No seer could possibly have foretold a connection between a missionary meeting held in a small one-room country church at Wheeler, Steuben County, New York, on a raw November evening in 1834, and the action taken by Congress in August 1848 which made Old Oregon a territory of the United States. The fact that these two events were related is clearly evident from contemporary documents. The one who tied them together during that span of fourteen years was Dr. Marcus Whitman and this is the story of what happened.

First, let us look at that small and at the time rather insignificant meeting held in the Presbyterian Church of Wheeler—its locale, the speaker, his message, and especially the key person in the audience, Dr. Whitman. About midway along the tier of New York counties bordering on Pennsylvania is Steuben County with Bath as its county seat. The town or township of Wheeler, in the central part of the county, and the village of Wheeler, received their names from one of the original settlers, who is reported to have been one of the patriots who took part in the Boston tea party of 1773.

The village of Wheeler is located about nine miles north of Bath and seven miles south of Prattsburg. It had a population of not more than twenty-five families when Dr. Whitman settled there early in 1832. His medical practice took him throughout the township, including such
neighboring places as Prattsburg. Roads were poor and carriages expensive. People, especially men, usually traveled on horseback. The discovery of Dr. Whitman’s saddlebags in the attic of an old house in Wheeler in 1936 gave mute evidence of his method of travel.3

When Dr. Whitman first settled at Wheeler, he lived in the home of Thomas Aulls, one of the elders of the Presbyterian Church. This church had been organized in 1824 with twenty-three charter members, but at the time of Whitman’s arrival in 1832, was practically defunct. It had no building, no pastor, and no Sunday services. Whitman took an immediate interest in reviving the congregation. Under his initiative, a building, which measured 32 x 40 feet, was erected; it was dedicated on January 10, 1833. The church was reorganized with nine members. Whitman was elected a trustee on December 29, 1832, and joined the church on the following February 10 by letter of transfer from the Congregational Church of his home town, Rushville, New York. He was ordained an elder on Sunday, June 1, 1834.4 The church records, still extant, show that he was active in the Sunday school, in temperance work, in the local branch of the American Bible Society, and in the official boards of the church. He was a generous contributor to the church’s budget and to special needs, as the following minute in one of the record books testifies: “Recd. fifteen dollars from Doctor Whitman to pay M. H. Brown for balance due on stove & pipe for Meeting House.”

The revitalized congregation called the Rev. James H. Hotchkin, 1771–1851, who had served as pastor of the Prattsburg Presbyterian Church from 1809 to 1830, to become its pastor in February 1833.5 His salary was paid in part by the American Home Missionary Society, the domestic counterpart of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, as the little congregation was not strong enough to be self-supporting.

Both of these mission boards enjoyed the support of the Congregational and Presbyterian denominations at that time. While at Prattsburg, Hotchkin had received into the church Narcissa Prentiss, who in 1836 was to become Mrs. Marcus Whitman, and Henry Harmon Spalding, who was destined to be associated with the Whitmans in the Oregon Mission of the American Board throughout its eleven-year history. Thus Hotchkin had the distinction of serving as the pastor of three of the most important members of that Mission.
Sometime during the latter part of November 1834, the Rev. Samuel Parker, 1779–1866, visited Wheeler and spoke before a small gathering in the Presbyterian Church in behalf of a proposed mission to far-away Oregon. Parker, who had visited St. Louis during the summer of 1834 on an exploring mission for the American Board, was then sent by the Board to tour western New York in order to solicit funds and recruit missionaries for the projected mission.

But of all places to visit for such purposes, could there have been a more unpromising place than Wheeler? Financially, the little congregation was still struggling to pay for its new building and to raise its share of its pastor’s salary. As for finding someone in that small community who would volunteer to go to Oregon as a missionary—who would have dared suggest such a possibility? Yet this is exactly what happened.

It may be that bad weather had prompted Parker to lay over for a day or two in Wheeler, since he commented in a letter to his family dated December 5 on “the very bad state of the roads.” Moreover, Parker and Hotchkin were old friends. Each had served Presbyterian churches in the same general area for about twenty years and each had a connection with the American Board. Parker was then one of its agents and Hotchkin had been made an honorary member.

Parker had a thrilling story to tell. His enthusiasm for the proposed mission to Oregon was contagious. As a result, there in that small rural church at Wheeler, where Parker first met Whitman, a decision was made which had far-reaching consequences. Dr. Marcus Whitman volunteered to go as a missionary to Oregon! A few days later, on Tuesday, December 2, 1834, Whitman wrote to the American Board in Boston: “I have had an interview with the Rev. Samuel Parker upon the subject of Missions and have determined to offer myself to the Am. Board to accompany him on his Mission or beyond the Rocky Mountains.”

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

The American Board played so important a role in the life of Marcus Whitman that a brief review of its early history and its objectives is necessary. During the first ten or fifteen years of the nineteenth century, a spiritual awakening pulsated through the nation, which resulted, among other things, in the rise of camp meetings on the western frontier,
for example in Kentucky, and in the establishment of theological seminaries and mission boards in the East.

Such institutions of higher learning as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, which had been founded primarily for the training of a Protestant ministry, had by 1800 become secularized. As a result such denominations as the Congregational and Presbyterian found it necessary for their continued existence to establish theological seminaries. Andover Theological Seminary, founded at Andover, Massachusetts, by the Congregationalists in 1808, was the first institution of this kind in America. Two years later the Presbyterians established their first seminary at Princeton, New Jersey.

Another result of the spiritual awakening which swept through the New England states during the early years of the nineteenth century was the establishment of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810. This arose out of an incident which took place on the campus of Williams College in northwestern Massachusetts in 1806. According to a commonly accepted story, the anti-religious feeling was so strong in the college that the Christian students found it best to retreat to a nearby grove in order to find privacy for their devotions. The leader of this band was the dynamic Samuel J. Mills, later active in such organizations as the American Colonization Society and the American Bible Society. He became one of the founders of the African Republic of Liberia.

One day in August 1806, five students at Williams College under the leadership of Mills met in the grove to discuss the proposition that the great commission of Jesus to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature was binding upon their generation. At that time there was not a single denominational foreign mission board in the United States. A sudden thunderstorm interrupted the prayer meeting and sent the five young men scurrying for cover. Unable to reach the shelter of a college building, they took refuge in the lee side of a haystack where they continued their discussions. There, under the leadership of Mills, the group solemnly dedicated themselves to the cause of foreign missions. They accepted the proposition that the great commission was binding upon them.

Several of these students, including Mills, enrolled at Andover Theological Seminary where they continued to crusade in the cause of foreign missions. Others, such as Adoniram Judson, who in 1812 was to
become the founder of the Baptist Mission in Burma, joined them. The zeal of this group induced the Congregational Association of Massachusetts to establish in 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, often referred to as the A.B.C.F.M. Other Congregational Associations soon joined, and in 1812 the Presbyterians began their cooperation with the Board.

Thus from the incident of a prayer meeting held in a haystack came the germinal idea that resulted in the founding of the first foreign missionary board in the United States. The site of the haystack on the campus of Williams College is now marked by a pedestaled monument bearing a globe and the inscription: “The Field is the World. Birthplace of American Foreign Missions, 1806.”

Since work with any non-English speaking people in the United States was classified as being foreign missions by most Protestant denominations throughout the nineteenth century, it was logical that the newly organized American Board should have become interested in the American Indians. The Board began its Indian work in 1816 when a few missionaries were sent to the Cherokees. Beginnings of missionary work with five other tribes had been made before Parker urged the Board to send him on an exploring tour to Old Oregon.

**Samuel Parker**

Samuel Parker was the connecting link between Marcus Whitman and the American Board and also between Whitman and Old Oregon. Parker was born April 28, 1779, at Ashfield, a village in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, about twenty-five miles southeast of Williamstown, the site of Williams College. His education was somewhat delayed; he was not graduated from Williams College until 1806, when he was twenty-seven years old.

Although a fellow student of Samuel J. Mills, there is no record of him being on the campus at the time of the haystack prayer meeting. After teaching school for a year, Parker began his theological studies under the tutelage of a Congregational minister and was licensed in 1806. He then served as an itinerant home missionary in the western part of New York State; this took him into such counties as Steuben, Allegany, and Cattaraugus which he was to revisit in the late fall and early winter of 1834.
Parker was a member of the first senior class at Andover Theological Seminary, 1810–11, but it does not appear that he was graduated. His associations at Andover with such enthusiasts for foreign Mission as Mills and Judson may have accounted for his lifelong interest in this aspect of Christian endeavor which was then beginning to challenge the attention of the Protestant churches.

Parker was ordained by the Congregational Church at Danby, Tompkins County, New York, in December 1812 when he was thirty-three years old. Later he became a Presbyterian minister, but throughout his life felt free to serve churches of either denomination. In 1812 he became pastor of the Congregational Church in Danby where he remained for fourteen years. He was married in 1815 to Miss Jerusha Lord; to this union three children were born—Jerusha, Samuel J., and Henry.

In 1882, the son, Samuel J. Parker, M.D., then sixty-four years old, wrote an article of about 75,000 words in answer to the question: “By whom were the missions of Dr. Whitman and others established and what was the influence of this movement on the history of the United States?” In it he gave the following description of his father: “...a man some five feet six or eight inches high; blue eyes, slightly sandy hair, a little over weight, but not fleshy; and with mild features, light complexion... He was not an eloquent speaker in the pulpit; but earnest... He was an active man.”

Parker resigned his pastorate at Danby in 1826 and during the following eight years moved frequently from one church or position to another. In 1830 he built a house, which is still standing, at 404 East Seneca Street in Ithaca, New York. For a time Parker taught school in that city. During the early part of 1832, he accepted a call to be pastor of the Congregational Church in Middlefield, in west central Massachusetts. While living there, the March 1, 1833, issue of the Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion’s Herald, a Methodist paper published in New York, came to his attention. This carried what Parker considered to be a truly amazing account of a pilgrimage made by four Indians “from west of the Rocky Mountains” to St. Louis to get information about the Christian religion and possibly, also, some missionaries.
THE WISE MEN FROM THE WEST

Nearly one-half of the front page of the Christian Advocate, a periodical with the page size of the New York Times, was devoted to a feature article under the caption: “The Flat-Head Indians.” The heart of the report was a letter from William Walker written from Upper Sandusky, Ohio, on January 19, 1833, to Gabriel P. Disosway, a Methodist merchant in New York City. Walker, who was part Wyandot Indian and also a Methodist, had visited St. Louis in the fall of 1831 to discuss with General William Clark, then in charge of Indian affairs west of the Mississippi River, the possible exchange of some land the Wyandots held in Ohio for a new location in the Indian Territory. This was the Clark who with Meriwether Lewis had made the exploring tour into the Pacific Northwest in 1805–06.

According to Walker’s letter, while in Clark’s office, “…he informed me that three chiefs from the Flat-Head nation were in his house, and were quite sick, and that one (the fourth) had died a few days ago. They were from the west of the Rocky Mountains.” Prompted by curiosity, Walker stepped into the room where the sick men were staying. He was attracted by the deformed skull of one of the Indians and sketched his picture showing the wedge-shaped malformation.

Walker’s letter continues: “Gen. C. related to me the object of their mission... It appeared that some white men had penetrated into their country, and happened to be a spectator at one of their religious ceremonies, which they scrupulously perform at stated periods. He informed them that their mode of worshipping the supreme Being was radically wrong, and instead of being acceptable and pleasing, it was displeasing to him; he also informed them that the white people away toward the rising of the sun had been put in possession of the true mode of worshipping the great Spirit. They had a book containing directions how to conduct themselves in order to enjoy his favor and hold converse with him; and with this guide, no one need go astray.”

After returning to his home in Upper Sandusky, Walker, for some reason, waited for more than a year before writing to Disosway. He enclosed a copy of the drawing he had made of the Indian’s deformed head. Disosway was so moved by the letter and the drawing that on February 18, 1833, he forwarded both to the editor of the Methodist Christian Advocate with comments of his own. This was the basis of the article which captured the attention of Samuel Parker.
Both the letter from Walker to Disosway and the latter’s letter to the editor contained references to the Indians as being from west of the Rockies. Parker saw a parallel between the New Testament story of the wise men from the East who traveled westward seeking the Christ child and this delegation from the West going eastward to St. Louis to get the “book” which would tell them how to obtain the Great Spirit’s favor. In a letter addressed to the American Board, dated April 10, 1833, Parker wrote: “Since I saw... what was stated under the head ‘The Wise Men from the West,’ I have asked myself the question, am I doing my duty with reference to those who are perishing without the gospel... ?”

Actually the Christian Advocate carried no such caption. In Parker’s imagination, “The Flat-Head Indians” became “The Wise Men from the West.”

OREGON INDIANS IN THE RED RIVER MISSION SCHOOL

Since the publication of the Walker-Disosway article in the Christian Advocate was directly responsible for both the Methodist Missionary Society and the American Board to send missionaries across the Rockies into Old Oregon in 1834 and 1835–38, we can well ask: What were the circumstances which inspired the Nez Perce Indians to make the journey to St. Louis to inquire about the white man’s religion?

In 1812 the Hudson’s Bay Company settled a colony of Scottish families at Red River where Winnipeg, Canada, is now. There followed many retired employees of the Company, then referred to as “servants,” with their native wives and half-breed children. Most of the Scotsmen were Presbyterians, but the “servants,” being French Canadians, were Roman Catholics. In 1821 the Anglican Church Missionary Society of London, with the approval of the Governing Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company, sent the Rev. John West, an Anglican, to the Red River colony. West has the distinction of being the first Protestant clergyman to settle in what is now western Canada.

Shortly after his arrival, West began to agitate for the establishment of a school for Indian youth. In this project he had the enthusiastic support of two important members of the Company’s Governing Committee in London, Nicholas Garry and Benjamin Harrison. As a result, the Church Missionary Society on January 27, 1822, authorized the establishment of the North-West American Mission at Red River with West as its superintendent. West returned to England in September
1823 and was succeeded by two more Anglicans, the Rev. David T. Jones and the Rev. William Cochran, both of whom were to play minor roles in the early history of Protestant missions in Old Oregon.

One of the most influential officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company was Governor George Simpson, 1787–1860, who was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1841. Beginning in 1820, when Simpson was only thirty-three years old, and continuing for nearly forty years, he was the all-powerful administrator of a great commercial empire in what is now western Canada and the Pacific Northwest.

A second important Company official was Dr. John McLoughlin, 1784–1857, who in 1824 was appointed to take charge of the newly established Columbia Department. McLoughlin was both a physician and a fur trader. He was a handsome man, standing six feet four inches and wearing his white hair long so that it touched his shoulders. Deeply religious, Dr. McLoughlin was a man of great moral integrity.

When Simpson first heard of the Rev. John West’s desire to establish a school for Indian youth at Red River, he expressed his disapproval. Writing to Andrew Colvile, a member of the Governing Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London, Simpson on May 20, 1822, ridiculed the proposal by saying that West “…takes a very sanguine view of this scheme which is to diffuse Christian Knowledge among the natives from the shores of the Pacific to those of [Hudson’s] Bay.” Simpson prophesied that the project “will be attended with little other good than filling the pockets and bellies of some hungry missionaries and schoolmasters and rearing the Indians in habits of indolence… I have always remarked that an enlightened Indian is good for nothing.”

In the early summer of 1824, when Governor Simpson was preparing to make his first journey into the Oregon country, he received a communication from the Church Missionary Society asking him to find some Indian boys from west of the Rockies who could be sent to the Red River Mission school. By this time Simpson had become aware of the great interest that Benjamin Harrison and others of the Company’s London Committee were taking in the proposed school. Even though Simpson two years earlier had ridiculed the idea of trying to educate the natives, he was above all else a practical man. He was under orders, and if his superiors in London wished him to find some Indian boys in Oregon and take them back to Red River to be educated, this he would do.
In a letter addressed to Harrison on August 1, 1824, Simpson wrote: “While in the Columbia I shall endeavour to procure a few children... for the Missionary Society School.” And at about the same time, Simpson wrote to West and gave him the same assurance. Simpson had made a complete about-face.

Dr. John McLoughlin accompanied Simpson on his journey into Oregon in the spring and summer of 1824. McLoughlin was then ready to assume the duties of Chief Factor of the Columbia Department of the Hudson’s Bay Company to which he had been appointed. The two men arrived at Fort George [present-day Astoria, Oregon] on the south bank of the Columbia River on November 8, 1824. Since the Company then had reason to believe that all territory south of the Columbia would probably come under the jurisdiction of the United States, both Simpson and McLoughlin felt that the site for a new trading post should be selected on the north bank of the river. Hence Fort Vancouver was established in a beautiful location near the mouth of the Willamette River. There McLoughlin remained when Simpson returned to Canada the following spring.

As Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, located about one hundred miles from the mouth of the Columbia River, McLoughlin ruled Old Oregon as an uncrowned king from 1825 to his retirement in 1846. The establishment and continuation of both the Protestant and Roman Catholic missions in Old Oregon would have been impossible without the help of the Hudson’s Bay Company and Dr. McLoughlin’s sympathetic cooperation.

Before leaving Fort George to return to Red River, Simpson wrote a letter of some two thousand words on March 10, 1825, to Benjamin Harrison in London. Whatever his private views regarding the wisdom of educating Indian boys may have been at that time, certainly this letter betrays no contrary spirit. Indeed, Simpson discreetly played the role of an advance agent for an evangelistic missionary society. “No part of North America that I have visited,” he wrote, “presents advantages and facilities towards civilization equal to this coast; the population is numerous, settled in villages, peaceable and well disposed... the missionary society could not therefore fail of success if the subject were taken up with that interest which it merits and fit and proper persons selected for the mission.” Simpson even suggested some places along the lower Columbia where stations could well be established and figured out the
approximate cost for each missionary per annum.

There is no hint in this letter from Simpson to Harrison that American missionaries might ever preempt the territory. Simpson apparently assumed that just as the Hudson’s Bay Company was enjoying exclusive privileges of the fur trade along the Columbia, an English missionary society would inherit the same favored position. Simpson had not forgotten his promise to take some Indian boys from the Oregon country back to the Red River Mission school. He told Harrison that he had tried to find some lads from the Chinook tribe but those suggested were “too young and delicate” for the long and difficult journey, so he had refused to take them.

On his way up the Columbia, Simpson stopped at the Company’s Spokane House, a post which had been established in 1810 by the North West Company and which was closed in 1826 when Fort Colville was built. The site of Spokane House is on the Spokane River, ten miles to the northwest of the present city of Spokane, Washington. There Simpson met Alexander Ross who had just returned from leading an expedition into the Snake River country in behalf of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Simpson had offered Ross the position of teacher in the Red River Mission school at a salary of £100 per annum which offer Ross had accepted. He returned with Simpson that summer to Red River.

Ross in his Fur Hunters of the Far West tells how Simpson induced two chiefs of the Spokane area to let their sons go with him to the mission school. At first the proposal was rejected with scorn. According to Ross, one chief asked Simpson if they “were looked upon as dogs—willing to give up their children to go they knew not whither.” Simpson pointed out that the boys would be placed in the care of a “Minister of Religion to learn how to know and serve God.” A chief of the Spokane tribe and another of the Kootenai (or Kutenais) each agreed to let a son go. According to Ross, one of the chiefs said: “We have given you our hearts—our children are our hearts; but bring them back again to us before they become white men—we wish to see them once more Indians...” Ross added: “They were about ten or twelve years old, both fine promising youths of equal age.”

A surprising entry appears in Simpson’s Journal for April 12, 1825, written while on his way eastward over the mountains: “Baptized the Indian boys, they are Sons of the Principal Spokan and Coutonais War
Chiefs, men of great Weight and consequence in this part of the Country; they are named Coutonais Pelly and Spokane Garry.” What did Simpson mean by writing that he had baptized the two Indian boys? Possibly he meant that he was christening them, giving them names. In each case he attached to the name of the tribe from which the individual came the last name of an important Hudson’s Bay Company official, thus setting a precedent which was followed in later years when other Oregon Indians were sent to the Red River school. John Henry Pelly had served as Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1822 to 1852, and Nicholas Garry as Deputy Governor from 1822 to 1835.

The ecclesiastical records of the Red River Mission, now in the archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company, show that “Kootanay Pelly, an Indian boy of the Kootanay Nation” was baptized by the Rev. David T. Jones on June 24, 1827, and on the same day, “Spokan Garry, an Indian boy of the Spokan tribe.” These were the first natives, not only from the Old Oregon country but also from the entire Pacific Coast of what is now the United States, to receive baptism by a Protestant minister. The fact that Jones administered this sacrament indicated that either Simpson had not formally done so, or, if he had indeed baptized the boys, the act was not recognized by the Anglican clergy.

In 1828 Governor Simpson made a second journey into the Oregon country. The following is recorded in regard to a speech he made to the Indians at Kamloops in what is now British Columbia in that year: “He, of course addressed them, and at some length, adverted to the propriety of behaving well among themselves, and exhorted them never to be guilty of theft, murder, or of any inhuman deeds towards the whites. To strengthen this argument, he produced, read, and translated to them two letters sent by the Indians at the Red River Settlement Missionary School to their parents at Spokan and the Kootanais country.”

From this we learn that Spokane Garry and Kootenay Pelly had each written a letter to his parents, and that Simpson was carrying them. It seems highly probable that the practical minded Simpson had not only suggested that the fifteen-year-old boys write such letters, but also told them what to say about how their people should treat white men.

The two lads made good progress at the school and by 1829 were able to read, write, and speak English fairly well. They returned to the Spokane country by going with the westward bound Hudson’s Bay express,
as the overland caravan was called, in the summer of 1829. The two youths, then about sixteen years old, carried back an enthusiastic report of their experiences at the mission school. Commenting on this, a western historian, J. Orin Oliphant, wrote: “Pelly and Garry were cast for a role deeply significant: they were to receive at the Red River an education that would serve as a linguistic key to open the door for the entrance of Christianity among their tribes.” No doubt their return, after an absence of four years, created a great sensation in their respective tribes. Spokane Garry seems to have exerted the greater influence.

The archives of the Hudson's Bay Company contain only a few fragmented sections of what was once an extensive series of journals of each of the Company's forts in the Old Oregon country. The only extant part of the Fort Colville journal covers the period April 12, 1830, to April 3, 1831. During this time Francis Heron was Chief Trader. His journal entry for April 14, 1830, carries the following reference to Spokane Garry: “Last evening all the Indian Chiefs about the place were admitted into the Gentlemen's Mess Hall and a speech was made to them, repeated by Spokane Garry in a satisfactory manner. The chiefs of the following nations were present: Spokain, Nez Perces, Coeur d'Alenes, Kootenais, Penderails, Cinq Pois [or San Poils], & Kettle Falls.” This is the first known instance of any of the Indian boys who had been educated at the Red River Mission school being used as an interpreter. The significance was noted by Heron.

When Spokane Gary and Kootenai Pelly returned to Red River in the spring of 1830 with the Company's eastbound express, five more Indian youths from four different tribes accompanied them. As was the case with Spokane Garry and Kootenai Pelly, each of the five was given the name of a Hudson's Bay official. The eldest of the group was Nez Perce Ellice [later written as Ellis], age nineteen or twenty. He was named after Edward Ellice, a member of the Company's Governing Committee in London, 1824–27. The other four were probably Cayuse Halket, age eleven, named after John Halket, also a member of the London Committee, 1829–48; San Poils Harrison, age eleven, a namesake of Benjamin Harrison, who served as Deputy Governor, 1835–39; Spokane Berens, age eleven, named after Joseph Berens, Jr., Governor of the Company, 1812–22; and Cayuse Pitt, age unknown, named after another Company official, Thomas Pitt. Other Oregon Indians may
have been sent to the mission school after 1830 but only these seven had any direct or indirect influence on the Nez Perce delegation which visited St. Louis in the fall of 1831.27

These seven came from five tribes and from three different linguistic groups. The Spokanes and San Poils spoke Salishan languages; the Nez Perces a Sahaptin tongue. The Cayuses had originally belonged to a different linguistic stock, but were already forsaking their own language for Nez Perce at the time of first contact with white men. The Kootenai language was quite different from any of these. Surely this diversification of tribes and languages among the seven youths sent to the Red River school was not accidental. Here again we see the guiding hand of profit-conscious Simpson who realized the value of having interpreters in as many different Oregon tribes as possible.

From various documented sources, such as the mission school’s baptismal and burial records, the ages of six of the seven youths mentioned above can fairly well be determined at the time of their first departure for the school. Four of the seven died while at Red River but the causes of their deaths are unknown. The dates of their burials are: Kootenai Pelly, April 6, 1831; San Poils Harrison, January 18, 1832; Spokane Be- rens, July 21, 1834; and Cayuse Halket, February 1, 1837.28

The fact that these four died while at the school was not forgotten by the Indians of Old Oregon. As will be mentioned later, the death of Cayuse Halket became a subject of controversy between the Cayuse Indians and Dr. Whitman in 1845. The three youths who lived to return to their respective tribes (not including Halket and Pelly who returned to Oregon for a time and then went back to Red River) were Cayuse Pitt, Nez Perce Ellis, and Spokane Garry.

Little is known about Cayuse Pitt. Three references to his being back with his people have been found in the correspondence of Dr. McLoughlin for 1836, 1837, and 1838.29 Narcissa Whitman, writing to her sister Jane on February 2, 1842, stated: “A young Nez Perce [sic] that had been to the Red River school died last summer.”

The two educated at the mission school, who later played important roles in their respective tribes, were Nez Perce Ellis and Spokane Garry. Ellis remained at the school for about four years, long enough to acquire a good command of English. He was appointed the first Head Chief of the Nez Perces in 1842 by Dr. Elijah White, the first Indian Agent to be
assigned to Oregon by the United States Government. The important role that Spokane Garry played in the establishment of Protestant missions in Old Oregon will subsequently be told.

**THE 1831 NEZ PERCE DELEGATION TO ST. LOUIS**

The delegation of four Indians from west of the Rockies who visited St. Louis in the fall of 1831 were Nez Perces (one half-Nez Perce and half-Flathead) and not Flathead Indians as mistakenly identified by General Clark. The Flathead Indians, from what is now western Montana, made two attempts to send delegations of their people to St. Louis to obtain information about the white man’s religion before 1831. This is evident from a letter sent by Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, the pioneer Catholic missionary to the Flatheads. He wrote to the Hon. J. C. Spencer on March 4, 1843: “It is now about 24 years since the Indian nation of the Flat-heads acquired a slight knowledge of the civil institutions of Christianity through the means of four poor Iroquois Indians who had wandered beyond the Rocky Mountains. Anxious to obtain instructions, they sent about 20 years ago [i.e., in 1823] a deputation of three of their chiefs to St. Louis. They were carried off by sickness. As their Deputies did not return, they appointed five others who were massacred in passing through the territory of the Sioux. In 1834 a third delegation arrived, an Iroquois accompanied it... In 1839 they deputed other missioners to communicate their wishes. It was on this occasion that I was requested to accompany the deputies on their return.”

Father DeSmet traveled widely through the Old Oregon country during 1840–46 and, in the fall of 1841, founded St. Mary’s Mission for the Flatheads in the Bitter Root River Valley.

At least three of the 1831 delegation were Nez Perces as is evident from the following facts: (1) The first Indian to die in St. Louis and to be buried by the Catholic priests on October 31, 1831, is listed in the cathedral records as being a Nez Perce:32 (2) The two survivors were passengers on a steamer which left St. Louis on March 26, 1832, for the ascent of the Missouri as far as the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Aboard was the artist, George Catlin, who painted their portraits. Catlin called them Nez Perces. The second Indian who died in St. Louis, who was buried on November 17, 1831, is identified in the cathedral records.
as being a Flathead. However, a strong Nez Perce tradition claims that his mother was a Flathead and his father a Nez Perce.\textsuperscript{34}

There is a direct connection between the Oregon youths who attended the Red River Mission school and the Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis of 1831. The Walker–Disosway correspondence, which appeared in the March 1, 1833, issue of the \textit{Christian Advocate}, undoubtedly provided the initial stimulus for the sending of the first missionaries into the Old Oregon country. This news-story, however, has been subject to much adverse criticism. As early as 1844, two of the Methodist missions to Old Oregon—Rev. Daniel Lee and Rev. Joseph H. Frost—called Walker’s account “high-wrought.”\textsuperscript{35} Writing in 1850, the Methodist bishop, Osmon C. Baker, called it “in a high degree, apocryphal.”\textsuperscript{36} And as late as 1950, the author of the \textit{History of Methodist Missions} referred to the \textit{Christian Advocate} account as being “a highly romanticized, largely fictitious account of a comparatively simple event.”\textsuperscript{37} We need, therefore, to examine the Walker–Disosway account carefully.

The fact that four Indians from west of the Rockies visited General Clark in St. Louis in the fall of 1831 is indisputable. They had accompanied the Rocky Mountain Fur Company’s caravan when it returned from the 1831 Rendezvous held in the Rockies to St. Louis.\textsuperscript{38} The caravan was under the command of Lucian Fontanelle, a Roman Catholic, who took a special interest in the four Indians and evidently had taken them to the Roman Catholic Cathedral in St. Louis where he had introduced them to some of the priests. According to Walker’s letter to Disosway, he called on Clark sometime between the deaths of the first and the second Indian.

On December 31, 1831, Joseph Rosati, Bishop of St. Louis, in a letter to a Catholic publication in Lyons, France, referred to the presence of the “four Indians, who live on the other side of the Rocky Mountains,” in St. Louis for the purpose of seeing General Clark. Bishop Rosati reported that the four had visited the Catholic Church “and appeared to be exceedingly well pleased with it; unfortunately there was no one who understood their language.”\textsuperscript{39} When all became ill, they were visited by one or more of the priests, who reported that the Indians made the sign of the cross, an indication that they knew something of the Christian faith. Bishop Rosati made no mention of any request that the four might have made for missionaries or for the Bible.
There are two aspects of Walker’s report which may have been embellished. The first is the drawing of the deformed head of one of the Indians that appeared in the March 1, 1833, issue of the Christian Advocate. In the early days of the history of Old Oregon, some of the natives along the Columbia River would depress the foreheads of newly born infants by tying a board over the forehead in such a manner as to make the upper part of the skull wedge-shaped. “You may form some idea of the shape of their heads,” wrote Walker, “from the rough sketch I have made with the pen, though I confess I have drawn too long a proboscis for a flat-head.” Before sending Walker’s letter to the editor of the Christian Advocate, Disosway redrew the sketch. He explained: “From the outlines of the face in Mr. Walker’s communication, I have endeavored to sketch a Flat Head for the purpose of illustrating more clearly this strange custom. The dotted lines will show the usual rotundity of a human head.” Since we do not have Walker’s original sketch, we cannot know how much Disosway altered it.

A second possible embellishment to be found in the Walker letter is in his statement regarding the extent of religious instruction that Clark gave the four Indians. Walker, who was a devout Methodist and well informed on doctrine, was no doubt aware that Clark was an Episcopalian. According to Walker, Clark gave the inquiring natives: “A succinct history of man, from his creation down to the advent of the Saviour; explaining to them all the moral precepts contained in the Bible, expounding to them the decalogue. Informed them of the advent of the Saviour, his life, precepts, his death, resurrection, ascension, and the relation he now stands to man as a mediator—that he will judge the world, etc.” How could Clark have given this outline of Christian theology to the Indians if there was no one in St. Louis who understood their language, as Bishop Rosati said? In all fairness to Walker, let it be said that Clark’s interpreter may have been unknown to the bishop.

**Spokane Garry, the Connecting Link**

After the errors have been corrected and the myths exposed, there remains a body of well-documented facts in the story of the Nez Perce delegation of 1831. Ample evidence is available to prove that Spokane Garry, the twelve-year-old boy who went to the Red River Mission school in 1825 and who returned to his people in 1829, was the connecting link.
between the school and the delegation. The first to give a contemporary account of the Indians’ explanation as to why the four Nez Perces went to St. Louis was the Rev. Asa B. Smith, a member of the 1838 reinforcement of the American Board for its Oregon Mission. Asa and his wife Sarah opened a station at Kamiah, in the upper Clearwater River Valley, in May 1839 where Asa studied the language under the tutelage of an intelligent native called Lawyer.

Smith’s letter to the American Board dated August 27, 1839, contains the following: “I have recently been making inquiries of the natives concerning the origin of their notions concerning the christian religion & of the object of those who went to the States as it was said, in search of Christian teachers... About ten years ago a young Spokan, who goes by the name of Spokan Garry, who had been at the Red River School, returned. My teacher, the Lawyer, saw him & learned from him respecting the Sabbath & some other things which he had heard at the school. This was the first time he had heard about the Sabbath & it was called by them Halahpawit. He returned & communicated what he had heard to his people. Soon after wh[ich] six individuals set out for the States, in search as he says of Christian teachers. Two of this number turned back in the mountains & the other four went on & arrived at St. Louis when two died, one died soon after having left that place & one alone returned to tell the Story & he is now dead.”

Since Lawyer referred to the return of Spokane Garry as having taken place “about ten years ago,” this confirms the 1829 date of Garry’s first return from the Red River school. Since Lawyer is reported to have had a Flathead mother and a Nez Perce father, he was bilingual and could, therefore, communicate directly with Spokane Garry. Although Heron, in the entry made in the Fort Colville journal for April 14, 1830, quoted above, did not mention by name any of the chiefs present that day, he did indicate that there was at least one from the Nez Perce tribe. In all probability that one was Lawyer. Spokane Garry, and not Kootenai Pelly, served as the interpreter for Heron at the April 1830 meeting with the chiefs as he was able to speak the language understood by five of the seven tribes represented. How natural it would have been for the sixteen or seventeen-year-old Garry to demonstrate to those present how much he had learned at the mission school by reading from the white man’s Bible.
Although the primary inspiration for the departure of the Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis in 1831 to get information about the white man’s religion seems to have come from Lawyer’s contact with Spokane Garry, yet the Nez Perces could have learned something about Christianity from one or more of the following four sources before Garry’s return in 1829 from the mission school.

In the first place, several of the early explorers, trappers, or traders who were in the Old Oregon country prior to 1830 are known to have carried their Bibles with their guns. Among these were David Thompson, who established a trading post on Lake Pend Oreille in what is now northern Idaho in 1809, and Jedediah Smith, who spent a month, November 26 to December 20, 1824, at Flathead Post in what is now western Montana. It may be assumed that such Christian men would have spoken of their religious faith to the natives as opportunities afforded.

Secondly, many of the Indians of Old Oregon, including the Nez Perces, had contacts with American trappers and traders beginning about 1824, some of whom must have been Christians. They, too, could have told the natives about the white man’s religion.

Thirdly, most of the “gentlemen” or officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who served at the several forts or trading posts along the Columbia River after 1824, were Anglicans or Presbyterians, although a few were Roman Catholics. Most of the employees or “servants” of the Company were Roman Catholics.

Writing in her diary on January 2, 1837, Narcissa Whitman commented: “The Cayuses as well as the Nez Perces are very strict in attending to their worship which they have regularly every morning at day break & eve at twilight and once on the Sab[bath]. They sing & repeat a form of prayers very devoutly after which the Chief gives them a talk. The tunes & prayers were taught them by a Roman Catholic trader. Indeed their worship was commenced by him.” Narcissa referred to Pierre Pambrun, a half-breed French Canadian, who had been placed in charge of Fort Walla Walla, a Hudson’s Bay Company’s post, as early as 1832. And finally, some of the Roman Catholic Iroquois Indians, who had been taken into the Old Oregon country as early as 1818 by fur traders, could have passed on information about their faith to the Oregon Indians.

Several travelers who visited the Pacific Northwest before the arrival of the missionaries reported that some of the natives observed Sunday
by remaining in camp and not engaging in hunting. This emphasis on Sunday observance indicates a Protestant rather than a Roman Catholic influence. It is significant that, in his conversation with A. B. Smith, Lawyer stated he first learned about the Sabbath from Spokane Garry. The importance of observing Sunday would have been stressed at the Red River Mission as this was under the sponsorship of the Church Missionary Society, an evangelical organization within the Anglican communion.

Another interesting entry in the Fort Colville journal, mentioned previously, reflects the influence that Garry and Pelly had upon the Indians of that locality. Under date of January II, 1831, which was at least eight months after these two, together with the five other Indian boys, had left with the eastbound Hudson’s Bay express for Red River, the following entry was made: “The Indians on the ground formally renounced in full council their ancient superstitions, doctrines, such as conjuration, medicine &c. and acknowledged themselves to be, and ever to continue, true and faithful Christians.”

Since Francis Heron, then in charge of Fort Colville, hailed from North Ireland and was a Protestant, it is likely that he was a Presbyterian. The question can be asked: Could such an amazing action have been taken by the natives in “full council” had not Spokane Garry and Kootenai Pelly, both sons of prominent chiefs, first told them about the white man’s religion?

The fact that five more Indian youths from the Oregon country accompanied Garry and Pelly on their return journey to the mission school in the spring of 1830 also reflects the extent of the influence that the two had made upon their own and adjoining tribes. Contemporary testimony from the Rev. David T. Jones of the Red River Mission confirms this judgment. The following is a quotation from one of his letters written sometime during the first months of 1831: “In the Summer of 1839, two Youths from over the Rocky Mountains—Kootemey and Spogan—went to visit their friends and relatives; and returned again... bringing with them five more Boys for education, all of whom are Chief’s Sons, of much importance in their ways. This shows, evidently, the confidence placed by the natives there in the good faith of the White People, and also the value which they attach to Christian instruction.” According to Jones, the impression that Garry and Pelly made upon their own and neighboring tribes “seems to have been very great.” Even
though he made this report to the Church Missionary Society in London with understandable jubilance, yet he added a word of caution: “Of course, this will be evanescent for want of a permanent and definitive system of instruction.”

The question has been asked: If Lawyer heard Spokane Garry at Fort Colville on April 14, 1830, why did the Nez Perces wait more than a year before sending a delegation to St. Louis? The simple answer is that Lawyer did not have enough time to return to his home, consult with other leaders of his tribe, select a deputation, and for them to get to the Rendezvous in time to go with the returning caravan to St. Louis.

Walker in his letter to Disosway stated that “a national council” had been held by the Indians at which time the four chiefs were selected “to proceed to St. Louis to see their great father, Gen. Clarke, to inquire of him, having no doubt but he would tell them the whole truth about it.” This account is confirmed by a statement made to the author by Corbett Lawyer, a grandson of Chief Lawyer, to the effect that Nez Perce tradition holds that those who went to St. Louis had been selected in the spring of 1831 when the Flatheads and the Nez Perces were camped together in the buffalo country of what is now western Montana.

According to a statement made by Lucien Fontanelle, who was in charge of the caravan which escorted the Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis in the summer of 1831, four Nez Perces and three Flatheads composed the original party but that one Nez Perce and two Flatheads turned back.

And still another question has been asked: If curiosity regarding the white man’s religion had been aroused by Garry and Pelly, who had spent about four years in the Red River Mission school, why did not the Nez Perce delegation go to Red River for the information they wanted rather than to St. Louis?

Among the explanations given to account for the Indians’ choice of St. Louis is that made by Thomas E.Jessett: “It is my opinion that they were seeking the Church of England Mission at the Red River but got lost and were diverted by American trappers to St. Louis.”

The logical answer, however, to this question is that the Nez Perces were accustomed to travel by horseback and not by canoe. A journey to Red River would have meant going most of the way by water. Moreover, the Hudson’s Bay Company was not inclined to take passengers with
them on their overland express, so it was not likely that the Indian delegation could have gone that way even if they had so desired.\textsuperscript{49}

It should also be noted that the Nez Perces and Flatheads had much closer relationships with the American fur traders in the buffalo country and at the Rendezvous than with those of the Hudson’s Bay Company. And finally, as stated by Walker, the Nez Perces remembered William Clark, who with Meriwether Lewis had visited their country nearly thirty years previously, and they wanted to see him. His headquarters were in St. Louis. It was most logical, therefore, for the Indian delegation to head for St. Louis rather than for Red River.

Some have also asked: If the Nez Perce delegation’s visit to St. Louis was so important, why did not General Clark make note of it in his writings?\textsuperscript{50} An indirect reference to the visit of the Indians has been located in General Clark’s writings. In his “1830 Report on the Fur Trade” written from his St. Louis office on November 20, 1831, Clark stated: “Yet surrounded as I am by hundreds of Indians, some emigrating from the North East, & for whom a home is to be provided here others from West of the Rocky Mountains visiting me.”\textsuperscript{51} William Walker came from Sandusky, Ohio, or from the “North East” seeking a home for the Wyandots somewhere west of the Mississippi. The reference to the Indians coming from west of the Rockies could well apply to the Nez Perces.

**Protestant Churches Stirred by the Nez Perce Appeal**

Dr. Ray Billington, who is today one of the best known authorities on the history of the American frontier, wrote: “In all American history no single letter accomplished such impossible wonders as that penned on January 19, 1833, by an educated Wyandot Indian named William Walker to his friend, Gabriel P. Disosway, a New York merchant interested in the Methodist Missionary Society. For that letter set off a chain reaction of events which added the Pacific Northwest to the United States.”\textsuperscript{52} The whole westward thrust of the Protestant missionary movement into the Old Oregon country was inspired by the Walker-Disosway article in the March 1, 1833, issue of the *Christian Advocate*.

The dramatic appeal of the Nez Perce delegation stirred the imaginations of the Protestants of New England, that seedbed of so many altruistic and benevolent movements. Never before had a delegation
visited the United States from a non-Christian land or people, then referred to as “pagan” or “heathen,” asking for missionaries and the Bible. But here was a party of four Indians who had made the long journey from beyond the Rocky Mountains to St. Louis for that express purpose! The incident pricked the consciences of many church members. Writing from St. Louis on April 17, 1833, the Rev. A. M’Allister, a Methodist minister, commented: “How ominous this visit of the Cho-pin-nish [i.e. Nez Perces] and Flat Head Indians! How loud the call to the missionary spirit of the age!” 53

The article in the *Christian Advocate* was reprinted or reviewed in several other religious publications. Letters of inquiry were sent to clergymen and others in St. Louis asking if the incident were true and if so, requesting more details. On May 10, 1833, the *Christian Advocate* featured the story for the second time and reprinted the sketch of the dying Indian’s deformed head. Along with this article were letters from three St. Louis residents which confirmed the essential facts of Walker’s report. One of the writers, the Rev. E. W. Sehon, in his letter of April 16 stated: “Gen. Clark informed me that the publication which appeared in the Advocate was correct.” 54

Sehon inquired of General Clark regarding the reasons why the Indians had made such a long journey. “He informed me,” Sehon wrote, “the cause of their visit was the following: Two of their number had received an education at some Jesuitical school [sic] in Montreal, Canada, had returned to their tribe, and endeavored as far as possible to instruct their brethren how the whites approached the Great Spirit.” Here is a clear reference to Spokane Garry and Kootenai Pelly but Clark was mistaken when he said that they had attended some “Jesuitical school in Montreal.” 55

So great was the impact of the Walker-Disosway article in the *Christian Advocate* that within the seven years, 1834–40, the Methodist Missionary Society and the American Board sent ninety-one men, women, and children to Old Oregon. When the five couples, who went out to Oregon in 1839 and 1840 on an independent basis, are added to this number, the total including children, but not counting those born in Oregon, comes to 101.

By a curious coincidence this number almost equaled the passenger list of the *Mayflower* which carried 102 Pilgrims to Cape Cod in 1620.
Indeed the parallel was not lost upon many New Englanders of that generation, as several references may be found in the missionary literature of that period to the new “Plymouth Colony” on the Pacific Coast. The influence of that small band of Protestant missionaries on the religious, social, economic, and political history of Old Oregon was deep and lasting. In this unfolding drama, Dr. Marcus Whitman was destined to play an important role.

THE METHODISTS SEND JASON LEE TO OLD OREGON

The first denomination to respond to the Nez Perce appeal was the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1834 it sent the Rev. Jason Lee; his nephew, the Rev. Daniel Lee; a schoolteacher, Cyrus Shepard; and two hired laymen, Philip L. Edwards and Courtneym M. Walker, overland to Oregon. Altogether the Methodist Missionary Society, during the years 1834–39, sent seventy-five men, women, and children to its Oregon Mission. With the exception of the first party in 1834, all went by sea around Cape Horn.56

Jason Lee was appointed “missionary to the Flathead Indians” on July 17, 1833. Because of ignorance on the part of the Missionary Society regarding the location and names of western tribes, the term “Flathead Mission” was used by the Methodists until October 1835 when it became the “Oregon Mission.” Jason and Daniel Lee spent the winter of 1833–34 making preparations for their westward journey. Fortunately for them, the explorer and fur trader, Nathaniel J. Wyeth, returned to his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in November 1833 after making his first journey to the Rockies. Since he was planning to return to the mountains in 1834, he invited the Lees to accompany him that far. Thus the first party of Protestant missionaries to go overland to Oregon was assured of protection and a qualified guide for the first part of their journey.

Wyeth (called Captain since he was in charge of his caravan), the mission party and a company of about sixty men with some two hundred horses, mules, and cattle left Liberty, Missouri, on April 26, 1834. The animals belonging to the missionaries included ten horses, four mules, two cows, and a bull.57 The Wyeth caravan traveled independently of that of the American Fur Company although each was bound for the annual Rendezvous to be held that year on the Green River, a few miles
to the west of South Pass in the Continental Divide. South Pass, first opened in 1824, became in time the great gateway to Oregon and also to northern California. The Wyeth party rode through the pass on June 15.

Because of the shortage of grass, the Rendezvous that year was shifted to Ham’s Fork, a tributary of Green River. On July 2, Captain Wyeth and his men, together with the mission party, left the Rendezvous for the Snake River country. On the 14th, Wyeth selected a site, near present-day Pocatello, Idaho, where he established a trading post called Fort Hall. Two years later the Hudson’s Bay Company would secure title to this fort. There at Fort Hall, on Sunday, July 27, Jason Lee conducted the first Protestant service ever held by an ordained missionary in the vast interior of the Old Oregon country.

The Lee party left Fort Hall on July 30 and traveled with Thomas McKay and his Hudson’s Bay Company’s brigade to Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River, where they arrived on September 1. The distance from Liberty, Missouri, to Walla Walla was about 1,900 miles. The missionaries continued their journey down the Columbia River and arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 15, where they were warmly welcomed by Dr. McLoughlin. The brig, May Dacre, which carried supplies for the mission around Cape Horn, arrived in the Columbia the following day. The timing was perfect.

The Methodist Missionary Society had commissioned Jason Lee and his associates to open a mission among the Flatheads or Nez Perces, but on the recommendation of Dr. McLoughlin, they selected a site for their work at French Prairie on the Willamette River about sixty miles up from where it emptied into the Columbia. Here a log house was erected, into which they moved on October 29. The Methodist Society sent out by ship a reinforcement of twelve and another of seven, both with women and children, in 1837. In 1838 Jason Lee returned to the States by the overland route in order to get still more reinforcements. On his way East, he visited the Whitmans and the Spaldings at their stations in the upper Columbia River Valley. The significance of that visit will be told in a later chapter.
Although the Methodist Church was the first to send missionaries to Oregon, actually the first person who offered to go in response to the Nez Perce appeal was the Rev. Samuel Parker, then pastor of a Congregational church at Middlefield, Massachusetts. Deeply moved by the article in the Christian Advocate about the “Flatheads,” Parker in a letter to the American Board dated April 10, 1833, wrote: “From my first entering the ministry, I think I have had some of the missionary spirit... and I have come to the conclusion to offer myself to go beyond the Rocky Mountains to establish a mission among the Flathead Indians, or some other tribe.”

The missionary spirit to which Parker had been exposed while a student at Williams College and at Andover Theological Seminary was now asserting itself. The more he thought about it, the more determined he became. He became convinced that God had called him to go to Oregon as a missionary.

Parker’s Application Rejected

Within the structure of the American Board at that time was, which we might today call an Executive Committee, the Prudential Committee. The very name suggests the caution with which the Board spent its limited funds. Parker’s surprising offer to go as a missionary to Oregon was referred to this Committee. In his letter of application, Parker suggested the possibility of making an exploration trip and then “after a few years to return to my family, who will reside in Ithaca where I have a house.” In reply one of the secretaries of the Board, writing on April 15, inquired as to Parker’s age and the number and ages of his children. He also asked: “Have you conferred with your wife, & what are her feelings on the subject?”

Making allowance for the slowness of the mails in those days, we note that Parker lost no time in replying. Writing on April 27, he stated that he was fifty-four years old. He had a daughter, sixteen; a son, fourteen; and another son, ten. As far as his wife’s attitude was concerned, he wrote: “She, as well as myself, thinks the object an important one, and although it will require much self-denial, yet we are willing, committing ourselves to God, our Redeemer, to meet it.”

Parker’s letter arrived at the Board’s offices in Boston on May 3,
just before a scheduled meeting of the Prudential Committee, and, therefore received prompt attention. A reply was written by the Rev. David Greene, 1797–1866, an assistant secretary in charge of the Board’s Indian work. Judging by his letter to Parker of May 4, there was much shaking of heads by members of the Committee when they learned of his age and his family responsibilities. The oldest missionary ever appointed by the Board up to that time, according to Greene, was ten years younger than Parker. Greene asked: How could one of his age hope to acquire a strange language? Having a wife and three children was a serious objection. Kindly but firmly, Greene told Parker that the Board could not appoint him.

**PARKER WINS APPOINTMENT BY THE AMERICAN BOARD**

A common characteristic of a visionary is persistence. Certainly this was true of Samuel Parker. Replying to Greene’s letter on May 17, Parker sought to answer the various objections which had been raised. He stressed his conviction that this was God’s will. “I think the call for the gospel beyond the Rocky Mountains,” he wrote, “is a plain intimation of providence.” He stated that he was ready to serve without salary, provided the Board would give his family four or five hundred dollars a year for their support during his absence, and he urged a reconsideration of his application.

Greene replied on August 21 and reaffirmed the decision of the Prudential Committee. His appointment was not expedient. Moreover, a new factor had entered the case. “The Methodists have long since claimed this field,” wrote Greene, “and it is reported that their missionaries are about proceeding to their labors.” From this it is evident that the American Board was aware of Jason Lee’s appointment. Greene explained that the Prudential Committee was guided by the principle of comity and therefore did not wish to enter any mission field occupied or about to be occupied by another denomination. Actually this argument was not valid; the Oregon country was so vast and there were so many different Indian tribes in it, that the presence of one church would mean no real competition or overlapping for another. Undoubtedly the Board felt that Parker was too old to be appointed for such a distant and unknown field.

Parker resigned his church in Middlefield sometime during the summer of 1833 and moved his family to their Ithaca home. He accepted
a position as a schoolteacher for that fall and following winter. Monday, January 6, 1834, was observed by the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca as a day of fasting and prayer. Parker was present at one of the meetings held in the church’s session house. In a letter to the Board dated January 16, Parker told what happened. “My strong feelings on the subject of the West again arose. I proposed to the church and those present that day, and others in this village and town who might be disposed to join them, should furnish the men… and support a missionary station beyond the Rocky Mountains.” Parker spoke with such conviction and enthusiasm that those present appointed a committee of five to see what could be done. “Three young men,” wrote Parker, “of fervent piety, good talents, and acquirements, and of more than ordinary promise offer themselves for the work.” He informed the Board that he had no doubt but that the full amount of money needed to support the mission could be raised. He then asked: “Will the Board accept our offer.”

As secretary Greene happened to be out of the city when Parker’s letter arrived, he did not reply until February 20. Since Parker had raised the money and had found volunteers to go with him, the Board reluctantly reconsidered his application for an appointment and authorized him to proceed with his plans to go on an exploring tour to Oregon under the Board’s auspices. Later the Board agreed to pay $450.00 annually for the support of Parker’s family for one or two years. Instead of finding three assistants, Parker succeeded in enlisting only two—the Rev. John Dunbar and Samuel Allis, Jr., both Presbyterians.

The Pawnee Indian Mission Founded

Both the American Board and Samuel Parker were ignorant as to how a mission party could travel hundreds of miles across the plains and the mountains to Oregon and not be molested by thieving or even hostile Indians. Seemingly, they had no information about the necessity of traveling under the protection of some fur company’s caravan. Jason Lee was better informed. He and his associates were on the frontier in plenty of time to leave with the Wyeth party on April 26, 1834. Parker and his two companions did not leave Ithaca until May 5, and did not arrive in St. Louis until the 23rd, nearly a month after both the Wyeth party and the Fur Company’s caravan had left for the Rendezvous. In a letter written to Greene from St. Louis on May 27, Parker bemoaned the
fact that they were “too late to go with any safety to the Oregon Territory that year.”

After some consultations in St. Louis with Major John Dougherty, U.S. Indian Agent for the Pawnee, Oto, and Omaha Indian tribes, it was decided that Dunbar and Allis should begin mission work with the Pawnees in what is now Nebraska while Parker would return East for reinforcements and make a second attempt the next year to go to Oregon.

Just when Parker arrived back in Ithaca is not known. Since the archives of the American Board do not contain any letters from him for the fall of 1834, it seems probable that Parker journeyed to Boston in order to make a personal report to Secretary Greene. The Board’s Annual Report for 1834 carried a brief notice of Parker’s return and about his intention to find new associates and make another attempt to go to Oregon the following year. “This,” the Report stated, “has been approved by the Committee.” Evidently the assurance of continued financial support from the Ithaca church and Parker’s unbounded enthusiasm induced the Prudential Committee, somewhat against its better judgment, to rescind its former action and to endorse Parker’s second attempt to go to Oregon. According to this 1834 Report, the Board spent $471.01 that year to cover the expenses of Parker, Dunbar, and Allis “on their exploring tour to the Indians west of the State of Missouri” [see Appendix 2]. Undoubtedly all or most of this money came from the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca.

Marcus Whitman and Narcissa Prentiss Volunteer for Oregon

Heartened by the action of the Prudential Committee, Parker turned enthusiastically to his task of raising more money and finding associates for his Oregon mission. Actually, judging by the receipts of the Board which were credited to him, Parker was much more concerned about finding someone to go with him to Oregon than he was in raising money. Surprisingly, instead of visiting the larger churches in the cities where larger gifts could possibly be secured, Parker made a tour during the fall of 1834 in the counties of Steuben, Allegany, and Cattaraugus in western New York. Reporting to the Board on December 24, 1834, Parker frankly stated: “…almost all the churches in the counties are small and feeble, and are assisted by the H.M.S.”

Chapter One Whitman Volunteers for Oregon 31
One reason why Parker turned to this area was that there he was on familiar territory. They were the counties where he had begun his ministry after his licensure in 1808 as an itinerant home missionary. He knew the churches, many of the people, and some of the pastors. Another factor worked to Parker's advantage. Throughout the history of Protestantism in the United States, the small rural churches have always been a fruitful source for the recruitment of ministers and missionaries. So it was that late in November 1834, Parker drove his horses, hitched to a light wagon, over muddy roads into the little crossroads village of Wheeler where he was welcomed by his old friend, the Rev. James H. Hotchkine, pastor of its small Presbyterian church. Thus the stage was set for an event which took place in that one-room country church which was destined to have far-reaching effects in later years in distant Oregon.

Although we have no copy of the message Parker delivered in Wheeler, we need but little imagination to summarize what he had to say. Drawing upon the several articles which had appeared in the Christian Advocate, Parker retold the story of the visit of the four Nez Perces to St. Louis in the fall of 1831. He surely told of his own visit to St. Louis during the previous summer where, possibly, he had had an opportunity to interview General Clark. Although Parker may never have heard of the Red River Mission school, or of Spokane Garry, or of Chief Lawyer, yet he had enough documented facts to present a moving appeal. Dr. Marcus Whitman, who heard Parker speak that evening, was stirred. When Parker climaxed his address with a plea for someone to go with him to Oregon the following spring, Whitman volunteered.

After leaving Wheeler, Parker traveled about forty-five miles west to a little settlement on the Genesee River then called Amity but now known as Belmont. There Parker repeated his message in the Presbyterian Church and made another plea for missionaries. Somewhat to his surprise, Narcissa Prentiss, daughter of judge and Mrs. Stephen Prentiss, offered herself. Since the American Board then rarely sent “unmarried females” into the foreign mission field, and since work with the American Indians was then considered to be a part of foreign missions, it appears that Parker gave her little encouragement.

Writing to his family on December 5, Parker reported: “My labours have been fatiguing owing to the very bad state of the roads. My success has been as good as I expected. The collections, though small, have been
greater than have ever been taken up on any other application of like nature. I have found some missionaries. Dr. Whitman of Wheeler, Steuben County, New York, has agreed to offer himself to the Board to go beyond the mountains. He has no family. Two ladies offer themselves, one a daughter of judge Prentiss of Amity...”  

We often need the perspective of time before we can appreciate the significance of events which at the time of their occurrence may appear to be insignificant. So it was with the Rev. James H. Hotchkin when his most influential layman decided to go as a missionary to the Indians of Oregon. According to the requirements of the American Home Missionary Society, which subsidized Hotchkin’s salary, he had to submit a quarterly report of his work. The only reference to Whitman located in these reports is the following which appeared in the one dated January 12, 1835: “...one of our elders expects shortly to leave us to join the company of Missionaries to go beyond the Rocky Mountains.” When Hotchkin submitted his report for the summer months of July, August, and September, 1835, when Whitman was with Parker on their journey to the Rockies, he wrote: “Nothing has occurred in the congregation during the quarter.”  

Whitman returned in the fall of 1835 bringing with him two Nez Perce youths and some thrilling news. He and Parker had met a large party of Nez Perces at the Rendezvous in the Rockies and had found them eager for missionaries. Jason Lee and his associates had by-passed that tribe and had settled in the Willamette Valley. Whitman had observed that it was possible to take women over the Rockies, hence he could return, be married to Narcissa Prentiss to whom he was engaged, and take her with him to Oregon.

Another married couple would have to be found to go with them. Parker and Whitman had separated at the Rendezvous—Parker to continue with the Nez Perces on an exploring tour of Oregon; Whitman to return home for reenforcements and then to go out to the Rockies again in the summer of 1836.

The significance of these important events seems to have escaped the attention of Whitman’s pastor at Wheeler. In his quarterly report dated January 7, 1836, Hotchkin, commenting on the events of the previous fall, wrote: “Nothing peculiar has taken place.”
Chapter 1 Footnotes

1 The term “Old Oregon” is commonly used to indicate the area which lies west of the Continental Divide and north of the present-day California–Oregon border. Prior to 1846 this 42nd parallel was the Mexican border. Following the settlement of the border question with Great Britain in 1846, the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and the western parts of Montana and Wyoming were carved out of Old Oregon. Unless otherwise stated in the text of this work, the use of the name “Oregon” refers to Old Oregon as here defined.

2 From a letter to the author dated April 6, 1969, from Harold G. Shults of Prattsburg, N.Y.

3 These saddlebags are now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

4 See article by S. W. Pratt, “The Making of Whitman,” Sunset Magazine, vol. XXIII (August 1909), pp. 185–8, and his original notes in Coll. Wn. Pratt, who belonged to an old Prattsburg family, made a special effort to interview people who knew the Whitmans and the Spaldings. Several of his articles appeared in local newspapers in New York State. He is also the author of History of the Presbyterian Church of Prattsburg, 1876.

5 Hotchkin, History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York, gives much information about the Presbyterian churches of Wheeler and Prattsburg.

6 W.C.Q., II (October 1898), p. 12.

7 Whitman Letter #5. Hereafter all references to Whitman letters listed in Appendix I will be by number in brackets inserted in the text, unless such letters are identified by date when written.

8 W.C.Q., II (October 1898), pp. 3 ff. contains a biographical sketch of Parker by Myron Eells. See also article by Henry Parker, Church at Home and Abroad, March 1895, and manuscripts by Dr. Samuel J. Parker mentioned below in fn. 9.

9 Original ms. in Cornell University Library, Ithaca. N.Y. Dr. Parker made copies for Yale University Library; Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; and the University of Washington Library, Seattle. Myron Eells made a copy for Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash. These copies do not agree with each other. In his old age, Dr. Parker displayed a bitter anti–Hudson’s Bay Company and also an anti–Roman Catholic attitude; hence his writings must be critically examined for accuracy. Many of his comments about the Whitmans and his father are reliable since, as a seventeen-year-old youth, he met Marcus and Narcissa Whitman shortly after their marriage in February 1836 and also had access to his father’s papers.

10 Parker ms., Ithaca.

11 Hereafter referred to as the Christian Advocate.

12 Francis Haines, “The Nez Perce Delegation to St. Louis in 1831,” P.H.R., VI (1937), pp. 71–8, maintained that Walker was not in St. Louis at the time of the visit of the four Indians and that he was “spinning a traveller’s yarn” in his letter to Disosway. J. Orin Oliphant, “Francis Haines and William Walker, a Critique,” P.H.R., XIV (1945), pp. 211–16, answered Haines. The November 25, 1831, issue of the Christian Advocate mentioned the fact that Walker headed a delegation of six Wyandotes who went that fall to see Gen. Clark in St. Louis.

13 The letters of Walker and Disosway have been reprinted in Hulbert, O.P., V: 87 ff. The italics used here are the author’s.
Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon

CHAPTER ONE

Whitman Volunteers for Oregon

14 Hulbert, O.P., VI:212. The old files of the American Board, referred to as Coll. A., are in Houghton Library, Harvard University.


17 HBC Arch., D/4/3.

18 Ibid.

19 The North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company joined in 1821 under the name of the latter. Fort Colville was named after Andrew Colvile, a member of the London Committee of the H.B.C. He spelled his name with only one “l” in the last syllable.


21 See fn. 16.

22 Malcolm McLeod (ed.) Peace River. A Canoe Voyage from Hudson’s Bay to Pacific, by the late Sir George Simpson, in 1828. Journal of the late Chief Factor, Archibald McDonald who Accompanied him. Ottawa, 1872, p. 34. The quotation is from McDonald’s Journal. McDonald was placed in charge of Fort Colville in 1836.


24 HBC Arch., B/45/a/1.

25 Tucker, Rainbow in the North, p. 70. Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, p. 89, states that the party with the Indian boys left the Spokane country for Red River on April 30, 1830.

26 Allen, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 185, claims that Ellis was thirty-two years old in 1842 when he was made Head Chief of the Nez Percies.

27 Other Indian boys from Old Oregon mentioned as having been sent to the Red River school include William Collins of the Kootenais: see article by Dr. Wm. McKay, Oregon Churchman, Dec. 15, 1873; Boyd, History of the Synod of Washington, p. 231; Lewis, “The Case of Spokane Gary,” Spokane Historical Society Bulletin, January 1917, p. 13, mentions a Jim Lion of the Nez Percies. Possibly these names refer to Indian boys sent to the Red River school after 1831.

28 HBC Arch., Records of the Mission School. Tucker, Rainbow in the North, pp. 73–4, states that Cayuse Halket “visited his friends on the Columbia River in 1834, but not being able to reconcile himself to their mode of life, he returned to reside with Mr. Cochran” at the mission school. William McKay, in the Oregon Churchman, December 15, 1873, wrote: “While Halket was among his people, he frequently held services, according to the Episcopal form among them.” Writing in his old age on July 14, 1892, to Mrs. Eva Emory Dye, McKay made extravagant claims for Halket: “He held services every Sabbath on the Church of England form of worship and taught them the Christian Religion and sung hymns to them.” Location of the original letter is unknown, if still extant. A friend of Mrs. Dye’s gave the author a copy. McKay’s evaluation of what a fifteen-year-old boy was able to do to evangelize the Cayuse tribe is very questionable. The Whitmans made no reference to this in any of their letters.
29 HBC Arch., McLoughlin to Pambrun, Nov. 2, 1836; April 14, 1837; and March 28, 1838. Nothing was said in any of these letters of any effort Pitt was making to spread Christianity among his people.

30 Catholic Iroquois Indians are known to have been employed by fur traders and taken into the Old Oregon country as early as 1818. Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, p. 55.

31 Original in Office of Indian Affairs, Oregon Superintendency, 1842–80, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

32 Drury, *Spalding*, p. 74. gives the text of the burial records.


34 McBeth, *The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark*, pp. 30 ff. Miss McBeth, who was for many years a missionary among the Nez Perces and knew their traditions, wrote of the Indian whose sketch was drawn by Walker: “Ka-ou-pu (Man of the Morning or Daylight) . . . His mother was a Flathead, his father a Nez Perce.”

35 Lee and Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 110.


37 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, II:203. See also Appendix 3 of this work.

38 The caravan carrying supplies from the States would meet the trappers at some agreed upon place in the Rockies each summer from 1824 to 1839, called the Rendezvous. Most of these gatherings were held west of the Continental Divide. There the supplies would be exchanged for furs. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company was dissolved in 1834. Thereafter the caravans were sent out by the American Fur Company. See W. J. Ghent, *The Early Far West*, New York, 1936, pp. 20 ff, for a discussion of the fur companies and the annual Rendezvous.


41 While gathering material for my biography of Henry Harmon Spalding, I visited the granddaughter of Spokane Garry, Mrs. Joe Nozer, at Worley, Idaho, on August 23, 1935. She showed me her grandfather’s Bible, his Anglican prayer book, a New Testament, and a small pamphlet with hymns in an Indian language. The Bible, octavo in size, was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. Later, I discovered in the records of the Red River Mission a reference to a shipment of Bibles from this Society to the school. In Spokane Garry’s Bible was an original letter from H. H. Spalding to Garry dated March 28, 1874. This letter is now in Coll. WN. The discovery of Spokane Garry’s Bible gives further confirmation to the account that Lawyer gave Smith.

42 Since Mrs. Whitman was writing about four months after she and her husband had arrived in Oregon, this comment shows that the natives had been following these practices long before they came. See also, Washington Irving, *Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, New York, 1837, III:7; W. A. Ferris, *Life in the Rocky Mountains*, Salt Lake City, 1940, p. 75; N. J. Wyeth, *Correspondence and Journals*, Eugene, Oregon, 1899, p. 192; Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour*, contains many references to the Nez Perces observing Sunday; and Elliott’s article, “Religion Among the Flatheads,” *O.H.Q.*, XXXVII (1936), pp. 1–8.
Old customs and superstitions continued as the missionaries who settled among them in 1839 testified. See Drury, *Walker*. The action taken by the council, however, is an indication of how some of the natives felt.

Garry returned to his people during the summer of 1831, following the death of Pelly on April 6 of that year. For a time Garry was zealous in his efforts to civilize and evangelize his people. However, the task was too much for an eighteen-year-old youth. According to W. S. Lewis, “The Case of Spokane Garry,” in *Spokane Historical Society, Bulletin*, No. 1, p. 16: “Spokane Garry himself gradually abandoned his efforts at religious teaching, and when pressed for the reason, gruffly stated that he had quit because the other Indians ‘jawed’ him so much about it.” When the Walkers and Eellses settled among the Spokanes in the spring of 1839, they were keenly disappointed by Garry’s refusal to cooperate.


See Drury, *Spalding*, pp. 72 ff, for further details about the Nez Perce delegation.

Whitman letter #11. Whitman, on his first journey to the Rockies with the caravan of the American Fur Company in 1835, inquired of Fontanelle regarding the personnel of the Nez Perce delegation.

Jessett in *Church History*, XXVII (1959): 150. Jessett stresses the Anglican influence of the Red River Mission on the Oregon Indians who studied there, and claims that when these youths returned to their respective tribes, they introduced Anglican forms of worship among the natives. Jessett maintains that this is the reason why Garry was reluctant to cooperate with the Congregational missionaries who opened a station among the Spokanes under the auspices of the American Board in 1839.

The Rev. Jason Lee applied for passage across Canada with the Hudson’s Bay Express of 1838. McLoughlin denied the request by writing from Fort Vancouver on February 12, 1838: “It is not in our power to do ourselves the pleasure to accommodate you with a passage across the mountains.” HBC Arch., B/231/b.

Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, p. 102: “The episode seems not to have been of unusual significance to the busy Indian superintendent.”

While searching through the files of the Department of Indian Affairs in National Archives, Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1946, I found General Clark’s report. This was published in *O.H.Q.*, XLVIII (1947): 33 ff.

From “A Letter to the Editor that Got Unexpected Results,” *Together*, a Methodist periodical published in Chicago, November 1959.


Ibid.

The Jesuit order was dissolved by Pope Clement XIV in 1773. The Jesuits did not begin their work in Canada again until 1842.


Although Robert Campbell, an American fur trader, had driven an ox or a cow over the Rockies to the Green River Rendezvous in 1833, the Lee party was the first to take cattle all the way to the Pacific Coast. Jason Lee’s Diary appeared in *O.H.Q.*, XVII (1916).
58 A white marble tablet in the vestibule of the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, New York, bears the statement that there on January 6, 1834, “this Church resolved to send and support the Oregon Mission of Rev. Samuel Parker.” A monument to Parker and Whitman was dedicated on the church’s property on May 12, 1935.

59 The day that Parker, Dunbar, and Allis sailed from Ithaca on a Cayuga Lake steamer, Parker’s two sons, ages ten and fourteen, watched their departure. They then erected a pile of stones on the spot which were later cemented together into what was called the “Pilar of Faith.” This monument, now at 227 Willard Way, Ithaca, once bore an explanatory plaque which has been stolen.

60 The initials stand for the American Home Missionary Society, a parallel organization to the A.B.C.F.M. The files of the A.H.M.S. are in Hammond Library, Chicago Theological Seminary.


62 A.H.M.S. files, Chicago Theological Seminary.
All of the six missionaries who were involved in the founding of the Oregon Mission of the American Board—namely, Samuel Parker, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Henry and Eliza Spalding, and William H. Gray—came from western New York. The first four of these came from a comparatively small triangular area in the Finger Lake district of the State. Samuel Parker lived at Ithaca, located at the southern end of Cayuga Lake. About forty miles to the west lay Prattsburg (originally spelled Prattsburgh), the birthplace of Narcissa Prentiss who became Mrs. Whitman. Nearby is Wheeler where Henry Harmon Spalding was born. About twenty-five miles north by east of Prattsburg is Rushville, which now straddles the boundary separating Yates and Ontario counties, the birthplace of Marcus Whitman. Eliza Hart, who married Henry H. Spalding, came from Holland Patent which is about ten miles north of Utica, New York. William H. Gray was living in Utica when he volunteered to go to Oregon.

Ancestry, Birth, and Early Years

Marcus Whitman belonged to the seventh generation of the descendants of John Whitman who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony sometime prior to December 1638. It is believed that John Whitman
came from Norfolk, England, where the family name was originally spelled Whiteman.¹

Samuel Lincoln, an ancestor of Abraham Lincoln, came to the same New England colony, also from Norfolk, in 1637, or at about the same time as did John Whitman. One of Samuel’s sons, Mordecai, married a granddaughter of John Whitman. Their son, another Mordecai, was the great-great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln. This means that the martyred pioneer missionary of Old Oregon and the martyred President were both descendants of John Whitman.

Beza Whitman, 1773–1810, the father of Marcus, and a younger half-brother, Freedom Whitman, settled at Cummington, a small village in the heart of the Berkshires of western Massachusetts in 1795. In the adjacent town² of Windsor lived the family of Hezekiah and Alice Green.³ Like the Whitmans, the Green family had long been in America. Hezekiah was of the sixth generation of the descendants of Thomas Green who migrated to Massachusetts from England about 1636. Beza Whitman had not been at Cummington long before he fell in love with Alice Green, 1777–1857, the youngest child of Hezekiah and Alice Green. They were married on March 9, 1797, and their first-born, a son named Augustus, arrived on January 7, 1798.⁴

Following the Revolutionary War, a restless urge for more fertile lands sent many New Englanders into western New York and into what was then called the Connecticut Western Reserve, which included what is now northeastern Ohio. About 1796, Henry Green, 1763–1849, an older brother of Alice, the wife of Beza Whitman, moved from Windsor to Ontario County, New York, and became one of the early settlers of Naples.

He moved in 1799 to a place called Federal Hollow. There, Henry Green, later known as Captain Green, operated a sawmill and gristmill on a stream called West River which empties into the southern end of Canandaigua Lake. Henry was so impressed with the opportunities of western New York that he persuaded his sister Alice and her husband to migrate thither.

Sometime early in 1799, Beza loaded his worldly goods onto an ox-drawn wagon and headed for Ontario County. His wife, carrying their year-old son Augustus, rode horseback. The family settled first at Canandaigua. There on August 16 of that year, their second son, Erastus, was born, and died the following October 16. Shortly afterwards,
Beza and Alice moved to Federal Hollow where they occupied a log cabin which shortly before had been vacated by the Henry Green family. There the Whitmans began life anew. According to a local tradition, a bear raided Beza's pigpen one night, an incident which throws light upon the primitive conditions then existing in that frontier community.

There in that humble cabin on September 4, 1802, a third son was born to Beza and Alice Whitman. They called him Marcus. Why that name? Possibly because Beza had a cousin, James Whitman of Belchertown, Massachusetts, who had a six-year-old son named Marcus. It may be that a friendship between the two Whitman families suggested this name to Beza and Alice.

In 1818, at the suggestion of the doctor in Federal Hollow, Ira Bryant, the name of the settlement was changed to Rushville in order to honor Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Revolutionary War patriot and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In order to avoid confusion, the name Rushville will hereafter be used to indicate the birthplace of Marcus Whitman, even though the change of name did not occur until he was about sixteen years old.

Beza was an industrious worker. He built a tannery on West River and plied his trade as a shoemaker. He so prospered that sometime before 1807, he was able to build a frame house which was used as an inn as well as a home. Courthouse records at Canandaigua show that Beza purchased forty acres of land about half-a-mile south of Rushville in December 1809 for $450.00. Two other sons and a daughter came to the Whitman home in Rushville following the birth of Marcus. They were Samuel, 1804–1875; Henry, 1806–1854; and Alice (Mrs. Wisewell), 1808–1887.

We know very little about the early life of Marcus. A niece of his, Mary Alice Wisewell, gives us the following glimpse into the Whitman home: “His parents lived in a log house—the country was new and wild, and as his father was a tanner and currier, his mother being lonely often used to go and sit with her husband in the little shop opposite the house, binding shoes. Having left him [i.e., Marcus] a baby in his cradle one evening, she was much startled to find on her return that a log had fallen from the fireplace and had burned the lower end of the cradle, and that he was nearly suffocated by the smoke.”

Only one reference has been found in the 175 letters Marcus
Whitman is known to have written [see Appendix 1] of any boyhood experiences. In his letter of April 13, 1846, to Secretary Greene, Whitman wrote: “I was accustomed to tend a carding machine when I was a boy.” A carding machine was used in the preparation of wool for spinning. We may safely assume that the kind of life Marcus lived during the first eight years of his life in Rushville was an important preparation for his later experiences as a missionary to the Indians in Old Oregon where living conditions were even more primitive than in western New York.

From such information as is available, Marcus resembled his mother. The Rev. S. W. Pratt, D.D., who served in 1907 as Moderator of the Presbyterian Synod of New York, once wrote: “Marcus was said to have derived much of his vigor and energy and resoluteness from his mother, who was physically very strong and untiring, weaving for her household, making cheese and performing other industrial duties. She had no patience with laziness... She never spent any time in sentiment, but abounded in deeds.”

As a missionary doctor in Old Oregon, Whitman was remembered as having these same characteristics of “vigor and energy.” In a letter which a Methodist missionary, the Rev. H. K. W. Perkins, wrote to a sister of Narcissa’s on October 19, 1849, we find the following appraisal of Dr. Whitman: “He could never stop to parley. It was always yes or no... he was always at work” [See Appendix 6]. As was the mother, so was the son.

**Ten Years in Massachusetts**

Sorrow came to the Whitman home in Rushville on April 7, 1810, when Beza Whitman died in his thirty-seventh year. He was buried in the Baldwin Corners cemetery near the village, where one can still read on the brown sandstone marker the following epitaph, so characteristic of that period:

Stop here my friend and think on me
I once was in the world like the
This is a call aloud to the
Prepare for Death and follow me

The widow was left with five children all under twelve years of age. The financial burden was too great for her slender resources, so she turned to relatives for help. In the fall of that year Marcus, then
only eight years old, was sent to live with his late father’s half-brother, Freedom Whitman, at Cummington, Massachusetts. Thus Marcus suffered a double tragedy. He was not only bereft of his father, but was also separated from his mother, his brothers, and his younger sister. However, in the slight of events which stemmed from his residence at Cummington and nearby Plainfield, it is most likely that Marcus Whitman would never have gone to Old Oregon as a medical missionary had he remained in Rushville.

In Whitman’s first letter to the American Board, dated June 3, 1834, he summarized his early life as follows: “My Father died when I was about seven years old and I was sent to reside with my Father’s brother in Massachusetts where I received my early education and religious instruction. My Grand Father (for he resided in the same family) and Uncle were both pious & gave me constant religious instruction and care. I was under their care mostly for ten years.” In the ecclesiastical terminology of that generation, “pious” meant what the word “religious” now implies. Uncle Freedom and Grandfather Samuel, both devout Baptists, left an indelible impression upon young Marcus.

Marcus lived with his relatives in Cummington for five years, 1810–15. The village is located in the northwest corner of Hampshire County, about twenty miles south of the Vermont border and on the eastern slope of the beautiful Berkshire Hills. After this range enters Vermont, the highlands are known as the Green Mountains. About six miles north of Cummington is Plainfield where Marcus lived for the next five years. Near Plainfield is West Mountain which rises 2,160 feet above sea level and is the highest point in the county. Running through the valley is Mill Creek on which, in those days, several mills were located. There in those villages of Cummington and Plainfield, surrounded by hills, forests, water, and farm lands, Marcus spent ten years of his youth, 1810–20.

At the time Marcus arrived in Cummington, a youth six years older than he, by the name of William Cullen Bryant, was living in the same village. The Bryant home, a large rambling structure of three stories, is still standing, and visitors are shown a room on the third floor where, in 1811, Bryant, then only seventeen years old, wrote the well-known poem “Thanatopsis.” In this poem, for the first time in published American literature, the word “Oregon” is used.
Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings…

The Oregon! This was the name by which the “River of the West” was then called. Evidently this name was unknown to Captain Robert Gray who discovered the river in 1792 and named it after his ship, the Columbia. Bryant, on the other hand, had never heard of Captain Gray’s discovery when he wrote his “Thanatopsis.” The question raises: How did that seventeen-year-old youth in Cummington, Massachusetts, learn in 1811 about a mighty river some 3,000 miles to the west called the Oregon? The most plausible answer is that Bryant had access to Jonathan Carver’s *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* which had been published in London in 1778. Carver had spent the winter of 1766–7 with some Sioux Indians near present-day Minneapolis and, during the following year, made another exploring trip, this time penetrating into what is now western Canada. In his book Carver made mention of a river which flowed into the Pacific Ocean which he called the “Origan” and also the “Oregon.” Much has been written on the origin of this name. For our story, it is sufficient to indicate that in all probability Carver’s work was the source of the word “Oregon” in “Thanatopsis.” Even though Bryant was six years older than Whitman, the two attended the same school in Plainfield at the same time; hence it is altogether possible that Bryant told Whitman about that mysterious river far to the west which flowed into the Pacific Ocean and which, in time, gave its name to that vast territory, in what is now the Pacific Northwest, first known as Old Oregon.

Marcus returned to Rushville in 1815 to visit his mother and relatives. He had changed so much during his five-year absence that his mother did not know him. His niece, Alice Whitman Wisewell, tells the story: “When thirteen years old, he unexpectedly returned home for a visit of three weeks. Coming in at evening, he went up to his mother and reached out his hand, saying, ‘How do you do, Mother?’—and she drew back thinking herself no mother to him. This so grieved him that he burst into tears. My mother says that it was during this visit that she first saw him [i.e., her brother] to know him—being six years younger.”
During the five years Marcus had been away from Rushville, his mother in 1811 had married Calvin Loomis, 1766–1840. To this marriage, the second for each, three children were born—Erastus, 1813;12 Oren Green, 1841–81; and Luther, 1816–17. Calvin Loomis continued the business activities which Beza Whitman had been conducting: the tannery, the shoeshop, and the tavern. Thus when Marcus returned to his home, he found it necessary to become acquainted with a stepfather and a baby half-brother.

**FIVE YEARS AT PLAINFIELD**

After returning to Massachusetts, Marcus went to Plainfield where he lived in the home of Colonel John Packard.13 The change of residence from his Uncle’s home in Cummington was made because Marcus was to attend the school in Plainfield taught by the pastor of the local Congregational Church, the Rev. Moses Hallock, and the Packard home was located about a mile from the school. Colonel Packard, a charter member of the Plainfield church and one of its deacons, was a man of considerable influence in both the community and the church.14

Here Marcus lived from 1815 to 1820 when he passed from his thirteenth to his eighteenth year. These were the years of adolescence, the critical teen-age period when every normal boy looks forward to the future and dreams of what he will do when he reaches man’s estate.

References to the activities of Marcus during these formative years are almost non-existent. The *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton, Massachusetts, in its issue of July 22, 1884, carried the following about Whitman: “He is distinctly remembered by some of his associates, as an energetic youth, possessing a good mind, and good principles.” The Gazette also reported the following incident: “By his daring, promptness, and skill, when a large boy, he saved another boy on the point of drowning from a watery grave.”

The center of the Plainfield community was the Congregational Church and this became a dominant force in molding the character of young Whitman. A characteristic of the religious life of New England of that generation was the strict emphasis placed on the observance of Sunday, or the Sabbath as it was then called. Here we see the influence of Puritanism which took root in England before 1600 and which left a deep impression upon the evangelical churches of both England and
New England for several generations. In Whitman’s day, the proper observance of the Sabbath was one of the most important outward signs of being a Christian. Strictly speaking, the Sabbath is Saturday, the holy day of the Jewish faith, but for the Puritans, Sabbath was the same as Sunday. The misuse of this term continued in Protestant circles in the United States until the early 1900s.

The records of the Plainfield church show how strictly Sunday was observed. Sabbath began at sundown on Saturday and continued until sundown on Sunday. Such innocent pleasures as boating or even loitering on a river bank were strictly forbidden. In 1800 the Plainfield church acquired a 650 pound bell and when this sounded on Sunday, be it morning or evening, all were reminded to go to church. Woe unto him who absented himself without good reason. All this explains why Whitman and his associates in the Oregon Mission laid such emphasis on the importance of Sabbath observance.

The Plainfield Congregational Church erected a building shortly after its organization in 1786 which measured $42\frac{1}{2} \times 55\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The building contained forty-four box pews on the main floor and nineteen in the gallery. The pew occupied by Colonel Packard and his family, and therefore also by Marcus Whitman, was located in the southwest corner of the main floor. During the “long prayer,” it was customary for the congregation to stand. The seats in the pews were hinged and when the people stood, these were lifted up in order to give more room. When the “Amen” was pronounced, the seats all fell back into place with a bang and clatter that would astonish a present-day congregation.

**The Influence of the Rev. Moses Hallock**

Marcus Whitman was highly favored during his adolescent years in having the scholarly Rev. Moses Hallock for both his teacher and his minister. Hallock was called to the pulpit of the Plainfield Congregational Church in 1792. He was then thirty-two years old, an ex-Revolutionary War soldier, and a graduate of Yale in the class of 1788. He served the Plainfield church for thirty-seven years, dying in 1887.

Shortly after his installation as pastor of the church, Hallock opened a school which he conducted with great effectiveness until 1824. More than three hundred students, of whom thirty were girls, studied under his direction. A few boarded in his home. The non-boarding stu-
students, including Marcus, paid a dollar a week for some meals, perhaps the noon luncheon, and for tuition. Hallock’s school was established a year after the founding of Williams College, thirty miles distant. One hundred and thirty-two of Hallock’s students are reported to have gone to college, most of them at nearby Williams College.

Several of Hallock’s students later became well-known. Among these were William Cullen Bryant from nearby Cummington and John Brown of Harper’s Ferry fame. Bryant has left for us the following account of his experiences as a student in Hallock’s academy: “I was early at my task in the morning, and kept on until bed-time; at night I dreamed of Greek, and my first thought in the morning was of my lesson for the day. At the end of two calendar months, I knew the Greek Testament from end to end almost as if it had been English.”

John Brown’s contact with the Hallock school was of short duration; the exact time is not known. In 1818, Brown, whose home was in Hudson, Ohio, decided to study for the ministry. Since Hallock was a relative of Brown’s mother, it was natural for the young man to go to Plainfield to study. Brown was two years older than Whitman; in all probability the two were students in Hallock’s school at the same time, as Whitman did not return to Rushville until 1820. Brown’s well-known concern with the slavery issue, came long after he left Plainfield. Whitman’s letters mention slavery only once or twice. He was too far removed in distant Old Oregon after 1836 to be involved.

The strong religious influence which Moses Hallock exercised over the young men who were his students is evident in the number who entered the ministry or who became missionaries. Fifty out of 304 students, including two of his own sons, became ministers, and seven became missionaries. The Plainfield church started a Sunday school in May 1819. Since the American Sunday School Union, as a national organization, was not established until 1824, it is to the credit of the Plainfield church that it adopted this means of Christian education so early. Marcus, then in his seventeenth year, enrolled in a class taught by Deacon James Richards. Commenting on his interest in the Sunday school movement, Whitman in his letter to the American Board dated June 3, 1834, wrote: “I have attended as a scholar, teacher or Superintendent ever since.”

All three of Deacon Richards’ sons entered the ministry, two of whom became foreign missionaries. James Richards, Jr., after complet-
ing his work in Hallock’s school, went to Williams College. He was one of the five young men who took part in the haystack prayer meeting held in August 1806, to which reference has already been made. James, Jr., was one of the first appointees of the newly organized American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and was sent as its pioneer missionary to Ceylon. How logical to suppose that Deacon Richards would have told the boys in his Sunday school class about his son in a faraway “heathen” land. Another son, William, who was a couple of years older than Marcus, was a member of a party of missionaries sent by the Board to Hawaii in 1822.

In 1819 the religious revival that swept through many New England communities came to Plainfield. Evangelistic meetings were popular, and when extended over several days or weeks were called “protracted meetings.” Among those at Plainfield who felt a spiritual quickening was Marcus Whitman. In a letter of June 3, 1834, to the Board, he wrote: “I attended the administrations of Rev. Moses Hallock at which time I was awakened to a sense of my sin and danger and brought by Divine grace to rely on the Lord Jesus for pardon and salvation.”

Even though Marcus had what could be called a conversion experience, he did not join the church in Plainfield. Possibly he found himself caught between conflicting loyalties. His uncle and grandfather in Cummington were Baptists. Denominational distinctions were so sharply drawn then that the records of the Congregational Church in Plainfield show that some members had been dismissed for holding “the Baptist error.” Possibly Whitman decided, under the circumstances, to postpone joining a church until he returned to Rushville.

The same influences that molded William Cullen Bryant into one of America’s most articulate poets in the expression of his Christian faith; which contributed to the iron resolve of John Brown to be faithful unto death for his convictions; which sent James Richards, Jr., and his brother to the foreign mission field; also moved the heart of Marcus Whitman. He too would be a minister. “My preliminary education,” he wrote in his first letter to the Board, “consists of the English branches with some knowledge of Latin and some little of Greek.” As a student in Hallock’s school, Marcus had received the classical education then required of young men who planned to enter the ministry.
The ten years that Marcus Whitman spent in Massachusetts were the decisive years of his life. There he had the good fortune to come under the influence of such active Christian men as his uncle and grandfather, John Packard, Deacon Richards, and especially the Rev. Moses Hallock. Home, church, and school combined to give young Marcus Whitman a strong Christian faith which gave direction to his life. He resolved to live to serve his fellowmen and his first choice was the Gospel ministry. It seems safe to say that if Marcus Whitman had never gone to Massachusetts, he never would have gone to Old Oregon.
Chapter 2 footnotes

1 Charles H. Farnham, History of the Descendants of John Whitman, New Haven, 1889, provided genealogical information for this section.

2 The word “town” is used in New York State and in New England to indicate a township. In other parts of the United States, a town is a village.

3 Samuel S. Greene, Genealogical Sketch of the Descendants of Thomas Green, Boston, 1858.

4 From entry in the Whitman family Bible, now in Coll. W.

5 Little is known about Beza Whitman. Coll. W contains a receipt in his handwriting.

6 Information supplied by Robert Moody of Rushville. This house remained standing until about 1905.


8 Sunset Magazine, XXIII (August 1909), p. 186. Also, Drury, Whitman, pp. 25–6 for an account of the discovery of what is believed to be a picture of Whitman’s mother and for a reproduction of the photograph.

9 Nahum Mitchell in his History of Bridgewater, Mass., Boston, 1840, states that Samuel Whitman “was plunged,” i.e., baptized by immersion, when over ninety years of age. Samuel and his son Freedom were charter members of a Baptist Church established in Cummington on May 29, 1821.

10 Several accounts of the origin of the name “Oregon” are to be found in various issues of the O.H.Q.; Bancroft, Oregon, I:17 ff; The Record, Washington State University, Pullman, p. 27; and George R. Stewart, Names on the Land, New York, 1945, pp. 153 ff.

11 Wisewell letter, Coll. W. This letter, written during the lifetime of the author, was dictated by her to her daughter. It gives us, therefore, authentic glimpses into the early life of Marcus Whitman.

12 The name Erastus had also been given to Mrs. Beza Whitman’s second son who also died in infancy. In that generation, it was quite customary for parents to use the same name a second time if the first child had died.

13 The original John Packard house, now known as the Laurens Seely home, is still standing and is occupied. The house has been remodeled.


15 Ibid., p. 7.


17 Dyer, op. cit. For some reason Dyer did not include the name of Marcus Whitman as being one of the missionaries, although in that day work with the American Indians was usually classified as foreign missions.
Marcus Whitman returned to Rushville in 1820, when he was eighteen years old, with the hope that his family would approve his plans to study for the ministry. To his great disappointment, they did not. His niece, Mary Alice Wisewell, commented: “His heart was set on studying for the ministry, but he was opposed by his brothers who thought his limited means would compel him to be a charity scholar, and persuaded him against his will to take up the study of medicine. My mother says many a time she has seen the big tears on his face as he thought of his disappointment in his course of life.”

Both the Congregational and the Presbyterian denominations, with which Whitman had contacts, frowned upon an uneducated ministry. Both churches required a full four-year college course followed by three years in a theological seminary. A few exceptions to this general rule were occasionally made and some scholarship aid was available. Seven years in college and seminary were expensive and it is evident that the Whitman family could offer little or no financial assistance to Marcus in the fulfillment of his cherished dream.

In addition to the financial problem, another influence was his mother’s unsympathetic attitude. In Whitman’s first letter to the American Board, he wrote: “My Mother is living and professes a hope but is
not attracted to any church.” Beza and Alice Whitman were not among the charter members of the Congregational Church of Rushville when it was organized in 1802, even though they were then living in Rushville, nor did they join later.³ On the other hand, Captain Henry Green, Mrs. Whitman’s brother, was one of the organizers and later became a deacon. Other Whitman relatives also were members. Many years later, Marcus was to write from the Missouri frontier to his mother, on May 27, 1843: “I feel most desirous to know that my Dear Mother has determined to live the rest of her days witnessing a good profession of godliness. What keeps you from this? Is it that you are not a sinner, or if not that, is it that there is no Saviour of sinners, or is it that you have not too long refused & neglected to love & obey him. Has not his forbearance & his mercy been very long expended towards you?”

In spite of his deep disappointment, Marcus was obedient to the wishes of his family. For the next three years, until he attained his majority in 1823, he lived in his mother’s home and rendered such assistance as he could in his stepfather’s business, the tannery and shoeshop.

When Marcus returned to his home, he learned that the village Congregational Church had in 1814 united with the Presbytery of Geneva and that it was then being served by the Rev. Joseph Merrill, a Presbyterian. In order to meet the spiritual needs of the expanding frontier, the Congregational Association of Connecticut and the Presbyterian General Assembly had adopted a Plan of Union in 1801. According to this agreement, members and ministers of both denominations cooperated in small communities. Both ministers and congregations moved rather freely back and forth in their regional denominational affiliations. Such congregations were often called “half-and-half” or “Presbygational” churches. Although the Rushville church retained its membership in the Presbytery of Geneva until 1855 and often had Presbyterian pastors, it retained its local Congregational polity. The church still continues its Congregational affiliations and hence will be referred to as such in this book. The Plan of Union accounts in part for the cooperation of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches in the American Board.

The Rushville congregation erected a new brick “meeting house” in 1818. This building served the community until it was burned on the night of January 31, 1971, as the result of an incendiary fire. A new, and somewhat smaller sanctuary, in the same architectural style,
has been erected on the same site. Unfortunately, the minutes of the church for its early years have been lost, but in a record book kept by Samuel Whitman, a brother of Marcus, we find the following: “Nov. 1870. Fifty years this Month Since I Profest to love God and to love his People. Brother Marcus Whitman Profest to love God the same time. S. Whitman.” This confirms Whitman’s statement in his first letter to the American Board: “I did not unite with the Church until I returned to Rushville, (my native place.).”

Merrill was followed in the pastorate of the Rushville church by the Rev. David Page in May 1821. Both of these men were graduates of Dartmouth College. According to one report, Marcus continued his Latin studies under Page. The history of the Rushville church, written for its centennial in 1902, states that upon his return to his home, Marcus “immediately interested himself in the welfare of the church by conducting sunrise prayer meetings with two other young men.” The church’s extant Sunday school records list Marcus as a teacher in 1822 and again in 1823. He taught a class of boys whose ages ranged from eight to sixteen.

The Rushville church was not without missionary enthusiasm although at that time the foreign missionary movement had touched but few American churches. On October 23, 1819, the brig Thaddeus sailed from New York with a party of seven missionaries and their wives, all appointees of the American Board, to begin missionary work in the Hawaiian Islands, then known as the Sandwich Islands. The party reached Hawaii, the largest of the Islands, on March 20, 1820, and Honolulu on April 19. Among those pioneer missionaries was Elisha Loomis, 1799–1836, of Rushville. Loomis was a printer and took with him a printing press valued at $450.00. He was helpful in reducing the native language to writing and in printing the Gospel of Matthew in that tongue. Because of his wife’s ill health, he returned to Rushville in 1827.

Loomis had left Rushville before Whitman returned to his home in 1820, yet it is possible that the two knew each other as young boys. Certainly, they were friendly after Loomis returned from the Islands, because when Whitman sent in a list of references to the American Board in the summer of 1834, he included the name of Elisha Loomis, “former Missionary Printer to the Sandwich Islands” [Letter 4]. In 1838 the Hawaiian Mission sent a small printing press to the Oregon
Mission, and it is possible that this was one of the presses which Loomis had used during his residence in the Islands.

In tracing out the reasons for Whitman’s interest in foreign mission, we should not overlook the possible influence of Elisha Loomis. There is evidence that Whitman was in Rushville at times during 1827, the year that Loomis returned from the Islands. Possibly the two met again then and that Whitman spent hours listening to the wonderful tales that Loomis could have told of the far-away islands set in the warm Pacific where the natives had accepted Christianity with great eagerness. If such a surmise be true, then this would have awakened in Whitman the old longing to be a minister and perhaps go as a missionary to the “benighted heathens” in some distant land.

Riding with Dr. Bryant

Marcus Whitman celebrated his twenty-first birthday on September 4, 1823. He was then free to follow his own inclinations. Frustrated in his plan to enter the ministry, Marcus turned his attention to the medical profession as a promising field for altruistic service. In that generation, training to be a doctor did not demand the extensive educational background which is now required. A medical course was short and comparatively inexpensive. All that was needed as basic preparation was a fair literary education and this Whitman had. Indeed, he was much better prepared than the average medical student as he had studied both Latin and Greek. In those days when a young man aspired to be a doctor, he usually began his studies under some local physician, who would take the student with him when visiting his patients. In a colloquialism of the time, this was referred to as “riding with the Doctor.” From the meager evidence available, it appears that Marcus Whitman began riding with Dr. Ira Bryant, Rushville’s doctor, sometime in the fall of 1823.

Dr. Ira Bryant, 1786–1840, reported to have been a distant cousin of William Cullen Bryant, had settled in Rushville sometime prior to 1818 and practiced his profession there until his death. In his letter of application to the American Board, Whitman wrote: “In my profession I studied and practiced regularly with a good physician” [Letter 3]. Whitman did not indicate how long he had ridden with Dr. Bryant. Since he entered a medical school in the fall of 1825 and received a
license to practice medicine the next spring, the assumption is that he must have had at least two years experience with Dr. Bryant.

One of Whitman’s boyhood playmates, later a schoolmate, was Jonathan Pratt, Jr., 1801–1880. In the summer of 1936, while searching for material bearing on the life of Marcus Whitman, I called on Carleton Pratt, the son of Jonathan, at his home in Hopewell near Rushville. With me was Robert Moody of Rushville. In his old age, Canton Pratt was sick and infirm. Shortly before we called, he had sold an antique desk which had once been used by his father. The contents of the drawers had been dumped on the floor when the desk was taken away, and this debris was still there at the time of our visit.

Looking through the papers, we found two letters written by Marcus to Jonathan in 1827 and 1828. These are the oldest Whitman letters known. Jonathan’s diary was also discovered covering the period, with irregular entries, from January 1, 1824, to May 2, 1828. The name of Marcus Whitman does not appear, but twice the initial letters “M.W.” are given which seem to refer to him. Since both Marcus and Jonathan were riding with Dr. Bryant at the same time during parts of 1824 and 1825, the experiences which Jonathan records throw light upon some obscure years in the life of Marcus. The old Pratt home burned on November 19, 1936, and Canton Pratt lost his life in the fire. The Whitman source material there discovered was rescued none too soon.4

From the documents found in the Pratt home, we learn that Augustus Whitman on November 10, 1823, had signed a letter recommending Jonathan to be a school-teacher. It appears that Jonathan alternated between teaching school and riding with Dr. Bryant. There is evidence that Marcus Whitman did the same. In 1845 Newton Gilbert, 1818–1879, of Rushville migrated to Oregon and called on the Whitmans at their mission station at Waiilatpu. Writing shortly after that visit, Whitman referred to Gilbert as being “formerly my day & Sabbath School Schollar” [Letter 178].

On July 17, 1936, Mrs. Isaac Lee Patterson of Portland, Oregon, wrote to me saying: “When I was a young girl, my grandmother, Lavina Lindsley, born in Middlesex, New York, told me several times that she had been to school to Marcus Whitman.”5 There is also evidence that Marcus, in addition to teaching school for a time, assisted his brother Henry in the operation of a sawmill.6 Here he learned a skill which was
of great value to him after he had arrived in Old Oregon.

On April 4, 1824, Jonathan Pratt noted in his diary: “Saturday finished Anatomy & was pleased to get through for I found a great part of it verry [sic] dry study, but think of the different parts of which it is composed, viz. Muscles, Bloodvessels, Lymphatics and Nerves, that the Muscles is the most perplexing. When shall I get through my studies; two long years (if I live) before I can attend a course of medical lectures, one course of which being three months will complete my studies.” Here Jonathan clearly states that a medical student was expected to study two years under a local physician and then take a three months’ course in a medical school before receiving his license. This was the program followed by Marcus Whitman.

**Whitman’s First Term at the Medical College**

Having completed his two-year period of riding with Dr. Bryant, Whitman was ready for the medical college. He enrolled in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Western District of New York at Fairfield, Herkimer County, New York, on or before October 3, 1825, when he was about a month past his twenty-third birthday. At that time this school was one of the best medical colleges in the nation, having some distinguished teachers on its faculty, including Doctors Westel Willoughby, Joseph White, T. Romeyn Beck, James Hadley, and James McNaughton. According to the custom of the school, the students paid their tuition by buying tickets of admission to the lectures of the individual professors. Among the extant documents regarding Whitman’s medical training is the ticket given by Dr. Willoughby to Marcus Whitman October 3, 1825, upon the payment of ten dollars as tuition for “Lectures on Midwifery.”

The Fairfield College of Physicians and Surgeons grew out of an academy which had been established at Fairfield in 1802. The Medical College was chartered in 1812 and continued until 1839; during this time 555 students were graduated. The academy continued alongside the medical department. In 1839 the academy was reorganized as Fairfield Seminary and conducted on a coeducational basis until 1891 when it became a military academy for eleven years. Of the five buildings which once stood on the campus, only the chapel remains and it is now deserted and in a dilapidated condition.
Dr. Willoughby, one of the founders of the Medical College, served as its head for nearly thirty years. Under his leadership the school reached a peak enrolment of 217 in 1833–34.11 In the sixteen-week session of 1825–26, when Whitman was a student, 130 were enrolled. The Fairfield Medical College was a most logical choice for Whitman as it was nearer to his home than any other institution of this kind. Moreover, the costs were reasonable. The catalog for 1825–26 advertised: “The whole expense for Tickets, Board, Wood, during a course, not to exceed 100 dollars.” The cost of the tuition tickets for the courses offered that term amounted to $54.00. Although textbooks were available to students on a rental basis, the catalog recommended that the students “furnish themselves with some of the most approved works on each branch of instruction, as a sufficient number of copies may not be at hand to supply a large class.”12

Among the graduates and faculty members of the Medical College were several who won fame. Asa Gray, 1810–1888, received his M.D. from Fairfield in 1831 and afterwards lectured there on botany. Possibly Whitman, when he returned for a second term in the fall of 1831, had an opportunity to become acquainted with Gray. Daniel Brainard, once a student at Fairfield, founded Rush Medical College in Chicago with a faculty consisting almost entirely of Fairfield men in 1837. One of these professors was Dr. W. S. Davis, who organized the American Medical Association in 1847. Many of the former students of Fairfield served as doctors in the Civil War and many went West to become doctors in frontier communities.

The late Dr. F. C. Waite, for many years a member of the Medical Faculty of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, and a recognized medical historian, summarized the importance of the Fairfield Medical College in a letter to me dated in July 1935: “I say advisedly and with much familiarity with all the medical schools of that period that no other school in the United States could have trained Whitman for the work he was to do as a frontier physician as could Fairfield, for that was the purpose of the school, namely, to train men for frontier work.”13

The popular prejudice against the use of human bodies for dissection by medical students was still strong in the days of Whitman’s preparation. Sometimes the students would resort to robbing graves for newly buried bodies. This practice was referred to as “resurrection.” The
public naturally resented such indignities and oftentimes the medical schools as well as individual students became involved in trouble over the practice. The Trustees of the Fairfield College in 1819 took the following action against any student who should be guilty “of digging up or in removing from any cemetery or burying ground any dead human body to be used as an anatomical subject in said College, he shall forthwith be dismissed from the College.”

The New York State Legislature, by act of March 30, 1820, gave to Fairfield College the bodies of convicts dying in the Auburn State Prison which were not claimed by relatives or friends. Dissection of a human body was, therefore, dependent upon the success of the faculty in securing an occasional cadaver. Even so, Fairfield College was the only medical school in New York State at that time where cadavers could legally be studied. Anatomy was largely taught by lectures, accompanied by charts or demonstrations on a skeleton. One of the buildings on the campus was called the laboratory, but in spite of the name, the students had virtually no laboratory facilities as we now know them.

Since the College was located in a village which had fewer than two thousand inhabitants, there was no hospital or clinic nearby in which the students could gain practical experience. Usually not more than one of the faculty members lived in Fairfield. The others came from a distance, often from New York City, to give a series of lectures extending over several days before returning to their homes. In all probability, William H. Gray, who later was associated with Marcus Whitman in the Oregon Mission, was a fifteen-year-old youth living in Fairfield when Whitman was a student at the Medical College in 1825–26. No evidence, however, has been found that the two ever met at that time.

The Next Five Years, 1826–1831

Students who completed a sixteen-week session at Fairfield Medical College were qualified to be licensed to practice medicine. New York State had no licensing medical board before 1841, so the only license a doctor could have in Whitman’s day was that issued by that county medical society which would receive him. Whitman finished his term at Fairfield on January 23, 1826, and on the following May 9th was licensed to practice medicine within the State of New York by the Herkimer County Medical Society. Since the Medical College at Fairfield
was located in Herkimer County and since Dr. Willoughby, one of Whitman’s professors, was then president of the Society, it was logical that Whitman should have applied to that body for licensure.

By courtesy such a license as that granted to Whitman was usually accepted anywhere in the United States or Canada. Although licensed physicians did not have the Doctor of Medicine degree, they were usually called “Doctor.”

The M.D. degree could then have been earned by taking a second sixteen-week course at some recognized medical school. It has been estimated that not more than one-half of the medical students of that period ever returned to a school to complete the requirements for the degree. Some practical difficulties discouraged a student from going back to the same institution from which he had been graduated. To do so meant that he would be listening to the same lectures that he had once heard, unless there had been changes in the faculty. Those who coveted the M.D. degree often attended a different school or waited several years until some changes had been made in the faculty or the curriculum of the school where they had first studied. There were no graduate courses in American medical schools until after the Civil War.

The next authenticated dates in Whitman’s life are found in the correspondence that he had with Jonathan Pratt who, after winning his licensure, opened an office at Sugargrove, Warren County, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1826. In the following August, Pratt complained in his diary about his ill health. Sometime during the latter part of that month or during the first part of September, Pratt wrote to Whitman begging him to take over his practice at Sugargrove for a short time. In Whitman’s reply, dated September 11, 1827 (the oldest Whitman letter extant), he indicated that he was still looking for a place to settle where he could practice medicine. Just what he had been doing during the sixteen months after completing his work at Fairfield is not known. Whitman wrote: “Friend Jonathan: I received your letter yesterday; it probably lay in the office several days, I being absent to the east. I have been making preparation for going into practice: had calculated to go westward but not as soon as you require, but as your health is so ill & you wish me to come and assist you, I will endeavor to get ready the latter part of this or by Monday of next week. I wish you to stay till I come. I have a horse and probably shall ride…”
The authors of a history of Warren County included a chapter dealing with the early doctors who practiced at Sugargrove and mentioned Dr. Jonathan Pratt. They stated that he was followed by “another bachelor physician, Dr. Marcus Whitman.” Pratt in his diary tells of his return to Sugargrove on December 13 of that year. Hence it may be assumed that Whitman practiced medicine in Sugargrove for about two months when he was substituting for his friend who needed a vacation.

The reference to Whitman being a bachelor raises the interesting question: Why was he not married by 1827 when he was twenty-five years old? He and Narcissa Prentiss were not married until February 1836 when he was in his thirty-fourth year. Why the long delay in getting married?

According to a surprising family tradition among the descendants of Thomas Saunders, a pioneer resident of Rushville, Whitman was married sometime in the 1820s to Miss Persia Saunders. Such a report is erroneous as Persia’s tombstone in the French Cemetery at Rushville gives her maiden name and the dates: Born, July 12, 1807, and died, March 28, 1830. It is possible that Marcus and Persia were engaged and that her ill health delayed a marriage. With the passing of many years, the memory of an engagement might have become the tradition of a marriage. The possible romance ending by the death of the young lady may have been the reason Whitman did not marry during his twenties.

**Whitman in Canada**

Following Whitman’s return from Sugargrove, he visited Upper Canada in search of a promising community. He called on a former classmate, Dr. James Hunter, who was practicing in the Niagara Peninsula. In Whitman’s second letter to Pratt, also written from Rushville, dated February 5, 1828, he reported: “I had a good journey with some exceptions but found it necessary to stay longer than I expected in Canada. I found my friend well and ready to assist me as far as I could wish. I intend going to Canada but as to what particular place I shall occupy, I do not know, or whether I shall take license this spring or go into copartnership with Hunter. I intend to return to Canada in a few days. As to the prospects in Canada, I cannot say precisely but I think they are better than at Sugargrove.”

After due investigation, Whitman selected a village called St. Anne
in Gainsboro township, located about twenty-five miles west of Niagara Falls. The 1829 census of Upper Canada shows that the County of Lincoln, in which Gainsboro and the present County of Welland were located, then had a population of less than twenty thousand. Whitman was licensed by the Upper Canada Medical Board in July 1829. He was listed as being from “Niagara District.” It is evident that Whitman had been practising his profession in Canada for more than a year before he received this official permission.

**Whitman Returns to the Medical College**

During the spring and summer of 1830, Whitman passed through a period of uncertainty, as he debated whether he should give up medicine and study for the ministry. Ten years earlier, when he returned to Rushville from Plainfield, he had dreamed of becoming a minister. Circumstances, probably largely financial, had directed him into medicine. Now, when he was twenty-eight years old, he seriously considered changing his profession. What was the reason for this discontent? Perhaps he had been engaged to Persia Saunders so that her death on March 28 of that year was a contributing factor to this yearning to follow through with his youthful dream.

This we know: Whitman was back in Rushville in the fall of 1830, for he reunited with the Congregational Church there on November 6 by letter from “the Presbyterian Church in Gainsboro, Upper Canada.” Thus Whitman’s residence in Canada did not extend to much more than two years if indeed it was that long. Whitman’s pastor at Rushville when he rejoined was the Rev. Joseph Brackett, 1781–1832, under whose direction he began his theological studies. In his letter to the American Board dated June 27, 1834, Whitman summarized what had happened: “In the fall of 1830 I gave up the practice of my profession and entered upon a course of study preparatory to the ministry.”

Little is known of Whitman’s activities for the year following his return to Rushville. We learn that he studied theology for a time and that he suffered from ill health. Of this he wrote in his letter to the Board of June 27: “I had not continued long [in the studies] when for want of active exercise I found my health become impaired by a pain in the left side which I attributed to an inflammation of the spleen. I immediately resorted to remedies with apparently full relief, resumed study so soon
that it caused a return of the pain & again I used remedies with partial relief. Then I used exercise & continued it for a number of months when I found I was not able to study & returned to the practice of my profession."

The question arises: If his health prevented his continuing his theological studies, how was he able to return to his medical practice? It may be that Whitman had come to realize that it was not wise for him at his age to change his profession and spend years in study to meet the educational requirements for the ministry of either the Congregational or the Presbyterian Churches. So he decided to return to the Medical College at Fairfield for another sixteen weeks' course and thus earn his M.D. degree.

When Whitman reenrolled at the College in the fall of 1831, he found that the institution then ranked third in size among the medical schools of the country with 205 students in attendance. During his five-year absence, one of his former professors, Dr. White, had retired and had been succeeded by Dr. John Delamater, an eminent physician and a successful teacher. On the whole Whitman was highly favored in being able to study under some of the best medical professors of that generation.

Whitman returned to Fairfield with a new zest for learning that often comes after one has been away from an academic schedule for several years. Now he had definitely and finally dismissed the idea of being a minister. With more maturity and several years of practical experience, he was receptive for further instruction.

The records of the Board of Trustees of the Medical College give the thesis subjects of each of the thirty-nine graduates of the class of January 1832. Whitman wrote on "Caloric." The term was then used to denote "some subtle influence that causes the heat of the body." Strange as it may seem to us today, the doctors of that generation failed to appreciate the importance of fever in the diagnosis of disease. Since we do not have a copy of Whitman's thesis, we are unable to learn just how far he was probing into this important subject. The very choice of such a topic for investigation indicates that he felt that there was some connection between fever, or "caloric," and disease.

The minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Medical College for January 24, 1832, contain the following: "After the reading of the
Theses by the candidates for graduation, and it being certified by the Registrar that they had individually complied with the requirements of the Laws of this state and the ordinances of the college, it was resolved that they be recommended to the Regents of the [State] University for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine."

Thereafter Marcus Whitman could rightfully, and not merely by courtesy, be called Doctor Whitman. He was a well-trained physician, and much better qualified than the average doctor of his day. His academic work had been preceded by a two-year apprenticeship, riding with a country doctor. He had studied under eminent professors. He had spent several years practicing medicine in frontier communities, having been licensed in both New York State and in Canada. Finally he had earned the M.D. degree which was granted by the University of the State of New York. Thus at the age of twenty-nine, Dr. Marcus Whitman found himself equipped for his life’s work, but the stage on which he was to play a major role was not then ready for his entrance.
Chapter 3 footnotes

1 Wisewell letter, Coll. W.

2 Centennial Celebration, 1902, Rushville Congregational Church.

3 Original record book now owned by Mrs. W. Merle Wheaton of Cohocton, N.Y.

4 See Appendix 1 for location of Whitman letters 1 & 2. The Pratt diary is in Coll. Wn.

5 This Levina Lindsley, a married woman, is not to be confused with the Levina Linsley of Prattsburg to whom H. H. Spalding is reported to have been engaged. See Drury, Spalding, p. 39. The reported dates of birth, 1810 and 1799, also indicate two different women.

6 Eells, Marcus Whitman, p. 23.

7 Mowry, Marcus Whitman, p. 62, erroneously states that Whitman attended the Berkshire Medical Institution at Pittsfield, Mass.

8 Drury, Whitman, gives pictures of six of Whitman’s professors at Fairfield and copies of pages from the catalog of the Medical College. Most of the information concerning Whitman’s medical education used in this chapter was furnished by the late Dr. F. C. Waite.

9 Original ticket in Coll. B. See picture in Drury, Whitman, p. 44.


12 A copy of the catalog is in the New York State Library, Albany. Photostat copy in Coll. Wn.

13 Dr. Waite in a letter to me dated July 1935. The file of my correspondence with him, together with other papers, has been deposited in the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane.

14 Information supplied by Dr. Waite.

15 Original certificate owned by Mrs. Dudley Voorhees, Middlesex, N.Y. See Drury, Whitman, p. 53.

16 J. S. Shenck and W. S. Rann, History of Warren County, Syracuse, 1887, p. 435.

17 Persia was pronounced Per-sigh-a, with the accent on the second syllable. This tradition was called to my attention by A. L. Saunders of Canton, Ill. The tombstone dates were supplied by Robert Moody of Rushville.

18 Canada was divided into Lower Canada and Upper Canada by the Ottawa River. The Province of Ontario is in Upper Canada.

19 Hunter was registered in the 1825–26 term at Fairfield as being from Niagara, Upper Canada.


22 See Waite’s article on Dr. Delamater, Bulletin of the Cleveland Academy of Medicine, May 1930.

23 Dr. Waite discovered the original records in 1935 in the New York State Library, Albany.

24 See picture of page with name of Whitman’s thesis in Drury, Whitman, p. 53.
On a large granite boulder at a crossroads in the village of Wheeler, New York, is a memorial plaque which states that the medical office of Dr. Marcus Whitman once stood at that place. The two-story building was constructed out of heavy hand-hewn timbers covered on the outside with boards. According to a local tradition, Whitman used the building as both his home and office. Just why Whitman selected Wheeler as the place where he would practice medicine after receiving his M.D. degree is not known. According to a census taken in 1835, Wheeler township had about 1,600 people scattered over more than forty-six square miles. Possibly the town had no doctor before he arrived. The fact that Wheeler was within forty miles of Rushville might also have been an attraction.

About two miles south of Wheeler is another marker along the roadside which states that Henry H. Spalding was born near that place on November 26, 1803. How strange that these two, who were to be so closely associated for eleven years in the Oregon Mission of the American Board, should each have had contacts with the little village of Wheeler. In 1832, when Whitman settled in Wheeler, Spalding was a senior in Western Reserve College at Hudson, Ohio.
Whitman's practice was largely in the country. The only practical way for him to visit his patients was on horseback. In such communities in those days, a doctor might ride ten or fifteen miles to see a patient and then find upon his return home a call to go a similar distance in another direction. If a doctor could keep up his practice by owning but one horse, it was evident that his calls were not numerous and consequently he could not be a popular or competent doctor. Such a man was called a “one-horse doctor” and the term came to be used to imply mediocrity.

Whitman's methods, medicines, and instruments, like those of other doctors of his generation, were as primitive as the community in which he lived. He had no fever thermometer, for doctors then did not appreciate its importance, as has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. Since very few stethoscopes were then in use, it is doubtful if Whitman had one. A set of amputating knives cost about fifty dollars. Whitman probably secured a set together with some surgical saws early in his professional career. The doctor in that day was also the dentist and with the aid of a turnkey would extract teeth, sometimes leaving a splinter of a tooth in the jaw. The cost of such a service was usually ten cents for each tooth.

It may be that Dr. Whitman did not have any obstetrical forceps, because his professor of obstetrics, Dr. Westel Willoughby, was much opposed to their use. The germ theory of disease was unknown and, of course, the wonderful antibiotics so common today were then in the future. Such a precaution as boiling instruments to sterilize them before use was not common practice. The properties of a weak solution of lye or of iodine as disinfectants were somewhat appreciated, although the real reason for their effectiveness was unknown. Usually doctors would merely wipe their instruments clean after use and put them away. Suppuration was commonly thought to be essential to healing and much was said about “laudable pus” until as late as 1870.

Because of a common belief that disease was caused by an excess of blood, the doctors of that generation often bled their patients. This was a remedy which had been practiced for centuries even on patients who had suffered an accident. Rarely, however, do we read of Whitman following this custom. Anesthesia with its merciful power to produce unconsciousness was then unknown. In amputation cases, the patient might be made drunk; be stupefied with heavy doses of opium; or be held by
strong men and bonds while the doctor worked as fast as he could. Some surgeons boasted that they could amputate an arm in three minutes and a leg in five. Sometimes an ordinary carpenter’s fine-toothed saw was used if the operating surgeon lacked a surgical saw.

The doctor of that generation had to be his own apothecary as only the largest towns had drug stores. Very few medicines were given in liquid form. The doctor would buy his drugs in bulk in crude form and then pulverize them with a hand mortar. He had to know how to manufacture his own pills. Inventories of drugs used in Whitman’s day show that a good doctor would have about fifty different kinds. Great reliance was placed on calomel, a compound of mercury and chlorine, which was an effective purgative. When Whitman rode his district, he must have carried with him a variety of the most used drugs in his saddlebags. Thus he was able to supply the medicine needed at the time he called on his patients.

False teeth were only for the wealthy, and even so, were ill-fitting and uncomfortable. Spectacles were available for those who needed them, but these were fitted by the trial and error method, usually with no consideration of the fact that one eye might be out of adjustment with the other. Thus a pair of spectacles often did more harm than good. Sometimes the same pair would be used by several members of the family.

Considering the medical conditions of Whitman’s generation, we need not wonder that a medical student could be licensed after riding for a couple of years with some doctor and then attending a medical college for sixteen weeks. By that time he had learned about all that could be taught. The fact that Whitman returned to the medical college for a second term means that he was better prepared than the average doctor of his day.

The business side of a doctor’s practice is of interest. He usually received a fee of twenty-five cents for a call in his office, including any medicine prescribed. The fee was doubled if the doctor had to make a house call within a five-mile radius. Beyond that distance, there was an extra charge of six and one-fourth cents for each mile. An obstetrical case would cost from two to five dollars. The usual fee for amputating a leg was ten dollars.

In spite of the limitations and handicaps under which Whitman worked, as compared with modern-day conditions, we know that he
was favored, as every successful physician should be, with a personality which inspired confidence. The people of Wheeler and vicinity grew to love him. After he had practiced medicine in the community for three years, word was spread abroad that he was planning to go to Oregon as a medical missionary. In Parker’s letter of January 1, 1835, to the American Board, we may read: “I am afraid that the people in Wheeler and the vicinity on account of their [being] unwilling to spare one whom they so highly esteem as a physician and Christian will dissuade him from offering himself.” In 1869, some thirty-five years after Whitman’s appointment, an elder of the Wheeler church wrote to the New School Presbyterian Board of Home Missions protesting the fact that so important a person in the local church and community had been sent as a missionary to Oregon. “Dr. Whitman was an elder in our church,” the unnamed correspondent wrote, “and a very good and useful member, practiced medicine all over the town. Everybody liked him and he had great influence over the inhabitants.”

**THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC**

Little did Marcus Whitman suspect, as he rode the byways of Steuben County during 1832, 1833, and 1834, that he was preparing himself for a special emergency which was to arise when he and Samuel Parker were on the western Missouri frontier in 1835. The emergency dated back to the introduction of the dreaded Asiatic cholera into the United States in 1832.

During World War I, Spanish influenza spread from city to city, from nation to nation, and across oceans with terrifying rapidity, leaving in its wake millions of newly made graves. A century earlier, or, to be exact, in 1817, a similar epidemic, Asiatic cholera, originating in Bengal, India, began its deadly march around the world. Transportation was slower then, but the march once begun never stopped even though at times it was delayed. It swept across Russia and Poland and reached Berlin by the summer of 1831. There the epidemic claimed seven thousand lives. By November of that year it had reached Scotland. In February 1832, the dread disease appeared in London and by March was in Liverpool. In June the cholera crossed the Atlantic in a boat from Belfast bound for Quebec and within a week, cholera was found in Montreal. From there it spread southward through the waterways down to New
York, and across the state along the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes. Cases were reported in Detroit on July 5, and soldiers going to the Black Hawk War carried the disease to Chicago. Continuing its relentless march, the epidemic moved southward along the Mississippi River and by mid-September was in New Orleans.

The terror of the people was nearly as dreadful as the disease itself. They had reason to be afraid, for the epidemic struck with fearful rapidity. Oftentimes people left their homes in the morning, apparently in the best of health, only to be dead before sundown. From the records of reliable contemporary physicians, we learn that not more than one-third of the cases recovered in 1832. In following years, as the doctors learned more about the disease, they were able to save more of their patients.

Among Dr. Whitman’s contemporaries was the Rev. Joel Wakeman, 1809–1889, whose personal reminiscences of both Marcus and Narcissa appeared in a Prattsburgh, New York newspaper in 1893 and again in 1898. One of his unpublished manuscripts, written sometime after 1890 in his old age, is entitled “The Fearful Scourge of 1832.” In this he wrote: “No summer in the history of the American people has ever equaled 1832 for excitement and general prostration of all enterprise. Every newspaper was freighted with the number of the dead and dying in the city—every breeze that swept by our doors, brought rumors (and often greatly exaggerated rumors) of the rapid increase of the scourge in the villages and inland towns... The plague was bad; so exceedingly bad that the present generation can form no adequate conception of its fearful ravages. Merchants were afraid to travel to the cities to buy goods. Because of the lack of knowledge about disease germs, all kinds of foolish superstitions swept the country. Some thought that food was responsible for the disease and for a time melons, cucumbers, green corn, and other vegetables were rejected, and even in some place their sale was forbidden by law.”

People fled in fear from the infected areas. It was noticed that many of the towns inland from the routes of travel escaped the contagion and to these many of the refugees went. Some towns of five thousand or more located in the midst of the contagion lost half of their population in a single day because of the precipitous flight of their residents.
METHODS OF TREATMENT

The helplessness of the physicians was almost as great as the terror of the people. Marcus Whitman, who had received his M.D. degree in January of that year, had been given no instruction whatsoever upon the subject of cholera in the Medical College. Ordinary remedies had no effect. Many physicians resorted to that old, old panacea of bloodletting, but this only left the unfortunate patient less able to combat the disease.

A few doctors began to make some astute observations. They noticed that deaths were prevalent among the lower strata of society, especially among those who lived along rivers and canals. These people were careless about their toilet facilities. Frequently they took their drinking water from these waterways which had been polluted but, not knowing anything about germs, this did not concern them. It was also observed that those addicted to intoxicating liquors were most prone to contract the disease. This, we now know, was due to the fact that the saloons were usually along the water fronts and the customers were provided with drinking water dipped up from the most convenient river or canal.

Slowly the doctors came to some basic convictions. They advised cleanliness, isolation for the sick, and the use of copperas and chloride of lime in drains, cesspools, and outbuildings. Members of the famed medical society of the University of Edinburgh studied the problem and issued a pamphlet with their recommendations for the prevention and treatment of the disease. This pamphlet was brought to the United States and its contents reprinted in some of the country’s newspapers. It was not then unusual to see a doctor using a country newspaper as the latest authority on how to treat Asiatic cholera.

Wheeler was sufficiently distant from the Erie Canal to avoid the major impact of the epidemic and yet it was near enough to bring fear to the hearts of the people. Dr. F. C. Waite, the medical historian, writing in January 1936, commented: “From what we know of Marcus Whitman, we cannot imagine that he did other than get all the information he could about the symptoms and treatment of cholera. He had an education both preliminary and professional much above the average. Moreover he was ambitious to learn. Otherwise he would not have returned to the medical college for further instruction after four years of practice.”

The cholera epidemic lasted for about three years. The fact that Whitman learned to recognize the symptoms and was acquainted with
the most approved methods to prevent its spread and to minister to the afflicted proved to be of inestimable value in the spring of 1835 when he and Parker were on their exploring tour to the Rockies with the caravan of the American Fur Company. This story belongs to a later chapter.

**Whitman Meets The Prentiss Family**

Living in nearby Prattsburg, when Dr. Whitman was in Wheeler, was the family of judge Stephen Prentiss. He and his wife were the parents of nine children, four boys and five girls. Their third child and eldest daughter was Narcissa, and their second daughter was Jane. Whitman’s professional and church interests often took him to Prattsburg where one day he attended a prayer meeting in the Prentiss home. Years later, in a letter addressed to Jane, May 17, 1842, Marcus refreshed her memory of their first meeting: “I was just telling Narcissa what an interest I had taken in yourself ever since I was introduced to you at your father’s house… at the close of a prayer meeting. That was my first introduction to the family. From that moment my heart has been towards the family. But you smile, I suppose, and say it was Narcissa; no, it was Jane; Narcissa was in Butler. I presume you will have no recollection of the introduction; if so, let it rest on my recollection, which is vivid.” Butler was in Wayne County, about seventy-five miles to the north where Narcissa may have been teaching school.

We have no evidence that Marcus and Narcissa met before the Prentiss family moved to nearby Amity in Allegany County in June 1834, yet in light of later events, it appears that they had become acquainted. Marcus was sufficiently well acquainted with the pastor of the Prattsburg church, the Rev. George Rudd, to request his endorsement upon the application he sent to the American Board in December 1834. This common interest in the Presbyterian Church and the proximity of Wheeler to Prattsburg would certainly have been favorable to the forming of a friendship between Marcus and Narcissa.

**Whitman Rejected by the American Board**

When we read the many references made by Whitman’s later associates to his great physical strength and endurance, we are surprised to learn that when he first applied for an appointment under the American Board, he was rejected because of ill health. Nearly a year before Whitman
heard Parker make his plea for missionaries to go with him to Old Oregon in the Wheeler Presbyterian Church, he had been considering offering his services to the American Board to go as a medical missionary to some tribe of American Indians. Evidently Whitman had never forgotten his youthful ambition to be a minister, and being a medical missionary to some Indian tribe appealed to him as a good substitute.

Sometime during April 1834, Whitman visited his mother in Rush-vile. While there he discussed with the Rev. Henry P. Strong, then pastor of the local Congregational Church, his idea of being a medical missionary to the Indians. Strong endorsed the proposal and, on April 25, took the initiative and wrote to the American Board, thus bringing to its attention for the first time the name of Dr. Marcus Whitman: “I write at this time to make known to you the request of Doct. Marcus Whitman. He is a young man of about 30 or 35 years of age, of solid, judicious mind, of, as I hope & believe, more than ordinary piety and perseverance, a regular bred Physician. He has practiced several years with good success & credit. He is, in my opinion, well qualified to act as a Missionary Physician: & altho I know not that he thinks of it, yet I think he might, if thought expedient, after a time be ordained to advantage. He has formerly been in poor health, but is now better, & thinks a station with some of our western Indians would be useful to him. He has thought of being a missionary for some time past, & I think him better qualified to do good in that capacity than most young men with whom I am acquainted. He would be glad to hear from you, as, should he go, he would have some worldly concerns to arrange.”

Since the secretaries of the Board were having difficulty finding qualified persons to go as missionaries to the American Indians, they were immediately interested. Secretary B. B. Wisner, then in charge of Indian missions under the Board, wrote to Strong on May 1: “Your account of him is so far satisfactory as to induce me to request you to suggest to him to address me a letter in which he shall give some account of himself, his parentage, education, religious history, views and feelings on the missionary subject &c, &c. We wish also to be informed whether he is married; and if he is, whether he has children, and if so, how many; if not married, whether he expects to be. We shall be glad to receive a communication.”
Upon receipt of this letter, Strong wrote to Whitman informing him of what the Board wished to know. In his first letter to the Board, dated June 3, 1834, Whitman gave a brief review of his life, mentioning such facts as his residence in Massachusetts, his studies under Moses Hallock, the Sunday school class he had attended which was taught by Deacon Pichards, and his joining the church at Rushville. He referred to the “constant religious instruction” he had received from his “pious” grandfather and uncle at Cummington. Theologically, Whitman was an orthodox Calvinist.

Regarding his views on the missionary cause, Whitman wrote: “I regard the Heathen as not having retained the knowledge of the true God and as perishing as described by St. Paul... I am willing to go to any field of usefulness at the direction of the A. Board. I will cooperate as Physician, Teacher or Agriculturalist so far as I may be able, if required. I am not married and I have no present arrangement upon that subject. Yet I think I should wish to take a wife, if the service of the Board would admit.”

Whitman’s letter was satisfactory in all respects save one—he made no reference to his health. On June 14, Wisner answered Whitman’s letter and mentioned the fact that Strong had reported that he had been in poor health. Wisner wrote: “Now good health and good constitution are very important prerequisites for missionary service; for if a man in this civilized and Christian society needs to take great care... what would be likely to be the case with him among savages & pagans & all the privations and perplexities of missionary service? Please write, as soon as practicable, and give us your history as to health.”

Wisner also asked: “What should you think of going to the Marquesas Islands [in the South Pacific]? We are now in need of a physician for that mission.” Wisner recommended that Whitman be married should he be appointed, “if you can get a good missionary wife.” On that same June 14, Wisner wrote to Strong and mentioned the fact that Whitman in his letter of application had made no reference to his health which was “a very important point.” Wisner asked about Whitman’s “talents and mental improvements.” He wanted to know if Whitman had “the ability to appear respectable among sensible and respectable people, and to make a general good impression, to acquire the respect of others, and to get and keep an influence over others?”
As has been stated in the previous chapter, Whitman answered Wisner’s inquiries about his health in his letter of June 27. He then explained how he had suffered from what he thought was “an inflammation of the spleen,” which led him to give up the practice of medicine for a time. After studying theology for several months and finding that his health had not improved, Whitman returned to his practice of medicine. In further explanation, he wrote: “I have not been for any length of time without a slight pain & for the last two or three weeks there has been an aggravation of pain & soreness so that I have used remedies & shall have to use more still…” Whitman stated that he felt able to work in a temperate climate but had “some fears of a hot climate.” Therefore, he was unwilling to accept an appointment for the Marquesian Islands. He closed his letter by saying: “I have some lands in possession which I should wish to sell & considerable business to settle if the Board should approve of me. It shall be done as soon as I am notified to that effect.”

Whitman’s letter was dated June 27 but postmarked at Wheeler on the 30th. It took five days for the letter to be carried from Wheeler to Boston. Wisner was puzzled as to what to say in reply and waited nearly two weeks before writing. In his letter to Whitman dated July 17, Wisner wrote: “I have hardly known what answer to return to it [i.e., Whitman’s letter of June 27]. Millions of heathen are perishing for lack of the knowledge of the Gospel… and you are willing and desirous to go… But your health is such that you think you cannot go to a warm climate & in such climates are the immense majority of heathen. Among no others have we any mission except among the Indians… & among these we have no demand for a physician at this time. Indeed it seems doubtful whether your health is such as to justify your going on a mission at all.” And there the matter rested.

On August 12, 1824, Strong wrote a belated reply to Wisner’s letter of inquiry of June 14. Part of the delay in writing, he explained was due to illness. Strong then gave the following recommendation for Whitman: “I find that his talents are above mediocrity, his mental improvement respectable, in his profession above ordinary Physicians; in appearance, among respectable people, rather forbidding at first, but makes a good impression & retains influence, will be a pleasant missionary companion, cooperates well with others. Upon the whole, his
acquaintance with the world is respectable & his friends think he will do well as a missionary.”

Strong’s recommendation came too late as the Board had already decided not to appoint Whitman for the time being. Some good, however, came out of the correspondence as all of the preliminary investigations regarding Whitman’s fitness to be appointed, provided his health improved, had been made. Thus, when Whitman’s name was again brought to the Board’s attention in the following December, quick action was possible.

**Whitman Commissioned by the American Board**

By 1834 the American Board was experiencing great difficulty in finding suitable missionaries who were willing to go to the American Indians. This problem is clearly outlined in a letter that Secretary David Greene wrote on September 10, 1834, to the Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury, then one of the Board’s missionaries to the Indians in what is now Oklahoma. After stating that “very few candidates for missionary service are willing to go among the Indians,” Greene wrote: “They had rather learn a language spoken by tens of millions & live among a dense and settled population, have daily access to thousands, & think that the fruits of their labors will be felt by large nations and through future generations, than to spend their lives in what they apprehend will be almost fruitless toil in reclaiming small tribes of sparsely settled migrators and nearly inaccessible men, who are wasting away and seemed devoted to extinction. Men of talent and energy, and of other missionary qualifications, are not disposed to engage in such a field...”

**Parker’s Appeal for Missionaries**

During 1834 events were taking place elsewhere which, before the end of the year, were to have a life-changing effect on Marcus Whitman. Samuel Parker, who left his two companions, John Dunbar and Samuel Allis, on the Missouri frontier to open a mission among the Pawnee Indians, returned to his home in Ithaca, New York, sometime during the first part of July. During the first week of August, Parker visited the headquarters of the American Board to report on his trip to St. Louis. The Prudential Committee was so favorably impressed with the outlook
that it approved his proposal to look for associates and make a second effort to go to the Rockies in 1835.

Parker was directed to act as an agent for the Board “in such parts of the State of New York, and in such manner as shall seem best by the Rev. Chauncey Eddy, Genl. Agent for the Board of that State;” to seek volunteers for a proposed mission in Oregon; and to raise money. “In looking for suitable persons to be missionaries or teachers,” wrote Wisner to Parker on August 7, “you will exercise great discretion, being well satisfied that they are qualified for the service, and so circumstanced that they may and ought to be engaged in it, before you bring the subject to them.”

When Parker spoke in the Wheeler Presbyterian Church on an evening late in November 1834 on the appeal of “the Wise Men from the West,” he unwittingly brought to a focus the unfulfilled dreams and aspirations of Marcus Whitman. Parker’s appeal for missionaries opened a door for Whitman. This was exactly what he had long wanted to do. The fact that Parker’s destination happened to be Old Oregon was incidental. Whitman was ready to accept any invitation which might have come from any western Indian tribe. We can only imagine the conversation which took place that November evening after Parker had spoken. Whitman’s eagerness to be accepted by the Board was matched by Parker’s desire to have someone go with him to the Rockies the next spring. Parker urged Whitman to make immediate application to the American Board for an appointment and suggested that he solicit testimonials from the pastors of the churches in Wheeler, Prattsburg, and Rushville to be sent with his letter.

Whitman Reapplies to the Board

Whitman lost not time in getting the needed testimonials. He turned first to his pastor, the Rev. J. H. Hotchkin, who on November 27 wrote: “I hereby certify that I have been intimately acquainted with him for about two years past... he is a member in good standing, and a Ruling Elder in said church, highly esteemed as a Christian of hopeful piety, and possessing in a good degree the spirit of active benevolence. In his medical profession, he has deservedly been held in estimation, and has a good share of practice.” Hotchkin heartily recommended his appointment. Three of the elders of the Wheeler church
added their signatures to the testimonial with the statement that they “most cordially” concurred in the opinions of their pastor.

Whitman then rode to Prattsburg where on Saturday, the 29th, he secured the endorsement of the Rev. George R. Rudd. Whitman then hastened on to Rushville where, on December 1, the Rev. H. P. Strong added his testimonial. Strong wrote: “I have simply to say as before, that the most judicious friends of Missions think him well qualified for the undertaking.” Having collected these endorsements, Whitman wrote to the Board on December 2 and asked to be appointed to go with Parker on his mission “beyond the Rocky Mountains.” “My health is so much restored,” he wrote, “that I think it will offer no impediment. I find no sensible inconvenience from my former difficulties and think I shall not [suffer] from the climate or labour of such a Mission.” This letter with the accompanying testimonials was received by the Board on December 9.

In the meantime Parker wrote to his family on December 5 saying that he had found Dr. Whitman, but for some reason he did not notify the Board until the 17th of that month. Writing then from Dansville, New York, he said: “Doct. Whitman… whom I saw a few weeks since made up his mind to offer himself… He has the name of being a good physician and a devoted Christian. I think there can be no doubt in this case.” After Parker’s return to Ithaca, he wrote a second time about Whitman’s offer on December 25: “His general reputation is regard to all the particulars required and into which I have made particular inquiry, I think places his case beyond any particular doubt. He wishes to accompany me in my expected tour.”

The Prudential Committee met in Boston on January 6, 1835, at which time Whitman’s application for an appointment was reconsidered. Since his health had evidently been improved, there was no longer any hesitancy to give him a commission to go with Parker that spring on an exploring tour to the Rockies. Writing to Whitman on January 7, Secretary Greene reported the action of the Prudential Committee and stated that Parker would be conferring with him “respecting the time of starting, the kind of outfit which will be required, and other topics connected with the undertaking.” As will be noted later, few persons were less qualified to give advice on such matters than Samuel Parker.

Greene in his letter to Whitman of January 7 gave the following wise advice: “On such a tour as this, as well as in your missionary labors...
among any of the wandering tribes of our continent, great patience, fortitude, & perseverance are necessary. You must be willing to encounter hardships, dangers, self-denials in almost every shape & discouragements without being moved by them from your purpose. Nothing but an unquenchable desire to do good to the souls of the Indians, originating and cherished by a supreme love to Christ and firm faith in the promises, can sustain you and carry you through."

Secretary Wisner, who had been in charge of the Board’s Indian Mission and the first to correspond with Whitman, died on February 9, 1835. He was succeeded by his assistant, the Rev. David Greene, who, throughout the history of the Oregon Mission was in charge of that field. No one can read his letters to the missionaries without being impressed with his good judgment and wise advice. Through his correspondence, Greene played a significant role in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board.

Although the Board made a grant of $450.00 a year to Parker for the support of his family during his absence while on his exploring tours, no allowances for a salary for either him or for Whitman were made. This was true of all missionaries who joined the Oregon Mission. They received necessary travel and living expenses, and that was all. After getting settled in their respective stations in the Old Oregon wilderness, they were expected to be self-supporting. Naturally the time and energy spent on farming and looking after their livestock meant that less could be done in learning the language and in civilizing and evangelizing the natives. More will be said later about this fundamental weakness in the Board’s policies.

**Whitman Leaves for the Rockies**

After receiving Greene’s letter of January 7 with the news of his appointment, Whitman went to Ithaca to see Parker and to make plans for their exploring tour. Upon his arrival at Parker’s home, he was disappointed to learn that no one else had been found to go with them. Whitman was also disappointed in discovering how indefinite Parker was as to the objectives of their prospective exploring tour.

After returning to his home in Wheeler, Whitman wrote to Greene on February 2 and asked for more instructions regarding the “intentions of the committee as to the extent and design of our commission.”
Whitman also told Greene that he planned to start on his long horseback ride to St. Louis on February 16, provided he had received a reply by that date. Whitman asked that Greene send his reply to him at Rushville which indicates that he was planning to spend some time there with his relatives before leaving for the West. He reassured Greene regarding his health by writing: “My health is generally good.”

Parker was planning to go by stage to Pittsburgh and then by river steamer to St. Louis, taking with him some of Whitman’s baggage. The two men planned to meet in St. Louis on or about April 1. They would then have plenty of time to assemble their outfit and be ready to leave with the caravan of the American Fur Company from the western frontier of Missouri in early May.

Two documents are extant from the days when Whitman was closing out his business affairs and getting ready to leave for the Rockies. Each is dated February 5, 1835. One is a receipt for eleven dollars signed by Whitman and given to the father of a boy whom he had treated for an attack of scarlet fever. The second is a church letter given Whitman by the Rev. James H. Hotchkin. This was the first letter of transfer of membership given to a church member who expected to join a Protestant church somewhere west of the Rocky Mountains. After reviewing the circumstances which had led Whitman to request such a certificate, Hotchkin stated: “He is hereby on his request [dismissed] from his particular relation to the church of Wheeler, and affectionately recommended to the christian regard of any of God’s people wherever he may travel and to the fellowship and communion of any particular church wherever God in his providence may cast his lot.”

Replying to Whitman’s request for more definite instructions, Greene on February 9 wrote to Whitman directing his letter, as requested, to Rushville. Greene wrote: “Respecting the object, extent & nature of your tour, you can learn from communications addressed to Mr. Parker last year or the present; especially from two long letters of instructions written to him last spring.” Parker had left the letters with Dunbar in the summer of 1834; hence Whitman had not been able to see them. Greene, however, summarized what had been written: “The object of the Com. is to learn as fully as possible the conditions & character of the remote & secluded tribes, that they may more effectually call upon the Christian church to furnish them the men & the
means in other respects for giving them the gospel.” Greene promised to forward Whitman’s official commission certifying his appointment as a missionary of the American Board to him at St. Louis.

Whitman received Greene’s letter on Thursday, February 19, which was several days later than Whitman had planned for his departure for St. Louis. After bidding his mother and other relatives farewell, he mounted his horse and started on the long ride westward. He spent the week-end at Amity, New York, where Narcissa Prentiss was then living with her parents. There Whitman was a guest in the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Oliver S. Powell. Powell was pastor of the Amity Presbyterian Church in which the Prentiss family were members. During that week-end Marcus Whitman and Narcissa Prentiss became engaged.

When Whitman resumed his travels on Monday, his cup of happiness was full and running over. Although his youthful dream of becoming a minister had not been realized, now he had found an acceptable substitute in his appointment as a medical missionary. Adventure, travel, Christian service, and the lure of the unknown, lay before him. He would return as soon as possible to claim his bride. No doubt he found it difficult to leave Narcissa so soon after becoming engaged, but a high sense of duty bade him go.

Greene’s letter of February 9, 1835, notifying Whitman of his appointment by the American Board was the cue which called for his entry into the great drama then taking place on a national scale involving the destiny of Old Oregon.
I After carefully checking the letters and diaries of the members of the Oregon Mission for references to bleeding, I was able to find only three instances where Whitman followed this practice.


3 The Presbyterian Church divided into two parts in 1837 known as the Old School and the New School. Each of these branches divided over the slavery issue. The two Southern branches united in 1861 to become what is now the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The two Northern branches joined in 1869 to become the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.


5 Wakeman ms., Coll. Wn.

6 Hulbert, *O.P.* V: 244 ff, gives the correspondence of the American Board with Strong and Whitman regarding the latter’s appointment. The italics in this quotation are the author’s.

7 In the commonly used ecclesiastical terminology of that day, non-Christians were referred to as “heathens” or “pagans.” Such terms did not then carry any derogatory meanings.

8 S. W. Pratt wrote: “About this time Whitman bought a farm of 150 acres on the Pultenay Estate, lying about midway between Wheeler and Prattsburg . . . on this he built a log house where he dwelt for a time.” Pratt ms., Coll. Wn.

9 Hulbert, *O.P.*, V: 266. The Rev. A. B. Smith, who went out to Old Oregon in 1838 as an appointee of the American Board, emphasized in his letters to the Board this same observation. See Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 109, and *passim*.

10 Eddy’s office was in Utica, New York.

11 The secretaries of the American Board were accustomed to note on letters received the date of arrival and also when answered.

12 Some of Greene’s letters to Whitman and other members of the Oregon Mission have been included in Hulbert, *O.P.*

13 Both documents in Coll. W.
EARLY LIFE OF NARCISSA PRENTISS
1808–1835

Narcissa Prentiss, who became Mrs. Marcus Whitman, is one of the best-known and most-loved characters in the history of the Pacific Northwest. This is due in part to the fact that we know so much about her. Most of the 126 letters and diaries which she wrote, originals or copies of which have been located, have been published.\(^1\) Since these writings were meant for her loved ones and not for the general public, they reveal for us her inner feelings, her hopes and fears, her joys and sorrows. Narcissa was a keen observer and has left us vivid accounts of her travels and her life at the Waiilatpu mission station in Old Oregon. Finally the fact that she suffered a martyr’s death along with her husband at the hands of a small band of Cayuse Indians on November 29, 1847, has given her an added claim to fame.

In addition to Narcissa’s writings, we have the reminiscences and writings of others who knew her. Fortunately for all interested in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board, the Board kept the correspondence received from its missionaries. These letters, estimated to contain about one million words, are now on deposit in Houghton Library, Harvard University. With but rare exceptions, all of the letters to the Board written from Oregon were by the male members of the Mission. As will be explained later, the wives of the Oregon missionaries
were not permitted to vote in their business meetings, hence it was not to be expected that they would be writing to the Board.

The reminiscences of those who knew Narcissa when she was a young woman at Prattsburg show her to have been vivacious, attractive, gregarious, idealistic, and sentimentally religious.

Narcissa’s Ancestry and Early Life

Narcissa was the eldest daughter and the third child of Stephen and Clarissa Prentiss, who settled in Prattsburg, Steuben County, New York, about 1805. Her descent can be traced to Henry Prentice, who migrated from England and settled at Cambridge, Massachusetts, prior to 1640. The line of descent from Henry through two Solomons and three Stephens is as follows:

Solomon (1646–1719)
Solomon (1673–1758)
Stephen (1719–)
Stephen (1744–1831)
Stephen (1777–1862)

Born at Grafton, Massachusetts, Stephen Prentiss, the father of Narcissa, apparently moved with his family while still a small boy to Walpole, New Hampshire. This Stephen was there when the first and second Federal censuses were taken in 1790 and 1800. In his early twenties, Stephen migrated to Onondaga County in western New York where he married Clarissa Ward on January 3, 1803. Evidence indicates that the second Stephen Prentiss changed the spelling of the family name from Prentice to Prentiss. It appears that the change was also made in collateral branches of the family.

About two years after their marriage, Stephen and Clarissa settled in Prattsburg (originally spelled Prattsburgh), a village named after the Pratt family who were the first owners of the land and among the first settlers. Captain Joel Pratt secured title to the whole township in which the village of Prattsburg is located and, in order to obtain settlers, granted favorable terms to desirable people. The fact that Stephen and Clarissa named their second-born Harvey Pratt is indicative of their respect for the Captain.

Stephen Prentiss and his family were among the earliest settlers
in the whole county. The same primitive conditions existed here as at Rushville, about twenty-five miles by the road to the north. Roads were almost non-existent. There were no schools or churches. People lived in log cabins on small clearings. For a time Stephen farmed on West Hill near Prattsburg, but soon began operating a sawmill and a gristmill on the banks of the little stream which flows through Prattsburg. Stephen was a carpenter and joiner and, no doubt, used lumber from his mill to build houses for the growing community.

According to a local tradition, Stephen erected a house for his family which is still standing in Prattsburg, although not on its original site. The house measures 22 x 32 feet, is a story and a half high, thus providing bedrooms upstairs, with windows at the gable ends. The house was purchased in 1936 by interested Presbyterians when it was in danger of being razed because of its dilapidated condition. It has been restored and is now being maintained as an historic site.

It was in that unpretentious home that Narcissa was born on Monday, March 14, 1808. Narcissa is such an uncommon name that we wonder why it was chosen. Since some girls are named after flowers, as Violet and Rose, perhaps she was given the feminine form of Narcissus, i.e., Narcissa.

She had two older brothers, Stephen Turner, born in 1804, and Harvey Pratt, 1805. Six more children followed Narcissa—Jonas Galusha, 1810; Jane Abigail, 1811; Mary Ann, 1813; Clarissa, 1815; Harriet, 1818; and Edward Warren, 1820. How a family with so many children, ranging in ages from an infant to teen-agers, was able to live in such a small house without such modern conveniences as inside running water and an indoor toilet is hard to imagine. Without doubt, Narcissa, as the eldest of the girls, was obliged to accept many responsibilities in the home as soon as she was able to do so. As can be noted in her correspondence, Narcissa felt especially close to her two younger sisters, Jane and Harriet. Jane never married. Harriet married John Jackson and the couple made their home in Oberlin, Ohio; they became the parents of a daughter who was named Narcissa Whitman.  

Narcissa’s father, Stephen Prentiss

The Rev. Joel Wakeman, to whom reference has already been made, has given us the following description of Narcissa’s father in
his reminiscences: “In the early spring of 1832, I became a resident of Prattsburg. I very soon made the acquaintance of Judge Stephen Prentiss, the father of Narcissa, who was then engaged in erecting the Presbyterian parsonage... He was an architect, a master builder, and followed that occupation as he had calls... He was quite tall, finely proportioned, a little inclined to corpulence... He was remarkably reticent for a man of his intelligence and standing... and it was a rare thing for him to indulge in laughter.”

Courthouse records at Bath show that Stephen Prentiss bought eleven acres of land in 1810 for $200.00 and a year later paid $100.00 for another ten acres, both plots being in the vicinity of Prattsburg. Stephen served at least one term as County Supervisor beginning in 1824 and for a time was Probate Judge, thus meriting the title of Judge. Narcissa was proud of this position and when she addressed letters to her father, she usually included the title: “Hon. Stephen Prentiss.”

Drunkenness was not a serious problem on the American frontier in the decades immediately following the Revolutionary War, hence the churches were slow to promote temperance. One of the results of the spiritual awakening which swept the country during the first two decades of the nineteenth century was the founding of a number of such interdenominational organizations as missionary societies, Bible societies, anti-slavery societies, and temperance societies. Until the church began to prick the consciences of its members on the evils of drinking, good church members and even ministers imbibed strong liquor without the disapproval of the community. Hence it was not thought unbecoming for Judge Prentiss to run a distillery along with his mills.

The Rev. Levi Fay Waldo, a descendant of an old Prattsburg family and a relative of the Prentiss family, wrote in his reminiscences: “From my earliest recollection he was always known as Judge Prentiss, having served one term as County or Probate Judge. He carried on his business about one-half mile southeast of the public square, where he had a saw-mill, a gristmill, and a distillery... My uncle, Prentiss Fay, a most excellent Christian man, worked for his uncle in the distillery, where I am told they kept the Bible depository and held mid-week prayer meetings.”

In 1825 or 1826 a temperance lecturer spoke in Prattsburg. Judge Prentiss attended the meeting and, according to Wakeman, left in anger “feeling that he had been personally abused and insulted.” At a later
date, Prentiss gave up the distillery because he became fearful of the effects of drinking on his sons. “If I remember correctly,” wrote Wake- man, “the good old parson [i.e. Hotchkin] embraced the reform at that time, and also the merchant that presented him occasionally with five gallons of rum.”

Narcissa’s Mother, Clarissa Prentiss

Wakeman, who also knew Narcissa’s mother, has given us the following description of her: “Mrs. Clarissa Prentiss, the wife and mother, was quite tall and fleshy and queenly in her deportment. She was intelligent, gifted in conversation, and possessed great weight of Christian character. Her influence was potent in her family and the community. She was remarkably sedate, never excited, always master of the occasion whatever occurred. She also, like unto her husband, seldom laughed. As familiar as I was in the family, I do not remember of ever seeing her laugh.”

In church circles of that generation, seriousness of mien was a sign of piety. Undue laughter was considered ungodly, especially on Sunday. This attitude was a part of the Puritan inheritance which both Stephen and Clarissa had received. Narcissa resembled her mother more than she did her father. She too was “queenly in her deportment” and “gifted in conversation,” but in one respect she differed from both her parents: Narcissa had a sense of humor. Her large family of adopted children at the Whitman mission in Old Oregon remembered how often she sang and laughed.

The Church at Prattsburg

Captain Joel Pratt’s nephew, Jared Pratt, settled at what became Prattsburg with his family in 1800. The Captain and his family followed a few years later. The Pratts were devout Congregationalists as were most of the pioneer settlers of that community. In order that a church might be established with sufficient financial resources, Captain Pratt required every purchaser of one hundred acres of land to pay fifteen dollars annually to the church. A Congregational Church was organized on June 26, 1804, and like the Congregational Church of Rushville, came under the Congregational-Presbyterian Plan of Union. In 1809 the Rev. James H. Hotchkin, a Congregational minister,
became the church’s second pastor. The church thrived under his min-
istry and had 240 members when he resigned in 1830. Both the pastor
and the church joined the local presbytery, although the church, as did
the one in Rushville, retained the Congregational form of government.
In Narcissa’s first letter to the American Board, dated February 23,
1835, she said: “I… united with the Congregational church in that place
[i.e., Prattsburg].”

Because of complications arising out of the Plan of Union which
had been adopted by the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches
in 1801, some ministers and some congregations on the frontier were
caught in a period of indecision, not knowing which way to go. The
Rev. James H. Hotchkin, who was pastor of the Prattsburg church when
Narcissa Prentiss and Henry Spalding were members, was a New School
Presbyterian. The church, however, followed Congregational polity in
its local government and did not vote to be fully Presbyterian until 1839.
In view of this final decision, this church will hereafter be referred to as
being Presbyterian, although in fact it was “Presbygational.”

**Church Life in Prattsburg**

A rectangular meeting house, 22 x 32 feet, was erected in Prattsburg
in 1807. This was the same size as the Prentiss home, and, no doubt,
Stephen Prentiss was the builder. Two years later, about the time that
Hotchkin became pastor, an eighteen-foot addition was built at one
end. The church thrived under the ministry of the new pastor. In 1820
the building was enlarged again when the rectangular structure was
sawn into two parts, from end to end, through the middle and the two
sections separated by eleven feet. The intervening space was then built
up anew, thus giving an auditorium 33 x 50 feet. This building satisfied
the needs of the congregation for about seven years; then it was razed,
and a more spacious structure was erected in 1828.

The reminiscences of two men who remembered the old Prattsburg
church are extant. S. W. Pratt wrote: “This church was never, either
in its exterior or interior appointments, much of a feast to the lover of
fair architectural proportions. Painting never adorned it.” 10 Joel Wake-
man commented: “The old church with its naked floor, box pews, tallow
 candles, and the old oval pulpit, elevated eight feet above the floor
and perched up against the wall like a robin’s nest,” was the center of
the community. The church had a “circular gallery.” Since the church was unheated, the women in wintertime took with them small charcoal burning foot-warmers. The men bore the cold as best they could while the pastor preached wearing a heavy overcoat and mittens.

In that plain unpainted wooden building, lighted in the evenings by tallow candles, the Spirit of God moved the hearts of the people. The members of the church took their religion seriously. Sunday, or Sabbath, observance was one of the main outward signs of their faith. Since Sunday began at sundown on Saturday, the Prattburg Church on October 11, 1808, voted: “That the members of the church will not attend raisings or other similar associations on Saturday in the afternoon.” The reference to “raisings” was to gatherings of neighbors who met to help one of their number raise logs for a log cabin. These were popular social events on the raw frontier and, if liquor was available, sometimes degenerated into a raucous party. Hence the church forbade raisings on Saturday afternoon for fear that such might violate the decorum which was supposed to be observed with the coming of the Sabbath at sundown.

Narcissa’s mother took the lead in the religious interests of her home. She joined the Prattburg Church in 1807 but her husband did not do so until 1817. Waldo recalled the interest the Prentiss family took in music. “Judge Prentiss and all his family were singers,” he wrote. “My earliest recollections of him are as choir leader, setting the tone with an old-fashioned pitch pipe, and now and then giving it a toot between the stanzas to make sure that they were keeping up to the pitch.”

However, the minutes of the church show that judge Prentiss was not always directing the choir for the Sunday services. According to an item dated April 14, 1828, Judge Prentiss was asked to explain why he had absented himself from the Presbyterian Church in order to worship with the Methodists. The record states: “His reasons were: he was best edified in attending with the Methodists, and was not wholly pleased with the administration in this church particularly with respect to discipline.”

Possibly the reference to the “discipline” of the Presbyterian Church is to an action taken by the Presbytery of Bath on August 28, 1828, in regard to Freemasonry. The Presbytery, moved no doubt by the strong anti-Masonic agitation of that time in western New York,
declared that Freemasonry was “hostile” to the interests of the Church of Christ,” and called upon all members of churches within its jurisdiction to “abandon the institution.” Although we do not have positive proof that judge Prentiss was a Mason, circumstantial evidence supports the theory. The Methodists were more lenient and permitted their members to belong to the lodge. Therefore, on May 5, 1829, judge Prentiss joined the Methodist Church of Prattsburg and for more than eighteen months the church affiliations of the Prentiss family were divided. Then, according to the records of the Presbyterian Church, the judge on January 19, 1831, confessed his “fault” and was received back into the Presbyterian fold.

Narcissa and the Church

The very first entry in the record of baptisms of the Prattsburg Church is the following: “Lord’s Day, July 17th, 1808, Baptized by Rev. Solomon Allen Willis... Narcissa Prentiss, daughter of Stephen Prentiss.” Since the Prattsburg Church at that time had no resident minister, a Congregational pastor from a nearby town was asked to officiate. Two baby boys were baptized at the same time. Narcissa was then a little over four months old. She grew up under the ministry of the Rev. James H. Hotchkin who has been described as being: “An admirable specimen of the clergy of the olden time... was educated, correct, dignified, genial, orthodox; and when he fell a-preaching or a-praying, kept straight on to the end of his subject, without the slightest regard to the whims of his congregation, or the tokens of passing time.”

Writing in his old age, Hotchkin gave the following account of a religious revival which was experienced in the Prattsburg church during the winter of 1818–19, and which reached a climax in February: “The first Sabbath in that month was a day of unusual solemnity. At an appointed weekly meeting, the house of worship was filled to overflowing... Individuals were seen trembling on their seats, and the silent tear trickling down their cheeks... Nothing was heard but the voice of the speaker imparting instructions, addressing exhortation to the assembly, or lifting up the prayer unto God. More than thirty, it is believed, were born again during that eventful week.” Hotchkin tells that all the converts won in this revival were received into the church on the first Sunday of the following June. On that June 6, 1819, “fifty-nine individuals
stood before a great congregation” and made their public confession of faith. People came from neighboring towns for the occasion. Since the attendance was too large for the seating capacity of the church, the meeting was held out-of-doors in a grove of trees, perhaps on the village commons. The weather was perfect. Hotchkin took for his text, Isaiah 53:11: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” The text reveals the joy Hotchkin felt upon that auspicious occasion.

Among the new members welcomed that day was golden-haired Narcissa Prentiss, then eleven years old. Her two older brothers, Stephen and Harvey, were with her. By an interesting coincidence a revival was held about the same time in Plainfield, Massachusetts, where Marcus Whitman also experienced a spiritual awakening. About five years later, when Narcissa was nearly sixteen, she had another religious experience which led her to give herself to the missionary cause. Of this she wrote in her first letter to the American Board: “I frequently desired to go to the heathen but only half-heartedly and it was not till the first Monday of Jan. 1824 that I felt to consecrate myself without reserve to the Missionary work waiting the leadings of Providence concerning me.” This must have been an impressive experience since Narcissa, eleven years later, was able to recall the exact day it had occurred.

Years later, Catherine Sager, one of the orphaned children raised by the Whitmans at their mission station, asked her foster mother what had led her to want to be a missionary. Narcissa replied by saying that she had been deeply moved by reading the life of Harriet Boardman, a pioneer American Board missionary to India.17 Once while writing to her sister Harriet from her mission station in Old Oregon, Narcissa asked: “What books do you read? Do you comfort Ma by reading to her such books as Dwight’s Theology, Dodridge’s Rise and Progress, Milner’s Church History, etc., as Narcissa used to do in her younger days?” [Letter 81]. The works here mentioned were then required reading by candidates for the ministry. No doubt Narcissa had borrowed the books from her pastor’s library. Any person who dips into such writings today finds them heavy reading. But those were serious-minded days.

Repeatedly in the reminiscences of those who knew Narcissa come references to her singing. Levi Fay Waldo, a Prattsburg boy who became a Congregational minister, wrote: “She seems to have been peculiarly gifted in speech, and especially in prayer and song. I well remember her
clear sweet voice, as a leading soprano, in the old church at home.” 18 And Wakeman wrote: “Her voice was an important factor in the social prayer meeting and missionary concerts that were held monthly in those days.” 19 The word “concert” was then commonly applied to a prayer meeting when people joined in concerted prayer.

Years later in distant Oregon, natives sometimes traveled many miles just to hear Narcissa Whitman sing. In a letter to her mother dated March 30, 1847, she wrote: “While I was at Vancouver, one Indian woman came a great distance with her daughter, as she said, to hear me sing with the children.” The Cayuse Indians at Waiilatpu felt the charm of that same voice, so much so that Narcissa wrote: “I was not aware that singing was a qualification of so much importance to a missionary” [Letter 40].

Wakeman tells of a revival which occurred in Prattsburg in the summer and fall of 1832 during the ministry of the Rev. George R. Rudd, who followed Hotchklin as pastor of the Prattsburg Church in 1830. During the summer months, sunrise prayer meetings were held in which the Prentiss family took an active part. Of Narcissa’s participation, Wakeman wrote: “No one devoted more time in personal efforts to win souls to Christ than Narcissa. There are some still living who can trace their first serious impressions to her charming singing and tender appeals to yield to the overtures of mercy… She had a clear, strong voice, and by cultivation it was under perfect control and as sweet and musical as a chime of bells.”

A good index of the vitality of the Prattsburg Church, which played so important a role in the life of Narcissa Prentiss, is the long list of sons and daughters of the church who entered full-time Christian service. Up to 1876 the church boasted of having sent twenty-six men into the ministry and “not far from a score of ministers’ wives have also gone out from this church.” 20 Most of this number belonged to Narcissa’s generation. As will be noted, Henry H. Spalding, who was born in Wheeler, November 26, 1803, spent his boyhood in a foster home near Prattsburg. He was a member of the Prattsburg Church and attended the same academy as did Narcissa. He is numbered among the twenty-six young men who entered the ministry.

With a growing family, Stephen Prentiss found that the house in which his older children, including Narcissa, had been born had
become too small. At some unknown date, he either bought or built “a large two story frame house” located on the west side of the village square. The Prentiss home became the center for many happy gatherings of young people. Narcissa was vivacious and popular. Sometimes her mother would say: “I wish Narcissa would not always have so much company.” Years later when Narcissa found her Oregon home crowded with guests, she felt moved to write: “It is well for me now that I have had so much experience in waiting upon company, and I can do it when necessary without considering it a great task” [Letter 78].

Narcissa’s Education

Throughout the centuries the Christian church has been the mother of schools, and this has been especially true of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. The pioneers of Prattsburg were as much concerned about having proper educational facilities as they were in having a church. As early as 1812 a school was built next to the church. Advanced pupils were taken into the home of the pastor, James H. Hotchkin. As the population of the town increased, a movement was launched in 1823 to raise money through voluntary gifts and taxes to build an academy. Stephen Prentiss was one of the most active promoters of the project and became a member of the first Board of Trustees. The school was called Franklin Academy in honor of Benjamin Franklin. A building 32 x 54 feet, two stories high, “surmounted with a cupola and belfry,” was opened in 1824. It stood next to the church. At first the academy was only for boys but when the building was enlarged in 1827 by adding rooms at either end of the original structure, a “female department” was opened.

The records of Franklin Academy and Collegiate Institute show that Narcissa was a student there for the term ending April 6, 1828, when thirty-four boys and twenty-eight girls were enrolled. The tuition fee was $6.00 for a term of twenty-one weeks. Another tuition record for the term ending September 28, 1831, lists the names of fifty-four young men, including Henry H. Spalding, and forty-six young women, including Narcissa Prentiss. Thus for at least one term Henry and Narcissa were fellow students. He would have been twenty-eight and she, twenty-three.
Narcissa Rejects Spalding’s Proposal for Marriage

In a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, and written from her mission station at Waiilatpu, Narcissa said: “The man who came with us is one who never ought to have come. My dear husband has suffered more from him in consequence of his wicked jealousy, and his great pique towards me, than can be known in this world.” The context of the remark clearly indicates that she was referring to Spalding. Light on the reason for this comment is found in a letter that Narcissa's sister, Harriet, wrote on January 11, 1893, to an Oregon author, Mrs. Eva Emery Dye. Regarding Spalding, Harriet wrote: “He was a student when a young man in Franklin Academy, Prattsburg, the place of our nativity, and he wished to make Narcissa his wife, and her refusal of him caused the wicked feeling he cherished towards them both.” The consequences of Narcissa's rejection of Henry's proposal for marriage were far-reaching, as shall be noted later.

Narcissa Teaches School

Extant records do not permit us to reconstruct with accuracy the events in Narcissa’s life from April 1828, when she completed her work in Franklin Academy, and June 1834 when the Prentiss family moved to Amity in Allegany County which adjoins Steuben County on the west. Waldo stated that Narcissa studied in Mrs. Emma Willard’s famous “Female Seminary” at Troy, New York, but did not indicate when nor for how long. Mrs. Willard, 1787–1870, had founded her school in 1821; it soon attracted students from all parts of the East. Within fifty years more than 13,000 young women had studied there. The school specialized in the training of teachers; it was what we would now call a normal school. Mrs. Willard, a woman of commanding personality, left a deep impression upon the girls who studied under her direction. She wrote on many subjects, was interested in such reform movements as temperance, and was the author of “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep.”

After completing such training as was available, Narcissa, according to Wakeman, “taught district schools several years with marked success.” One of her former pupils, O. P. Fay, writing his reminiscences for a Prattsburg newspaper in 1898, stated: “I well remember Marcus Whitman’s wife, Narcissa Prentiss; she taught our district school when I was quite a lad, and she seemed to me then as a woman
of rare abilities, with qualifications sufficient to teach in any academy instead of a common school... She had a class in natural philosophy [term then used to designate a science course] and wanted to start one in chemistry also, but that was more than we could venture to try until we had graduated in philosophy. She taught the best school of any teacher in our district.” 25 For a time Narcissa taught a kindergarten in Bath, and Marcus, in a letter to Jane Prentiss, refers to Narcissa teaching in Butler26 [Letter 109].

This is all that is known of the background of Narcissa Prentiss who, on February 18, 1836, was married to Dr. Marcus Whitman. From the information available, we see her as an attractive light auburn-haired young woman, well educated for her generation, highly literate in her writings, one who loved to entertain company, an able school teacher, and above all one deeply religious who dreamed of being some day a missionary. If contemporary accounts show her to have been rather sentimental in her religious beliefs and activities, let us remember that this was characteristic of church life of her time. Narcissa’s later letters, written from her lonely mission station in Old Oregon, carry frequent nostalgic references to the “melting seasons” [i.e., when people would weep for their sins] which were characteristic of the revival meetings held in the Prattsburg church.

Although often dreaming of being a missionary, Narcissa had little opportunity to know what such a career entailed, especially among the American Indians. The foreign missionary work of the church was still too new for objective appraisals to have been made. Such books about missionary activities as were available often gave an unrealistic and idealized picture. No doubt Narcissa’s best source of information was the American Board’s official publication, the Missionary Herald. An examination of the file of this magazine for the years 1820–36 reveals the fact that very little information was given about work with the American Indians. Thus Narcissa, when she did offer to go as a missionary to the Indians of Old Oregon, was woefully uninformed.

ARE FEMALES WANTED?

Wakeman tells us that the residents of Prattsburg were troubled in the spring of 1834 when they learned that the Prentiss family was to move to Amity. The residence of twenty-eight or more years was to be
terminated. We are not told why judge Prentiss decided to move, but perhaps it was because Amity was a new community where a number of houses were to be erected. Prentiss, as a carpenter, may have been attracted by these business opportunities. Amity, now known as Belmont, lies about forty miles southwest of Prattsburg.

A Presbyterian Church had been organized at Amity on January 30, 1833. For nine years, the small congregation held its services in a log schoolhouse. During the years 1833–35, the Rev. Samuel May served as a part-time pastor. On April 27, 1834, the Prattsburg church granted letters of dismissal to Stephen and Clarissa Prentiss and to their children, Jonas G., Narcissa, Clarissa, Harriet, and Edward, “to join the Presbyterian Church in Amity, N.Y.” In the early spring of 1835, the Rev. Oliver S. Powell, a brother-in-law, became pastor of the Amity church. For a time both the Mays and the Powells seriously considered going to Old Oregon as missionaries.

In the latter part of November 1834, the Rev. Samuel Parker arrived in Amity to make his appeal for missionaries and money for his proposed Oregon mission. If Wheeler had been an unlikely place to find an associate to go with him to Oregon, Amity was even more so. At a meeting held in the log schoolhouse, Parker repeated the message he had given at Wheeler. He told about the long trip “the Wise Men from the West” had made to St. Louis to get the white man’s Bible. He told of his trip to St. Louis during the preceding summer and of his intention to go to the Rockies in the spring of 1835. He explained how the American Board had authorized him to find associates, and no doubt told of his visit to Wheeler where Dr. Whitman had volunteered.

Narcissa Prentiss was present that evening when Parker spoke. His appeal for missionaries found her in as receptive a mood as Marcus Whitman had been. For years she too had considered the possibility of going to some foreign land as a missionary and was, therefore, prepared to respond to the appeal that Parker made. After the meeting, Narcissa asked Parker: “Is there a place for an unmarried female in my Lord’s vineyard?”

Parker was not sure about the designs of Providence, and was doubtful about the readiness of the Board to appoint a single woman as a missionary. The foreign missionary program of all American Protestant denominations was still so new that their mission boards failed to
appreciate the value of unmarried women. Parker was looking for men and was unprepared to find a young woman responding to his appeal. In a letter to the American Board dated December 17, 1834, he asked: “Are females wanted? A Miss Narcissa Prentiss of Amity is very anxious to go to the heathen. Her education is good—piety conspicuous—her influence is good. She will offer herself if needed.”

From Amity Parker drove a few miles to the west and repeated his message in the Presbyterian Church of Cuba where another single woman offered to go, a Miss McCoy. On January 1, 1835, Parker again wrote to the Board and explained why he had been cautious in giving either Miss Prentiss or Miss McCoy any hope of an appointment. He wrote: “I think I said nothing about their going among the Indians, or to any particular part of the world, but only that they would offer themselves if their services were needed. I recollect that I told them if they offered themselves, it must be to go anywhere the Board should choose.”

Secretary Greene, replying to Parker’s letter of December 17, wrote on the 24th: “I don’t think we have missions among the Indians where unmarried females are valuable just now.” Parker must have been rather discouraging in the advice he gave to the two young women, as Greene, in his letter to Parker of January 7, 1835, stated that neither had made application for an appointment. So the matter rested with Narcissa until Marcus Whitman spent the week-end of February 22 with the Powells at Amity—and then everything was changed.

**Marcus and Narcissa Become Engaged**

As has been stated in the preceding chapter, when Whitman received Greene’s letter of January 7, 1835, telling him of his appointment as an “Assistant Missionary” to accompany Samuel Parker on his exploring tour to the Rockies, he rode to Ithaca to consult with Parker regarding their plans. While visiting Parker, Whitman learned that Narcissa Prentiss of Amity had also volunteered to go to Oregon as a missionary. According to Samuel J. Parker, Jr., his father at that time suggested to Whitman that he call on Narcissa and propose marriage. There seems to be no doubt but that by this time Marcus knew Narcissa. Their common interest in church activities could have brought them together after Whitman’s first visit in the Prentiss home in Prattsburg.

Parker’s suggestion struck a responsive chord in Whitman’s heart
for he had long been thinking about getting married. In his letter of June 3, 1834, to the Board he had written: “I think I should wish to take a wife, if the service of the Board would admit.” It is easy to imagine Whitman reasoning that if both he and Narcissa Prentiss were offering their services to the American Board to go as missionaries to the Indians of Oregon, then Providence might be intending that they go as husband and wife.

In all probability Marcus wrote to Narcissa telling her of his appointment and of his intention to start overland for St. Louis on February 9, and that it would not be out of his way to call on her should she welcome the visit. There is some evidence to indicate that Parker also wrote to Narcissa telling her of possible developments. If such suppositions be valid, then there would have been time for Narcissa to have replied. Whatever was the background, this we know—Whitman had made definite plans to visit Amity and call on Narcissa before he left Rushville on January 19.

After his return from Ithaca, Whitman closed out his business affairs at Wheeler and then went to Rushville to say farewell to his mother and other relatives and to await final instructions from Greene. The expected letter, dated February 9, was received on Thursday, the 19th. Whitman left that day for Amity where he arrived sometime on the following Saturday and was received as a guest in the Powell home.

Just why Narcissa was not married when she was approaching her twenty-seventh birthday is not known. By the standards of that generation, she was already considered to be an old maid. From the descriptions given by her contemporaries of her attractiveness and accomplishments, we may safely assume that she had had proposals for marriage but had rejected them, including that of Henry H. Spalding.

We do not have any account of Whitman’s visit to Amity or just how or when he asked Narcissa to be his wife. After her marriage in February 1836, Narcissa explained to Mrs. Parker: “We had to make love somewhat abruptly and must do our courtship now we are married.” Undoubtedly their common desire to be missionaries to the Indians of Oregon was a bond which drew them together. To them, a kindly Providence had brought them together; God had called them to be husband and wife to serve in the same field.

After becoming engaged sometime during that week-end of February 22, Marcus and Narcissa had to make some quick and important deci-
sions. Marcus encouraged Narcissa to make immediate application to the Board for an appointment. The two discussed the question as to when they might be married. Since the Powells had received word of their appointment by the American Board to the Pawnee Mission and were planning to leave that spring for their field, Marcus and Narcissa discussed the possibility of her traveling to the Missouri frontier with them. Then as soon as Marcus returned from his exploring journey to the Rockies, they could be married. Everything, however, was indefinite. For the time being, it was enough to know that they loved each other and that someday they would be married.

**Narcissa Prentiss Appointed by the American Board**

On Monday morning, February 23, Marcus mounted his horse and headed for St. Louis. On that same day Narcissa sent the following letter of application to the American Board:

> Dear Brethren:

> Permit an unworthy sister to address you. Having found favour of the Lord and desiring to live for the conversion of the world, I now offer myself to the American Board to be employed in their service among the heathen, if counted worthy. As it is requested of me to make some statements concerning myself, I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible, knowing the value of your time, especially now under the late afflictive bereavement.  

> My native place is Prattsburg, Steuben County. I was born March 14, A.D. 1808. In the beginning of the year 1819 a precious revival of religion was witnessed in Prattsburg. I became a subject of the work, united with the Congregational church in that place and remained a member of it fifteen years. My advantages for acquiring an education have been good, having been situated near Franklin Academy—and most of the time when not attending school have been engaged in teaching. My last effort in teaching was an Infant School in which I took great delight. My brothers and sisters, nine in number, with our parents, have all united with the same church. In June last we removed to Amity, Allegheny County, where we now reside.
In relation to my feelings upon the subject of mission, I will say but little. From my conversion I have felt a particular interest for the salvation of the heathen, and an increasing desire for information on the subject and have not neglected to gratify that desire: but from time to time, with peculiar feelings, greeted the arrival of the Missionary Herald. I frequently desired to go to the heathen but only half-heartedly—and it was not till the first Monday of Jan. 1824 that I felt to consecrate myself without reserve to the Missionary work waiting the leadings of Providence concerning me.

Feeling it more my privilege than duty to labour for the conversion of the heathen, I respectfully submit myself to your direction and subscribe,

Your unworthy sister in the Lord,

Narcissa Prentiss.

This, the first of Narcissa’s extant letters, was written in a clear hand on pale green paper. On the back of the letter are three short testimonials. The Rev. Samuel W. May, who signed himself, “Minister of Angelica,” wrote: “Having been acquainted for some time with Miss Narcissa Prentiss—I therefore most cheerfully recommend her to your Board as well qualified for usefulness in instructing the heathen in the way to Heaven.” The Rev. William Bridgman, pastor of the Cuba Presbyterian Church, wrote: “...from a personal acquaintance with Miss Prentiss, I do consider her well qualified for usefulness in that station.” And the Rev. Oliver S. Powell stated: “I fully concur in the above recommendations... I am happy in the prospect of having so efficient a fellow labourer in the missionary service.”

Powell then added the following illuminating footnotes: “As it is probable that Miss Prentiss will hereafter become the companion of Doct. Marcus Whitman (should he be established missionary beyond the Rocky Mts.) it may be proper to add that he expressed a desire that she might accompany us on our mission as it will be a field of usefulness & an opportunity for [her] becoming acquainted with the labors of a missionary.” In other words, Powell was suggesting that Narcissa also be assigned to the Pawnee Mission until Whitman would be able to return from his exploring tour.
A few weeks after Whitman had left for St. Louis, Mrs. Powell discovered that she was pregnant. Under the circumstances, the Powells felt that for the time being it would not be wise for them to undertake missionary work. Narcissa hastened to inform Marcus of the new developments. On April 30, 1835, Marcus replied writing from Liberty, Missouri: “I had not given up the hope that you would have been able to come on with Mr. Powell until I received your letter. I regret very much that he did not come... Had I known one half as much of the trip as I now do, when I left you, I should have been entirely willing, if not anxious, that you should have accompanied me.”

The original copy of this letter is not known to be extant. A copy appeared in Mowry’s Marcus Whitman. Mowry stated that Narcissa had written on the margin of the letter: “Mr. Parker said I could go just as well as not. N. Prentiss.” 31 This is a puzzling statement. Did Narcissa, at the time she heard Parker speak in her church, then discuss with him the possibility of her going with the Powells to the Pawnees? Or could it be that Parker wrote to Narcissa from Ithaca, after talking with Whitman, and suggested the possibility of the two getting married and for her to go then with Marcus to the Missouri frontier. If so, then it was Marcus who prudently urged a delay. He wanted to see if it were wise to take a wife on such a long journey not only to the Missouri frontier but also across the plains to the Rockies.

Narcissa’s letter of application with its several endorsements was sent to Parker, who, on March 5, forwarded it to the Board with a letter of his own. He wrote: “I enclose Miss Narcissa Prentiss’ offer of herself to become a missionary. I have for some time been acquainted with Judge Prentiss’ family. Their standing as intelligent Christians in public estimation is good. Narcissa’s education, talents, person, disposition, conciliatory manners, and sound judgment promise well for usefulness in a mission field.”

Acting upon Narcissa’s letter of application together with the testimonials and the information that she and Marcus Whitman were engaged, the Prudential Committee of the Board approved her appointment on March 18, 1835. In the letter of notification sent to her, nothing was said about her destination. It seemed to have been understood that she was to wait until Marcus had returned.
1 See Appendix 1 for list of letters written by Narcissa Whitman.

2 W.C.Q. I (1897):8:27 ff, contains an article on the Prentiss Family by the Rev. Levi Fay Waldo, who was once a resident of Prattsburg.

3 C. F. J. Binney, History and Genealogy of the Prentice or Prentiss Family, 2nd ed., Boston, 1883, p. 75, claims that Stephen was born at Walpole, N.H. Ross Woodbridge, drew my attention to Vital Records of Grafton, Massachusetts, p. 106, which states that this Stephen Prentiss was born at Grafton, Mass. He has also provided information from tombstones found in the old cemetery at Walpole regarding the change of the spelling of the family name. Warren Prentiss, a great-nephew of Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, of Palos Verdes Peninsula, Calif., has also supplied genealogical information about the Prentiss family.

4 Joel Pratt had a brother Jared, who was an ancestor of the Mormon Apostles, Orson and Parley P. Pratt.

5 Sometime before 1891, Harriet Prentiss Jackson gave a collection of letters written by her sister Narcissa to the Oregon Historical Society in Portland. Most of these were published in the 1891 and 1893 issues of the Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association. See Appendix 1.


8 Wakeman ms., Coll. Wn.

9 Ibid.

10 S. W. Pratt, History of the Presbyterian Church of Prattsburg, 1876, pp. 5–6.

11 Wakeman ms., Coll. Wn.

12 James A. Miller, Presbyterianism in Steuben and Allegany, Angelica, N.Y., 1897, p. 54.

13 From original Prattsburg Presbyterian Church records.

14 Ibid.

15 Miller, op. cit., p. 69.

16 J H. Hotchklin published his A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York, and of the Rise, Progress, and present state of the Presbyterian Church in that Section, in New York in 1848. The quotation here given is from p. 465.

17 See article by Catherine Sager Pringle in Mary Osborn Douthit (ed.) Souvenir of Western Women, Portland, 1905. No copy of a life of Harriet Boardman, either in book, pamphlet, or magazine article form, has been located.

18 W.C.Q., II (1898):1:38. Waldo was a Congregational minister in Canon City, Cob., at the time he wrote his memories of Narcissa Whitman. He also stated: “She could offer up the finest petition to the Throne of Grace of any person I ever heard in my life.”


20 Prattsburg News, January 27, 1898. Among the members of the church who became a Presbyterian minister was David Maim, who served as pastor of a prominent church in Philadelphia. Later, out in Old Oregon, Narcissa was to give his name to a forlorn lad, half-Spanish and half-Indian, whom the Whitmans took into their home.
21 Original letter in Coll. O. While gathering material for my Spalding book, I consulted with Miss Charlotte Howe of Prattsburg, who was well informed on the town's history. She strongly rejected the idea that Spalding was a rejected suitor of Narcissa's and asked for proof. At that time I was unaware of Harriet's letter. Having discovered the letter before my Marcus Whitman was published, I made a correction in that book. See p. 84.


23 A. W. Fairbanks, Emma Willard and her Pupils, New York, 1898, makes no mention of her students before 1843, hence no record of Narcissa Prentiss.

24 Prattsburg News, January 27, 1898.

25 Ibid., January 16, 1898.

26 See Drury, Whitman, p. 85, for details about Narcissa's “infant school” at Bath.

27 Parker ms., Cornell University Library.


29 Italics indicate words underlined in the original letter. The reference is to the death of Secretary B. B. Wisner which was mentioned in Greene's letter to Whitman of February 9, 1835, which Marcus showed to Narcissa.

30 The Board's official publication, the Missionary Herald, included in each of its monthly issues extracts from letters received from its missionaries. During the period of the Oregon Mission, 183–47, lengthy extracts from the Oregon missionaries were published.

When Marcus Whitman left Amity on that Monday morning, February 23, 1835, he was making his first entry as an actor on the Old Oregon stage. For more than twelve years, or until his tragic death on November 29, 1847, he was destined to play a leading role in the stirring events which were to take place in the Pacific Northwest. Whitman made three journeys across the plains to the Rockies. This, the first, came in 1835. He retraced the route with his wife and the Spaldings in 1836, and again with the first great wagon train to go to Oregon in 1843.

Upon the advice of Parker, Whitman drew on the American Board for $100.00 for expenses. After his arrival at Liberty, Missouri, Whitman wrote to the Board on May 13 saying in part: “...I have expended in the following manner: about $30 expenses of traveling to St. Louis, seven dollars lost from my pocket with my wallet; sixty-one of the remainder I have expended for some additional clothing & articles of goods & medicines to carry with us, & in part to pay expenses.” This indicates that the actual travel costs of the thirty-seven days horseback ride from Amity to St. Louis was less than one dollar a day.

Since Whitman had informed Greene of his desire to visit relatives and friends in Ohio and Illinois [Letter 6], we can trace in some detail the approximate route he followed. After leaving Amity, he rode
west until he came to the Buffalo–Cleveland highway. In all probability Whitman reached Erie, Pennsylvania, before Sunday, March 1. Since he was loath to travel on Sunday, he probably spent the day resting and in attending church. From Erie, Whitman rode to Kirkland, Ohio. There he must have seen the new Mormon temple then being erected; it is still standing. In 1835 the growing cult of Mormonism was a main topic of conversation throughout the area.

At Kirkland, Whitman turned to the left and rode seven miles south to the small crossroads community of Chester, about ten miles south of Cleveland, where he visited a number of relatives and friends. Within a few years after Whitman’s return to Rushville from Plainfield, Massachusetts, a migration had begun to the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio. It had caught up many of the people he had known in Cummington and Plainfield. Among those who had migrated were Freedom Whitman and his wife; two of Beza Whitman’s sisters and their families; and Colonel and Mrs. John Packard.¹ No wonder that Whitman, on his westward journey in 1835, took time to call on his relatives and friends at Chester whom he had not seen for about fifteen years. After leaving Chester, Whitman rode westward to Danville, Illinois, which is about 125 miles south of Chicago, where he was a guest in the home of his brother Samuel.² In that home was a five-year-old boy named Perrin Beza, the son of Samuel, who had been named after his two grandfathers; we shall hear of him later.

**Whitman’s Official Commission**

Whitman received at St. Louis a communication from Secretary Greene which contained his official commission, dated February 17, 1835, and the Board’s final instructions. The commission was a certificate, which measures about eight by ten inches, with an engraved picture in top center.³ The illustration epitomized the Board’s philosophy of foreign missions. In the center of the picture is a sailing ship presumably arriving in some foreign port with the morning sun appearing above the distant horizon. In the foreground are some palm trees which suggest a tropical climate. On either side of the harbor are buildings, including some which represent Hindu temples. In the immediate foreground is a group of forty or more natives who, with outstretched arms, appear to be welcoming the arrival of the Christian missionaries supposedly aboard
the ship. Beneath the picture is the verse from Isaiah 9:2 (King James version): “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

After the printed inscription: “This is to certify that” comes the penned statement: “Doct. Marcus Whitman is an assistant missionary to the Indian tribes West of the State of Missouri.” Whitman was not commissioned as a “missionary,” for that classification was then reserved for ordained men. Instead he was called an “assistant missionary.” The January 1838 issue of the Missionary Herald listed him as “Physician” and in following years as “Physician and Catechist.” The wives of the missionaries of the American Board were not then officially commissioned.

**Differences Arise Between Whitman and Parker**

Whitman arrived in St. Louis on April 1, whereas Parker, who had left Ithaca on March 14 traveling by stage to Pittsburgh and from there by river boat, did not arrive until the 4th. The two men called upon the officials of the American Fur Company and secured permission to travel with the Company’s caravan across the plains and the Rockies to the Rendezvous, which was to be held that year on the Green River in what is now western Wyoming. The caravan was to be under the command of Lucien Fontenelle,¹ 1800–1840. Whitman and Parker left St. Louis on April 8 on the steamboat Siam for Liberty on the western Missouri frontier, near present-day Kansas City. The boat trip between these two points was usually made in seven or eight days, but this time because of an accident, the Siam took two weeks.

Since the Fur Company’s caravan was not to leave Liberty until May 14, Whitman and Parker had about three weeks in which to purchase their animals, assemble equipment, and complete other necessary arrangements. At first Whitman deferred to Parker’s judgment regarding what should be purchased. This was to be expected, as Parker was fifty-six years old and Whitman, thirty-three. Moreover, Parker was the one who had initiated and promoted the exploring mission. He had already made one journey to St. Louis and was presumably better informed on what was needed for overland travel.

Differences of opinion, however, soon arose between the two men over what should be purchased. Parker, who knew from personal experience
the difficulty of raising money for missions, was far too parsimonious. Whitman turned to Fontenelle for advice. None of Whitman’s contemporary letters reveal the extent of the differences of opinion between him and Parker over this question. Several years later, when Whitman learned of some criticisms that Parker had passed on to the Board regarding the costs of the Oregon Mission, he was moved to write a long and revealing letter in which he gave some sharp criticisms of Parker [Letter 62].

Writing to Greene on May 10, 1839, Whitman frankly stated: “…as you introduce Rev. Samuel Parker as authority for supposing we might have saved expense, I will venture to make a few statements respecting his policy in this Country, & in his general tour of exploring. When he joined me at St. Louis, I thought he must know all that was required for our journey as he had been out before & made inquiry, so that I committed all arrangements to him. He said that our personal baggage must not exceed fifty pounds & in this he wished to include everything necessary to be carried, viz clothing, stationary, books, Medicines, Instruments, Ammunition, Goods for trading supplies, &c, &c. We made our arrangements accordingly, as near as possible. In the purchase of animals, he limited us to one apiece for riding, & one for packing which we bought. Mr. P. took one to ride to Fort Leavenworth about thirty miles, & injured his [i.e., the horse’s] back so that he was unfit for the journey. He then sold him & bought another. Fearing the consequences of such an accident when we might be remote from the means of other supplies, I tried to persuade him to purchase another animal, but to no effect, & so we started with but three to cross the Rocky Mountains. One mule was to pack all the provisions necessary to take on that long route, including the above items of clothing, &c., besides cooking furniture, bedding, tent, axe, &c One of the items taken was Samuel Parker’s saddle case which is now at Whitman College. This is a cylindrical leather bag, approximately 22½” long by 10½” in diameter and is marked on one end: “Rev. S. Parker, Ithaca.”

While still at Liberty, Whitman and Parker met the Rev. Moses Merrill, a Baptist missionary who had established a mission among the Oto Indians on the north bank of the Platte River about eight miles west of Bellevue in 1834. Merrill had gone to Liberty with an ox drawn wagon for supplies and was planning to return with Fontenelle. Bellevue lay on the west bank of the Missouri about twenty miles south of present-day
Omaha, Nebraska. Fontenelle, with between fifty and sixty men, about two hundred horses and mules, six wagons, and three ox teams, left Liberty for Bellevue on Thursday morning, May 14. Previously Fontenelle had shipped some of his supplies by boat up the Missouri River.

Whitman, in his letter of May 10, 1839, told Greene of unhappy experiences with Parker which took place at the very beginning of their overland travels: “Mr. P. obtained leave to put a small supply of provisions into Mr. Fontenelle’s wagon. And now for the task of packing; a thing I had never seen done, & had no example before me, as the company was to go up to Bellevue before arranging their packs… This task I performed alone in the streets of Liberty, & after putting all but our provisions on the poor old mule, I started alone, but did not go far before all was in disorder & needed a repacking, a scene often occurring & for which I was as often blamed by Mr. P. for my unskillful management.”

Experience is needed to tie a miscellaneous assortment of items on the back of an animal and have them remain securely in place when it is trotting or even walking. This Whitman lacked at first but in time he became an expert packer. Whitman’s account continues: “It was not long before we found Mr. F. did not wish to take the trouble of our provisions, & we were forced to put them into Mr. Merrill’s wagon, although he was obliged with a loaded ox team to keep up with Mr. F. with [his] mules & empty wagons. In order to do this, I assisted him in taking out his boxes at every bad place & carrying them on our backs or else lifting at the wheels in the mud &c.”

**Hostility of the Men of the Caravan**

The unwillingness of Fontenelle to permit the missionaries to place some of their supplies in his empty wagons boded ill for their future relationships. The caravan had hardly started before Whitman became aware that the rough and ungodly men of Fontenelle’s company did not appreciate the presence of missionaries and emphatically expressed their displeasure. Whitman wrote: “Very evident tokens gave us to understand that our company was not agreeable, such as the throwing of rotten eggs at me.” He added: “In order to remedy this, I used to labour with extreme exertion with Mr. F’s men in crossing rivers, making rafts & bridges, &c. In this way we reached Bellevue. I found I was very much exhausted in health, having been an invalid for some years previous.”
Parker, in his *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, likewise referred to the hostility of the men of the caravan, who “so disliked the restraints which our presence imposed upon them that, as they afterwards confessed, they had plotted our death & intended on the first convenient occasion to put this purpose into execution.” Since the caravan was traveling rather slowly over the two hundred mile stretch which separated Liberty from Bellevue, the three missionaries decided to remain in camp over Sunday, May 24. When the men of the caravan learned of this, they took great offense.

Parker described what happened: “After our arrangements were made for the night, one of the desperadoes came to our tent with a basin of alcohol, and stated that they had taken offense of our refusing to travel with them on the Sabbath... and concluded to pass it over, if we would take a friendly drink with them. This of course we declined. He said the men were highly displeased, and he could not say what would be the result—giving us to understand that if we refused their terms of reconciliation, our lives would be in danger. We still refused. He then said if we would put the basin to our lips and wet them, they would accept that as satisfaction. But his arguments and threats not availing to shake our temperance principles, he went away, but as we afterwards learned without giving up the purpose of revenge on some other occasion.”

Parker recorded a second incident in which some of the men of the caravan expressed their dislike of the missionaries and especially their disapproval “because we did not travel with them on the sabbath.” After the caravan had crossed a stream where a raft had been needed, some of the men tried to dismantle the raft and set it adrift before the three missionaries could use it. “Providentially,” wrote Parker, “it did not drift far before it lodged against a tree, and, without much loss of time, we repaired it and passed over.”
Whitman began a journal on May 14, the day the caravan left Liberty. He kept it with more or less regularity until October 26 when he was back at Cantonment Leavenworth after his journey to the Rockies.

Whitman took the original manuscript of this journal with him to Rushville where, it appears, he copied and enlarged it and then sent the revised version with a letter dated December 17 to the American Board. A comparison of the original with the revised copy shows that Whitman made many changes, mostly of a minor nature, as the following extracts illustrate. The streams mentioned empty into the east side of the Missouri River.

**Whitman’s Journal**

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**Original Journal**

[May] 24. The Sabbath. Rested in company with Rev. Roses Merrill. How refreshing is the rest of the Sabbath and how delightful is social worship in this uncultivated prairie. Mr. Fontanell’s men went on.

25th. Started and crossed the big Tarkoo with raft. Came up with Mr. Fontanell at evening.

27. Spent the day in crossing the River on the raft.

28th. Made a raft and crossed the west branch of the Nishnabotna. Mr. Fronsa [Fontenelle] has wagons which he crosses on the raft. We swim our animals over. The water was rising so fast we had great difficulty to get off the bottom before crossing.

29th. Made a bridge over the five barrel creek. [Now Keg Creek.]

30th. Bridged the Maraguim [Mosquito] creek and crossed the Missouri and came to Bellevue. We stopped at the government

**American Board Copy**

24. The Sabbath. We rested in company with Mr. Merrill. Mr. Fontanelle’s men went on. How refreshing is the Sabbath and how delightful social worship in this uncultivated prairie. I bled myself for the pain in my side which is quite severe.

30. We arrived at Bellevue after a very fatiguing journey. The rains were excessive and the streams high. Most of them had to be bridged or crossed by rafts. We put up with Mr. Merrill at the agency. Messrs. Dunbar and Allis are waiting for Maj. Dockerty [John Dougherty], agent for the Pawnees. They speak encouragingly of their reception among the Pawnees.

31st. Sabbath. Mr. Parker preached in Mr. Merrill’s house in the morning & in the evening prayer meeting.

1st June. Attended concert with Mr. Merrill’s family and the Brethren of the Pawnee mission.
agency under the hospitality of Mr. Merrill. The Brethren Dunbar and Allis of the Pawnee mission are here awaiting the arrival of Maj. Dockerty, agent for the Pawnees. They speak encourageingly of their reception among the Pawnees.

10 June. I was called to visit one of Mr. Fontanell’s men sick with cholera. Spent much of the night with him. 11th. Patient much relieved.

Parker, in his journal, commented on their drinking water: “The water of all this portion of country, especially of the Missouri river, and its large tributaries, are very turbid, owing to the nature of the soil over which they pass. A pail full of water, standing half an hour at the seasons of freshets, will deposit three-eighths of an inch of sediment; and yet the water, when settled, appears to be of good quality.” One of the difficulties which the missionaries encountered while traveling at that season of the year across the rolling prairies lush with the new growth of grass was the lack of wood for fuel. Parker wrote: “Our mode of living, from day to day, had already necessarily become uniform. Dry bread and bacon constituted our breakfast, dinner and supper. The bacon we cooked, when we could obtain wood for fire; but when out of sight of land, that is, when nothing but green grass could be seen, we eat our bacon without cooking.”

Whitman found the sixteen-day trip from Liberty to Bellevue a gruelling experience. Although the caravan once traveled twenty miles in one day, yet because of heavy rains and swollen streams, it averaged about thirteen miles. Wherever a rushing torrent could not be forded by a wagon, either a bridge had to be built or a raft constructed, so that the wagons could be taken across. All this took time. Whitman and Parker had a small conical tent which provided some protection at night but, like the men of the caravan, they had to sleep on the wet ground.

Whitman quickly discovered that Parker was more of a liability than a help on the trail. It is difficult to imagine any two men with more opposite qualifications for a journey across the plains and the mountains in
those days than Marcus Whitman and Samuel Parker. Whitman was the practical type, eager to do his share of work and more. He was an out-of-doors man, rugged, likeable, and adjustable to the circumstances of his environment. Parker was an older man. At fifty-six he never should have ventured on such an expedition. His disposition was more suited for the study than for the rough life of western travel. He was tactless, fussy, and dogmatic. Parker let Whitman do most of the work in packing, setting up camp, and preparing the meals. Perhaps Parker was standing on protocol. After all, he had the status of being a “missionary” of the American Board; Whitman was only an “assistant missionary.”

William H. Gray, who went out to Oregon in 1836 with the Whitman-Spalding party, characterized Parker as follows: “Mr. Parker was inclined to self-applause, requiring his full share of ministerial approbation or respect... was rather fastidious.”

Another characterization of Parker is found in a letter that W. G. Rae, an official of the Hudson’s Bay Company, wrote from Fort Nez Perce (the early name for Fort Walla Walla), on March 20, 1836: “There is a Missionary there [referring to Fort Vancouver] from the United States of the presbyterian persuasion who sends us all to Hell—honest man—with as little ceremony as I would (at this moment for I am very hungry) drive a rump steak into my bread basket. Parker is the Worthy’s name—and I must do him the justice to say he deals as plainly with the high as the low—in this respect I find no fault but altogether I think however good his motives—that he goes much too bluntly...”

Becoming aware of the unfriendly attitude of the men of the caravan towards him and Parker, Whitman became concerned. How would it be possible for the two to cross the plains and the mountains unless they had the goodwill and the cooperation of Fontenelle and his men? Since he had become engaged to Narcissa Prentiss, Whitman was naturally taking note of travel conditions to see if it would be possible to take a white woman across the country to Oregon. If he were to get married and if at least one other married couple would join them, they would have to travel under the protection of the Fur Company’s caravan after leaving the Missouri frontier. Whitman knew that if he and Parker could not win the respect of the men of the caravan, it would be impossible for any mission party with women to contemplate an overland journey to Oregon the following year.
Alert to the problem, Whitman overexerted himself in helping the men of the caravan get their wagons over the swollen streams. He felt that this was one way of overcoming the growing hostility which was being shown, but he paid a heavy price. Writing in his journal on May 20, Whitman confessed: “Much afflicted with pain in my side which is much aggravated by fatigue.” On June 15, two weeks after the caravan had arrived at Bellevue, he again mentioned his ill health: “I have been quite sick yesterday and today.” All such discouragements and afflictions, combined with the continued hostility of the men and the liability of Parker’s attitude, made the outlook bleak. Whitman began to wonder if it would be possible for him and Parker to complete their projected exploring tour.

**THE DREAD CHOLERA STRIKES**

A couplet from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is here applicable:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,*
*Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.*

At Bellevue, in a sudden and unexpected way, the tide turned for Whitman when the dread cholera struck down some of the men of the caravan. As has been stated, Asiatic cholera was brought from Ireland to the Atlantic states in June 1832, and within a few months had spread across the country to St. Louis. The disease had reappeared with lessened virulence in 1833, but was worse in 1834. In some mysterious way, the deadly germs contaminated the drinking water used by Fontenelle and his men when they were encamped at Bellevue in June 1835.

Whitman’s journal tells the story. On June 16, he wrote: “My health is improved. Went to see a man for whom I was called last night but was unable to go. Found him in a hopeless collapse of cholera. Another case, the man laying on the bank of the river and in the evening exposed to a severe shower, soon after which he died.” On the 19th Whitman wrote: “There have been several new cases of cholera each day and one death last night. Mr. Fontanelle is sick with cholera.”

On June 21, in a letter to Narcissa, Whitman wrote: “For the last twelve days have been attending upon Mr. Fontanelle’s men; the cholera has raged severely among them; three only have died. Mr. Fontanelle...
is sick with it himself, but now convalescent. He has a house and farm half a mile below here, where his men have been, some encamped, and some in his buildings. It is not strange that they should have the cholera because of their intemperance, their sunken and filthy situation.”

Although we have no evidence that Whitman had actually treated a case of cholera while practicing medicine at Wheeler, it is evident that he had been close enough to the Erie Canal and other focal points of infection to become informed about the symptoms of the disease and the best ways to treat it. He had learned that contagion was connected with intemperance and lack of cleanliness. He knew the importance of good clean drinking water, and he knew the most appropriate medication to be used. When Fontenelle called upon Whitman for help, Whitman at once recommended that the men be moved from the low bottom lands bordering the river, where the water supply had evidently become polluted, to “a clean, healthy situation” on higher ground. This stopped the spread of the disease.

Looking back on those days, Parker commented in his Journal: “Three of the company died; and several others barely survived, through the blessing of God upon the assiduous attentions of Doct. Whitman, my associate, and the free use of powerful medicines. And, had it not been for his successful practice, the men would have dispersed, and the caravan would have failed of going to the place of rendezvous. This was plainly seen and frankly acknowledged.”

After the death of the three men, all others who had been stricken, including Fontenelle, recovered. A magical change of attitude towards the missionaries took place. There were no more throwing of rotten eggs at them, no more taunts because of their temperance principles, and no more harassments. Dr. Whitman became the most respected man in the caravan. Parker was tolerated for Whitman’s sake. Both Whitman and Parker viewed the cholera epidemic, as far as they were concerned, as being providential. “The medical skill of the Doctor,” wrote Parker, “converted those [who had been hostile] into permanent friends.”

Four years later, Whitman in a letter to Greene likewise stressed the providential aspects of the epidemic by writing: “At this place the Lord had a great change for us, for the Cholera appearing in camp, my aid was greatly sought. Mr. F. himself being one of the subjects of the disease and recovering (as also most of his men), he showed his gratitude, as
well as all other persons concerned in the company, by bestowing upon us every favor in his power” [Letter 62].

What if there had been no cholera outbreak at Bellevue: Would the two missionaries have been able to continue their exploring tour to the Rockies that summer? What if Whitman had been a minister and not a doctor? Would he have been able to overcome the hostility of the company and so win the friendship of Fontenelle that it was possible for the mission party of the following year, which included two women, to travel with the caravan to the Rendezvous? This is doubtful. From all available evidence, it is safe to conclude that Whitman’s skill as a doctor in dealing with the cholera epidemic at Bellevue made possible the establishment of the Oregon Mission of the American Board in 1836.

FROM BELLEVUE TO THE RENDEZVOUS

The friction which had arisen between Whitman and Parker during the trek from Liberty to Bellevue threatened to end their missionary tour at the latter place. Whitman insisted on buying another mule and hiring a man to help in packing and unpacking. Parker was opposed to such extra costs. His determination to keep the expenses of the exploring tour to a minimum may have reflected some promise that he had made to Secretary Greene, whom he had seen in Boston in the fall of 1834.

Whitman, knowing that they would have to carry enough food for at least three weeks, until they arrived at the buffalo range, in addition to other equipment and supplies, continued to insist on the absolute necessity of having a second pack animal. In his letter of May 1839, Whitman gave Greene the following details: “After much entreaty I received for a reply, You may purchase one if you will take the responsibility.’ I replied, No, Mr. P. not under such circumstances. In such a situation I cannot go any farther.’ After that he reluctantly consented to buy one, but would not hire a man to assist in packing, although we were repeatedly urged to do it.” It is evident that Fontenelle was one who recommended that the two missionaries hire a packer.

Whitman faced the eight-week journey to the Rendezvous with a heavy heart as he realized that most if not all of the labor connected with packing and unpacking, setting up camp and preparing meals, would devolve upon him. On June 22, the day he and Parker left Bellevue, Whitman wrote in his journal: “My health is feeble,” and then bravely
added, “but I am not discouraged.”

After being delayed by the cholera outbreak for a full three weeks, Fontenelle was eager to be on his way even though some of his men were not fully recovered. On Sunday, June 21, he moved the caravan a short distance out of Bellevue into the prairie. The trail that he planned to follow paralleled somewhat the north bank of the Platte River to its forks, about three hundred miles west of Bellevue, and then up the North Fork to Fort Laramie. This trading post, located at the mouth of Laramie Creek, was founded only the year before, 1834, and is not to be confused with present-day Laramie, Wyoming, which lies about eighty miles to the southwest.\textsuperscript{16}

The buffalo range began in the vicinity of what is now North Platte, Nebraska, at the forks of the Platte, which was a good three weeks march from Bellevue. The long delay at Bellevue had meant a serious depletion of Fontenelle’s food supplies, hence the urgency to be on their way and get to the buffalo range as soon as possible. After reaching buffalo, the men would live almost exclusively on meat.

Having conscientious scruples about traveling on Sunday unless it was absolutely necessary, Whitman and Parker remained in camp at Bellevue on the day that Fontenelle left. Both men knew, however, that as soon as the caravan entered the Indian country, they would have to stay with it on Sundays as well as other days of the week for safety’s sake. On Monday, June 22, the two men started their westward march and easily caught up with the caravan before evening.

Parker, like Whitman, made rough notes along the way which became the basis for the report he submitted to the Board on June 25, 1837.\textsuperscript{17} He used both these rough notes and his report in the writing of his \textit{Journal of an Exploring Tour} which was first published in 1838. A comparison of Whitman’s journal and his letters, written shortly after his return to Rushville in the fall of 1835, with Parker’s writings reveals some striking differences in their respective attitudes toward the objectives of their tour.

Whitman was the practical person, mindful of his engagement to Narcissa Prentiss and concerned with the problems involved in taking her together with one or more other married couples across the prairies and over the Rockies to Oregon. He saw the importance of establishing a good rapport with the leaders of the American Fur Company’s
caravan. He also wanted to make sure that the hardships of horseback travel, when the women would be riding on side-saddles, would not be too much for them to endure. Of course Indian women had crossed the mountains but they, like the Indian men, rode astride. The Spanish, in what is now southwestern United States, had taken their wives over the Continental Divide but they too may have ridden astride. Certainly the mountains in the south were not as rugged as those north of what was then the Mexican border. Whitman knew that no white woman had ever crossed those rugged and little known mountains which lay north of the border. Was such an endeavor feasible? This he wanted to investigate.

Parker, on the other hand, had no such concern in mind. He was not planning to establish any particular mission. He was on an exploring tour and was viewing the whole scene on a grand scale. He had an observant eye and an inquiring mind. He gathered a myriad of facts regarding the physical features of the country, its geology, fauna, flora, climate, the customs of the Indians, and the activities of the fur companies. Although of great value to Americans interested in Oregon, Parker’s explorations and published journal proved to be of little use to the American Board or to its Oregon missionaries.

The combined testimony of Whitman and Parker through their respective accounts give us some vivid descriptions of the experiences and hardships endured on the trail. At the end of their first day’s ride after leaving Bellevue, Parker noted: “In the afternoon we had to ride in a heavy, cold rain, in consequence of which I became much chilled. We overtook the caravan, and encamped on a high prairie, where we could find but little wood, and it was difficult to make a fire. We had for supper coarse bread made of corn, and some bacon. The change from the comforts to the bare necessities of life was trying... On the 23d, the storm still continued, and we did not remove our encampment.”

Fontenelle got the caravan on the march again about noon on the 24th but before the men could make camp in the late afternoon, they were drenched with another heavy rain. Whitman wrote that evening in his journal after they had made camp during the storm: “The water ran across our tent like a brook, so that we could not lay down until late, and then cover ourselves with wet blankets.”

The caravan made slow progress partly because of the inclement weather and also due to the difficulties involved in taking six heavily
loaded wagons over the soggy prairie. The Elkhorn River was crossed on the 26th in a boat made by covering one of the wagon boxes with buffalo skins. The Loup Fork of the Platte was forded on July 1, and on the 4th, the caravan arrived at a large Pawnee Indian village and camped near it. “We were invited to three feasts,” wrote Whitman, “two of boiled corn, and one of dried buffalo meat.” Here Whitman and Parker met Allis and Dunbar, who had gone out to the frontier with Parker the preceding year, and who were then traveling with the Pawnee Indians. There on the prairie of what is now eastern Nebraska, Whitman became aware of some of the problems and difficulties which missionaries faced in trying to evangelize roving bands of Indians. These were problems which he would have to face later in Old Oregon.

“How solitary is the situation of Messrs. Dunbar and Allis,” he wrote in his journal, “each with different bands.”

Whitman’s ill health continued. He referred to it in his journal for July 7 and on the 13th wrote: “I have had dysentery for several days so that it was with great difficulty I could travel with the company.” Parker, however, made no reference to this in his journal. Four years later when Whitman was stung by Parker’s criticism, he wrote to Greene saying: “Soon after passing the Pawnees, I was taken sick with a painful bowel complaint. Being often obliged to stop, I fell in the rear of camp, & was unable to overtake them again until they had long been encamped for I was too weak to ride faster than a walk. I must have failed by the way had it not been for one of the Companies Clerks who kindly kept me company & assisted me in mounting & dismounting.

“Before I was able to stand, I was obliged to do our cooking or else do without eating, for I do not recollect that Mr. P. ever got a meal during my sickness either for himself or me, but went to eat with Mr. F. & it was only by the favour of his cook that I obtained a little food occasionally. During this time, Mr. P. was obliged to pack the animals, which task he found himself very unskillful & poorly able to perform. I write thus to show how unfit it was for us to be without an experienced servant” [Letter 62].

Parker in his June 1837 report to the Board gave the following account of their “Mode of travelling:” “At break of day the call is made, out, out, gear up your mules.’ We get on our way about sunrise, travel on until about the middle of the day and stop for breakfast21—our horses
and mules are turned out for about two hours to feed upon the prairies, under guard. In the afternoon we travel until about two hours sun, when we encamp for the night—the animals are again turned out until near dark, when they are taken up and staked out with twelve or fifteen feet of rope, in a hollow square, formed by the river on one side—three wagons on one side, extending back to the river, and three on the opposite side, and the packs in the rear. Guards are placed around the square, relieved every two hours during the night. This is done to keep hostile Indians from falling upon us by surprise, or from stealing our horses.” He also wrote: “We were permitted, by favor, to pitch our tent next to the river, half way between the two wings, which made our situation a little more retired.” Here we see clear evidence of Fontenelle’s appreciation of Whitman in assigning a man to help during his illness and in giving the missionaries a favored camping site.

The first buffalo was killed on July 13, a little over three weeks after the caravan had left Bellevue. By this time the men were almost out of food. After reaching the buffalo range, the men lived almost exclusively on buffalo meat. On July 20, Parker noted in his journal that he had participated in a buffalo hunt and that he had shot and wounded one. Although Parker did not so indicate, we can assume that another person killed the animal. There is no evidence that Whitman ever took part in a buffalo hunt. He was by conviction opposed to the use of force and would not engage in hunting wild animals unless the demand for food required it. He took no pleasure in seeing the buffalo killed and let others shoot what were necessary to provide food for the caravan.

The caravan arrived at Fort Laramie on July 20, which was about two-thirds of the way from Liberty to the Rendezvous. Here the wagons were left and the baggage transferred to pack animals. At this point, Thomas Fitzpatrick relieved Fontenelle as captain of the caravan.

Before parting company with Fontenelle, Whitman asked for his bill for giving the two missionaries protection while crossing the plains from Bellevue. According to Parker, Fontenelle refused to even think of making such a charge and told Whitman: “If any one is indebted, it is myself, for you have saved my life, and the lives of my men.” In a letter to Andrew Drips, one of the partners in the American Fur Company who was awaiting the arrival of the caravan at the Rendezvous, Fontenelle recommended that special care and attention be given to Whitman and
Parker and to “…the Doctor particularly. He has been of great service to us.” 27 Fontenelle praised Whitman to Fitzpatrick. During the journey from Fort Laramie to the Rendezvous, a friendship grew up between Whitman and Fitzpatrick which proved to be of great value the next year when the mission party of five, including two women, crossed the plains and the Rockies with the caravan then under Fitzpatrick’s command.

The caravan started out on the last segment of its journey on August 1. The trail followed the south bank of the North Fork of the Platte until it crossed the river at a point a few miles southwest of present-day Casper, Wyoming, whence it followed the north bank of the Sweetwater River to the summit of the Rockies. The caravan passed that great landmark on the Oregon Trail, Independence Rock, on August 7, and rode through South Pass on the 10th.

The Pass, which became the great mountain gateway to Old Oregon, lies at an elevation of about 7,550 feet. The ascent is so gradual that the exact summit can be located only with difficulty. Parker that day wrote in his journal: “It [i.e., the Pass] varies in width from two to fifteen miles... Though there are some elevations and depressions in this valley, yet comparatively speaking, it is level.” Then with prophetic insight, Parker added: “There would be no difficulty in the way of constructing a rail-road from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean.” 28

**At the 1835 Rendezvous**

Books could be written about the way changing fashions in men’s and women’s clothing have affected the economy and even the history of our country. For several centuries the beautiful fur of the beaver has been an important item of dress and adornment both in America and abroad. Since the European species of beaver became almost extinct in the 17th century, the fur of the American species, *Castor canadensis*, was in great demand. When it became known that vast numbers of these animals were to be found in the Rocky Mountains of both Canada and the United States, several fur companies were organized which vied with each other in the scramble for the rich rewards found in the sale of beaver pelts. Sometimes the rivalry of these contending companies led to violence and even to bloodshed.

In Canada the Hudson’s Bay Company, which had been chartered in 1670, secured exclusive rights to the fur trade of Old Oregon when it
absorbed the North West Company in 1821. The Hudson’s Bay Company had its Canadian headquarters at Lachine, nine miles from Montreal. The Company partitioned British America into four great departments. The Columbia Department covered the Columbia River Valley and, after 1825, the Pacific slope of what is now Canada, then called New Caledonia. Fort Vancouver, located on the north bank of the Columbia River near the mouth of the Willamette River, became the headquarters of the Columbia Department. The furs collected at that place were sent by sea to the Orient or to England.

The American Fur Company, chartered in 1808 by John Jacob Astor, was organized to compete with the great fur companies of Canada. Branch headquarters were established in St. Louis in 1822. The history of the American fur companies is complex during the third and fourth decades of the 19th century. For our purpose it is sufficient to say that Astor retired from the fur trade in 1834 and by 1835 the American Fur Company was supreme in the mountain fur trade. Since the Americans did not have the advantage enjoyed by the British of being able to ship their furs to various markets by sea, they had to carry their furs out of the Rockies on pack animals. In order to collect the pelts from the hundreds of trappers which the several American fur companies employed, annual gatherings were held during the midsummer at some previously appointed place in the Rockies called the Rendezvous. Sixteen of these gatherings took place beginning in 1825 and ending with a small, unsponsored gathering of trappers in 1840. During the peak years in the history of the American Fur Company, 1835–38, annual caravans consisting of several hundred pack animals loaded with supplies from civilization and under the care of fifty or sixty men would leave the Missouri frontier as early in May as conditions permitted for the mountains. At the Rendezvous the supplies would be traded for furs which would then be taken back to St. Louis.

Most of the Rendezvous were held west of the Continental Divide, the favorite place being on Green River, a tributary of the Colorado, near what is now Daniel, Wyoming. Here was a well watered meadow, some twelve miles long and about ten miles wide. This provided an ideal pasture to accommodate large herds of horses. Sometimes as many as five thousand Indians would be present; if each Indian had two horses, this would mean ten thousand animals. In addition were the horses and
mules belonging to the trappers and to the Fur Company’s caravan. Thus a large meadow was a necessity. The location on Green River was one of surpassing beauty. To the east was the imposing Wind River range with Fremont Peak rising to a height of 13,700 feet. Although the Rendezvous was an event unique to the American fur trade, the Hudson’s Bay Company would often send small parties to these gatherings from their trading posts in the Columbia River Valley.

The Indians who attended the Rendezvous came from such still friendly tribes as the Shoshones or Snakes, the Bannocks, the Nez Perces, the Cayuses, the Flatheads, and sometimes the Utes. Most of the trappers, also called mountain men, had a native wife—sometimes more than one. The Rendezvous was the great social event of the year for these men. Most of the year, they had lived in lonely isolation, but now with their wives and half-breed children, they assembled not only to trade their pelts for supplies but also to celebrate. The Hudson’s Bay Company tried to prevent the bartering of liquor to the Indians or to the mountain men for furs, but the American companies had no such scruples. Large quantities of whisky were carried by the caravans to the Rendezvous in barrels especially made to fit over the curvature of a horse’s back. For some ten days or two weeks, there would be intermingled with business dealings—drinking, carousing, horse racing, gambling, philandering, and fighting.

A vivid description of the Rendezvous of 1834 held on Ham’s Fork of Green River has been given us by the naturalist, John K. Townsend, who wrote from personal observation. With particular reference to the mountain men, he wrote: “These people with their obstreperous mirth; their whooping, and howling, and quarreling, added to the mounted Indians who are constantly dashing into and through our camp, yelling like fiends; the barking and baying of savage wolf-dogs, and the incessant crackling of rifles and carbines render our camp a perfect bedlam.” He also commented on the “jargon of drunken traders... the swearing and screaming of our own men, who are scarcely less savage than the rest, being heated by the detestable liquor which circulates freely among them.”

All trading was done on a barter basis. Beaver pelts were valued from five to eight dollars each, depending upon size and quality. Prices for the goods brought from the States were high. Townsend wrote that
tobacco which sold for ten cents a pound in Philadelphia brought $2.00 at the Rendezvous. Whiskey sold for $2.00 a pint even when diluted; three awls brought fifty cents; and a blanket $25.00.33

For nearly two decades after 1815, the fashionable headpiece for men was the high beaver hat with a crown of varying shape and a narrow rolling brim. But when Prince Albert of England in the early 1830s preferred the silk hat to the beaver hat, this doomed the beaver trade. Perhaps the change came just in time to save the Rocky Mountain beaver from the fate of its European cousin. Only about two hundred trappers attended the 1835 Rendezvous and their supply of pelts was smaller than that of the previous year. The beaver trade had already started to decline.

By another of those coincidences of history, which the devout Christian might call the providence of God, the Fur Company's caravans were still crossing the plains during the summers of 1835, 1836, and 1838, thus providing protection for the missionaries of the American Board who traveled to Old Oregon during those years. Without such protection in hostile Indian country east of the Rockies, there might have been no Oregon Mission of the American Board.

The 1835 caravan with Whitman and Parker finally arrived at the Green River Rendezvous on Wednesday, August 12, about a month behind schedule. It was greeted with uproarious enthusiasm by the impatient trappers and by about 2,000 Indians [Letter 11]. The weather at that altitude was already beginning to turn cold. Parker noted that the thermometer stood at 24° on the morning of the 11th. Even before the trading for furs and supplies could begin, the casks of whiskey had to be opened and the carousing began. Both Whitman and Parker were dismayed to see the demoralizing effects of the liquor traffic, not only upon the mountain men, but upon the Indians as well. The hard life of the trappers took a terrific toll. Parker reported that the attrition rate among them amounted to about one-third each year.34

Upon Whitman's return to the States, he wrote to Greene on December 28 and gave considerable information as to the extent of the liquor traffic. “All the present regulations upon this point are disregarded or evaded,” he said, “and I fear all further regulations will be equally ineffectual.” Whitman sensed the fact that the hesitancy of some of the officials of the American Fur Company, including Fontenelle, to
extend a cordial welcome to the missionaries was the feeling that “our object would always be regarded as opposed to their interests.” In this letter to Greene, Whitman suggested that perhaps the American Board could lay pressure on the Government to take some steps to curb the evil, but warned: “You are aware of the delicacy of this subject to one who is liable to be exposed to opposition of Traders.”

At the Rendezvous Whitman and Parker were introduced to the buckskin dress worn by the Indians and whites alike. The day came when Whitman likewise wore buckskin. The fringes below the neck across the back, at the bottom of the jacket, at the end of the sleeves and trouser legs were not just for ornament but rather to facilitate the draining of water. Water drains better from points than from a straight edge; this may he the reason why our Creator gave us eyelashes.

**DR. WHITMAN’S OPERATION**

Among the colorful characters at the 1835 Rendezvous was Jim Bridger, one of the most famous of the mountain men. He had been a member of a trappers’ party which had a skirmish with the Blackfeet Indians at Pierre’s Hole on July 18, 1832 in what is now known as Teton Basin in Idaho near the Wyoming border. A few days later Bridger was in another skirmish with the Blackfeet at which time he was wounded, receiving an arrowhead in his back. Incidentally, it is evident which way Bridger was going when the arrow struck.

The three-inch arrowhead remained in Bridger’s back for three years until Whitman removed it on August 13, 1835. Parker described the operation: “It was a difficult operation, because the arrow was hooked at the point by striking a large bone and a cartilaginous substance had grown around it. The Doctor pursued the operation with great selfpossession and perseverance; and his patient manifested equal firmness.” This operation, perhaps the first ever to be performed by an American-trained physician west of the Rockies, came eleven years before the blessed effects of anesthesia were first demonstrated in the United States.

Parker’s account continues: “The Doctor also extracted another arrow from the shoulder of one of the hunters, which had been there two years and a half. His reputation becoming favorably established, calls for medical and surgical aid were almost incessant.” Even some of the
Indians sought his help. Here was a medicine man greater than they had ever seen, whose skill was magic in their eyes. Whitman carried back with him to the States a stone arrowhead taken from some Indian’s body which the author saw in the summer of 1955 when he visited its owner who lived near Rushville.

Due attention has never been given to the important connection between Whitman’s medical and surgical ability and the founding of the Oregon Mission of the American Board. We find several instances in the history of Protestant foreign missions where some land hostile to the introduction of Christianity has been opened because of the skill of a missionary doctor. This was true of Korea where a missionary doctor performed a successful operation on a member of the royal family and, as a result, the land was opened to Christian missionaries. So may it be said of Old Oregon.

The fact that Whitman saved the caravan of 1835 at Bellevue prepared the way for the mission party of 1836, which included women, to cross the plains in safety. Now at the Rendezvous, Whitman in his open-air clinic won the respect and admiration of mountain men and Indians alike. Friendships were begun which continued through the remaining years of Whitman’s life. Two mountain men whom Whitman first met at the Rendezvous of 1835 were Jim Bridger and Joe Meek; each of them in later years sent a half-breed daughter to the Whitman mission to be cared for and educated. Moreover, the reputation that Whitman gained among the natives was an important factor in the warm welcome given the members of the 1836 mission party by both the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians.

WHITMAN AND PARKER SEPARATE

On Sunday, August 16, Whitman and Parker met with the principal men of the Nez Perce and Flathead tribes and explained the object of their visit. A French Canadian mountain man, Charles Compo, who had a Nez Perce wife, may have been their interpreter. Without a doubt, references were made to the Nez Perce delegation which had gone with Fontenelle to St. Louis four years earlier. When Whitman sent the journal of his overland travels to Greene, he gave Fontenelle’s account of the delegation, and quoted him as saying that the Indians went “to gain religious knowledge” [Letter 11].
Whitman and Parker asked the Indians if they had met the Jason Lee party which passed through the Rockies the previous year. They replied that “they never heard of the Methodist missionaries.” It may be that the two men misunderstood what the Indians said; we do have evidence that Lee met with some of the Cayuses and some Nez Perces at the Rendezvous of 1834 and also later at Fort Walla Walla. A Scottish adventurer, Sir William Drummond Stewart, who had traveled with the Wyeth party and the Lees to the Willamette Valley the previous year, was present at the 1835 Rendezvous. He told Whitman that on the advice of Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, the Methodist missionaries had decided to settle in the Willamette Valley. Hence, the Nez Perce field was still open for Protestant missionaries, free of any denominational competition.

Whitman wrote in his journal on August 16: “We had a talk with the chiefs of the Flathead and Napiersas [i.e., Nez Perce] tribes, in which they expressed great pleasure in seeing us and strong desires to be taught. Little Chief of the Flatheads said he was greatly rejoiced when he heard there was a teacher from the Almighty and a physician coming among them:… He had been told some things he said about the worship of God but he did not practice them. But now, if a teacher would come among them, he and his children (meaning all over whom he had authority) would obey all he should say.”

Parker reported: “The first chief of the Nez Perces, Tai-quin-su-watish, arose and said, He had heard from white men a little about God, which had only gone into his ears; he wished to know enough to have it go down into his heart, to influence his life, and to teach his people.’ Others spoke to the same import, and they all made as many promises as we could desire.”

Tai-quin-su-watish, known to Whitman and Spalding as Tack-en-sua-tis, was nicknamed Rotten Belly by the trappers. This unsavory title was due to a severe stomach wound he had received in the Battle of Pierre’s Hole. The nickname continued long after the festering wound had healed. Chief Tackensuatis was to be one of the most enthusiastic friends of the missionaries during the first years of the Oregon Mission of the American Board, but later his attitude changed.

Whitman and Parker were deeply stirred by the earnestness and sincerity of the Indians and by their evident eagerness for Christian
teaching. All that they learned in this conference confirmed the Walker-Disosway report which had appeared in the March 1, 1833, issue of the New York Christian Advocate. Following their conference with the chiefs of the Flathead and Nez Perce tribes on Sunday, August 16, Whitman wrote in his journal: “After mutual conversation and prayer with reference to these tribes, and being satisfied there were no missionaries of any denomination among them, I said to Mr. Parker if we had another associate with us, I should like to return home and, if the Board should approve, come out next year with others to establish a mission among them.”

Much to Whitman’s surprise, Parker gave immediate approval to the suggestion that Whitman return for associates while he continued on the exploring tour. Knowing Parker’s ineptitude in packing and the fact that he was then in his fifty-seventh year, Whitman at first was skeptical of the wisdom of having him continue the tour alone. Parker insisted that it would be perfectly safe for him to travel with the Nez Perce Indians to their homeland. Whitman asked what the people in the States would say if some accident befell him. Parker replied: “I told him to give himself no uneasiness upon this subject, for we could not go safely together without divine protection, and with it, I could go alone.” 40 This was a courageous attitude to take. All honor to him!

William H. Gray, who went out to Oregon with the Whitman-Spalding party in 1836, in his History of Oregon, suggested that a subdued friction had developed between the two men which made Parker desirous of going his own way alone. Gray wrote: “The peculiarities of Messrs. Parker and Whitman were such, that, when they had reached the rendezvous on Green River… they agreed to separate; not because Dr. Whitman was not willing and anxious to continue the exploring expedition in company with Mr. Parker, but because Mr. P. could not put up’ with the off-hand, careless, and, as he thought, slovenly manner in which Dr. Whitman was inclined to travel.” 41

Perhaps the most important factor which induced Whitman to consent to Parker’s daring proposal to separate was his desire to return home, be married, find associates, and lead a mission party to Oregon in the spring and summer of 1836. Whitman was convinced that travel conditions across the plains and even over the Rockies presented no serious obstacle for women.
In his report to Greene, he wrote: “There were 20 wagons at one time from St. Louis at the place where the company rendezvoused last summer” [Letter 11]. Realizing that nearly 2,000 miles separated the Missouri frontier from Fort Walla Walla and being fully aware that custom then demanded white women should ride on side-saddles rather than astride, Whitman reasoned that wherever a wagon could go, a woman could go. If she grew weary riding side-saddle, let her ride in the wagon. Being thus convinced that it was indeed feasible for women to cross the Rockies if a light wagon could be taken along, Whitman was eager to return home and get married. Whitman’s immediate concern was for the safety and comfort of Parker should he continue with the exploring project with the Indians.

Whitman and Parker met with the Nez Perces on Monday, the 17th of August. Since the Flatheads were not included in the consultations of that day, this indicates that the two men had decided that it was best, in view of the slender resources of the American Board, to limit their attention to one tribe. Regarding this meeting, Whitman informed the Board: “They expressed great satisfaction that I should return and see if others would come and live among them and teach them and readily promised the necessary escort to Mr. Parker, together with assistance to pack and drive his animals” [Letter 11].

Parker gives confirming testimony in his journal: “They were much pleased and promised to assist me, and to send a convoy with me from their country to Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River. They selected one of their principal young men for my particular assistant, as long as I should have need of him, who was called Kentuc; and I engaged a voyageur, who understood English, and also the Nez Perce language sufficiently well to interpret common business, and some of the plain truths of our holy religion, to go with me while I should continue with these tribes.”

Kentuc (or Kentucky) was a fun-loving young Nez Perce who was so named by the trappers because of his efforts to sing a popular ballad “The Hunters of Kentucky.” The voyageur was Charles Compo. Satisfied with the arrangements that had been made with the Indians for Parker’s welfare, Whitman gave his final consent to the plan. Since the Nez Perces were eager to be on their way, the missionaries found that they had but four days in which to prepare for their separation.
Letters had to be written by Parker for Whitman to carry back to the States. Whitman turned over to Parker both of their pack animals with most of the camping equipment, keeping only his riding horse and the barest essentials. Needing a pack animal, he made inquiry and found that a good horse at the Rendezvous sold for $100.00, which was more than he felt justified in asking the Board to pay. He finally bought a decrepit animal for $5.00 but, as he later explained to Greene, the horse “was a disgrace to any man to pack on account of his extreme sore back” [Letter 62]. A mitigating factor was the lightness of Whitman’s pack.

Criticism has sometimes been made that the missionaries forced themselves upon the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians. Contemporary evidence is all to the contrary. The Protestant thrust into the Old Oregon country came as the result of the appeal made by the Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis in 1831. Both Whitman and Parker in their respective journals and letters, when commenting on their experiences at the 1835 Rendezvous, testified as to the eagerness of the Indians for missionaries. Nothing was said by the natives regarding land for mission sites. This was apparently something that all took for granted. Since at that time the Indians knew nothing about the white man’s custom of securing legal titles to certain parcels of land, this simply was not an issue. In general the Indians promised to do all that they could to induce the missionaries to settle among them. Whitman received assurances that if he found associates and brought them to the 1836 Rendezvous, the Nez Perces would escort them to Fort Walla Walla.

**Whitman Selects Two Nez Perce Boys to Return with Him**

At the August 17 meeting with the Nez Perces, Whitman suggested that he take back to the States with him a Nez Perce lad by the name of Tack-i-too-tis or Tack-it-ton-i-tis whom he renamed Richard. After some discussion regarding the advantages of giving the youth some education and a chance to learn the English language, the boy’s father consented. Whitman later explained to Greene: “My reason for taking him is that he can speak the English language a little and by being with white people he will soon speak so as to interpret or assist in learning his language” [Letter 11].

Three days later another Nez Perce chief begged Whitman to take
his son, Ais, also. “The father said,” wrote Whitman, “he had but one more son, but he was willing to part with this one that he might be taught the religion of the whites or the Christian religion.” Whitman was doubtful of the wisdom of taking two Indian boys back to the States with him, but Parker urged him to do so and suggested that the second lad could stay with his family in Ithaca. Finally being convinced that it would prove helpful in the future to have two boys who could speak English and who would have some knowledge of Christianity, Whitman consented. Ais was renamed John.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between the sending of Spokane Garry and Kootenai Pelly to the Red River Mission school in 1825 and Whitman’s taking the two Nez Perce boys, Richard and John, with him to the States in 1835. In both instances the boys were sent to a school where they would learn English with the expectation of being used later as interpreters, and also with the hope that they would be taught the Christian religion.

Before Whitman and Parker parted, they witnessed a duel fought by two mountain men, Kit Carson and a French bully called Shunar. Parker tells the story and thus introduces for the first time in the literature of the West the name of Kit Carson. The two men fought with pistols, each being on horseback. Both fired almost simultaneously. Shunar’s bullet passed over Carson’s head. According to Parker: “C’s ball entered S’s hand, came out at the wrist, and passed through the arm above the elbow.” As Carson was reloading preparing to fire again, Shunar begged for his life and the duel was over. The savage incident gave Whitman another patient.

On Friday, August 21, the Nez Perces moved their camp three miles, thus beginning their homeward march. Whitman went along and spent the night with Parker. The next morning the two men parted, never to meet again. With a heavy heart Whitman returned to the Rendezvous. That day he wrote in his journal: “Mr. Parker went on this morning, after we had unitedly sought the blessing and guidance of God. He went on with firmness. I regretted exceedingly to see him go alone, but so we have decided, hoping more fully to advance the cause of our divine master.” Whitman’s return meant that a mission could be established in Oregon at least a year earlier than would have been possible had he continued with Parker.
The Return Journey

The caravan loaded with a year’s harvest of furs left the Rendezvous for Fort Laramie under Fitzpatrick’s leadership on August 27. With the caravan were some eighty-five mountain men who were returning to civilization. Among these was Robert Newell who later played an important role in Oregon’s history. He bore the nickname “Doc” because of some skill he had in minor surgery and in the use of a few simple remedies. A friendship developed between Newell and Whitman on this eastward journey. Five years later a son born to Newell and his Nez Perce wife, was named Marcus Whitman. Here is further evidence of the favorable impression that Whitman made on his contemporaries.

The returning caravan arrived at Fort Laramie on September 8 where Fontenelle took over the command from Fitzpatrick. By September 3, the caravan was in the buffalo country, and a halt of three days was called in order for the men to kill buffalo and dry the meat for the remainder of the journey. On or about October 10, Whitman left the caravan and rode on ahead to a trading post conducted by Jean Pierre Cabanné about ten miles above present-day Omaha. There he had the pleasure of meeting Dunbar and Allis with whom he spent a Sunday before continuing to Bellevue. Both Dunbar and Allis were engaged to be married and they asked Whitman to escort their fiancées to Liberty the next spring. This he promised to do.

Having made previous arrangements with Fontenelle, Whitman left his horses and those belonging to the Indian boys to be wintered with the Fur Company’s animals on the Missouri bottom lands near Bellevue. Through the courtesy of Cabanné, free passage was given to Whitman and the boys on a boat which left Bellevue on October 20 for St. Louis. The boat arrived at Fort Leavenworth on the 26th, where Whitman met Colonel Henry Dodge and received confirming information from him about the feasibility of taking wagons over the Rockies [Letter 11].

Whitman and the Indian boys landed in St. Louis on November 4. Here the letters Parker had written to the Board and to his family, which Whitman had carried, were forwarded. Whitman wrote to Greene on the 7th and told him of the decision that he and Parker had made at the Rendezvous to separate—Parker to continue on his exploring tour and he to return for associates. Whitman stressed the friendly attitude of the
Indians, reporting that the Nez Perces were “remarkably well disposed and exceedingly anxious to receive instruction.”

He further stated: “They say they have always been unhappy since they have become informed of the religion of the whites; they do not understand it. It has only reached their ears; they wish it to affect their most vital parts. They are very much inclined to follow any advice given them by the whites and are ready to adopt anything that is taught them as religion.” Whitman expressed the hope that he could “return with others... next spring, if the Board should approve of it” [Letter 13].

In the closing paragraph of the report sent to Greene from Rushville on December 17, Whitman mentioned receiving contributions for the Board from an individual in Cincinnati and the Presbyterian Church at Erie, Pennsylvania. From such references we are able to trace out the route of his return journey. He traveled by river boat from St. Louis to Cincinnati; thence by stage to Cleveland; and then by boat or stage to Erie. Since there was in that day no means of rapid communication, Marcus had no way of sending advance word to Narcissa of his coming. When he arrived at Amity, he learned that the Prentiss family had moved about six miles to the north to a small village called Angelica. Judging by the time it took Whitman to go to St. Louis in the early spring of that year, he could hardly have arrived in Angelica before December 10, 1835.

No record remains of the joy that both Marcus and Narcissa felt on their meeting again. He had much to tell, and she was eager to listen. We can assume that he told about the cholera epidemic and of the assurances given by the American Fur Company for the safe conduct across the plains and the Rockies of any mission party, including women, which he might bring out in 1836. No doubt Marcus told about the great herds of buffalo which at times moved like dark clouds hugging the landscape. He surely would have mentioned the gentle approach to the Continental Divide through South Pass. The Rockies were not nearly as formidable as some had said. And what a topic for conversation—the buckskin clad mountain men and the thousands of Indians at the Rendezvous! No doubt he mentioned such men as Jim Bridger, Joe Meek, Kit Carson, and Doe Newell and perhaps he showed Narcissa the stone arrowhead he had extracted from an Indian which he had carried back as a souvenir.
A high point of his report to Narcissa would have been a description of the enthusiastic reception given to him and Parker by the Nez Perces. The Indians were eager for missionaries. The very presence of the two Indian boys, Richard and John, doubly emphasized this point. And finally Marcus would certainly have told how wheeled vehicles could be taken over the Rockies. He would have assured Narcissa and her parents that it was perfectly feasible for women to cross the Rockies, for wherever a wagon could go, a woman could go. There was then no valid reason why the two should not be married and go out to Oregon the next year with at least one other couple. Little imagination is needed to conjure up the thrilling stories Marcus was able to tell of his great adventure.

We know practically nothing of what Narcissa was able to tell Marcus regarding her experiences during their nine-month separation. She no doubt told of sending in her letter of application to the American Board on February 23, the day that Marcus had left for St. Louis. She would have been able to report that she had received notice of her appointment and that Secretary Greene had discreetly stated in his letter to her of March 19: “The particular tribe for whom you may labour & your location cannot of coarse be stated definitely at present.” After Marcus had explained the possibilities and the difficulties of women crossing the Rockies, Narcissa unhesitatingly indicated her readiness to be married and go with him to Oregon.

Realizing that it would be unwise for Narcissa to be the only woman in whatever mission party might be assembled, the next problem to be faced was that of finding at least one other couple to go with them. Among the possible candidates, Narcissa suggested the names of Henry and Eliza Spalding. Although we do not know whether Marcus at that time knew the Rev. Henry H. Spalding, we know that Narcissa did. As has been stated, Henry and Narcissa had grown up in Prattsburg, and had attended the same church and the same academy at the same time. Henry had proposed marriage and had been rejected. Later, Henry had married Eliza Hart and the two had been appointed by the American Board to be missionaries among the Osage Indians at a station near what is now Emporia, Kansas. Their departure had been delayed in 1835 because of the expected birth of a child. A stillborn baby girl was born to the Spaldings at Prattsburg on October 24 shortly before Marcus’ return from the Rockies. No doubt Narcissa knew of this.
The urgency of finding associates prompted Whitman to write to Spalding to see if he would be willing to change his destination and go with him and Narcissa to Oregon, provided the Board would give its consent. Although Whitman was taking the initiative in looking for associates, yet at the same time he was expecting the Board to help in the search.

After a short visit with Narcissa at Angelica, Whitman hastened on to Rushville. Mrs. Mary Alice Wisewell Caulkins, a daughter of Whitman’s only sister, has described how her uncle with the two Indian boys arrived at his mother’s home late on a Saturday evening, perhaps December 12. The family had retired for the night. Mrs. Caulkins wrote: “His mother, then Mrs. Loomis, hearing a noise, recognized his step and ran in her nightclothes to meet him.”

The household was soon aroused. The fire in the fireplace was stirred up. All present listened with rapt attention to the marvelous tales of adventure which Marcus had to relate. Mrs. Caulkins also wrote of an incident which took place the next morning: “A brother, Augustus, lived only across the street, but the Sabbath was so strictly observed that there was no communication between the two families on that day, so Augustus and his family were already in church without knowing that Marcus was in town.” When Marcus and the two Indian boys unexpectedly entered the church, sixteen-year-old Deborah Whitman broke the decorum of the meeting by suddenly jumping up and crying out: “Why, there’s Uncle Marcus!”

When Whitman agreed to take the two Nez Perce boys back to the States with him, Parker had suggested that one be left with his family in Ithaca. After a short visit with relatives in Rushville, Whitman took Richard and John to Ithaca. In his reminiscences of his father, Samuel J. Parker, M.D., wrote: “My recollections are that one day late in the fall of 1835, he came to my father’s house... and there was at the door the two Indian boys; that he said he had been a few days with his brother’s family at Rushville; and that the Indian boys could not bear to be separated.”

Even though Mrs. Parker had two sons living with her then—Samuel, seventeen, and Henry, thirteen—who could help take care of the Indian boys, she viewed the responsibility with considerable misgivings. Samuel J. remembered that several days were spent in consulting with members of the Ithaca Presbyterian Church, who no doubt promised to help, before Mrs. Parker consented to receive the boys into her home.
In his reminiscences, Samuel J. told of how the Nez Perces were always suspicious of all strangers, and especially those who might be carrying guns. Among the incidents related are the following: “…and what was amusing, these Indian boys were ever on the look-out for being murdered. As one day they came home on the most rapid run, having seen a codger’ with a gun just above Spring St. and another [time] while four or five of us were sporting on skates… a man with a gun hunting partridges, sent them off like the wind; into the cliffs of the creek, while we skated undisturbed.”

The Indian boys attended a school taught by Miss Emeline Palmer, who was engaged to Samuel Allis and who planned to go out to the Missouri frontier the next spring. She took a special interest in the lads. The strangeness of their environment and language difficulties brought problems. Sometime in January, Whitman returned to Ithaca and took Richard back to Rushville where, perhaps, he was placed in the home of his brother Augustus.

In Whitman’s letter to Greene written from Rushville on December 17, he reported the presence of the boys. Replying on the 30th, Greene wrote: “I think you will have cause to regret that you brought the two Indian boys with you. Our whole experience is against such a measure. The boys will probably be ruined by the attention they will receive They can hardly fail to occasion considerable expense.” Here is a good example of Greene’s straightforwardness in speaking his mind. As will be shown later, the two boys were of great help to the mission party on their westward journey the following summer. However, the high hopes of Whitman regarding the usefulness of the boys in the mission were not realized after their arrival in Old Oregon.

“We Could Cross the Mountains with a Wagon”

As has been stated, when Whitman wrote to Greene from St. Louis on November 7, 1835, he expressed his hope of finding associates and going out to Oregon the following spring if this met the approval of the Board. Although Whitman had said nothing in this letter of his desire to get married and take his wife with him over the Rockies, Greene was able to read between the lines. He replied on December 8 and asked: “Have you carefully ascertained & weighed the difficulties in the way of conducting females to those remote & desolate regions and comfortably
sustaining families there?... How are annual supplies to be obtained with such certainty that a family may safely depend upon them.”

David Greene was a hard-headed New Englander, a Yale graduate, and a Board career man, to whom the difficulties of escorting women over the Rockies to Oregon and sustaining a family in such “remote & desolate regions” seemed insurmountable. Yet he was willing to accept Whitman’s judgment. “You are better able to judge than we,” he wrote. “If there is no obstacle here, we will send as many suitable persons as can be found.” The final decision as to the feasibility and advisability of taking women over the Rockies and establishing homes in the Oregon wilderness was Whitman’s. In making the decision to venture forward, Whitman was assuming a degree of cooperation from the natives which at that time was untested and unpredictable.

Even before receiving Greene’s letter of December 8, Whitman had anticipated the questions which might be asked regarding the feasibility of taking women over the Rockies. Before mailing the journal of his travels to Greene, Whitman added a 2,000 word appendix in which he passed on important information about various western Indian tribes and commented especially on travel conditions. He answered three questions which he felt members of the Board would surely ask: (1) What protection was available for a mission party while crossing through hostile Indian territory? (2) What food supplies would be available to the members of a mission party while en route and after their arrival in Oregon? And (3) was it feasible to take women on a 1,900 mile trip after leaving the Missouri frontier across the plains and over the Rockies when they would have to ride on side-saddles most of the way?

Regarding protection for a mission party, he wrote: “I have every assurance [of traveling with the caravan] from Mr. Fontenelle if we should go out with him next year.” Whitman did not seem to be concerned about the need for protection for the part of the journey which stretched from the Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla.

Regarding food supplies, he explained: “Our subsistence would be such as we should take from the settlements to last us to Buffalo [i.e., the buffalo range]. We could take flour besides to last us in part to our destination. The Company would furnish us with meat from their hunters after we reach Buffalo... We could drive cows and other cattle without much if any expense and I would advise to take enough so that in case
of necessity we might kill some for beef after we arrived at our destination.” He added that after their arrival in Oregon, they could purchase supplies from the Hudson’s Bay Company with drafts on the American Board. Whitman knew that the Jason Lee party had driven a small band of cattle to Oregon in 1834.

As to the feasibility of taking women, Whitman wrote: “We could cross the mountains with a wagon.” The implication was clear: Wagons could be taken for the convenience of women should they grow weary riding on side-saddles.

What a contrast between Parker’s report of his exploring tour and Whitman’s factual and illuminating analysis of travel conditions. Parker looked into the future and prophesied that the day would come when a railroad would cross the Rockies. Whitman, considering the problems of the present, saw the possibility of taking wagons thus making it feasible for women to ride horseback over the mountains. In Whitman, the Board had unknowingly chosen a man well qualified to observe travel conditions and to make sound judgments regarding certain practical problems which a party of missionaries going overland to Oregon would have to face.

Whitman sent his journal with an accompanying letter to the Board from Rushville on December 17. Again he referred to the possibility of taking a wagon: “If you see fit to send [a] mission to the other side of the mountains, we can go as far as the Black Hills [i.e., Fort Laramie] with a wagon for the convenience of females and from that to rendezvous.” For a third time, in his letter to Greene of December 28, 1835, he repeated the reference to a wagon: “We should go as far as the Black Hills with a wagon.”

Greene, in his letter to Whitman dated December 30, frankly stated that the Board had found it difficult to recruit men willing to work in mission fields in America. Somehow the glamor of going overseas was more appealing. He wrote: “The patient, enduring, contented, unostentatious [person] whose love for God and the souls of men vents itself out, making no noise and never having their names heard of—these are the persons wanted for such a service.”

Oregon was then so far away and so isolated, that the prospect of making a journey of six months or more was frightening, especially for women. Mail service was spasmodic and uncertain. After their arrival
on the field, the missionaries discovered that it usually took two years for a letter to be sent by sailing ship around Cape Horn to the States and for a reply to be received. Moreover, some candidates for the mission field questioned the wisdom of spending a lifetime working with a tribe having only a few hundred or possibly a few thousand members, and learning their language, when the same effort could be spent on some foreign field as China or India where the people were settled in cities and where millions spoke the same tongue. This issue was raised by the Rev. A. B. Smith, a member of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission who settled among the Nez Perces in the upper Clearwater Valley. He came to the point where he deeply regretted his decision to go to the Nez Perces and wrote to Greene saying how much he wished he had gone to Siam.56

The year 1835 came to a close with Whitman engaged in doing what Parker had been doing just a year before—looking for missionaries, and especially for at least one married couple, who would be willing to go with him and Narcissa to Oregon. There was more urgency in Whitman’s search than in Parker’s—Whitman had promised to return the two Indian boys to their fathers in the summer of 1836. Since he wanted to be on his way to the Missouri frontier by the middle of February, Whitman had but six weeks to find some qualified couple who would accept his assurance that it was indeed possible for women to cross the Rockies.
Chapter 6 Footnotes

1 The late Dr. F. C. Waite and I visited the Chester County cemetery in the summer of 1935 where we found the tombstones of many of Whitman’s relatives and friends whom he had known in Massachusetts. John Packard’s tombstone states that he died April 11, 1843.

2 W.C.Q., II (1898):2:33, quotes Perrin Whitman as saying that his parents were then living at Deerfield, Ill. Samuel Whitman’s record book (see fn. 3, Chapter Three) clearly states that he was living at Danville and not Deerfield.

3 Original certificate is in Coll. W. See picture in Drury, Whitman, p. 88.

4 For the sake of clarity and consistency, corrections have occasionally been made in quotations taken from Whitman’s writings. Fontenelle’s name, for instance, has a variety of spellings. Whitman and others of his day usually spelled wagon with a double “g”—“waggon.”

5 Whitman College has no record as to the history of this item except that it was presented to the college in October 1949 by George A. Taber of Reading, Mass., who claimed that it was owned by Dr. Whitman. The inscription on the bag clearly indicates that it had once belonged to Parker.


7 Ibid., p. 46.

8 Ibid., p. 37.

9 See notation Letter 11, Appendix 1, regarding location of the two versions of Whitman’s journal.

10 This is one of the few references to bleeding found in Whitman’s writings.

11 The word “concert” was often used by Christians of Whitman’s day to indicate a prayer meeting, or “a concert of prayer.”

12 Parker, op. cit., p. 39.

13 Gray, Oregon, p. 107.


15 Parker, op. cit., p. 46.

16 Fort Laramie was sometimes called Fort William after the fur trader, William Sublette.

17 Samuel J. Parker, M.D., in his manuscript in Coll. B, stated that his father used two notebooks on the trail: “One that he carried in his pocket, quite small, made of sheets of paper cut, and sewed together with thread. 2nd. A red spotted paper-covered note-book… that he wrote fuller in and kept in his valise as he travelled.” All efforts to locate either or both of these notebooks have failed.

18 Parker, Journal, p. 47.

19 Hulbert, O.P., VI: 150 ff.

20 Ibid., p. 152.

21 The Fur Company’s caravan usually made two camps or marches a day. The morning march was usually shorter than that of the afternoon. This meant two meals a day.

22 Hulbert, O.P., VI:96.
23 Parker, *Journal*, p. 52.

24 Ibid., p. 61.

25 Fitzpatrick had been one of the exploring party that discovered South Pass in March 1824. He was known as “Broken Hand.” See L. R. Hafen and W. J. Ghent, *Broken Hand, Life Story of Thomas Fitzpatrick*, Denver, 1931.

26 Parker, *Journal*, p. 72.


28 Parker, *Journal*, p. 77. Parker died in 1866, three years before the first transcontinental railroad was completed but near enough to know that his prophecy would be fulfilled.


30 Only three of the Rendezvous were held for the full or partial period at some site east of the Continental Divide—1829, 1830, and 1838.

31 See L. R. Hafen (ed.), *Mountain Men and the Fur Trade*, 10 vols., Clark Co., Glendale, Calif., 1965–72. All of the mountain men mentioned in this work have biographical sketches in this set. The first reference that the author has been able to find which calls the trappers “mountain men” is in the diary of Mrs. Cushing Eells, April 30, 1838. See Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:75.


34 Parker, *Journal*, p. 189.

35 The term “hole” was used by the trappers to designate a part of a valley.


37 The use of ether was first demonstrated in this country in Boston in 1846.

38 Parker, in the first edition of his *Journal*, p. 77, wrote that calls for Dr. Whitman’s services “were constant every hour of the day.”

39 Parker to Greene, Aug. 17, 1835. Coll. A.

40 Parker, *Journal*, p. 82.

41 Ibid., p. 108.

42 Parker, *Journal*, p. 83.


44 Parker, *Journal*, p. 84.


47 Hulbert, O.P., VI:158.

48 Ibid., p. 142.

49 From Spalding’s family Bible, Pacific University, Forest Grove, Ore.

50 Mrs. Caulkins ms., Coll. Wn.
51 Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon* gives a different version of the incident, claiming that it was Whitman’s mother who exclaimed: “Well, well, there is Marcus Whitman.” Mowry in his *Marcus Whitman* and other writers have followed Nixon. The account given by the niece seems to be the true story.

52 Parker ms., Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.


54 Ibid., p. 170.

55 Ibid., p. 176.

Sometime during the summer of 1835, Judge and Mrs. Prentiss with four of their children had moved from Amity to Angelica, about six miles to the north. The records of the Presbyterian Church of Angelica show that on Sunday, September 27, 1835: “Stephen Prentiss and Clarissa his wife, Narcissa, Clarissa, Harriet, R., and Edward W., their children,” were received into the church.¹

Narcissa with characteristic enthusiasm gave herself to the activities of the church, which then numbered about 135 members. She sang in the choir and taught a class of girls in the Sunday school. Included in the church’s membership was William Geiger, Jr., of whom we shall hear more later.

Judge Prentiss was elected an elder in the Angelica church on January 21, 1836, and was ordained to that office on Thursday evening, February 18, just before the marriage service was conducted for his daughter Narcissa and Marcus Whitman. An indication of the interest that Stephen Prentiss took in the church is the fact that he and his pastor, the Rev. Leverett Hull, were commissioners to the Presbyterian General Assembly which met in Philadelphia in May 1836.

Writing to Sarah Hull, the wife of the pastor, in the spring of 1835, Narcissa expressed her deep concern about the proposed Oregon Mission.²
Narcissa referred to some “obstacles” which had arisen which threatened the founding of an Oregon Mission. She asked her friend: “What can be the obstacles which the Board of Missions speak of? Is it want of funds or missionaries? Or is it the want of faith and prayer in the churches?” Narcissa then recalled the Nez Perce appeal of 1831: “Surely the obstacles cannot be with the Indians, whom they have sent over to us and invited us to carry them the Word of Life.” Out of touch with Marcus who was then on his long trek to the Rockies, Narcissa was dreaming, planning, and praying for that Oregon Mission of which she wanted to be a part. Again quoting from her letter: “I can say, notwithstanding the clouds of darkness that overshadow the future, and the obstacles that roll up before the mind like waves of the sea, that I am permitted to believe that a mission will be established there soon, at least before many years shall have passed away.”

**The Search for Associates**

Whitman’s major concern after his return from the Rockies was to find at least one married couple to go with him and Narcissa to Oregon in the spring of 1836. As previously stated, Narcissa had told Marcus about the plans of Henry and Eliza Spalding to go as missionaries to the Osage Indians. Whitman had written to Spalding to see if they would consent to a change of destination and go with him and Narcissa to Oregon. When Whitman mailed his journal to Greene from Rushville on December 17, he reported: “I received a letter yesterday from H. H. Spalding saying that he would be ready to accompany me across the mountains if the Board would approve of it.”

For a time Whitman’s heart was at ease as he felt that the Board would consent to a reassignment for the Spaldings. Greene had been informed that Mrs. Spalding was expecting to give birth to a child in October 1835. Whitman, however, had failed to tell him that the child was stillborn, perhaps assuming that Spalding would have passed on this information. This failure to keep Greene posted almost canceled any hope of a mission party going out to Oregon in 1836.

A letter from Greene dated December 8 reached Whitman at Rushville after he had mailed his journal. The slowness of the mails of that day added to the complexities of the problem. Greene put the burden of finding associates on Whitman’s shoulders. “Before taking measures to
obtain associates,” he wrote, “you had better confer with our agent, Mr. Eddy, who may have some person in mind.” The reference is to the Rev. Chauncey Eddy, to whom reference has already been made.\(^3\) Greene then gave the names of several possible candidates, including those of the Rev. and Mrs. Oliver S. Powell, in whose home Whitman was a guest at the time he became engaged to Narcissa.

The month of December 1835 passed with the Board making no definite appointments for the Oregon Mission. Whitman was still waiting for confirmation from the Board as to a change of destination for the Spaldings.

The Prudential Committee of the Board met in Boston on January 5, and the next day Greene wrote to Whitman notifying him that the Committee had authorized him to return to Oregon with his wife, another married couple and three single men—preferably a teacher, a farmer, and a “mechanic”—if such could be found. The term “mechanic” was then used to indicate a craftsman, such as a carpenter, or even a laborer. Greene definitely stated: “But families of children cannot be taken.” He added that should an Oregon Mission party be sent, the fiancées of Dunbar and Allis would accompany them to Council Bluffs and that in all probability Dr. Benedict Satterlee, who had been appointed to the Pawnee Mission, would also go along. No mention was made of Spalding in this letter.

On this same day, January 5, Whitman again wrote to Greene and again brought up the name of Spalding. He reminded Greene that Spalding had indicated his willingness to go to Oregon and also mentioned the fact that the Powells had a baby, which meant that they could not be appointed. Greene, replying on January 15, explained why nothing had been said about the Spaldings. “The same object,” he wrote, “we suppose to he against Mr. and Mrs. Spalding which you mention in the case of Mr. Powell.”

A week later Greene again wrote to Whitman informing him that other prospective candidates for the Oregon Mission had for various reasons withdrawn their names from consideration. Then came the following comment about Spalding: “I do not know where to look for a missionary to accompany you, unless Mr. Spaulding\(^4\) should go. His child (as I understand he has one) will be a hinderance; and it seems to me that no person with an infant child should go to such a work.”

CHAPTER SEVEN Marcus and Narcissa are Married, 1836 151
Here, seemingly, was a modification of Greene’s former statement that no couple with a child would be appointed. Then followed a most significant comment on Spalding’s personality which fell like a thin shadow on things to come: “Besides I have some doubt whether his temperament will fit him for intercourse with the traders and travellers in that region.” Actually, as later events proved, Spalding’s problem was not to be with traders and travelers but rather with his own coworkers in the mission. Greene did have a favorable word: “As to labouriousness, self-denial, energy and perseverance, I presume few men are better qualified than he.”

Matters were rapidly approaching a crisis. Whitman had given the most solemn assurances to the fathers of the two Indian boys that he would bring them to the 1836 Rendezvous and he had also promised to meet Parker there at that time. The month of January was about gone with nothing definite accomplished. If there were to be an Oregon Mission established that year, the party should be on its way within a month.

Whitman’s letter to Greene of January 29, in reply to Greene’s letter of the 22nd, was filled with discouraging news. Whitman confessed that all his efforts to find someone to go with him and Narcissa had failed. “I wrote Mr. Eddy some time since,” he stated, “and have been in constant expectation of an answer, but do not receive it. We ought to leave for St. Louis by 25th Feb. or at the furtherest the 1st March.”

Whitman clarified the status of the Spaldings by writing: “Your allusion to Mr. Spalding is not correct; they lost their child by death some time since. They expect to be at Prattsburg where I can see him if desired.” Whitman was still hoping that Greene would have success in finding someone, for he wrote: “I should like to know your success and intention as soon as possible.”

In his letter to Whitman of the previous December 30, Greene had listed some of the qualifications needed by any who aspired to be a missionary to the Indians, including: “Much apparent zeal for the conversion of the Indians, strong professions of devotedness to the cause of Christ, and readiness to encounter hardship and danger... and such I hope you may find the finger of Providence pointing to.” Replying to Whitman’s letter of January 29, Greene on February 5 rather reluctantly admitted that “the finger of Providence” was point-
ing to Henry H. Spalding. One by one all other possible candidates had been eliminated. The Spaldings were already under appointment to go to the Osage Indians, but had indicated a willingness to change their destination. The need for some immediate decision prompted Greene to give a half-hearted consent, for he wrote: “I know not who will accompany you unless Mr. Spalding should.” Before receiving Greene’s letter, Whitman on February 6, wrote to a brother-in-law of Samuel Parker, Harley Lord, in whose Ithaca home John, one of the Nez Perce boys, was living, and said: “The present prospect is poor for going next spring. Our only other method is to have the destination of Rev. H. H. Spalding changed from the Osages to the Nez Perces.”

**Henry Harmon Spalding**

Henry Harmon Spalding was born out of wedlock in a log cabin near Wheeler, Steuben County, New York, on November 26, 1803. He was therefore, nearly fifteen months younger than Marcus Whitman. Abandoned by his mother when a babe only fourteen months old and reared in a foster home, Henry had a hard time. Years later, the Rev. James Hotchkin, who was once his pastor, stated that Spalding had been “inured to hardship from infancy.”

Little is known of the first seventeen years of Spalding’s life. In his old age, Spalding returned to Wheeler and was invited to occupy the pulpit in the Presbyterian Church on a Sunday in May 1871. Some of his old friends and neighbors were present. Great emotions swept over him as he looked into the faces of gray-haired men and women who had known him in his youth. The intervening years rolled away, and he saw himself with self-pitying eyes in his own yesterdays.

The next day he wrote to his wife, the second Mrs. Spalding, and in this letter pulled aside the veil which had shrouded those first seventeen years: “Some mates of those school days were present, grayheaded men and women. What memories! The place where I was born and the place where my unfeeling mother gave me (but 14 months old) to a stranger and saw her child no more, and the place where I was brought up by an adopted mother, and where I was kicked out, and the brook and the willow and the hill where I fished and played and tumbled with other children,... and the hills and the bottoms where I gathered chestnuts and butternuts and the road I took when he kicked me out after whipping my
mother and me, to a neighbor, sad, destitute, 17, crying, a cast off bastard wishing myself dead! What emotions!” 9

The forlorn lad, with the odious epithet “bastard,” which an infuriated foster father had shouted at him, ringing in his ears, took the road to Prattsburg. There he found shelter in the home of Ezra Rice, a schoolteacher, where he remained for the next four years, 1820–24. Of these years Spalding wrote in his diary: “[I] worked for my board and room and went to a common school which he taught.” 10 His opportunities for an education were limited; he noted in his diary that when he was twenty-one he could read only with difficulty and could laboriously “write after a copy.”

Henry enrolled in the newly opened Franklin Academy in Prattsburg in the summer of 1825 when he was twenty-two years old. In the autobiographical note that he wrote in the beginning of his diary, he made mention of his “bashfulness” when called upon to speak before some school audience. Using modern psychological terms, might we not call this an inferiority complex? And how could it have been otherwise when one remembers his background? He was five or six years older than his classmates. He was without doubt clad in the plainest of clothing. He was at this time living in the home of a farmer three miles from the village, where he worked for his board and room, and walked back and forth to school. He was, as he described himself, “worse than an orphan.”

Henry was a student at the academy at irregular intervals from the summer of 1825 to the early fall of 1831. Sometimes he interrupted his studies in order to make some money by teaching country schools, especially during the winter months. We must admire his tenacity in his struggle for an education against great odds. He was baptized and received into the membership of the Prattsburg Presbyterian Church on October 2, 1825, when he was twenty-two. During the winter of 1828–29, Henry decided to enter the ministry. At that time Franklin Academy was prepared to give the first two years of college work, so Henry returned to the academy. With scholarship aid from the American Education Society, 11 Henry enrolled in Western Reserve College at Hudson, Ohio, in the fall of 1831. He was graduated from that institution with an A.B. degree in 1833.
Eliza Hart Spalding

Some time during 1830, Spalding began corresponding with Eliza Hart, who at that time was living with her parents, Captain and Mrs. Levi Hart, at Holland Patent, near Utica, New York, and about 140 miles northeast of Prattsburg. Eliza was born at Kensington, later called Berlin, Connecticut, on August 11, 1807. She was, therefore, about four years younger than Henry and about eight months older than Narcissa.

Henry and Eliza had not met before they began writing to each other on the recommendation of a mutual friend. They first met in the fall of 1831 shortly before he left for college in Ohio. Another year passed with the two depending upon the mails for their courtship. Henry visited Eliza again in the fall of 1832, at which time it appears that they became engaged.

Eliza was deeply religious. She joined the Presbyterian Church of Holland Patent on August 15, 1826, when nineteen years old. William H. Gray, who went out to Oregon with the Whitman–Spalding party in 1836, wrote his impressions of Eliza as he remembered her at their first meeting: “She was above medium height, slender in form, with coarse features, dark brown hair, blue eyes, rather dark complexion, coarse voice, of a serious turn of mind, and quick in understanding language.”

Little is known about Eliza’s youth and education. She is reported to have attended a female seminary in Clinton, New York, and to have taught school for a time. She had some ability in painting and learned the common skills needed in a pioneer home of her generation including spinning and weaving. Eliza attended a school at Hudson, Ohio, 1832–33 while Henry was taking his last year of college work at Western Reserve College. The two were married in Hudson on October 13, 1833, and left soon afterwards for Lane Theological Seminary, a New School Presbyterian institution located in Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, where they spent the next two years.

Henry found Eliza to be a devoted and faithful helpmate. Since the Presbyterian Church at that time frowned upon seminary students getting married, Henry was disqualified from receiving further scholarship aid. He and Eliza opened a boarding house at Walnut Hills for other students and provided board and room for $3.00 a week. Henry bought a cow which supplied milk for their table. He also worked in a
printing establishment thus learning a trade which proved of value to him in Old Oregon.

Eliza Spalding is pictured in several fictional accounts of the Oregon Mission as being poorly educated and of a weak character. The contrary is the case. She was the best educated of the six women who were in the Oregon Mission. Confirming evidence to support this judgment is found in the following quotation from a letter Eliza wrote to a sister from Walnut Hills on March 31, 1834: “I am now pursuing Greek and Hebrew studies. I take the same lessons that Mr. S. does in the Greek Testament, and in the Hebrew Bible. I am quite pleased with these studies, but find the Greek Grammar rather perplexing. I generally attend Dr. [Lyman] Beecher’s lectures on Theology, Saturdays, from the hours of ten to twelve, which are very interesting and profitable.” Perhaps no one in the Oregon Mission acquired the native language more quickly than she.

**Spalding Appointed by the American Board**

Hoping to secure a teacher’s position under the Government with the Choctaw Indians, Henry decided to leave the Seminary in May 1835 at the end of his second year and one year before completing the full theological course. Due application was made for such an appointment. In the expectation of receiving favorable word, Henry and Eliza returned to Holland Patent to make preparations for leaving for their new work. Captain Hart gave the couple a light Dearborn wagon and other items valued at $120.00. This is the much publicized wagon which Whitman and Spalding took with them over the Rockies and as far west as Fort Boise in 1836, but of this more will be said later.

In a letter dated March 20, 1888, to the Rev. Myron Eells, the Rev. J. S. Griffin wrote: “Touching the question of wagons from the East to this coast... I will say, that on the 5th day of July, 1835, in the town of Holland Patent... I worked with H. H. Spalding on the barn floor of his father-in-law, a Mr. Hart, in putting the top on a small wagon, when he was soon to leave for the west to engage in Indian Missions.” From this we know that this became a covered wagon.

Perrin Whitman, who saw the remains of the wagon at Fort Boise in the fall of 1843, wrote: “It had been one of the old fashioned Dearborn wagons, with wooden springs from one axle to another made out of hard
wood… The bed was of a dark brown color, and the wheels were yellow with blue stripes. It was as a light two horse wagon.”

Several weeks passed after Spalding sent in his application for a government appointment without any reply being received. Spalding was becoming increasingly worried as he had been so confident that the appointment would be forthcoming. During the latter part of July 1835, the Spaldings loaded their few possessions on their wagon and drove to Prattsburg. Still more days passed without any word from the government. Spalding then wrote to the American Board and offered to go to “any part of that portion of the vineyard of Christ over which the Lord has appointed you stewards.”

In order to hasten consideration by the Board of his application, Spalding asked several who knew him to send in testimonials. Among these was Artemas Bullard, field agent of the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Society who, in a letter dated August 14, made the following penetrating comment: “I consider Mr. S. a man of ardent piety. His mental powers are not remarkable, though decent… Few men are willing to labor more abundantly or endure more fatigue, or make greater sacrifices than he… He can turn his hand to almost any kind of handy work. Is not remarkable for judgment and common sense, though not particularly deficient. Is sometimes too much inclined to denounce or censure those who are not as zealous and ardent as himself… On the whole I expect in his proper place he will make a good missionary. His wife is highly respected and beloved in a large circle of friends on Walnut Hill and in Cincinnati.”

Greene replied to Spalding's letter of application on August 14. The Board was in urgent need of men for its Indian missions and welcomed his interest. Greene advised Spalding to be ordained “as if you were appointed” and said that the Prudential Committee would act on his application at its next meeting. Spalding met with the Presbytery of Bath and, after being examined and found qualified, was ordained to the ministry on August 27, 1835. Sometime that fall, Spalding was notified that the Board had appointed him to the Boudinot station among the Osage Indians on the Neosho River in what is now eastern Kansas. The notification of their assignment came too late for the Spaldings to go to their field in the fall of 1835. Eliza was pregnant and gave birth at Prattsburg to the stillborn baby girl on October 24. Following her
confinement, Eliza was seriously ill for several weeks. Sometime during the week of December 10, Spalding received word from Whitman asking if he and his wife would be willing to change their destination from the Osage to the Nez Perce Indians. Whitman, while at Rushville, received a letter from Spalding on December 16 in which Spalding stated their willingness to go to Oregon should the Board approve.

**Spalding’s Unfortunate Remark**

Spalding wrote to Greene from Holland Patent on December 28, 1835: “If the Board and Dr. Whitman wish me to go to the Rocky Mountains with him, I am ready. Act your pleasure.” Evidently the Spaldings had returned to Eliza’s parental home for a few weeks before leaving for their mission field, wherever that might be. Greene, still unaware of the death of the Spalding baby, replied on January 2: “It does not seem to me desirable that yr destination should be changed to the Rocky Mountain Indians at this time unless you strongly desire it.” Greene evidently felt that the Spaldings might go to the Osage Indians with an infant but should not attempt taking one with them on the long and hazardous journey over the Rockies to Oregon. Spalding was not told why the Board was reluctant to approve a change of destination for him.

The Spaldings returned to Prattsburg during the first week of February 1836 where they spent several days before leaving for their Osage Indian station. Since some of Spalding’s Prattsburg friends knew that he had been under consideration to go with the Whitmans to Oregon, the questions naturally arose: Why was Whitman still looking for associates? Why were the Spaldings not going to Oregon? Circumstantial evidence suggests that Spalding was put on the defensive. His pride had been touched. Some explanation was needed, so one day in a public assembly—perhaps in a church service—he said: “I do not want to go into the same mission with Narcissa Prentiss as I question her judgment.” Such a statement reflected a latent feeling of resentment or possibly even of hostility on Spalding’s part towards Narcissa. He could not forget that he had been a rejected suitor.

Some have wondered why Whitman ever induced Spalding to join him in the Oregon Mission project. A writer in the *American Heritage* called this a “baffling” detail and characterized Spalding as being “a man of touchy pride and smoldering resentments.” The most plausible
answer to this question is that Whitman had no other choice. After an extensive search for associates, with one after another possible candidate being eliminated for various reasons, Whitman had to take whomever he could find who was willing to go with him and Narcissa to Oregon. Time was running out. He had promised to return the Indian boys to their fathers and to meet Parker at the 1836 Rendezvous; and he had assured the Nez Perces that he would return with associates in 1836 and open a mission among them. Possibly Whitman had not heard of Spalding’s unfortunate remark, or, if he had heard, had failed to appreciate its full significance. The fact that Narcissa was the one who first suggested Spalding’s name, even though he was a rejected suitor, shows that she harbored no ill will towards him. Perhaps she felt that since Henry had married Eliza Hart, his memory of a broken romance would not be an obstacle.

“**WE WANT YOU FOR OREGON**”

Greene’s letter of February 5, in which a reluctant approval was given for Whitman to see if Spalding would consent going to Oregon, reached Whitman on the 12th. Whitman felt that the urgency of the occasion called for immediate action. He decided to ride at once to Prattsburg, where he understood the Spaldings were then staying, and make a personal appeal. From circumstantial evidence, it appears that Whitman arrived in Prattsburg either on Friday afternoon, the 12th, or early the next morning. To his great disappointment, he learned that the Spaldings had left for Howard, a village about twenty miles to the southwest of Prattsburg, where Spalding had a speaking appointment on Sunday in the Presbyterian Church there.

A winter storm had laid a thick blanket of snow over the land making travel difficult. Because of the snow, Spalding had to put runners on his wagon, thus converting it into a sleigh.

Whitman set out from Prattsburg in pursuit of the Spaldings and overtook them on the road shortly before they arrived at Howard with the hail: “We want you for Oregon.” Whitman continued with them into the village where Spalding engaged a room in the inn. There Whitman presented his plea. He reviewed the course of events and explained how Greene had been reluctant to assign them to Oregon because he thought that their child had lived.
Whitman stressed the argument of need. Unless he could find a clergyman to go with him and Narcissa, there would be no Oregon Mission founded that year.

This struck a responsive chord in the hearts of both Henry and Eliza. They were not afraid of the journey, having been satisfied by what Whitman told them regarding the feasibility of women crossing the Rockies. It is possible that Whitman referred to their wagon and urged them to take it with them. Henry was a little hesitant, because he felt that Eliza might not be physically strong enough to endure the long horseback ride, but she pluckily declared: “I like the command just as it stands, ‘Go ye into all the world,’ and no exceptions for poor health.”

The three sought God’s guidance in prayer.

Being assured of the willingness of the Spaldings to accompany him and Narcissa to Oregon, Whitman returned to Rushville on Monday, February 15, with a light heart. His Oregon Mission was assured! Yet in a letter that he wrote to Greene from Rushville that evening, we find a trace of apprehension: “I am willing to accompany Mr. Spalding as an associate, yet I know little of his peculiar adaptedness to that station.”

Whitman told Greene that the Spaldings would continue their journey to Cincinnati where they would await his arrival. He suggested that Greene write to him at that place and confirm the change of destination.

Writing to Greene from Jamestown, New York, on February 17, Spalding reviewed what had happened at Howard. “He says,” Spalding wrote, “you are perfectly willing the destiny should be changed. He said all the other attempts to obtain a clergyman have failed and if I refused, the Mission to the Rocky Mountains must be abandoned, at least for the present… I felt it my duty to consent to his request.”

We have reason to believe that the Spaldings visited the Prentiss home in Angelica, which was about thirty miles to the west of Howard and along the route that they were following to Jamestown, New York, on their way to Pittsburgh. If so, they could have carried a letter from Marcus to Narcissa informing her of the developments and suggesting that she plan for their wedding that very week.

From a statement made by Narcissa in a letter she wrote to her father on October 10, 1840, it appears that Judge Prentiss had heard about Spalding’s unfortunate remark about not wanting to go “into the same mission with Narcissa Prentiss,” and had demanded an explanation.
Narcissa wrote: “This pretended settlement with father, before we started, was only an excuse, and from all we have seen and heard, both during the journey and since we have been here the same bitter feeling exists.” The resentment which Henry Spalding harbored towards Narcissa Whitman was to have far-reaching consequences for the Oregon Mission of the American Board.

**Their Personal Appearance**

Before telling of the marriage of Marcus and Narcissa and of their departure for Oregon, it is fitting that mention should be made of the descriptions of their personal appearance which were made by their contemporaries. Until the discovery in the summer of 1968 of what appear to be authentic sketches of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman made by the Canadian artist, Paul Kane, regarding which more will be said later, we had to rely only upon these recollections of their contemporaries as to their personal appearance.

Joel Wakeman described Narcissa as follows: “She was of medium height, symmetrically formed, very graceful in her deportment and general carriage, slightly sandy complexion, a brilliant, sparkling eye, peculiarly so when engaged in animated conversation. She was not a beauty, and yet, when engaged in singing or conversation there was something in her appearance very attractive.” Levi Waldo, also drawing upon personal recollections, wrote: “She was a beautiful blonde, of fair form and well rounded features, dignified and stately, yet modest in her bearing, kindly and Christian in social life, honoring and gracing every station that she was called to fill.” In another account she was described as being “of slight build, a little above medium height, blue eyes, pretty, with beautiful blonde hair.” Others referred to her hair as being a golden or light colored auburn. Narcissa weighed herself a few weeks after her marriage and in a letter to her sister Jane said that the scales registered 136 pounds [Letter 21]. Writing to her parents on October 9, 1844, Narcissa stated that she then weighed 167 pounds, “much higher than ever before in my life.”

Several idealized portraits or sketches have been made of Narcissa, one of which by Mrs. Orville R. Allen hangs in Prentiss Hall at Whitman College. This is a lifesize study which shows her wearing a gray silk dress with flowing sleeves and a low neck line. The artist was
guided by some hazy tradition that she wore such a dress and “fluffed up her hair” once when about to greet her husband upon his return from a trip. According to Matilda Sager Delaney, who spent several years as a little girl in the Whitman mission home, Narcissa never had a silk dress. The sleeves, which the artist copied from a pair which once belong to Narcissa, were the only authentic part of the portrait.

When the Rev. Oliver W. Nixon published his How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon [see Appendix 4], he included idealized pictures of both Marcus and Narcissa. The first and second editions of this work give an imaginary picture of Narcissa without any explanation as to how it happened to have been drawn or by whom. A different drawing appeared in the third and subsequent editions with the following caption: “No authentic picture of Mrs. Whitman is in existence. This portrait of her has been drawn under the supervision of a gentleman familiar with her appearance and with suggestions from members of her family. It is considered a good likeness of her.” However, when we compared this second Nixon picture with the Kane sketch, we see only slight similarities.

W. H. Gray, in his History of Oregon, has given us the following description of Narcissa: “…a lady of refined feelings and commanding appearance. She had very light hair, fresh complexion, and light blue eyes. Her features were large, her form full and round. At the time she arrived in the country [i.e., Oregon], she was considered a fine, noble-looking woman, affable and free to converse with all she met. Her conversation was animated and cheerful. Firmness in her was natural, and to some, especially the Indians, it was repulsive.” Gray’s comment about the reaction of the Indians to her firmness, is confirmed in the appraisal given her by the Rev. H. K. W. Perkins [See Appendix 6].

The first two editions of Nixon’s book also carried an idealized sketch of Marcus Whitman. Incredible to relate, he is there pictured as wearing the ministerial garb of 1870. A retouched picture of Whitman appeared in the third edition with this anachronism corrected but with Whitman wearing burnsides, unknown in 1836. Under this retouched sketch, Nixon stated: “Changes have been made under the supervision of the family, who now pronounce this a very correct likeness.” Since this sketch, like that of Narcissa, was drawn some thirty-five years after Whitman had been killed, it can have no claim to accuracy. It certainly has no resemblance to the recently discovered sketch by Kane believed to be of Whitman.
Gray in his *Oregon*, has given us the following description of Whitman: “He was above medium height; of spare habit; peculiar hair, a portion of each being white and a dark brown, so that it might be called iron-gray; deep blue eyes, and large mouth.” 37

Two members of the 1844 Oregon emigration spent some time working for Whitman at his mission station, each of whom has given us his reminiscences. Alanson Hinman, of whom further mention will be made, wrote: “He [was]... tall, with high cheek bones and prominent eyebrows, beneath which were grave kindly eyes of gray.” 38 B. F. Nichols, who as an eighteen-year-old youth spent the winter of 1844–45 at Waiilatpu, wrote in 1897: “I think he was a man that would weigh about 175 pounds, being what we would call a raw-boned man. He was muscular and sinewy, with broad shoulders, neck slightly bent forward... His eyes were blue, rather dark, I think; his hair was brown, his forehead massive and broad, and his nose, though not large, was straight and prominent. His cheekbones were high and prominent, and his mouth was nearer like General Grant’s than any one else I know of, denoting firmness and determination.” 39 Nichols also told of seeing Whitman walk into a corral and catch a three-year-old steer by the under jaw and near horn and throw it to the ground. “Bulldogging” steers is still practiced in western rodeos and indicates skill as well as great physical strength.

Several attempts have been made in recent years to create an idealized portrait of Marcus Whitman. One of the best known is that painted by Ernest Ralph Norling; it was presented by a group of physicians and surgeons of the Pacific Northwest to Whitman College in August 1936 at the time of the Whitman Centennial celebration. This is a life-size study and pictures Whitman with a beard and clad in buckskins. The two statues which have been made of Whitman, will be described in the last chapter of this work.

**Marcus and Narcissa are Married**

When Marcus sent word to Narcissa of his success in persuading the Spaldings to go with them to Oregon, she immediately planned for the marriage to be performed on Thursday evening, February 18. The time was opportune as a congregational meeting of the Angelica Presbyterian Church had been called for that evening when her father
was to be ordained an elder. An audience would thus be on hand then for the wedding. Marcus had found it necessary to return to Rushville after seeing the Spaldings at Howard, but was able to arrive at Angelica by Wednesday, the 17th. Narcissa’s bombazine wedding dress had already been made.40

According to the minute book of the Angelica church, after Judge Prentiss and two others were ordained as elders, the newly constituted session met and granted a letter of dismission “to our sister Narcissa Prentiss who is destined to the Mission beyond the Rocky Mountains.” As will be stated, Narcissa presented this letter when the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon was organized on August 18, 1838.

In a letter to her parents written about two years after her marriage, Narcissa mentioned a communion service held just before her wedding. Judge Prentiss, as one of the newly-ordained elders, could have served the bread and the cup to his daughter and future son-in-law. Then came the exchange of vows when Marcus and Narcissa were made husband and wife.

According to the custom of the day, the minister then preached a sermon, which may have been addressed especially to the bridal couple. Of that sermon Narcissa later wrote: “Brother Hull, you know not how much good that sermon I heard you preach... the which you gave me, does me now in this desert land. O that I had more than one! I read it, meditate upon it in my solitary hours until the truth of it burns upon my heart and cheers my soul with its blessed promise” [Letter 37].

The dramatic events of the evening came to a climax with the singing of the following sentimental hymn41 written by the Rev. Samuel F. Smith, the author of “America.”

Yes, my native land! I love thee;
All thy scenes I love them well;
Friends, connections, happy country, Can I bid you all farewell?
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee,
Far in heathen lands to dwell?
Home!-thy joys are passing lovely
Joys no stranger-heart can tell;
Happy home!-‘tis sure I love thee!
Can I—can I say—Farewell?
Can I leave thee, can I leave thee,
Far in heathen lands to dwell?

One by one members of the choir and congregation found their throats constricted with emotion and their cheeks dampened with tears. Only a few, including Narcissa, sang the next stanza:

Yes! I hasten gladly,
From the scenes I love so well;
Far away, ye billows! bear me;
Lovely native land!—farewell!
Pleased I leave thee, pleased I leave thee,
Far in heathen lands to dwell.

Muffled sobs could be heard by the time the last stanza was reached. The sentiment of the hymn was too overpowering. Narcissa in her clear soprano voice, which Wakeman described as being “as sweet and musical as a chime of bells,” sang the last stanza as a solo—a dramatic event which all present that evening never forgot.

In the deserts let me labor,
On the mountains let me tell,
How he died—the blessed Saviour
To redeem a world from hell!
Let me hasten, let me hasten,
Far in heathen lands to dwell.\(^{42}\)

The next day the bridal couple left for Rushville and Ithaca to get Richard and John before leaving for St. Louis. Imagination alone must supply the details of their last farewells. No doubt all were aware that the parting might be final. Narcissa, like Eliza Spalding, was never to return.

From a reference in one of Narcissa’s letters [\#35], we know that the Whitmans spent Sunday, February 21 in Ithaca. Samuel J. Parker, M.D., years later recalled their visit: “Dr. Whitman made addresses in the churches; and Mrs. Whitman in the Sunday schools, especially the Presby. and the Dutch Reformed Churches.” \(^{43}\) Undoubtedly present in the latter church was Miss Mary Augusta Dix who, almost exactly two
years later, was to marry William Henry Gray and leave at once with the
1838 reinforcement of the American Board for its Oregon Mission.

Following their visit in Ithaca, the Whitmans with at least one of
the Nez Perce boys went to Rushville where final farewells had to be
said again. Only a few scattered references in the Whitman letters throw
light upon the events of those days. We read of Whitman speaking in the
Congregational Church on Sunday, February 28. Narcissa, in her let-
ter of March 31 to her sister Jane, wrote: “I had made for me in Brother
Augustusí shoe store in Rushville, a pair of gentlemen’s boots, and from
him we supplied ourselves with what shoes we wanted.” The women of
the church presented Marcus with some shirts which he was tempted to
leave behind as surplus baggage when arranging the packs before leaving
the Missouri frontier. Narcissa, however, persuaded him to take them
[Letter 26].

Nothing was said in any of the correspondence between the Board
and the Whitmans and the Spaldings about a salary. Apparently the
missionaries were content to receive traveling expenses and such funds
as were needed to make their mission self-supporting. Likewise noth-
ing was said about furloughs, retirement, or educational benefits for
children. In simple faith, which many church leaders of today would
call unrealistic and improvident, these devoted missionaries moved
into their future, believing that the Lord would provide.

Whitman, like Spalding, made appeals for funds for the Board in
a number of churches interested in their proposed mission. Writing to
the Board on March 3, 1836, Whitman reported that he had received
$26.00 from the Angelica church and $200.00 from the Rushville
congregation. According to a financial report he submitted to the
Board on September 5, the traveling expenses for himself, his wife, and
the two Indian boys from Rushville to Cincinnati covering the dates
March 3–18 were $185.11. Even such a modest sum might have included
the cost of some supplies.

The Whitmans bade their loved ones and friends at Rushville
farewell on Thursday, March 3, and started in private conveyance for
Pittsburgh going by way of Elmira, New York, and Williamsport and
Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Near Williamsport, they overtook Dr.
and Mrs. Benedict Satterlee and Miss Emeline Palmer, the fiancée of
Samuel Allis, who were on their way to join the Pawnee Mission.44 These
three had left Ithaca on March 1 but, because of the ill health of Mrs. Satterlee, their travels had been interrupted. The mission party, now numbering seven, spent Sunday, March 6, in Williamsport where a local doctor was called to consult with Whitman and Satterlee regarding Mrs. Satterlee’s condition.

In those days the American Board did not require a physical examination of its missionary candidates. This was not due to carelessness but rather to the current lack of medical knowledge. Dr. Satterlee had just completed his course at the Fairfield Medical College and presumably was as qualified as any physician could then be to diagnose his bride’s physical condition. Her health, however, was so precarious by the time they reached Williamsport that there was some thought of sending her home [Letter 22]. A day’s rest in an inn proved so beneficial that the doctors felt she could continue with the party.

The missionaries continued their journey by sleigh on Monday, March 7, and arrived at Pittsburgh the following Saturday. Had they been traveling a few weeks later, they could have taken the recently opened Allegheny Portage Railroad from Hollidaysburg to Pittsburgh, but this was closed during the winter months. The party took rooms in the Exchange Hotel.\(^{45}\) On Sunday Marcus with the two Indian boys attended the East Liberty Presbyterian Church\(^{16}\) where the boys created a sensation when their identities became known. Narcissa, suffering from a headache, remained in her room at the hotel [Letter 20]. Here, the following day, she spent her twenty-eighth birthday. The party secured passage down the Ohio River on the 127-ton steamboat, *Siam*, that left Pittsburgh Tuesday morning, the 15\(^{th}\). The vessel had been launched in 1835 and was the one which had carried Whitman and Parker up the Missouri River to Liberty that spring.
1 I examined the original records of this church, now no longer in existence, in the summer of 1935.

2 Mowry, Marcus Whitman, pp. 65 ff. Whitman letter #10. Mowry gives no date or place of writing.

3 See fn. 10, Chapter Four.

4 Spalding spelled his name without the “u.”

5 Hulbert, O.P., printed some of the letters Greene sent to Whitman but did not include his letter of January 22, 1835, from which this quotation is taken. Copy is in Coll. A.

6 Parker ms., Coll. W.

7 Drury, Spalding, gives details about the early life of H. H. Spalding.

8 Hotchkin to the American Board, August 6, 1835, Coll. A.

9 Spalding to his wife, May 3, 1871, Coll. O.

10 Original diary in Coll. W.

11 Organized in 1815 to aid indigent students studying for the ministry, largely Congregational in its constituency but for a time included the Presbyterians.

12 Gray, Oregon, p. 110.

13 For more details regarding Eliza Spalding’s early life, see Drury, Spalding.

14 Original letter is in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. Dr. Beecher was then President of Lane Theological Seminary.

15 Spalding reported this price to the American Board as the value of “sundries” given to him and his wife by “Capt. Hart for miss. to Flat Head Indians.” See Missionary Herald, May 1836, p. 196. Capt. Hart did not know when he gave the wagon and other items to the Spaldings that they would be going to Oregon. He was much opposed to his daughter going so far away. Capt. Hart died Feb. 27, 1846, and in his will denied Eliza any of his property unless she returned home. Drury, Spalding, p. 317.

16 A son of the Rev. Cushing Eells who was a member of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission.

17 Rev. J. S. Griffin and his wife went overland to Oregon in 1839 as independent missionaries.

18 Original letter in Coll. W.

19 W.C.Q., II (1898):2:36.

20 Original, Coll. A.

21 Ibid.


23 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 294. quoting from an entry in Spalding’s diary for July 9, 1840. See also Smith to Greene, September 3, 1840, Coll. A.; Gray to Greene, October 14, 1840; and Drury, Whitman, p. 119.


26 A picture of the inn is in Drury, *Whitman*, p. 121. It was known as the Hamilton House and was torn down in the spring of 1919.


28 Original, Coll. A.

29 *Prattsburg News*, January 27, 1898.


31 Description given to the author in 1935 by a resident of Rushville who recalled what her mother had told her.

32 Locks of Narcissa’s hair, showing it to be blond with an auburn tinge, are in Colls. O., W., and Wn.

33 Portland, Ore., *Times Sun*, May 8, 1927. The portrait was dedicated May 16, 1927.

34 The late Mrs. Edmund Bowden of Seattle donated one of the sleeves to Whitman College.


36 The *Presbyterian Journal of History*, December 1932, published what it claimed to be a picture of Marcus Whitman from an “original ambrotype.” Since the ambrotype process, which was a transparency on glass, was not discovered until 1851 and not patented until 1854, this claim is clearly unfounded. The picture may have been one of Whitman’s namesakes.


40 Matilda Sager Delaney to Mrs. Bowden, March 26, 1928; copy in Coll. Wn: “Her best dress was a black bombazine—it was her wedding dress and her whole family wore black at her wedding.”

41 Several tunes have been associated with this hymn including Newton, Wellwood, Smyrna, Latter Day, and Greenville. This was a favorite hymn used in that generation especially in farewell services for missionaries leaving for some distant land.

42 When I visited Angelica in the summer of 1935, an old lady whose grandparents were present at the wedding told me this story. See also *Magazine of American History*, September 1884, p. 193. The Angelica church burned in 1868. See references to the wedding in Whitman letters 19 and 44.

43 Parker ms., Cornell Uni.

44 Miss Esther Smith, the fiancée of John Dunbar, who was supposed to go out with this party was, for some reason, detained. Dunbar returned East the following winter and was then married. *Nebraska State Historical Society*, II:149.

45 I am indebted to Ross Woodbridge (see “In Appreciation”) for this information. He found a record of the hotel’s list of guests in the *Daily Pittsburg Gazette* for March 14, 1836.

46 While passing through Pittsburgh, the missionaries received a silver communion set from the East Liberty Presbyterian Church. The chalice, inscribed: “E. L. Pby. church,” without its base, is now in the Presbyterian (Indian) Church of Spalding, Idaho.
The day that Whitman-Satterlee party left Pittsburgh, March 15, 1836, Narcissa wrote her first travel letter which she addressed to her mother: “Dear, Dear Mother: —Your proposal concerning keeping a diary as I journey comes before my mind often. I have not found it practicable while traveling by land, although many events have passed which, if noted as they occurred, might have been interesting. We left Pittsburgh this morning at ten o’clock, and are sailing at the rate of thirteen miles an hour. It is delightful passing so rapidly down the waters of the beautiful river. The motion of the boat is very agreeable to me, except when writing. Our accommodations are good; we occupy a stateroom where we can be as retired as we wish” [Letter 20].

Four of these travel letters are extant, dated March 15 and 31, and June 3 and 27. Two are missing: May 15 and July 7. Sometimes Narcissa made daily entries in these letters, thus making them more of a diary than just letters; at other times, she would summarize the events of a week or more. Narcissa was a gifted writer. Her letters and diary are filled with interesting anecdotes, vivid descriptions, with now and then a touch of humor. She was fully aware of the uniqueness of the experience which lay before her as twice in these letters, she referred to their travels as “an unheard of journey for females,” as indeed it was.
The *Siam* took two days to go from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, as the missionaries arrived there on Tuesday noon, the 17th. The Spaldings were eagerly awaiting their coming and for the first time Narcissa and Eliza met. Writing to her sister Jane on April 7, Narcissa commented: “Mrs. Spalding does not look nor feel quite healthy enough for our enterprise. Riding affects her differently from what it does me. Everyone who sees me compliments me as being the best able to endure the journey over the mountains from my looks. Sister S. is very resolute, no shrinking with her. She possesses good fortitude. I like her very much. She wears well on acquaintance. She is a very suitable person for Mr. Spalding, has the right temperament to match him. I think we shall get along very well together; we have so far.”

Undoubtedly, a main subject for conversation when the two couples first met was the possible difficulties involved in taking white women over the Rockies. While passing through Pittsburgh, Spalding had opportunity to meet the famous painter of Indians who had been on an expedition to the far west in 1832 and who could, therefore, speak out of first-hand knowledge. We have Catlin’s advice in Spalding’s letter to the American Board dated March 2, 1836: “He says he would not attempt to take a white female into that country for the whole of Am; for two reasons. The first, the enthusiastic desire to see a white woman every where prevailing among the distant tribes, may terminate in unrestrained passion, consequently in her ruin... 2nd, the fatigues of the journey, he thinks, will destroy them. 1400 miles from the mouth of the Platte, on pack horses, rivers to swim, and every night to spend in the open air, hot suns and storms. The buffalo meat we can live on doubtless. But this like the other objections you see is supposed. No female has yet made the trip.”

Henry and Eliza Spalding were as ready to undertake the venture-some journey as were Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.

To avoid traveling on Sunday, the Whitman–Spalding party stayed over in Cincinnati until the following Tuesday, March 22, when they resumed their voyage down the river to St. Louis on the *Junius*. Here is another example of the Puritanical emphasis on Sunday observance and the reluctance to travel on that day which was characteristic of American Protestantism of that generation.

Whitman and Spalding took advantage of the days spent in Cincin-
nati to buy some supplies for their overland journey, drawing upon the American Board for $200.00 for that purpose. On Sunday the mission party, now enlarged to nine, attended the Presbyterian Church where they heard Dr. Lyman Beecher preach. Narcissa, in her diary-letter begun on March 15, said that after their short sojourn in the city, they “felt strengthened and comforted as we left… to pursue our journey into the wilderness.”

The missionaries had expected to reach St. Louis before the following Sunday, but Saturday night found them still eighty-nine miles from their destination. The steamer, as was sometimes the custom of the river boats at that time, tied up for the night. On Sunday morning the party disembarked at Chester, Illinois, again to avoid traveling on that day. After spending the day with a small group of Christians found in that village, the mission party was fortunate in being able to secure passage on another steamer, the Majestic, which was passing up the river Monday morning on its way to St. Louis. Delayed by fog, the vessel did not tie up at a wharf in the city until Tuesday afternoon, March 29.

As soon as he was able, Whitman went to the post office to see if any mail had arrived for him or for others in the party. He found letters from Greene and the War Department, but nothing from loved ones. Narcissa expressed her deep disappointment by writing in her diary: “Husband has been to the Office expecting to find letters from dear, dear friends at home but finds none. Why have they not written, seeing it is the very last, last time they will have to cheer my heart with intelligence from home, home, sweet home, and the friends I love.” Here we see a homesick Narcissa. After thus opening her heart, she added words which she underlined: “But I am not sad.”

The day after their arrival in St. Louis, the Whitmans and the Spaldings visited the new Catholic Cathedral. This venerable and historic building stands today on the west central side of the recently established Jefferson National Memorial. Started in 1831 and dedicated in 1834, the Cathedral had been in the course of construction when the Nez Perce delegation visited St. Louis in the winter of 1831–32. The older building, which the Indians had visited, might still have been standing when the Whitmans and Spaldings were there. Had they known about the contacts the Oregon Indians had with the Catholic clergy in St. Louis, they would no doubt have shown keen interest in the first Cathedral.
The Whitmans were met in St. Louis by an old acquaintance of Narcissa’s, the Rev. Milton Kimball, a Presbyterian minister and a field agent of the American Board. In the course of showing them the sights of the city, he took them to the new Cathedral at a time when an Archbishop was conducting High Mass. The strange ritual, the unfamiliar Latin chants, the richly embroidered vestments, the candles, and the incense all left an unfavorable impression on the missionaries. This may have been the first time any of them had ever witnessed a Roman Catholic service.

We must remember that the Whitmans and the Spaldings were heirs to the strong anti-Catholic feeling common to Protestantism in the United States in that generation.\(^2\) Describing her reactions, Narcissa in a letter to her sister Jane, dated March 31, wrote: “While sitting there and beholding this idolatry, I thot of the whited sepulcher which indeed appeared beautiful to men but within was full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” [Matt. 23:27]. And Eliza wrote that same day in her diary: “…the unpleasant sensations we experienced on witnessing their heartless forms and ceremonies, induced us soon to leave, rejoicing that we had never been left to embrace such delusions.”\(^3\)

We should remember that Narcissa was writing in the privacy of a family letter and not for publication; Eliza was confiding her thoughts to her diary meant only for herself. The comments of the two women no doubt reflected their husbands’ attitudes towards Roman Catholicism.

**Official Government Permit to Reside in Oregon**

While at Cincinnati, Spalding had received a letter from Greene dated February 25 giving the Board’s official consent for the change of destination for the Spaldings.\(^4\) Greene wrote: “I have written to the Secretary of War for letters of introduction & permits to enter & reside in the Indian country, which I have requested him to forward to St. Louis for yourself & Dr. Whitman.” Old Oregon was then a semi-foreign land with both the United States and Great Britain exercising joint occupancy under the Treaty of 1818, so the permits which Greene requested of the War Department were called passports in the official records.

We have no evidence that Greene had requested such a permit for Samuel Parker nor is there evidence that the Methodist Church had requested such for Jason Lee and his associates. Certainly the mountain
men who were trapping beaver on both sides of the Continental Divide never bothered about asking for such a document. The initiative in securing passports for the missionaries of the American Board seems to have been taken by Greene early in January 1836 when it became apparent that a mission party would be going to Oregon that spring. In reply to Greene’s request, Lewis Cass, who served as Secretary of War 1831–36, wrote on January 20 that the War Department approved “the design of the Board,” and that permission for Whitman and his associates to live among the Indians of Oregon was granted.5

When Greene learned that Spalding had consented to accompany Whitman to Oregon, he wrote again to Secretary Cass asking for another permit in which Spalding would be mentioned. According to the custom of the time, no reference was made to their wives. This revised passport, dated “War Department, Office of Indian Affairs, March 2, 1836,” was in the Post Office in St. Louis when Whitman called for his mail on March 29. The document reads as follows:

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS HAVE APPRISED THE DEPARTMENT THAT THEY HAVE APPOINTED DOCTOR MARCUS WHITMAN AND REV. HENRY SPALDING, LATE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, TO BE MISSIONARIES AND TEACHERS TO RESIDE IN THE INDIAN COUNTRY AMONG THE FLAT HEAD AND NEZ PERCE INDIANS.

APPROVING THE DESIGN OF THE BOARD THOSE GENTLEMEN ARE PERMITTED TO RESIDE IN THE COUNTRY, AND I RECOMMEND THEM TO THE OFFICERS OF THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, TO THE INDIAN AGENTS AND TO THE CITIZENS GENERALLY AND I REQUEST FOR THEM SUCH ATTENTION AND AID AS WILL FACILITATE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THEIR OBJECTS, AND PROTECTION SHOULD CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE IT.6

Here is the United States Government’s official permission for the missionaries to travel through Indian country and to live among the natives in Oregon for the purpose of establishing mission stations. This passport gave the promise of protection by the U.S. Army and Indian Agents “should circumstances require it.” Not one of the several memorials sent to Congress by the American residents of the Willamette Valley, beginning in 1838, refers to this promise of the Government to protect its citizens in Oregon. Evidently the writers of these memorials were unaware of the passport and the promises therein contained.
A mong the letters Whitman received at St. Louis was one from Greene dated March 4, 1836. In his final instructions, he gave some sound advice. Greene first dealt with the associations that the missionaries would have with “traders, agents, &c,” and wrote: “Let your conduct be unblameable, exemplary & free from the appearance of evil. Do not feel it necessary to be the forward reprover of everything wrong among this class of persons, remembering that your business is almost exclusively with the Indians. While you are strict & uncompromising as to yr. own principles & conduct, do not be harsh & dictatorial to others. Do them good & be kind to all as you have opportunity. Let Christian love shine brightly in all that you do.”

A second subject was “The Sabbath.” “Keep it strictly,” Greene urged, “and let the Indians & all others see that you do so. Make the distinction between that and other days as broad and obvious as you can... You must introduce the Sabbath, explain its meaning, design & use. You must fix the standard of its sacredness.” Here is a reflection of the Puritan movement which was strong in England and Scotland beginning shortly before the reign of Elizabeth I. All saints days and special holy days were eliminated from the calendar, and emphasis was placed on keeping the Sabbath, as Sunday was then called. To this day the observance of Christmas and Easter in most Presbyterian churches in Scotland is minimized. Christmas is a family day, and every Sunday “a day of resurrection.”

It was a matter of great concern to the missionaries that Sunday was never observed by the caravan of the American Fur Company, with which they were to travel while crossing the plains. Their diaries and letters are sprinkled with comments which reflect their distress. If they traveled with the caravan on Sunday, they would be breaking one of the ten commandments: “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.” If they remained in camp, they might be robbed or even killed by hostile Indians. The dilemma was real and most distressing. When the American Board’s 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission paused for a few days in Cincinnati, a member of the party asked Dr. Lyman Beecher what he would do when conscience clashed with caution. “Well,” replied the practical theologian, “if I were to cross the Atlantic, I certainly would not jump overboard when Saturday night came.”
A third word of advice from Greene urged the missionaries to concentrate on benefiting the Indians. “Avoid all secular and political interference with any class of men. Engage in no trading not absolutely necessary for obtaining the necessaries of life for yr-selves and families... Let all yr worldly and secular concerns be as limited and compact as yr circumstances will permit.” Wise advice! The Methodist Mission in the Willamette Valley came under the severe censure of the Hudson’s Bay Company because of its business activities, but such criticism was never directed to the Oregon Mission of the American Board. Writing to the Governors of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London on October 18, 1838, James Douglas, later to become a Chief Factor of Fort Vancouver, expressed his fears regarding the intentions of the Methodist missionaries to engage in trade. “My remarks apply solely to the Methodists,” he wrote, “and have no reference to the Calvinist missionaries who voluntarily came forward and pledged themselves not to trade furs.”

“Live near to God,” urged Greene in his concluding remarks. “May yr mission be as life from the dead to the benighted tribes of the remote west.” On the whole, this was a good letter, filled with wise and kindly counsel.

**FROM NARCISSA’S LETTERS**

To Narcissa Whitman, the journey from her home in New York State to far-away Old Oregon was a thrilling and a wonderful experience. Her letters, more than those of any other member of the mission parties of 1836 or 1838, reveal the excitement of the West and the first impressions of an alert observer of the wonders along the route.

After telling of her impressions of the Roman Catholic Mass, Narcissa mentioned the fact that Elijah Lovejoy, the well-known editor of an abolitionist paper then being published in St. Louis, had called at the boat and had invited the Whitmans to dine with him. Marcus talked with him but Narcissa happened to be absent at the time. The Whitmans were unable to accept Lovejoy’s invitation. “He wished to know when we were married,” Narcissa wrote, “because he designed to publish it in the Observer.” The April 7 issue of Lovejoy’s paper reported the marriage of Marcus and Narcissa and noted that they had passed through St. Louis en route “to the Bored Nose [i.e., Nez Percé or Pierced Nose] Indians.”
Under date of March 30, Narcissa wrote in her journal-letter: “I think I should like to whisper in Mother’s ear many things which I cannot write. If I could only see her in her room for one half hour. This much, Dear Mother, I have one of the kindest Husbands and the very best every way.” Then Narcissa added a special message for her father: “Tell Father by the side of his calomel, he has a quarter of a pound of lobelia and a large quantity of Cayenne which will answer my purpose better than some of the apothecary medicines.”

The average reader of today will miss the significance of the reference that Narcissa here made to lobelia and cayenne pepper, but to those acquainted with America’s medical history, those words stand out like words on a telegram. They are the code words for Thomsonianism, a medical cult founded by Samuel Thomson, an illiterate New Hampshire farmer, in 1808. Thomson strongly opposed the use of epsom salts and calomel, and the practice of bleeding. These were the favorite remedies of the regular physicians whom Thomson called “mineral murderers.” He maintained that all medicines except those of vegetable origin were poisonous. His treatment called for the patient to take a drink made from the herb lobelia inflata, which acted as a powerful emetic. Hence the regular doctors called the Thomsonian practitioners “puke-doctors.” After inducing vomiting, Thomson would make the patient perspire by having him take “hot-drops” prepared by a patented formula, the principal ingredient being cayenne pepper. 

Since Judge Prentiss was a Thomsonian, it appears that Narcissa, out of respect for his views, was inclined to follow the same remedies when needed. Yet she had married one of the “mineral murderers.” The fact that Marcus was willing to take with them to Oregon a small quantity of lobelia and cayenne pepper, “by side of his calomel,” reveals his tolerant spirit. Since no further reference to these items appear in later letters of the Whitmans, we may assume that Narcissa gave up her father’s medical theories and accepted those of her husband.

**ST. LOUIS TO LIBERTY**

The mission party secured accommodations on the Chariton which left St. Louis “immediately after dinner” on Thursday, March 31, for Liberty, Missouri. At twilight the steamer moved out of the wide sweep of the Mississippi and entered the narrower channel of the Missouri
River. The moon shone in all its brightness making night navigation possible. The newly-wedded couple of six weeks found the scene exhilarating. “It was a beautiful evening,” wrote Narcissa to Jane. “My husband and myself went upon the top of the boat to take a commanding view of the scenery. How majestic, how grand was the scene. The meeting of two such great waters. ‘Surely how admirable are thy works, O Lord of Hosts!’ I could have dwelt upon the scene still longer with pleasure but Brother Spalding called us to prayers and we left beholding the works of God for his immediate worship.” The Spaldings had been married nearly three years and by that time Henry evidently had more religion than romance in his soul.

On April 1, the wide-eyed and excited Narcissa wrote: “My eyes are satiated with the same beautiful scenery all along the coasts of this mighty river so peculiar to this western country. One year ago today since my husband first arrived in St. Louis on his exploring route to the mountains. We are one week earlier passing up the river this spring than he was last year.” Whenever the boat stopped to take on fuel for the wood-burning engine, Marcus and Narcissa would go ashore where they “rambled considerably in pursuit of new objects.”

The vessel stopped at Jefferson City, the half-way point to Liberty, on Saturday evening and continued on its way on Sunday. With troubled consciences the missionaries stayed aboard. There was no other choice. The three hundred mile journey from St. Louis ended on Thursday, April 7, when the party disembarked at Liberty on a raw spring morning with the thermometer registering 24° at nine o’clock. Liberty was about half-way between their homes in New York State and Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River. So far they had traveled most of the way in comparative ease on river steamers. Nineteen hundred miles of prairie, mountain, and desert stretched before them. The most trying part of their journey lay ahead.

Again turning to Narcissa’s letter to her sister, we read: “I have such a good place to shelter, under my husband’s wings. He is so excellent. I love to confide in his judgment and act under him. He is just like Mother in telling me my failings. He does it in such a way that I like to have him, for it gives me a chance to improve. Jane, if you want to be happy, get a good husband and be a missionary... The way looks pleasant notwithstanding we are now near encountering the difficulties of an unheard of journey for females.”
Before leaving St. Louis, Whitman had learned that the American Fur Company was planning to ship some of its personnel and supplies to Bellevue on the steamer Diana. This boat was scheduled to sail from St. Louis a couple of weeks after the Chariton, on which the missionaries had booked passage to Liberty. Whitman requested permission for his party to board the Diana at Liberty and thus be taken to Bellevue. The request was granted, thus giving Whitman and Spalding about two weeks at Liberty in which to complete arrangements for their overland journey, including the buying of horses, mules, cows, and supplies.

Members of the mission party were delighted to receive some mail at Liberty. Narcissa got a letter from her brother-in-law, the Rev. Lyman Judson, who had married her sister Mary Ann. This was the only letter she received from any member of her family for nearly two and a half years.

**William Henry Gray**

Whitman received a letter from Greene at St. Louis dated March 9, when the mission party was already one week on its way to Pittsburg. It brought the good news that a single man had been appointed to go with them, William Henry Gray. Greene wrote: “Since I wrote you last, our Com. have appointed a Mr. Gray, a good teacher, cabinet maker and house-joiner, from Utica, to yr mission, and instructed him, if when he receives our letter he shall think he can overtake you before you leave the frontier, he may start after you. He is highly recommend- ed, and we hope that he will make a valuable assistant. He said that he would be ready to start in two days after receiving his appointment. We hope that he may overtake you.”

Gray caught up with the mission party at Liberty on April 19, and announced that he had been appointed by the American Board to go with them to Oregon as a mechanic. The Whitmans and the Spaldings welcomed him with enthusiasm. Since Gray became such a controversial figure in the Oregon Mission, it is well to review briefly the circumstances leading up to his appointment and something of his qualifications.

Gray was born at Fairfield, New York, on September 8, 1810, and was possibly living there when Whitman was a student at the Fairfield Medical College, 1825–6. It is altogether possible that the two attended the same church during that winter and had other social contacts, never dreaming of their future associations in Old Oregon.
Following the death of his father in 1826, Gray became an apprentice to a cabinetmaker at Springfield, Otsego County, New York, where he remained until he was twenty-one, when he moved to Utica. Judging by the letters of recommendation received by the American Board and some extant letters that he wrote, Gray’s education was limited. He was described, in one of the letters of recommendation, as being “an extremely dull scholar.” Gray joined the Presbyterian Church in Utica in November 1831. His brother John was a Presbyterian minister who hoped that William would also enter the ministry.

Gray was ambitious, always striving for a status in life higher than that for which he was qualified. In the fall of 1835, he aspired to be a doctor and “commenced riding with a practising physician” in Utica, who likewise found Gray to be very “dull.” It so happened that Gray boarded at the same place in Utica where the Rev. Chauncey Eddy, a field agent of the American Board, was also taking his meals. As has been stated, as early as December 8, 1835, Greene had suggested to Whitman that he get in touch with Eddy about possible associates for the Oregon Mission. Evidently Whitman had delayed in doing so until in desperation, for fear that he would not find someone, he wrote to Eddy sometime during the early part of February. Eddy, who had a favorable impression of Gray, asked him on February 15 if he would be interested in joining Whitman and going to Oregon as a missionary. This happened to be the very day that Whitman wrote to Greene to report his success in finding the Spaldings.

Gray’s response to Eddy’s question was immediate. He declared himself ready to go on two days’ notice, “or less if necessary.” The Rev. Ira Pettibone, pastor of the church of which Gray was a member, sent a testimonial to the Board which carried the endorsement of two of his elders. The following extracts from Pettibone’s letter are most revealing:

We think him possessed of ardent piety... He has a tolerable share of what may be called common sense... He evinces an unusual share of perseverance; and a confidence in his own abilities to a fault... His literary acquisitions are slender owing to the fact that he is a slow scholar... He is a skillful mechanic... He has good health and a firm constitution. [And then Pettibone added the following: ] Brother Gray has by no means the qualifications that we think
desirable for such a station but perhaps as many are combined in him as in any young man of our acquaintance who is willing to go.

The Prudential Committee of the Board acted in haste on Gray's application sometime after February 25 and before March 9. Gray must have received word of his appointment sometime during the first week of March and left at once for Liberty. He is reported to have been engaged to a young lady in Utica at the time, but there seems to have been no problem in postponing the marriage.

The suddenness with which Gray decided to go as a missionary to Oregon reflects his impulsive nature, while at the same time the haste in which the Board acted reveals the urgency it felt to recruit additional workers for the Oregon Mission. Secretary Greene, whose letters show him to have been a man of sound judgment, must have had some qualms of conscience when he approved the appointment of one who had such doubtful recommendations as Gray. Yet was it not better to send one with mediocre qualifications than none at all?

TRAVEL OUTFIT ASSEMBLED

The Whitmans and the Spaldings were greatly encouraged with Gray's arrival. Providence, they thought, had smiled on them again. During the twelve days at Liberty, before Gray arrived, Whitman and Spalding had been busy buying animals and assembling their equipment. On September 5, 1836, the three men submitted a financial report to the Board; from this we are able to obtain a good idea of the outfit they assembled for their overland journey.

The report, made out in Whitman's handwriting, lists total expenditures at $3,063.96. A large farm wagon was purchased to carry the heavier baggage over the first part of their journey. Spalding's light wagon was reserved for the women's use if needed and for some lighter items of supplies. Twelve horses, six mules, and seventeen head of cattle, including four fresh milk cows, were purchased. Whitman's judgment as to what was needed prevailed and this time he was not hampered by the negative vote of a Parker.

Whitman's itemized account follows: “Traveling & Provisions—$590.98; Labor—$275.75; Saddlery & Harness—$267.73; Cattle—$118.00; Indian goods to trade for horses & provisions—$225.25; Horses &
Mules—$926.00; Tools & Furniture—$219.03; Guns & Ammunition—$91.44; Clothing—$208.05; Books & Stationery—$74.57; Seeds—$7.17; Medicines & Instruments—$28.39; Incidentals—$35.20.” The supplies included a tin plate, knife, fork, and cup for each person. Narcissa wrote of the women having rubber life preservers, “so that, if we fall into the water we shall not drown” [Letter 21]. Possibly these were purchased in Cincinnati before the party embarked on their voyage down the river. There is no reference to the women keeping these items after they left Liberty, Missouri.

More than one-third of the total cost of their outfit went for horses, mules, and cattle, including four milk cows. Writing to Greene on May 5, Whitman explained: “Our expenses have been much worse than I expected, horses and cattle cost over $1,000.00.” Marcus gave Narcissa the choice of a horse or a mule to ride. She chose the horse. Richard, who was inclined to judge the value of a riding animal by its speed, took one look at the mule and exclaimed: “That very bad mule, can’t catch buffalo” [Letter 21]. Side-saddles were purchased for the women. This permitted the left foot to remain in the stirrup while the right leg rested over a hook on the saddle.

While the men were busy assembling their livestock and equipment, Narcissa and Eliza were making a tent. Of this Narcissa wrote: “It is made of bed ticking in conical form, large enough for us all to sleep under, viz Mr. Spalding and wife, Dr. Whitman and wife, Mr. Gray, Richard Takahtoo-ah-tis, and John Ais—quite a little family, raised with a center pole and fastened down with pegs, covering a large circle. There we shall live, eat and sleep for the summer to come at least, perhaps longer.” Whitman and Parker had used a small conical tent the previous year. Perhaps this shape was selected in imitation of an Indian tepee.

Narcissa’s account continues: “We five spread our India Rubber cloth on the ground, then our blankets and encamp for the night. We take plenty of Mackinaw blankets which answers for our bed and bedding. When we journey, we place them over our saddles and ride on them” [Letter 21].

Both Whitman and Spalding, and likewise the four ministers of the 1838 reinforcement, were loath to carry guns, feeling that to do so was inconsistent with their role as missionaries. No indication has been found in the diaries or letters that any of these six men joined in
a buffalo hunt. As has been stated, Parker mentioned doing so on only one occasion. However, Whitman purchased guns and ammunition for his party, either because the American Fur Company insisted that all men traveling with its caravan be armed in case of an Indian attack, or for the use of men hired to hunt buffalo for food.

Whitman hired a young man by the name of Dulin to assist with the packing and the care of the animals and also welcomed to their party a young Nez Perce by the name of Samuel Temoni, who for some reason had visited the white man’s country and was then returning to his people. Shortly after the mission party had left Liberty, a redheaded, nineteen-year-old youth from New Haven, Connecticut, Miles Goodyear, attached himself to the party. Thus their number grew to ten five missionaries, three Nez Perces, and two hired men. Dulin left the party at the Rendezvous but Goodyear continued to Fort Hall.

On Thursday, April 21, Samuel Allis arrived at Liberty, having descended the Missouri River by boat from Bellevue. On the following Saturday, he was married to Miss Emeline Palmer, the Rev. H. H. Spalding officiating.

**The Mission Party Almost Left Behind**

Whitman had arranged with the American Fur Company in St. Louis for himself and the two women to be taken from Liberty to Bellevue on the Company’s boat, *Diana*. Plans were made at Liberty for Spalding, Gray, the two hired men, and the Nez Perces to go overland with two wagons (including Spalding’s) loaded with supplies and with the livestock. They were to proceed up the east bank of the Missouri River to a point opposite Fort Leavenworth, where there was a ferry, cross to the west bank and strike out in a northwesterly direction across the prairie to the Oto Agency on the north bank of the Platte River.

Whitman planned for the Spalding party to join the caravan of the Fur Company when it passed the Agency, which was located a few miles to the west of Bellevue. Only enough food was taken to carry them through to the buffalo range, with some additional items for the journey from the Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla. Like the fur traders and trappers, the mission party expected to live on buffalo meat, either fresh or dried, for most of their journey. The Spalding–Gray party left Liberty on Wednesday, April 27.
Mrs. Satterlee, who had been ill ever since she left her home in Ithaca, died late Saturday night, April 30, at the age of twenty-three. Whitman performed an autopsy and discovered that she had succumbed to a lung disease of “long standing,” undoubtedly tuberculosis. Just as the funeral service was about to be held on Sunday, May 1, the Fur Company’s boat suddenly appeared on its voyage up the river. To the consternation and dismay of Whitman and the two women, the captain refused to stop. In response to Whitman’s frantic appeals, the captain shouted back that he was loaded and could take no more passengers. Later Whitman learned that the captain had not been told of the arrangements made in St. Louis for the boat to pick up the three at Liberty and take them to Bellevue.

After the steamer had disappeared around a bend in the river, the missionaries returned to their sad duty of burying the earthly remains of Mrs. Satterlee. A new burden had suddenly been thrust upon Whitman’s shoulders. He, more than any of the others, realized the absolute necessity for the protection of their small party while traveling through hostile Indian country. Unless he and the two women could get to the Oto Agency, about 300 miles distant, in time to join the Spalding party before the caravan passed, no Oregon Mission could be established that year.

Immediate plans had to be made to meet this emergency. Since Allis and Satterlee had planned to leave for Bellevue soon after Mrs. Satterlee’s funeral, with their heavily loaded wagon, drawn by three yoke of oxen, Whitman decided that he and the women should travel with them. He hired a man with a wagon to take them to Fort Leavenworth. The mission party left Liberty on Tuesday, May 3. For a time Whitman was content to stay with Allis and Satterlee, but the progress being made by the oxen was too slow. Becoming impatient, Whitman sent Allis on ahead to overtake Spalding and request that the light wagon be returned for the convenience of the women. Allis caught up with Spalding near what is now the Kansas–Nebraska border and got the light wagon. Spalding, knowing that Whitman and the women would be following, continued on his way.

Since all of the heavy baggage had been placed in the wagons, including the tent, Whitman and the women had only their hand luggage and their bedding which they had expected to carry aboard the steamer. Until the light wagon returned with more camping equipment, the
three were obliged to sleep in the open. This was a rough initiation into the rigors of prairie travel for the two women.

After the death of Mrs. Satterlee, Whitman became concerned about Eliza Spalding’s health. “I have some fears,” he confided in his letter of May 5 to Greene written at Leavenworth, “with respect to Mrs. Spalding’s ability to stand the journey.” He knew that once on the trail away from civilization, there could be no turning back. The exigencies of prairie travel of that day meant that the Fur Company’s caravan could not tarry for any one who became too sick to be moved. The sick and infirm either kept up with the caravan by riding in a wagon or were left behind. No favours could be expected, even for missionary women; they ventured forth at their own risk.

At Fort Leavenworth, the man whom Whitman had hired to take them to that place, turned back. Fortunately Whitman was able to find another team and driver to carry them until they met Allis. In spite of the great need for haste, the three missionaries spent Sunday, May 8, at the Methodist Mission for the Kickapoo Indians near the fort. On Monday, they resumed their pursuit of Spalding, and on the 11th or 12th met Allis with the light wagon. The Whitman party caught up with Spalding some time before Saturday, the 14th, when they were within eighteen miles of the Oto Agency. Again the missionaries obeyed their consciences and remained in camp over Sunday. On that day the Fur Company’s caravan left Bellevue, under the command of Captain Fitzpatrick, with whom Whitman had traveled the previous year.

While the missionaries were encamped on Sunday, the 15th, a messenger arrived from Major John Dougherty, the Indian Agent assigned to the Otoes. Dougherty’s brother was seriously ill and the Major begged Whitman to attend the sick man as soon as possible. Whitman left early Monday morning with the assurance that the messenger would return and guide the mission party to a crossing of the Platte River near the Oto Agency where Whitman would meet them on Tuesday. After ministering to the sick man, Whitman rode several miles west of the Agency and caught up with Fitzpatrick and the caravan. He urged Fitzpatrick to wait a few days until the mission party could catch up. Fitzpatrick was friendly and indicated his willingness to have the missionaries travel with the caravan, but insisted on the necessity of pressing on. He felt that the mission party could overtake the caravan before it reached
hostile Indian country. Whitman retrieved from Fitzpatrick the horses which had been left at Bellevue the previous fall.

When Whitman returned to the Platte River crossing on Tuesday, he found to his dismay that the Spalding party was not there. It did not arrive until the next day; the guide had got lost on the uninhabited prairie. This precipitated a new crisis; the caravan was moving further and further away with each passing day.

The spring rains had swollen the Platte River, and fording was impossible. Driving the livestock across was a simple matter. The real problem lay in getting the wagons and heavy baggage across. Fortunately, an Indian canoe was found large enough to carry about six hundred pounds. Narcissa wrote: “We stretched a rope across the river and pulled the goods over in the canoe without much difficulty” [Letter 26]. In this same letter to Whitman’s brother, Augustus, Narcissa said: “Husband became so completely exhausted with swimming the river on Thursday, the 19th, that it was with difficulty that he made the shore the last time. Mr. Spalding was sick, our two hired men good for nothing.” The crossing was not completed until Friday night.

Precious time was lost Saturday morning when one of the wagons had to be repaired. The missionaries were not able to resume their march until early afternoon. By that time they realized that they had too much baggage. Regretfully they gave many items to Dunbar and Allis. Spalding found it necessary to part with some of his treasured theological books. With the Fur Company’s caravan four days in advance and knowing that unless they caught up with it before coming to the Pawnee Indian villages, it would not be safe to travel without escort, the mission party pressed on in haste. The outlook was bleak, and they faced the fact that they might have to turn back.

**On the March**

With Dunbar as their guide, they pushed westward along the north bank of the Platte River. They traveled all day Sunday, May 22, necessity making excuse for their troubled conscience, and they reached the Elkhorn River on Monday in time to cross it before dark. Mrs. Spalding in her diary tells of their using an Indian “skin canoe.” Here Dunbar left them, as another guide became available who was to stay with the party until they caught up with the caravan. On Tuesday, the 24th, the
missionaries made a grueling march of sixty miles. The Whitmans and the Spaldings rode most of the day in the light wagon. Although the wooden springs had little resiliency, the couples found that sitting upon bundles of bedding made riding fairly comfortable. Gray was in the larger wagon. The Indian boys drove the cattle, while Dulin and Good-year looked after the horses.

The missionaries tried to reach the Loup River by Tuesday night, but the cattle gave out about nine o’clock in the evening, when they were still at least five miles from their objective. In view of these circumstances, the Whitmans decided to remain with the Indian boys and the cattle in the open prairie, while Gray and the Spaldings would continue on to the river. Narcissa wrote: “Husb[and] had a cup tied to his saddle in which he milked what we wished to drink. This was our supper” [Letter 26]. Early in the morning they were on the march again and rode to the river before breakfast. To their great joy, they saw the caravan on the opposite bank.

It took the missionaries half a day to cross the Loup River, and on Wednesday afternoon they made another forced march in order to catch up with the caravan. They drove until one o’clock Thursday morning, when with thankful hearts they joined the sleeping caravan. The race had been won! Later the missionaries learned that the failure of the Company to take axle grease for their seven heavily loaded wagons had caused a delay of several days shortly after the caravan had started. Two fat oxen had to be slain in order to make the grease. It was this delay which permitted the mission party to catch up. Had it not been for this lack of axle grease, a great many aspects of the subsequent history of the Pacific Northwest would have been much different.

Whitman, in a letter dated June 4 to Narcissa’s parents, wrote: “We then felt that we had been signally blessed, thanked God and took courage.” The last five words of this quotation are taken from Acts 28:15 and refer to an experience of the Apostle Paul who, when being taken as a prisoner to Rome, met some friends who comforted him. Paul wrote that “he thanked God and took courage.” Since Whitman referred to this text on subsequent occasions, we can believe that it was especially meaningful to him. The failure of the Company to take axle grease, which in turn caused a delay for the caravan, was accepted by the missionaries as evidence of God’s protective care over them.
On Thursday the caravan, with the mission party in the rear, passed the first of the Pawnee villages where Narcissa and Eliza experienced for the first time the sensation of being objects of great curiosity by the Indians. They were no doubt the first white women that most if not all the Indians had ever seen. Narcissa wrote: “We especially were visited by them both at noon and night. We ladies were such a curiosity to them, they would come and stand around our tent —peep in and grin in astonishment to see such looking objects” [Letter 26].

In Narcissa’s chatty letter of June 3 to members of her family, we find many fascinating wordpictures of her experiences such as the following: “I told you how many bipeds there was in our company, now for the quadrupeds, —14 horses and six mules and fifteen head of cattle. We milk four cows… if you wish to see the camp in motion, look away ahead and see first the pilot and the Captain Fitzpatrick, just before him —next the pack animals, all mules loaded with great packs —soon after you will see the wagons and in the rear our company. We all cover quite a space. The pack mules always string along one after the other just like Indians.”

This letter reflects an exuberant spirit. Narcissa, the bride, was thoroughly enjoying her unusual experiences and took pleasure in telling her family back in Angelica about them. “I wish I could describe to you how we live so that you can realize it,” she wrote. “Our manner of living is far preferable to any in the States. I never was so contented and happy before. Neither have I enjoyed such health for years. In the morn as soon as the day breaks, the first that we hear is the word arise, arise. Then the mules set up such noise as you never heard which puts the whole camp in motion. We encamp in a large ring—baggage and men, tents and wagons on the outside and all the animals, except the cows [which] are fastened to pickets, within the circle. This arrangement is to accommodate the guard who stands regularly every night and day, also when we are in motion, to protect our animals from the approach of Indians who would steal them… We are ready to start, usually at six—travel till eleven, encamp, rest and feed, start again about two—travel until six or before if we come to a good tavern—then encamp for the night.”

Narcissa made light of the discomforts of prairie travel. Reading between the lines of her letter, we find her joking, laughing, and singing. “Our table is the ground,” she wrote, “our table-cloth is an India
rubber cloth, used when it rains as a cloak; our dishes are made of tin basins for tea cups, iron spoons and plates, each of us, and several pans for milk and to put our meat in when we wish to set it upon the table each one carries his own knife in a scabbard and it is always ready for use. When the table things [are] spread, after making our forks of sticks and helping ourselves to chairs, we gather around the table. Husband always provides my seat and in a way that you would laugh to see us. It is the fashion of all this country to imitate the Turks.”

The missionaries took with them bread and some other perishable supplies which lasted for a few days, and then the women were obliged to bake bread over an open fire. Regarding their food, Narcissa wrote: “Let me assure you of this, we relish our food none the less for sitting on the ground while eating. We have tea and a plenty of milk which is a luxury in this country. Our milk has assisted us very much in making our bread since we have been journeying. While the fur company has felt the want of food, our milk has been of great service to us, but was considerable work to supply ten persons with bread three times a day... What little flour we have left we shall preserve for thickening our broth, which is excellent. I never saw anything like buffalo meat to satisfy hunger.”

The caravan reached the eastern edge of the buffalo range on June 2 when the first buffalo was killed. The mission party had been obliged to live for twelve days, after leaving the Platte River crossing, on the food they had taken with them and the milk from their cows. After being supplied with buffalo meat, Whitman took over the job of cook. Writing on June 27, Narcissa praised her husband for the talent he had in cooking the meat in different ways. “We have had no bread since [reaching the buffalo range]” she wrote. “We have meat and tea in the morn and tea and meat at noon. All our variety consists in the different ways of cooking. I relish it well and it agrees with me. My health is excellent, so long as I have buffalo meat I do not wish anything else. Sister S. is affected by it considerably, has been quite sick.” Whitman, writing to Greene from the Rendezvous on July 16, reported: “Mrs. Spalding has suffered considerably from change of diet but in the end, I am confident her health will be greatly improved by the journey.”

When a buffalo was killed for meat, the hunter would take the tongue, which was considered a great delicacy, and the hump ribs. The rest of the carcass would be left to rot. Cornelius Rogers, one of the
members of the 1838 reinforcement sent out to the Oregon Mission by the American Board, gave the following account of buffalo meat: “The meat is very sweet and easily cooked. Ten minutes boiling is enough, more will make it tough. The meat is sometimes ‘jerked’ by being dried in the sun or over a slow fire. In this state it can be kept for three or four days in the most sultry weather.” Since but few buffalo were to be found west of the Continental Divide, the missionaries were obliged to take some of the ‘jerked’ or dried meat with them on their westward journey across what is now southern Idaho.

In her letter of June 3, Narcissa wrote: “Our fuel for cooking since we left timber (no timber except on the rivers) has been dried buffalo dung. We now find plenty of it and it answers a very good purpose, similar to the kind of coal used in Pennsylvania. (I suppose Harriet will make up a face at this, but if she was here she would be glad to have her supper cooked at any rate, in this scarce timber country).” On the treeless prairies, travelers used buffalo chips for fuel, often called them “prairie coal.” A member of the Oregon emigration of 1852 noted in his diary that at first the women were most fastidious about picking up the chips and would wear gloves, but that passed and they “began gathering the buffalo chips with their bare hands.”

While on the march, the caravan averaged about twenty miles a day. Narcissa wrote: “It is astonishing how [well we] get along with our wagons where there are no roads. I think I may say [it is] easier traveling here than on any turnpike in the [States]” [Letter 26]. On the back page of this letter, Narcissa added a note for her sister-in-law, the wife of her husband’s older brother, Augustus: “Now Sister Julia, between you and me, I just want to tell you how much trouble I have had with Marcus two or three weeks past. He was under the impression that we had too much baggage and could not think of anything so easy to be dispensed with as his own wearing apparel, those shirts the Ladies made him just before we left home, his black suit and overcoat, these were the condemned articles, sell them he must as soon as he got to the fort [i.e., Laramie]. At first I could not believe him in earnest. All the reasons I could bring were of no avail, he still said he would get rid of them. I told him to sell all of mine too, I could do without them better than he could—indeed I did not wish to dress unless he could. I had already mended and repaired the coat he wears until it would not stay
on him...” Narcissa succeeded in persuading her husband to keep the shirts and other items of clothing.

After joining the Fur Company’s caravan on May 26th, the missionaries found it necessary to travel on Sunday to the great distress of their consciences. The following quotation from Eliza Spalding’s diary for May 29 is typical of expressions found in the writings of her confidantes: “This is the second Sabbath that has dawned upon us since we left Otoe... Oh, the blessed privilege of those who can every sabbath go to the house of God with the multitude who keep holy day, and do not feel themselves under the necessity of journeying on the Lord’s holy Sabbath.”

The caravan reached Fort Laramie on Monday, June 13, which meant that it was about five weeks earlier than was the caravan of the preceding year. There it remained for eight days before leaving on Tuesday, June 14, for the Rendezvous on Green River. During this interval the women had an opportunity to wash their clothes. Narcissa noted that only three such opportunities came to them en route; once at Fort Laramie, again at the Rendezvous, and the third time at Fort Boise [Letter 29]. The mission party was not given rooms within the Fort but remained encamped outside. Eliza mentioned in her diary what a welcome sight it was just to see the walls of buildings again. A worship service was held at the Fort on Sunday, June 19, at which Spalding preached and some of the men of the caravan attended.

Through South Pass – July 4, 1836

Fitzpatrick left all of his wagons at the Fort and repacked the baggage on animals. Each mule was given a load weighing about 250 pounds and the horses a somewhat heavier pack. Whitman and Spalding left their big wagon and likewise arranged packs for the few animals they had, besides loading as much as possible on the light Dearborn wagon. This meant that the women, who had been alternating between riding horseback and riding in the wagon, would have to continue the trip on their side-saddles unless an emergency arose.

After leaving Fort Laramie on June 21, the caravan followed the south bank of the North Platte for about five days until it reached a crossing place near what is now Casper, Wyoming. Upon arriving there, Fitzpatrick found the river too high to be forded so boats had to be made
by stretching buffalo hides over a frame of willow branches. These were called “bull-boats” because only the skins taken from tough old buffalo bulls were used. The delay at the crossing included a Sunday, which permitted the missionaries to enjoy a day of rest and worship to their great satisfaction.

After crossing the river, the trail led along the north bank to the Sweetwater River which was then followed to the summit of the Rockies. The caravan paused for a short time at Independence Rock, that great landmark and register of the Oregon Trail. This isolated and monumental piece of granite is about 175 feet high, 2,100 feet long, and about a mile in circumference. This became a favorite camping spot for westward bound travelers, many of whom carved their names on the rock. According to Gray, “all the prominent persons” of the 1836 caravan cut their names on the south end of the rock.25 If any member of the mission party did so, erosion has erased them, for no such inscriptions have been found.

July 4, 1836, was an epoch-making day in the history of the Pacific Northwest, for on that day Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding rode through South Pass on the Continental Divide on their way to Old Oregon. They were the first white American women to do so and were seven years in advance of the first Oregon emigration wagon train of 1843. Narcissa and Eliza pioneered the way. What these two had been able to do riding side-saddles gave confidence to countless other women to follow in covered wagons.

Participants in some history-making incident are often unaware of its real significance at the time of the event. So it was with the Whitmans and the Spaldings as they rode over the Continental Divide on that July 4, in 1836. The only reference found in the contemporary writings of the members of the party is the following brief statement from Eliza’s diary: “Crossed a ridge of land today; called the divide, which separates the waters that flow into the Atlantic from those that flow into the Pacific, and camped for the night on the head waters of the Colorado.”26 As far as Eliza Spalding was concerned, this was just another day of travel.

The editor of the Missionary Herald, in his report of the arrival of the mission party at Fort Vancouver in the October 1837 issue of his magazine, dismissed the significance of the crossing of the Rockies in a single
sentence: “Mrs. Spalding and Mrs. Whitman are believed to be the first white women who have crossed the Rocky Mountains.” Although the editor failed to appreciate the significance of the event, Senator Lewis F. Linn of Missouri did not. When he learned of what Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding had been able to accomplish, he arose in the U.S. Senate on June 6, 1838, and declared: “Thus has vanished the great obstacle to a direct and facile communication between the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific Ocean.” The great Rocky Mountain barrier had been breached. The door to Old Oregon had been opened for women and children!

After Whitman’s visit to Washington and Boston in 1843, of which more will be said later, he returned with the first great Oregon emigration of 1843 and was largely responsible for the success achieved by the emigrants in taking their wagons west of Fort Hall and over the Blue Mountains into the Columbia River Valley. Writing to Greene on November 1, 1843, shortly after his return to his mission station, Whitman proudly stated: “If I never do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the Mountains & prevent the disaster & reaction which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present Emigration & establishing the first wagon road across to the borders of the Columbia River, I am satisfied.” Here we see a recognition by Whitman, seven years after he and Spalding had taken their wives over the Rockies, of the great significance of that accomplishment.

The Whitman massacre of November 1847 naturally focused attention on the Whitmans and the past history of the Oregon Mission. A writer in the Oregon Spectator for February 5, 1848, using the pseudonym “Oregonian,” drew attention to the fact that Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding “were the first white females that ventured to try the perils of a journey across the mountains, which, at that time, was considered presumptuous in the extreme, and doubtless has contributed to dispel the fears and remove the dread of a passage from the Mississippi to the Columbia, more than all other adventures.” Here is the judgment of a contemporary. “Oregonian” further stated: “I have no fears in venturing the assertion, that the simple act of these two females, sustained by others who have followed them on a similar enterprise, has contributed more to the present occupancy of Oregon than all the fine-spun speeches and high-sounding words that have yet issued from the executive branch at Washington.”
Years later the eloquent but historically inaccurate H. H. Spalding wrote the following highly embellished account of the crossing of the Continental Divide as part of a Resolution adopted by the Pleasant Butte Baptist Church of Linn County, Oregon, on October 22, 1869: “At twelve o’clock on the 4th of July last, thirty-three years ago, two Protestant heroines, Mrs. Spalding and Mrs. Whitman, alighted from their horses, themselves in great weakness, at the dividing point on the Rocky Mountains, in the famous South Pass, and after returning profound thanks to Almighty God for his heavenly care of them thus far, and dedicating themselves anew to his holy cause, with the banner of the cross in one hand and the stars and stripes in the other, they stepped down, the first American women, into the Territory of Oregon, and took formal possession in the name of their Saviour and their country, in the name of American mothers and of the American church; and being immediately confronted by the British lion, they instantly bearded the royal beast in his lair. Honorable day! It sealed the fate of Great Britain on these shores.”

The late Dr. Grace Raymond Hebard, once Professor of Economies and Sociology at the University of Wyoming, has added further embellishments to the story. In an article published in the Washington Historical Quarterly for 1917, she quoted Mrs. Spalding as saying when she stood in South Pass: “It is a reality of a dream that after four months of painful journey I am alive and actually standing on the summit of the Rocky Mountains where the foot of a white woman has never before trod.”

A drawing in Nixon’s Whitman’s Ride Through Savage Lands pictures the missionaries kneeling in prayer by a covered wagon and an American flag flying from a nearby flagpole. A similar illustration in Myron Eell’s Marcus Whitman shows Spalding holding the flag while the other members of the party are kneeling as in prayer.

If such a dramatic prayer meeting had ever been held, surely Narcissa or one of the three men would have referred to it in some of their writings. Not one of the mission party ever referred to having a United States flag on their journey. Only Eliza Spalding made reference to the pass, as has been stated, when she wrote: “Crossed a ridge of land today; called the divide.” We must dismiss Spalding’s account as being nothing more than the embellishment of an old man’s fertile imagination. Since the missionaries were accustomed to hold daily devotions, it may be that
when they met in worship on the evening of July 4, some mention was made of God’s providence in bringing them safely over the Rockies. Such a meeting could have been the basis of Spalding’s remarks made some thirty-three years later when memory and imagination became inseparably intertwined.

Eighty years after Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding rode through South Pass, in June 1916, a patriotic citizen of Lander, Wyoming—Captain Herman G. Nickerson—placed an upright stone monument about three feet high at the summit of the pass along some of the ruts made by Oregon bound wagons. This monument bears the words:

Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, Eliza Hart Spalding, First White Women to Cross This Pass, July 4, 1836.
Chapter 8 Footnotes

1 Drury, *F.W.W.*, vol. I contains copies of Narcissa’s travel letters and her diary.

2 Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1964, gives an excellent history of the rise and spread of the anti-Catholic sentiment in the United States. One of the most influential and outspoken critics of Roman Catholicism was Dr. Lyman Beecher, under whom the Spaldings had studied at Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati.


5 Copy in Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, 1843, Schools, W-2091, National Archives.

6 From copy in Coll. H., sent by Spalding to Hiram Bingham, Sept. 19, 1836. Permits were likewise secured for members of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission.


8 EellIs, *Father Eells*, p. 89.

9 HBC Arch., B/223/b/8a.

10 Lovejoy’s printing establishment in St. Louis was destroyed by an anti-abolitionist mob about a month after the Whitmans were in the city. Lovejoy then moved to Alton, Illinois, where he continued to publish his *Observer*. On November 7, 1837, another mob destroyed his press and killed him.

11 See Drury, *Whitman*, pp. 134 ff, for more details about this medical cult.

12 Italics, the author’s.

13 Hulbert, *O.P.*, VI:197. Greene directed this letter to Independence, Mo., which was about fifteen miles from Liberty.


15 Gray’s name was not included in Greene’s letter to the Secretary of War dated Feb. 25, 1836, when Greene asked for a passport for Spalding.

16 Gray, *Oregon*, p. 113, claimed that Goodyear was only sixteen years old and that he was from Iowa. See Hafen, *Mountain Men*, II:179 ff., for a sketch of his life.
17 See article by Allis, “Forty Years among the Indians on the Eastern Borders of Nebraska,” in Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society, II (1887): 133 ff. Reference to his marriage is on page 148. Allis, in a letter to the American Board, July 14, 1836, said: “I think it is a hasty step to take Females across the Mountains at present.”

18 Drury, F.W.W., I:190.

19 Jason Lee took a small band of cattle across the country to Oregon in 1834. So far as is known, the taking of cattle by Whitman and Spalding was the second time such was done.

20 From letter of Cornelius Rogers, July 3, 1838, in Oregonian & Indians Advocate December 1838, p. 35. Also, P.N.Q., 56 (1965):4:159.

21 See article by G. M. Christman on “The Mountain Bison,” American West, Palo Alto, Calif., VIII (1971):3:44 ff. The mountain bison was a different subspecies of that of the plains. One characteristic was that the mountain bison was larger. A herd of the mountain bison is in Yellowstone National Park.


23 Here is one of the few instances in the letters of Narcissa when she referred to her husband by his first name. Usually she called him “husband” or “the Doctor.” The same reticence to the use of Christian names is found in the writings of all members of the Oregon Mission. It was never “Henry” or “Eliza” but rather “Mr. Spalding” and “Mrs. Spalding.”


25 Gray, Oregon, p. 118.


28 “Oregonian’s” reference to the women who followed Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding was to the four women who crossed the Rockies in 1838 as members of the American Board’s reenforcement to the Oregon Mission and to the five wives of independent missionaries who went out to Old Oregon in 1839 and 1840. Altogether eleven women rode horseback through South Pass before the first great Oregon emigration went west in 1843.

30 Op. Cit., VIII (Jan. 1917): p. 30. Although Mrs. Hebard refers to Mrs. Spalding’s diary, she gave no precise reference and this quotation has not been found. The author does not believe it is authentic.
William Henry Gray
A member of the first Oregon party, 1836, of the American Board, Gray was to cause serious problems within the Mission.Courtesy, Whitman College Quarterly, June 1913.
The Oregon Trail, 1836
The route used by the Whitman–Spalding party on their first trip over the Rockies. By permission of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

South Pass Monument
The monument at South Pass in Wyoming was erected in honor of the first white American women to cross the Continental Divide. Photo by C. M. Drury. By permission of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.
A messenger had been sent ahead from Independence Rock to the trappers and Indians who were impatiently awaiting the coming of the caravan at Green River to inform them when it was expected to arrive. The messenger also passed on the exciting news of the presence of missionaries, including women, with the caravan. Many of the trappers had not seen a white woman for years and it is doubtful if any of the Indians had ever seen one.

A self-appointed welcoming committee rode out to greet the incoming caravan and to give a mountain-style welcome to the missionaries. Gray tells what happened: “Two days before we arrived at our rendezvous and some two hours before we reached camp, the whole caravan was alarmed by the arrival of some ten Indians and four or five white men, whose dress and appearance could scarcely be distinguished from that of the Indians. As they came in sight over the hills, they all gave a yell, such as hunters and Indians only can give; whiz, whiz, came their balls over our heads...”¹ For a few minutes the missionaries were alarmed, thinking that they were about to be attacked by hostile Indians, but then their attention was directed to a white flag flying from a raised gun. As the welcoming party rode down one side of the caravan and up the other, they were greeted by wild shouts from the men of the caravan.
and by more firing of guns. Finally the excitement died down, and the missionaries were given a warm personal welcome.

After the mission party had made camp, two of the Indians were invited to join them for supper. They were Tackensuatis, whom Whitman and Parker had met at the Rendezvous the previous year, and Ish-hol-hoats-hoats, better known as Lawyer. Chief Lawyer has already been mentioned, as it was he who had heard Spokane Garry read from his Bible and had carried back the story of what Garry had told of the white man’s religion to the Nez Perces. As has been stated, Lawyer later told the Rev. A. B. Smith that he was the connecting link between Spokane Garry and the Nez Perce delegation which went to St. Louis in 1831 to get teachers and more information about Christianity.

Lawyer’s exact age is unknown but circumstantial evidence places his birth in 1802, which was also the year in which Whitman was born. Since Lawyer had some knowledge of English, he was able to communicate directly with the missionaries. Gray, in his comments on the evening meal with the two Indians, wrote: “Of this feast, these sons of the wilderness partook with expressions of great satisfaction. The Lawyer, twenty-seven years after, spoke of it as the time when his heart became one with the Suapies (Americans).”

One of the members of the welcoming committee was Kentuc, who had accompanied Parker on his exploring tour of the Pacific Northwest in 1835. He delivered a letter from Parker to Whitman dated May 10, 1836. Parker stated that “his way was hedged up” and hence he had decided not to return to the States by the overland route, but would return by sea. This was a great disappointment to the Whitmans and the Spaldings, especially as Parker had left no directions and had given no advice regarding possible locations for mission stations.

Whitman was loath to write any letter of complaint regarding Parker, and it was not until he learned of Parker’s criticism of him that Whitman on May 10, 1839, wrote to the American Board sharply criticizing Parker for many things that he did or did not do. In this letter we may read: “We cannot say how much good Mr. P’s tour will do others, it has done us none, for instead of meeting us at Rendezvous as he agreed, he neglected even to write a single letter containing any information concerning the country, Indians, prospects, or advice of any kind whatever.”
Parker spent the winter at Fort Vancouver as a non-paying guest of the Hudson’s Bay Company. He visited the upper Columbia River country in the spring of 1836 going as far as Fort Colville. When he thought of the long journey overland, his heart failed him. “We cannot avoid the conclusion,” wrote Whitman to Greene, “that he preferred to go home by way of England in the Company’s ship as he said he had the offer of a free passage.” Parker sailed from Fort Vancouver on June 12 for Hawaii. He was obliged to wait there until November 14 when he was able to obtain passage on a ship bound for New London, Connecticut. During a wea- risome voyage of five months around Cape Horn, when at times he had to subsist on salt meat, dried vegetables, and stale biscuits infested with weevils, Parker wished that he had returned overland. He landed at New London, on May 18, 1837, after an absence from the United States of two years and two months and after having traveled about 28,000 miles.

In 1838 Parker published the first edition of his *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains* at Ithaca, New York. This book with its map of the Old Oregon country, one of the first to be made available to the public, became immensely popular, especially among those who dreamed of migrating to that far-away land. The *Journal* ran through five American and three European editions. Parker’s son, Samuel J., estimated that at least ten thousand copies were sold in the United States and another four thousand abroad.

**At the Rendezvous**

Among those who took a leading part in giving the mission party such a boisterous welcome was twenty-six year-old Joseph L. Meek, 1810–1875, one of the most colorful of the mountain men. Meek first went out to the Rockies in the spring of 1829 when only nineteen years old. Many of his fantastic adventures are told for us in Frances Fuller Victor’s book, *River of the West*. Meek had been at the 1835 Rendezvous when he first met Whitman. He was especially impressed by Narcissa Whitman, who was not only in better health at the time than was Eliza Spalding, but who was also by nature more vivacious and sociable. Meek never lost an opportunity to be in her company. During the ride to the Green River Rendezvous after leaving the Big Sandy on the morning of July 5, Meek rode at Narcissa’s side and regaled her with his “bar” (bear) stories.
The mission party escorted by Meek, Tackensuatis, Lawyer, Kentuc, and others, arrived at the Rendezvous on Wednesday evening, July 6. Gray tells us that about one hundred American trappers were there that year, about two hundred Nez Perces and Flatheads, and also several hundred Indians from other tribes including a few Cayuses. All joined in giving the missionaries a heart-warming welcome. “As soon as I alighted from my horse,” wrote Narcissa, “I was met by a company of native women, one after the other, shaking hands and saluting me with a most hearty kiss. They gave Sister Spalding the same salutation” [Letter 27].

The two white women were at once the center of a “gazing throng” as Narcissa described it. Tackensuatis and Lawyer brought their wives and introduced them. “It was truly pleasing,” commented Narcissa, “to see the meeting of Richard and John with their friends. Richard was affected to tears, his father is not here but several of his band and brothers. When they met each took off his hat and shook hands as respectful as in civilized life.” Both Richard and John remained with the mission party until it reached Fort Walla Walla.

Whitman in his letter to Greene written from the Rendezvous said that the Indians “were greatly interested with our females, cattle, & wagon.” They called the wagon a “land canoe.” Although vivacious Narcissa made the greater impression of the two women on the white men, it was Eliza who appealed to the natives. Eliza was obliged to remain in the tent much of the time the party was at the Rendezvous because of illness, but even so she began at once learning the Nez Perce language. Evidence indicates that she was the first among the missionaries to become proficient in the use of this tongue.

The mountain men were likewise attracted by the women. Gray noted: “The rough veteran mountain hunter would touch his hat in a manner absolutely ridiculous.” Some of the men manifested a sudden interest in religion and attended the morning and evening devotions of the missionaries. Hearing women’s voices raised in song was a new and thrilling experience for a Rendezvous gathering. Some asked for Bibles; regarding this, Narcissa wrote: “This is a cause worth living for—Wherever we go we find opportunities of doing good—If we had packed one or two animals with bibles & testaments, we should have had abundant opportunity of disposing of them to the traders & trappers of the mountains who would
Among the mountain men at the 1836 Rendezvous were two who turned author and in their respective books told of the impression the white women had made on both the trappers and the Indians. The first was Osborne Russell whose *Journal of a Trapper; or Nine Years in the Rocky Mountains, 1834–1843*, was published posthumously in 1914. Russell wrote: “The two ladies were gazed upon with wonder and astonishment by the rude Savages, they being the first white women ever seen by these Indians, the first that had ever penetrated into these wild and rocky regions.” According to Dr. George H. Atkinson, a pioneer Congregational minister in Portland, Oregon, Russell was “converted while reading his Bible in his lonely hunter’s cabin in the Rocky Mountains.” It may be that he was one who received a Bible from the missionaries at the 1836 Rendezvous.

The second mountain man who turned author was Isaac P. Rose who, in 1884, published his *Four Years in the Rockies*, from which the following is taken: “Mrs. Whitman was a large, stately, fair skinned woman, with blue eyes and light, auburn, almost golden hair. Her manners were at once dignified and gracious. She was, both by nature and education, a lady, and had a lady’s appreciation of all that was courageous and refined; yet not without an element of romance and heroism in her disposition strong enough to have impelled her to undertake a missionary’s life in the wilderness. Mrs. Spalding, the other lady, was more delicate than her companion, yet equally earnest and zealous in the cause they had undertaken. The Indians would turn their gaze from the dark haired, dark eyed Mrs. Spalding to what was, to them, the more interesting golden hair and blue eyes of Mrs. Whitman, and they seemed to regard them both as beings of a superior nature.”

Whitman in his report to the American Board of his 1835 visit to the Rendezvous had given a summary of the different Indian tribes of the area and had mentioned “the Napiersas [i.e., Nez Perces] and Kiusas [i.e., Cayuses].” Parker had visited the Cayuse Indians when at Fort Walla Walla in May 1836 and stated in his report to the Board that he had attempted to give them some instruction in the Christian religion. He wrote: “Here is a promising field for missionary labours.” In all probability Parker told the Cayuses of the possible coming of Whitman that summer with associates and may have suggested that a mission station might be established in their midst. If this were the case, then the Cayuses would have had time...
to send some of their number to the Rendezvous to make known their desires. There is no contemporary evidence that Parker ever promised the Cayuses any payment for land to be used as a mission station as has been claimed by some of Whitman’s critics.

A strong spirit of rivalry developed at the Rendezvous between the Cayuses and the Nez Perces in regard as to where the missionaries were to settle. The members of each of these tribes had come to feel that they would reap many benefits if the missionaries would live with them. Of this Narcissa wrote: “This reminds me of a quarrel among the [Indian] women while... at Rendezvous. The Nez Perce women said we were going to live with them, and the Cayuses said, No, we were going to live with them. The contradiction was so sharp they nearly came to blows” [Letter 34].

It is well to emphasize the fact that the missionaries did not force themselves upon unwilling natives. Both the Cayuses and the Nez Perces were quick to promise full cooperation. Undoubtedly the Indians had mixed motives in their desire to have the missionaries settle among them. There is evidence of a sincere desire to learn more of the white man’s religion. On the other hand, as A. B. Smith pointed out in a letter he wrote to the Board on August 27, 1839, regarding the Nez Perces: “They have manifested a great desire for missionaries, but there is no doubt but that much of this desire has been the hope of temporal gain.”

Whitman, in his letter to Greene written at the Rendezvous and dated July 16, 1836, stated that he and Spalding had decided to go through to Fort Walla Walla and thence to Fort Vancouver. This meant that the Flatheads would be by-passed in favor of the tribes that spoke the Nez Perce language, which included the Cayuses. Commenting on his decision to take women over the Rockies, Whitman wrote: “I see no reason to regret our choice of a journey by land.” During their travels across the plains, they had enjoyed excellent weather. Whitman reported that they had had but one shower “that gave us any inconvenience.” He said that Mrs. Spalding had suffered some from a change of diet but that his wife had endured the journey very well.

Spalding also wrote to the Board from the Rendezvous. In his letter of July 8, he reported: “We travelled 1,700 miles to Liberty mostly by water; 1,300 from Liberty to this place, all by land, and have yet 600 miles to make. Our living since we reached buffalo country, 300 miles from the mouth of the Platte, on the first of June, has been nothing but
buffalo meat and the poorest kind of buffalo are very scarce this year.”

Whitman, in his letter of July 16 to Greene, reported that when he was about to leave the Rendezvous, he went to Captain Fitzpatrick and asked for his bill to cover many favors received including the shoeing of the horses of the missionaries, supplies of meat, etc. Fitzpatrick then asked Dr. Whitman for his bill for medical services rendered to men of the caravan. Whitman replied: “I have no bill.” “Then,” said Fitzpatrick, “neither have I.” Whitman wrote: “We have received nothing but favour and kindness from this company while with them.” This incident is reminiscent of Fontenelle’s attitude when Whitman parted company with him at Fort Laramie in July 1835, when Fontenelle also refused to submit a bill to Whitman. Surely there would have been no mission party with women going overland to Old Oregon in 1836, under the escort of the American Fur Company, had not the way been prepared by Whitman’s medical services to the men of the 1835 caravan who had been stricken with cholera.

After having parted with the Fur Company’s caravan, the mission party was faced with the serious question as to an escort for them from the Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla. The Nez Perce Indians, as though fearful of losing their new-found friends, were eager for the missionaries to go with them by the northern route to Fort Walla Walla. This is what Parker had done in 1835, and it took him forty-five days to make the journey. This route was very mountainous. It crossed and recrossed the Continental Divide four times. Whitman was warned by well-informed mountain men that it would be impossible to take the Dearborn wagon that way and also that such a trail would be most difficult if not impossible for the cattle.

The alternative route would be along the Snake River across the desert of what is now southern Idaho. Lawyer and Tackensuatis promised to accompany the mission party as far west as Soda Springs. Whitman and Spalding decided that with the help of their two Indian boys and Goodyear, they could make the journey in safety. Dulin who had been with them since leaving the frontier left them at the Rendezvous. John Hinds, a Negro, who was ill with “dropsy” joined the party in order to get medical help from Dr. Whitman [Letter 39]. As early as July 8, only two days after their arrival at the Rendezvous, Spalding in his letter to Greene stated that they had decided to take the Snake River route.
An unexpected and most welcome development came on July 12; a small party of Hudson's Bay men under the command of John L. McLeod and Thomas McKay arrived at the Rendezvous to take part in trading. The Company had purchased from Nathaniel J. Wyeth the fort which he had built in 1834, known as Fort Hall, near present-day Pocatello, Idaho. Wyeth was on his way back to the States and had traveled with McLeod and McKay to the Rendezvous. Parker, learning of the intention of the Hudson's Bay Company to acquire Fort Hall, had sent a second letter to Whitman by McLeod and McKay in which he advised the mission party to travel under their protection. The missionaries looked upon this as another token of divine favor and hastened to make their plans accordingly. On Thursday, July 14, they moved to the encampment of McLeod and McKay which was about ten miles from the main Rendezvous. Since the Nez Perces had also decided to travel with the Hudson's Bay Company's party as far as Fort Hall, they likewise moved their camp to be near McLeod.

Narcissa described the warm reception given them by the Hudson's Bay men: “On our arrival Mr. McL. came to meet us, led us to his tent & gave us a supper which consisted of steak (Antelope), broiled ham, biscuit & butter, tea and loaf sugar brought from Wallah Wallah. This we relished very much as we had not seen anything of the bread kind since the last of May. Especially sister Spalding who has found it quite difficult to eat meat [for] some time.” McLeod gave his guests glowing accounts of the abundance of fresh vegetables and food supplies at Fort Walla Walla and Fort Vancouver. This was good news!

Years later, Spalding looked back upon the first meeting of the mission party with McLeod and McKay and remembered how “The shrewd McKay as he met our little party leaving Green River to join his camp said, referring to our ladies, ‘There is something that Doct. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the country so easy.’”

Although the contemporary writings of Whitman, Spalding, and Gray do not indicate that any of them appreciated the significance of their feat in taking the first white women over the Rockies, Tom McKay was one who did. As the stepson of Dr. John McLoughlin, he was well acquainted with the firmness with which the Doctor, as Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, conducted the business of his company. Dr. McLoughlin could outbid, outsell, and outmaneuver any threatened rival in the
fur trade. But larger issues were arising than those involved in the fur trade which would give the Hudson’s Bay Company and the British Government increasing concern.

One of these issues was the location of the boundary in Old Oregon which would determine which part of that vast territory would come under the jurisdiction of the United States and which would go to Great Britain. Tom McKay saw in the presence of two white women at the Rendezvous, on the west side of the Continental Divide, a development which challenged England’s dominance in Old Oregon.

Only two white women at the Rendezvous! This was an epoch making event with far-reaching consequences for the political future of Old Oregon. Their very presence proved that the Rocky Mountains were no longer a barrier to American emigration. The two women riding horseback, on side-saddles, through South Pass had opened the mountain door to Old Oregon to countless thousands of women to follow. Where two women could go on horseback, other women could follow in covered wagons, wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. The coming of families meant the establishment of homes, schools, churches, and inevitably the formation of a civil government under the jurisdiction of the United States. In a flash all this was made clear to Tom McKay who saw that the focal point of competition between Great Britain and the United States was no longer to be centered in the fur trade but rather in the growth of a resident white population in Old Oregon. Hence the remark: “There is something that Doct. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the country so easy.”

**FROM THE RENDEZVOUS TO FORT BOISE**

The Hudson’s Bay party with the missionaries and some two hundred or more Nez Perces started for Fort Hall on Saturday, July 16. While crossing the plains, the Fur Company’s caravan made two “camps” [i.e., marches] a day, stopping for a two-hour period at midday for rest and refreshment. The Indians, however, made but one camp a day. They did not stop after they got started in the morning until they were ready to camp for the night. McLeod, his men, and the mission party found it best to accommodate themselves to the Indians’ custom although the
women found it most trying and were glad to resume their former schedule after parting with the Indians at Fort Hall.

**Narcissa Whitman’s Diary**

After leaving the Rendezvous, the missionaries had no opportunity to send letters back to their homes until they arrived at Fort Vancouver. Narcissa, who had been writing a series of travel letters to her family, decided to keep a diary instead. Judging from the evidence, she first made rough notes along the way in a pocket notebook. After arriving at Fort Vancouver, she wrote the first draft of her diary from these notes and from memory. This first draft is so uniform in its writing and in the flow of ink, that it could not have been written at irregular intervals along the trail. Then Narcissa made a copy for her mother and also one for her husband’s mother. Thus there are the rough notes, the original diary, and two copies, all extant.²⁰

The copy that Narcissa sent to her parents was published in some local paper shortly after it had been received. This displeased her. Writing to her sister Jane on September 18, 1838, Narcissa said: “I regret you should have it printed, or any [part] of it, for it was never designed for public eye.” Yet by a queer irony of fate, nothing written by a member of the Oregon Mission of the American Board has been reprinted as often as Narcissa’s charming diary.²¹

**Narcissa Tells the Story**

Narcissa in her diary gives the following description of their travel experiences:

> We commenced our journey to Walla Walla July 18, 1836, under the protection of Mr. McLeod & his company... On the 19th did not move at all. 20th. Came twelve miles... over many steep & high mountains... the 22nd was a tedious day to us, we started about nine o’clock a.m., rode until half past four, p.m. Came twenty one miles. Had two short showers in the afternoon which cooled the air considerably. Before this the heat was oppressive. I thought of Mother’s bread & butter many times as any hungry child would, but did not find it on the way. I fancy pork & potatoes would relish extremely well. Have been living on fresh meat.
for two months exclusively. Am cloyed with it. I do not know how I shall endure this part of the journey.

On Sunday, July 23, Narcissa’s thoughts turned to her home and to her parents. She wrote of praying for them: “Earnestly desired that God would bless them in their declining years, & smooth their passage to the tomb; that in the absence of their earthly comforts, he would fill their souls with his more immediate presence, so that they may never have cause to regret the sacrifice they have made for his Name Sake.” Here she is referring to her departure from the family circle for Oregon.

On July 27, Narcissa wrote:

Our cattle endure the journey remarkably well. They are a source of great comfort to us in this land of scarcity, they supply us with sufficient milk for our tea & coffee which is indeed a luxury... Have seen no buffalo since we left Rendezvous. Had no game of any kind except a few messes of Antelope which John’s Father gave us. We have plenty of dry Buffalo meat which we purchased of the Indians & dry it is for me. I can scarcely eat it, it appears so filthy, but it will keep us alive, and we ought to be thankful for it. We have had a few meals of fresh fish also, which relished well... Found no berries. Neither have I found any of Ma’s bread. (Girls do not waste the bread, if you know how well I should relish even the dryest morsel, you would have every piece carefully.) Do not think I regret coming. No, far from it. I would not go back for a world. I am contented and happy notwithstanding I sometimes get very hungry and weary.

McLeod gave the missionaries some rice he had obtained at Fort Walla Walla; this was greatly appreciated.

Narcissa refers several times to the light wagon which Whitman was determined to take with him to his future mission station. As has been stated, this wagon was not the first to have been taken over the Continental Divide, but it was the first to have been taken across what is now southern Idaho as far west as Fort Boise. Narcissa repeatedly mentioned the great difficulties the men, and especially her husband, faced in their endeavors to take the wagon over terrain never before crossed by a wheeled vehicle. On July 25, she wrote:
Husband has had a tedious time with the wagon today. Got set in the creek this morning while crossing, was obliged to wade considerably in getting it out. After that in going between two mountains, on the side of one so steep that it was difficult for the horses to pass, the wagon was upset twice. Did not wonder at this at all. It was a greater wonder that it was not turning a somerset continually. It is not very grateful to my feelings to see him wear out with such excessive fatigue as I am obliged to... All the most difficult part of the way he has walked in his laborious attempt to take the wagon over.

On July 28 after traveling through some “very mountainous” country, Narcissa reported: “One of the axle trees of the wagon broke today. Was a little rejoiced, for we were in hopes they would leave it and have no more trouble with it. Our rejoicing was in vain, however, for they are making a cart of the hind wheels this afternoon & lashing the forward wheels to it, intending to take it through in some shape or other. They are so resolute & untiring in their efforts, they will probably succeed.” This incident occurred two days before the party arrived at Soda Springs.

On July 30, the missionaries rode ten miles out of their way in order to see an unusual phenomenon of nature just west of present-day Soda Springs, Idaho. Here two springs, called Steamboat Springs and Beer Springs, emitted hot water heavily saturated with soda and some form of gas which killed birds and insects in the immediate vicinity. In recent times, these bubbling springs have been inundated by the Soda Point Reservoir.

After leaving the mountainous country, the trail entered a flat desert where the thermometer often rose above 100°. On August 2, Narcissa wrote: “Heat excessive. Truly I thought ‘the Heavens over us were brass, & the earth iron under our feet’.” Narcissa’s quotation from Deuteronomy 28:23, so appropriate in describing the weather, reveals her thorough knowledge of the Bible.

The missionaries arrived at Fort Hall on Wednesday morning, August 3, where they were cordially welcomed by Captain Joseph Thing, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s official in charge. The fort was located on the south bank of the Snake River about twelve miles from what is now Pocatello, Idaho. Thing provided rooms in the fort for the two couples.
This was the first time that the Whitmans and the Spaldings had been able to sleep within a building since leaving the Missouri frontier.

Thing proudly showed his garden, which was the beginning of agriculture in what is now Idaho. His turnips were excellent; his corn had been frostbitten; his crop of peas and onions was not promising. That evening the missionaries had the pleasure of dining on “turnips & fried bread” as a supplement to their dried buffalo meat and for dessert, they had tea and stewed wild serviceberries. Narcissa noted: “We had stools to sit on.”

Instead of following the Snake River across what is now southern Idaho, the Nez Perces with the few Cayuses who were traveling with them turned north at Fort Hall. “The whole tribe are exceedingly anxious to have us go with them, use every argument they can invent to prevail on us to do so, & not only arguments, but stratagem. We all think it not best.” The missionaries were convinced that the route the Indians were planning to take would be longer and consume more time. “To go with them would take us two months or more,” wrote Narcissa, “when now we expect to go to Walla Walla in twenty-five days, or be there by the first of September. When we get there, rest will be sweet to us.” Chief Tackensuatis, his family, Kentuc, and a few other Indians decided to stay with the mission party.

One who did not remain with the missionaries was Miles Goodyear. According to Gray: “Miles Goodyear, the boy we picked up two days from Fort Leavenworth, who had been assigned to assist the Doctor, was determined, if the Doctor took his wagon any further, to leave the company. He was the only one that could be spared to assist in this wild, and, as all considered, crazy undertaking.” Goodyear was given two horses and “the best outfit” the mission party could give him.23

The McLeod party with the Missionaries, their Indian helpers, and Hinds, left Fort Hall on Thursday, August 4, for Fort Boise.24 Since they were no longer with the main body of the Nez Perces, they could travel at a more leisurely pace and make two camps a day. “I feel this to be a great mercy to us weak females,” wrote Narcissa in her diary, “for it was more than we could well endure to travel during the heat of the day without refreshment.”

Their trail led along the south bank of the Snake River which the missionaries had seen for the first time at Fort Hall. This tributary of
the Columbia River is the seventh largest river in the United States in volume of water carried. On August 5 Narcissa wrote: “We came through several swamps & all the last part of the way we were so swarmed with musquetoes as to be scarcely able to see, especially while crossing the Portneuf [River] which we did just before we came into camp. It is the widest river I have forded on horseback. It seemed as if the cows would run mad for the musquetoes.”

Some indication of the dangers the women faced when riding sidesaddle, with only the left foot in the stirrup and with the right leg hooked over a horn on the saddle, is found in the following entry from Eliza’s diary for August 6: “Yesterday my horse became unmanageable in consequence of stepping into a hornet’s nest. I was thrown, and notwithstanding my foot remained a moment in the stirrup, and my body dragged for some distance, I received no serious injury.” This was the second time that Eliza had had such an experience.

Narcissa described the terrain over which they rode as being nothing more than a barren sandy desert were it not for the sage. “In some places,” she noted, “it grows in bunches to the height of a man’s head, & it is so stiff and hard as to be much in the way of our animals and wagon.” Whitman, still determined to take the wagon with them, often found it difficult to get it either around or over the sage.

On Sunday evening, August 7, Narcissa wrote: “Came fifteen miles without seeing water, over a dry parched earth, covered with its native sage as parched as the earth itself. Heat excessive.” Whitman later wrote: “Imagination can hardly equal the barrenness of the Snake River [country]” [Letter 31]. On Monday, the 8th, the missionaries were provided with some fresh elk meat, the first they had eaten, and on the 12th they got fresh salmon from some Indians at Salmon Falls. Narcissa wrote regarding the fish: “Had we been a few days earlier, we should not have been able to obtain any fish, for they had but just come up.” Since the falls were too high for the salmon, this was the limit of their spawning run up the river.

There follows in Narcissa’s diary for August 12, one of the most quoted passages of her writings, often referred to as the soliloquy to her trunk:

Friday Eve. Dear Harriet, the little trunk you gave me has come with me so far & now I must leave it here alone. Poor little
trunk, I am sorry to leave thee. Thou must abide here alone & no more by this presence remind me of my Dear Harriet. Twenty miles below the Falls on Snake River. This shall be thy place of rest. Farewell little Trunk. I thank thee for thy faithful services & that I have been cheered by thy presence so long. Thus we scatter as we go along.

[Narcissa’s entry for August 12 continues:] The hills are so steep and rocky that Husband thought it best to lighten the wagon as much as possible & take nothing but the wheels, leaving the box with my trunk. I regret leaving anything that came from home especially that trunk, but it is best. It would have been better for us not to have attempted to bring any baggage whatever, only what was necessary to use on the way. It costs so much labor, besides the expense of animals. If I were to make this journey again, I would make quite different preparations. To pack & unpack so many times & cross so many streams, where the packs frequently get wet, requires no small amount of labour, besides the injury done to the articles... The custom of the country is to possess nothing & then you will lose nothing while traveling. Farewell for the present.

On the next day, Narcissa wrote in her diary that McKay had “asked the privilege of taking the little trunk along so that my soliloquy about it last night was for nought.” Possibly McKay later returned the trunk to her but nothing was said of this in her diary.

In order to take a shorter route to Fort Boise, McLeod decided to cross the Snake River at a place near present-day Glenns Ferry, Idaho. There several islands break the swift flow of the river making fording on horseback possible. Narcissa mentioned in her diary for August 13 that the crossing was made where there were two islands. She wrote: “The packs are placed upon the top of the highest horses & in this way crossed without wetting. Two of the tallest horses were selected to carry Mrs. S. & myself over... The last branch we rode as much as a half-mile in crossing & against the current too, which made it hard for the horses, the water being up to their sides.” Few men today would ever attempt such a crossing but the women accepted the experience, no doubt riding side-saddle, as matter-of-course. “I once thought,” wrote Narcissa,
“that crossing streams would be the most dreadful part of the journey. I can now cross the most difficult stream without the least fear.”

Whitman had a most difficult time in getting the cart across the Snake River. Narcissa described the event: “Both the cart & the mules were capsized in the water and the mules entangled in the harness. Both the cart and mules turned upside down in the river.” After a desperate struggle the cart and the mules were landed on the north bank. Here again we see Whitman’s determination to take the wagon through at all cost.

After reaching the north bank of the river, McLeod and his men pushed on ahead of the missionaries who found their progress delayed by the cattle. The trail led in a northwesterly direction across the desert to the Boise River which was then followed to its mouth on the Snake River where Fort Boise was located. This fort had been established in the summer of 1834 by Thomas McKay, and he remained there after his return from the Rendezvous of 1836.

The mission party arrived at Fort Boise, which Narcissa called “Snake Fort,” on Friday noon, August 19. On Saturday morning, she wrote in her diary: “Last night I put my clothes in water & this morning finished washing before breakfast. I find it not very agreeable to do such work in the middle of the day when I have no shelter to protect me from the sun’s scorching rays. This is the third time I have washed since I left the states, or home either.” McLeod, who was planning to escort the mission party to Fort Walla Walla, was ready to leave that Saturday but after finding the women busy with their washing kindly offered to wait until Monday. “This, I can assure you,” wrote Narcissa, “was a favour for which we can never be too thankful for our souls need the rest of the Sab. as well as our bodies.”

Whitman had to face some harsh realities at Fort Boise. Aware that the horses, which had been pulling the wagon reduced to a cart through the sage, were physically exhausted, and learning that the trail which lay before them over the Blue Mountains was far more difficult than any yet followed, he reluctantly decided to leave the wagon at the fort. Even though Whitman failed to take the wagon through to the Columbia River, his accomplishment in getting it as far west as Fort Boise is worthy of acclaim. He had proved that it was possible for a wheeled vehicle to cross the desert which lay between the Rockies and the Blue Mountains.
A long section of what came to be the Oregon trail, stretching for some four hundred miles west of the Rendezvous, had been opened to vehicular traffic. Seven years later, when some one thousand Oregon-bound emigrants with their wagons were told at Fort Hall that it was impossible to take wagons any further west, it was Whitman who stepped forward and assured them that it could be done, as his experience had proven.

Time is needed to give perspective so that the significance of passing events can be appreciated. Even as members of the 1836 mission party had not at the time recognized the significance of white women crossing the Rockies, neither did they appreciate the importance of their feat in taking the wagon as far west as Fort Boise. Gray called it a “crazy undertaking.” It was not until November 1843 that we find Whitman taking justifiable pride in the part he played in “establishing the first wagon road across to the border of the Columbia River” [Letter 142].

FROM FORT BOISE TO FORT VANCOUVER

The mission party crossed to the west bank of the Snake River on Monday morning, August 22. The women were taken over in a rude Indian canoe made out of rushes and willow branches. After crossing the river, the missionaries were in what is now eastern Oregon. Their trail led in a northerly direction. They crossed the Malheur River at noon on the 23rd and by the evening of the 24th had reached Burnt River. Nowhere along their entire journey had they encountered such mountainous and difficult terrain as along Burnt River. After crossing a divide, they came into Powder River Valley on the afternoon of the 26th. By this time McLeod was getting restless. Fort Walla Walla was about four days’ march away. He suggested, since they were no longer in hostile Indian country, that he push on ahead with the Whitmans and Gray, leaving the Spaldings to follow with the cattle. Chief Tackensuatis was now able to guide the Spaldings. The tent was left with them as McLeod turned his tent over to the Whitmans. Narcissa’s diary mentions many favors which McLeod extended to them. A good instance is recorded in her diary for August 27 when McLeod succeeded in shooting twenty-two wild ducks and gave nine of them to the Whitmans.

The trail led from Powder River over another divide into Grande Ronde Valley, which was a favorite place for a part of the Nez Perce tribe. On the 28th, Narcissa wrote: “We descended a very steep hill
coming into Grande Ronde at the foot of which is a beautiful cluster of trees... Grande Ronde is indeed a beautiful place. It is a circular plain, surrounded with lofty mountains & has a beautiful stream coursing through it, skirted with timber, quite large timber." After traveling for so many weeks on the treeless prairies and the barren deserts, riding through forests was what Narcissa called, “a very agreeable change.”

On Monday, August 29, while crossing the Blue Mountains, Narcissa gave the following vivid description of her experiences: “Before noon we began to descend one of the most terrible mountains for steepness & length I have yet seen. It was like winding stairs in its descent & in some places almost perpendicular. We were a long time descending it. The horses appeared to dread the hill as much as we did. They would turn & wind in a zigzag manner all the way down. The men usually walked but I could not get permission to, neither did I desire it much. We had no sooner gained the foot of the mountain when another more steep & dreadful was before us.”

The Whitmans had an exciting experience late that afternoon. They rode out to a vantage point at about the 5,000 foot level where a beautiful landscape burst into view. Below them and somewhat to the right were the valleys of the Umatilla and Walla Walla Rivers. A little further away flowed the mighty Columbia. They were highly favored in having a clear day for they could see two hundred miles across what is now eastern Oregon to the snowy peaks of the Cascade Mountain Range. “It was beautiful,” wrote Narcissa that evening. “Just as we gained the highest elevation & began to descend, the sun was dipping his disk behind the western horizon. Beyond the valley, we could see two distinct mountains, Mount Hood & Mount St. Helens. These lofty peaks were of a conical form & separate from each other by a considerable distance. Behind the former the sun was hiding part of his rays which gave us a more distinct view of this gigantic cone. The beauty of this extensive valley contrasted well with the rolling mountains behind us & at this hour of twilight was enchanting & quite diverted my mind from the fatigue under which I was labouring.”

Tuesday, August 30, was spent in camp because of some difficulty McLeod had with some of his pack animals. Early the next morning, McLeod rode on ahead to notify those at Fort Walla Walla of the approach of the missionaries. On the 31st, the Whitmans rode about thirty
miles over dry hills, which are now devoted to wheat fields, and camped for the night on Walla Walla River about eight miles from Fort Walla Walla. In the course of their travels that day, they rode past the site which was to become their home. Whitman did not then know that the mission party would have to go to Fort Vancouver for supplies. For the time being, Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia was considered to be the terminus of their travels as they felt sure that they would find a location somewhere near that place. The missionaries of the American Board arrived at Fort Walla Walla just two years to the day after the arrival of the Jason Lee party.

The site of Fort Walla Walla is now covered by the waters of the Columbia River which have been backed up by the McNary Dam, completed in December 1953. The fort was located on a sandy elevation on the east bank of the Columbia near the mouth of the Walla Walla River and was originally called Fort Nez Perce. At the time of the arrival of the 1836 mission party, a French Canadian, Pierre C. Pambrun, was the Hudson’s Bay official in charge. Narcissa’s account of their arrival at the fort in her diary for September 1 pulsates with the excitement she felt as they ended their long overland journey.

“September 1st, 1836. You can better imagine our feelings this morning than I can describe them. I could not realize that the end of our long journey was so near. We arose as soon as it was light, took a cup of coffee and eat of the duck we had given us last night, then dressed for Walla W. We started while it was yet early, for all were in haste to reach the desired haven.” Marcus was riding an Indian pony which did not know how to pace as did the horse Narcissa was riding, so they had to gallop all the way to the fort. “The first appearance of civilization we saw,” wrote Narcissa, “was the garden, two miles this side of the fort. The fatigues of the long journey seemed to be forgotten in the excitement of being so near the close.”

Seeing the approach of the Whitmans and Gray, McLeod, Pambrun, and a naturalist who happened to be at the fort, John K. Townsend, rode forth to greet them. “After the usual introductions and salutations,” added Narcissa, “we entered the fort & were comfortably seated in cushioned armed chairs.” They were served breakfast: “...fresh salmon, potatoes, tea, bread & butter.” While at breakfast, a rooster placed himself on the door sill and crowed. Even such an insignificant incident stirred
Narcissa to write: “Now whether it was the sight of the first white female or out of compliment to the company, I know not... I was pleased with his appearance.”

After breakfast the three missionaries were taken on a tour of the fort and the grounds. Narcissa mentioned seeing chickens, turkeys, pigeons, goats, and “the largest & fattest cattle & swine I ever saw.” The Whitmans were given a room in the west bastion of the fort “full of port holes in the sides but no windows, & filled with fire arms.” The room even had a “large cannon.” Narcissa wrote that she was so pleased to be sheltered from the scorching sun that she paid no attention to the armaments.

Later in the morning, Pambrun treated his guests to some muskmelons. According to Narcissa, one was “eighteen inches in length.” This was a real treat. Dinner was served at 4:00 p.m. The very fact that Narcissa listed the various items on the menu is an indication of how much she appreciated the change of diet: “…pork, potatoes, beets, cabbage, turnips, tea, bread & butter.” The privations of the trail were over and they were back in civilization again. The missionaries met Mrs. Pambrun, a native woman, who spoke some French but very little English.

Townsend, who had gone out to Old Oregon with the Wyeth party and the Methodist missionaries in 1834, has given us the following in his journal under date of September 1, 1836: “I have had this evening some interesting conversation with our guests, the missionaries. They appear admirably qualified for the arduous duty to which they have devoted themselves, their minds being fully alive to the mortifications and trials incident to a residence among wild Indians, but they do not shrink from the task, believing it to be their religious duty to engage in this work. The ladies have borne the journey astonishingly; they look robust and healthy.”29 From this it is evident that Eliza Spalding’s health was better at the end than it had been at the beginning of her overland journey.

On September 2, the day after their arrival at the fort, Narcissa noted in her diary that her husband had decided to go to Fort Vancouver, a six days’ voyage by boat down the Columbia River. Whitman wanted to see Dr. McLoughlin. By this time he had learned that he would not be able to get all supplies needed at Fort Walla Walla and that he would have
to get them at Fort Vancouver. Narcissa decided to go with him rather than remain at Walla Walla. McLeod and Townsend left for Vancouver the 3rd with heavily loaded boats. Since Pambrun was also planning to go to Vancouver a few days later, the Whitmans decided to travel with him.

The Spalding party with the pack animals and the cattle arrived at Fort Walla Walla on the afternoon of the 3rd. The Spaldings were given the same cordial welcome as had been extended to the Whitmans and Gray. Only eight head of the original herd of seventeen (including perhaps two calves born en route) cattle survived the long trek. Two had been butchered en route; two calves were lost; and five had to be left at Fort Boise because of their sore feet. The missionaries were glad to have these eight as they knew it was not the policy of the Hudson’s Bay Company to sell cattle to settlers or to missionaries. Evidently the Company gave the missionaries five head to replace those left at Fort Boise, as Whitman, in a letter to Parker dated September 18, wrote: “We shall have five cows, seven heifers, and one bull.” The missionaries had left the Missouri frontier with fourteen head of horses, including the two that Whitman had left the year before at Bellevue, and six mules. Eight of the horses were taken through. The letters of the missionaries do not tell the fate of the mules.

At Fort Walla Walla the missionaries met Charles Compo who had served as Parker’s interpreter the previous year. Compo complained to Whitman about the treatment he had received from Parker; he had given up his chances of trapping in the fall and winter of 1835–36 in order to go with Parker, and had received only $18.00 worth of Indian goods for his services. Whitman asked Greene: “How could so small a compensation be right?” [Letter 62]. Compo spent the winter with the Nez Perce Indians hoping to return to the Rendezvous with Parker in the spring of 1836. When Parker failed to make that journey, Compo entered the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Walla Walla where he remained for two years.

The five missionaries left for Fort Vancouver with Pambrun on September 6. Gray described the boat which carried them down the Columbia as being “about 30 feet long and 8 wide in the center, coming to a point at each end, propelled by 5 oares and a stearsman, of sufficient depth to early 2,500 pounds.” A trip up or down the Columbia River in those days involved several portages because of dangerous rapids or falls.
This meant that all occupants of the boats would have to walk the length of the portage; in some places this exposed them to the flea infested terrain. This came as a surprise to Narcissa who in her diary tells of her unpleasant experiences. Once she had seated herself in the shade of a large rock when suddenly she became aware of insects crawling on her neck. She soon discovered that she was covered with thousands of fleas!

“Immediately,” she wrote, “I cast my eyes upon my dress and to my astonishment found it was black with these creatures all making all possible speed to lay siege to my neck & ears. This sight made me almost frantic.” Narcissa shouted for help but no one was within hearing at the time. She began climbing up the rocks and finally attracted her husband’s attention. “I could not tell him,” she wrote, “but showed him the cause of my distress. On opening the gathers in my dress around my waist, every plait was lined with them. Thus they had already laid themselves in ambush against a fresh attack. We brushed & shook & brushed for an hour, not stopping to kill them for that would have been impossible.” After returning to the boat, the Whitmans learned that every one else in the party had been likewise afflicted. They found no relief until they were able to camp for the night and change their apparel.

On the evening of September 9, a day when the party remained in camp because of contrary winds, a band of Indians visited them. Narcissa noted: “Every head was flattened. These are the first I have seen so near as to be able to examine them.” It was the picture of a deformed head said to be of one of the four Indians who had visited St. Louis in the fall of 1831, with the accompanying appeal for missionaries, which had attracted the attention of Samuel Parker when he read the March 1, 1833, issue of the New York Christian Advocate. Now the missionaries were seeing the custom in reality. Two days later while making the portage at the Cascades, Narcissa had a better opportunity to observe the flattening process. “I saw an infant here,” she wrote, “whose head was in the pressing machine. This was a pitiful sight. Its mother took great satisfaction in unbinding & showing its naked head to us.” The infant was only three weeks old and the bones of the skull were still pliable. Narcissa learned that the infant’s head would usually be kept under pressure for three or more months. “There is a variety of shapes among them,” she wrote. “Some are sharper [i.e., more wedge-shaped] than others. I saw a child about a year old whose head had been recently
released from its pressure, as I suppose from its looks. All the back part of it was of a purple colour as if it had been sadly bruised.”

The custom of flattening the heads of infants was common in that day in the lower Columbia River country, and there is evidence that a few of the natives in the upper country also practiced it. By 1836 the custom was beginning to die out.

AT FORT VANCOUVER

Pambrun’s boat with the five missionary passengers arrived at Fort Vancouver on Monday morning, September 12. The first to greet them was the naturalist, J. K. Townsend, who escorted them to the main gate of the fort. Dr. McLoughlin and others, hearing of their arrival, hastened to greet them. He gave a warm welcome to the missionaries who had come to the end of a seven-months journey across the continent. Dr. McLoughlin was quick to appreciate the significance of the achievement of the women in crossing the Rockies and, according to Spalding, called upon “his powers of invention to confer upon them some title of honor due to their heroism.”

McLoughlin presented his wife, Margaret, to the missionaries. She was the daughter of a Swiss merchant in Canada and a Cree Indian woman and is described by those who knew her as being intelligent and capable. She was the widow of Alexander McKay, when Dr. McLoughlin married her, and already the mother of four children including Tom McKay. Among those at Fort Vancouver at the time of the arrival of the mission party was twelve-year-old William McKay, son of Thomas, who later was sent East on the advice of Dr. Whitman to study at the Fairfield Medical College.

In the welcoming party was Sir James Douglas, Dr. McLoughlin’s chief associate and later his successor, and Dr. William Frazer Tolmie, a young Scottish physician who had been sent to Fort Vancouver in 1833 to relieve Dr. McLoughlin of his medical cares. Douglas also had a half-breed wife. Another couple who was introduced to the missionaries were the Rev. and Mrs. Herbert Beaver, who had arrived from England on the Neriade, then in port, only six days before the arrival of the American Board missionaries. Beaver, an Anglican clergyman, was to be the chaplain of the Fort. Another English woman at the Fort was a Mrs. Capendel, the wife of one of the employees of the Company. “This is

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more than we expected,” noted Narcissa in her diary, “that we should be privileged with the acquaintance & society of two English ladies.”

Now that the “unheard of journey for females” was completed, what was the verdict of those who were directly involved? Was Marcus Whitman, the first who believed that such a journey for women was possible, to be censured for promoting so foolhardy an undertaking or was he to be commended for his sound judgment? Great risks were taken. Mrs. Satterlee, who had accompanied her husband to the Missouri frontier, had died at Liberty. Mrs. Spalding was ill several times along the way. After the trying experience of crossing the desert of what is now southern Idaho, Spalding wrote to Greene on September 20: “I can never advise females, notwithstanding, to venture a route over the mountains so long as a passage to this country is so easy by sea.

Narcissa agreed with Marcus in recommending the overland route. Writing to Mrs. Parker from Fort Vancouver on October 24, Narcissa said: “Do you ask whether I regret coming by land? I must answer no! by no means. If I were at home now, I would choose to come this way in preference to a seven months voyage” [Letter 35]. No one was better qualified to judge the relative merits of an overland journey as compared with a sea voyage than Samuel Parker, for he had gone both ways. In a letter to Elkanah Walker, who was thinking of taking his bride overland to Oregon, Parker on February 19, 1838, wrote: “By all means go across the continent by land. I would rather go across the continent three times than around the Cape once… A lady can go with far more comfort by land than by water.”

The Women at Fort Vancouver

What a delightful place this [is],” wrote Narcissa in her diary. “What a contrast this to the rough barren sand plains through which we have so recently passed. Here we find fruit of every description, apples, peaches, grapes, pear, plum, & fig trees in abundance.” In the extensive gardens, she saw: “…cucumbers, melons, beans, peas, beets, cabbages, tomatoes, and every kind of vegetable too numerous to be mentioned.” The missionaries were taken on a tour of the barns and fields on the afternoon of September 14. Narcissa was greatly impressed. “They estimate their wheat crop at 4,000 bushels this year, peas, the same,” she wrote. “Oats & barley between 15 & 1,700 bushels each. The potato & turnip fields
are large and fine. Their cattle are numerous, estimated at 1,000 head in all their settlements, also sheep & goats, but the sheep are of an inferior kind. We find also hens, turkeys, pigeons, but no geese.” The Company also had three hundred hogs.

They inspected the dairy where between fifty and sixty cows were being milked. The Company had a gristmill run by horse power at Vancouver and another powered by water at Fort Colville. Their storehouses were filled with all manner of merchandise. Regarding this Narcissa informed her family on November 1:

The Company lets us have goods as cheap as can be afforded & cheaper probably than we can get them from the States. They only charge us a hundred per cent more than the prime cost, or England prices. All their goods are of the best quality & will be durable. Husband has obtained a good [heating] stove of Mr. Pambrun of W.W. & we take up enough sheet iron for the pipe. My tin ware has all been made within a week past of the first rate block tin. I have six large milk pans, coffee & tea pots, candle sticks & molds. Covered pails & a baker... and besides this the blacksmiths have all been employed in making our farming utensils &c... There are a few deficiencies in the cloth line. No provision is made for bedding except blankets & these are dear. No sheets, nothing for shirting except striped or calico. I have found a piece of bleach linen which I take for sheets, the only one in the store, price 75 cents per yard. We see now that it was not necessary to bring anything because we find all here [Letter 38].

Narcissa noted one exception—religious books and papers.

Dr. McLoughlin’s hospitality to the two missionary couples knew no limits. He invited them to dine at his table along with his wife and daughter Maria. Others who were also included in that select circle were Sir James and his wife and possibly Dr. Tomie [Letter 26]. The Beavers were not so honored nor was Gray. Since protocol was an important aspect of the social life at Fort Vancouver, and since Gray was known to be the “mechanic” for the mission, Dr. McLoughlin did not consider him as having the same status as the two couples. Gray never forgot what he considered to be the discourteous treatment he had received at the Fort and this may have been the basis for his anti-Hudson’s Bay Company
attitude so evident in his book. Dr. McLoughlin’s dining-room furniture, including his china and some of his silver, are now on display in the McLoughlin house at Oregon City, Oregon. These items give evidence of a culture and an elegance that only the chief factor of an important trading post of the Company could afford.

Narcissa commented on the abundance and variety of food served. On September 23 she noted: “There is such a variety I know not where to begin. For breakfast we have coffee or coco. Salt Salmon & roast duck, wild & potatoes. When we have eaten our supply of them, our plates are changed & we make a finish on bread & butter. For dinner we have a greater variety. First we are always treated to a dish of soup, which is very good. Every kind of vegetable in use is taken & chopped fine & put into water with a little rice & boiled to a soup.” The menu always included a variety of vegetables and of meats—“roast duck... boiled pork... fresh Salmon...” Following the main course would come the dessert—a rice pudding or apple pie and fruit and cheese. “The gentlemen frequently drink toasts to each other,” wrote Narcissa, “but never give us the opportunity of refusing for they know we belong to the teetotal Society.” Undoubtedly many a glass was lifted by the gentlemen of the Company in honor of their guests and especially the two women. Never before had the Whitmans and the Spaldings been so well feasted and honored.

When Parker had spent the winter of 1835–36 at Fort Vancouver, he had been invited by Dr. McLoughlin to teach sacred music to the fifty or more half-breed children then enrolled in the school. How natural, therefore, was it for Dr. McLoughlin to invite the two women to help in the school and especially for Narcissa to teach singing. Narcissa made three references in her diary to this experience. “I could employ all my time in writing, & work for myself if it were not for his [i.e., Dr. McLoughlin’s] wishes,” she once wrote. “I sing with the children every evening also, which is considered a favor.” And again: “I sing about an hour every evening with the children, teaching them new tunes, at the request of Dr. McLoughlin.” It is easy to believe that Dr. McLoughlin was present whenever possible for those informal concerts, for he, too, had succumbed to the charms of her sweet voice. At his invitation, Narcissa became a tutor for his daughter, Maria.

The Rev. Herbert Beaver, however, looked upon the presence of the women in the school as an infringement of his rights. So on September 30,
a little more than two weeks after the mission party had arrived, Beaver addressed a note to Dr. McLoughlin protesting the introduction of “various systems of instructions” and asked if the school “is under my sole superintendence?” 37 Dr. McLoughlin replied the same day and firmly informed Beaver that the school was under “my direction.” Even after receiving that clarification, Beaver wrote to “Mesdames Whitman and Spalding” on October 1 informing them that in England “it is unusual... for any person to take part, without his permission and request, in the parochial duties of the minister... He would, therefore, hope that after this explanation, the Ladies, whom he has thus presumed to address, will refrain from teaching, in any respect, the children of the School at Vancouver, over which he has charge in virtue of his office.”

Dr. McLoughlin was incensed when he learned of this letter. He requested his chaplain to call at his office on Monday morning, October 3. Beaver replied that he preferred to conduct business by writing letters and not by a personal interview. At 1:00 p.m. that day, Dr. McLoughlin sent another note to Beaver in which he stated that he viewed the letter sent to the two missionary ladies as “a deliberate insult to the Honble. [i.e., Honorable] Company.” McLoughlin was firm in stating that he expected “that necessary degree of deference to his wishes” from Chaplain Beaver that was required “from all other persons in the service under him.”

Beaver replied with another note dated “half past two” on that Monday. He claimed that he was greatly surprised to learn that his letter to the women was taken as an insult. “He would gladly state,” he wrote, “for their satisfaction, that not the slightest insult was intended.” 38 There the matter rested.

The women at Dr. McLoughlin’s insistence continued their work in the school. Beaver, who had been at Fort Vancouver for less than a month, found himself out of favor with the chief factor. He poured out his troubles in long letters to Benjamin Harrison, a member of the Governing Committee of the Company in London and one, as has been stated, who had been very influential in founding the Red River Mission school.

In Beaver’s letter to Harrison dated November 15, 1836, we may read: “With respect to private treatment, I might have characterized it as insufferable by any person accustomed to the contrary; and I might have affirmed, in general, that no Englishman, no gentleman, no Christian,
no clergyman, no married couple, could possibly remain here, without having their feelings daily outraged by every species of conduct offensive to their former habits.” Already Beaver regretted his appointment to Fort Vancouver and wished that he had returned to England on a vessel that had but shortly before sailed from Fort Vancouver. In spite of the appropriateness of his name for a fur-trading post, Chaplain Beaver was not a success at Vancouver. He and his wife returned to England in 1838.

The Men at Fort Vancouver

There is evidence which supports the theory that long before the mission party arrived at Fort Vancouver, Whitman and Spalding had agreed to establish separate stations. And so it was. The Whitman home at Waiilatpu, near Fort Walla Walla and among the Cayuses, was 120 miles from the Spalding station on the Clearwater River with the Nez Perces at a place called Lapwai, now known as Spalding, Idaho. Why did the two couples separate? Why, in view of the limited financial resources of the American Board, were two stations established, when common sense would dictate that they concentrate their energies in one station? Why should they have denied themselves the fellowship and support of each other when so far removed from civilization?

The answer to such questions seems to be that Henry, as has been stated, had proposed marriage to Narcissa and had been rejected. He had found a most loyal helpmate in Eliza Hart, but could never forget the humiliation and disappointment of being turned down by Narcissa. Possibly Whitman was aware of this when he begged the Spaldings to go with him and Narcissa to Old Oregon. If so, it may be that he felt that since Henry was married to Eliza, the old romance was no longer an issue. Narcissa’s father was doubtful of the wisdom of his daughter going to the same mission with Henry Spalding but, after having had a personal interview with Spalding, withdrew his objection.

Spalding, however, could not forget, and difficulties arose between him and Whitman on their overland journey to Oregon. Gray in a letter to Greene dated October 14, 1840, stated that the two men had quarreled three times on their way across the country: “...at the Pawnee village, at Fort Boise on the Snake River, and at Walla Walla on the Columbia.” Gray did not give the reasons for the disagreements. After the 1838 reenforcement arrived, Elkanah Walker asked Spalding why he had
gone so far from Waiilatpu to establish a separate station. According to Gray, Spalding replied: “Do you suppose I would have come off here all alone, a hundred and twenty miles, if I could have lived with him and Mrs. Whitman?”

The fact that the Whitmans and the Spaldings were sent to the same field by the same mission board did not mean that they were temperamentally suited to be bosom friends. Before they were missionaries, these four were human beings with the frailties to which we are all subject. Whitman and Spalding very wisely agreed, before they arrived at Fort Vancouver, to have separate stations even if this required some duplication of equipment and supplies. On the other hand, having two stations with work in two different tribes meant an expansion of their missionary influence.

In all probability Whitman and Spalding discussed with the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians at the Rendezvous the desirability of having a station with each tribe. Narcissa noted in her diary for September 21, 1836, written at Vancouver: “Mr. Parker recommended a place on the Koos Kooske [Clearwater] river, six days ride above Walla W.” This is the only known reference in the writings of the mission party of 1836 to any definite recommendation left by Parker to a possible site for a mission station. Parker had visited the upper Columbia River country in the spring of 1836. His reference to a six days’ ride from Fort Walla Walla indicated the Kamiah country. It is possible that Parker left some verbal recommendations with Dr. McLoughlin, but Whitman claimed that Parker had left no written instructions. Evidence indicates that Whitman and Spalding, after consulting with Dr. McLoughlin, made their final decision to have the Whitmans settle among the Cayuses and the Spaldings among the Nez Perces when the two couples were at Fort Vancouver. Plans were then made accordingly.

After further consultation with Dr. McLoughlin, Whitman and Spalding decided that it would be wise for them to return with Gray to Fort Walla Walla, to select the sites, and possibly begin building while the women would remain at Fort Vancouver. Dr. McLoughlin expressed his willingness to sell supplies. A bill of goods amounting to £371–8–1 was purchased, which included household furniture, clothing, home and farming utensils, building supplies, Indian goods, books, stationery, and some provisions. Of this amount, Whitman assumed £188–7–2;
Spalding £172-13-1; and Gray £10-7-10 [Letter 42]. Gray’s bill was the smallest as he was not planning to have a separate station and he was unmarried.

During the whole mission period of eleven years, 1836–47, financial transactions between the missionaries and the Hudson’s Bay Company were on the basis of English currency. According to a letter that Henry Hill, Treasurer of the American Board wrote to Spalding on June 23, 1837, every £100 cost the Board about $540.00. When the cost of purchases made at Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1836 is added to the $3,273.96 incurred before the missionaries left the States, we find that the Board paid out nearly $6,000.00 to establish the Oregon Mission. This sum does not include the costs incurred by Parker on his exploring tour [See Appendix 2]. Dr. McLoughlin assured Whitman that the expenses incurred by the 1836 mission party in going to Oregon, covering a period of about seven months, were less than the cost would have been had they gone by sea [Letter 88].

Both Whitman and Spalding were generous in their expressions of appreciation for the assistance rendered to them by the Hudson’s Bay Company. Whitman made special mention of the warm reception given them by Dr. McLoughlin [Letter 42]. Without the help of this Company, especially in making supplies available and indirectly in keeping the natives peaceful, it is doubtful whether the American Board would ever have been able to establish and maintain its Oregon Mission.41

The North West Company, as early as 1813, had imported Hawaiians, sometimes called Kanakas, into the Oregon country as laborers, as the local Indians could not be depended upon to do manual work.42 The Hudson's Bay Company also found the Hawaiians useful and dependable. When Whitman inquired as to the possibility of getting such help, Dr. McLoughlin suggested that he write to the Rev. Hiram Bingham, head of the American Board’s Mission in the Islands, and ask him to send some Hawaiians to aid in the Oregon Mission. McLoughlin also suggested that while writing, he ask Bingham for some sheep as it was contrary to the policy of the Company to sell any animals from their large flocks or herds. A letter was written to Bingham on September 19, 1836, which was signed by Whitman, Spalding, and Gray, asking for both Hawaiian laborers and some sheep.
On Wednesday, September 21, 1836, a heavily laden boat manned by eleven oarsmen left Fort Vancouver for Fort Walla Walla. Among the passengers, in addition to the three missionary men, were Pambrun and a Cayuse chief who had accompanied the mission party to Fort Vancouver. Spalding in a letter to Greene, which was begun on September 20, reported that before they left Fort Vancouver, Dr. McLoughlin had suggested that they seek God’s guidance in prayer and joined his petitions with theirs. Narcissa and Eliza were reluctant to see their husbands leave. “One thing comforts me,” wrote Narcissa, “they are as unwilling to leave us as we are to stay & would not, if it was possible for us to go now.”

The boat party reached the Cascades on the Columbia on the 22nd where a portage was necessary. Another portage of about one-half mile was required at The Dalles. Indians native to the region were always willing to help carry the freight and the boats over the portage if given a little tobacco. Depending upon the size of the boat, from thirty to forty Indians were needed even when a boat was empty. The party arrived at Fort Walla Walla on October 2.
CHAPTER 9 FOOTNOTES


2 Tackensuatis was not the father of Richard as erroneously stated in Drury, F.W.W., I:84.

3 See Drury, “I, the Lawyer,” in New York Westerners, VII (May 1960), No. 1. Lawyer’s name is spelled Hol-Lol-Sote-Tote on the Lawyer monument, Whitman College campus, Walla Walla. Lawyer served as Head Chief of the Nez Perces, 1849–71.

4 McBeth, The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark, p. 25, states that the word means “crowned ones” in reference to the hats which the white men wore. Other explanations are given in Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, p. 38.

5 Spalding to American Board, July 6, 1836, Coll. A.


7 For sketch of the life of Joe Meek, see Hafen, Mountain Men, I:313 ff.

8 Gray, Oregon, p. 122.

9 For a time both youths were helpful as interpreters but on the whole, as Secretary Greene had prophesied, the experiment of taking the Indian boys East was not a success.

10 Gray, Oregon, pp. 118 & 123.

11 Ibid., 123.


14 James B. Marsh, Four Years in the Rockies, New Castle, Pa., 1884., p. 156.

15 Whitman’s spelling of Nez Perce as “Napiersas” shows that he was trying to represent the French pronunciation which he had heard. The Anglicized pronunciation is now used “Nez Purse.” Hulbert, O.P., VI: 162.

16 Hulbert, O.P., VI: 117–8. This comment was made after Parker had visited the Cayuse country the second time, i.e., in May 1836.

17 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 107.

18 Stanley Davison, “Worker in God’s Wilderness,” Montana, Helena (Winter, 1957) has a map (p. 16) of the supposed route taken by the Nez Perces and Parker in 1835. See also Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, pp. 134 ff., for description of the probable route.

19 Spalding ms. file, #201, p. 7, Coll. W.

20 The original notes made by Narcissa while traveling, and from which the diary was later written, are in private hands, but they have been seen by a historian who vouches for their authenticity. The first copy of Narcissa’s diary, made from these notes, is in W.S.H.S. See Drury, F.W.W., I:71 ff., for a comparison of Diary A., which was sent to Narcissa’s mother, and Diary B., which was sent to her husband’s mother. In my Whitman, p. 148, fn. 16, I stated that the diary in
W.S.H.S. was not an original. This opinion was based on a picture of the first page which had been published and which was not in Narcissa’s handwriting. I was not then able to examine the original document. Since then, I have had this privilege, and am now convinced that, with the exception of the first page, the diary is authentic.

21 In addition to the publication of her diary referred to by Narcissa, the text has appeared in T.O.P.A., 1891; Chronicle Express, Penn Yan, N.Y., beginning January 8, 1891; O.H.Q., XXXVIII (1937) in an article by T. C. Elliott, “Coming of the White Women,” and in Drury, F.W.W., I.

22 All quotations from Narcissa’s diary in this section have been taken from Drury, F.W.W., I. Spalding to Greene, September 20, 1836, Coll. A., claimed that the dried buffalo meat was “... sour, mouldy, & full of all manner of filth, such as I would not have fed to a dog.”

23 Gray, Oregon, p. 133; and Hafen, Mountain Men, II: 179 ff.

24 An excellent map of the Oregon Trail through what is now southern Idaho, with explanatory notes, is to be found in a pamphlet issued by the Department of Highways, State of Idaho, Route of the Oregon Trail in Idaho, 1968 & 1967.

25 The mosquitoes and flies are still extremely annoying in some of the places visited by the missionaries. I was at the site of the 1836 Rendezvous in July 1960 and found them as described by Narcissa. Horses were plagued by the horse fly, the deer fly, and the botfly. Some of the insects laid their eggs in the nostrils of the animals while others stung them in the tender spot back of the ankle, just above the hoof. Such attacks often made the animals half crazy.

26 Drury, F.W.W., I:195, fn. 32.

27 The picture of the two-island crossing in Drury, F.W.W., I:83, does not show the correct site. The probable location is shown in Route of the Oregon Trail in Idaho, p. 8.

28 Farnham, Travels, p. 142, mentions seeing the wagon at Fort Boise in 1839. Perrin Whitman, W.C.Q., II (June 1898), p. 36, also refers to seeing it in 1843. Cannon, Wailatpu, p. 25, states that the wagon had been used to move the effects of the Fort to a new location early in the 1860s. This is the last known reference to the famous wagon.

29 John K. Townsend, Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains, in Early Western Travels, Cleveland, 1905, p. 355.

30 See chapter on Charles Compo, by Drury, in Hafen, Mountain Men, VIII: 87 ff.

31 Gray to Ambler, September 9, 1886, Coll. O.

32 Spalding to Greene, Sept. 20, 1886, Coll. A.

33 Alexander McKay lost his life on the ill-fated Tonquin which was blown up on the west coast of Vancouver Island in June 1811.


35 Gray, Oregon, p. 153, referring to himself: “... he was looked upon as a vagabond, and entitled to no place or encouragement... There was nothing but master and servant in the country.” Gray was housed in “the quarters of the clerks.” p. 149.

36 Parker, Journal, p. 171.


40 Original letter, Coll. A.

41 Gray became critical of the Hudson’s Bay Company. See ante fn., 35. Gray wrote in his *Oregon*, p. 158: “To the disgrace of most of the missionaries, this state of absolute dependence and submission to the Hudson’s Bay Company was submitted to and encouraged.”

42 The Hawaiians were also called Owyhees. A county in Idaho bears this name. Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 152, quotes from a letter written by Smith on August 1, 1840, in which he states that one Hawaiian could do more work than four Indians, and one American more than four Hawaiians.
Fort Vancouver, 1845

The Hudson's Bay Company post, established 1825. Drawing used by permission of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. Courtesy Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
**Fort Walla Walla**

Sketch of Fort Walla Walla drawn in 1841 by a member of the Wilkes expedition. This was the Hudson’s Bay Company fort located at the confluence of the Columbia and Walla Walla rivers. This was the Fort Walla Walla that the Whitmans interacted with. Later the U.S. Army would build another fort by the same name located in what is today the town of Walla Walla.

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**Council Lodge Made of Woven Mats**

This tule lodge is typical of the type of housing used by the native peoples throughout the Columbia Plateau at the time of the Whitman’s Arrival in the area in the 1830s. This photo was taken ca. 1900 by Major Lee Moorhouse. Provided by Whitman Mission National Historic Site, courtesy Smithsonian Institution.
The real history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board began with the arrival of Whitman, Spalding, and Gray at Fort Walla Walla on October 2, 1836. The preceding nine chapters of this book constitute the prelude of a new section which begins with this chapter.

Fort Walla Walla was located at one of the most important crossroads of Old Oregon. Before it rolled the mighty Columbia River, the largest in America, not in size of the area drained but rather in volume of water carried, as it flows several times faster than does the Mississippi. The Columbia provided the main artery of travel connecting Fort Vancouver with the Company’s forts in what is now the State of Washington and with its activities east of the Canadian Rockies.

Each spring an express, which usually consisted of several bateaux or canoes manned by Indians of various tribes, French Canadians, or half-breeds, would leave Fort Vancouver and proceed up the Columbia stopping at the forts along the way—Walla Walla, Okanogan, and Colville. After reaching the waters of the upper Columbia, the men would cross the Continental Divide through Athabasca Pass which had an elevation of only 5,736 feet, being about 1,800 feet lower than the South Pass used by the Americans. The express would then continue eastward by the streams and lakes of Canada to Montreal. Although
called an “express,” it usually took the men six months to make the transcontinental journey. Another express would leave Montreal for Fort Vancouver about the same time. Occasionally a second express would be sent each way during the same year.

Fort Walla Walla was the main terminus of the overland section of the Oregon Trail, a trail stretching eastward over the Blue Mountains, through Grande Ronde Valley, and on to the Rendezvous and South Pass. A network of Indian trails branched out of Fort Walla Walla. One led into the Nez Perce country in the Clearwater Valley, another to the north into the Spokane country. Still other trails connected the Fort with the tribes of what is now central Washington and to The Dalles.

Writing in the spring of 1840, Narcissa said: “We are emphatically [i.e., definitely] situated on the highway between the States and the Columbia River” [Letter 76]. By that date, Narcissa had realized that all who entered Old Oregon by the overland route would be passing their homemountain men, Hudson’s Bay Company’s officials, explorers, adventurers, and immigrants. Within the next seven years the number arriving annually over the Oregon Trail would be numbered in the thousands.

When Whitman and Spalding agreed at Fort Vancouver for the former to settle among the Cayuses near Fort Walla Walla and the latter to go to the Nez Perces in the Clearwater Valley, neither could have appreciated the strategic importance of the proposed site for the Whitman station. The decision for the two couples to settle among tribes speaking the same language was of prime importance. The original language of the Cayuses had been very different from that of the Nez Perces, but at the time the Whitmans settled among them, the Cayuses were adopting the Nez Perce tongue.¹ Likewise, many of the Walla Walla and Umatilla Indians, neighbors to the Cayuses, knew the Nez Perce language because of intermarriage and trade relations. According to the best available estimates, the Cayuse tribe then numbered between three and four hundred; the Nez Perces between three and four thousand.²

Wailatpu Selected

On Tuesday, October 4, Whitman, Spalding, Gray, and Pambrun set out to explore the Walla Walla River Valley in search of a suitable site for the Whitman station. This river, which rises in the Blue Mountains, near what is now the Oregon-Washington border, is only
about forty miles long. The four men followed its north bank, and on the 5th came to a place, about twenty-five miles east of Fort Walla Walla and about seven miles west of present-day Walla Walla, which Whitman felt was suitable for his station.

The site included about three hundred acres which lay in a triangular area between the Walla Walla River and its tributary, now known as Mill Creek. Their confluence marked the apex of a triangle with the base about eighty rods long stretching from the top of a sharp bend in Walla Walla River to Mill Creek. The streams were lined with cottonwood and birch trees; the soil appeared excellent. If Whitman then had in mind the possibility of future irrigation, he would have noted the favorable availability of water when he selected the site.

There is no contemporary evidence to indicate that Samuel Parker had recommended that particular location. Whitman reported that he found the Cayuses of the vicinity “very favorable” [Letter 32]. The site was near the favorite camping ground of Chief Umtippe. The acreage was covered with a coarse rye grass that grew in bunches sometimes higher than a man’s head. The Indians called the general area Wy-eé-lat-poo, “the place of the rye grass.” The tall grass is still growing there on what is now the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

On October 6 the men returned to Fort Walla Walla and on the 8th, Whitman wrote to Parker and told of the selection of a mission site among the Cayuses. “You are aware,” he wrote, “of the importance of this place and its influence on the future civilization of the Indians; it is undoubtedly before the Willamette Valley or any point on the Columbia.” Whitman was not then thinking about any incoming American population. His concern was with the Indians. In the light of later developments, his appraisal of the strategic importance of establishing a mission among the Cayuses was correct.

**THE SPALDING MISSION LOCATED**

Having selected the Waiilatpu site, Whitman and Spalding were ready to choose a location among the Nez Perces. Gray was given the responsibility of taking supplies out to Waiilatpu, while Whitman and Spalding visited the Clearwater Valley in search of a suitable place for the Spalding mission. The Black, John Hinds, who had traveled with the mission party from the Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla in order to
receive medical care from Dr. Whitman, and who had remained at the fort while the missionaries went to Fort Vancouver, may have given some help to Gray.

On October 7, Chief Tackensuatis (whom Whitman usually referred to by his nickname, Rotten Belly) arrived at Walla Walla with a party of from twenty to thirty Nez Perces to escort the missionaries to his country. When the Nez Perces learned that Whitman had decided to settle among the Cayuses, they immediately protested. Whitman wrote: “The Nez Perces do not like my stopping with the Cayous; and say that the Nez Perces do not have difficulties with the white man as Cayous do and that we will see the difference”6 [Letter 32]. No doubt it was Tackensuatis who gave this ominous warning. Prophetic words! Would that Whitman had heeded them.

Whitman and Spalding with their escort left Fort Walla Walla on Saturday, October 8, for the Nez Perce country. The company remained in camp over Sunday. The missionaries felt frustrated in not being able, for want of a good interpreter, to communicate with the Indians about Christianity. They were gratified, however, to note that the Nez Perces observed daily devotions and were quite willing to refrain from traveling on Sunday.

On Tuesday, the 11th, the party arrived at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, where Lewiston, Idaho, is now located. The next day they rode about ten miles up the Clearwater to the mouth of Lapwai Creek which flows into the river from the south. Here was a fairly level plain large enough for cultivation and also having possibilities for irrigation. Spalding, however, was attracted by another site about two miles up Lapwai Creek at the foot of Thunder Mountain8 where three springs were flowing. Finding the land suitable for cultivation, Spalding decided to locate there.

The geographical locations of Waiilatpu and Lapwai inevitably affected the subsequent outlook and activities of both Whitman and Spalding. Whitman deliberately chose to settle among a tribe numbering three hundred or more in order to capitalize on the “future importance of this place.” His station was destined to become the first outpost on the Oregon Trail west of the Blue Mountains, so that in coming years much of his time and resources would be devoted to the immigrants. At the time Whitman selected Waiilatpu to be the site of his mission, neither
he nor the Cayuse Indians ever dreamed that this would happen. For the present, the Indians were pleased with having won a degree of status by having one of the two missionary couples decide to live with them.

Spalding, on the other hand, elected to settle in the midst of a larger tribe far removed from the comings and goings of the white men on the Columbia River or on the Oregon Trail. Of all the Protestant missionaries who went to Old Oregon, no one had greater success in evangelizing and civilizing the natives than Henry Harmon Spalding, and no one of the missionary women was more loved by the Indians than his wife, Eliza. An important factor in Spalding’s success was the enthusiasm with which he was welcomed by the Nez Perces. This was in sharp contract to the merely “very favorable” attitude of the Cayuses mentioned by Whitman [Letter 32]. No chief was more eager to have the missionaries settle among his people than Tackensuatis. “This is all my country,” he said to Spalding as they rode into the Lapwai Valley. “Where you settle, I will settle. Only let me know what you want done, and it will be done.”

Whitman never enjoyed such wholehearted cooperation from the natives at Waiilatpu as Spalding received at Lapwai. It is true that within two years, Tackensuatis lost his enthusiasm for the white man’s religion, but at first Spalding benefited greatly from his assistance. Other Nez Perce chiefs, such as Timothy and Joseph, as will be indicated, came to Spalding’s aid.

Having selected a site for the Spalding mission, the two missionaries began their 120 mile ride back to Waiilatpu, now without an Indian escort. Each of the two men was to ride that long trail which connected their two stations many times during the following eleven years. They arrived at Waiilatpu on October 14th, where they found Gray at work preparing logs for a house. He was assisted by Charles Compo and the two Hawaiians who had been hired through the cooperation of Pambrun at Fort Walla Walla. Since both Whitman and Spalding realized the necessity of having a house erected at each station before winter came, they decided that it was best for Whitman to remain at Waiilatpu and work with Gray and for Spalding to go to Fort Vancouver to get the women. Upon their return, Gray could then go and help Spalding build his cabin.
Spalding was back at Fort Walla Walla in time to engage passage with the annual Hudson’s Bay express from Montreal which arrived on Saturday, October 15. The express left on Sunday at 4:00 a.m. and made the voyage down the river in a record time of less than three days. Sails were hoisted on the boats to catch a favorable wind which accelerated their progress. The express arrived at Fort Vancouver on Thursday, the 18th, at 2:00 p.m.

Dr. McLoughlin was surprised to see Spalding back so soon. He had made the round trip in less than a month and was able to report that mission sites had been selected at Waiilatpu and at Lapwai. Spalding noted in a letter to Greene that he had traveled 1,200 miles after his arrival at Fort Walla Walla on September 8, and altogether 5,800 since February 1. “There is yet 425 miles to travel,” he wrote, “before myself & wife reach our location.”

Dr. McLoughlin was disappointed to learn that the women desired to return with Spalding to Fort Walla Walla as soon as necessary arrangements could be made. “The Dr.,” wrote Narcissa in her diary, “urges me to stay all winter. He is a very sympathetic man.” Dr. McLoughlin was aware that Narcissa was then in the fifth month of her pregnancy and felt that the care she would have at Fort Vancouver would be much better for her than the privations and hardships attendant upon the establishment of a pioneer home during the late fall or winter. In spite of his repeated urgings, however, the women decided to return with Spalding.

Narcissa and Eliza had spent four happy weeks at Vancouver. Besides making three copies of her diary while at the fort, Narcissa wrote a number of letters, six of which are extant in either the original or printed form [Letters 33–38]. Some interesting sidelights on Oregon life as she saw it are found in these letters. Writing to her former pastor, the Rev. Leverett Hull, on October 25, she referred to a Cayuse boy who was then attending the Red River Mission school. “A young chief of the tribe and of considerable influence has been to school at a mission station on Red River, east of the mountains, [with] Mr. Cockran, missionary, and Mr. Jones, chaplain of the Hudson Bay Company… The Cayuse chief is still there. We expect his return next fall. In his former visits home he has exerted a good influence in favor of religion and we feel encouraged to think he will be of essential service to the mission.”
No doubt Narcissa had received information about this youth, Cayuse Halket, from a letter that Spalding had brought from her husband. Cayuse Halket had been only eleven years old when sent to the mission school in 1830. He was a nephew of an important Cayuse chief called Tauitau (Tawatoe or Young Chief) [Letter 181b]. According to an historian of the Anglican Church in Canada: “Cayuse Halket is said to have been a pleasing, thoughtful lad who also came from beyond the Rocky Mountains; he returned there in 1834 but could not adjust to the life, and so came back and lived with Mr. Cochran.”

He died at Red River on February 1, 1837, as will be noted. In October 1836, however, both Marcus and Narcissa were hoping that the young man would return to his people after being educated at the mission school and thus be able to assist them in missionary activities at Waiilatpu.

In the frank letter to her former pastor, Narcissa felt free to comment on her impressions of the Anglican services conducted at Fort Vancouver by the Rev. Herbert Beaver. She reported that he preached twice each Sunday and although she enjoyed the services, yet “to contrast it with the preaching at home, I find a great want of plainness and heart. He is a great way behind the times. The standard of piety is low with him and other professed Christians here. He seldom draws the line of distinction between the righteous and the wicked, and when he does it is so faintly that it is scarcely perceptible.” She was critical even of the gentlemen of the Company who were Presbyterians. “Do not see much evidence of real piety among them,” she wrote. “No family worship, no social prayer meetings; yet at the same time all think themselves Christians, safe enough; at least they appear so.” She reported that a Roman Catholic priest was expected, as most of the servants of the Company were of that faith.

During her month’s residence at the Fort, Narcissa was able to secure enough feathers from wild fowl to make a feather bed. Perhaps Eliza was able to do the same. Occasionally the women took horseback rides. One day Mrs. McLoughlin sought to persuade them to give up their sidesaddles and ride astride as did the native women. “We have never seen the necessity of changing our fashion,” noted Narcissa in her diary. For her and Eliza, riding astride was immodest. We have no evidence to indicate that any of the six women connected with the Oregon Mission ever gave up her side-saddle during the eleven-year history of the Mission.
Narcissa took advantage of the interlude of two weeks or more between Spalding’s arrival on October 18 and her departure for the journey up the river to write letters which were to be carried to the States on a ship scheduled to leave soon from Fort Vancouver. At the end of the diary mailed to her parents, she wrote: “Husband is so filled with business that I must write for him, until he is less hurried in his business. (He is far away now, poor husband, three hundred miles. If I had wings I would fly. Adieu.)” Those words — “so filled with business” — aptly described Marcus Whitman. He was always an activist, giving himself unstintingly to many responsibilities.

Spalding took two weeks to assemble his supplies and load them into the two boats which Dr. McLoughlin so kindly provided. Eight of the oarsmen were Iroquois Indians. There is no evidence that any charge was made by the Hudson's Bay Company for this service. John McLeod, who was at Vancouver, decided to accompany the Spalding party to Fort Walla Walla. On Thursday noon, November 3, the two heavily loaded boats shoved off on their tedious journey up the Columbia against the swift current. McLeod and Mrs. Whitman were in one boat; the Spaldings were in the other.

An incident took place at the time of the departure of the boats from Vancouver which aroused the ire of Chaplain Beaver. In a letter dated November 15 and directed to Benjamin Harrison in London, Beaver told what happened: “When the missionaries went from the Fort the other day, I was shocked not at being present, but at hearing that the scholars, by command, had been paraded on the River beach, and sung there an hymn. Sacred music should only be used on solemn occasions, but it is made here a common entertainment of an evening, without the slightest religious feeling or purpose.” Completely ignoring how his chaplain might feel, Dr. McLoughlin had arranged for the school children to bid the missionaries Godspeed by singing some of the songs Narcissa had taught them.

The rainy season began before the Spalding party left Fort Vancouver. On their way up the Columbia, it rained steadily for three days, November 4–6. The women succeeded in keeping dry by staying under oilcloth. Narcissa has given the following description: “At night, when a great fire was made, our tents pitched and the cloth spread for tea, all was pleasant and comfortable. I rolled my bed and blankets in
my India-rubber cloak, which preserved them quite well from the rain, so that nights I slept warm and comfortably as ever. My featherbed was of essential service to me in keeping my health this rainy voyage” [Letter 39].

They arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Sunday, November 13, after a disagreeable trip of ten days with rain falling nearly every day. Narcissa was disappointed not to see her husband at Walla Walla, but understood the reason for his absence when told that he and Gray were busy at Waiilatpu building a house. Whitman and Gray returned to Fort Walla Walla on Friday, the 18th, and all five were together for a religious service the following Sunday. This was the last time the five were together until after the arrival of the reenforcement in the early fall of 1838.

In the meantime a party of 125 Nez Perces, no doubt under the leadership of Tackensuatis, arrived at Fort Walla Walla to escort the Spaldings to Lapwai. Whereas Whitman had resolved to erect a suitable dwelling for his wife before taking her to Waiilatpu, the Spaldings were willing to live in an Indian tepee until a log cabin could be built. The Nez Perces were eager to do everything possible for their missionaries. Of this Spalding wrote to Greene: “They took entire direction of everything, pitched and struck our tent, saddled our horses, and gladly would have put victuals to our mouths, had we wished it. So eager were they to do all they could to make us comfortable. I was astonished at the ease with which they handled and packed our heavy bags and cases, the latter sixteen inches square, thirty inches long, and weighing usually 125 pounds each. Our effects loaded twenty horses.”

If we estimate the average load for each horse to have been 250 pounds, the Spaldings must have taken with them about 5,000 pounds of goods and provisions. This included everything: clothing, farm utensils, furniture, books, building materials including glass, and some food supplies. Whitman must have transported a like quantity of goods to his station. A division of the cattle was made; Spalding took five cows, the bull, and two calves. Since we do not know whether the calves were born after the missionaries reported having thirteen head, we cannot tell whether Whitman received five or seven cows.

The Spaldings and Gray, with their Nez Perce escort, left Walla Walla on Tuesday, November 22, and arrived at Lapwai on the 29th. Narcissa and Eliza, each isolated in her own lonely home in the wilderness, were not to see each other for about a year. Whitman returned to
Waiilatpu to complete work on the house he was building while his wife remained at the Fort. At this time Whitman had no assistants except for the two Hawaiians.

John Hinds, the black man, died sometime during the last week of November. Of this Narcissa wrote on December 5: “Already death has entered our home, and laid one low.” According to a commonly accepted theory, Whitman buried the body at the foot of the hill to the northeast of the mission house. Thus the little cemetery at Waiilatpu had its beginning even before actual missionary work for the Indians could begin.

Just as Dr. McLoughlin had asked Narcissa to teach English to his daughter, Maria, at Walla Walla Pambrun made a similar request for his wife and daughter, the latter of whom was also called Maria. This Narcissa was glad to do. “We consider it a very kind providence,” she wrote, “to be situated near one family so interesting, and a native female that promises to be so much society for me. She is learning to speak the English language quite fast” [Letter 39].

**THE FIRST HOUSE AT WAIILATPU**

When Whitman arrived at Waiilatpu on October 14, after making the trip to Lapwai with Spalding, he was able to give his full time to the imperative task of building a suitable house before winter came.

Perhaps with the advice of both Gray and Spalding, a site was selected about one hundred feet north of the top of the horseshoe bend in the Walla Walla River. The location of the first mission house at that particular site proved to have been unfortunate; the land was too low and was flooded by the rising waters of the river late in the winter of 1837–38.

We do not have full details of the type of construction which Whitman intended to follow but it appears that he planned a hybrid combination of small logs and adobe bricks. According to Narcissa, her husband planned to erect a story-and-a-half house which would measure 30 x 36 feet [Letter 39]. A limited supply of logs suitable to be whipsawed into boards was available by cutting down some cottonwood trees which grew along the streams in the vicinity. Whipsawing was a slow and laborious process. A log would be propped up at an angle over a pit. A thin tapering whipsaw, about six feet long with handles on either
end, would be used by two men, one in the pit and the other standing on top of the log. The resulting green cottonwood boards proved to be unsatisfactory as they warped when drying out. Later Whitman sent men into the foothills of the Blue Mountains where pine trees were available.

On their westward journey, the missionaries had observed the use of adobe bricks at such places as Fort Laramie, Fort Hall, and Fort Boise. These were made by mixing soil with grass or straw and, after shaping the material in a frame, letting them dry in the sun. Evidently Whitman planned to erect a wooden frame for his house and then fill in the wall spaces with either trimmed logs or adobe bricks.

Since Whitman came from New York State where a house was rarely built in those days without a cellar or basement, he naturally assumed that his house should have one. This would not only provide a convenient and safe place for storage but, also, the dirt excavated could be used to make adobe bricks.

A shallow basement, about four and one-half feet deep, was dug under the proposed building and the walls were lined with adobes which measured 5 x 7 x 10 inches. The bricks were laid according to the “header-stretcher method,” two deep which gave a wall fourteen inches wide. Just how high the basement walls were raised above the ground level is not known.

Because of the lateness of the season, the scarcity of building materials, and the lack of efficient assistants, Whitman found it necessary to abandon his plan to erect the house as originally planned and concentrate on a lean-to on the west side of the house, the frame of which had been erected. This lean-to measured twelve feet wide and ran the length of the thirty-six foot west wall of the house. A large adobe fireplace was placed in the center of the west wall of the lean-to with a window space on each side. The roof was made out of poles covered first with the long tough rye grass, over which five or six inches of dirt or sod were placed. As can well be imagined, this type of roof was not efficient in times of heavy rains; the moisture seeped through and great globules of mud would drop into the room below. Spalding, who was obliged to use the same type of roof for his home, once wrote: “Our mud roofs show us that the earth was made to drink the rain, not to shed it.”
On Friday, December 9, 1836, Whitman returned to Fort Walla Walla for his wife. Late the next day Narcissa’s “unheard of journey for females” came to an end when she alighted from her horse in front of the rudely constructed lean-to. Their wedding journey of nine months and about 2,500 miles, including the trip to Fort Vancouver, was over.

Narcissa began a letter to her mother on December 5, shortly before she left Fort Walla Walla, and from time to time added to it. On the 26th she described her arrival at Waiilatpu: “Where are we now?” she asked. “And who are we that we should be thus blessed of the Lord? I can scarcely realize that we are thus comfortably fixed & keeping house so soon after our marriage when considering what was then before us. We arrived here on the tenth, distance twenty-five miles from W.W.; found a house reared & the lean-to enclosed, a good chimney & fireplace & the floor laid. No windows or door except blankets. My heart truly leaped for joy as I alighted from my horse, entered and seated myself before a pleasant fire (for it was now night). It occurred to me that my dear Parents had made a similar beginning & perhaps more difficult one than ours.” In her description of the lean-to, she stated: “The siding is made of split logs fitted into grooved posts, & the spaces filled with mud [i.e., adobe bricks].”

**The Whitmans Begin Housekeeping**

Although the Whitmans had ridden by Waiilatpu on their way to Fort Walla Walla on August 31, they then had no reason to be interested in the site. But now it was different. This was to be their home. The day after her arrival, Narcissa had an opportunity to survey her surroundings. About three hundred yards to the northeast of the lean-to was a cone-shaped hill a little more than one hundred feet high. From the top of that elevation, Narcissa had an excellent view of the adjoining territory. She could trace the course of the Walla Walla River as it curled in a half loop around the south and west sides of the site her husband had selected. She could also see, about one-half mile to the west, the confluence of Mill Creek with the Walla Walla River. Fifteen or more miles to the south and east were the lower tree-covered slopes of the Blue Mountains, the upper levels of which were already covered with snow [Letter 39]. “It is indeed a lovely situation,” she wrote to her mother.

On December 16, eighteen inches of snow fell, and remained on
the ground for about six weeks [Letters 39 & 42]. Whitman’s livestock had to paw through the snow to find forage. On that day Pambrun sent a table and some window sashes to the Whitmans. “I have taken the liberty to prime them,” commented Narcissa, “and set some of the lights [i.e., window panes], & engaged in it thought a great deal about Father, how handily he used to do such work.” The “lights” had been purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company; they measured about 7 x 8 inches and were only about one millimeter thick. Many fragments of such thin glass have been found in the archaeological diggings at Waiilatpu. The windows, each with twelve panes, were not ready to be placed until Saturday, December 24.

By December 26, enough additional boards had been sawed to make it possible for Whitman to erect two partitions in the lean-to, thus making a small room at either end. “My room is in the south end,” Narcissa told her mother, “a small bedroom & pantry on the north end, and a very pleasant kitchen in the middle.” The heating stove which the Whitmans got from Pambrun was placed in their bedroom. The central room was heated by the fireplace where Narcissa did her cooking.

In the various postscripts which Narcissa added to the letter begun on December 5, she commented on many incidental items of interest. Regarding the weather, she wrote on January 2, 1837: “I am spending my winter as comfortably as heart could wish, & have suffered less from excessive cold than in many winters previous in New York. Winters are not very severe here.”

On February 18, the first anniversary of her marriage, Narcissa found her thoughts spanning the continent to her Angelica home. “One year since I have heard a lisp even of my beloved friends in Angelica,” she wrote, “and who can tell how many are sleeping in their graves by this time. Ah! it would be like cold water to a thirsty soul indeed, to know how you all do.” She seemed to have forgotten about receiving a letter from her brother-in-law, the Rev. Lyman Judson, at Liberty, Missouri. Perhaps because of the uncertainty as to how a letter should be addressed, Narcissa’s family did not write until they heard from her. She had to wait until July 1838 before a letter from her home arrived at Waiilatpu.

In this February 18 postscript, she boasted of her comforts: “We have now 3 chairs & a bedstead & all our doors are made & hanging.”

Regarding the chairs, she wrote: “These are exceedingly comfortable although not of the finest order. My chairs, two of them are of my Husband’s making; with deer skin bottoms woven as the fancy chairs of the States are & very durable. Our bedstead is made of rough boards & nailed to the wall, according to the fashion of the country.” On this Narcissa was able to place her prized feather bed.

Narcissa listed other acquisitions: “You will scarcely think it possible that I should have such a convenience as a barrel to pound my clothes in for washing so soon, in this part of the world, & probably mine with Mrs. Pambrun are the only two this side of the Rocky Mountains.” She even had a dog and a cat. “My dog,” she explained, “was a present from Mr. McLeod.” The many references to McLeod in her diary and letters indicate that he took a special interest in her and delighted to show such favors as he could. “These may appear small subjects to fill a letter with,” she wrote, “but my object is to show you that people can live here, & as comfortably too as in many places east of the mountains.”

**FOOD SUPPLIES**

Until the first harvest was reaped, both the Whitmans and the Spaldings were dependent upon the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Indians for food supplies. No reference in the writings of Whitman and Spalding has been found telling about either going out to hunt wild game. Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, reports: “We feel we have passed a comfortable winter indeed; but still at my place we have eaten nine wild horses bought of the Indians at a cost of about $6. each in goods. We have had a tolerable supply of flour, corn, butter & a little pork & venison & a few potatoes. We are now getting fish in small quantity but soon expect to get plenty of salmon of which I hope to salt a good supply.”

Narcissa in a letter to her family dated May 3, wrote: “The Indians have furnished us a little venison—barely enough for our own eating—but to supply our men and visitors, we have killed and eaten ten wild horses bought of the Indians. This will make you pity me, but you had better save your pity for more worthy subjects. I do not prefer it to other meat, but can eat it very well when we have nothing else.” Two years later, Whitman informed Greene that up to that date—May 10,
1839—they had butchered and eaten “twenty-three or four horses since we have been here” [Letter 62]. Two of Whitman’s cows calved the first part of February 1837; thus plenty of milk was then available.

Since there was so much that needed to be done, Whitman hired such transient labor as he could. He found the Hawaiians very satisfactory. One of them, Jack or John, stayed with the Whitmans for several years and will be mentioned later in this story. Regarding the possibility of using natives as laborers, Narcissa wrote that they did not “love to work well enough for us to place any dependence upon them.” Occasionally Whitman was able to hire a mountain man who happened to pass that way [Letter 41]. Of course when such men were hired, extra food had to be provided, with Narcissa doing the cooking over an open fire in the fireplace.

W. H. Gray Returns to the States

Although W. H. Gray had joined the mission as a mechanic [i.e., a craftsman] with the expectation that he would relieve both Whitman and Spalding of some of their secular duties such as building and farming, yet he was a great disappointment to both. Gray remained at Lapwai helping Spalding for only a month until December 28, 1836, when he left for Fort Walla Walla. On January 4 he rode out to Waiilatpu where he stayed for only four or five days helping Whitman hang some doors.18 He then returned to the fort where he met Francis Ermatinger, one of the traders in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who was on his way to Vancouver. Gray decided to go with him. While at Fort Vancouver the previous fall, Gray had written to Greene suggesting that he make an exploring trip for the Board.19 Without waiting for official approval of such a plan, Gray made arrangements to go with Ermatinger through the Flathead country in the spring of 1837.

Gray returned to Walla Walla on March 14, and after another short visit with the Whitmans, left for Spokane Falls. If Gray consulted with Whitman about his intentions to visit the Flathead country, there is no evidence that Whitman approved. The failure of Gray to stay at Waiilatpu and help with the work of building and preparing the soil for spring planting must have been a keen disappointment to Whitman. It so happened that Spalding was at Spokane Falls on March 31 where he met Gray and then learned to his surprise that Gray was planning to return.
to the States to ask the American Board to send out a reinforcement for its Oregon Mission.

Gray was engaged to be married; this may have been another reason for his desire to return. Also, his restless nature and his inclination “to do good on his own hook,” accounts for his independent action. Gray aspired to have a station of his own, such as both Whitman and Spalding had. He was unhappy to work in any subordinate capacity. In furtherance of his dream, he conceived a plan of driving a herd of horses to the Missouri frontier where they would be sold and the money used to buy cattle which would then be driven to Oregon in 1838. The Nez Perces, who had come to appreciate the value of American cattle, were attracted by Gray’s proposal and promised to cooperate. Gray seems to have won a reluctant approval from Spalding for the plan. Gray then succeeded in persuading four Nez Perces to go with him, including Ellis, one of the young men who had studied at the Red River school. Also among the Nez Perces was one called The Hat. The Nez Perces offered to send some of their horses with Gray, hoping to get cattle in return.

Gray and his Indian companions with a band of horses left Spokane Falls with Ermatinger on April 5 for the Rendezvous. After reaching that place, Ellis and two of the Nez Perces, for some unknown reason, decided not to continue with Gray. They turned back taking their horses with them. Only The Hat stayed with Gray who, at the Rendezvous, persuaded a prominent Iroquois, Big Ignace, and four Flathead Indians to join his party.

BEGINNINGS OF AGRICULTURE AT WAIILATPU

While in Cincinnati in the early spring of 1836, Whitman and Spalding had purchased $7.00 worth of seeds to be taken with them. No doubt these were vegetable seeds. While at Fort Vancouver, Narcissa carefully saved all the seeds of the fruit that she ate. “This is a rule of Vancouver,” she noted in her diary, and added: “I have got collected before me an assortment of garden seeds, which I take up with me, also, I intend taking some young sprouts of apple, peach & grapes, & some strawberry vines, etc., from the nursery here.”

While still at Fort Vancouver, Whitman wrote to friends in the States asking for seeds of the locust, chestnut, and walnut trees. Narcissa added that she wanted seeds of the butternut tree as well [Letter 34]. To
this day locust trees, which were not native to the Pacific Northwest, are growing on the mission sites at Waiilatpu and Lapwai.

With a practical eye on the duties of a housekeeper, Narcissa requested her relatives to send her some broom corn seed, which she called “another very important article for us housewives.” She explained that although they did take some seeds of this plant with them, they were afraid that the seeds would not do well and wanted a fresh supply. “They have nothing of the kind here,” Narcissa wrote, “but use hemlock boughs for broom. Hemlock, I say, there is no such tree known here. It is balsam” [Letter 34].

Only seven Whitman letters written in 1837 have been located, and one of these is in a publication [See Appendix 1]. Only one of Whitman’s letters to the Board is extant. This, containing some two thousand words, is dated May 5. Surely both Marcus and Narcissa wrote other letters which, for some reason, have been lost or destroyed. Because of the paucity of source material for 1837, we are unable to trace out in detail the story of what happened at Waiilatpu during that year.

Regarding his farm activities, Whitman wrote on May 5: “I began to plow the first week in March but was unable to do much on account of Mrs. Whitman’s health.” As will be told later, a baby girl was born on March 14. This important event naturally had caused some interruptions in Whitman’s farming activities. His account to Greene continues: “My farm [work animals] consists of one yoke oxen belonging to one of the Cayuse Chiefs & a yoke of bulls, one belonging to the Co & one to the mission both of which I have broken, two horses & four mules. With this team I am able to break the ground very well. I have two acres of peas sowed, 9 acres of corn planted & intend to plant 3 more and have planted & intend to plant 2 acres of potatoes, in all 16 acres. If associates come, I think they will have little to fear for want of provision. I hope to obtain wheat for fall sowing.”

From a letter written by Narcissa on April 11, 1838, we learn that her husband harvested about two hundred fifty bushels of potatoes and two hundred bushels of corn, besides an abundance of garden vegetables in the fall of 1837. Because of an expected demand by the Indians for pea and potato seed in the spring of 1838, Narcissa wrote that they refrained from eating peas and used potatoes only sparingly. By the summer and fall of 1838, the gardens and fields at both Waiilatpu and Lapwai were
producing so abundantly that the food problem, except for beef, had been solved.

**First Efforts at Evangelization**

The experience of the American Board in Indian evangelism was so limited by 1836 that it could give but little guidance to the Whitmans and the Spaldings as to the best methods to be pursued in their endeavors to Christianize the Indians of Old Oregon. The American Board had established its first Indian mission in 1816 with the Cherokees. Work was begun on a limited basis with four other tribes before Dunbar and Allis were sent to the Pawnees in 1834. Thus the Whitmans and the Spaldings were pioneers in Indian evangelism.

Such questions as to whether they could teach the Indians English and work through that language or learn the native language and use it for instructional purposes were unanswered. Were they to try to settle the natives on small farms or in villages before establishing schools and possibly churches, or should they follow the Indians in their migrations to find food and preach the Gospel as opportunities afforded? Which should have precedence—civilization or evangelization? The missionaries had to find answers to such perplexing questions through experience.

First came the immediate problem of acquiring the native language. The missionaries soon discovered that the Nez Perce tongue was extremely complex. A. B. Smith, a member of the 1838 reinforcement and the best linguist in the Oregon Mission, said that the tendency of the language to compound words was “beyond description.” He who had specialized in the study of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin found that the Nez Perce language had no resemblance whatever to these, and called it “unclassical and outlandish.”

In all probability Whitman had made a beginning in acquiring the language when he took the two Indian boys, Richard and John, east with him in 1835. No doubt members of the mission party picked up some words from these youths as they traveled westward in 1836. The high expectations entertained by Whitman in using the two boys as interpreters were never realized. John rejoined his family who lived near Lapwai. Writing on October 3, 1838, to Mrs. Parker, Narcissa said: “John is the same unassuming, humble, obedient lad that he was while at Ithaca... But he is not long for this world, if he is still alive.
Nearly one year ago he was taken with the most afflicting disease I ever saw—the swelling of the joints.” Nothing more is known about John. According to Spalding, Richard ran away from Waiilatpu after taking “considerable property... He is a profane, gambling youth.”

Since the Nez Perce language had never been reduced to writing, the missionaries at first had no system of representing the sounds of the language, such as an alphabet, to aid them in learning the tongue. In Whitman’s May 5, 1837, letter, he wrote: “A few Indians only wintered with us & did not afford us a very favorable opportunity for acquiring the language.” Several years had to pass before the Whitmans had mastered the language sufficiently well for them to teach the doctrines of Christianity effectively, but by that time the natives had lost much of their enthusiasm for the white man’s religion. It should be remembered that Whitman was a doctor and not trained as a minister or as an evangelist. His professional and secular duties were demanding, increasingly so as time passed, which left him little time for study or teaching.

An entry in Narcissa’s letter of December 5, 1836, which has a postscript dated the following March 6, gives us this description of a meeting of natives held in her kitchen: “Sab. Eve. Today our congregation has increased very considerably in consequence of the arrival of a party of Indians during the past week. A strong desire is manifest in them all to understand the truth & to be taught. Last eve our room was full of men & boys, who came every eve to learn to sing. The whole tribe both men, women & children would like the same privilege if our room was larger & my health would admit so much singing. Indeed I should not attempt to sing with them, were it not for the assistance my Husband renders. You will recollect when he was in Angelica, he could not sing a single tune. Now he is able to sing several tunes & lead the school in them. This saves me a great deal hard singing.” We may assume that the Whitmans were teaching the natives to sing religious songs with English words which, of course, they could not understand. Possibly Richard or Compo, if present, could have served as interpreters.

For an indefinite period before the Whitmans settled at Waiilatpu, the Cayuse were accustomed to hold daily devotions after what they were told to be Christian forms of worship. Writing on January 2, 1837, Narcissa said: “The Cayuses as well as the Nez Perces are very strict in attending to their worship which they have regularly every morning at day
break & eve at twilight and once on the Sab. They sing & repeat a form of prayers very devoutly after which the Chief gives them a talk. The tunes & prayers were taught them by a Roman Catholic trader. Indeed their worship was commenced by him” [Letter 39]. In all probability the Roman Catholic trader was Pierre Pambrun who had been placed in charge of Fort Walla Walla in 1832.29 Whitman gives similar information in his letter of May 5, 1837: “The present worship of the Indians was established by the Traders of the Hudson Bay Co. & it consists of the singing a form of prayer30 after which the Chief gives them a talk.”

As has been noted in the first chapter of this book, some knowledge of Christianity was passed on to the various tribes living in the upper Columbia River country by the Oregon Indian boys who had been sent to the Red River Mission school. Two of these lads, Cayuse Halket and Cayuse Pitt, may have been partly responsible for the introduction of certain forms of Christian worship among their people.31 When Samuel Parker traveled through the Nez Perce and Cayuse country in 1835 and 1836, he frequently held religious services, and since he had an interpreter, he was able to impart some information about Christianity. According to his journal, he camped along the Walla Walla River on May 18, 1836, “twenty–two miles” from Fort Walla Walla, which would have placed him near Waiilatpu. On the Sunday following, May 22, Parker held a religious service for the natives at Fort Walla Walla.

In Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he reviewed the little that they had been able to do in the way of giving religious instruction to the Indians. “We have made but little attempt to teach them,” he wrote, “except to sing, with which they are much pleased & adopt in their worship which they have at the Chief’s lodge night & morning & Sabbath afternoon. In the afternoon of Sabbath I assemble them for worship & instruction.” Without a good interpreter, Whitman’s efforts would have been almost useless. There is a pathetic touch in reading about the Indians singing the songs that the Whitmans had taught them without understanding the real meaning of the words.

Added to the language barrier was the fact that the Indians were semi-nomadic. The Cayuses, like their neighbors, the Nez Perces, were frequently on the move. They had to be in order to survive. At one time of the year they would go to the Columbia River or one of its tributaries for the salmon which were taken in great numbers and dried. At another
season, some would migrate to the buffalo country in what is now Montana and Wyoming to hunt these animals for their meat and hides. Still again, they would gather on some upper prairie to dig for the onion–like tuber of the camas plant. This roving existence posed a great problem for the missionaries. How were they to teach and evangelize a people, as Spalding once wrote to Greene, “who were always on the wing?”

**The Indians in a Period of Rapid Change**

The Whitmans and the Spaldings began their work with the natives of Old Oregon at a time of rapid change. Writing to Greene from the Rendezvous on July 8, 1836, Spalding said: “What is done for the poor Indians of this western world must be done soon. The only thing that can save them from annihilation is the introduction of civilization.” He was dismayed to note how the great herds of buffalo on the western plains were being decimated. Here were real grounds for the grievances that the red man held against the white, by killing off the buffalo, the white man was also destroying age–old customs.

Although the Cayuses and the Nez Perces did not sense in 1836 and the years immediately following that their manner of life was destined to be replaced by the white man’s civilization, this both Whitman and Spalding realized. Even if missionaries had never gone to Old Oregon, the natives would have had to face that inevitable period of transition. Both Whitman and Spalding were one in their commitment to do all within their power to civilize the natives. They were convinced that the Indians would be unable to preserve their old manner of life. They would have to adapt themselves to the white man’s ways or perish.

In Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he reported that most of the Cayuses had returned from the mountains by early March “& for a time labored very hard to prepare ground to plant.” By that time Whitman was at work breaking the virgin soil for his fields. Since he had but one plow, he was unable then to use it for the natives, but he was setting an example of how the earth could best be cultivated. “I had no means of assisting them,” he wrote, “but by loaning hoes of which [I] had but fifteen but still they had succeeded in making a good beginning.” After working a few weeks planting corn and potatoes, the Indians were off again, this time to the camas prairies. “They will return to hoe their corn in about four weeks,” Whitman wrote. “I think there
can be no doubt of their readiness to adopt cultivation & when they have plenty of food, they will be little disposed to wander.”

There is no evidence, as some have suggested, that the Indians turned reluctantly to farming. As soon as they appreciated the relative ease with which they could obtain food from the soil, as compared to the time-consuming treks into the buffalo country or elsewhere for food, they began to clamor for hoes and plows.

Again and again in the first letters that Whitman and Spalding wrote to the Board or to relatives or friends, we find them pleading for hoes and plows, especially the latter. Spalding, in his letter to Greene of September 11, 1838, summarized his philosophy of evangelism, which Whitman fully shared: “While we point them with one hand to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, we believe it equally our duty to point with the other to the hoe, as the means of saving their famishing bodies from an untimely grave & furnishing the means of subsistence to future generations.”

This emphasis on settling the natives on farms was in full harmony with the views of such an enlightened Indian Agent as Major John Dougherty, to whom reference has been made. As early as 1829 Dougherty was urging the government to encourage the Indians to take up farming.

Whitman had called on Dougherty at the Oto Indian Agency in May 1836, at which time, no doubt, this subject of settling the Indians had been discussed.

A few critics have accused the missionaries of taking part in the expropriation of the lands and resources of the Oregon Indians. The reverse is the case. No group of individuals did more to help the natives bridge the gap from a primitive, semi-nomadic life to a civilized, settled existence than did the missionaries. As far as the Cayuses and the Nez Perces were concerned, Whitman and Spalding introduced the hoe and the plow and taught the natives to plant vegetables, especially potatoes, wheat, and corn. They helped them obtain American cattle. They reduced the language to writing, and printed primers and other little books in the Nez Perce tongue on the first American press to be brought to the Pacific Coast. To civilize and educate the natives was a fundamental part of their endeavors to evangelize them. The Indians had to be settled before any consistent program of education could be conducted. They had to be able to read before they could appreciate the teachings of the Bible.
Whitman and Spalding never debated the question as to which should receive the major emphasis—to civilize or to evangelize. The two went together. And with all due respect to the activities of the Methodist missionaries, who established their work in the Willamette Valley in 1834, and to the Roman Catholic priests, who entered Old Oregon in 1838, no missionaries did so much for the improvement of the material welfare of the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians as Marcus Whitman and Henry Spalding.

**Three Cayuse Chiefs**

Narcissa, in a postscript dated January 2, 1837, to the letter to her mother which had been begun on the previous December 5, mentioned three Cayuse chiefs, each of whom was to play an important role in the unfolding drama which had begun to take place at Waiilatpu. They were Umtippe,34 “Towerlooe” (Tauitai) or Young Chief, and Tiloukaikt. Umtippe was an old man when the Whitmans arrived and died sometime during the winter of 1840–41. The problems he caused remained as a source of irritation for the Whitmans long after he had died. Both Young Chief and Tiloukaikt lived throughout the eleven-year mission period.

In her note of January 2, Narcissa wrote: “We are on the lands of the Old Chief Umtippe who with a lodge35 or two are now absent for a few days hunting deer. But a few of the Cayuses winter here... The Young Chief, Towerlooe, is of another family & is more properly the ruling chief. He is Uncle to the young Cayuse Halket now at Red River Mission whom we expect to return this fall & to whom the chieftainship belongs by inheritance. The old Chief Umtippe has been a savage creature in his day. His heart is still the same, full of all manner of hypocrisy, deceit and guile. He is a mortal beggar as all Indians are. If you ask a favour of him, sometimes it is granted or not, just as he feels; if granted it must be well paid for. A few days ago he took it into his head to require pay for teaching us the language & forbade his people from coming & talking with us for fear we should learn a few words from them.” It should be noted that Narcissa did not claim that the avaricious Chief Umtippe asked payment for the land occupied by the mission but rather for such services as he or others had rendered in teaching the language. Upon the death of Umtippe, during the winter of 1840–41, Tiloukaikt succeeded to the leadership of the band.
living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. When Narcissa mentioned Tiloukaikt in a note dated March 30, following the birth of her baby, she then called him “a friendly Indian” [Letter 39].

**Alice Clarissa Whitman**

On the evening of Narcissa’s twenty-ninth birthday, March 14, 1837, a daughter was born to the Whitmans. They named her Alice after the mother and sister of Marcus, and Clarissa after the mother and a sister of Narcissa. She was the first white child to be born of white American parents in the Old Oregon country and the second girl of American parents on the whole Pacific Slope of what is now the United States. I was sick but about two hours,” Narcissa told her family. “She was born half past eight, so early in the evening that we all had time to get considerable rest that night” [Letter 40].

Anticipating the need for some assistance, the Whitmans had sent for Mrs. Pambrun, who arrived with two of her children about two weeks before the baby was born, but, according to Narcissa, she was not of much help. “She with my Husband dressed the babe,” Narcissa wrote. “It would have made you smile to see them work over the little creature. Mrs. P. never saw one dressed before as we dress them having been accustomed to dress her own in the native style… Thus you see, Beloved Sisters, how the missionary does in heathen lands. No Mother, no sister, to relieve me of a single care, only an affectionate Husband, who as a physician & nurse exceeds all I ever knew.”

Narcissa’s confinement came at an exceedingly busy time for Marcus. He had started plowing the first week of March and felt the need to complete his planting. About this time, a party of Indians arrived who desired instruction as to how they could begin agriculture. Hoes, seed corn, and potatoes had to be distributed. Whitman then had to take time to show the natives how to prepare the soil and plant the seeds. A few days after the birth of the baby, Pambrun arrived to take his wife and family back to Fort Walla Walla. With him were Gray and Ermatinger who remained a few days at Waiilatpu before leaving for the Spokane country. Regarding her husband, Narcissa wrote: “He was excessively pressed with care and labour during the whole time of my confinement. Beside the attention I required of him, he had my washing & the cooking to do for the family.”

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Narcissa made a rapid recovery. Within a week she was up and carrying on the work of her home: Writing two weeks after her baby was born, Narcissa gave the following description of the child: “Her hair is a light brown... She is plump & large, holds her head up finely & looks about considerably. She weighs ten pounds.” The proud and happy mother called her “a treasure invaluable” [Letter 40].

When the Pambruns returned to the fort on Saturday, the 24th, they left their twelve-year-old daughter, Maria, with the Whitmans to assist in the house work and to learn more English. On April 1, an Indian girl, possibly a half-breed, sixteen years old, arrived, who appeared no larger than an average American girl of twelve years. Narcissa named her Sarah Hull after the wife of the minister who had officiated at her wedding. “You have no idea,” wrote Narcissa to her family, “how difficult it is to realize any benefit from those who do not understand you.”

This practice of bestowing Bible names or the names of relatives and friends on natives, especially converts, was common to Protestant missionaries of that generation. The practice was followed by the missionaries of both the American Board and the Methodist Society at work in Oregon. Some of these New England surnames and Bible names continue among the Cayuses and Nez Perces to this day.

The Cayuses were tremendously interested in the birth of a white baby in their midst. On March 30, Narcissa wrote: “The Little Stranger is visited daily by the Chiefs & principal men in camp & the women throng the house continually waiting an opportunity to see her. Her whole appearance is so new to them. Her complexion, her size & dress & all excite a deal of wonder for they never raise a child here except they are lashed tight to a board & the girls' heads undergo the flattening process” [Letter 40]. In this same letter, she wrote “Tee-low-kiki [Tiloukaikt], a friendly Indian, called to see her the next day after she was born; Said she was a Cayuse Te-mi (Cayuse girl) because she was born on Cayuse wai-tis (Cayuse land). He told us her arrival was expected by all the people of the country... The whole tribe are highly pleased because we allow her to be called a Cayuse girl.”

Narcissa made two additional references in her letters to the native custom of flattening the foreheads of some of their newly born infants. On May 3, she wrote: “The system of head-flattening exists among their people in a degree, but not to excess. The girls' heads only are flattened.
They consider it a peculiar mark of beauty and it makes them more acceptable in the sight of the men as wives. They raise but few of their children. Great numbers of them die” [Letter 41]. Narcissa was writing of the natives in the vicinity of Waiilatpu and not of the lower Columbia River country where the head-flattening custom was more prevalent.

In an hitherto unquoted letter of Narcissa’s is found her third reference to this custom. Writing to Mrs. G. P. Judd of the American Board’s Mission in Honolulu on September 1, 1837, she said: “Our babe has scarcely seen a sick day since she was born. She is now nearly six months old and weighs twenty-two pounds. I do not know as she is larger or heavier than children usually are at home, but the natives here are much surprised at her size and strength, and her rapid growth, which is very different from their children. Her clean, round, natural head is a striking contrast to their scurfy, ill shapen, flat heads, and they feel it so. It speaks louder than words, against their cruel, murderous system of flattening the heads of their infants. My heart bleeds for suffering infancy about me. O when will these mothers possess the feelings that belong to their endearing name?” [Letter 42a.]

No reference has been found in any of Spalding’s writings to the practice of head-flattening among the Nez Perces. Yet it seems that the custom must have been in vogue to some extent among these people, as one of the four Nez Perces who went to St. Louis in 1831 had such a deformed head, as shown in the drawing made by William Walker which was published in the New York Christian Advocate. By the time the Whitmans settled at Waiilatpu, the custom was dying out among the Cayuses. Alice Clarissa’s “clean, round, natural head” was an eloquent and persuasive object lesson for them. It requires little imagination for us to believe that no Cayuse mother would willingly deform her baby’s head after seeing Alice Clarissa. Here was one of the unexpected good results of the ministry of Marcus and Narcissa among the Cayuses.

**TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS**

Many of the trials experienced by the Whitmans during their first four months’ residence at Waiilatpu foreshadowed greater difficulties which were to come. The language problem was more baffling and frustrating than they had expected. The Whitmans had no good teacher or interpreter. Richard, in whom Whitman had placed so much
hope, proved to be unreliable. Chief Umtippe, whom Narcissa called a “mortal beggar,” was demanding payment for any help given the missionaries in learning the language.

The winter of 1836–37 was unusually severe for that region; snow stayed on the ground for six weeks. For several weeks the Whitmans found it difficult to keep their house comfortably warm as they had nothing but blankets for windows and doors. For want of beef or wild game, the Whitmans had to turn to eating horse flesh. The failure of Gray to stay and help with the building and the farming must have been a great disappointment, yet there is no word of complaint on this subject in any of the extant letters of either of the Whitmans written during 1837.

Their trials, however, were more than offset by their accomplishments. In spite of many difficulties, a beginning had been made. Their house was gradually being made more comfortable. Both Marcus and Narcissa enjoyed good health. We hear less of Marcus’ physical disability which had caused the American Board to reject his application in the spring of 1834. It has been conjectured that Whitman’s trouble had been stomach ulcers which cleared up. This could have explained the pain he experienced in his left side. A beginning had been made in language study and agriculture. Some of the natives had shown a desire to be taught the principles of Christianity, and even though Chief Umtippe created some difficulties, the Indians, for the most part, were friendly and cooperative.

Completely removed from the protection that the United States could give in case of trouble, and living some twenty-five miles from Fort Walla Walla, the Whitmans had established their home in the wilderness in the midst of an uncivilized tribe where they were to live for several years without fear of physical harm. The coming of Alice Clarissa had established a bond of sympathy between the natives and the missionaries. The outlook was propitious.
CHAPTER 10 FOOTNOTES

1 The original Cayuse language is now extinct. Deward E. Walker, Jr., states in his Mutual Cross-Utilization of Economic Resources in the Plateau..., Washington State University, Laboratory of Anthropology, Pullman, 1967, Reports of Investigations, No. 41: “Nez Perce was a lingua franca from the Bitterroots in the east to the Dalles-Celilo region in the west...” by the time these Indians had their first contacts with the white men. “The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Palouse were so intermarried... it was virtually impossible to distinguish them particularly for the Nez Percies and Cayuse.” Pp. 18 & 21.

2 The most reliable estimates of the numbers in the Nez Perce and Cayuse tribes were made by A. B. Smith in 1839 and 1840. See Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 109, 129, & 136.

3 Indian name for “little river.”

4 The automatic guides, i.e., the little electronic speakers installed at several points on the grounds of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site, place the accent on the second syllable. According to an explanation given me personally by the late Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose, President of Whitman College, Myron and Edwin Eells, sons of the Rev. Cushing Eells, differed as to the correct pronunciation of Waiilatpu. One placed the accent on the second syllable, and the other on the third. On March 30, 1837, Narcissa spelled the name “Wi-el-et-poo.”

5 Lewis and Clark called the river Kooskooske, whereas the missionaries referred to it as the Clearwater, which is the name that prevailed.

6 Narcissa in her letter of October 24, 1836, wrote: “The Nez Perces are exceedingly anxious [for us] to have a location among them, Husband writes. Say they do not have difficulty with the whites as the Cayuses do & we will find it so.”

7 Lapwai is usually explained as meaning “place of butterflies.”

8 The hills along the Clearwater at Lapwai Creek rise to an elevation of about 2,600 feet above sea level, or about 1,800 feet above the river.

9 Drury, Spalding, p. 159.

10 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 127.

11 Possibly Gray was also making adobe bricks and such necessary items of furniture as chairs, stools, and tables, during the absence of Whitman from Waiilatpu.

12 Spalding to Greene from Fort Vancouver, Sept. 20, 1836, Coll. A. Spalding gave different figures at a later time. See Drury, Spalding, p. 162, where the total distance was estimated at 6,155 miles. The earlier figure is to be preferred.


14 Mrs. Elkanah Walker's side-saddle is in the museum of O.H.S., Portland. A picture of this saddle is in Drury, F.W.W., II:68.


16 From archaeological findings, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

17 A twenty-seven foot high granite shaft, including height of the base, now crowns the top of this hill as a memorial to the Whitmans.

18 Gray's Journal, W.C.Q., June 1913.
19 Gray to Greene, Sept. 19, 1836. Coll. A.

20 From testimonial letter of Chauncey Eddy to Greene, Feb. 17, 1836. Coll. A.

21 Narcissa succeeded in getting some broom corn seeds, for on July 7, 1842, in a letter to Maria Pambrun, she wrote: “Our broom corn did not do well last year.”

22 The Hudson’s Bay Company would loan animals to natives or settlers on condition that the Company would receive any increase of stock and also be paid for any animal lost. Whitman letter 42.

23 Ordinarily a man with a two-horse team and a 16 inch plowshare can plow about three acres a day. Whitman with a yoke of oxen working in tough virgin soil studded with clumps of rye grass would have been fortunate to plow one acre a day.


26 Ibid., p. 180.

27 Drury, Whitman, p. 172, quoting from Spalding’s letter to Parker of Feb. 11, 1837. See also Whitman letter 42. Josephy, Nez Perce Indians, p. 382, lists Richard as one of the Nez Perce chiefs who signed a treaty with the U.S. Government on Aug. 6, 1858. Yet Victor, The Early Wars of Oregon, p. 208, claims that he was killed during the Cayuse War of 1848. According to another account in the Pacific Northwesterner, Summer, 1958, p. 45. Richard was killed in the Steptoe campaign in May 1858.

28 Gray, Oregon, p. 109, states that one of Narcissa’s “amusements” while crossing the country in the summer of 1836 was “to teach the Doctor to sing, which she did with considerable success.”

29 Simpson, in his Character Book, HBC Arch., described Pambrun as being in 1832: “…about 45 years of age—17 years in the service; an active, steady, dapper little fellow.” He had the rank of clerk when given charge of Fort Walla Walla; was promoted to chief trader in Nov. 1839; remained at the fort until his death on May 15, 1841.

30 No indication is given whether the songs and prayers taught to the Indians were in Latin, French, English, or Nez Perce.


32 See illustration in this work of Spalding holding a Bible in one hand and a hoe in the other—symbolic of his philosophy of Indian missions.


34 Possible Umtippe was Tum-a-tap-um mentioned several times by Alexander Ross in his The Fur Hunters of the Far West, K. A. Spalding (ed.), Norman, Oklahoma, 1956. On page 123, we may read: “Notwithstanding reiterated professions of friendship, it was observed that his disposition was uncommonly selfish. He never opened his mouth but to insist on our goods being lavished on his numerous train of followers, without the hope of compensation. The more he received, the more his assurance increased, and his demands had no bounds.”

35 A Cayuse Indian lodge was an oblong shelter made out of reed mats or skins supported by willow poles and large enough to accommodate several families, each with its own hearth.
The late Dr. John A. Hawgood of Birmingham, England, discovered the baptismal record of Isabelle Anna, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Larkin, born on January 31, 1833, at Monterey, California, where Larkin was U.S. Consul. California was then a part of Mexico. The baby died in infancy. A son, Thomas O. Larkin, Jr., was born on April 13, 1834. Information received in a personal interview with Dr. Hawgood.
The Whitmans at Waiilatpu and the Spaldings at Lapwai carried on their work in their separate stations for about two years with but little outside help beyond that of a few Hawaiians and an occasional wandering mountain man. The restless Gray, who was supposed to assist in the secular affairs of the mission, had given only six weeks of his time to help Whitman and about four to aid Spalding before leaving for Fort Vancouver and then for the States. Both Whitman and Spalding were fully aware that the American Board expected them to be self-supporting, with the exception of a few basic staples which had to be imported. Such a policy meant that both men, and the associates who joined them in 1838, had to devote most of their time and energy to manual labor just to keep themselves and their families alive and fairly comfortable.

At Waiilatpu Whitman had to superintend or actually engage in such duties as farming, building fences to protect his crops, taking care of his animals, milking cows, butchering a horse when needed, sawing logs to make boards, making adobe bricks for the unfinished part of his house, plus a multitude of incidental duties connected with maintaining a home in the wilderness. Fortunately both Whitman and Spalding were versatile and energetic. Neither was afraid of work. Each had to be a jack-of-all-trades in order to survive. The multiplicity of such secular
duties, however, made it difficult for either man to spend much time on language study and on those professional duties for which each was especially qualified. The marvel is that they were able to accomplish as much as they did in civilizing and evangelizing the natives under such restricting conditions. With infinite patience and devotion, the Whitmans and the Spaldings gave themselves, without expectation of any material reward, to ministering to a people of an entirely different culture—to semi-nomadic, “heathen” Indians.

Our chief source of information regarding the activities of the Whitmans during the two years from their arrival in Oregon to the fall of 1838 is their correspondence. After that date, their letters are supplemented by the letters and diaries of the 1838 reenforcement. During their eleven-year residence in Old Oregon, beginning with their arrival at the 1836 Rendezvous, the Whitmans wrote 275 letters which are extant either in original or in copy form. Only six original Whitman letters written during 1837 have been found, and an additional one which was published. For the eight-month period beginning January 1, 1838, and ending with the arrival of the reenforcement in the early fall of that year, thirteen Whitman letters are known of which four were written by Narcissa. Even though the source material for these months is scanty, we can glean considerable information from them regarding Whitman’s activities as a doctor, a farmer, and a teacher.

**WHITMAN, THE DOCTOR**

Although Whitman was sent to Old Oregon as a missionary physician, we find that he rarely referred to his professional experiences in his letters. When writing to the Board, he would sometimes refer to the health of his wife or of his associates, but seldom would he mention the ailments of the natives. Here even Narcissa fails us. If the theory that her father was a Thomsonian is correct, then we can understand her hesitancy to say much about her husband’s medical practice to members of her family. Under such circumstances the tactful thing would be to say nothing about a subject over which there was such pronounced disagreement. We do find, however, a few statements in Narcissa’s letters which throw light upon the conditions her husband faced as a missionary doctor among superstitious natives.

Both the Cayuses and the Nez Perces had medicine men whom
they called *te-wats*. Like many medicine men of primitive peoples, they had, no doubt, some effective remedies. They also relied upon what the Whitmans considered to be sorcery, superstition, and deceit in trying to effect cures. A terrifying aspect of *te-watism* was their acceptance of the right of relatives of a deceased person to kill the *te-wat* if he were unable to cure his patient. This custom put Dr. Whitman constantly under threat of death and greatly restricted what he might otherwise have been able to accomplish.

In Narcissa’s letter of May 2, 1837, she wrote that many of the Indians of their vicinity were ill “with an inflammation of the lungs.” Many turned to Dr. Whitman for help. He was, in their eyes, a white *te-wat* of great renown, for had he not removed an arrowhead from the back of Jim Bridger at the Rendezvous of 1835? Among the afflicted was the wife of the irascible Chief Umtippe. Narcissa described what happened: “The old chief Umtippe’s wife was quite sick and came near dying. For a season they were satisfied with my husband’s attention, and were doing well; but when they would overeat themselves, or go into a relapse from unnecessary exposure, then they must have their *te-wat* doctors; say that the medicine was bad, and all was bad. Their *te-wat* is the same species of juggling as practiced by the Pawnees, which Mr. Dunbar describes, playing the fool over them, and giving no medicine” [Letter 41].

“Umtippe got in a rage about his wife,” wrote Narcissa, “and told my husband, while she was under his care, that if his wife died that night he should kill him. The contest has been sharp between him and the Indians, and husband was nearly sick with the excitement and care of them.” Losing faith in Dr. Whitman, Umtippe sent for “the great Walla Walla *te-wat*,” and thus Whitman was relieved of the responsibility if the woman died. The Walla Walla *te-wat* came and “after going through several incantations, and receiving a horse and a blanket or two, pronounced her well; but the next day she was the same again.” Umtippe’s rage was then directed against the *te-wat* and said “that he was bad and ought to be killed.” Since Narcissa does not say whether the woman died or not, we may assume that she lived and that the *te-wat’s* life was spared. A few weeks later Umtippe became ill. “Notwithstanding all his villainy,” wrote Narcissa, “he came to my husband to be doctored. He was very sick, and we thought he would die; but the medicine given him soon relieved him.”
A few days later, the grim superstition of the Indians wrought its vengeance on “the great Walla Walla te-wat.” Narcissa wrote on May 2: “Last Saturday the war chief died at Walla Walla. He was a Cayuse and a relative of Umtippe; was sick but six days; employed the same Walla Walla tewat Umtippe sent for, but he died in his hands. The same day... a younger brother of Umtippe went to Walla Walla; arrived about twilight, and shot the te-wat dead. Thus they are avenged.” Narcissa felt that as soon as some of the older chiefs died, no doubt including Umtippe, things would be different. She contrasted the older chiefs, who were “filled with so much war and bloodshed,” with the younger men, who had “an eager desire to adopt the manners and customs of civilized life; but they are ruled by the chiefs, and feel themselves obliged to bow in subjection to them.”

**Introducing Chief Stickus**

On Monday, May 1, 1837, another influential Cayuse chief called on Dr. Whitman and asked for medical attention. He was Stickus whom Narcissa called “an excellent Indian” and who lived with his band on the Umatila River about twenty-five miles from Wailatpu. The Whitmans took Stickus into their home where they could give him personal attention. In doing so they realized the risk they ran if he died. Writing late in the evening of the following Wednesday, Narcissa said: “He has been taking medicine, and it appears to have relieved him in a measure; but, because he is not all about immediately, he became exceedingly uneasy and restless and talks about the te-wats. He, with many other sensible ones in the tribe, and men of influence, too, are convinced that it is a deception, and not of God, and yet no doubt feel a great struggle in their minds to entirely renounce that in which they have so long had implicit confidence.” The Whitmans found that customs generations old did not change quickly. They had to be patient, and they knew it was wise to exercise restraint.

Before Narcissa closed her letter, she made an appeal for additional workers, an appeal that comes again and again in the letters that she and Marcus wrote: “Who will come over and help us? Weak, frail nature cannot endure excessive care and anxiety any great length of time, without falling under it.” She then made mention of her husband’s health. “I refer more particularly to my husband. His labor this spring
has affected his health considerably. His old complaint in his side affects him occasionally.” There is no evidence that Whitman had any physical problems while crossing the country or during their first months’ residence at Waiilatpu. Narcissa attributed the recurrence of his old trouble to excessive labor, hence the plea for assistants.

Narcissa’s letter closes with the following postscript: “You are indebted to little Alice Clarissa’s disposition for this sheet. I have no cradle yet, and she has lain in my lap all day; for she does not like to be where she cannot see her mother, long at a time. She receives many kisses for her grandparents, uncles and aunts, every day. She is now in bed with her father, sleeping sweetly. She is pleasant company for me, here alone. One o’clock [a.m.] and I retire, leave the sick Indian to himself the remainder of the night.” Stickus recovered, and the Whitmans had no more loyal friend during their remaining ten and one-half years residence among the Cayuses than this chief. How different would have been the history of the Whitman mission had the locations of Stickus and Tiloukaikt been reversed.

**Whitman, The Farmer**

Both Whitman and Spalding saw the necessity of teaching the Indians the arts of civilization for two compelling reasons. In the first place, their semi-nomadic type of life gave them a precarious livelihood. The buffalo east of the mountains were being decimated. The missionaries realized that the day was rapidly approaching when the wild game would not provide sufficient meat for the natives. Narcissa wrote: “We are anxious to give them the means of procuring their provisions in a more easy way, so that there may be less starving ones during the winter” [Letter 46]. Therefore, the necessity to teach the Indians how to cultivate the soil. There is evidence to indicate that the Cayuses were aware of this need and were ready to make an adjustment to the circumstances which were being forced upon them, as increasingly they were asking for plows. At the same time this necessity to change their pattern of living may have been one of the most serious grievances that the Indians harbored against the white men.

The second reason why the missionaries urged the natives to take up cultivating the soil was to induce them to give up their semi-nomadic habits and accept a settled life. This was necessary before any consistent
program of education or religious instruction could be conducted.

Whitman found the soil and the climate at Waiilatpu admirably suited for agriculture. He began in the spring of 1837, with only one plow and fifteen hoes, the herculean task of cultivating sufficient land to provide for his needs and to teach the natives how to till the soil. Spalding was facing the same frustrating experience at Lapwai where he too lacked agricultural instruments. He tried to make a plow out of cedar wood, using large roots for the “chip and mold boards.” 

This, however, proved unsuccessful. Whitman saw a plow that Pambrun was using, made out of wood with an iron point, and wrote to McLoughlin requesting that at least one of like kind be made for him. McLoughlin, in a letter dated June 23, 1837, replied: “The plough you request will be made.” When Jason Lee visited Waiilatpu in the spring of 1838, he found several of these wooden plows with iron points in use, but they were not very satisfactory.

Whitman hesitated to ask the Board to send plows, as he was aware of its limited resources. Moreover, he knew that some members of the Board would question the wisdom of spending benevolence funds for such secular objects as plows. How could the infant American Board, founded in 1810, with a limited constituency and restricted income, afford to venture into the field of furnishing agricultural tools to whole tribes of Indians? In Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he stressed the importance of having plows and hoes, and suggested that if such were sent to the Hawaiian Islands, ships of the Hudson’s Bay Company would carry them to the Columbia.

The planting season of 1838, when the Indians showed an increased desire for plows, added to Whitman’s feeling of frustration. Writing to Greene on May 8 of that year, Whitman made the following plea for plows:

We are now at an important crisis, & need men & means to carry out what has been so auspiciously begun & that there be no reaction. There is danger of this, for the want of facilities to accomplish our plans, & to induce the Indians to settle around us that we may teach them & their children without interruption. Even this year I am confident if we had had suitable ploughs & hoes that they would have raised [enough] corn & potatoes &c. to have detained a large number with us constantly. We shall labour under great disadvantage until such things can be sent.
I have thought best not to ask the Board for them fearing what reception it might meet with & so have written to several gentlemen of my acquaintance to send us fifty ploughs & three hundred hoes, & in case of failure I have ordered my Brother [i.e., Augustus Whitman] to appropriate two hundred dollars on my account to that object. But this is not enough, what are three hundred hoes & fifty ploughs? We ought to have at least seventy five or one hundred ploughs & six hundred hoes immediately to save this starving multitude from an untimely grave.

Whitman's willingness to contribute two hundred dollars from his personal funds left with his brother speaks eloquently of his faith in this cause. This sum amounted to more than a schoolteacher's pay for one year. Whitman's appeal to the Board continues: “If the Board cannot approve of such an expense, I do not see how they can afford to proceed without it, for it seems evident that without them we shall not see the Indians at our station for any considerable time. On the contrary, if we had them, it would not be long before we should see them located around us with houses, fields, gardens, hogs & cows, & their children enjoying the benefit of constant instruction, at far less expense to the Board then to take them into our families for that purpose. They are fond of ploughing.”

Whitman had to wait two years before he learned of the result of this appeal. Then to his great satisfaction, he heard that a shipment of supplies from the Board had arrived at Fort Vancouver which included ten plows, “18 or 20 doz. hoes, two cook stoves,” and many other items [Letter 76a]. In the same shipment were twenty-five plows donated by the Rushville Congregational Church [Letter 89]. The arrival of these thirty-five plows came after the spring planting of 1840, but in time for the sowing of fall wheat. Thus we see that four years elapsed after the Whitmans had settled at Waiilatpu before enough good plows were on hand for the Indians to make a beginning in cultivation.

In his letter of May 8, 1838, Whitman wrote: “Had I one doubt of the disposition of the Indians to cultivate, I would not thus write: but having seen them for two seasons breaking ground with hoes & sticks & having given them the trial of the plough, I feel an entire confidence in their disposition & ability... Several of them have already planted half to an acre of potatoes & have considerable fields of corn and peas.”
Whitman had only sixteen acres under cultivation in 1837. This was increased to forty acres in 1838 including “six acres of potatoes, two & half of wheat,” with peas, oats, and corn making up the balance. Much of what he raised had to be given to the Indians for seed. “This field is emphatically white for the harvest,” he wrote, “although we bring the gospel as the first object, we cannot gain an assurance unless they are attracted & retained by the plough & hoe, & in this way even before the language is acquired you may have the people drawn around you & ready to hear your every instruction. And why should not this be our method of proceeding? Is it not what Paul meant when he said, ‘I become all things unto all men,’ that he accommodated himself to the circumstances of the People? Why then should we not take the best, & may I not say, the only way to win them to Christ?” Here was Whitman’s philosophy of missions. Secretary Greene was inclined to begin with a sermon and end with the plow. Whitman and Spalding had the opposite emphasis—begin with the plow and end with the sermon.

At first it seems that no questions were raised by the natives regarding ownership or use of the land. Evidently Whitman had been invited by Umtippe to settle in his vicinity and there is no evidence that the chief asked for or received any compensation. Since the Indians were often absent from their home lands for months of each year, they had no sense of individual proprietary rights to any particular acreage. Not until the Cayuses had begun to cultivate the fields did the idea of private ownership of designated plots of land become a part of their thinking.

In his letter to Greene dated March 12, 1838, Whitman explained why the Indians, who did want to cultivate some land in the immediate vicinity of Waiilatpu, were eager for that particular location: “Their great fear is that other Indians will steal from them... & all are anxious to plant where I can watch their crops for, as they say, the Indians fear me but do not fear them.” A revolutionary new idea had taken root: the private ownership of land. Later this was an issue which would cause trouble for Whitman, when Tiloukaikt demanded payment for the lands occupied by the mission.

**Beginnings in Horticulture**

While still at Fort Vancouver, Narcissa noted in her diary her intention to take some “sprouts of apple, peach & grape” with them when
they made the return trip to Fort Walla Walla. We may assume that this is what happened for, soon after they moved to Waiilatpu, Whitman planted an orchard to the west of their house. We have record of Spalding sending fifty young apple trees to Whitman in February 1842. Since it takes years for an apple orchard to become productive, we do not find many references in the writings of the missionaries to fruit being harvested at Waiilatpu. We do have evidence that the Whitmans were able to pick a few apples in the fall of 1846. There is no evidence that any of the Cayuses took any special interest in planting fruit trees; some of the Nez Perces, however, did so.

**Beginnings in Animal Husbandry**

No record has been found of the division that Whitman and Spalding made of their horses and mules after their arrival in Old Oregon. In his letter to Greene dated July 8, 1840, Whitman stated that he had seventeen head of horses. The Cayuses had large herds of horses; consequently Whitman was able to buy from them for as low as $6.00 a head during the first five years that he lived at Waiilatpu, when he and his family were obliged to eat horseflesh. Spalding, in the inventory that he made of the Waiilatpu property owned at the time of the massacre, claimed that Whitman had forty-six horses of which number ten were broken to harness. This means that Whitman had been able to use Cayuse horses, often called ponies, to pull plows.

When the missionaries first settled among the Old Oregon Indians, the natives had only two domesticated animals—the horse and the dog. Although Whitman made mention of one Cayuse chief who had secured some oxen from the Hudson’s Bay Company, these were on loan only. The Company did not wish to encourage the natives to raise cattle. This, however, became the policy of Whitman and Spalding who, from the very beginning of their missionary work, looked upon cattle raising by the natives as one good method of inducing them to abandon their roving habits and settle down to farming.

After Whitman and Spalding had divided their small herd of cattle which survived the long overland trek, Whitman had either five or seven heifers or cows. For five years the Whitmans refrained from eating beef, wishing to build up their little herd. During these years, Whitman found it necessary to butcher thirty-two horses for food. In his report
of mission activities at Waiilatpu, written for Greene on July 6, 1840, Whitman said that he then had “…five cows, two one year-old heifers & three heifer calves. One pair oxen, two pair of steers, two yearling bulls & two bull calves, twenty in all.” Not until the summer of 1841 did Whitman feel free to kill his first beef, “a steer four years old” which had been fattened on the luxurious grass of the region and which “gave us one hundred and forty-eight pounds of tried tallow” [Letter 100]. After that time, the necessity of killing horses for food diminished.

With the increase of their respective herds, both Whitman and Spalding occasionally parted with some of their cattle, giving or selling them to a few selected natives who they believed would prize them. We have no accurate figures as to how many head of cattle the Indians owned at the close of the mission period. Since the Nez Perces were several times more numerous than the Cayuses and also since they seem to have demonstrated a greater desire to adopt the white man’s ways, we may assume that they had more cattle than the Cayuses. At the time of the Cayuse War, 1848–49, members of that tribe were reported to have had forty head of cattle. It is possible that some of that number had been stolen from Oregon immigrants, or received through trading.

Following the great California cattle drive of 1837, when about six hundred head of Spanish cattle were driven into the Willamette Valley, cattle became more easily available to the Indians. The Methodist missionaries introduced some cattle into The Dalles area in 1838. The Spanish cattle were of inferior stock as compared to the American breed, being smaller; also the cows were poor in milk production.

Spalding, in his Waiilatpu inventory, stated that Whitman had 290 head of cattle in November 1847, including “100 milch cows; 80 young cattle; 11 yoke of oxen; 80 calves; and 8 beef cattle.” The fact that Whitman had one hundred milk cows does not mean that he was actually milking that many, rather these were breeding animals. We are not told just how Whitman was able to keep his live stock separate from that owned by the Indians before he was able to fence sufficient pasture land to keep them confined. Perhaps he had some system of identifying his stock by notching the ears of the young or by branding them. Whitman was handicapped in his efforts to erect rail fences at Waiilatpu because of the lack of nearby suitable timber.
INTRODUCTION OF HOGS AND SHEEP

In a letter that Spalding wrote to Greene in the summer of 1837, he reported getting three hogs from the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Colville.\(^1\) Whitman, in a financial report submitted to the American Board dated March 27, 1838, stated that he had spent £10-3-6 for “Flour & Seeds & Hogs.” He did not indicate how many were purchased or when, though it was probably in the summer of 1837. Writing on December 3, 1839, Whitman stated: “I killed four hogs which weighed 1,083 lbs.” Narcissa wrote on November 6, 1841: “Seven hogs have been butchered today.” In order to keep large quantities of freshly butchered meat, the Whitmans would have had to dry it, smoke it, or salt it down. As will be mentioned later, the Oregon Mission received large shipments of salt from their associates in the Hawaiian Islands.

More important than hogs for both the Whitmans and the Spaldings were sheep. Evidence is lacking as to whether the missionaries were able to induce the natives to raise these animals. The Indians were quick to see the value of cattle as they could be turned loose to graze on the fenceless prairies, but hogs and sheep had to be confined and watched. Moreover, sheep were often victims of marauding animals such as wolves and coyotes. This was a problem that the natives were not as well able to meet as the missionaries, who controlled the predatory animals by resorting to the use of poison.

While still at Fort Vancouver, Whitman, Spalding, and Gray had jointly signed a letter dated September 19, 1836, which was addressed to the Rev. Hiram Bingham, head of the Hawaiian Mission of the American Board, in which they requested that he send some sheep to them. No doubt Dr. McLoughlin had encouraged them to do this as he was forbidden by the policy of his Company to sell any from the large flock at the fort. “Any number from 50 to 200 would be acceptable,” the men wrote. Bingham was in full sympathy with the project, but had to wait until he could secure transportation for the animals on a ship bound for Fort Vancouver. An opportunity came with the unexpected arrival in Honolulu, during the latter part of December 1836, of a ship bearing a party of twelve Methodist missionaries, including three men, five women, and four children, on their way to the Willamette Valley. The party had sailed from Boston the latter part of the previous July. The voyage around Cape Horn had taken five months. The Methodists had
to wait in Honolulu for nearly four months before they secured passage on a vessel, the *Diana*, which was bound for the Columbia River. The missionaries consented to look after eight head of sheep which Bingham was ready to send to Oregon.

The *Diana*, with the first Methodist reinforcement for its Oregon Mission, dropped anchor at Fort Vancouver on May 28, 1837. Dr. McLoughlin notified Whitman that eight sheep had been left with him “but one of them died.” McLoughlin replaced the dead sheep with a ram from his flock, but charged Whitman for it. He also reported that Bingham had sent seventy bags of salt and a contribution from the Hawaiian Christians of $79.87½. The salt was a most welcome gift as it was needed to preserve fish and meat.

The first missionaries of the American Board had arrived in the Hawaiian Islands (then called the Sandwich Islands) in the early months of 1820 and met with immediate and rather fantastic success. By 1837 they claimed about five thousand converts and by 1853 the native church became both self-supporting and self-administering. The first “foreign missionary” project of the infant Hawaiian Church was to contribute to the Oregon Mission of the American Board. The gifts made in 1837, although relatively small, were significant. Other gifts followed.

Mrs. Elkanah Walker, a member of the 1838 reinforcement for the Oregon Mission, wrote in her diary on May 17, 1839: “Mr. Bingham’s church has made our mission a present of about 400 dollars.” At other times the Hawaiian Christians sent kegs of sugar or molasses to Oregon. In May 1839 the Hawaiian Mission sent a small printing press to Oregon, of which mention will be made later. Many of the Hawaiians who entered the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company or of the Oregon Mission were Christians.

In August 1837, Dr. McLoughlin turned the eight sheep over to the interpreter stationed at Fort Walla Walla, who happened to be at Fort Vancouver, with instructions to deliver them to Whitman. Writing to Levi Chamberlain, the business agent of the Hawaiian Mission, on October 7, Whitman related a sad story: “From his negligence & injuring their legs with cords (they were brought in canoes), three died after reaching Walla Walla. Only one ewe is living.” That lone ewe marked the beginning of the sheep and wool industry which once thrived in what is now often called the Inland Empire of the Pacific Northwest.
Whitman, eager to get more sheep, wrote to Chamberlain a second time on October 16 and asked him to send “fifteen or twenty sheep, all ewes except one or two rams.” In this letter he also requested that two married Hawaiian men with their wives be sent. When Whitman began building at Waiilatpu, he had the assistance of two Hawaiians whom he had gotten through the Hudson’s Bay Company, but difficulties arose because they were single. Whitman explained: “The Indians are constantly urging them to take some of their women, & one asked liberty of me to do so, a few days since. But I replied he had a wife at home & for that reason must not take one here.” Whitman felt that if one or more couples could be sent at the same time as the sheep, they could care for the animals in transit. Another reason for wanting married couples was to have the women help Narcissa in her house work.

Acting on Whitman’s request, Chamberlain sent six sheep to the Oregon Mission in the spring of 1838 and a married couple, Joseph and Maria Maki Whitman acknowledged the arrival of five of the six sheep (one died en route) in a letter to Chamberlain dated October 30, 1838. The Oregon Mission paid £12 sterling for the fare of the Hawaiian couple. Joseph and Maria proved to be excellent workers and were a much appreciated addition to the Whitman household.

The sheep thrived in Oregon. Writing to his former mentor, Dr. Ira Bryant of Rushville, on May 24, 1841, Whitman reported: “The sheep belonging to the Mission breed twice a year & in some instances I think they have had lambs three times in twelve months.” With such a rate of reproduction, the flocks increased at a surprising rate. Spalding reported having forty-one sheep in July 1841 and 150 in April 1846.14 In August 1840 Spalding noted in his diary the completion of the building of a loom.15 The inventory of the Lapwai station, compiled after the Whitman massacre, listed not only the loom but also two spinning wheels. Whitman reported having eighty sheep in April 1845 [Letter 170] and the Waiilatpu inventory listed ninety-two sheep and two spinning wheels. Since both Whitman and Spalding may have given or sold some sheep to the Indians, no accurate statistics regarding the increase of their flocks are available.

Whitman saw the possibilities of a booming sheep industry in the upper Columbia River country. Writing to A. B. Smith, after the latter had left the Oregon Mission and gone to Hawaii, on May 31, 1844,
Whitman described Oregon as: “A country where a man can winter a thousand sheep easier than he could feed half the number from a well stored barn in your own native Vermont.” Whitman looked into the future and dreamed of the day when: “The wool grown here & manufactured in the country would be exchanged for domestic articles, the same as a trade with the Islands... no foreign fabrics can come in competition.” Today large woolen mills stand at Pendleton, Oregon, in fulfillment of Whitman’s dreams.

MEETING THE THREAT OF MARAUDING ANIMALS

The introduction of sheep into the interior of Old Oregon back in the 1830s and 1840s had its difficulties and precipitated some serious complications, as will be noted. One of the members of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission, the Rev. A. B. Smith, writing from Kamiah on September 3, 1840, critically commented: “He [i.e., Spalding] & Doct. W. were in such haste to introduce all the arts of civilization among the Indians at the very onset, they encumbered themselves with sheep; but the [Indian] camp was so full of dogs that the poor harmless sheep could have no peace but were in danger of being destroyed at once.” Spalding tried to meet this threat by offering a reward for every dog killed but, according to Smith, this proved highly unpopular with the natives who liked their dogs.

Another and a more serious threat to the sheep came from the marauding wolves and coyotes. Spalding made several references in his diary to wolves attacking and sometimes killing young cattle and even horses. The helpless sheep were easy victims. On October 2, 1839, Spalding wrote to Greene requesting: “A quantity of strychnia or Nux Vomica sufficient to kill 1,000 wolves.” We have no evidence to indicate how much of this poison, if any was sent by Greene. Whitman had to face the same problem as Spalding in protecting his sheep from marauding animals. Although no record has been found in any of Whitman’s letters to Greene asking for poison, he may have received such from Spalding or from the Hudson’s Bay Company. As will be noted later, the fact that Whitman did use poison to kill wolves became the basis for certain serious charges made at the time of the massacre.
In addition to the introduction of cattle, hogs, and sheep, the Whitmans and the Spaldings had poultry. Writing to his friend and former mentor, Dr. Ira Bryant, on May 24, 1841, Whitman listed some of the improvements made at Waiilatpu which included “some out houses as Corn Cribs, & Granary, Harness House, Smoke & hen houses, double back houses.” The reference to hen houses indicates the presence of poultry, and Narcissa once wrote of having a few turkeys. Spalding informed Greene in September 1838 of having forty hens. Neither of the inventories of property lost or destroyed at Waiilatpu or at Lapwai following the massacre, however, mentioned poultry. We do not know to what extent, if any, the natives were encouraged to raise chickens but with the Indians’ fondness of dogs, we doubt that this experiment proved successful.

**Whitman, The Missionary Teacher**

The task of establishing a home in the primeval wilderness was so tremendous that we marvel how Whitman found time to learn the language and to conduct a school for the natives or to give any instruction in the basic truths of the Christian religion. As a doctor he had a major responsibility to minister to the physical ailments of his associates and, as far as possible, those of the natives. He was not expected to perform the duties of an ordained minister, yet as a conscientious Christian, he felt an obligation to do all that he could to educate and to evangelize the natives. In this he had the wholehearted cooperation of Narcissa.

By the fall of 1837, the Whitmans felt that they had sufficient mastery of the language to begin a school. Writing on April 11, 1838, Narcissa said: “We have had a school for them about four months past, & much of the time our kitchen has been crowded & all seem very much attached.” By that time Spalding had made a beginning in reducing the Nez Perce language to writing and had submitted a manuscript primer of seventy-two pages to the Whitmans for their approval. Narcissa copied this primer before it was sent to the Hawaiian Mission to be printed. Whitman knew that a printing press was there because his friend, Elisha Loomis of Rushville, had taken one out to the Islands in 1820. The primer was never published in full, only a few proof sheets were
run off, as it was discovered that Spalding’s transcription of the language was incorrect.

In Whitman’s letter of March 12, 1838, to Greene, we find the following account of his method of religious instruction: “We have two meetings for Indians on the Sabbath & in the evening what we call a sabbath school for the children & youth. The attention on religious instruction is good & solemn. Worship is strictly maintained in the principal lodges morning & evening. Lately I have been explaining the ten Commandments & our saviour’s first & great commandment to which they listen with great attention & from their inquiries I think they understand them.”

A reference to Cayuse Halket is found in this letter: “The young Cayuse who had been about seven years at the Mission School at Red River died about a year since just as he was about to return to his people.” As previously stated, Cayuse Halket was buried at Red River on February 1, 1837. “We had looked for his return with much interest,” wrote Whitman, “as he had been home on a visit & behaved very well. But Providence has removed him from either good or harm in his life any further than his people remember his good advice.” If Cayuse Halket had been active or effective in any endeavor to introduce Christianity among his people, as some have suggested, surely Whitman would have mentioned it. Whitman dismissed the youth’s influence simply by saying that he had “behaved very well,” and had given some good advice.

The news of Cayuse Halket’s death was carried to Oregon by the Hudson’s Bay Company’s westbound express of 1837. Dr. McLoughlin was disturbed, as is shown in a letter he wrote to Spalding on November 27, 1837: “In my opinion, Indians ought never to be taken from their lands to a Civilized Country, as they will see so many things new to them, that they may form very mistaken opinions, and if any thing happens to displease them, they may give those who take them there an immensity of trouble. You see the return we get for sending the young Cayuse Chief to be educated at Red River, now that he is dead, his Relations, at least some of them, give it out that we killed him.”

Narcissa in her letter of April 11, 1838, also commented on their endeavors to teach Christianity. She wrote: “For several Sabbaths past, our worship with them has been very interesting. All seem to manifest a deep interest in the instruction given them. Some feel almost to blame
us for telling them about eternal realities. One said that it was good when they knew nothing but to hunt, eat, drink, and sleep; now it is bad.” Here is the age-old question: Is it better to live in ignorance of the divine law and be content, or to have an enlightened conscience and be discontented?

Narcissa wrote especially about the children. “There are many very interesting children,” she commented, “both among the Nez Perces and Cayuses. We have generally given names to those that have attended school. One boy about ten years old, we have given the name of Edward,—a bright, active boy, and loves his book.” We shall hear more about this Edward, who evidently had been named after one of Narcissa’s brothers. He was a son of Chief Tiloukaikt and was also known as Shu-ma-hici. His portrait, painted by John Mix Stanley in October 1847, is reproduced as an illustration in volume two of this work.

In this letter of Narcissa’s of April 11, we find another reference to Umtippe. “The old chief, Umtippe, who threatened my husband’s life last spring, is especially changed,” she wrote, “particularly in his deportment to us, and about the house.” Narcissa stressed the fact that “becoming familiar with the language” had made instruction much more effective. Interpreters were never satisfactory, especially when dealing with theological terms. Later on, in a letter dated May 10, 1838, Narcissa wrote: “Under date of April 11th, I spoke of old Umtippe’s appearance. He seems to be declining fast. Last Saturday he came here, he said, on purpose to spend the Sabbath. Said he had had recently three fainting turns, and felt that he could not live a great while. He had been very wicked, and did not know where his soul would go when he died—was lost about it.” The Rev. Jason Lee happened to be at Waiilatpu that week-end and was invited to speak at the Indians’ worship service. Of course an interpreter was needed and perhaps Whitman was able to serve in that capacity. Lee’s words made a deep impression on Umtippe. “Never can a person manifest a greater change,” wrote Narcissa. “That selfish, wicked, cunning and troublesome old chief, now so still and quiet, so attentive to the truth, and grateful for favors now given! Surely nought but the spirit of God has done this.”

One of the problems that the missionaries experienced when trying to convert the Indians was that of getting them to understand Calvinistic doctrines. To the missionaries, becoming a Christian meant not
only that one should show penitence for sins committed but also have an understanding of what it meant to accept Jesus Christ and his forgiveness. This was the faith in which the missionaries had been reared and it was natural for them to make these requirements of their would-be converts. Turning again to Narcissa’s letter of April 11, 1838, we read: “We are not yet satisfied how much he [i.e., Chief Umtippe] understands of the atonement, or whether he has any correct views of salvation through Jesus Christ. But this we do know, that God is able by his spirit to take what little truth we are able to give, and impress it upon the hearts and consciences of the most benighted minds.”

The doctrine of the atonement of Christ, often puzzling to informed Christians, was doubly so to the Cayuses who were hearing about it for the first time from the Whitmans. “To hold up before them the atonement,” wrote Narcissa to the American Board missionaries in Honolulu, “and [say] that their sins bore a part in crucifying the Lord of glory; they say, ‘It is another saying; we never heard it before; we do not understand it’.” 26 Here is one reason why the Roman Catholic missionaries were able to baptize Oregon Indians by the hundreds, while the Protestants had so few whom they felt were qualified for church membership; their standards were too difficult.

Although Narcissa, in her letter of May 10, 1838, reported that old Chief Umtippe was in failing health and might die at any time, he lived for more than two years after she wrote. In a letter to Greene dated March 28, 1841, Whitman stated: “The old chief Cut Lip died last winter, which has removed a very troublesome cause.” In all probability Cut Up, also referred to in some contemporary writings as Split Lip, was none other than Umtippe. 27 Evidently Tiloukaikt took over the chieftainship of the band living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu before Umtippe died. Whitman, in his letter to Greene of November 11, 1841, mentions a brother of Umtippe, Waptash-tak-mahl, five times. This subchief of the Waiilatpu band of Indians, was also called Feathercap or Tamsucky. 28

To the missionaries, the Indians acted like children in many respects. They were dutiful and obedient at times, and again petulant and threatening. In his letter to Greene of March 12, 1838, Whitman wrote that the Indians “were much more friendly & accommodating than last year, but still I need not tell you we have many perverse dispositions to
encounter.” The Cayuse men considered manual work to be beneath their dignity and were even fearful that the missionaries would make their children work if sent to school. “Gratitude,” wrote Narcissa, “has no place in their hearts” [Letter 46]. On the other hand, she also told of their respect for the white man’s property: “I have let my clothes remain out over night, feeling just as sale in doing it as I used to in Prattsburgh” [Letter 40]. Later, however, the extent of the family wash became a controversial issue as the Indians looked with envious eyes upon what they considered an excessive amount of clothing owned by the Whitman household.

**Eliza Spalding Born**

Whitman’s letter to Greene of March 12, 1838, and Narcissa’s letter to her parents written two days later, tell of their visit during the previous November to the Spaldings at Lapwai when their baby girl was born. This was the first time that Narcissa and Eliza had seen each other after they had parted at Fort Walla Walla on November 22, 1836. Realizing that the Whitmans would be taking their eight-month-old daughter with them, Spalding sent three of his Indians with a “leather lodge” [i.e., a buffalo skin tepee], to Waiilatpu for their use. With that convenience, wrote Whitman, “we could have a fire at night & be secure from the weather although doomed to suffer some from smoke.”

After boarding up the windows, locking the doors, and giving a trusted Hawaiian precise directions for the care of the animals, including the sheep, the Whitmans left for Lapwai on Tuesday noon, November 7, 1837. Whitman had a second Hawaiian man go with them. They traveled only ten miles the first afternoon which would have taken them a little beyond present day Walla Walla. The Whitmans felt “obliged to make all possible speed,” as Narcissa explained, because of a late start. On Wednesday, the 8th, they rode nearly thirty miles and camped on the Touchet River, a tributary of the Walla Walla River, in the vicinity of what is now Dayton, Washington. They were following an old Indian trail which connected the Walla Walla Valley with the Clearwater. Lewis and Clark had gone that way in the spring of 1806 on their return trip to the States from their winter’s camp south of what is now Astoria, Oregon.

Riding side-saddle while holding a lively child was no easy task for Narcissa and, no doubt, Marcus shared the responsibility part of the
way. Narcissa wrote that they got very tired before they stopped to camp on Wednesday. It started raining that night and continued until noon the next day, so they moved only six miles on Thursday. When they awoke on Friday morning, they found two inches of snow on the ground. Whitman wrote: “We made a long day’s ride & encamped on waters emptying into Snake River.” This would have been the Tucannon River or its tributary, Pataha Creek. On Friday they encountered both snow and rain until two o’clock in the afternoon. On Saturday morning, after going over a high divide, the Whitmans arrived at Chief Timothy’s lodge at Alpowa Creek, where they found a note from Spalding urging them to press on with all possible speed. Timothy was one of Spalding’s first converts and was without doubt the most faithful and sincere of native Christians.

Narcissa gives the following account of their experiences on Saturday, the 11th:

We rode all day in the wind and rain and came to the Snake river about the middle of the afternoon and thought to stop, but it cleared away, and after making a fire and warming a little, we started again and came to the crossing place, and when the sun went down, it found me sitting by the root of a large tree on stones with my babe in my arms, watching by moonlight the movements in crossing our baggage and horses. This was the only piece of wood in sight and with a few bunches of wild sage, a fire was made against it to warm me while waiting to cross. Soon I was seated in a canoe with my babe and landed safely across [Letter 44].

The Whitmans were then at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, the site of present-day Lewiston, Idaho, and about twelve miles from Lapwai. Since the next day was Sunday and there was “a good moon,” as Narcissa described it, they felt an urgency to keep traveling. After some deliberation, Narcissa claimed that she was “too much fatigued,” so they camped for the night. On Sunday morning, the 12th, the Whitmans rode on to Lapwai, but left the Hawaiian and the three Indian helpers with the baggage and the other animals to follow on Monday morning. “It was with no common emotion,” wrote Whitman, “that we met after a years absence & so far as Mrs. Spalding was concerned, the year was spent without seeing any civilized friends after Brother Gray left the December previous. We found Brother Spalding situated under
better circumstances than we could expect from his single-handed situation” [Letter 43].

The Spalding baby, a girl, arrived on Wednesday morning, November 15. She was the first white child to have been born in what is now the State of Idaho and the first born of white American parents in Old Oregon who lived to maturity. She was named Eliza after her mother. On Sunday, November 26, Spalding baptized his daughter and Alice Clarissa, and administered the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Narcissa referred to this as “a blessing which we have not enjoyed since we sat at the table with our beloved friends in Angelica on the eve of our marriage.” This was the first time that the missionaries had been able to use the silver communion set received from the East Liberty Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, while on their westward journey.

Whitman reported to Greene: “We prolonged our visit for Mrs. Spalding’s recovery, as in a former sickness she had a protracted and tedious recovery.” Eliza had some difficulty in nursing her baby for lack of milk. “Little Alice Clarissa,” wrote Narcissa, “has been very much favored; she has had enough to spare most of the time.” The weather continued cold with snow on the ground. Narcissa felt appalled as she contemplated the long journey by horseback to Waiilatpu. It was so difficult under such conditions to care for a child still in the diaper stage. The Whitmans, therefore, decided to return by canoe, going down the Clearwater to the Snake, and thence down the Snake and the Columbia Rivers to Fort Walla Walla. A suitable dug-out canoe was made available, and Spalding induced some of his Indians to man the little boat. Whitman was impressed with the friendliness of the Nez Perces at Lapwai, whom he found much more cooperative than the Cayuses at Waiilatpu.

**THE RETURN TRIP BY CANOE**

After turning their horses and some of their baggage over to the faithful Hawaiian and the three Indians who were to take the overland route back to Waiilatpu, the Whitmans with their little girl embarked in their log canoe on Saturday, December 2, for their return trip. They camped that night at the confluence of the Clearwater and the Snake Rivers. One wonders why they left the Spaldings on Saturday rather than waiting over another Sunday until Monday. The presence of a
large encampment of Nez Perces at the mouth of the Clearwater might have been the reason. Whitman informed Greene that the Indians there were “very attentive to religious instruction as all the Indians do in this section.”

The return trip took four and a half days, not counting the Sunday spent with the Indians. The river was low and navigation was dangerous in some places. Once they had to portage. “We had a tedious journey home,” wrote Narcissa, “almost every night were obliged to clear away the snow to find a place to camp upon.” They arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Thursday, December 7th, and after spending the night there, left for Waiilatpu the next morning. Narcissa wrote that Alice Clarissa “rode with her father all the way from Walla Walla (twenty-five miles) and we only stopped once to nurse and change her, which she did not relish quite so well as to be moving” [Letter 44]. No wonder the child objected; having a diaper changed out-of-doors in a snow storm was not a pleasant experience. “It was some time after dark before we reached home,” wrote Narcissa, “and [we] were not a little rejoiced to see it again.” To their relief, they found everything safe and in good condition.

The Whitmans had been gone from November 7 to December 8; it had taken the doctor a month to make one professional call. During the eleven-year history of the Oregon Mission, sixteen children were born to five of the six missionary wives. With but few exceptions, Dr. Whitman was the attending physician. An inordinate amount of time was spent in making long horseback rides and in waiting for the babies to arrive. Mrs. Elkanah Walker gave birth to four children and Mrs. Cushing Eells to two while the two families lived at Tshimakain near present-day Spokane, Washington, about 140 miles from Waiilatpu. Whitman was present at four of these deliveries. On a fifth occasion he arrived a few days late; Mrs. Walker met him at the door with her baby in her arms. The total distance covered on these five journeys was more than 1,400 miles, nearly one-half the distance across the United States, and the elapsed time in travel and in waiting amounted to about one hundred days.
When Whitman began building at Waiilatpu on October 14, 1836, he ambitiously planned a story-and-a-half building, 30 x 86 feet, similar in style to the salt-box house common in New England. As has been stated, he found it necessary to abandon work on what had been started and to concentrate on the erection of a lean-to on the west side of the house, which measured 12 x 36 feet. Just when Whitman was able to complete the construction of the main part of his house is not known, as there is a hiatus in the extant Whitman correspondence to the Board from May 5, 1837, to March 12, 1838. In his March 12 letter, Whitman mentioned some window sash which Spalding had made for him and which he evidently took back to Waiilatpu on his return trip from Lapwai in December 1837. Possibly the Whitmans moved into their enlarged quarters sometime during the early part of 1838.

Some incidental descriptions of the Whitman home are found in the writings of members of the 1838 reenforcement who arrived at Waiilatpu on August 29, 1838. Mrs. Cushing Eells commented: “Dr. W’s house... is built of adobe... I can not describe its appearance as I can not compare it with anything I ever saw. There are doors and windows, but they are of the roughest kind; the boards being sawed by hand and put together by no carpenter, but by one who knew nothing about such work, as is evident from its appearance... The furniture is very primitive. The bedsteads are boards nailed to the side of the house, sink fashion, then some blankets and husks made the bed; but it is good compared with traveling accommodations.” Mrs. Elkanah Walker mentions the house having “three large rooms, two bedrooms,” but she does not indicate whether this included the three rooms in the lean-to. We have no accurate information regarding the floor plan of the main house.

In the latter part of December 1837, a warm wind (known in that region as a chinook) melted the snow on the Blue Mountains so rapidly and in such quantities that the Walla Walla River overflowed its banks. Narcissa tells what happened:

On the eve of the 28th, the waters entered our cellar; the walls settled; the props gave way one after another; & for the whole night we were in the utmost anxiety, fearing the consequences.
to our whole house. Soon after dark our men & Indians went to work dipping out the water & throwing earth against the walls & continued all night long. In great mercy to us our house was preserved to us standing, although the wall is materially injured... We were obliged for several days & nights in succession to keep the water bailed out.\textsuperscript{36}

On May 8, 1838, Whitman reported another flooding: “A second rise in March has so far damaged my house that I shall be obliged to build again this summer as the present one will not answer to finish. I intend to build of dobies again with projecting roof & without a cellar\textsuperscript{37} on a place where I think there is no danger.” During the winter of 1837–38, Whitman sent the Hawaiians to the foothills of the Blue Mountains to saw some pine boards. With the prospect of building a new house on higher ground, the need for lumber was imperative.

**THE WHITMAN HOUSEHOLD**

A new house was needed also for an expanding family. Mention has been made of Maria Pambrun and the Indian girl, Sarah Hull, who were received into the Whitman home in the spring of 1837. Just how long Maria remained is not known. Sarah lived with the Whitmans until her death on August 11, 1838. Just where she stayed when the Whitmans made their trip to Lapwai in the late fall of 1837 is not known. Sarah quickly learned enough English to be of real assistance to Narcissa and perhaps she was able to help both of the Whitmans learn the Nez Perce language.

Following the Whitmans’ return from Lapwai, Mungo Mevway, a lad twelve or thirteen years old, the son of an Hawaiian father and a native woman, was also received into the Whitman home. He had been sent by Dr. McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver [Letters 54 & 42c]. Mungo remained with the Whitmans until October 1841, when he went to live with the Walkers at Tshimakain. There, a year or so later, he married a Spokane girl. His name frequently appears in the writings of the missionaries.

Each of the three men whom the Whitmans met at the 1836 Rendezvous—Tom McKay, Joe Meek, and Jim Bridger—sent a half-breed daughter to live in the Whitman home and be educated. The first to be received was the teen-ager, Margaret McKay, who arrived at Waiilatpu
during the winter of 1837–38. Narcissa wrote: “She is a good girl, for one who has had so few advantages, and renders me much assistance in my domestic labors.” As will be told later, the Meek and Bridger girls came in 1840 and 1841.

Whitman had two single Hawaiians working for him from the fall of 1836 to the spring of 1838. Sometime in the spring of 1838, Charles Compo, the French Canadian mountain man, who had served as interpreter and guide for Samuel Parker, moved with his Nez Perce wife and infant son from Fort Walla Walla to Waiilatpu and entered Whitman’s employ. Both of the Whitmans made favorable mention of him in their 1838 letters.

Writing to her sister, Mary Ann, on September 25, Narcissa said: “Charles Compo… came here and put himself under our protection, and went to cultivating land here, and assisting my husband in his cares. He is an excellent man, and we feel as if the Lord had sent him here. Husband left him in charge when he went to Mr. S’s, having got all the crops in…” And in her letter to Mrs. Parker: “We have employed him to take charge of the farm, etc., and find him very faithful and trusty. His superior knowledge of the language makes him truly a helper in our work. He has been a regular attendant upon our family social and Sabbath worship” [Letter 52]. Compo, born in Canada, had been reared as a Roman Catholic. He evidently had some connection with either the Hudson’s Bay Company or some American fur company before entering Parker’s employ in 1835. There is no evidence to indicate where Compo and his family lived at Waiilatpu, perhaps in his own lodge.

From the very beginning of Waiilatpu, the Whitman mission virtually became a convalescent home or hospital. The Black, John Hinds, had accompanied the Whitman–Spalding party from the 1836 Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla in order to get medical help from Dr. Whitman. He followed Whitman to Waiilatpu, where he died during the last week of November 1836. In Whitman’s letter of March 12, 1838, he mentioned a sick half-breed boy whom Dr. McLoughlin had sent from Fort Vancouver for “medical aid.”

On June 28, 1838, Joseph and Maria Maki arrived at Waiilatpu, both being members of the mission church in Honolulu. With them was a single Hawaiian, referred to as Jack, who worked for either the Whitmans or the Spaldings for several years. The Makies were the only
Hawaiian couple to be sent to the Oregon Mission; the others were single men. The Whitmans were delighted to have a married couple, who were Christians, in their home. “You cannot imagine,” wrote Narcissa, “how it strengthened our hearts to hear them pray, notwithstanding we could not understand a single word” [Letter 54].

Joseph and Maria proved to be most dependable. Thus with their own baby; the four Indian or half-breed children; and four, or possibly five, Hawaiians; the Whitman household numbered eleven or twelve, not including the Compo family. Moreover, the Whitmans were confident that Gray would be returning that fall with a reinforcement. There was indeed a need for a larger house. Although Whitman, in his letter to Greene of May 8, 1838, mentioned his intention to rebuild on higher ground, little was actually done in this regard during the summer of 1838 with the possible exception of having some boards cut.

**William Cameron McKay**

During the first part of March 1838, Tom McKay, who was on his way to Fort Hall to get some furs from the Hudson’s Bay Company, stopped at Waiilatpu to see his daughter, Margaret, and his friends, the Whitmans. With him were his three sons, William, John, and Alexander. McKay told the Whitmans of two other visitors who would be following him to Fort Walla Walla. The first was Dr. John McLoughlin who would be traveling with the Company’s eastbound express to Montreal. From thence he expected to visit Boston and New York before sailing for England. Dr. McLoughlin was expected to arrive at Walla Walla the latter part of March. McKay, who wanted his son, William Cameron, 1824–1892, to be a physician, had made arrangements for him to accompany Dr. McLoughlin to Scotland, where relatives had promised to assist the lad financially in getting an education.

The second expected visitor would be the Rev. Jason Lee who, according to McKay, would probably arrive at Walla Walla the first part of April. Lee was going East by the overland route in order to get reinforcements for his mission. McKay had already made arrangements for Lee to take the two younger sons to the States and place them in Lee’s Alma Mater, Wilbraham Academy, in Massachusetts.38

Tom McKay and his children were indirectly related to Dr. McLoughlin as the doctor had married Alexander McKay’s widow,
Margaret, the mother of Tom. Margaret was a half-breed. Tom married a native woman; therefore his children had five-eighths Indian blood. Tom’s son, William, had been one of those who witnessed the arrival of the Whitmans and Spaldings at Fort Vancouver on September 12, 1836, and no doubt was thrilled to see his step-grandfather welcome the white women to the fort. He and his brothers and sister had been in the school when Narcissa taught the children to sing some of her favorite religious songs.

On February 21, 1885, nearly fifty years later, Dr. W. C. McKay recalled: “When Dr. Whitman learned what the plans were for my future, he protested and earnestly urged my father to send me to the United States and make ‘an American’ of me. He said this country would certainly belong to the United States in a few years, and I would succeed better here if I was educated in the States, and became an American in thought and feeling.” When McKay explained that he was financially unable to pay the costs of keeping three boys in eastern schools, Whitman offered to give “a draft on the missionary board which he represented and taking from my father the equivalent in property needed at the mission.”

Tom McKay had to make a critical decision there at Waiilatpu. Should his son go with Dr. McLoughlin to Scotland and become a Britisher in training and outlook, or go with Jason Lee to the States and become an American? Although the British Government did not officially assert any claim to the Oregon country to the south and east of the Columbia River after signing the joint Occupation Treaty with the United States in 1818; nevertheless the Hudson’s Bay Company continued to look with longing eyes for many years on all of Old Oregon. Two of the Company’s forts on the Columbia—Walla Walla and Colville—were on the east bank of the river and Fort Boise and Fort Hall were far in the interior of Old Oregon. By 1838 the Company, beginning to face realities, felt it wise to concentrate its efforts on retaining the area to the north and west of the Columbia River.

McKay, as a step-son of Dr. McLoughlin, would have been aware of the apprehension felt by his Company over the growing American influence in Oregon. As has been stated, it was he who, when he first saw Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding at the 1836 Rendezvous, said: “There is something that Doct. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the
country so easy.” McKay finally accepted Whitman’s reasoning and decided to send his son William to the academy connected with the Medical School at Fairfield, New York, where Whitman had studied. William was to be an American!

McKay took his three sons with him to Fort Hall. Jason Lee, who followed McKay, arrived at Fort Hall on June 12 and took the three boys with him to the States. After spending several years in the academy at Fairfield, William transferred to Geneva College where he was a student in 1841–42. He then followed one of his teachers to a new medical school at Willoughby, Ohio, where he apparently remained until he returned to Oregon in the latter part of 1843.

Tom McKay moved to the Willamette Valley in 1839 and threw his lot in with the Americans.40 In this incident, in which we find Whitman urging Tom McKay to send his son to a school in the States to be educated, we see the first indication of Whitman’s convictions regarding the future of Old Oregon. He was convinced that the lower Columbia River Valley was to be a part of the United States!

**DR. MCLOUGHLIN VISITS WALLA WALLA**

Dr. McLoughlin arrived at Fort Walla Walla on March 28, 1838, en route to London. Since he had been delayed in his travels, he sent advance word to the Whitmans, saying that he would be unable to go out to Waiilatpu and requesting that they meet him at the fort. A heavy rain on the morning of the 28th prevented Narcissa and her little girl from going, but Marcus made the trip and met with Dr. McLoughlin that evening.

Letters between Old Oregon and the States were carried by one of three routes: (1) by a voyage of nine months or more around South America via Honolulu; (2) by some trusted traveler who planned to cross to the States over the Oregon Trail, or (3) by the Hudson’s Bay Company’s express across Canada. The Company was cooperative in its willingness to carry mail, and both the Whitmans and the Spaldings took advantage of the opportunity to send letters with Dr. McLoughlin.41

Dr. McLoughlin had previously informed Whitman and Spalding of his hope to call at the headquarters of the American Board in Boston; therefore, Spalding wrote a letter of introduction to Secretary Greene on March 12, which Whitman also signed. They mentioned with deep appreciation the “numerous favors” extended to them by Dr. McLou-
ghun and others in the Hudson’s Bay Company. On the same day, Whitman wrote to Greene: “We cannot speak too highly of his kindness to us since we have been in this country.” Dr. McLoughlin replied on March 29, modestly stating: “You put too high a value on the little I have done.”

This exchange of letters indicates the good feeling which existed between the Company and the Whitmans and the Spaldings. Beginning in 1838, the Company’s officials at Fort Vancouver began to doubt the designs of the Methodist missionaries in the Willamette Valley. They suspected them of wishing to engage in trade and to promote American colonization. Thus there was a growing coolness towards the Methodist missionaries not shown to those under the American Board.

**JASON LEE VISITS THE WHITMANS AND THE SPALDINGS**

On Friday, April 13, 1838, the Rev. Jason Lee arrived at Fort Walla Walla on his way to the States to get reenforcements for the Methodist Mission in the Willamette Valley. The next day he rode out to Waiilatpu, where he met the Whitmans for the first time. He described their meeting in his diary: “Dr. Whitman met us and conducted us to the house. Mrs. Whitman met us at the door, and I soon found myself seated and engaged in earnest and familiar conversation as if we were old acquaintances.” On the following day, Sunday, the 15th, Lee preached to the Indians with Whitman interpreting. Chief Umtippe attended this service.

Lee was favorably impressed with the progress the Cayuse Indians had made in cultivating the land. On the 16th he noted in his diary: “Visited the In[dian]’s farms and was surprised that they had done so much in the absence of almost every tool necessary to do with. Some had two or three acres, wheat, peas, corn & potatoes.” Of Lee’s visit, Narcissa wrote: “Our visit with him has been a refreshing one. He is the first Christian brother that has visited us since Mr. Gray left last March, 1837.”

Lee left for Lapwai on Thursday, April 19, and spent the week-end with the Spaldings, whom he also met for the first time. More will be told of this visit in a subsequent chapter. Lee started back to Waiilatpu with Spalding on Monday morning, the 23rd, and for some reason the two felt the necessity of riding 140 miles to Fort Walla Walla in two days.
In a letter to his nephew, the Rev. Daniel Lee, dated from the fort on April 25, Lee commented: “Both the Kioose and the Nez Perces are doing a great deal in cultivation, the former with wooden ploughs with a little bit of iron nailed upon them, and hoes, and the latter with hoes alone. Some of the Nez Perces came to the Doctor’s for potatoes to plant, a distance of 300 mil. [i.e., for the round trip]. I was astonished to see the industry of these Indians. The fact is they are starving, and they will be forced to work their land.” 45

Regarding his visit to Lapwai, Lee wrote: “They [i.e., the Nez Perces] expressed a great joy at seeing me, and several made very sensible speeches, and all seemed anxious to be taught. But still he [Spalding] has his troubles with them. The truth is they are Indians; though they are certainly superior to those upon the Willamette, and though his things are much exposed as they can be, they steal nothing from him.”

Lee felt that Whitman and Spalding had been able to accomplish more in civilizing and evangelizing the Indians by having two stations than could have been possible if they had stayed together. Yet, he doubted the wisdom of the separation. “It was rather a rash measure,” he wrote, “to put themselves so entirely into the hands of the Indians where there was no absolute necessity for it.” Evidently Lee was not told the real reason for the separation.

“Let Them Feel the Lash”

In his letter of April 25, 1838, to his nephew, Lee made the surprising statement: “Both Mr. W. & Mr. S. use highhanded measures with their people, and when they deserve it, let them feel the lash.” 46 Lee was mistaken in believing that Whitman ever used or ordered the use of the whip, but was correct in stating that Spalding did. Whitman was a pacifist and consistently refrained from using force to discipline the natives. Not one reference to Whitman using the whip himself or ordering the chiefs to use it on the natives has been found, even in the statements of his critics.

Spalding’s diary contains at least two references to Indians being whipped, evidently on his orders. On January 9, 1839, he wrote: “Williams wife left him last night.” Williams was a mountain man who had been married by Spalding to a Nez Perce woman. She was so mistreated by her husband that she left him, but it was not Williams, but the
woman who was punished. Spalding wrote: “Williams wife is whiped, 70 lashes. Indians come nigh whipping him.” 47 The second diary entry is for August 19, 1841: “Cause three children to be whiped for stealing corn.” Since Lee visited Lapwai in 1838, before the above entries were made, it seems evident that Spalding had been ordering offenders to be punished by the lash on earlier occasions.

Only one reference has been found of Spalding himself using the whip on an Indian and then he was forced to do so by other Nez Perces. 48 The very fact, however, that he consented to such humiliating punishment as that inflicted on the wife of Williams seems reprehensible. We should, however, place such incidents in the context of that generation.

In a country where there were no prisons or law-enforcing agencies, the white man adopted the lash as a quick and effective way to punish wrongdoers and to inculcate respect for the rights of others. Long before the missionaries settled among the Indians of Old Oregon, the Hudson’s Bay Company had authorized the use of the lash on Indian offenders. In a letter to Greene dated May 5, 1837, Whitman wrote: “A system of punishment for crimes established by the traders has done much good.”

Although Whitman did not specify that the Hudson’s Bay Company approved the use of the lash, we do find evidence of this in a letter Dr. McLoughlin wrote to Spalding on November 28, 1837. Dr. McLoughlin was unhappy over the attitude of Ellis and Garry who, after their return from the Red River Mission school, said they had been taught that it was wrong to whip wrongdoers. McLoughlin wrote: “You see the return that Ellice is making us for the expense we have been upon him and you know how Garry has acted. When he came [back] he found that the chiefs were in the habit of flogging, at our suggesting, those who stole, &c., and by which in a great measure they had put a stop to those evil practices, and made their followers live more correctly than before. In the same way as Ellice, who told the Chiefs we misled them, that Mr. Johns 49 had told him it was wrong to flog on any account... and they consequently gave over [i.e., up] flogging and last year the Cayuse Chief told me that he now saw they were wrong in giving up flogging, as the young men would not attend to anything.” 50 We therefore see that the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Indians themselves were using the lash before the missionaries arrived. This throws new light on Lee’s hasty
statement that both Whitman and Spalding used “highhanded measures with their people.”

The lash was commonly used at the Roman Catholic missions in California during the mission period as a means of enforcing discipline. Flogging was a common punishment in the United States Navy until it was abolished by Act of Congress on September 28, 1850. As will be mentioned later, Indian Agent Elijah White in the late fall of 1842 induced the Nez Perces and the Cayuses to accept a code of laws. Four of the eleven articles specifically listed a penalty of from twenty-five to fifty lashes for each offense.51

### Madame Dorion

Among the visitors who called on the Whitmans in the spring of 1838 was Madame Dorion, the heroine of Washington Irving’s *Astoria*. Of this visit Narcissa wrote: “Saturday [i.e., April 14] Mrs. Pambrun came with her three daughters, Maria, Ada, & Harriet, also two daughters & a son of an Iowa [Indian], the old woman spoken of in Washington Irving’s *Astoria* (Perhaps Father has not seen the book, it contains a more just representation of this country than any other written previous.)52 She is now the wife of a Frenchman now residing at the Fort. She was here with the rest & spent the Sabbath & left today. Mr. Lee arriving at Walla Walla on Friday came with them [Letter 46].

Pierre Dorion, with his wife and their two little boys, had been a member of a trapping party working along the Snake River in January 1814 when attacked by Indians. All of the men were killed. Madame Dorion managed to escape with her boys and two horses. She had a limited amount of provisions and a few buffalo robes and blankets. She fled into the Blue Mountains where alone, hundreds of miles from friends, she managed to keep herself and her children alive through the winter months. She killed the horses and smoked the meat. With their hides and the buffalo robes, she constructed a rude shelter. She had no guns, only knives. As soon as possible in the spring, she continued her journey towards the Columbia River and was found by some Walla Walla Indians who adopted her and the little boys into their tribe. This is the story to which Narcissa referred; it is told in more detail by Washington Irving.
Madame Dorion later married John Toupin, a French Canadian, who became the interpreter at Fort Walla Walla. In July 1841, Father A. M. A. Blanchet, one of the pioneer Roman Catholic missionaries to Old Oregon, blessed a relationship which had existed since 1824.

Narcissa’s letters show that life at Waiilatpu was not dull; interesting guests were coming and going; Tom McKay and his four children, Madame Dorion and her three daughters, Jason Lee and the two Indian boys he was taking to the States, and Pierre Pambrun, his wife, and their children. These were but the forerunners of many more who, during the following years, were to visit the Whitman mission, some to spend months or even years there.
CHAPTER 11 FOOTNOTES


2 Drury, Spalding, p. 168.

3 HBC Arch., B/223/b/17.

4 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 329. On Oct. 13, 1936, in company with the late Dr. Arthur H. Limouze, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, I visited the site of Spalding’s first home at Lapwai. We there found a shoot growing out of an old apple tree trunk, perhaps one that Spalding had planted, on which were some apples identified as the Gentian, a fall apple common in New York State a century ago.

5 Drury, F.W.W., II:302, with reference to diary of Mrs. Elkanah Walker, Oct. 2, 1846, where she refers to receiving three apples from the Whitman orchard. She wrote: “They . . . are very nice.”

6 Following the Whitman massacre of 1847, Spalding compiled an inventory of property lost or abandoned at Lapwai. This was published in Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 359 ff. A similar inventory was compiled for property lost or abandoned at Waiilatpu which appeared in Richardson, The Whitman Mission, pp. 149 ff.


8 Victor, Early Indian Wars of Oregon, p. 211.


10 Drury, Spalding, p. 178. Although Spalding, in the inventory he compiled for Lapwai, listed thirty-one hogs, he made no mention of hogs in the similar inventory compiled for Waiilatpu. This was probably an oversight.

11 HBC Arch., B/223/b/17, letters of Dr. McLoughlin to Whitman of June 23 and August 3, 1837, and letter of September 27 to Spalding. The Hawaiian Spectator, Vol. I (1838), p. 331, quotes from a letter of Dr. Whitman’s for Oct. 5, 1837: “The donation of salt, by the King and his sister, gave us much satisfaction, as a token of respect for the servants of the Lord Jesus.”

12 Drury, Presbyterian Panorama, pp. 57 ff. The Hawaiian Evangelical Association organized in 1853, took over the administration of the former activities of the American Board in the Islands.

13 For years Idaho ranked first among the states of the Union in the production of wool and mutton.

14 Drury, Spalding, pp. 269 & 315. W. D. Breckenridge, a member of the Wilkes Expedition, visited Lapwai in June 1841 and wrote in his journal for the 25th: “He [i.e., Spalding] showed me a Yewe that had 7 lambs in one year, viz: 2 in the early part of January, 3 in June, and 2 in Decr. Yewes breed with him twice every year. He showed me also 38 sheep the off spring of two Yewes in three years.” W.H.Q., XXII (Jan. 1931), p. 51.

15 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 320.

16 Whitman, in this letter, believed that the Pacific Northwest would become a great wool producing and manufacturing country. Here was an activity which the white men, and not the Indians, would control.

17 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 174.

18 Ibid., p. 268.
Archaeological excavations at Waiilatpu indicate that double toilets or “back houses” were at the east end to the “T” of the main mission house. The excavations of the pits revealed a large number of artifacts, such as broken dishes, etc., which had been discarded there.

Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 265 and 359 give evidence that Spalding had chickens at Lapwai.

Drury, *F.W.W.*, II contains many references to the difficulties the missionaries at Tshimakain had raising chickens because of the tendency of the Indian dogs to kill them. See index in that volume.

Whitman, in this letter, refers to a former communication to Greene which he had written in the fall of 1837 in which he had given an account of his evangelistic work. Evidently this letter was lost in transit as it is not now in Coll. A.

Two dates have been given as to the time of Cayuse Halket's visit to his people. Wm. McKay in Boyd’s *History of the Synod of Washington*, p. 231, suggested 1831. Tucker in *Rainbow in the North*, p. 74, more accurately gives 1834.

See Chapter One, fn. 29.

HBC Arch., B/223/b/18.f.9.

*Hawaiian Spectator*, I:332 quoting from an undated letter of Narcissa’s but written before the end of 1837.

Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 18. Brouillet claimed that the mission site at Waiilatpu belonged to three chiefs: “Splitted Lip or Tomtipi [Umtippe], Red Cloak or Waptashtakamal, and Pilankaikt [Tiloukaikt].”

Hulbert, *O.P.*, VII:248, quoting from Whitman’s letter of Nov. 11, 1841, identifies Waptashtakmahl with Feather Cap. Cannon, *Waiilatpu*, p. 103, states that Feathercap belonged to Tiloukaikt’s camp and was also known as Tamsucky. The variety of names given to the same individual makes positive identification difficult.

Timothy named his camping site Halahpawit or Alpowa which means “Sabbath rest” in the Nez Perce tongue. The very name is evidence of Timothy’s desire to keep Sunday as a day of rest. Alpowa is about twelve miles west of Lewiston, Idaho, on the road leading to Walla Walla.


Drury, *F.W.W.*, I:22, for list of the children of the missionaries with their birthdays.

Ibid., II:265. The baby was born Feb. 10, 1844. Dr. Whitman arrived on the 22nd. Rev. and Mrs. Elkanah Walker and the Rev. and Mrs. Cushing Eells were members of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission.

Narcissa in a letter to her parents, April 11, 1838, told of Pambrun sending her a rocking chair, and also a little chair for her daughter.


Ibid., I:132. This quotation was not included when the rest of the letter was published in *T.O.P.A.*, 1891, pp. 101 ff. See below, fn. 44.

Archaeological excavations at Waiilatpu show that there was a cellar beneath one of the rooms in the long arm of the “T” shaped mission house.
Brosnan, Jason Lee, p. 107.


Larsell, “Development of Medical Education in the Pacific Northwest,” O.H.Q., XXVII (1926), 65 ff.; see also chapter on Tom McKay in Hafen, Mountain Men, VI: 259 ff.

Whitman, Letter 89, stated: “We write you twice & sometimes three times a year, once in the fall by the Islands & in the spring by Canada & by the American Rendezvous.” In Letter 42c he wrote: “The American traders will not forward letters coming this way.” Dr. McLoughlin, writing to Spalding on April 14, 1837, stated: “I am of opinion the Hudson’s Bay Company would agree to bring any dispatches for you by the Express from Canada and for this your correspondents have only to send their letters (forty letters could come) to Hudson’s Bay Company’s office at Montreal, or rather Lachine.” HBC Arch., 2/228/b/17.

Original in Coll. A.

Lee, who had been at Fort Vancouver during the week before the Whitman–Spalding party arrived, had left to return to his station on Sept. 10th, not knowing that the American Board missionaries would arrive two days later.

About 1,400 words of this letter (No. 46) were omitted when it was published in T.O.P.A., 1891, pp. 101 ff. Although the letter was dated April 11, 1838, it contains some entries under later dates.

Brosnan, Jason Lee, p. 95.

Ibid.

Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 173 & 252.

Brouillet, House Document, p. 20, quoting John Toupin who claimed that the Indians told Spalding: “Whip him, or if not, we will put you in his place and whip you.”

A reference to the Rev. David T. Jones, one of the clergyman at the Red River Mission School when the Old Oregon Indian boys were there.

HBC Arch., B/223/b/18, fo. 9–9d.

See below, Chapter XVII, “Laws of the Nez Perces.”

This work appeared in Philadelphia in 1836. Just how or when Narcissa got to read this book is not known.
Since both Great Britain and the United States laid claim to Old Oregon and were unable to agree as to the location of the boundary line, they signed a Treaty of Joint Occupancy on October 20, 1818, which was subject for reconsideration if an agreement had not been reached within ten years. During the following twenty-eight years, 1818–1846, the two powers found themselves engaged in a contest for title. The main question was—where was the dividing line to be drawn? The Hudson’s Bay Company, the unofficial arm of the British Government, wanted it at the Columbia River. The United States, having become aware by 1839 of the strategic and economic importance of Puget Sound for naval and commercial harbors, insisted upon a more northern line.

During these critical years, 1838–1846, the debate over the location of the boundary was carried on in many circles; in the British Parliament and in the halls of Congress; in diplomatic conferences and in the press; in the councils of the Hudson’s Bay Company and in its Oregon trading posts; and especially after 1838 in the embryonic American settlements along the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. Both the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries in Old Oregon were drawn into the controversy.
A question which has perplexed scholars, who have studied the life of the Rev. Jason Lee, is whether he became more interested in colonizing the Willamette Valley with Americans than in evangelizing the natives. His interest in American colonization was linked with his desire to have the United States extend its jurisdiction over a large part of Old Oregon. After weighing the evidence, the historian H. H. Bancroft was convinced that after 1838 we must “regard Jason Lee less as a missionary than as an American colonizer.” Cornelius Brosnan, an authority on Lee, took the opposite point of view; he insisted that the reinforcement sent out by the Methodist Missionary Society in 1839, consisting of fifty men, women, and children, “was not primarily a colonizing enterprise, but distinctly a missionary expedition.”

The question can be restated: Did Jason Lee ride East in 1838 to save Oregon for the United States, or was he primarily interested in securing a missionary reinforcement to assist in evangelizing and civilizing the rapidly diminishing tribes in the lower Columbia River basin? Instead of accepting the now discredited theory of Whitman riding East in 1842 to save Oregon, might it not be possible that Lee was the one who made such a ride in 1838? Let the facts speak for themselves.

**Lieutenant William A. Slacum, U.S.N., Visits Oregon**

Our review of background events must begin with a Boston schoolteacher and Oregon enthusiast, Hall Jackson Kelley, who as early as 1829 founded a society to promote an American settlement in the disputed Columbia River country. He repeatedly presented memorials to Congress and made numerous appeals to prospective settlers, all for the purpose of insuring the extension of United States jurisdiction over a part of Old Oregon.

In 1833 Kelley started out for Oregon via New Orleans, Vera Cruz, thence across Mexico to San Diego, California. There he met and joined forces with an American trapper and explorer, Ewing Young. These two, with sixteen men and a band of from eighty to one hundred horses, worked their way north into Oregon, arriving in the Willamette Valley in October 1834. Kelley called on the Lees at their mission near what is now Salem, Oregon.

Unfortunately for Kelley and Young, Governor José Figueroa of
California wrote to Dr. McLoughlin accusing the men of being horse thieves. The large band of horses which they drove into Oregon lent some credence to the report. On the basis of this information, McLoughlin gave the men a cool reception at Fort Vancouver and also refused to extend to them the privileges of trade. Later McLoughlin learned that the report sent by Governor Figueroa was false, but the damage had been done. Both Kelley and Young harbored a deep hostility against Dr. McLoughlin and the Hudson’s Bay Company. Young settled in the Willamette Valley, but Kelley returned to the States in 1835.

When Kelley got back to Boston, he wrote an account of his visit to Oregon which was published in a government document. Kelley claimed that the few American settlers in Oregon were suffering from the monopolistic practices of the Hudson’s Bay Company. He was most critical of Dr. McLoughlin and claimed that the Company was flagrantly violating the terms of the 1818 Treaty of Joint Occupation. This outburst against the Hudson’s Bay Company only corroborated similar reports which had been coming to the attention of the United States Government.

President Andrew Jackson, who is remembered for his expansionist policies, directed John Forsyth, Secretary of State, to send someone to Oregon to investigate. Forsyth commissioned Lieut. William A. Slacum, then a purser in the U.S. Navy, “to proceed to the Northwest Coast of America and to the River Oregon [i.e., Columbia], by such means as he should find best, and there ascertain the truth of Kelley’s story.”

Slacum began his journey on June 1, 1836. He crossed Mexico and after some delays was able to sail from La Paz on October 10 for Honolulu. Although Slacum might have secured passage to the Columbia River on a Hudson’s Bay Company’s vessel, he felt it wise to be independent. He chartered the American brig, Loriot, for $700.00 a month and set sail for Oregon on October 24 taking with him a small cargo of items for the Indian trade. When Slacum arrived at Fort Vancouver on January 2, 1837, he was politely received by Dr. McLoughlin, who naturally inquired as to the object of his visit. Since he had so little cargo, it was evident that his main objective in visiting Oregon was not trade. Slacum said that he was on a private fact-finding expedition. Dr. McLoughlin was not fooled. To him Slacum was a spy, a government agent of the United States.
For some thirty years after the return of the Lewis and Clark party from the Pacific Coast, the United States Government had remained strangely indifferent to its rights to the Old Oregon country. With the single exception of United States Commissioner, J. B. Provost, who visited Oregon in 1818 to receive back Fort George (Astoria), which had been sold to the British by the Americans in 1813 because of the War of 1812, Slacum was the first government official to visit the Pacific Northwest after Lewis and Clark.

Some of the early reports on Oregon indicated that the country was not favorable for colonization. Wilson P. Hunt, who had led the overland expedition to the Pacific Coast sponsored by John Jacob Astor in 1810–12, stated in a memorandum to a member of Congress, the Hon. Edward Bates, dated February 15, 1828: “The nature of the country on the N.W. coast is such as forever to prevent agriculture.” So Slacum was really sent on a mission of rediscovery.

Slacum remained at Fort Vancouver from January 2 to the 10th. McLoughlin cooperated fully in supplying information about the activities of the Company and its resources. Slacum then called on Jason Lee at its mission, near present-day Salem, Oregon, where he arrived on the 14th. Slacum spent about two weeks in the Willamette Valley, largely if not exclusively in Lee’s company, and in his official report stated that he had called on all of the thirty American settlers. He listened with sympathetic ears to the many complaints made by the Americans against the monopolistic practices of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Especially objectionable was the refusal of the Company to sell cattle to the settlers even though the Company’s herds at Fort Vancouver numbered over a thousand head. It was well known that cattle could be purchased in California for $3.00 a head.

Under the leadership of Lee, and with Slacum’s enthusiastic back-stage endorsement, a meeting of the settlers was held at Champoeg with forty-one present, including thirteen French Canadians, former servants of the Hudson’s Bay Company. At that time the Willamette Cattle Company was formed with all forty-one men signing the Articles of Agreement. Slacum offered to take a party to California on his ship to buy cattle which could then be driven into the Willamette Valley. Out of their meager financial resources, the settlers pledged $900.00. Jason Lee invested $400.00 for the Methodist Mission and Slacum added
another $500.00, which probably came from some government funds placed at his disposal by President Jackson.10 With a $1,800.00 on hand, the newly organized company expected to buy about six hundred head of Spanish cattle.

After Slacum had returned to Fort Vancouver and had told Dr. McLoughlin what the settlers had done, McLoughlin, much to Slacum’s surprise, asked to be included in the project and contributed $900.00. This act of Dr. McLoughlin’s indicates that he was not in sympathy with the Company’s refusal to sell cattle, a policy which had been dictated by his superiors. Strange to say, Slacum made no mention of McLoughlin’s contribution in his official report to Congress, thus revealing Slacum’s bias against the Hudson’s Bay Company.

Lee accompanied Slacum back to Fort Vancouver and conducted a farewell service for the departing cattlemen aboard the Loriot on January 21. The cattle drive was an outstanding success. Evidently some additional funds had been raised as about eight hundred head of cattle were purchased at $3.00 each and forty horses at $12.00 a head. The drive ended in mid-October. Nearly two hundred head of cattle were lost along the trail. These losses, together with other expenses, brought the final cost per head upon delivery in Oregon to $7.67. The success of this cattle drive of 1837 opened a new era in Oregon’s history. It made the settlers, as far as cattle were concerned, independent of the Company’s stranglehold on a basic element in Oregon’s economy.

When Slacum returned to the States, he carried with him a petition, addressed to the United States Congress and signed by the American settlers in the Willamette Valley. The Americans begged that Congress would “recognize them in their helpless and defenceless state, and extend to them the protection of its laws, as being, or desiring to become citizens.” 11 The last clause may have had reference to some French Canadians who had also signed with the Americans. This was the first of several petitions forwarded to Congress by Americans living in the Valley, each of which asked for the establishment of their government’s jurisdiction in Oregon. Actually, any unilateral establishment of such an authority was not possible under the joint Occupation Treaty of 1818. The boundary issue had to be settled first.
The Oregon Boundary Issue

The location of the boundary which would separate that part of Old Oregon which would come under the jurisdiction of the United States from that which would be under the British flag, was becoming increasingly controversial by 1837. The British Government wanted the Columbia River to be the boundary. A variation of this proposal is to be found in a letter Governor Simpson wrote to Dr. McLoughlin on June 21, 1843, in which he suggested that the boundary start from the summit of the Rockies at the 49° parallel, continue south to the route followed by Lewis and Clark, then down the Clearwater, the Snake, and the Columbia Rivers to the Pacific Ocean. Such a dividing line would have given to Great Britain a large slice of what is now northwestern Montana, all of the panhandle of what is now northern Idaho, and all but the southeastern corner of what is now Washington.

Slacum, as a Navy officer, was quick to see the strategic value of having Puget Sound as a part of the United States. “I beg leave to call your attention to the topography of ‘Pugitt’s sound’,” he wrote in his report, “and urge, in the most earnest manner, that this point should never be abandoned. If the United States claim, as I hope they ever will, at least as far as 49 degrees north latitude, running due west from the ‘Lake of the Woods,’ on the above parallel, we shall take in Pugitt’s Sound. In a military point of view, it is of the highest importance to the United States.”

Slacum also pointed out that it was the policy of the Hudson’s Bay Company to encourage their retired servants to settle on the Cowlitz River “as it lies to the north of the Columbia.” Slacum explained: “The reason he [i.e., McLoughlin] assigns is, that the north side of the Columbia River will belong to the Hudson’s Bay Company.” Feeling that such an attitude posed a threat to American rights, Slacum wrote: “If one side of the river is claimed, with the same propriety they might claim both sides.” To Slacum, the establishment of the border at the 49° parallel was vital to the best interests of the United States of Puget Sound as providing harbors for the Navy and for commercial shipping. It was the only good harbor site along the whole Pacific Coast north of San Francisco Bay.

But how was that goal to be achieved? By war? That was unthinkable. The alternative was by diplomacy, but before diplomacy could be effective,
there had to be a good bargaining base. To Slacum the trump card for the Americans would be the presence of a large colony of its citizens in Old Oregon.

Reasoning backwards from events which took place after Slacum left Oregon, we can conclude that Slacum convinced Lee of the importance of increasing the number of American citizens in Oregon. There was no other person so strategically situated as Lee to promote such a project. Judging by evidence, which will be given subsequently, Slacum assured Lee that the United States Government would subsidize the cost of chartering a ship to carry a company of settlers, who could be called missionaries, to Oregon.

Since such a move would arouse the suspicions of the British Government, Slacum no doubt stressed the need for secrecy. Instead of advertising the political advantages of having more Americans settle in the Willamette Valley, the emphasis could be placed on the missionary aspects. Those recruited could go out under the auspices of the Methodist Missionary Society. As to personnel, let the emphasis be on farmers, mechanics, and artisans, rather than on ordained men.

Bancroft, in his *Oregon* (p. 166), suggests that Lee might have been dreaming of being a colonizer for Oregon when he met Kelley late in 1834, but the evidence for this theory is not strong. “There can be little doubt,” wrote Bancroft, “that the scheme took form on being encouraged by Slacum to look for the support of government in sustaining American supremacy south of the Columbia.” No doubt Slacum urged Lee to return to the States with him in order to get the reinforcement as soon as possible. Lee, however, felt that he could not leave at that time. He had but three assistants—Daniel Lee, Cyrus Shepard, and Philip P. Edwards. Lee may have assured Slacum that if a reinforcement for his mission arrived in 1837, he would leave for the States the following spring.

**Arrival of Methodist Reenforcements**

Two parties of Methodist missionaries reached Oregon in 1837, both having come by sea. The first with twelve persons arrived in May; the second with seven, the following September. The combined personnel included five men, seven women, and seven children. In the first group was Dr. Elijah P. White, the first physician to join the Willamette Mission. After serving for three years, because of serious difficulties
with Jason Lee, Dr. White withdrew from the Methodist Mission and returned to the States. In the second reenforcement was the Rev. Henry Kirk White Perkins who, shortly after his arrival in Oregon, married Miss Elvira Johnson, a member of the first party. The couple was assigned to the Methodist station at The Dalles, also called Waskopum.

In Slacum’s report to Congress, he stated that the total Indian population of the Willamette Valley was only 1,200, including the membership of five tribes. Slacum said that disease had “swept off no less than 5,000 to 6,000 souls” since 1829. The Methodist reenforcements, including that which reached Oregon aboard the Lausanne in May 1840, brought the total number of men, women, and children sent out by the Methodist Missionary Society to about seventy-five, of which number fifty were adults. If the Indian population had remained constant and if all adults worked in the Willamette Valley, there would have been one adult missionary for every twenty-four natives! Actually, several stations were opened outside of the Valley, such as the one at The Dalles where there were more than a thousand Indians. But even so, the overconcentration of missionaries for so few natives, who were rapidly dying off, shows that the primary emphasis of the Methodists had become one of colonization and not Indian evangelization.

Lee Leaves for New York

After the arrival of the reenforcements of 1837, Lee felt that it would be possible for him to leave for the East in the spring of 1838. It is not known to what extent he shared with his colleagues any assurance given him by Slacum that the government would subsidize the chartering of a ship to carry a large reenforcement to Old Oregon. Contemporary Methodist records merely indicate that the Oregon missionaries felt a reenforcement was desired in order to reach untouched tribes and that laymen were needed to relieve ministers of secular duties.

Before leaving for the States, Lee with the assistance of P. L. Edwards and David Leslie (a member of the second reenforcement), prepared a memorial to be submitted to Congress. This was the second appeal to be drawn up by residents of the Willamette Valley, the first having been carried East by Slacum. Lee called a meeting of the settlers for March 16, 1838, at the Methodist Mission when the memorial was presented for their approval.
The document adopted was another plea for the United States Government “to take formal and speedy possession” of Oregon. It did not specify where the boundary line was to be placed. The memorialists pointed out that the harmonious relationships then existing between the little colony of American settlers and the Hudson’s Bay Company might not continue if the settlement increased in population. The Americans claimed that they were living in a land without law. They stressed the need for some official government authority in Oregon “to secure the execution of all laws affecting Indian trade and the intercourse of white men with the Indians.” The memorial was signed by all nine male members of the Methodist Mission, eighteen American settlers, and nine French Canadians. Lee carried this memorial with him on his journey to the States.17

On March 26, 1838, Lee bade farewell to his wife18 and associates and left for Fort Walla Walla. With him were P. L. Edwards, who had gone out to Oregon with the Lee party in 1834; F. Y. Young, who was returning to his home in the States;19 and two Indian boys named Thomas Adams and William Brooks, whom he was taking with him as prime exhibits of the work of the Methodist Mission school.20

**Whitman and Spalding Request 220 Additional Workers**

On Saturday, April 14, 1838, the day after arriving at Fort Walla Walla, Lee rode out to Waiilatpu to see the Whitmans. There he remained for five days before starting for Lapwai. No records remain of the subjects that Whitman and Lee discussed, but it takes little imagination to fill in the general outline. Lee must have told Whitman about Slacum’s visit and of his strong conviction that the final border must be at the 49° parallel in order to give Puget Sound to the United States. Neither Whitman nor Lee discussed the location of the border in any of their known writings, but it appears that both men were in agreement with Slacum’s recommendations. Lee must have told Whitman about the promise of a government subsidy to charter a ship and probably also referred to some “Secret Service” fund mentioned by Slacum. We do know that Whitman in later correspondence referred to Lee’s intention to charter a ship, and also then made mention of the availability of financial assistance from a “Secret Service” fund.
A main subject of conversation between Lee and Whitman must have been the former’s desire to get a large reinforcement for his mission which would be the nucleus of an expanding American colony in the Willamette Valley. They must have agreed on the importance of the United States securing title to much of Old Oregon, and on the strategy for accomplishing this goal. The method was to secure the presence in Oregon of Americans—thousands of them—to outvote any residents who might be under the control of the Hudson’s Bay Company when a provisional government would be established. This, Lee must have explained to Whitman, was the primary reason why he was going East. He wanted to persuade the Methodist Missionary Society to send out a colony of missionaries and, no doubt, he urged Whitman to write to the American Board and ask it to do likewise.

Whitman was not only a sympathetic but also an enthusiastic listener. Undoubtedly he told Lee of how, just a few weeks earlier, he had persuaded Tom McKay to send his son, William, to an American school rather than to one in Scotland because of his conviction that Oregon would surely belong to the United States. No doubt Whitman reminded Lee of the fact that he and Spalding had taken their wives over the Rockies. The overland gateway to Old Oregon had been opened for women; they did not have to be sent by sea around South America. In this respect, the United States, because of its proximity to Oregon, had a great advantage over Great Britain if the Oregon emigrants would take the overland route. With the exception of a few colonists entering Oregon from what is now western Canada, British subjects would have to take the long sea voyage around Cape Horn.

Having won full and sympathetic support for his plan from Whitman, Lee went to see Spalding. He arrived at Lapwai either late Friday evening, April 20, or early the next day. After explaining his plan to Spalding, Lee found him as enthusiastic about the desirability of securing American sovereignty over Oregon as Whitman had been. Spalding agreed that an appeal should be made to the American Board to send a colony of missionaries to the upper Columbia River Valley.

On Saturday, April 21, 1838, Spalding began what was evidently intended to be a joint letter from him and Whitman to the American Board, for he opened his letter by writing: “We, the undersigned...” After reviewing the length of their residence on the field, their acquaintance
with the country, the promising outlook for work among other tribes, and the favorable reception which had been given them by the natives, Spalding then made the following amazing request: “To occupy these fields immediately, we ask as the least possible number which God & our conscience will admit us to name, for 30 ordained missionaries, 30 farmers, 30 school teachers, 10 physicians, & 10 mechanics, with their wives.” This meant a reinforcement of 220 adults!!!

As to the route such a reinforcement should take to go to Oregon, Spalding suggested that they go either by sea around Cape Horn “or the Mountain route, as you may think proper ... with all possible dispatch.” In long involved sentences and with his characteristic flowery language, Spalding fortified his request with pious sentiments about the thousands who would “take their leave of this world & pass beyond the borders of hope, leaving the blood of their souls in the skirts of somebody, before the laborers can arrive on the ground…”

Regarding the expected return of Gray that fall, he wrote: “We expect that a good number of these laborers are now, or will be soon on their way with brother Gray.” On that date, April 21, Gray with his bride, three other newly-wedded couples, and a single man were at Westport, Missouri, waiting for the American Fur Company’s caravan to start for the Rendezvous.

Being completely ignorant of the fact that the United States had experienced a minor financial depression in 1837 which left the American Board with a debt of over $40,000.00, in spite of greatly curtailed activities, Spalding unrealistically suggested: “You have only to make the request known & the men & money are at your command at once.”

The total number of missionaries under appointment by the American Board in 1837 was 360. Spalding was asking that this number be increased by two-thirds and all of the new appointees be sent to Old Oregon! Jason Lee had oversold his project!

As to where these new missionaries were to serve, Spalding listed tribes to the north of Lapwai including the Coeur d’Alenes, and others to the west as far as Puget’s Sound, and then looking to the east and southeast, he mentioned the Snakes, the Bannocks, and the Utahs. The whole appeal of the letter was based on the importance of evangelizing the red men. Nothing was said of any political aspirations or of
the Oregon boundary or of Lee’s ambitious designs to establish a large American colony in the Willamette Valley.

The Request for Supplies

This letter of April 21, 1838, included a long list of supplies which were then needed for Wailatpu and Lapwai and possibly for some of the expected reinforcement of 1838. With the exception of some items needed to be given as compensation for Indian labor or for trade, the list was reasonable. Requested items of clothing included: “6 pr female shoes, No. 7; 6 pr. male shoes, No. 8, 9 & 10; and 12 palmleaf hats.” 24 Household needs were: “2 cook stoves, 6 box stoves,... 12 candlesticks;” and an assortment of dishes and crockery as “4 doz dining plates,” and other kinds of dishes in proportion, “1 doz chambers with covers,” tools, kitchen utensils, knives, forks, spoons, lanterns, and kettles.

The request for two cook stoves indicates that both Narcissa and Eliza were still cooking over an open fire in a fireplace. When an archaeologist examined the soil where the Whitman house once stood, he found fragments of chinaware, “at least half of which is beautiful English pictorial ware—Spode, Staffordshire, Copeland and Garrett there was very little plain undecorated earthenware or utility china. What must have been the everyday ware had an attractive blue border.” 25 Since Narcissa had no opportunity to go shopping for chinaware after leaving Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1836, such patterns must have been selected for herself by others from the stores at the Fort, or possibly secured by an order placed by the American Board through an English firm. It may be assumed that the Spaldings had similar dishes.

Supplies needed in their contacts with the Indians included: “Five hundred yards of striped or checked cotton for shirts to be made by native girls,” and books and school supplies “for two English schools of 50 scholars each.” Evidently, Spalding was still dreaming of teaching the natives the English language. Spalding also asked for machinery and tools for a blacksmith shop and a gristmill. Needed for the blacksmith shop were “several tons” of iron and steel. Spalding wanted to make hoes, hundreds of them, for the natives. A gristmill would have saved money for the missionaries, as they were paying $10.00 per hundred pounds of flour purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company. A gristmill could also have given encouragement to the Indians to raise wheat.
Spalding also requested “50 gross Indian awls” which were much desired by the natives in sewing their buckskin garments, but “50 gross” totaled 7,200 awls!

Another amazing request that Spalding made was for: “2,000 gunflints... 100 doz scalping knives,” and for a quantity of powder and ammunition. The scalping knife was a utility tool used for many purposes, all perfectly legitimate. Greene honored most of the requests for supplies contained in this letter, but not for tons of iron and steel, the excessive number of awls, gunflints, scalping knives, and ammunition. Regarding the latter items, Greene wrote on March 31, 1839: “Our Committee have never... consented to send to any mission... [such items as] balls, powder, gunflints, scalping knives, etc., nor does it seem to me proper to send them [to you] to be used in trade with the Indians. Would you feel satisfied to see one tribe for some slight provocation, or perhaps in a war party got up for the sake of plunder, using the balls, powder, & flints which you sold them, upon their unhappy neighbors? What would be said of you & the cause of Christian missions, should it be known that you traded with the Indians in such articles as these?”

Undoubtedly Spalding was thinking more of the Indians’ needs for the hunt for wild game than for war.

Whitman’s Involvement

Spalding went with Lee on his return trip to Waiilatpu on Monday and Tuesday, April 23 and 24. We have no contemporary evidence to show just what Whitman thought of Spalding’s extravagant request for 220 additional workers except a statement in his letter of May 8 to Greene: “I have had the pleasure of signing a joint letter to yourself prepared by Brother Spalding & of filling a blank with supplies...” Whitman added a request for “three hundred hoes & fifty ploughs.” There is some mystery about Whitman’s statement about “filling a blank with supplies.” The original correspondence in the Board’s archives in Boston shows that the letter of April 21, including the request for supplies, is in Spalding’s handwriting.

About two years later, when strained relationships existed between Whitman and Spalding, Whitman wrote to Greene repudiating the letter of April 21, 1838, which he had signed with Spalding. He stated: “I feel to regret the joint letter sent by Mr. Spalding & myself in 1838 as
containing a forced view of things calculated to excite hopes not to be realized. This I have wished to avoid in all my correspondence. The letter was written in Mr. S’s peculiar style for which I do not feel responsible [Letter 74].” Marshall, in his Acquisition of Oregon (II:36), accused Whitman of “playing the baby act” by trying to shift the blame for the letter to Spalding.

This joint letter of April 1838 has long puzzled students of the Whitman-Spalding story. The request for 220 additional workers seems altogether unreasonable for such a limited field as that part of Old Oregon not then occupied by the Methodists. Hulbert, in his Overland to the Pacific series (VI:302), called it “the notorious joint epistle written by the latter (i.e., Spalding) but signed by Dr. Whitman for some reasons unknown.” In my Marcus Whitman, M.D. (p. 192), I advanced the theory that perhaps Whitman and Spalding, after learning of Lee’s ambitious plans for a large reenforcement, had become envious; not wishing to let the Methodists outdo them, they asked for a reenforcement of 220 for their field. In support of such a view, one could quote from Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 8, 1838: “I hope we may not be left unsupported while our Methodist brethren devise so liberal things…”

After reviewing the implications of Slacum’s visit to Oregon and Lee’s grandiose dreams of establishing a large American colony in the Willamette Valley in order to strengthen the claims of the United States for a large share of Old Oregon, we need no longer say that Whitman signed the joint letter for “some reasons unknown.” It is reasonable to believe that he, along with Spalding, had been persuaded to petition the American Board to act in unison with the Methodist Society in sending out a colony of settlers, who could be called missionaries, for political as well as religious purposes. If the two missionary boards would work together, the claims of the United States Government to Old Oregon would be immeasurably enhanced. Since Lee agreed to carry the joint letter of April 21 to Boston with the hope that he might have a personal visit with Greene, Spalding wrote: “Revd. Jason Lee of the Willamette mission, who is the bearer of this, should he visit Boston, can give you more information in relation to this subject, than we can by writing.” Here is the suggestion that both Spalding and Whitman felt it wise to refrain from writing about any political matters related to final settlement of the Oregon boundary. Lee was to supplement what had been written by a verbal report.
Neither Whitman nor Spalding added his name to the memorial Lee was carrying which had been signed by the Willamette Valley settlers on March 16, 1838, including all male members of the Methodist Mission. They may have felt that this was something which applied particularly to the residents of the Willamette Valley. Possibly they remembered the advice of Secretary Greene, given in his farewell instructions to them, not to become involved in secular or political affairs. After receiving the joint letter of April 21, Greene answered on October 17, 1838, saying in part: “It is not at all unlikely that a movement will be made by the Government of the United States for taking possession of the Oregon country, and establishing jurisdiction over it.” This indicates that Greene had read between the lines of the letter that Spalding and Whitman had signed and also, possibly, that he had talked with Lee. Greene was fearful that if the United States did establish its jurisdiction over a part of Old Oregon, there would be a rush of “speculators & adventurers, making it a theatre for all kinds of wickedness, leading to the corruption and oppression of the Indian tribes beyond anything that has yet been seen on our borders.” He strongly advised the two missionaries “from taking any political stand.”

**DID THE METHODISTS RECEIVE A GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY?**

There is evidence that when Jason Lee was at Waiilatpu and Lapwai, he fully expected to obtain a subsidy from the U.S. Government to help pay the cost of chartering a ship, and that the Methodist Missionary Society could be persuaded to recruit a colony of “missionaries.” On May 8, four days before Lee left Waiilatpu to continue his eastward journey, Whitman wrote to Greene: “It is expected by him that the Methodists will send a ship directly to the Columbia River.” Notice those words—“a ship!” Here was news unknown at the time to the Methodist Missionary Society. How could Lee have been so certain that he would be returning by ship unless this was part of the promise made to him by Slacum?

The Hudson’s Bay authorities at Fort Vancouver also heard rumors about Lee’s expected return to Oregon with a shipload of colonists and merchandise. James Douglas, who was serving as Chief Factor at the Fort during the absence of Dr. McLoughlin, in a letter to the headquarters
of the Company in London dated October 18, 1838, wrote: “I fear that the Methodists nourish secret views at variance with your interests. The Revd. Mr. Lee, their superintendent, returns this summer by the overland route to the United States to make arrangements for importing goods. A vessel is, therefore, expected in the course of next year freighted by the missionary society, solely or in part, with other adventurers who may be deceived by false hopes of gain.”

Here is the second reference to the probability of Lee returning with a company of “adventurers” in a ship. The date of the Douglas letter was several weeks before Jason Lee had an opportunity to meet with the Methodist Missionary Society and present his request for a large reinforcement and a ship. Douglas, sensitive to the exclusive trade privileges then being enjoyed by his Company, was more concerned with the threat of trade competition from the Methodists than with the effect that an enlarged American colony in Oregon might have on political issues.

Douglas also wrote: “It is difficult to anticipate their real intentions and perhaps unfair to question them, but I am naturally anxious about the designs of a body of men, who have the power of seriously injuring our business and whose conduct may justify suspicion. It is my opinion they will engage directly or indirectly in trade and their interference will be more detrimental to our interests than the efforts of the most active commercial body.” He made it clear that his suspicions were directed only against the Methodists and not against Whitman and Spalding. “My remarks,” he added, “apply solely to the Methodists and have no reference to the Calvinist missionaries, who voluntarily came forward and pledged themselves not to trade furs.”

Lee arrived in New York on October 31, having traveled from the frontier by way of Chicago, Detroit, and possibly Boston. One of the Indian boys, Thomas Adams, became ill and had to be left with a kindly family in Illinois. Lee, the second Indian boy, and the three McKay boys, were in Utica, New York, on October 28. Since Fairfield Medical College and its preparatory academy were located about twenty-five miles from Utica, we have reason to believe that Lee took William McKay there and saw that he was properly enrolled. Possibly, Lee then continued on to Wilbraham, Massachusetts, where he left the other two McKay boys. He was then near Boston and perhaps felt it advisable to deliver the letters he had been carrying from Whitman and Spalding to
Greene in person. If this assumption is correct, then Lee would have had an opportunity to explain why their missionaries had requested a reinforcement of 220 men and women for the Oregon Mission.

On March 21, 1839, Greene answered the Whitman–Spalding letter of April 21, 1838. “You are quite mistaken, Dear Brethren,” he wrote, “when you assert in your letter that the Board have only to make their wants known, and funds & men will be furnished without delay, and only a short experiment in the situation in which the Committee are placed would have led you to seriously modify the language which you use on this point. The Committee have no such control over the churches; or the men or the funds of the Christian community…” As gently and yet as firmly as possible, Greene said that the Board would do what it could to send additional workers but that the expectations expressed in their letter were “too high.”

**The Quick Response of the Methodist Society**

The promptness and generosity with which the Methodist Missionary Society responded to Lee’s request for a large reinforcement for Oregon and a ship would be inexplicable if considered apart from Lee’s political designs. Lee called on Dr. Nathan Bangs, Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Society, in New York as soon as possible after his arrival in the city. Bangs was so impressed with the urgency of Lee’s appeal that he called a special meeting of the Board of Managers of the Society for November 14. In a letter to Henry B. Brewer, who was a member of the Methodist reinforcement of 1839, Lee on November 21, 1838, wrote: “Mr. Slacum called on me and seemed very glad to see me.” Since Slacum was with Lee frequently during the following months, often appearing with him on public platforms when making appeals for men and money, it may not be idle speculation to suggest that he had been in touch with the Missionary Society before Lee arrived.

According to the minutes of the Board of Managers’ meeting for November 14, the proposal of chartering a ship to carry a large reinforcement to Oregon was discussed. At that meeting Lee asked for twenty-six men; if they were married, it would mean a reinforcement of fifty-two adults. A second special meeting of the Board was held on November 21, just a week later, and still a third on December 6. After
the November 21 meeting, Lee visited Washington, D.C., where he met several members of Congress including Senator Lewis F. Linn of Missouri and Representative Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts, both of whom were much interested in Oregon. Lee submitted his memorial to Cushing, who had it published, together with other documents, as *House Report, No. 101, 25th Congress, 3d Session*. Here is further evidence of Lee’s involvement in politics.

At the December 6 meeting, the Methodist Board made an initial appropriation of $35,000 which was later increased by another $5,000. This totaled more than one-third of the Society’s entire budget for one year. Such a relatively large appropriation stands out in sharp contrast to the $1,000 which the American Board had budgeted for its Oregon Mission for 1838. At its December meeting the Methodists authorized the appointment of a reinforcement of thirty-four adults. Never before had any mission board in the United States appropriated so much money and authorized the appointment of so many missionaries for a single mission as this action by the Board of Managers of the Methodist Missionary Society. The fact that the Board held three special meetings in the late fall of 1838 and that it granted practically all of Lee’s requests, indicates its recognition of the importance and urgency of Lee’s appeal.

The inevitable publicity given to the sending of such a large reinforcement to Oregon raised questions and aroused criticism. Some people asked why so many were being sent to this mission when there were so few Indians in Oregon? Others boldly asked if this were not a colonizing scheme disguised as a missionary enterprise?

Secretary Bangs published an answer to such criticisms in the April 29, 1839, issue of the *Christian Advocate*, in which he declared: “We have nothing to do with planting a colony in Oregon. Our business is to send the Gospel to those who may be there, either now or hereafter, whether native or otherwise.” Bang’s answer is ambiguous. Although denying that the Methodist Church was sponsoring a colonizing project, yet he admitted that the large company of missionaries to be sent to Oregon would be ministering to settlers who were already there or who might arrive later.
Arrangements were made with the P. J. Farnham Company of Boston early in 1839 for the chartering of the four hundred ton Lausanne, a three-masted sailing ship. The financial records of the Missionary Society show that the fare for each passenger over the age of fifteen for the nearly eightmonth voyage from New York to Oregon was $250.00, with a smaller sum for younger children. Freight was carried for $25.00 a ton. The Lausanne was gone for eighteen months before returning to her home port. The full amount paid to Farnham Company by the Missionary Society was $9,427.55, which seems a small sum for such a long voyage and for a ship with a crew of sixteen in addition to Captain Josiah Spaulding.34

Did the United States Government pay a subsidy directly to the shipping firm to supplement what was paid by the Methodist Missionary Society? The best evidence for the affirmative is the testimony of the Rev. Josiah L. Parrish, a member of the Lausanne party, who was interviewed by the historian, H. H. Bancroft, at Salem, Oregon, on July 15, 1878. Parrish testified: “I was told [later] but I knew nothing of it then... I understood after I had been to Oregon seven years [i.e., by 1847] that the Government paid Fry Farnham & Co. 50 dollars a head from the secret treasury... The Government had an eye to the settlement of the boundary question... I have no doubt that the reinforcement was the settlement of the [boundary] issue.”35

Bancroft, commenting on this testimony, stated: “Lee kept the secret, and so did those who gave him money, until the boundary question was settled between the United States and Great Britain.” After the boundary was fixed at the 49th parallel in 1846, secrecy was no longer necessary; Parrish learned of the subsidy the following year, 1847. According to his figures, the shipping company would have received only $2,500.00 which, when added to the sum known to have been paid by the Methodist Society, still seems much too low for a ship of that size for a voyage of eighteen months.

Another estimate as to the amount of the subsidy supposedly paid is found in the testimony of the Rev. Harvey Kimball Hines, a younger brother of the Rev. Gustavus Hines who was one of the passengers on the Lausanne. In 1889, in his Missionary History of the Pacific Northwest (p. 201), H. K. Hines wrote: “Such was the impression made by Mr. Lee upon the
Congress, the President and his cabinet... that the government out of the ‘secret service fund’ assisted in its outfit and expenses to the amount of $5,000.00.”

The references made by Parrish and Hines to a secret government fund recalls a similar statement found in one of Whitman’s letters. On his return journey to Oregon, after a trip to Washington, D.C., and Boston, Whitman wrote to his brother-in-law, Jonas Galusha Prentiss, on May 28, 1843: “You will be the best judge what can be done & how far you can exert yourself in this matter & whether the secret service fund can be obtained. It is now decided in my mind that Oregon will be occupied by American citizens.” Endeavors fail to find some record in government archives of such a fund at the time or of such a payment.  

**The Lausanne Reenforcement**

The *Lausanne* sailed from New York on October 10, 1839, with fifty or more members of the Methodist reenforcement for their Oregon Mission. Included were fourteen men, eighteen women, and at least eighteen children. We cannot be certain as to the exact number of children, as the contemporary records are vague. Also on board was Thomas Adams, the Indian boy, and a Presbyterian family—the Rev. and Mrs. S. Dibble and their children, appointees of the American Board, on their way to Honolulu. Among the passengers was Jason Lee’s second wife, the former Miss Lucy Thompson, whom he had married the previous July 28.

Only six of the fourteen men, including Jason Lee, were listed as ministers. This does not include two who had been ordained but subsequently had turned to secular pursuits. One of the ministers had an M.D. degree. Among the other eight men were a doctor, two farmers, three carpenters, a blacksmith, and a business manager. The last was George Abernethy who in 1845 would become the first Provisional Governor of Oregon. Four of the five single women were listed as teachers, the sixth was a stewardess. A layman, David Carter, joined the party at Honolulu on April 11, 1840. The *Lausanne* arrived at Fort Vancouver on June 1 where the missionaries were given a cordial welcome by Dr. McLoughlin. A new era in Old Oregon’s history began with the arrival of this large reenforcement.
REACTION OF THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY

Before Dr. McLoughlin left for England in the spring of 1838, he had encouraged retired servants of the Company to settle at Cowlitz Portage, where several thousand acres of land were available for cultivation. The site is near present-day Toledo, Washington. Since the Hudson’s Bay Company was hoping that the Columbia River would ultimately be the border, it was to its advantage to have as many British settlers, including French Canadians, living north of the river as possible. When Sir George Simpson, the top official of the Company in Canada, and Dr. McLoughlin met with the Governor and Committee of the Company in London during the fall of 1838 and the following winter, it was decided to form a corporation, to be known as the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, which would be separate from the Hudson’s Bay Company but with an interlocking directorate. The establishment of this Agricultural Company was designed to encourage the settlement of retired servants of the Hudson’s Bay Company and other British citizens at the Cowlitz Portage.

When Simpson was on his return journey, he happened to be in New York on October 1, 1839, a few days before the _Lausanne_ sailed. There he met Jason Lee and from him learned the size of the Methodist reinforcement. Lee also told him of the activities of the Oregon Provisional Emigration Society, which had been organized at Lynn, Massachusetts, on August 30, 1838, with the primary objective of promoting the emigration of Christian people to Oregon. Beginning in October 1838, the Society published a monthly magazine called _The Oregonian and Indian’s Advocate_. The editor repeatedly stressed the advantages of overland travel to the Oregon country as preferable to the long and dangerous sea voyage. The first issue told of Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding who, as “delicate females,” had successfully crossed the Rockies. The June 1839 issue carried an advertisement calling for “two hundred men with whatever families they may have,” to make the overland journey to Oregon. By the time the editor was preparing his July number, he had learned of the successful crossing of the Rockies by the four missionary wives who were part of the American Boards’ 1838 reinforcement for its Oregon Mission. The editor drove home his argument: if missionary women could cross the Rockies on horseback in safety and comfort, could not “a large company of families, who would move more slowly [and] be better provided... pass from Missouri to Oregon?”
Simpson’s reaction to all that he heard and observed in New York was immediate. He looked upon the Methodist reinforcement about to sail on the Lausanne as a thinly disguised colonization project. The advertised intentions of the Oregon Provisional Emigration Society were disturbing. Simpson at once notified his superiors in London as to these new developments. On December 31, 1839, the Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company wrote to Dr. McLoughlin: “Governor Simpson, on his way home from Canada this season, saw Mr. Lee, the American missionary at New York on the 1st Oct., who informed him he was then on the eve of sailing for the Columbia River, with about thirty other missionaries and their families, in a vessel called the Lausanne, especially chartered by the Missionary Society of Boston,\(^39\) for the purpose of conveying these people, but without any merchandise intended for trade with natives or others in that quarter.”\(^40\) Evidently Simpson had specifically inquired of Lee as to possible intentions of the Methodists to engage in trade.

The Governor’s letter to McLoughlin continues:

Mr. Lee further informed Mr. Simpson that a large party amounting to about 200 souls contemplated migrating from the State of Massachusetts next summer with the view of becoming settlers on the Wilhamet [Willamette] River. We doubt that so large a party will attempt this wild enterprise, but think it is possible many persons may be induced by the flattering reports given of the country to undertake the journey and although the influx of population may not be to the extent spoken of in public report, we are nevertheless apprehensive the settlement on the Wilhamet may be more rapid than desirable for the interests of the Fur Trade, especially so from the miscellaneous and restless character of the people who are likely to migrate thither.

Actually the plans of the Emigration Society to send a company of two hundred men with their families overland to Oregon in 1840 did not materialize, but the publicity that they gave to such a project may have contributed to the numbers who migrated in 1842 and following years. The possibility of a “miscellaneous and restless” people migrating to Oregon was alarming to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s officials in London. They shared Simpson’s fears that if such a migration were realized and if these people combined with an enlarged Methodist colony in
the Willamette Valley, the commercial privileges which the Company so long had enjoyed at Fort Vancouver would be imperiled. The Governor and Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London comforted themselves by looking upon any overland emigration of large numbers of people from the States to Oregon as a “wild enterprise,” most unlikely ever to be realized. These officials failed to realize that after 1836 the Rocky Mountains were no longer the barrier to overland travel they had once seemed.

In addition to the economic threat posed by the Methodist reinforcement of 1839, the Governor and Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company recognized a political challenge. The Governor in his letter of December 31, 1839, to Dr. McLoughlin touched on this when he wrote: “With regard to Mr. Lee and his missionary Brethren, however much they may profess friendship and good will towards us, and notwithstanding the high eulogiums upon us for hospitality and kind offices, it is quite evident that they have promoted the present mania for emigration to the Columbia, which is likely to prove so troublesome and injurious to us; that they are influenced by other objects of a political nature, besides the moral and religious instruction of the natives and that they are employed as pioneers for the overflowing population of the New England States, who have it in view to repay us for our good offices by possessing themselves of the fruits of our labors, as soon as they may be in a condition to wrest them from us by main strength.”

Whereas Douglas at Fort Vancouver had been concerned about the threat that Lee’s proposed reinforcement might offer to the Company’s fur trade, Simpson, with keener insight, saw the political implications in the enlargement of the American colony in the Willamette Valley. He communicated his anxiety to the Governor and Committee in Lendo who in turn warned Dr. McLoughlin. Steps had to be taken to offset the threatened American population superiority in Old Oregon. Fortunately for the Hudson’s Bay Company, the formation of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company had been authorized late in 1838. Here was a channel through which the Methodist threat could be checked, at least to some degree.

The Governor’s letter of December 31, 1839, to Dr. McLoughlin contains the following: “With the view that our Settlement on the Cowlitz may not become overawed by the presence of so large an as-
semblage of strangers and as a means of protection to the depot [i.e., Fort Vancouver] and trade, we have... directed Chief Factor Finlayson to encourage migration of Settlers from the Red River Colony to the Columbia River, and the facilitating such migration by making advances and affording passage to persons... who may feel disposed to proceed thither.” 41

Here is the background story of the migration of a colony of French Canadians, their Indian wives, and half-breed children which left Red River on June 1, 1841, for the Cowlitz Portage.
Chapter 12 Footnotes

1 Hunter Miller (ed.), Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States, Washington, D.C., 1931, p. 660. “Article III. It is agreed that any Country that may be claimed by either Party on the North West Coast of America, westward of the Stone Mountains shall . . . be free and open, for the term of ten Years from the date of the Signature of the present Convention . . .” This Treaty of Joint Occupancy was signed in London on October 20, 1818.

2 Bancroft, Oregon, I: 166; Brosnan, Jason Lee, p. 147.

3 Kenneth L. Holmes, Ewing Young, Master Trapper, Portland, Oregon, 1967, gives a fine biography of Young.


5 Dr. McLoughlin resented Kelley’s report and wrote: “He published a narrative of his voyage, in which, instead of being grateful for the kindness shown to him, he abused me, and falsely stated that I had been so alarmed with the dread that he would destroy the Hudson’s Bay Company’s trade that I kept a constant watch over him.” McLoughlin mss., 2 and 4, Coll. B.

6 Bancroft, Oregon, I:100.


9 Contemporary accounts of when the meeting was held to form the Cattle Company are confusing as to the exact date.

10 Brosnan, Jason Lee, p. 84.

11 Bancroft, Oregon, I:142.

12 HBC Arch., B/223/c.

13 See ante, fn. 8.

14 Brosnan, Jason Lee, p. 84. Edwards served for a time as treasurer of the Methodist Mission. He was one of the cattlemen who went to California in 1887.

15 Slacum’s Report, p. 17.

16 Barclay, History of Methodist Missions, IV:220 ff.

17 Brosnan, Jason Lee, 220 ff., gives the text of the memorial with the list of signers.


19 See Appendix 1 for listing of Whitman letters 42e & 46a, to Young.

20 Both Indian lads had flattened heads and their appearance in the States caused quite a sensation. William Brooks died on May 29, 1839, in Illinois. Thomas Adams returned with the Methodist reinforcement on the Lausanne which arrived at Fort Vancouver on June 1, 1840.

21 Italics are the author’s.

22 Hulbert, O.P., VI:305.
23 See Drury, *Spalding*, p. 203, for details regarding the financial situation of the American Board in 1837-38.

24 Temperatures in the Lapwai Valley sometimes rise to 1100 or more in summertime. The Walla Walla region is somewhat cooler, but even there 100∞ is not uncommon.


27 See Drury, *Whitman*, p. 193, where on the basis of this statement, credit was given to Whitman for filling out the list for supplies. Whitman may have made such a list which was then copied by Spalding, as the document in Coll. A. is in Spalding’s handwriting.


29 Italics are the author’s.

30 HBC Arch., B/223/b/20. Italics are the author’s.


32 Original in Coll. W.S.H.S.

33 See circular addressed to Spalding from the American Board, June 23, 1837, Coll. W.

34 These figures were secured by the author from a personal examination of the financial records of the Methodist Missionary Society in New York in the summer of 1966. The volume containing the records of receipts for the years involved in this study was missing. The records of the Bureau of Customs, Record Group 36, National Archives, Washington, D.C., provided information about the crew of the *Lausanne*.


36 The Secret Service, as now known, began at the time of the Civil War. Search was made for the existence of some other secret government fund which could have aided the Methodist project in the contemporary records of the Departments of State, Treasury, War, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


39 This letter was in error in saying that the headquarters of the Methodist Missionary Society was in Boston; it was in New York. The headquarters of the American Board was in Boston.

40 HBC Arch., B/223/c.

41 Italics are the author’s.
The third year of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was filled with many trials and difficulties for the Whitmans. The experiences of that year ran the gamut of human emotions, from great joy to poignant sorrow. This was a year of painful but necessary adjustments to an ever changing scene.

The summer of 1838 passed swiftly for Marcus and Narcissa. A multitude of demands in the field, in the home, among the Indians, and even from distant neighbors called for their time and attention. Writing to her father on September 28, Narcissa said: “We have had our house full of company most all summer.” The comment calls to mind the remark made by her mother when Narcissa was a young woman: “I wish Narcissa would not always have so much company.” The time came during the fall of 1838 and the following winter when Narcissa harbored the same wish.

While Spalding was at Waiilatpu with Lee during the latter part of April, he implored Whitman to go to Lapwai to help build a log cabin on the bank of the Clearwater. Spalding’s first cabin had been erected on Lapwai Creek about two miles from its mouth. For several reasons, this location had proved unsatisfactory. After listening to Spalding’s pleas, Whitman consented to go. A new log cabin was erected at the mouth
of Lapwai Creek, and thereafter Spalding referred to the place in his correspondence with the American Board as “Clearwater Mission.” Spalding’s associates in the Oregon Mission, however, continued to refer to it as Lapwai.\footnote{To avoid confusion, the author will hereafter refer to Spalding’s second location as Lapwai.} Narcissa was unhappy that her husband went to Lapwai to help Spalding erect his log cabin when they needed a new house so badly at Wailatpu. Writing to her sister, Mary Ann, on September 25, 1838, Narcissa said: “Mr. Spalding persuaded my husband to believe that he needed a house more than we did... He left here the first of June and was gone two weeks.” During this time Narcissa was alone at Wailatpu with the Compo family, possibly one or two Hawaiian single men, and the several half-breed children whom they had received into their home. This was the first of many times that Marcus was called away from Wailatpu, for business or professional reasons. Usually Narcissa had some reliable person or persons to stay with her, but there were times when she was left alone with no adults except, perhaps, one or two Hawaiians.

During the last week of June, after Whitman had returned from Lapwai, Mr. and Mrs. Archibald McDonald, with four children all under eight years of age, called and spent a week with the Whitmans. McDonald, a Presbyterian, was in charge of Fort Colville from 1836 to 1843, and was friendly with the American Board missionaries, especially those of the 1838 reenforcement who settled at Tshimakian about seventy miles south of Colville. Mrs. McDonald, a half-breed, had been a student in the Red River Mission school and had a good command of English.\footnote{She had sent a gift of twelve pickled buffalo tongues to Narcissa in January 1838; these were considered a rare delicacy.} Narcissa made two visits to Fort Walla Walla during the summer of 1838, being called there by the illness of Mrs. Pambrun. No doubt she felt a special obligation to go, as Mrs. Pambrun had come to Wailatpu at the time Alice Clarissa was born. During the first part of August, Dr. Whitman was called to the Methodist Mission at The Dalles, 140 miles distant, to see Mrs. H. K. W. Perkins, who was critically ill. This marked the beginning of the friendship of the Perkins couple with the Whitmans. During Whitman’s absence from Wailatpu, Sarah Hull, the Indian girl who had lived with the Whitmans for more than a year, died...
on August 11. “If ever I felt the presence of my husband necessary to sustain me,” wrote Narcissa, “it was while passing through such a scene” [Letter 52]. During the latter part of August, the Rev. Daniel Lee, a nephew of Jason, called on the Whitmans.

**First Mail from Home**

On July 11, 1838, when Narcissa was with Mrs. Pambrun at Fort Walla Walla, the westward bound Hudson’s Bay express arrived from Canada with letters for herself and her husband. For the first time since they had been married, twenty-seven months earlier, with the single exception of a letter received at Westport, Marcus and Narcissa got letters from home. “You know not with what feelings of inexpressible joy,” wrote Narcissa to her sister Jane, “I received your letters dated January and August 1837.” It is hard to understand why their loved ones did not write more often. Possibly, they were not sure as to how to address their letters and waited until they had first heard from Oregon. In a letter to her sister Mary Ann, dated September 25, 1838, Narcissa wrote: “You must recollect that three years must elapse from the time of your writing to receiving the answer, if sent by way of the Islands. You cannot be more anxious to hear from me than I am to hear from you.” In this same letter, Narcissa expressed the hope that: “When the contemplated railroad over the Isthmus of Darien [i.e., Panama] shall be opened, which is expected within two or three years, communication will be more frequent.” The proposed railroad across the Isthmus, however, was not opened until January 1855. If a letter were answered promptly, it usually took two years for a reply to be received; sometimes, as Narcissa indicated, it took three years. This means that Old Oregon was as remote in that day as the planet Mars is in this generation of space travel, if the prognostications of astroscientists are correct.

**Financial Matters**

As has been stated, the cost to the American Board of establishing its Oregon Mission amounted to about $6,000.00.³ To this sum should be added the expenses incurred by Parker, Dunbar, and Allis who went out in 1834 to the Missouri frontier; the traveling expenses of Whitman and Parker in 1835; and Parker’s expenses for 1836–37.⁴ On March 27, 1838, Whitman made out his financial report covering the
period after March 18, 1837. He acknowledged receipt of two boxes of goods, shipped from Boston on January 18, 1837, which contained bedding, books, paper, and other supplies. The letters of the missionaries contain occasional references to the arrival of “missionary barrels.” These usually contained a miscellaneous assortment of items which were divided according to the needs of individual members of the mission, unless otherwise directed. The books in the boxes Whitman mentioned formed the nucleus of the mission library of which Spalding became librarian.\(^5\)

Purchases from the Hudson’s Bay Company were figured in English money. As has been stated, Greene informed Whitman that the Board had to pay $540.00 for every £100. Whitman, in his report of March 27, 1838, summarized his personal expenditures of £63-14-2\(^{\frac{1}{2}}\) as follows:\(^6\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Supplies, Clothing \& Indian goods to pay for} & \quad \text{£29-1-1} \\
\text{Provisions \&c, \&c, Transportation} & \quad \text{£29-1-1} \\
\text{Farming Utensils \& Building Materials} & \quad \text{£11-5-9} \\
\text{Clothing \&c for a Boy living with me} & \quad \text{£3-14-1} \\
\text{Bill at Walla Walla for last years} & \quad \text{£11-5-9} \\
\text{Seeds \& provisions \&c} & \quad \text{£5-8-9} \\
\text{Flour \& Seeds \& Hogs} & \quad \text{£10-3-6} \\
\text{One Half of Mr. Grays expenses in the} & \quad \text{£4-1-\(\frac{1}{2}\)} \\
\text{Flat Head country \& at Rendezvous} & \quad \text{£10-3-6}
\end{align*}
\]

From this total, Whitman subtracted £9-19-4\(^{\frac{1}{2}}\) which was his share of a cash contribution made by the “Society of Honolulu” to the Oregon Mission. Spalding received a like amount. Whitman also reported: “The avails of the sale of salt contributed by the King and his sisters at Oahu (one half), the other being reported by Mr. Spalding £17-5-10.” This indicates that King Kamehameha III and his royal sisters were among the contributors for the evangelization of the Oregon Indians. After subtracting these two cash gifts from Hawaii, Whitman found it necessary to draw upon the Board for £130-15-11 to meet his and Spalding’s expenses for the year.

To this statement, Whitman added another charge of £58-3-10 to pay wages due the two Hawaiians who had worked for him from September 21, 1836, to June 1, 1838, at £17-0-0 each per annum, and £0-12-0 due some Indians for such services as carrying letters. When we total
Whitman’s various expense accounts, we find that up to March 28, 1838, he had drawn upon the Board for £336-18-½. Thus the total cost of the Waiilatpu station was somewhat more than $1,800.00 for its first two years. This included cost of some building materials, wages for laborers, food supplies, Indian goods for trading, tools, some livestock as hogs, and transportation. Neither Whitman nor Spalding received a salary. Considering the fact that prices at Fort Vancouver were double what they were in the States and the high rate of exchange, we can conclude that the total cost to the Board of this station for two years was indeed very modest.

**Letters from Secretary Greene**

Not all of the letters that the Whitmans received on that memorable July 11, 1838, brought joy. Discouraging word came from Secretary Greene regarding an increasing debt which the American Board was carrying. In 1836, the Board received $176,232.15 but spent $210,407.54. The accumulated deficit then amounted to $38,866.57. This increased by another $2,500.00 in 1837, due in part to a minor financial depression felt in the States. The American Board found it necessary to cut expenses in order to balance the budget and on June 23, 1837, prepared a statement which was sent out to all of its missionaries. One of these circulars addressed to “Rev. H. H. Spalding & Associates” evidently arrived in the packet of letters received on July 11th.⁷

Three letters from Greene also arrived, dated July 6, August 2, and November 4, 1837.⁸ Conservative as the expenses of the 1836 mission party had been, they brought dismay to the secretaries of the Board. In a handwritten postscript to the June 23 circular, Greene said: “…no more than one thousand dollars annually can be granted to your mission until you hear further from the Committee... You must permit me here to say that the expenses of your mission hitherto have much exceeded our anticipation... I write also a remark of Mr. Parker, which he made on being informed of the expenses of your outfit and journey, without expressing my opinion respecting its correctness: He remarked that he would pledge himself to outfit a mission of equal numbers, take them across the country, and sustain them in their work three years for the same amount, i.e., about $7,000. We were greatly surprised at your draft of £371 received by Mr. Hill⁹ yesterday. It is quite impossible for us to go on meeting such drafts in present circumstances.”
Greene urged Whitman to exercise extreme economy. “Your expenses as they stand in your accounts received,” he wrote on August 3, “are much greater than anticipated, much beyond what can be allowed to the Mission in future years.” What would Greene have written had he known that additional drafts totaling some $1,600.00 were then on their way from Oregon? And what did Whitman and Spalding say to each other when they read the circular of June 1837 and remembered their request of April 1838 for 220 additional workers?

Spalding wrote a long letter to Greene on September 10 in which he vigorously defended the expenditures that he and Whitman had made in order to make their stations self-supporting as soon as possible. The initial expenses were large, he admitted, but these included the costs of livestock, plows, mill machinery, tools, etc. He ventured to assert that he and Whitman could make their stations self-supporting within ten years.

Parker’s boast that he could take a mission party of the same number across the country at a cost far below that spent by Whitman and Spalding irritated both men. In answer to that claim, Spalding passed on to Greene some reports of the unfavorable impression that Parker had made on the Hudson’s Bay Company’s officials. Whitman, in accordance with his milder disposition, did not reply as quickly to Parker’s criticisms as Spalding. Writing to Greene on October 30, Whitman said: “I think Brother Spalding & myself will find no difficulty in getting on with $1000 between us & taking that as a guide, the other Brethren [i.e., the members of the 1838 reinforcement] intend to govern themselves by it & not exceed $500 apiece [i.e., per family].” It was not until May 1839 that an incident occurred which moved Whitman to write to Greene to answer Parker’s criticisms.

Before receiving the discouraging letters from Greene, Whitman and Spalding had sent a party of six Nez Perces with extra horses and provisions to Fort Hall to meet any possible reinforcement that Gray might be bringing back with him to Oregon. The letters from Greene received in July, however, caused such hopes to fade away. Writing to her sister, Jane, on September 18, after the arrival of the reinforcement, Narcissa explained: “Letters received from Mr. Greene caused our hearts to sink, and we gave up all hopes of a reinforcement very soon joining us.” The Whitmans and Spaldings even doubted that Gray himself would be able to return.
Even before Dr. Whitman had been called to The Dalles to see Mrs. Perkins in her illness, the Whitmans and the Methodist missionaries stationed there had agreed through correspondence to “set aside Tues. eve of each week to pray for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon all the missions in Oregon.” On Tuesday evening, July 24, a prayer meeting was held in the Whitman home with Compo and Mungo present. What Narcissa described as “a melting season” was experienced when Compo gave evidence of conversion [Letter 54]. Since the natives at Waiilatpu were then showing an increased interest in Christianity, the Whitmans decided that the time was ripe for a series of evangelistic or “protracted” meetings. Whitman, therefore, wrote to Spalding and urged him “to come & labour with us, & to organize a church, &c im-mediately.” Perhaps also there was a lingering hope that Gray might return during the latter part of August with some associates. In that case, it would be well if the Spaldings were present.

The invitation met with a cordial response from the Spaldings. Although Spalding had made several trips away from Lapwai after they had settled there in the latter part of November 1836, and had been to Waiilatpu with Lee the previous May, his wife had never been away during that period of nearly two years. One problem was the safety of their little flock of eight sheep. Spalding decided that he could leave the premises in care of the Hawaiian, Jack, who had arrived the previous June to help him, but hesitated to give Jack the responsibility of caring for the precious sheep. He finally decided that he would have to take the sheep with them, all the way, 120 miles to Waiilatpu and back. With their eight-month old daughter, the Spaldings left Lapwai with some American milk cows and the sheep on Wednesday, August 8th. The sheep had to be ferried across the Snake River in canoes where Lewiston, Idaho, is now located, and perhaps across some of the smaller rivers such as the Tucannon. The Spaldings spent at least five days in making the journey, arriving at Waiilatpu on or before Monday, August 13th. It was about this time that Whitman returned from The Dalles.

Spalding began his meetings with the Indians on Tuesday, the 14th, and continued them through the following Sunday. By this time he had a sufficient command of the Nez Perce tongue so that the natives could understand him. Possibly Compo, who was present for these meetings,
assisted as an interpreter. On Saturday, August 18, 1838, the Whitmans and the Spaldings met in the Whitman home and organized “The First Presbyterian Church in the Oregon Territory.”

Actually, this was also the first Protestant church to be established on the whole Pacific Slope of what is now the United States, being prior to any similar organization formed by the Methodists in the Willamette Valley. Spalding, acting as clerk for the church, began a record book in which he noted: “H. H. Spalding was elected Pastor & Doct. Marcus Whitman Ruling Elder. Resolved that this church be governed on the Congregational plan, but attached to Bath Presbytery, N.Y.”

Although Marcus Whitman carried with him his letter of transfer from the Presbyterian Church at Wheeler, and Narcissa had a similar letter from her church in Angelica, Spalding made no reference to either of these documents when writing the report of the organization of the church. He did mention the fact that Joseph and Maria Maki brought letters of transfer from the mission church in Honolulu and on this evidence, they too became charter members of the First Presbyterian Church in the Oregon Territory.

“On the same day, viz 18 Aug.,” wrote Spalding in the record book, “Charles Compo, formerly a Catholic, baptized by that church, declaring his disbelief in that faith & expressing a wish to unite with us, was examined & giving satisfactory evidence of being lately born into the Kingdom of Christ, was propounded for admission into the Church at some future time. Mr. Pambrun of Fort Walla Walla, a Catholic present, advised Compo to consider the matter before he left his own religion to join another.” On the following day, a Sunday, Compo still declared his desire to join the church. Both Whitman and Spalding felt that first he should be married to the Nez Perce woman with whom he was living and who was the mother of his little boy. Compo willingly consented, and Spalding read the marriage service. He was then, as Spalding noted, “baptized & admitted to our little flock as the first fruit of our missionary labor in this country.” Actually, having been baptized by a Catholic priest, there was no need for him to be rebaptized, as most Protestant churches, including the Presbyterian, recognize the validity of Catholic baptism. Spalding, evidently, was not informed on this subject. The little Compo boy, who was “about eighteen months old,” was then baptized and given the name John. There is no record that Mrs. Compo joined the church.
On that same Sunday, the seven charter members of the First Presbyterian Church in the Oregon Territory partook of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The Rev. Daniel Lee was still at Waiilatpu and joined them at the table. The infant pioneer church had an ecumenical cast with four Presbyterians, two Congregationalists, and an ex-Roman Catholic banned together in a hybrid Presbyterian-Congregational form of government. The church was not only interdenominational, it was also interracial and international; four had come from New York State, two from Hawaii, and one from French-speaking Canada. Although Pambrun was present at the time the Lord’s Supper was served, he was not invited to partake, as he was a Roman Catholic.  

The Reinforcement of 1838

On Saturday evening, August 18, the very day the First Church of Oregon was organized, an Indian messenger arrived with the exciting news that Gray and his bride were only a couple of days ride away from Waiilatpu. Following them was the American Board’s reinforcement for its Oregon Mission consisting of three newly-wedded couples and a single man. With characteristic impulsiveness, Gray with his bride had left the other members of the party at Fort Boise on Wednesday, August 15, and by forced marches had pushed on ahead. They arrived at Waiilatpu on the following Tuesday evening, the 21st [Letter 50a].

Spalding was eager to return to Lapwai, as he was concerned about the safety of the premises there during his long absence. He had planned to start back on Monday, but now he felt it necessary to stay and greet the new arrivals. There would have to be a mission meeting. Many important decisions would have to be made. Should one or more new stations be opened? Where would nine extra people live during the coming winter? What new policies of missionary methods should be adopted? Whitman, appreciating the urgency of the situation which Spalding was facing, addressed a letter to “Revs. Walker, Eells & Smith” on August 22, in which he urged them to make all possible speed.” Don’t delay on account of the animals,” he wrote, “but press on and if any are too weak to come, leave them with some of the Kayuses whom you will be likely to see… Do not fail to be here by Sabbath” [Letter 50a].

In this letter, Whitman quoted one of his favorite verses from the Bible. Referring to the joy that he, his wife, and the Spaldings experienced
when the Grays arrived, Whitman wrote: “We felt like Paul when he met the brethren from Rome, ‘We thanked God and took courage’.” This was the same verse that Whitman had quoted in a letter to Narcissa’s parents when he described the joy the mission party experienced when, after they had been in danger of missing the Fur Company’s caravan, they finally caught up with it at Loup Fork on May 24, 1836 [Letter 24]. In each time of crisis, Whitman felt that they had been “signally blessed” of God. With the return of Gray and the addition of eight more workers, the outlook for the Oregon Mission was indeed bright.

While waiting for the reenforcement to arrive, the Whitmans and the Spaldings plied Gray with questions. Why did Ellis and two of the other Nez Perces return with their horses from the 1837 Rendezvous instead of accompanying Gray to the Missouri frontier? What about the outcome of his venture to drive a band of horses to the States where they would be sold and the money used to buy cattle? Gray told his story. He had started east from the 1837 Rendezvous on July 25 with a small band of horses, probably not more than fourteen, with six Indians including one Nez Perce, The Hat, in advance of the Fur Company’s eastbound caravan. Later Whitman and Spalding learned that Jim Bridger and other mountain men had warned Gray that he was courting disaster by venturing to go through hostile Sioux country with so few in his party, but Gray refused to listen.  

Disaster overtook Gray on August 7 near Ash Hollow in what is now western Nebraska, when he and his party were attacked by Sioux Indians. All six of the Indians with Gray were killed, his horses stolen, and Gray narrowly escaped death when two bullets pierced his hat leaving a scalp wound. Through the intercession of a French trader who happened to be with the Sioux at the time, Gray’s life was spared, and he was permitted to continue his journey. Gray was later accused by the Flathead Indians and the mountain men of cowardice and of abandoning his companions in order to save his own life.

Gray confessed that Secretary Greene was greatly displeased when he learned of his unauthorized return. He told the Whitmans and the Spaldings that he had spent part of the winter of 1837–38 as a student at the Medical College at Fairfield, New York. He also reported that the Board’s financial situation had so improved by the spring of 1838 that it felt able to authorize Gray to return to Oregon with a reenforcement.
PERSONNEL OF THE 1838 REENFORCEMENT

As soon as he was able after his return to the States, Gray called on the young lady to whom he was engaged. According to one report, his fiancée’s mother noticed the four bullet holes in his hat and made inquiry as to the cause. Gray told them of the Sioux attack at Ash Hollow and how he had barely escaped with his life, whereupon the mother immediately declared that she could not allow her daughter “to venture upon such a dangerous journey as a trip to the Columbia Valley would be.” So the engagement was abruptly terminated.

Early in February 1838, a few weeks before Gray planned to leave for Oregon, he called on Samuel Parker at Ithaca, New York. Since Gray at that time had no prospects of marriage, Parker told him about a young lady in the Dutch Reformed Church of that city, Miss Mary Augusta Dix, 1810–1881, who would make an ideal wife for him. According to a family tradition, William and Mary first met at a church social held in Ithaca on Wednesday evening, February 14. Having already been told much about Mary by Parker, and perhaps by others, William proposed marriage that evening. This was too sudden for Mary who asked for time to think it over. By this time Gray was as anxious to be married and on his way to Oregon as Whitman had been two years earlier. Mary gave her consent on February 20, and they were married on Sunday evening, the 25th. The next day they left for Oregon. For the second time, Parker had played the role of a matchmaker for a couple who were to become members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board.

It so happened that the Board had appointed two clergymen, the Rev. Elkanah Walker, 1805–1877, and the Rev. Cushing Eells, 1810–1893, as missionaries to the Zulus in Africa, but because of a tribal war they were unable to go to that field. Learning that they were willing to have their destination changed to Oregon, the Board authorized them to go with Gray on his return journey. Walker and Eells were married on the same day, March 5, 1838, on the eve of their departure for Oregon; Walker to Miss Mary Richardson, 1811–1897, at Baldwin, Maine, and Eells to Miss Myra Fairbanks, 1805–1878, at Holden, Massachusetts. The two couples met for the first time on Saturday, March 17, when a farewell service was held for them in New York City. They were joined on the following Monday by the Rev. Asa Bowen Smith, 1809–1886, and his bride, née Sarah Gilbert White, 1813–1855.
ASA BOWEN SMITH

Since the Rev. Asa B. Smith was to become such a troublemaker in the Oregon Mission, special attention should be paid to his background. He and Sarah had become engaged in the fall of 1836 about the time that Asa received an appointment from the American Board with the expectation of being sent to Siam. By advice of the Board, the two postponed their marriage until the way was clear for them to leave for their assigned field. There were many delays including the effects of the financial depression of 1837. Harassed by financial problems, frustrated over the repeated postponement of his departure date for Siam, and eager to be married, Asa was ready to go anywhere if the Board would only give its approval. Psychologically, he was conditioned to make a quick and impulsive decision.

As a faithful reader of the Missionary Herald, Asa knew of the establishment of the Oregon Mission in 1836. He had read the lengthy and enthusiastic reports taken from Spalding’s letters which appeared in several issues of the Herald beginning with July 1837. The October number carried about six thousand words from a letter Spalding had written to Greene on September 20, 1836, and the December issue devoted five pages to extracts from Spalding’s letter of February 17, 1837. These letters overflowed with optimism regarding the enthusiastic reception given the missionaries by the natives and the cordial attitude of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Spalding was eloquent with both tongue and pen and in these letters his tendency to exaggerate found full expression. To judge by these reports, the whole Nez Perce nation was on the verge of accepting Christianity. Asa Smith found the letters exciting. He decided that Oregon was the field in which he would like to serve.

Smith, despairing that the Board would ever send him to Siam, addressed an inquiry to Greene during the first part of January 1838 about the possibility of going to Oregon. Greene replied on January 15 stating that the Board had authorized the sending of only two ordained men to that field with Gray. Smith waited for about six weeks. He then went to Boston in early March to have a personal interview with Greene. Again he urged the Board to appoint him. He was told that it was rather late for him to join the reinforcement as the Grays were already on their way to the Missouri frontier, and the Walkers and the Eellses were to be in New York for a farewell service on March 18. Smith showed such eagerness to
be included that he was told he would be appointed if he could get married and be in New York by the 18th.

The evident need for quick decisions was breathtaking. Asa was back in Sarah’s home at West Brookfield, Massachusetts, by March 10. He found Sarah much interested, but she wanted a few days to think about this sudden development. Two days later, Asa wrote again to the Board saying that they had decided to go, and asking for final confirmation of their appointment. Greene’s letter confirming their selection arrived on the 14th. Asa and Sarah were married the next day and left at once for New York City. Not wishing to travel on Sunday, even when faced with an emergency, they stayed over in New Haven and continued their journey to New York on Monday, the 19th. They were one day too late for the farewell service, but were in time to join the other two couples when they started for Westport the next day.

It is interesting to note that the three men who became focal points of dissension and controversy within the Oregon Mission—Spalding, Gray, and Smith—each made a spur-of-the-moment decision. Spalding and his wife had been on their way to the Osage Mission when Whitman caught up with them at Howard, New York, and persuaded them to accept a change of destination. Gray had not asked for an appointment until February 17, 1836, and by the time he was notified that he could go, had settled his affairs, and made preparations for the journey, the Spaldings and the Whitmans were some twelve days in advance of him. Perhaps no couple went through such a period of turmoil when such life-shaping decisions had to be made in so short a time as the Smiths. Yet this was not of the Board’s choosing, but rather due to the impulsiveness and impatience of Smith. He was so eager to be appointed to some mission field so that he could get married and enter upon his life’s chosen work that he was incapable of a balanced judgment.

**Cornelius Rogers**

The seventh and last member of the 1838 mission party was Cornelius Rogers who likewise made a sudden decision to be a missionary in Old Oregon. When the three couples were in Cincinnati, March 29–April 4, they met Rogers who was then twenty-two years old and unmarried. He was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church of which Dr. Lyman Beecher was pastor. Not waiting for any official appointment...
from the American Board, Rogers decided to join the reenforcement on a volunteer basis. Even after his arrival in Oregon, Rogers remained on an unofficial basis for about two and a half years, or until he left for the Willamette Valley in May 1841. He was a likeable, well-mannered young man who caused no trouble within the mission. Including Rogers, the personnel of the American Board’s Oregon Mission grew to thirteen. It was never any larger. Of this number the Whitmans, the Spaldings, the Grays, and Rogers were Presbyterians; the other three couples were Congregationalists.

“A Strange Company of Missionaries”

The three couples and Rogers arrived at Liberty, Missouri, on April 15 where they met the Grays for the first time. The united party had about a week at Liberty to complete their arrangements for the long trek to Wailatpu. They left on April 23 and joined the American Fur Company’s caravan on the 28th. Their livestock included twenty-five horses and mules, and nine head of cattle including two milk cows. They took a light wagon with them as far as Fort Laramie where it was abandoned. In general the members of the 1838 reenforcement endured all of the hardships and privations experienced by those of the Whitman-Spalding party two years earlier. The four women rode side-saddle as Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding had done.

The four-month close association on the Oregon Trail, beginning at Liberty and continuing across the plains, the mountains, and the desert to Oregon, was a most trying experience for all members of the reenforcement. The physical hardships inseparable from their mode of travel, combined with serious clashes of personalities, created deep animosities which later disrupted the life of the Oregon Mission. As will be told, the Whitmans and the Spaldings were unavoidably drawn into the unhappy dissensions which began while the mission party was still at Liberty Missouri.

Since Gray had been to Oregon and back and since he was the one who was largely responsible for the American Board’s decision to send a reenforcement that year to Oregon, it was logical that he should have considered himself to be in charge. The responsibility inflated his ego. An evidence of this is found in the fact that soon after the arrival of the three couples and Rogers at Westport, Gray informed them that he was
to be called “Dr. Gray.” This claim to the title of Doctor was based on the fact that he had attended medical lectures for a few weeks at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Fairfield, New York, during the winter of 1837–38; however, he had not taken enough work to be licensed to practice medicine. Mary Walker, in her very personal and revealing diary, made several references to him as “Doctor Gray.” Shortly after the reenforcement arrived at Waiilatpu and Whitman learned of this, he quickly eliminated the use of the title.

Gray had been listed in the Annual Reports of the American Board for 1836, 1837, and 1838 as a mechanic. The 1839 Report, however, listed him as “Doctor Gray,” no doubt at his request. Whitman was irritated when this came to his attention. On October 22, 1839, he wrote to Greene: “I cannot conceive how you have been so much imposed upon to report him a Physician. What can a man learn in sixteen weeks of public lectures (which is barely all he can boast) to entitle him to that distinction?” The Board thereafter listed Gray as “Mechanic and Teacher.”

Much of the trouble which Gray had with his associates arose out of the fact that he was too parsimonious in the purchase of supplies and in the hiring of assistants. In his eagerness to induce the Board to send out a reenforcement in 1838, Gray claimed that he could take a party of ten through to Old Oregon for $3,000.00. Having committed himself to a policy of strict economy, Gray felt obliged to maintain it even though this meant privations and extra work for his associates. For instance, the mission party of 1836 had had two hired men and three Nez Perces to assist with the animals and with packing and unpacking. Gray, with a party almost twice the size, hired only two men. This meant that the five men of the 1838 reenforcement, three of whom were clergymen, had to endure much physical labor in addition to taking their turns with the men of the caravan standing guard at night. Smith, in a letter to Greene dated April 29, 1839, complained: “I have not indeed worked my passage on board a vessel to a foreign port, but I can say in truth, I worked my passage across the Rocky Mountains.”

Although Smith had been assured by Greene that he and his bride would have the sole use of a small tent while crossing the country, such was not the case. Gray, remembering how the five members of the 1836 party shared their one tent, refused to buy enough canvass at Westport to make four small tents, to give one to each newly wedded
couple. Instead only two tents were made, each measuring 8 x 10 feet. This permitted each couple to have a bed four feet wide, seven feet long, and with three feet at one end for storage space. A sheet was hung in the center to separate the two beds. The Smiths shared their tent with the Walkers, and the Grays and the Eellses were together. The Smiths and the Walkers especially found the arrangement very unsatisfactory. Smith complained about it in one of his letters to Greene, and Mary Walker made mention of it in her diary. Both Cushing and Myra Eells were of the uncomplaining kind; they made no mention of the inconvenience; nor, of course, did the Grays.

On April 27, only four days after the mission party started on their overland journey, Mary wrote in the privacy of her diary: “Some of the company feel disposed to murmur against Moses [i.e., Gray].” Undoubtedly the complainant was Smith. The 1838 party had been gone from the frontier less than two weeks when Smith wished he had never started, but there was no turning back then. Mary Walker penned another caustic sentiment on May 6: “Some of our company expressed regret that they have undertaken the journey. I suspect more from aversion to the toil than real dread of sin.” By May 27, personnel animosities were so sharp that Mary wrote: “We have a strange company of Missionaries. Scarcely one who is not intolerable on some account.”

The Rendezvous of 1838 was held at the junction of the Popo Agie and Wind Rivers on the east side of the Continental Divide, near present-day Riverton, Wyoming. While there, Smith on July 10 unburdened himself in a letter to Greene: “What I am now to write I whisper in your ear, but would not say it to the world. We have not found Mr. Gray such a man as we hoped to find. I presume you are already aware, & I should judge so from the letters he read from you at Independence, that he is not judicious in all his movements. He is rash & inconsiderate & not at all calculated properly to fill the station he now does. He has assumed a great deal of authority over us, & talked to us in a very harsh & unbecoming, & I may say abusive, manner, regardless of the feelings of others, even of the ladies. This has often rendered our situation very unpleasant.”

At the Rendezvous the mission party met Jason Lee who showed Gray the joint letter of Whitman and Spalding of April 21, 1838, in which they had asked for 220 additional missionaries. Even Gray was surprised at the magnitude of the request. Writing to Greene on July 10
from the Rendezvous, Gray said that he thought Whitman and Spalding “were somewhat premature in forwarding it, at least till they had heard something farther from yourself or from Me.”

On Thursday, July 12, the mission party took leave of the caravan of the American Fur Company and joined a party of about twenty men of the Hudson’s Bay Company under the command of Francis Ermatinger who was to escort them to Fort Hall. The missionaries rode through South Pass on July 15, thus bringing the number of white women who rode horseback over the Rockies to six. This fact, when made known through the public press in the States, further increased interest in the possibilities of emigration to Old Oregon.

Upon their arrival at Fort Hall on July 17, the missionaries were heartened to find a party of six Nez Perces with horses and provisions waiting there for them. This was an indication that Whitman and Spalding were expecting Gray to return that year with a reinforcement. By this time the members of the reinforcement were discussing various possibilities for their future locations. In a letter to her parents, Mary Walker wrote: “Mr. Walker is expecting to settle with Dr. Whitman. Dr. Gray [sic] among the Flatheads, Mr. Smith & Eells, I know not where, but unless some one should like Mr. S. better than at present, he will have to settle alone. He is as successful in gaining universal ill will as Mr. Walker good.” Here is evidence that by this time Gray was dreaming of establishing a separate station and that neither of the other two couples was willing to live with the Smiths.

This was the “strange company of missionaries,” as Mary Walker described the reinforcement, which the Whitmans and the Spaldings were waiting to welcome with such high expectations. For two years, these two couples had worked together in harmony, but with the arrival of the 1838 reinforcement, things were to be different. Of course, when the Grays arrived at Waiilatpu on August 21, they probably said little or nothing about the personality clashes which had been engendered along the way. For a short time the Whitmans and the Spaldings were overjoyed with the prospects of an enlarged mission. They soon became disillusioned as they were made aware of the personality conflicts which existed within the reinforcement.
INTRODUCING CAPTAIN JOHN A. SUTTER

John A. Sutter of Switzerland, who was on his way to California, traveled with the Fur Company’s caravan to the Rendezvous, and then with the mission party after it left that place. Mary Walker mentioned him several times in her diary. Eager for the members of the mission party to arrive at Waiilatpu as soon as possible, Whitman sent a second note to them on August 28, urging them to press forward with all possible speed [Letter 50b]. He sent fresh horses and suggested that the Indians follow with the packs. Having been informed by Gray that Captain Sutter was with the party, Whitman wrote: “Please give our compliments to Capt. Sutur & invite him to come on with you & let his packs come slowly with yours.”

In a letter dated from Fort Vancouver on October 18, 1838, Douglas informed the officials of his Company in London that: “A party of Calvinist missionaries and Captain Sutter, a Swiss gentleman, with a suite of 8 men travelled with our people from rendezvous to Fort Hall; from whence they took the lead to the Columbia.” According to Douglas, Sutter “draws his title from a commission formerly held in the French Army, and has no connection whatever with the United States Government.”

On Saturday, August 25, as the missionaries were crossing the Blue Mountains, a baby girl was born to the Nez Perce wife of James Conner, a mountain man who had been hired by Gray at the Rendezvous to assist in the packing. According to an entry in Mary’s diary for that day, the Indian woman was able to resume riding within a few hours after giving birth. On August 27, Rogers was thrown from his horse and received an injury which further delayed the travelers. The Smiths volunteered to stay with him while the Walkers and the Eellses with the Sutter party pushed on ahead.

On Wednesday, the 29th, the two couples with Sutter rode thirty miles in seven hours and arrived at Waiilatpu at 2:00 p.m. They were warmly greeted by the Whitmans and the Spaldings. The Grays were absent because they had gone to Fort Walla Walla. Mary wrote in her diary: “We were feasted on melons, pumpkin pies & milk. Capt. Sutor was with us. Just as we were sitting down to eat melons, the house became thronged with Indians & we were obliged to suspend eating & shake hands with some 30, 40, or 50 of them. Towards night we partook of
a fine dinner of vegetables, salt salmon, bread, butter, cream &c. Thus our long toilsome journey at length came to a close.”

The next day the Smiths, Rogers, and the Conners arrived with the baggage. Also on that day, the Grays returned from Fort Walla Walla. Thus, for the first and only time in the history of the Oregon Mission, all thirteen members were together. Just when Captain Sutter left for Fort Vancouver is not known, evidently shortly after his arrival at Waiilatpu. Before saying goodbye to his missionary friends, he gave his leatherbound French-English and English-French pocket dictionary to the Walkers. On the flyleaf of this volume, now on display at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site, is the following inscription in Mary Walker’s handwriting: “Elkanah Walker. Presented by Capt. Sutter who crossed the plains with our party in 1838. He gave us this book as a parting memo when we parted at Dr. Marcus Whitman’s mission among the Cayuses in Oregon. He afterwards settled in Sacramento, Ca. & was the first to discover gold in Cal. in 1848. He died in June, 1880. His funeral was in Washington, D.C. M.R.W.”

THE FIRST MISSION MEETING

The members of the reenforcement spent Friday, August 31, in unpacking, paying off the hired men, and getting settled. Before the reenforcement arrived, the Whitmans had thirteen living with them, either in their adobe house or in Indian lodges on the grounds. This included the three Spaldings, the three Compos, the two Hawaiians, Margaret McKay, Mungo Mewway, a sick half-breed boy (Xavier Foier), and two Indian helpers. With the three Whitmans, this made sixteen. Then suddenly the Whitmans had to provide accommodations for the nine members of the reenforcement plus the three Conners, thus bringing the total to twenty-eight. Since the total area of the house, including the lean-to, was about 1,500 square feet, this meant that some would have had to sleep in tents or Indian lodges. Possibly some sleeping accommodations had been arranged in the halfstory of the main section of the house for the children. All cooking was done over an open fire in the fireplace of the lean-to with the exception, perhaps, of that done outof-doors by the native wives of Compo and Conner.

Because Spalding was becoming increasingly eager to be on his way back to Lapwai, the first business meeting of the enlarged Oregon
Mission began on Saturday morning and, after the Sunday intermission, continued through Monday. Spalding served as moderator and Walker, clerk. Rogers had not received a commission from the Board; hence he was not invited to take part in the deliberations. Neither were the women. On a few rare occasions in following years, some of the women were invited to attend the official meetings of the Mission, but even then they were not permitted to take part in the discussions or to vote. It was a man’s world. There is evidence, however, that a husband often voiced his wife’s opinions.

The first and most important question which confronted the six men was the assignment of the reinforcement. Gray wanted to open a new station among the Spokane Indians, then sometimes called Flatheads. However, it was the unanimous judgment of the other five men that Gray was not qualified to do independent missionary work. Spalding, in a letter to Greene, October 15, 1842, stated: “At the first meeting after Mr. Gray and his party arrived, the three clergymen who accompanied him said respectively and decidedly they would not be associated with Mr. Gray.” After a lengthy and sometimes heated debate, which surprised Whitman, the majority voted that Walker and Eells would be assigned to the Spokane field. The question then arose, where was the unhappy Gray to be sent? Finally, Spalding agreed to let the Grays live at Lapwai.

The next perplexing decision which had to be made was the assignment of the Smiths. Eells and Walker made it clear that they did not want them at the Flathead station. Spalding had already consented to take the Grays. Since it was clearly impossible for the Smiths and the Grays to live in the same station; therefore, by elimination, the Smiths would have to live with the Whitmans at Waiilatpu. This compromise settlement, accepted at the first Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission, was to give rise to four years of growing dissension. Gray was never happy with the decision affecting him and repeatedly tried to gain permission during the following years to start a new station. And, as we shall see, Smith, likewise unhappy and ill-adjusted, withdrew to Kamiah in the summer of 1839.

Other actions taken at this business meeting included the following: (1) That all members of the mission apply themselves to the study of the language of the place where they lived and reduce it to writing; (2) That the natives be taught primarily in their own language, but as
far as possible they should also be taught some English; (3) That the offer of a printing press by the Hawaiian Mission be accepted; (4) That a corn and gristmill and a blacksmith shop be established at Lapwai; and finally (5) That Dr. Whitman go to Fort Vancouver for supplies. Nothing was said as to where Rogers was to live. Evidently, he could go where he pleased. It was also agreed, although not so recorded in the minutes, that Walker and Eells should leave soon for the Spokane country to select a site for their station, and that a new and larger house was to be erected at Waiilatpu.

On Sunday, September 2, all business was laid aside, and the day was spent in rest and worship. Services were conducted by Spalding for the natives. All nine of the incoming party joined the Mission Church, raising its membership to sixteen. Walker was asked to deliver the sermon. He chose John 15:8 for his text: “Herein is my Father glorified.” The very words suggest the outline of his thought. They had left their comfortable homes in the States and had endured the hardships and perils of a long journey across the country, not for personal glory but for the glory of God. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was served, after which Spalding explained to a group of curious Indians, who were watching the proceedings, the meaning of the service. After the meeting was over, Mary Walker wrote in her diary: “We had an interesting & I think a happy season, notwithstanding all the hardness that has existed among us.”

**The Columbia Maternal Association**

On Monday, September 8, while the six men were still in their business meeting, the six missionary wives met and organized the Columbia [River] Maternal Association, which has the distinction of having been the first club organized by American women west of the Rockies. It was modelled after similar organizations quite common at that time in the East and could be likened to various forms of mother’s clubs of our own generation.

The original record book, now in the archives of Whitman College, shows that Eliza Spalding was elected president; Narcissa Whitman, corresponding secretary; Mary Gray, recording secretary; and Mary Walker, vicepresident. The records begin with the following statement of objectives in Mary Gray’s handwriting:29

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29
Sensible of the evils that beset the young mind especially in a Heathen land, & confident that no arm but God’s can secure our children or those committed to our care, from the dangers that surround them, to bring them early into the fold of Christ & fit them for usefulness here & glory hereafter, we the subscribers agree to form ourselves into an Association for the purpose of adopting such [methods] as are best calculated to assist us in the right performance of our Maternal duties.

At that time only Narcissa and Eliza were mothers but Mary Walker was in the sixth month of her pregnancy and Mary Gray, who gave birth to a son on the following March 20, had reason to believe that she also was pregnant.

Even the women of the mission had their disagreements. It appears that soon after the arrival of the reinforcement at Waiilatpu, Mary Gray was questioned by Narcissa. Regarding this, Mary on February 23, 1839, wrote from Lapwai to Mary Walker who was then at Waiilatpu: ”The second day after our arrival at W[aiilatpu], Mrs. Whitman in conversation with me commenced questioning me relative to my situation. I evaded her first question but she continued her questions until I could no longer evade them without hurting her with rudeness. This I was unwilling to do, & supposing I might place some confidence in her, told her some circumstances but she drew her own conclusions. I told her I wished her to keep her views to herself—for I felt uncertain—she said she must tell her husband—to this I made no reply, for I supposed it would be of no avail, but thought he as a physician would feel it out of place to publish such things—but I found that my favors were soon spread abroad, and how could it come but through Mrs. W.” The report of Mary’s pregnancy was soon known throughout the mission, to her great embarrassment.

On February 22, 1839, following the visit of the Whitmans and Eellses at Lapwai, Spalding wrote in his diary:”Mrs. Whitman & Mrs. Gray do not succeed in settling their difficulties. Mr. Gray in all probability was the first person that made known the fact in this country that his wife was pregnant, but wishes to make himself & wife think that Mrs. Whitman pumped the secret out of Mrs. Gray & then communicated it to Mrs. Spalding & she to me, whereas Mr. Gray communicated the fact to me long before. A very little matter to cause such a difficulty.”
In the spring before the arrival of the 1838 reinforcement, Narcissa and Eliza had agreed to observe a certain hour each day in prayer for each other and their little daughters. Eliza in her diary for March 28 and 29, 1838, wrote: "I have received a note from Mrs. Whitman this evening in which she informs me that she has fixed upon the half past eight or nine o’clock in the morning of each day to be observed by us as a season of special and united prayer... Resolved, to observe daily at nine in the morning, a season of reading some select portion of scripture & prayer, in unison with Mrs. Whitman, to seek divine assistance in discharging the responsible duties of mothers & for the early conversion of our children."

Never again after that initial organization meeting were all of the charter members of the Columbia Maternal Association able to meet together at the same time. The women, following the example of Narcissa and Eliza, agreed to observe “the second & last Wednesday of every month” as a Maternal Association meeting, each in her respective station even though she might be alone at the time. Mary Walker kept the fullest diary of any of the missionaries for the full mission period. One has but to look through this remarkable document for the entries for the designated Wednesdays to see with what regularity she observed the days. Sometimes she met with her neighbor, Myra Eells, in their lonely station at Tshimakain, and sometimes she was alone.32

Narcissa was active in securing subscriptions for the Mother’s Magazine, the national journal of the movement, not only from the women of the Oregon Mission but also from the wives of the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company and from women who lived in the Willamette Valley. The archives of the American Board contain two orders for subscriptions sent by Narcissa for Mother’s Magazine and for the Youth’s Companion in 1843 and 1845. The 1846 volume of the former published a letter from Narcissa dated April 16, 1846. The minutes of the Maternal Association show that during the nine years of its existence, the membership increased to thirteen, including the wives of the five independent missionaries who arrived in Old Oregon in 1839 and 1840 and the native wives of two Company officials, Archibald McDonald and Archibald McKinlay. The names of twenty-seven children are listed, including fourteen of the sixteen born to the women of the Oregon Mission during the years 1837–47 inclusive.33 The minutes also record the deaths of several of the children. These records are undoubtedly the first vital statistics kept in Old Oregon.
DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

On Tuesday morning, September 4, 1838, the Spaldings with their cows and sheep, the Grays, and the Conners left for Lapwai. Spalding had hired Conner to work for him through the coming winter. Compo also accompanied the party to help with the packing and the care of the animals.

The six Nez Perces, who had taken supplies to Fort Hall for the reinforcement, preceded the Spalding party back to Lapwai. They carried the news of the disaster which had overtaken Gray and his party at Ash Hollow where The Hat had been killed. They also reported that the horses, owned by the Nez Perces, which Gray had driven east with the hope of exchanging them for cattle, had been stolen. Hence, Gray was returning with no cattle. This news angered the formerly friendly Nez Perces. They blamed Gray for the death of one of their number and for the loss of their horses. Spalding was also censured as the Indians felt that he had encouraged Gray in his project.

Evidently Spalding and Gray had a bitter confrontation with some of the most belligerent of the Nez Perces as reflected in an entry in Mary Walker’s diary for September 20: “In the afternoon letter from Mr. S. informing that they were in trouble. Dick [Possibly Jack, the Hawaiian] & Conner so alarmed they can neither eat nor sleep. He [i.e., Spalding] does not dare part with Compo.” In order to appease the anger of the Nez Perces, Spalding had to give them some of his precious cows. Although the incident was evidently temporary in character, it was a harbinger of more trouble which both Whitman and Spalding were to have with the Indians. When Rogers heard of the trouble at Lapwai, he left on September 20 for that place to be of any assistance possible.

MISSION SITE AT TSHIMAKAIN SELECTED

On September 10, Walker and Eells left for the Spokane country to select a mission site. The two men reached the ford on the south bank of the Spokane River on Friday evening, the 14th, where they met a number of Spokane Indians. With the aid of someone who could interpret to a limited degree, Eells read from his New Testament. “They seemed to know what it was,” wrote Walker, “and said that Garry had read the same. While he was reading, tears came into their eyes. I never so much desired the gift of tongues as at the present time that I might communicate
religious truth.” Although both Walker and Eells knew about Spokane Gary and that he had been at the Red River school, they did not meet him on this their first trip to the Spokane country.

On Saturday, the two men crossed the Spokane River and followed a northern tributary taking the trail that led to Fort Colville. About seven miles from the mouth of this creek, they rode across a plain which they were later to select to be the site of their mission station. This was about seventy miles south of Fort Colville and about twenty-five miles northwest of present-day Spokane. The place was called Tshimakain or Chimakain, “place of the springs,” referring to a spring which still flows on the site where Walker and Eells built their cabins. The name, now spelled Chamokane, has survived as the name of the creek flowing through this valley.

On that Saturday afternoon, the two missionaries met the local chief called Big Head or Old Chief. Later he was known as Cornelius. He was to figure prominently in the Tshimakain story. A son of his, Spokane Berens, had been sent to the Red River Mission school in the spring of 1830 when only eleven years old. He was one of the five Old Oregon Indian boys taken to the school when Spokane Garry and Kootenay Pelly returned there after their visit to their people during the winter of 1829–30. Spokane Berens died at the school and was buried on July 21, 1834. Walker wrote that Chief Big Head “referred to the case of his son who died at the Red River. Said he mourned much at his death. Not because he was dead but because he did not return to teach him about the way to heaven.”

Old Chief was most eager to have missionaries settle in his vicinity. He had visited Lapwai shortly after the Spaldings went there in the fall of 1836, and had met Gray in the Spokane country in the spring of 1837. He had visited Waiilatpu at the time the reinforcement arrived, or shortly thereafter, in order to plead that some of the missionaries go to his people. His keen interest, therefore, gave great promise for the success of the Spokane mission.

On Monday, September 17, Walker and Eells arrived at Fort Colville, where they were given a warm welcome by Archibald McDonald, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s trader in charge. The missionaries spent several days at the Fort during which time they sought the advice of McDonald as to the best place to establish their station. He recom-
mended the Tshimakain site and promised to furnish tools and supplies to help them erect their cabins. The two men returned to Tshimakain on Tuesday, the 25th, at which time they met a member of Old Chief’s band whom they called Solomon “from the sagacious look on his countenance.” He proved to be a good man and a friend of both missionary families.

After selecting a building site near the spring Walker and Eells, with the willing help of a number of Indians, raised the walls for two log cabins, each about fourteen feet square and separated by about twenty feet. The season being too far advanced for them to finish the buildings and move their wives to the location, they decided to return to Waiilatpu and complete their work the next spring. They were back at Waiilatpu on Saturday, October 13.

On the Saturday following the departure of Walker and Eells for Spokane, Whitman left for Fort Vancouver to get supplies. Mary Walker’s diary for September 17 contains the following note: “We rose early. I churned and wrote to Mrs. Perkins &c. In the P.M. began to work on husband’s coat. The Dr. hurried & bustled just as my husband does. Finally he got in such a fret that his wife began to cry which brought him to himself; he went on more calmly until he got ready to start.” Whitman returned to his home on Monday morning, October 15.

R O M A N CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES ARRIVE IN OLD OREGON

The first Roman Catholic missionaries to arrive in Old Oregon were Fathers Francois Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers who were given free passage across Canada with the Hudson’s Bay Company’s express in the spring and summer of 1838. In a letter dated October 31, 1838, from the Governor and Committee of the Company’s office in London to James Douglas at Fort Vancouver, we may read: “Those missionaries were permitted to go to the Columbia on the express condition that they were to locate themselves on the Cowlitz Portage, or wherever the Company’s representative at Fort Vancouver might determine on the north side of the Columbia River, as we were unwilling to facilitate the formation of a Settlement on the South Side, which in all probability, will in due time, become United States Territory, but Mr. McLoughlin is of opinion that advantage may arise from allowing one of them to seat
himself down among such of the Company’s retired Canadian servants on the Wilhamet [Willamette], as may determine on not removing to the Cowlitz river portage." 38

Although at the time, Dr. McLoughlin was not a member of the Roman Catholic Church, he was sympathetic and cooperative with it. He had been born of Catholic parents who had him baptized by a priest when he was fifteen days old. Later he had become a communicant member of the Church of England.39 When Jason Lee and his companions first arrived at Fort Vancouver in September 1834, McLoughlin asked Lee to baptize a number of women and children at the Fort, including Mrs. McLoughlin. This Lee did.40

When the members of the Whitman-Spalding party were at Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1836, Narcissa noted in her diary that Dr. McLoughlin was conducting religious services on Sundays for the Catholic employees at the Fort. Using the French language, the Doctor would read a chapter from the Bible, a sermon, and offer prayers. Writing from Fort Vancouver to Samuel Parker, Narcissa said: "They have been expecting a Roman Catholic priest by the express this fall, but no one has come [Letter 36]. Anticipating the arrival of a priest, Dr. McLoughlin had a log church erected in 1836 at Fairfield on French Prairie near Champoeg in the Willamette Valley. There Father Blanchet celebrated the first mass in what is now the State of Oregon on January 3, 1839.41 Father Demers was assigned to work with the French Canadians at the Cowlitz Portage.

The arrival of these two Roman Catholic priests at Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1838 opened another chapter in the complicated story of the contest then taking place between the United States and Great Britain over the location of the Oregon boundary. Dr. McLoughlin was no doubt primarily interested in meeting the spiritual needs of the former employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company, yet he was astute enough to appreciate the services that Father Blanchet could render as a liaison between the Company and the French Canadians living in the Willamette Valley.

Prior to the arrival of Father Blanchet, the former servants of the Company had been drawn into the orbit of the Methodist missionaries. Some of the French Canadians had signed the petition of 1837 which Slacum took East with him in which a plea was made for the United
States to extend its jurisdiction over Oregon. Likewise, nine Canadians signed a similar memorial in 1838 which Lee carried East. The attitude of the British Government, as expressed through the Hudson’s Bay Company, was firmly to the contrary. The formation even of a provisional American government in the Willamette Valley was viewed as a threat to British territorial claims in Oregon.

After the arrival of Father Blanchet, Dr. McLoughlin was able to exercise a tighter control over the French Canadians in the Valley. Thereafter for four years, or until a provisional government was formed in May 1843, the Canadians refrained from joining the American settlers in their endeavors to establish a local government or to petition the United States to extend its jurisdiction to Oregon.

In 1840 a third memorial was drawn up by American settlers which boldly stated: “And your petitioners represent, that the said Territory, north of the Columbia, is an invaluable possession to the American Union; that in and about Puget Sound are the only harbors of easy access, and commodious and safe, upon the whole coast of the Territory... For these and other reasons, your petitioners pray that Congress will establish its sovereignty over said Territory.” This was signed by sixty-seven American settlers who were either citizens of the United States or were desirous of becoming so. No French Canadians signed this memorial.

Catholic Priests Subsidized by the Hudson’s Bay Company

The archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London contain a copy of the 1857 Parliamentary Report, Notes from the Select Committee which contains an account of the investigations of this Committee of the British Parliament into the activities of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Oregon. On February 26, 1857, when Simpson was being cross-examined, he stated that his Company was paying £100 a year to the Roman Catholic bishop in Oregon. Since the international border had been settled by treaty in 1846, this statement surprised members of the Committee. One asked: “What do you mean by Oregon? Oregon is in the United States. Do you give religious instruction to the inhabitants of the United States?” Simpson’s answer was somewhat ambiguous: “No, there is a Roman Catholic bishop who was taken across by us a good many years ago to Oregon, and he remains there on the promise that he should be
allowed 100 £ a year.” Just how long that subsidy continued after 1857 is not known to the author.

An interesting parallel may be drawn between what appears to be, on strong circumstantial evidence, the payment of a subsidy by the United States Government to the Methodist Church to assist in the cost of sending a colony of missionaries to the Willamette Valley in 1839–40 and the free passage given two priests by the Hudson’s Bay Company to Oregon in 1838 and the annual subsidy of £100. Mention will be made later of the assistance given by the Company to a colony of settlers from the Red River sent out to Old Oregon in 1841. After the provisional government was established in the Willamette Valley in 1843, the political influence of Bishop Blanchet was minimal.

The coming of the Roman Catholic priests into Oregon brought many complications for the Protestant missionaries and especially for the Whitinans. Mary Walker in her diary commented on a minor problem which the Protestants at Wailatpu faced when they were invited to go to Fort Walla Walla to meet the incoming Catholic priests. Under date of November 3, 1838, Mary wrote: “Last night Mr. Pambrun sent us a quarter of beef. He was expecting some Catholic priests to visit him & so he slew the old cream colored cow, which was 23 years old. He also sent the tripe, so that I had the job of cleaning it. Mr. P. also invited the gentlemen to call over and make his guests a visit. They hardly knew what to do about accepting it, but finally concluded that it was best.” The fact that the men were hesitant about accepting Pambrun’s invitation to pay a social call in order to meet the priests reflects the intolerant spirit towards Roman Catholics of the communities in which each was born and reared. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, there were very few Catholics in New England and upper New York State. This lack of knowledge and of personal contact with Roman Catholics explains much of the prejudice the missionaries displayed. According to Mary’s account, Whitman, Eells, and her husband finally decided to go to meet the priests, but Smith refused saying “that it looked too much like countenancing Romanism.” Mary added: “Hope our husbands will manage discreetly.” The men returned on Monday with the news that the expected Hudson’s Bay express had been delayed and the priests had not arrived.

If the Protestant missionaries had known that the Hudson’s Bay
Company had paid the traveling expenses of the priests and was giving an annual subsidy of £100 to the bishop who was to settle in the Willamette Valley, surely they would have had reason for concern. These facts were not known to Spalding even in 1865 when he began his attacks through the press on the Roman Catholic missionaries in Oregon nor by Gray who wrote several tirades against the Hudson's Bay Company [See Appendix 3].

**WHITMAN’S SECOND ADOBE HOUSE**

Fortunately for all members of the Oregon Mission, both Whitman and Spalding had a bountiful harvest in the fall of 1838. In a letter dated September 15, 1838, Smith told of Whitman’s success. “My first business here has been to assist in securing the crops,” he wrote. “Dr. W. has about 17 acres in all under cultivation. His crop of wheat was very fine. It is not threshed but he thinks there will be from 75 to 100 bushels from 2½ acres. Nicer wheat I never saw. His crop of corn was good. No frost touched it... The corn is all gathered in & put in big cribs near 300 bushels of it. Potatoes do well here. Dr. has about 6 (?) acres, all in the field yet thinks there will not be less than 1000 bushels. He has about 2 acres of turnips, & garden vegetables in abundance. We have had an abundance of melons all the time since we have been here.

“The labor of gleaning the crops is done considerably by the natives. The women do most of the work. They have harvested the corn almost entirely. Some of it was brought from the field to the house in bags on the backs of the women. We have no vehicle of any kind for the transportation of articles. No cart, sled, or corn dray. Much of the corn was cut up & drawn to the house by the oxen on brush. This was very hard dragging.” Several years had to pass before Whitman was able to obtain a wagon.

Smith’s account continues: “We labor to great disadvantage in many respects. We are in great want of tools of most every kind. Dr. has two ploughs but neither of them very good... We labor under disadvantage in respect to building. There is no good building timber nearer than 20 miles. On the mountains there is a great abundance of excellent pine & spruce but at present it is very difficult getting it. There is a limited supply of cottonwood (a kind of poplar) on the streams near us & scarcely any other timber... We build our houses here with dobies, or clay dried in
the sun in the form of brick 20 inches long, 10 wide & 5 in thickness. This is the best of anything we can use.”

When Walker and Eells returned from their first visit to the Spokane country, they made a detour in order to call on the Spaldings at Lapwai. Walker was much impressed with Spalding’s potato crop and claimed that three acres produced 1,500 bushels, or 500 bushels to the acre. Walker wrote: “I never saw any that turned out so well.” This marks the beginning of Idaho’s fame as a great potato raising state. It should be remembered that both Whitman and Spalding used their produce in trade with the Indians, sometimes in payment for labor, and also for seed for themselves and for the natives.

After gathering the harvest, the next important task at Waiilatpu was the erection of another house. The first adobe building was pitifully inadequate. On September 4, 1838, Sarah Smith wrote the following description of the Whitman house in her diary: “We are arranging our things, begin to feel a little at home. The Doctor’s house would be considered in the States a very rough one. Part of it is log & part dobie or dried clay. One side of it has partly fallen down & [is] propped up with large poles. Some of the floors are nailed & some of them loose boards & all unplaned. But we are glad to find a home in so comfortable a place. Our room is the Indians meeting house, school room, wash room & store room, so you may well suppose [how] it is furnished.” We have no floor plan of Whitman’s first house but from the above description by Sarah, we may assume that the room she and her husband occupied was the largest in the main part of the 30 x 36 foot building.

Asa Smith, in a letter written to his parents about the middle of October, throws further light upon Whitman’s first adobe house when he stated that it contained only “3 rooms & 2 bedrooms.” From one of Narcissa’s letters [No. 39] we learn that the 12 x 36 lean-to had two bedrooms and a “very pleasant kitchen in the middle.” If Smith was referring to the two bedrooms in the lean-to, then the “3 rooms” would have included the one in the lean-to and only two in the main part of the house. It is possible that some sleeping accommodations were in the upper half-story of the main structure. Even so, the prospect of housing about twenty people in such cramped quarters during the winter months was not appealing. The crowded conditions brought difficulties, as we shall see.
PLANS FOR A NEW BUILDING

Following the flooding of the basement of his first house during December 1837 and the following March, Whitman saw the necessity of building another house located on higher ground and further back from the river. Narcissa’s letter of May 2, 1840, contains a drawing of the floor plan of this second house. The outline of the foundations of this house as laid bare by the excavations of archaeologists at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site shows that the house which was actually erected differed in many respects from what was originally planned. [See the illustration in this volume for the actual floor plan, page 363.] Whitman selected a site about ninety feet to the north of the first adobe structure. He sent men into the mountains some twenty or more miles from Waiilatpu to whipsaw boards during the winters of 1837–38 and 1838–39 [Letter 39]. Occasionally there was enough snow during the winter months so that lumber could be drawn to the mission site on sleds. Some boards were packed on horses. Information is lacking as to how much Whitman had been able to accomplish towards the erection of the new house before the reinforcement of 1838 arrived.

Whitman planned the erection of a “T” shaped building with the main axis of the top of the “T” running north and south, and with the stem of the “T” joining on the east side. Evidently the building was laid out with a compass, as the axis of the top of the “T” was oriented approximately with the magnetic north. This part of the new building was to be a story and a half high and to contain a bedroom, a living room, and an Indian room. A stairway leading to the attic was in the central part, or in the living room. The drawing made in 1840 by Asahel Munger indicated a fourth room at the south end of the top of the “T” (room “A” on his drawing) but it is evident from the uncovered foundations that this was never built. According to the archaeologist, the top of the “T” measured 19’ 3” by 60’ 10”, and the stem of the “T” measured 22’ x 80’.

In a letter to his parents written about the middle of October 1838, during the temporary absence of Whitman, Walker, and Eells, Smith stated that he was laying adobe bricks for the new house and that the walls had been raised “nearly to the chamber floor.” This indicates that the unit on which he was working had an upper story or a half-story. We have good reason to believe that the top of the “T” was the first section of the building to be erected. Smith was able to finish one room
by December 4, 1838, for on that day he and his wife moved out of the crowded adobe house near the river into the new building.

Evidence is lacking as to when the other units of the building were erected, except the room marked “H” on Munger’s drawing, which was built near the end of 1843. This room was erected over a cellar and, according to the rough sketch made of the Whitman home by Paul Kane in 1847 [see the illustration on page 363], was a story and a half high. A room was being built at the east end of the stem of the “T” at the time of the massacre in November 1847.

The adobe bricks uncovered by the archaeologist measure roughly 5 x 10 x 29 inches and, according to one estimate, about six thousand were needed in the erection of this building. Spalding in his description of the building found in the inventory of the Waiilatpu property compiled after the massacre, stated that the roof was constructed of “split timber, grassed earth [i.e., sod].” With the possible exception of the first roof on the lean-to, the roofs at Waiilatpu seem to have been efficient in shedding the heavy winter rains; no complaints about leaky roofs have been found in the writings of those who lived for varying periods of time at this station. Evidently the main Whitman home was built in segments over several years as time and manpower were available. Although one room was finished in December 1838, about a year and a half passed before the Whitmans were able to move into their new quarters.

“Such Folks Right in My Kitchen”

The news that Henry and Mary Gray carried to the Whitmans and the Spaldings on August 21, 1838, that a reenforcement of seven (in addition to Mrs. Gray) for the Oregon Mission was about to arrive, lifted their spirits to the heights. As Whitman wrote: “They thanked God and took courage.” It was a time of rejoicing—a day of triumph! But within a few days after all had arrived at Waiilatpu, the Whitmans and the Spaldings became aware that the tensions, which had developed within the reenforcement during their overland journey, were being forced upon them. Circumstances were such that they too became involved in personality clashes.

The fact that these people were missionaries did not mean that they were saints. They were first of all human beings, subject to all
of the inherent weaknesses of human flesh. Indeed, the fact that they were missionaries is evidence that each was an individual with strong convictions, else they would not have ventured on such a journey. The hardships endured while traveling, and the primitive conditions under which so many lived in the cramped quarters of the Whitman home, made it easy for strained relationships to arise. Perhaps no sharper test of Christian forbearance has been devised than that of making two or more families live under the same roof and share the same kitchen. This becomes especially trying when such families are surrounded by peoples of another culture, race, or language, thus forcing them all the more upon each other's society. Modern-day missionaries who have lived in the same compound on some foreign mission field can testify to the truth of this statement.

The change which took place in the minds and hearts of Marcus and Narcissa when their initial joy was changed to disappointment can easily be traced in the writings of the missionaries themselves, especially in Mary Walker's diary and in some of Narcissa's letters. On the whole, this is an unpleasant side of the Whitman story, but in the light of later events, it is too important to be omitted. The friction which developed within the mission had important consequences.

Mary Walker opens many windows in her diary through which we can look into the Whitman household. In strict conformity with the custom of that day, she always referred to the other members of the Mission, even to her husband, with the title “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” or “Dr.” as the case might be. She never used the given name alone. Mary noted a number of incidents which involved Asa Smith. On September 18, she wrote: “Mr. Smith came to pantry & found nothing but milk & melons. Didn't like it... At supper Mr. S. said he was very hungry, had had no dinner. In forenoon Mr. S. sent out to give a melon to some boys for pounding [i.e., washing clothes]. Mrs. W. countermanded.” On October 13, she noted: “Mrs. Whitman quite put out with Mr. Smith because he was unwilling to let her have Jack [the Hawaiian] help her.” Even mild-mannered Dr. Whitman had difficulties with Smith; on November 30, Mary wrote: “Dr. W. quite out of patience with Mr. Smith.”

A difference of opinion arose over the question whether women should pray aloud in the mission prayer meetings. Narcissa grew up in
communities in western New York where women took part with men in public prayer. Hers was an emotional religion. As a girl and young woman, she took part in revivals and gloriied in seeing sinners weep when under conviction of sin. These were for her “melting times.” The three couples from New England were more restrained in giving expression to their inner feelings. In their home communities women did not pray aloud in the presence of men. During the absence of Walker and Eells on their trip to Spokane, Mary ventured to pray aloud in the Whitman family worship. But this troubled her, for she wrote in her diary on October 2: “I wish I knew whether my husband likes to have me pray before folks or not. When he comes home I will ask him.”

Narcissa, in a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, wrote: “We have none in our mission of as high-toned piety as we could wish, especially among those who came in the last reenforcement. They think it wrong for females to pray in the presence of men, and do not allow it even in our small circle here. This has been a great trial to me, and I have almost sunk under it.” And again on October 6, 1841, she wrote: “In all the prayer meetings of this mission, the brethren only pray. I believe all the sisters would be willing to pray if their husbands would let them... My husband has no objection to my praying, but if my sisters do not, he thinks it quite as well for me not to.”

Still another irritant was the fact that Elkanah Walker chewed tobacco and, no doubt to Narcissa’s great disgust, used the open fireplace in the kitchen as a spittoon. Also at least one of the New England men liked his wine, and this too was objectionable to the Whitmans. In wet and cold weather, the men sought the warmth of the kitchen where Narcissa and the other women would be preparing their meals. All this is background for the following comment taken from Narcissa’s letter to her sister, Jane, dated March 23, 1839: “We need help very much, and those who will pray, too. In this we have been disappointed in our helpers last come, particularly the two Revs. who have gone to the Flatheads. They think it not good to have too many meetings, too many prayers, and that it is wrong and unseemly for a woman to pray where there are men, and plead the necessity for wine, tobacco, etc.’ and now how do you think I have lived with such folks right in my kitchen for the whole winter.”

The endless household duties, multiplied by the presence of so many in her home, added to the nervous strain under which Narcissa
was living. In addition to such daily tasks as cooking for twenty or more over an open fire in the fireplace, were the repeated duties of washing clothes, making soap, and dipping candles. On January 29, 1839, Mary Walker mentioned that she, Mary, had that day “dipped 24 doz candles.” Narcissa also had the care of her little girl whom she was still nursing. A remembrance of these facts helps us to appreciate the following extracts from Mary’s diary: “Nov. 16. Worked about house all day. Got very tired. Mrs. W. appears to feel cross at everybody… She seems in a worry about [something]. Went out & blustered round & succeeded in melting over her tallow.” “Friday 23. Mrs. Whitman washing. Cross time of it.” And “Friday 30. Mrs. W. washing. Think she has less help from the other ladies than she ought.”

On Sunday, November 11, less than a month before her baby was born, Mary wrote: “Oh! I wish I had a little chamber where I could secrete myself.” On the 18th, she added: “My husband seems to think I expose myself more than is necessary, but what can I do? There is no place where I can be.”

Asa Smith, eager to have a private bedroom for himself and his wife, worked hard to complete one room in the new adobe house. The Smiths were able to spend the first night in the new house on Monday, December 3, although Mary did not refer to them as actually moving out of the old adobe until the next day, December 4. On Monday evening, according to Mary’s diary, the three couples—the Whitmans, the Walkers, and the Eellses—sat up “till midnight talking about Mr. S[mith] & Mr. G[ray].” Evidently Narcissa was deeply moved by what was said, for Mary added: “Mrs. W. gets to feeling very bad, goes to bed crying.” And on the 4th, Mary wrote: “Mrs. W. in a sad mood all day, did not present herself at the breakfast table.” Then comes the saddest entry to be found in Mary’s diary: “[Mrs. Whitman] went out doors, down by the river to cry.” Since she could find no privacy in her home, Narcissa had to seek some lonely spot in the outdoors where she could weep.

As soon as the Smiths had moved, Elkanah erected a board partition in a corner of one of the rooms in the main section of the adobe house thus giving his wife a private bedroom. Mary was able to move into it on the 5th. On the 6th, for some unknown reason, Elkanah found it necessary to ride to Fort Walla Walla and hence was not present when his son was born. Early on the morning of the 7th, Mary’s labor pains began.
She called the Whitmans who made such preparations as were necessary. About nine o’clock the pains increased. Later, looking back upon her experience, she wrote in her diary: “Felt as if I almost wished I had never been married. But there was no retreating, meet it I must. About eleven I began to be quite discouraged. I had hoped to be delivered ere then… But just as I supposed the worst was at hand, my ears were saluted with the cry of my child. A son was the salutation. Soon I forgot my misery in the joy of possessing a proper child.” They called the boy Cyrus Hamblin after one of Elkanah’s classmates who was a pioneer missionary to Turkey. Inevitably the birth of the baby meant extra work for Narcissa.

**Camping on the Tucannon**

Perhaps the nearest to a vacation that the Whitmans ever experienced came during the latter part of January and the first part of February 1839 when they rode to the Tucannon River, about fifty miles distant, with their little girl and spent about two and one-half weeks camping. The occasion for the outing arose out of some special meetings Spalding had conducted at Lapwai for the Nez Perces during December 1838. The meetings were first held in a 20’ x 40’ log schoolhouse which Gray had built. This soon became too small to accommodate the numbers who came, so that Spalding had to conduct the meetings outdoors. With his characteristic tendency to exaggerate, Spalding, in a letter to Greene dated March 3, 1839, reported that “several thousand” Nez Perces were in attendance and the “probably two thousand have made a public confession of their sins.”

**Spalding’s Success with the Nez Perces**

Both Spalding and Gray were eager to have a millrace dug so that a gristmill could be erected at Lapwai. The presence of so many natives on the mission grounds suggested the idea of enlisting their aid in the project and paying them with potatoes. The Indians were encouraged to assist in digging the millrace by being told that they would benefit by having a gristmill available for the grinding of their wheat. So with the enthusiastic help of several hundred Indians, a ditch was dug about half a mile long, four feet wide, and in some places fifteen feet deep. They had no other tools than two shovels, a few hoes, some axes, tomahawks, and sharpened sticks. The Indians worked in the mornings and early
afternoons and then attended Spalding’s meetings in the latter part of the afternoons and evenings. The outline of the millrace can still be traced at the Spalding mission site which is now a part of the Nez Perce National Historical Park.

One of the secrets of Spalding’s success with the Nez Perces was the fact that he won the support of several influential chiefs. Among those who seemed to have experienced a spiritual awakening during those December meetings were two chiefs, Teutakas and Timosa. Spalding had the custom of bestowing upon his converts Bible names and to these two he gave the names of Joseph and Timothy. Teutakas is mentioned in Parker’s *Journal of an Exploring Tour* when his interpreter, Kentuc, once had occasion to compare the sincerity of Teutakas with that of another chief called Charlie. According to Parker, Kentuc said: “Charlie prayed with his lips, but Teutacusc prayed with his heart.”

Teutakas is also known as Old Joseph to distinguish him from his son, also called Joseph, or Young Joseph, who was to be a leader in the Nez Perce uprising of 1877. Among the few natives who became members of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon, there was none more sincere and faithful in the profession and practice of the Christian faith than Timothy. He figures prominently in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board and also in the history of the Indian wars following the Whitman massacre. He was always a faithful friend of the white men. On the other hand, Tackensuatis, who had manifested such eagerness to have at least one missionary couple settle among the Nez Perces, lost interest in the white man’s religion. For some reason he had become disillusioned within a year or so after the Spaldings went to Lapwai. Writing to Greene on February 6, 1840, Smith said: “People at home may think from what was written of him that he is a christian, but he is far from it. Instead of being settled with Mr. S[palding], he has become his enemy & proves to be a very wicked man.”

**WHITMAN VISITS SPALDING AT LAPWAY**

When Whitman learned of the stirring events taking place at Lapwai, he decided to go and see for himself. He left Waiilatpu on January 1, 1839. According to a letter Narcissa wrote to her sister Jane, dated May 17, 1839, he wanted “to attend a protracted meeting” which Spalding was holding for the natives. Judging by subsequent events, however, it is possible that
there were other reasons for the trip. Spalding was having some difficulties with Gray at Lapwai and may have asked for Whitman’s presence to discuss the problem. Also, it is possible that Whitman wanted to talk with Spalding about problems which had arisen at Waiilatpu with Smith.

Whitman made the 120-mile ride to Lapwai in less than four days. After seeing the response the natives were giving to Spalding, Whitman found himself deeply impressed. Never again during the mission period was Spalding going to be able to attract so many natives to the mission site and keep them there for so many days as was the case during the winter of 1838-39. Whitman admired Spalding’s ability to use the native language and felt somewhat conscience stricken at his failure to be as proficient.

Evidently Whitman and Spalding discussed the need for Whitman to get away from Waiilatpu for a time and live with the natives in order to have a better opportunity to learn the language. A plan was evolved. Whitman would return to Waiilatpu, get Narcissa and Alice Clarissa and then the three would return to the place where the Lapwai-Waiilatpu trail crossed the Tucannon River. Timothy agreed to meet the Whitmans there with some of his band and do what he could to teach them the Nez Perce language.

Whitman left Lapwai on January 10 and was back at his home by the 15th. When he told Narcissa of his plan, he found her not only willing to endure whatever hardships they might encounter at that time of the year, but even enthusiastic. Writing to her sister Jane, Narcissa said: “He had no difficulty to persuade me to accompany him, for I was nearly exhausted, both in body and mind, in the labour and care of our numerous family.” She explained that the purpose of their going to live with the Indians was “for the benefit of having free access to the language and be free from care and company” [Letter 63].

WITH THE NEZ PERCES ON THE TUCANNON

The Whitmans with their daughter, then nearly two years old, left Waiilatpu on Tuesday, January 22. Cushing and Myra Eells, Mary Walker, and Margaret McKay rode with them for the first three miles. The following extract from Mary’s diary reflects a continuing tension in the home: “Mrs. W. has dealt so largely in powder and balls of late that perhaps her absence will not detract much from our happiness.”
If such an excursion could be called a vacation, then this was the first that Marcus and Narcissa had enjoyed after their marriage. The weather was mild, even quite warm for that time of the year. After a leisurely journey of three days, they arrived at the Tucannon where they found an encampment of Nez Perces with Timothy. Soon after their arrival, the weather turned cold and snow fell. The Whitmans were sheltered in a tent. In order to keep warm, Marcus built a small fire inside the tent but the smoke caused the child to cry. Marcus then moved the fire to the entrance and erected a “lodge” around the fire to carry off the smoke. This proved to be a better plan.

Narcissa’s account of the worship services her husband conducted on Sunday shows not only Whitman’s participation in teaching Christianity but also the religious receptivity of the Nez Perces. She wrote:

Sab. at Tukanon. Jan. 27, 1839. This has been a day of peculiar interest here. Could you have been an eye witness of the scenes you would, as I do, have rejoiced in being thus privileged. The morning worship at daybreak I did not attend. At midday I was present. Husband talked to them of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; all listened with eager attention. After prayer and singing, an opportunity was given for those who had heavy hearts under a sense of sin, and only those, to speak if they wished it. For a few moments all sat in silence; soon a prominent and intelligent man named Timothy broke the silence with sobs weeping. He arose, spoke of his great wickedness, and how very black his heart was; how weak and insufficient he was of himself to effect his own salvation; that his only dependence was in the blood of Christ to make him clean and save his soul from sin and hell.

He was followed by a brother, who spoke much to the same effect. Next came the wives of the first and of the second, who seemed to manifest deep feelings. Several others followed; one in particular, while confessing her sins, her tears fell to the ground so copiously that I was reminded of the weeping ‘Mary who washed her Saviour’s feet with her tears.’ All manifested much deep feeling; some in loud sobs and tears; others in anxious and solemn countenance. You can better imagine my feelings than I can describe them on witnessing such a scene in heathen
lands. They had but recently come from the meeting at Brother Spalding’s.

Narcissa liked the Nez Perces. She told Jane that: “Most of them were not so hardened in sin; or, rather, they were not so proud a people as our people, the Wieletpoos, are.” Both Marcus and Narcissa experienced a deep feeling of joy and satisfaction when they witnessed these evidences of the acceptance of Christianity by the natives. This was a moment of triumph for the Whitmans, an experience which made them feel that all of the hardships they had endured were eminently worthwhile. God was blessing their labors!

While sitting in the door of her tent on that Sunday evening, Narcissa continued her letter to Jane: “O, my dear Jane, could you see us here this beautiful eve, the full moon shining in all her splendor, clear, yet freezing cold, my little one sleeping by my side, husband at worship with the people within hearing, and I sitting in the ‘door of the tent’ writing, with my usual clothing except a shawl, and handkerchief on my head, and before me a large comfortable fire in the open air. Do you think we suffer? No, dear Jane; I have not realized so much enjoyment for a long time as I have since I have been here.”

The Whitmans stayed at Tucannon into the third week and returned home on Saturday, February 9. Mary Walker mentioned this in her diary and added: “Adieu to peace and order.”

GROWING DISSENSION WITHIN THE MISSION

The winter of 1838–39 and spring of 1839 was a time of growing dissension within the Oregon Mission. A focal point of trouble at Waiilatpu was Asa Smith, who soon realized that the life of an Oregon missionary was far different from that which he had imagined. His deep unhappiness is reflected in a letter to Greene dated April 29, 1839, and a longer one of some six thousand words of August 27. For one thing, he was amazed to realize how much time the missionaries had to spend in manual work and secular activities just to keep alive. He Wrote: “I feel that it is a great calamity that we are under the necessity of spending so much time in providing for our temporal wants. But necessity is laid upon us & we must do it or suffer.”

Soon after his arrival at Waiilatpu, Smith began to have doubts over
the wisdom of the endeavors that Whitman and Spalding were making to settle the Indians. Here was a fundamental difference of opinion. In his letter of April 29, Smith wrote: “Much has been said about furnishing the Indians with cattle, ploughs, sending out farmers, mechanics, &c. With regard to this I must say that it appears to me to be departing from the object which the Board has in view. A few cows are important for our comfort & support but to think of furnishing a nation with them, it would I believe defeat our object in coming. I feel that there is very great danger of introducing the habits of civilized life faster than the natives are capable of appreciating them.” Smith felt that the enthusiasm the Indians manifested at the coming of the missionaries was not a reflection of their eagerness for the truths of Christianity but rather for their “hope of temporal gain.” Over and over again, he emphasized what he considered to be the selfishness of the natives. Writing in his diary on September 1, 1839, Spalding commented: “Mr. Smith preaches against all efforts to settle the poor Indians, thinks they should be kept upon the chase to prevent their becoming worldly minded.”

In recalling the circumstances which led to his application to be included in the 1838 reinforcements, Smith blamed Spalding for the over enthusiastic reports which the latter had sent to the Board during his first year in Old Oregon and which had been published in the Missionary Herald. Smith felt that he would never have volunteered for the Oregon Mission had he not been misled by Spalding’s exaggerations. Blaming Spalding for his predicament, he became increasingly critical of him. Writing to Greene on February 6, 1840, Smith said: “Before I left the States this mission seemed to absorb the attention of Christians, I often thought, more than all others, tho’ in fact it was one of the very least in its relative importance.” And in his letter of August 27, 1839, he declared:”Had I known what I now do before I left the States, I can not say that I should have come here.”

Friction arose between Smith and Whitman during the winter of 1838–39; details are lacking as to its causes. Smith became extremely unhappy, and by February was determined to leave Waiilatpu. He wanted a station of his own. The idea occurred to him that he might move to Kamiah in the heart of the Nez Perce country, about sixty miles up the river from Lapwai. During the winter of 1838–39, Lawyer had spent some time at Waiilatpu tutoring Smith in the Nez Perce language.57
Lawyer’s home was at Kamiah; in all probability it was he who told Smith about the advantages of studying the language there.

**Special Mission Meeting of February 1839**

The decision had been made at the first mission meeting held at Waiilatpu in September 1838 to establish a gristmill at Lapwai. As has been stated, Spalding was successful in securing the aid of the Nez Perces in the digging of a millrace. The next requirement was to quarry the millstones. Walker was asked to go to Lapwai to help Gray, Spalding, and Rogers in this undertaking. When Smith learned of Walker’s intended journey, he decided to go along, with the intention of continuing on to Kamiah to explore the country for a mission site. The two men left Waiilatpu on Monday, February 11, and arrived at Lapwai the following Wednesday afternoon.

The arrival of Walker and Smith at Lapwai brought five of the seven men of the Mission together. Smith emphatically told his four associates that “he would leave the Mission rather than be connected with Dr. Whitman.” The situation was so serious that the men agreed a special meeting of the Mission should be held as soon as possible. Spalding, therefore, sent word the next day, February 14, to Whitman asking that he and Eells come to Lapwai at once. In the meantime, Walker, Gray, and Rogers set out to see if they could cut out some millstones, and Smith, with an Indian guide, left for Kamiah to explore for a possible mission site.

When Narcissa learned of the special meeting, she decided to go with her husband to Lapwai. Accordingly, the Whitmans with their little girl and Eells left Waiilatpu on the 19th, and arrived at Lapwai at noon on the 22nd. By this time the three men who had gone for millstones had returned, but without having any success; and Smith was back from Kamiah. Thus all members of the Oregon Mission were present except Mary Walker, Myra Eells, and Sarah Smith.

The Mission meeting began on Saturday morning, the 23rd, with Spalding serving as moderator. A number of minor items of business were first considered. Some time before this date, Spalding had officiated at the marriage of Richard Williams, a mountain man in his employ, to a Nez Perce woman with whom he had been living. It had been the common practice in the heyday of the fur trade for the traders
and trappers to live with native women without benefit of clergy. There had been no other course, when no clergy or authorized law officials were available. This was looked upon as a shocking situation by clergy-men of various denominations who came into contact with this custom. Anglican ministers at Red River, Chaplain Beaver at Fort Vancouver, and the Methodist missionaries in the Willamette Valley, all encouraged the white men to legalize their common law relationships by having a marriage service performed. This would give valuable legal rights to the offspring of such marriages. Spalding acted entirely in line with accepted ecclesiastical practice when he married Williams and the Nez Perce woman, yet someone protested, no doubt the overcritical Smith. After reviewing the facts of the case, the Mission voted that in the future no member of the Mission should perform such a marriage unless the white man was a candidate for church membership.59

After some other lesser issues were settled, a resolution was introduced to authorize the transfer of Smith from Waiilatpu to some undesignated new location. Spalding, in his diary, noted that this precipitated “a long debate.” Not being able to reach a decision on Saturday, the question was carried over until the following Monday when, after further deliberation, the resolution was rejected. Smith was not authorized to leave Waiilatpu.

Then a second resolution was introduced which called for Dr. Whitman to leave Wailatpu and open a new station on the Snake River near the mouth of the Palouse River. Such a location, argued Spalding, Walker, and Eells, would put the doctor in a more central location, thus making him more quickly available in cases of severe illness in the more distant stations. An implication of this resolution was that Smith would take charge of the Waiilatpu mission. To the surprise and dismay of both Marcus and Narcissa, this motion carried. Narcissa was of the opinion that Spalding was the one most responsible for the vote. Looking back on that meeting, Narcissa in a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, wrote: “Every mind in the mission that he had had access to, he has tried to prejudice against us, and did succeed for a while, which was the cause of our being voted to remove and form a new station.”

Another important action was taken when full charge of the blacksmith shop, gristmill, and framing operations at Lapwai was given to Gray, with the understanding that Spalding, relieved of such duties,
would be able to give full time to his religious work. Such an assignment of duties to Gray was in harmony with the original intention of the Board, but the action of the Mission, as will be seen, did not prove satisfactory. The Mission also voted that the printing press, which was expected to arrive that spring from Honolulu, be located at Lapwai. It may be that this decision was based in part on the fact that Spalding, as a student in Lane Theological Seminary at Cincinnati, 1833–35, had worked in a printing shop.

The business meeting closed on Tuesday noon, February 26. Walker, Eells, and Smith left at once for Waiilatpu. Previous arrangements had been made with the Spokane chief, Cornelius, to escort the Walkers and the Eellses to Tshimakain, leaving Waiilatpu on or about March 5; thus the men felt a special urge to be on their way back to Waiilatpu. They made the return journey in two and one-half days, and upon their arrival, found Cornelius waiting for them. Evidently Elkanah gave Mary a discouraging report of the Lapwai meeting, for she wrote in her diary that the men “had a bad time.”

Smith Considers Leaving the Mission

The Whitmans tarried at Lapwai for a few days because of the illness of little Eliza Spalding. Eager to be back at his home before the two couples left for Tshimakain, Whitman left Lapwai on Saturday, March 2, after making arrangements for the Spaldings to escort his wife and daughter to the Tucannon River where he would meet them on the 8th. Whitman wanted Spalding’s advice in the selection of a site for the proposed new station. Even though pressed for time, it appears that Whitman obeyed his conscience about not traveling on Sunday. After remaining in camp on that day, he continued his journey early Monday morning. He had a hard ride all day Monday and perhaps through all of Monday night. Mary wrote in her diary for Tuesday, May 5: “About sunrise Dr. W. reached home & about noon we left W[aiilatpu].” A residence of about six months for the Walkers and the Eellses in the crowded Whitman home had come to an end.

Rarely in the eleven-year history of the Oregon Mission was Whitman so dejected as he was during those days. To begin with, there were the letters from Greene received in the summer of 1838 with the criticisms of Whitman’s expenditures made by Samuel Parker. Then
came the tensions and personality conflicts which grew out of the crowded living conditions at Waiilatpu during the fall of 1838 and the following winter. The blunt declaration that Smith had made to the members of the Mission that he refused to live in the same station with him and Narcissa must have been hard to take. But the final blow was the vote that the Mission had taken that he should turn over Waiilatpu to Smith and start a new station. Of all members of the Mission, no one was less qualified for the responsibilities of Waiilatpu than Smith and no one realized this more than Whitman. The hasty and ill-considered vote of the Mission calling upon the Whitmans to leave Waiilatpu and start a new station was devastating to his morale. His heart failed him as he thought of the work, the privations, and the difficulties attendant upon establishing a new station in the wilderness. The outlook was so discouraging that Whitman seriously considered leaving the Mission.

When the Walker-Eells party left Waiilatpu at noon on March 5 for Tshimakain, Whitman traveled with them to their first encampment on Mill Creek, five or six miles east of Waiilatpu, on what is now a part of the campus of Whitman College. Mary Walker wrote that day in her diary: “We talked with him all that time would allow & he left us feeling much better than when he came home.” For the time being, Whitman tried to accept the decision of the Mission with Christian forbearance. At least he would make an effort to investigate the possibilities of a new location.

Riding in advance of the Walkers and the Eellses, Whitman met the Spaldings and Narcissa at the crossing of the Tucannon River on the 8th. Because of Eliza Spalding’s feeble health, she remained in camp the next day while her husband, their daughter, and the Whitmans with their little girl rode the trail following the Tucannon to where it emptied into the Snake River. The Whitmans and Spalding met the Walker-Eells party, who had taken a different trail from that followed by Whitman, at the Snake River crossing on March 9. Mary Walker mentioned the meeting in her diary and added: “Had not a remarkably pleasant interview with them.” This was the last time the two women en route to the Spokane country were to see any of the other four women of the Mission for over a year. With the passing of time, the strained relationships, evident at Waiilatpu, disappeared.
While the four men were together, they again discussed the advisability of the Whitmans leaving Waiilatpu. By this time Narcissa was voicing her strong opposition. When Spalding, Walker, and Eells began to realize more of the problems involved, they began to doubt the wisdom of their vote. On Saturday, February 9, the Walker-Eells party bade farewell to the Spaldings and Whitman, crossed the Snake, and continued their journey to Tshimakain. A few miles below the mouth of the Tucannon was the place where the Palouse River, coming in from the north, also emptied into the Snake. The trail which led to the Spokane country followed the Palouse and its tributaries for about fifty miles before striking across the country to the Spokane River. [See map in this volume.] Spalding wrote in his diary for that day: “Doct. & myself examine the Paluse, not favorable for a location.” After spending Sunday with a band of Nez Perces on the Tucannon, the Whitmans and Spaldings separated on Monday to return to their respective stations.

Back at Waiilatpu, Whitman and Smith debated the pros and cons of the prospective move. Out of the discussions came a compromise suggestion, perhaps made by Whitman: Smith would move to Kamiah on a temporary basis in order to study the language, and the Whitmans would remain at Waiilatpu. Then at the Annual Meeting of the Mission scheduled for September, the whole question would be reconsidered. Feeling the necessity of Spalding’s approval for this plan, the two men journeyed again to Lapwai where they arrived on March 23. On the 25th Spalding wrote in his diary: “Doct. Whitman & Mr. Smith wish advice as to their future course but after long consultation, came to no conclusion.” Whitman and Smith started back to Waiilatpu on the 25th. This was the third time since the beginning of that year that Whitman had ridden the 240-mile round trip from Waiilatpu to Lapwai.

On March 28, the day after their return to Waiilatpu, Smith wrote to Walker: “It is very evident that the Dr. & his wife were not so willing to leave this place as was pretended at the meeting. He told me that he did not expect that such a decision would have been made. So it seems that neither of us have been suited by the arrangement. I lament that I ever consented to remain here [i.e., at Waiilatpu]. Indeed my heart never has consented to it & I do not expect ever to be satisfied or contented with my present situation. I lament the day that connected me with this mission. Why it is that I am here, I know not... Should this mission be broken up, I should
not be disappointed. At any rate I doubt whether I have any connection with it for a long time to come.”

On April 1, Spalding wrote in his diary: “Last eve letters arrived from Doct. Whitman & wife. Doct. remains at his old station. Everything seems to be settled.” During the latter part of that month, Spalding went to Wailatpu to get the printing press. On the 27th, he wrote: “Mr. Smith & the Doct. on good terms for which I am truly thankful. Also Mrs. Whitman & Mrs. Smith are on good terms which is a matter of much joy. Doubtless they have all prayed more & talked less.”

On April 30, the Smiths left for Kamiah. For the first time in eight months, the Whitman household was back to normal size. After tarrying a few days at Lapwai, the Smiths moved on to Kamiah arriving there on May 10. Gray accompanied them in order to help in the erection of a rude cabin to serve as a temporary shelter for the summer. The cabin had no floor except the earth and no windows. Sarah wrote in her diary that they really did not need windows as “the many cracks furnish us with sufficient light.” None of the other couples in the Oregon Mission lived in such an isolated place and under such primitive conditions as the Smiths at Kamiah. Moreover, none of the six missionary wives was in such poor health as Sarah Smith.

Smith and Gray, who had not been on speaking terms with each other at times when crossing the country in the summer of 1838, now discovered that they were in full agreement in their criticisms of Spalding. In the lonely isolation of Kamiah, the unhappy and ill-adjusted Smith had plenty of time to brood on his misfortunes and to write long letters to Greene. Thus, while at Kamiah, Smith’s discontentment became a greater threat to the harmony and success of the Oregon Mission than it ever was at Wailatpu.

**Other Events of the Spring and Summer of 1839**

On April 17, 1839, Spalding learned of the arrival at Fort Vancouver of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin O. Hall, members of the Hawaiian Mission of the American Board, with the small printing press which that Mission was giving to the Oregon Mission. Hall informed Spalding that he expected to accompany a Hudson’s Bay party under the command of Francis Ermatinger up the Columbia to Fort Walla Walla with the hope of arriving there on or about May 1. He suggested that Spalding meet him at the
fort with horses to carry the press to Lapwai but that a canoe be provided for Mrs. Hall as she was then unable to ride horseback. She was suffering from a chronic illness of the spine and was able to sit up, as Narcissa wrote, “but very little” [Letter 63]. We are amazed to read of the long sea voyage and then the travel in Old Oregon under primitive conditions which Mrs. Hall ventured to undertake in her handicapped condition. Moreover, she was pregnant and gave birth to a daughter at Waiilatpu on November 5, 1839. Even Whitman, however, felt that the travel would improve her health and that she would gain much by a change of climate [Letter 62].

The Spaldings with their little girl left Lapwai on April 24 and arrived at Waiilatpu on the 27th. Word came from Pambrun on the 29th that the Halls, with the press, were at Fort Walla Walla. The next day, the Whitmans and the Spaldings rode to the fort. Spalding was delighted with the press and the supplies which came with it. Writing in his diary, he said: “Rev. Mr. Bingham says the press, type, paper, binding materials, sugar, molasses & salt which his church & congregation purchased & sent as a donation to this Mission amounted to about $400.” This was the first American press to be established on the Pacific Coast of what is now the United States. In the years following, seven items in the Nez Perce and one in the Spokane language were to be printed on it.61

**Whitman Reports to Greene**

The Spaldings and Edwin Hall, with the pack train carrying the press and supplies, left Fort Walla Walla on May 6. Mrs. Hall made the journey to Lapwai in a canoe manned by friendly Nez Perces. Whitman was at the Fort to see them off. During this visit to the Fort, Whitman had opportunity to talk with Ermatinger, who passed on to him some gossip regarding the unfavorable impression that Samuel Parker had left on Company officials at Fort Vancouver. Such information revived unhappy memories of letters which he and Spalding had received from Greene about a year earlier quoting Parker as saying that he could have taken a party of missionaries of the same size as the 1836 party to Oregon at far less expense than that incurred by Whitman and Spalding. Whitman had replied to those letters in October 1838, but in a mild way.

Some of the things which Ermatinger told raised Whitman’s ire. He was doubly sensitive of criticism because of recent events within the
Mission; for instance, the vote calling upon him to leave Waiilatpu.
There is reason to believe that the Whitmans had considered the possi-
bility of leaving the Mission and moving to the Willamette Valley. What-
ever may have been the psychological background, this we know; on
May 10, 1839, Whitman wrote a 3,000—word letter to Greene which is
the sharpest of all of his extant letters. In it he reviewed his experiences
with Parker while crossing the plains and the mountains in the summer
of 1835. He cited incident after incident to show Parker’s ineptness, his
lack of good judgment, his refusal to do his fair share of work, and fi-
nally his failure in Old Oregon to prepare the way for the mission party
of 1836. Regarding this last point, Whitman wrote: ”We cannot say how
much good Mr. P’s tour will do others, it has done us none, for instead
of meeting us at Rendezvous as he agreed, he neglected even to write a
single letter containing any information concerning the country, Indi-
ans, prospects, or advice of any kind whatever” [Letter 62].

In this letter of May 10, Whitman made only a brief reference to the
action of the Mission regarding his possible removal from Waiilatpu:
”It was expected that I should have gone to join a new station in a more
central location, but it has been deferred for the present.” Whitman
also gave a financial report for the year ending on the date he wrote.
The total expense incurred by the Oregon Mission was £595-1-0, which
was less than an average of £100 for each of the six families. When we
remember that prices at Fort Vancouver were about double prime cost,
the total expense for the year was most reasonable. Whitman assumed
£118-19-10 as his share, which included the cost of taking care of three
couples of the reinforcement during the winter of 1838–39. His item-
ized statement follows:

Family supplies, building materials, farming (tools) provisions,
medicines, Indian goods, transportation ..................... £67-8-4
One-sixth General Expense for Black Smith shop, Mill Irons,
Steel for ploughs, hoes, chains, etc, bolt cloth, hire of Smith,
transportation ................................................... £17-17-2
Labour............................................................... £21-3-4
Passage of an Hawaiian & wife from the Sandwich Isls.... £12-10-0
AlicE ClariSSA Whitman

About four months before Narcissa received her first mail from her family in New York State, she wrote a letter to her “Very, Very Dear Parents,” under date of March 14, 1838. This was her thirtieth birthday and the first of her daughter, Alice Clarissa. The letter begins with the lament: “More than two years have passed since I left my father’s home and not a single word has been wafted hence, or, perhaps I should say, has greeted my ears to afford consolation in a desponding hour. This long, long silence makes me feel the truth of our situation, that we are far, very far removed from the land of our birth and Christian privileges.”

This letter, like others written by Narcissa to her loved ones during the two years her daughter was alive, is sprinkled with tender references to her. The proud mother listed the words the one-year-old could say, as “Papa,” “Mama,” and “pussy.” The last word shows that the Whitmans had a cat. From other references, we know that they also had at least one dog. The little girl was then learning to walk. Narcissa wrote: “She is as large and larger than some of the native children of two years old. Her strength, size, and activity surprise the Indians very much. They think it is owing to their being laced on their tecashes (as they call the board they use for them), motionless night and day, that makes their children so weak and small when compared with her.”

On April 11, 1838, Narcissa wrote again to her parents and again made mention of her little girl. “My Clarissa is my own little companion from day to day, and dear daughter.” Again: “She is her mother’s constant companion, & appears to be very lonely if she is out of sight but for a few moments... Dear child, she is a great solace & comfort to her mother in her lonely hours & God grant she may live still to continue so.” In this letter Narcissa requested that some flannel dresses, shoes, and other clothing items be sent for her daughter. She also requested that “the name of Alice Clarissa Whitman, born Wieletpoo, O. Territory, March 14, 1837, be placed in father’s family Bible.”

On September 18, 1838, shortly after the arrival of the reinforcement, Narcissa wrote another long letter to her sister Jane, from which the following is taken: “Yes, Jane, you cannot know how much of a comfort our little daughter, Alice Clarissa, is to her father and mother. O, how many melancholy hours she has saved me, while living here alone so
long, especially when her father is gone for many days together. I wish most sincerely that her aunts could see her, for surely they would love her as well as her parents. She is now eighteen months old, very large and remarkably healthy. She is a great talker. Causes her mother many steps and much anxiety. She is just beginning to sing with us in our family worship. The moment singing commences, if she is not in her mother's arms, she comes to me immediately and wishes me to take her, especially if it is a Nez Perce hymn that we are singing. We have but three or four of them, and sing them every day, and Alice has become so familiar with them that she is repeating some part of them most of the time."

As Narcissa was writing this letter, Alice Clarissa happened to lay a dirty hand on the upper left-hand corner of the page. Since Narcissa had nearly finished filling the page when the incident took place, she decided not to rewrite that part of her letter but to send it as it was with the explanation: "You see, Jane, Alice has come & laid her dirty hands on this paper & given it a fine mark. I send it as it is so that you may have some of her doings to look at & realize perhaps that there is such a child in existence." [See illustration in this volume, page 346.]

The original letter was included in the collection of Narcissa's letters given by her sister, Harriet, to the Oregon Historical Society sometime before 1891. When I was gathering material for my *Marcus Whitman, M.D.*, I visited the Oregon Historical Society and asked to see this letter, as I wanted to see the little girl's smudge marks. I then learned that the letter had mysteriously disappeared. Years later, while examining the Whitman letters in the Coe Collection at Yale University, I discovered this letter, and there on one page were the marks of Alice Clarissa's dirty hand. A copy of this page is included as an illustration in this book. Just how the letter got into the Coe Collection is not fully known.

**Alice Clarissa Drowned**

As has been indicated, the Walla Walla River flowed a few feet from the first Whitman home. Both Marcus and Narcissa were aware of the danger of the stream as they saw their little girl learning to walk and watched her active feet carry her about the house and dooryard. Marcus was unable to construct a fence around the dooryard for lack of suitable materials. On the Friday before the tragedy, the parents were working in their vegetable garden with Alice who, in her baby ways, was trying to
be of assistance. Marcus happened to pull up a radish which the child took and ran away with it. After awhile the parents, missing her in the garden, searched for her and found her washing the radish in the river. They were “horrorstricken,” to use Narcissa’s term, to find her alone by the stream [Letter 67].

Being more aware than ever of the danger of the stream, the parents repeatedly sought to warn Alice of its dangers. Some weeks before the final tragedy, Whitman found it necessary to drown a sick dog, called Boxer, with which Alice had often played. Feeling that this might be a good object lesson, Alice was permitted to watch the drowning of the dog. That evening after her mother had again repeated the warning about going near the river, the child said: “Alice fall in water; Alice she die like Boxer—Mama have no Alice” [Letter 67].

The events of the last day of Alice’s life are described in detail by the sorrowing mother in a letter sent to her father dated September 30, 1839. On Sunday morning, June 23, Narcissa awakened her daughter with a kiss. The child slowly opened her eyes and, then seeing her mother, stretched up her pudgy arms for an embrace. Although only two years and three months old, Alice was able to sing a number of hymns frequently used by her parents in family worship. That morning she asked for “Rock of Ages.” Later the grieving mother remembered how, after singing the first stanza, Alice asked: “Mama, should my tears forever flow.” That was her way of calling for the second stanza where these words occur.

Later that morning the Whitmans took their daughter with them when they conducted a worship service for the Indians in their vicinity. Here again at the close of the service, “Rock of Ages” was sung. Of this, Narcissa wrote: “She united with us again, with a clearness and distinctness we shall never forget, and with such ecstasy as almost to raise her out of her chair. And no wonder for what words could have been more appropriate to her mind than these:

\[
\text{While I draw this fleeting breath,} \\
\text{When my eyelids close in death;} \\
\text{When I rise to worlds unknown,} \\
\text{And behold Thee on Thy throne,} \\
\text{Rock of Ages, cleft for me,} \\
\text{Let me hide myself in Thee.}
\]
Dear father, when you sing this hymn, think of me, for my thoughts do not recur to it without almost overcoming me... This was the last [time] we heard her sing."

About two-thirty on that fateful Sunday afternoon, Margaret McKay set the table for the Sunday evening meal. Both Marcus and Narcissa were absorbed in reading. Later Narcissa had a dim recollection that Alice had said: “Mama, supper is almost ready; let Alice get some water” [Letter 68]. Taking two cups from the table, the child left the house. “This was like a shadow that passed across my mind,” wrote Narcissa.” [It] passed away and made no impression.”

Soon Narcissa realized that the child was gone and asked Margaret to look for her. Margaret went out and not seeing Alice, went to the garden for some vegetables instead of returning at once to report. Then Mungo went out to look and soon he came back saying that he saw two cups in the river. “How did they get there?” asked Narcissa. “Let them be,” said Marcus, “and get them tomorrow, because of the Sabbath.” But Narcissa, becoming uneasy, again asked: “How did they get there?” Then Marcus replied: “I suppose Alice put them there.” Laying aside his book, he went out to investigate. Narcissa followed. At first they went to the garden. Then after a flash of memory crossed her mind about Alice getting the cups, Narcissa ran to the river. Marcus joined her.

In a letter to her mother, Narcissa described their frantic search: “We ran down on the brink of the river near the place where she was, and, as if forbidden to approach the spot, although accessible, we passed her, crossed a bend in the river far below, and then back again, and then in another direction, still further below, while others got into the river and waded to find her, and what was remarkable, all entered the river below where she was last found.”

When all hope passed of finding her alive, the despairing parents turned towards their house. Then, according to Narcissa: “We saw an old Indian preparing to enter the river where she fell in. I stopped to see him swim under water until he passed me, and just a little below me he took her from the water and exclaimed ‘She is found.’” Dr. Whitman grasped the body and did what he could to restore breathing but it was in vain. The child was dead. In the depths of her sorrow, Narcissa “flew to the promises of God’s holy word,” where she found the strength to say: “Thy will be done, not mine” [Letter 68].
THE FUNERAL

A messenger was sent at once to notify the Spaldings and others at Lapwai. He made the 120-mile trip in twenty-five hours. E. O. Hall, the printer, left at once for Waiilatpu. He rode all Monday night and arrived at Waiilatpu in twenty-four hours. Spalding was recovering from an injury received as the result of a serious fall, perhaps from a horse, and was unable to ride horseback. Therefore, the Spaldings made the trip to Fort Walla Walla by canoe down the Clearwater, the Snake, and the Columbia Rivers. The log canoe was manned by Nez Perces. They traveled all Monday night, and during the day on Tuesday and Wednesday, arriving at Fort Walla Walla about 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday. The next morning, June 26, they rode out to Waiilatpu, arriving there about 10:00 a.m. Pambrun accompanied them. Spalding noted in his diary: “Riding caused considerable pain in my side… Mrs. S. much fatigued.” It may be assumed that the Spaldings took their little girl with them.

During the three-day interval following the child’s death, Narcissa had prepared a shroud for the body while Marcus supervised the making of a coffin and the digging of a grave at the foot of the hill to the northeast of the mission house. Spalding took for his text words found in II Kings 4:26: “Is it well with the child?” Only a few were present for the funeral service. These included the Whitmans and the members of their household, the Spaldings, Hall, Pambrun, and possibly a few Indians. In a letter to her mother dated October 9, 1839, Narcissa wrote that although the grave was in sight every time she stepped out-of-doors: “I seem not to feel that she is there.” The spirit had gone to God who gave it.

Because of the slowness of the mails, we may assume that for the next two years letters from the States carried references to Alice Clarissa. Perhaps also in time came the clothing that Narcissa had requested in her letter of April 11, 1838. Such references and articles of clothing would have been poignant reminders of the little child no longer with them.

Sometime after the funeral, Dr. Whitman constructed a picket fence around the grave which a visitor to Waiilatpu saw in May 1843. In the late 1930s, a construction crew working on the road at the base of the hill, uncovered some short boards which might have been used for a coffin and bones judged to be of a two-year-old child. Because of a belief
that these remains were those of Alice Clarissa, a marker was erected on the site and dedicated on May 8, 1969.

**Reconciliation and Rededication**

An old adage proved again to be true: "A joy shared is a joy increased; a sorrow shared is a sorrow decreased." The hearts of all in the Mission were touched by the great bereavement which had come to the Whitmans. For the time being, at least, old animosities were forgotten and a kindlier feeling was manifested. Whitman began to reproach himself for his reluctance to abide by the decision of the Mission to move. Terrible questions haunted his mind. Was the death of his little girl a judgment of God for his hardness of heart? Was this tragic event a sign from heaven telling him not to leave the Mission but to remain at his post? In a letter dated June 30, 1839, and directed to Elkanah Walker, Whitman wrote: “It is sufficient to say I could not, see any hope of a reconciliation in the Mission & had concluded to take the consequences of leaving the Mission at the (next) annual meeting but God in his wise & holy Providence has seen fit to stay me from such a course. I feel satisfied nothing but his hand has done it. I was set upon an opportunity of self justification but God, I trust, has shown me that I should exercise a different spirit.”

Whitman gave Walker further details regarding his change of attitude: “On Sabbath, the 23rd instant, I was lead to read Henry on Meekness which so softened my feelings for the time at least as to lead me to desire that Grace & to resolve to exercise it toward the Brethren of the Mission, which was the first lucid moment of reason I had seen. But this was God’s method to prepare me for a severe chastening stroke. In the afternoon of that day, he saw cause to take from us our much loved Alice Clarissa.” Matthew Henry’s small volume on Meekness may have been the book he was reading when little Alice got the cups and left the house for the river. Whitman was moved to ask the forgiveness of all in the Mission “for the spirit of harshness & stubbornness which they have seen in me at any time.” Whitman added, in this letter to Walker: “I find my pen quite too stiff to express the feelings of my heart. I no longer wish to make conditions of peace with my brethren… I feel to confess that I have been to blame at every step of difficulty in the Mission.” Humbly, he asked the forgiveness of the Walkers for everything he might have
done to offend them. In this confession, Narcissa joined and likewise asked forgiveness.

Narcissa, in a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, mentioned that her husband had been about to leave the Mission “had not the Lord removed from us our beloved child.” She wrote that the affliction had not only softened his heart, but also “had a great effect upon all in the mission; it softened their hearts toward us.” In a letter that Whitman wrote to Greene on October 15, 1840, he stated that he had planned to leave the Mission “had not the Providence of God arrested me in my deliberate determination to do so by taking away our dear child in so sudden a manner by drowning.”

**More Trips to Lapwai**

The Spaldings remained at Waiilatpu for a week following Alice Clarissa’s funeral, thus giving Spalding time to recover from his injury. Since Spalding felt the need for a conference of all working in the Nez Perce language to decide on an alphabet, he induced the Whitmans to return with him and E. O. Hall to Lapwai. The party left Waiilatpu on Thursday morning, July 4, and, in order to avoid traveling on Sunday, rode on the average forty miles a day. They arrived at Lapwai late on Saturday, the 6th. On the following Monday, the Whitmans, the Spaldings, and Hall left for Kamiah, sixty miles distant, to consult with Smith. This trip took them two days. Spalding noted in his diary that the Smiths were living “in a very open house without floor or windows, much to the injury... of Mrs. Smith’s health. Their food, pudding & milk is quite too simple, I think.”

Now that a printing press was at hand and Hall from Honolulu was present to help with any printing that might be done, it was necessary to decide upon a system for reducing the Nez Perce language to writing. Spalding had worked on this problem and had devised an alphabet in which he used some consonant letters of the Roman alphabet, not needed in the Nez Perce language, to represent certain vowel sounds: e.g., “b” was used as “a” in “hawk”. Spalding’s alphabet proved to be too inaccurate to be used. Even though Smith had been on the field for less than a year, he had already mastered the language to such an extent that even Spalding deferred to his judgment. Sometime previous to this meeting at Kamiah, Greene had sent to the Oregon missionaries an es-
say by John Pickering on “The Adoption of a Uniform Orthography for the Indian languages of North America,” which proved to be a helpful guide. The four men—Whitman, Spalding, Hall, and Smith agreed on taking the twelve letter alphabet which was being used in the Hawaiian Islands to which were added the letters “s” and “t.” Other letters, as “b, d, f, g, r, v, and z” were to be used in foreign words. The alphabet thus worked out was formally adopted at the mission meeting held the following September.

The Whitmans spent the following Sunday, July 14, at Lapwai and left on Tuesday for Waiilatpu where they arrived on Friday, the 19th. That very day word came from Tshimakain that Mrs. Eells was seriously ill. Her husband, despairing of her life, begged Whitman to come at once. Marcus was reluctant to leave his wife alone when the loss of their daughter was still so fresh in their minds, but duty called. Narcissa had to pay the price of being a doctor’s wife. “It was then,” she wrote, “that I fully realized the full reality of my bereavement” [Letter 68].

Marcus was able to return in about two weeks. During the third week in August, the Whitmans were pleasantly surprised when William Geiger, Jr., of Angelica, New York, suddenly arrived at Waiilatpu. With him was a D. G. Johnson. Both men were on their way to the Willamette Valley with the expectation of settling there. They were the first of a long procession of Oregon immigrants to stream past the Whitman mission. A few years later [as will be mentioned], Geiger entered Whitman’s employ.

On Sunday, August 25, little Eliza Spalding got an obstruction in her throat which so alarmed her parents that they sent for Dr. Whitman. By riding all night after receiving word, he was able to reach Lapwai on the 28th. He found the little girl recovered. This was the fifth time since the first of that year, 1839, that Whitman had made the 240-mile, round trip, ride to Lapwai. During those same eight months, he had also ridden twice to the Tucannon River, once to Kamiah from Lapwai, and once to Tshimakain, making a total of about 1,800 miles. If on these trips, Whitman had averaged riding thirty miles a day, this meant that he would have spent a full two months in the saddle! Under such circumstances, we marvel how he was able at the same time to direct farming activities at Waiilatpu, tend to the growing administrative duties of the Mission, continue his study of the language, and carry on his professional and missionary activities for the natives.
Since the Annual Meeting of the Mission was scheduled to be held at Lapwai during the first part of September, Whitman made plans, before he left Waiilatpu, for Narcissa to follow. On the evening of August 30, when Narcissa was expected to arrive, Marcus mounted his horse and with little Eliza Spalding rode down the trail on the south side of the Clearwater to meet his wife. Narcissa and those with her happened to have crossed the Snake River at Alpowa and had gone up the north side of the Clearwater, so they missed each other. Narcissa arrived at Lapwai at sunset while Marcus returned after dark.
1 Strictly speaking, the name Lapwai applied to the whole valley and also to the site of the first Spalding home. Today the name Lapwai has been given to a small settlement several miles up the valley. In 1897 the mission site on the bank of the Clearwater was named Spalding when a post office was established there.

2 From Spalding letter of October 9, 1837, in Hawaiian Spectator, I:367: “Mrs. McDonald . . . with more or less native blood . . . has no native appearance, has spent some time with Rev. Mr. Cochran of Red. R., reads and speaks English very correctly.” Narcissa called her “quite an intelligent woman” [Letter 50].

3 See, also, discussion of finances in section “The Men at Fort Vancouver,” Chapter Nine, and Appendix 2.

4 Although Dunbar and Allis founded the mission for the Pawnee Indians, at first they were appointed for the Oregon work.

5 See Drury, Walker, pp. 254 ff., for an account of the author’s experiences in receiving from Sam Walker, the youngest son of Elkanah and Mary Walker, many items such as letters, books, etc., which had belonged to his parents. Included in the lot were eight volumes from the Columbia Mission Library. Most of the items then received are now in Coll. Wn.

6 The financial reports of the Oregon Mission are in Coll. A. Photostats of certain relevant sections are in Coll. Wn.

7 See Drury, Spalding, p. 203. The copy Spalding received is now in Coll. W.

8 Hulbert, O.P., VI:284 ff.

9 Henry Hill was Treasurer of the American Board. 1822–54.

10 Drury, Spalding, 205 ff. Also, McLoughlin ms., Coll. B., p. 6: “The Rev. Mr. Parker . . . is very unpopular with the other Protestant missionaries in this country for which I see no cause.”

11 The original record book is in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. An inaccurate transcription appeared in the 1903 Minutes of the Synod of Washington which was republished in the Minutes for 1936. Spalding included in the records of the church a brief biographical sketch of each of the charter members.

12 See Chapter Four, fn. 3, for reference to the division of the Presbyterian Church in 1837 into the Old and New School branches. The latter was closely affiliated with the Congregational Church. Bath Presbytery was a part of the New School. At the time of the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon, the missionaries were unaware of this division in their home church. No record has been found in the minutes of Bath Presbytery to this Oregon church. Spalding possibly had forgotten to report its organization. Actually, the polity of the Oregon Mission Church was more Congregational than it was Presbyterian.

13 Original in Coll. W.

14 Writing to Greene on Sept. 11, 1838, Spalding asked: “Did I do right in baptizing Compo, who had before been baptized by a Catholic priest, & did I do right in refusing our friend Mr. Pambrun, a Catholic, a place at our table?” No record of Greene’s reply to these questions has been found.

15 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 72, quoting from Smith’s letter to Greene of July 10, 1838.

16 W.C.Q., xvi (1913), No. 2, gives Gray’s journal of the trip. Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, pp. 166 ff. points out that Gray’s conduct in this skirmish brought lasting
disgrace to him among the mountain men when they heard about the fight.

17 According to the records of the Medical College, Gray gave his home address as “Columbia, Oregon.”

18 Mowry, Marcus Whitman, p. 86.

19 The Annual Reports of the American Board listed Rogers as a member of the Oregon Mission for three years under the following classifications: 1840—Mechanic; 1841—Teacher; and 1842—Printer & Teacher.

20 Drury, F.W.W., III:239, quoting from Gray’s letter to Greene written at the Rendezvous July 10, 1838: “Please inform me in your next letter whether you told Mr. Smith while in N. York that he would be furnished with a separate tent, travelling cases, cooking utensils &c &c for the journey or what suggestion you made to him on the subject of traveling from Independence to Walla Walla.” Evidently Smith had complained to Gray regarding his failure to provide what Greene had promised. Greene’s answer to Gray’s question has not been found.

21 Drury, F.W.W., II:87. Hereafter when name of person quoted and date of diary entry are given, no further reference will be given in footnotes.

22 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 72. Josephy, in his The Nez Perce Indians, p. 176, in commenting on Smith’s evaluation of Gray, wrote: “Smith was a master at character assassination, but in the case of Gray, he reported facts.”

23 Drury, F.W.W., III:238.


26 See ante, fn. 5 of this chapter. This volume was one of the items received from Sam Walker on July 15, 1939. A few months after these items were obtained, the Walker home with all of its contents burned. Mr. and Mrs. Walker escaped.

27 No record book containing the minutes of the Annual Meetings of the Oregon Mission has been located. Copies of actions taken were sometimes included in letters sent to the American Board by individual members of the Mission. In Walker’s letter to Greene dated October 15, 1838, we find a summary of actions taken at the September 1838 meeting. See Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 90.

28 The term Flathead is nowadays confined to a tribe in western Montana, but in the time of the missionaries, the name was used more widely to include some other tribes, such as the Spokanes, who spoke closely related Salishan dialects.


30 Drury, F.W.W., I:245. Original letter in Coll. Y.

31 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 255. Hereafter references to diary entries of either Spalding or Smith will be to this volume, thus no footnotes will be needed.

32 Drury, F.W.W., I:244 gives a letter written by Mary Gray to Lapwai on Sept. 29, 1838, in which she stated: “We have observed the M[aternal] Association but in order to do this we were last Wednesday obliged to resort to a grove to find a place sufficiently retired from public gaze.

33 Through some oversight, the two younger daughters of the Spaldings were not listed. For a list of the children born to the five women, see Drury, F.W.W., I:22. The Smiths had no children. Descendants of the Walkers, the Spaldings, and the Grays still live in the Pacific Northwest.
34 Drury, *Spalding*, p. 201, quoting from a letter Spalding wrote to Greene on July 12, 1841: “I have already disposed of a few young cattle on this score.”


36 Fort Colville stood in the middle of a prairie about one and one-half miles wide, and about three miles long on the east bank of the Columbia River. The site is now covered with waters backed up by the Grand Coulee Dam.

37 Mrs. Perkins, neé Elvira Johnson, was a schoolmate of Mary Walker’s in 1834 when both attended the Maine Wesleyan Seminary, Kents Hill, Maine. Miss Johnson was a member of the first 1837 Methodist reinforcement. On Nov. 21, 1837, she married the Rev. H. K. W. Perkins, who arrived in Oregon with the second reinforcement of that year.

38 HBC Arch., A/6/25. According to a letter from the Hudson’s Bay Company in London to Douglas, Nov. 15, 1837, the initial idea of sending priests to Old Oregon for the French Canadians came from the Bishop of Juliopolis, the Roman Catholic primate of Canada. The letter stated: “One important objection to our compliance with the Bishop’s request . . . is that when the boundary line shall be determined, the southern side of the Columbia River may become United States Territory, and we are unwilling to become instrumental in forwarding the views of the American Government and establishing for them a Colony of British Subjects, who in due time might become dangerous neighbors.” HBC Arch., B/223/c carries a reference to a recommendation of Dr. McLoughlin’s that a priest be sent to the Willamette Valley. In Oct. 1838, the adult male population of the Valley was 51, including 23 French Canadians, 10 Methodist missionaries, and 18 other Americans. *McLoughlin’s Vancouver Letters*, III:XXXIV.


41 This log church was the forerunner of the Roman Catholic church at St. Paul, Oregon. A brick building, which replaced the log church, was dedicated Nov. 1, 1846. It is still in use.


44 HBC Arch., 1857 Parliamentary Report, Notes from the Select Committee, pp. 1102 ff.

45 There were four priests with the Blanchet surname in the Old Oregon country. The first was Francois Norbet Blanchet, consecrated Bishop of Philadelphia in Partibus Infidelium (name later changed to Bishop of Drasa) at Montreal on July 25, 1845. A younger brother, A. M. A. Blanchet was made Bishop of Walla Walla shortly before the Whitman massacre in 1847. A nephew of these two, Francis Xavier Blanchet, and George Blanchet, O.M. (relationship unknown) later went to Oregon. Information furnished by kindness of the late Father W. J. Davis, S.J., of Spokane.


47 Elkanah Walker’s diary; original in Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.


51 Italics are the author's.

52 Cyrus Walker was the second son born of white American parents in Old Oregon, but the first to live to maturity. The first was Joseph Beers, a son of a Methodist missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Alanson Beers, born Sept. 15, 1837, in the Willamette Valley.


55 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 127. Sections of Spalding’s letters to Greene, written in 1836 and 1837, which referred to Tackensuatis, had been published in the *Missionary Herald*.

56 Ibid., pp. 96 ff.

57 Whitman’s letter, No. 59a, carries reference to a request for a supply of corn and potatoes to be paid to Lawyer, perhaps for his services in teaching the Nez Perce language to Smith.


59 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 173, for reference by Smith to the marriage performed by Spalding.

60 Ibid., p. 95. Italics are the author’s.


62 Much information from this letter has been used in a previous chapter of this book where the travels of Whitman and Parker to the Rockies in 1835 were reviewed.

63 This letter of Narcissa’s was published in *T.O.P.A.*, 1891: 101 ff., but with about 1,000 words being omitted. The quotation here given is from the part not published.

64 All efforts to locate the Prentiss family Bible have failed. The Whitman family Bible is in Coll. W.

65 Spalding translated a number of gospel hymns into the Nez Perce language, some of which are still being used by the Christian Nez Perces. It may be that the Nez Perce hymns used by the Whitmans were some Spalding had translated.

66 In a letter to me dated May 13, 1960, Helen L. Shaffner of Dillon, Montana, wrote: “I wish I could have recorded all the stories told me by my Father and Great Uncle. One of my favorites, though, concerns the son of the man who found Alice Clarissa’s body. For years his picture hung on the wall in the basement of my Great Uncle’s home. The picture showed him in the bright shirt that had been given his Father by Whitman as a reward for finding the body.” She identified the Indian who found the body of Alice Clarissa as Chief Umtippe.


68 Italics are the author’s.

69 Matthew Henry’s *Discourse on Meekness* was published at Plymouth, Mass., in 1828. This volume may have been included in a shipment of books sent to the Oregon Mission by the American Board which arrived during the summer of 1838. The following quotation from p. 12, might have been read by Whitman on that fateful
June 23: “When the events of providence are grievous and afflicting to sense, and crossing our secular interests; meekness, doth not only quiet us under them, but reconciles us to them; and enables us, not only to bear, but to receive evil as well as good, at the hand of the Lord.”

70 O.H.Q., XXIII (1922) carries illustrations of some pages printed by Spalding at Lapwai which illustrate the alphabet which Spalding first devised.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN  A Year of Adjustments, 1838–1839

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This last page of the letter to her sister Jane, September 18, 1838, shows the smudge of her little girl's hand. Alice was eighteen months old. The final two sentences read: "You see Jane, Alice has come & laid her dirty hands on this letter & given it a fine mark. I send it as it is so that you may have some of her doings to look at & realize perhaps that there is such a child in existence." Courtesy and permission, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
FOURTH YEAR OF
THE OREGON MISSION
1839–1840

The fourth year of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was marred by growing dissension among its members; long letters of criticism about Spalding were sent to the Board. The two troublemakers were W. H. Gray and Asa B. Smith, both being unhappy in their respective stations within the Mission. The fact that both men had made spur-of-the-moment decisions to go as missionaries to Old Oregon reveals a certain instability of character and lack of good judgment. Some of the blame must also rest on the secretaries of the Board who approved their appointments with so little investigation of suitability.

GRAY DEMANDS A STATION FOR HIMSELF

The Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission for 1839 was held in Spalding’s home at Lapwai September 2–5. Whitman, Spalding, Gray, and Smith were present. Walker and Eells were unable to attend. Hall and Rogers were made corresponding members. Spalding was again elected moderator and Smith, clerk. The first action taken rescinded the vote of the special meeting held the previous February, which called for Whitman to start a new station in a central location. Now he was permitted to remain at Waiilatpu, and Smith was authorized to open a station at Kamiah. “I do not approve of this,” wrote Spalding in his
diary. “There should be a mission in the Cayuse tribe & the physician should be near the centre of the field.”

Gray argued for a station of his own. After considerable heated discussion, the majority reluctantly granted permission for him to explore for a station, but again Spalding disapproved. This particular action of the Mission caused much subsequent trouble because Gray interpreted it to mean that he was authorized to establish a new station, and not merely to explore the possibility. In a letter to Walker dated October 15, Whitman wrote: “I thought it was clearly expressed by the meeting that he was not to locate for the year to come but make his home at Clear Water for that time.”

As soon as possible after the Mission meeting closed on September 5, the Grays started on their tour of exploration. After being away from Lapwai for more than a month, they returned on October 18 and informed Spalding that they had selected a site “about a day above Walla Walla on a small stream putting in from the S.W.” Gray began immediate preparations to move. Spalding, with his characteristic bluntness, told him that the Mission had not authorized the establishment of a new station, but had only given him permission to explore. The argument became heated. Gray, thoroughly discouraged and smarting under what he felt was his inferior status in the Mission, decided to investigate the possibilities of finding employment elsewhere.

Gray left for Fort Vancouver on October 21 with the hope of finding some employment in the Willamette Valley and even possibly with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Dr. McLoughlin refused to hire him as he could not produce satisfactory evidence that his withdrawal from the Mission met the approval of his associates. This rebuff by Dr. McLoughlin accounts in part for the caustic remarks which Gray later made on the Hudson’s Bay Company. Also, Spalding’s attitude explains Gray’s severe criticism of him in several letters written to Greene during the winter of 1839–40.

Disappointed in his endeavors to find employment elsewhere, Gray returned to Fort Walla Walla and sent word to his wife at Lapwai to join him. Gray was so angry with Spalding that he refused to return to Lapwai. Mary Gray, with her seven-month-old baby left Lapwai on November 11 with only an Indian escort. During Gray’s absence, Spalding wrote to Walker and Eells to find out how they would interpret the
action of the Mission regarding Gray. Both replied expressing full agreement with the position that he and Whitman had taken; thus the judgment of the four was unanimous against Gray moving. Had Gray been able to find employment elsewhere, the subsequent history of the Mission would have been far different.

Early in the week of November 10, Whitman left for Lapwai to attend Mrs. Spalding who was expecting to be confined about the middle of November. He reached the sandy beach on the Clearwater River, opposite the Spalding home, on Thursday night, the 14th, but being unable to attract Spalding’s attention, had to spend the night sleeping on the sand. The little beach is still there.²

While Whitman was at Lapwai, word came from Gray demanding a special meeting of the Mission to clarify his status. Both Whitman and Spalding felt that this was impractical because of the cost and trouble involved. They wrote a joint letter, dated November 25, to Gray in which they pointed out the difficulties in holding such a meeting and “respectfully requested” him to proceed to Waiilatpu where Whitman was to provide him with living quarters and where he was to assist in the erection of buildings and such other work as “Doct. Whitman shall direct.” Gray was infuriated when he received the letter. He replied on December 2, saying:

In regard to your orders or request, I have only to say: Gentlemen, I shall not yet nor shall I put myself under the control of any Committee of our Mission to answer individual demands any further than labor properly coming under the care and control of the Mission. The proposition to which you refer was gratuitous and does not relate to Doct. Whitman in any way except that he is bound equally with myself to assist the ordained Ministers (not Doct. Whitman) in building and furnishing their permanent houses… I protest against your right as a Committee of this Mission to order me to obey the private order or direction of any member of this Mission, or any body else in any way, shape, or manner.³

Whitman, on December 3, wrote to Walker: “What is to be the course of Mr. Gray, I know not. He is with his family at Walla Walla. I invited him here & offered to arrange a house for him... but he objected to all we propose...” Although Gray was embittered against Spalding, he was even more aroused over the “request” that he go to Waiilatpu and
work for Whitman. In another letter to Walker, dated December 27, 1839, Whitman wrote that Gray “has spent six to eight weeks at Walla Walla, much of the time... in playing chequers with Mr. Payette while I had no door to my house & of course, no chairs or any thing of furni-
ture or windows but what Mr. Pambrun sent me.” Finally, Gray decided that returning to Lapwai was for him the lesser of two evils. Although Gray and his family arrived at the Spalding station on December 28, he sulked during the winter months, criticizing the constructive efforts Spalding was making, and in other ways causing trouble.

**THE FIRST INDEPENDENT MISSIONARIES**

When Whitman had arrived at Lapwai on August 28 to attend the Annual Meeting of the Mission, he brought news of the expected arrival that fall of two missionary couples who were venturing into the Oregon country on a “faith” basis, without the support of any mission-
ary board. Whitman had learned this from William Geiger, Jr., who had traveled with them as far as the Rendezvous and had then pushed on ahead. The couples were the Rev, and Mrs. John Smith Griffin and Mr. and Mrs. Asahel Munger. Spalding knew Griffin, for Griffin had helped him attach a top to the Dearborn wagon Captain Levi Hart had given his daughter and son-in-law in July 1835 before they started for their mission field which they then thought would be among the Osage Indians. The Griffins and the Mungers expected to establish a selfsup-
porting mission among some tribe of Oregon Indians—a highly imprac-
tical idea which at once aroused grave misgivings among all members of the Oregon Mission. They foresaw trouble and indeed trouble came.

Asahel Munger, a carpenter, had been a member of a colony of re-
ligious zealots who settled at Oberlin, Ohio, in 1833. John S. Griffin had entered the newly established Oberlin Theological Seminary in 1836, graduated in 1838, and shortly afterwards was ordained by the Congregational Church. Sometime in the summer of 1838 Muriger and Griffin had attended a meeting of the Oberlin Missionary Society when a speaker presented a thrilling report on missionary activities in Old Oregon. References were made to the Lee Party of 1834 and to the Whitman–Spalding party of 1836. Griffin was stirred by the message as he knew the Spaldings. According to Gray, Griffin decided shortly af-
terwards to go to Oregon as a missionary and persuaded Munger and his
wife, Eliza, to go with him. At that time Griffin was unmarried.

The two men applied to the American Board for appointments. But the Board had just authorized the 1838 reenforcement, and was also in financial difficulties, so the applications were therefore rejected. Munger then applied to the Congregational Church in Oberlin for an endorsement of his plan to go to Oregon as a missionary but the church refused to give any funds saying: “Under present circumstances the church can not feel justified in recommending to Br. & Sister Munger to embark on their proposed missionary expedition.” As will be told later, Munger became insane after his arrival in Old Oregon; it may be that the Oberlin church was aware of some mental instability and for that reason refused to endorse or support his proposed mission.

Griffin and Munger then turned to the Congregational Association of North Litchfield, Connecticut, which agreed to furnish funds to buy their outfit. With this assistance, the two men decided to go out to Oregon in 1839 on an independent basis, foolishly believing that the Lord would provide. Out of their abysmal ignorance of conditions in Old Oregon, they cherished the hope that once there, they could establish a self-supporting mission, without any outside financial assistance.

While passing through St. Louis on their way west, Griffin, in February 1839, met Miss Desire C. Smith. After a whirlwind courtship, they were married on April 10. The four crossed the plains to the Rendezvous with a small caravan of the American Fur Company. Mrs. Griffin and Mrs. Munger were the seventh and eighth white American omen to cross the Continental Divide. Like the six who had preceded them, they rode horseback on sidesaddles from the Missouri frontier to the Columbia River. After leaving the Rendezvous, the two couples had the good fortune to travel with a small Hudson’s Bay party to Fort Walla Walla under the command of Francis Ermatinger.

From several sources we learn that Griffin and Munger quarreled, especially after they left the Rendezvous. According to one report: “Munger blamed Griffin for the diet which made Mrs. M. unwell.” Evidently Griffin was doing the cooking. Munger, who kept a journal his overland travels, made the following brief note for Monday, July 29: “This day we divided our mess.” There were other points of friction also. The dream they had cherished at the beginning of their journey that the two couples would live and work together in one station was
shattered. By the time they had reached Fort Boise, they were scarcely on speaking terms.

The missionaries learned much from Ermatinger. As they drew near Fort Walla Walla, they became increasingly aware of the realities of their precarious situation. Munger’s journal reflects the uneasiness he felt regarding his future. How would they be able to support themselves without funds in a wilderness? In the Grande Ronde Valley, they learned from the Cayuse Indians that the Whitmans were at Lapwai attending a Mission meeting. After obtaining some directions regarding trails, the Griffins struck out alone without a guide for the Spalding mission. On September 9, Spalding noted without enthusiasm in his diary: “Mr. Griffin & wife arrive unexpectedly.” He had no alternative but to receive them.

On his way back to Wailatpu, following the Mission meeting, Whitman stopped over at Fort Walla Walla where he met the Mungers. On the morning of September 10, he entered into an arrangement with Munger by which he agreed to furnish board and room for the couple and pay Munger $8.00 a month until March 1, 1840, for his services as carpenter. Whitman needed help as Compo and his family had left for the Willamette Valley the previous May. Being able to hire a carpenter was one bright aspect of the unexpected burden of taking care of indigent missionaries so suddenly thrust upon the members of the Oregon Mission. Whitman was in urgent need of a qualified workman to assist in the erection of his new house, especially after Gray had refused to help; Munger seemed to be an answer to his prayers. The Mungers moved into the room which the Smiths had occupied, and within a month Munger finished a room for the Halls.

Edwin O. Hall, who had been at Lapwai to set up the printing press, returned to Wailatpu after the Mission meeting. His wife, being an invalid, was taken down the Snake River in a canoe and carried from Fort Walla Walla to Wailatpu in a hammock. On November 5, she gave birth to a baby girl. The Halls remained at Wailatpu until March 1, 1840, when they left to return to Hawaii.
SECRETARY GREENE ADVISES REGARDING INDEPENDENT MISSIONARIES

When Secretary Greene heard about the intentions of Griffin and Munger to go out to Old Oregon on an independent bases, he wrote to Spalding on October 15, 1838, saying: “You should conduct [yourselves] toward them, as of course you will be disposed to do, with all Christian courtesy & kindness... But do not permit the affairs of your mission & theirs to become entangled, so that you shall in any manner be deemed responsible for what they do.” 8 Although the members of the Oregon Mission had pronounced differences of opinion regarding some policies, they were unanimous in deploiring the coming of the independent missionaries and were in full accord with the advice Greene had to give.

In a letter to Greene dated September 13, 1839, Smith wrote: “The least that can be said is that they have brought themselves & the cause of Christ into disgrace... We must feed them for the winter, or the H.B. Co. must have mercy upon them or they will starve.” 9 Spalding expressed himself in a similar way in his letter to Greene of October 2 when he wrote: “We shall probably furnish them with labor enough for their support this winter. But I am sure they cannot succeed in their proposed self supporting Mission.” 10

The straitened circumstances in which the Griffins and the Mungers found themselves is further revealed in a letter written by Sarah Smith to Mary Walker and Myra Eells dated from Kamiah on December 18, 1839. She wrote: “What is best for us to do about giving to Mrs. Griffin? What they can do I know not, or how they can get things to make them comfortable I know not, unless some one gives them. I would give with all my heart if it is right. Mr. Smith, Mr. Hall & others say that they have come in opposition to the Amr. Board & ought not to be assisted. But the poor woman has come without a sheet or pillow case, & how they will get them I don’t know. Mrs. Spalding while I was there gave her three broken plates... & enough wide striped cotton to make a pair of sheets. If husband will consent I shall give her some things... She has more neck dresses than she will ever need & all very pretty. Mr. G. has enough. But sheets, pillow cases, paper & crockery, they need. Would you give them: Shall you do it?” 11

When Munger’s term of service ended on March 1, 1840, Whitman rehired him for another six months and raised his wages to £3 per month. “He is a good house carpenter,” wrote Whitman to Greene on
March 27. “In that time I hope he will finish our house & make us some comfortable furniture & some farming implements.” Writing on May 2, Narcissa said: “It seems as if the Lord’s hand was in it in sending Mr. and Mrs. Munger just at this time, and I know not how to feel grateful enough.” Mrs. Munger was able to help Narcissa with the housework. On June 25, 1840, she gave birth to a daughter. The Mungers continued to live at Waiilatpu until the spring of 1841 when they moved to the Willamette Valley. More will be said of them in a later chapter. As also will be indicated, three more independent missionary couples arrived at the Whitman mission in August 1840.

FIRST NATIVE CONVERTS

Should the success or failure of a mission to American Indians be judged by the number of baptisms recorded? If so, then the Oregon Mission of the American Board could not be called a success, especially when its record of baptisms is compared with that of the Roman Catholic missionaries who, during the same years, were baptizing natives by the hundreds in the upper Columbia River Valley.

Of the four ordained men in the Oregon Mission, only Spalding reported any baptisms. Walker and Eells lived at Tshimakain for nine years without having had a single native convert. The records of the First Presbyterian Church in the Territory of Oregon show that during the years following its organization to the time of the Whitman massacre, Spalding baptized twenty-one native adults, of whom one was a Cayuse, and fifteen were children.

A fundamental difference in the theology of baptism separates the Roman Catholic Church from most Protestant denominations and this, in part, explains why the Catholic priests, working in the same general area as the missionaries of the American Board, were able to baptize so many more natives than did Spalding. To the Catholics, baptism is necessary for salvation, even for infants, whereas for the average Protestant, baptism is the initiation rite into church membership. For Protestants, infants are baptized on the announced faith of one or both Parents; later these children become full church members on their own confession of faith. The Roman Catholics would baptize adult natives after they had received, what the Protestants considered to be, minimal religious instruction. The American Board missionaries, on the other
hand, expected evidence of a change of hearts and a good understanding of Christian doctrine.

According to Presbyterian polity, the pastor of a church together with one or more of his elders constitutes the session, which has the authority to receive and dismiss members. Spalding, taking advantage of the presence of Whitman at Lapwai during the middle of November, called a session meeting and presented two Nez Perce chiefs, Joseph and Timothy, and a mountain man, James Conner, as candidates for church membership. Joseph and Timothy had been converted in the revival meeting held at Lapwai the previous January. Spalding entered the following record in the minute book of the church: “Nov. 17, 1839 [Sunday], on profession of their faith in Christ & by the decision of the Pastor & Elder the following persons were admitted to the First Presby. Church in Oregon Territory, having been examined as to the grounds of their hopes some 10 months before, viz. Joseph Tuitakas the principle Nez Perce Chief some 37 years old. Timothy Timosa a native of considerable influence, some 31 years of age, And James Conner...” Eight years had to pass following the arrival of the Nez Perce delegation in St. Louis before the first natives made public confession of their faith and became members of a Christian church. James Conner was the mountain man who had been hired by the 1838 reinforcement to assist them in traveling from the Rendezvous to Waiilatpu.

On that same Sunday, the jubilant Spalding copied into his diary the prayer that he evidently had used at the baptism of the two Indians and the mountain man: “Oh Lord thou knowest the hearts of all men, thou knowest the hearts of these three, who now stand before thee to take the solemn vows of God upon them. I know they are not sheep, but I would hope they are lambs. Feed them, O thou kind Shepherd.” Following the reception of the new members, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was served. “Oh what a glorious thought,” wrote Spalding, “that we have lived to see two of the sons of the Red men brought into the fold of Christ. To God be all the praise forever & ever. Amen.”

On the following Sunday, Spalding baptized the two sons of “Timothy & Tamar Timosa” and three daughters and a son of “Joseph & Asenath Tuitakas.” On Sunday, April 12, 1840, Spalding recorded the baptism of his son, Henry Hart; a son and a daughter of James and Mary Conner; and another son of Joseph and Asenath,
age “3½ months” whom Spalding christened “Ephraim.” Since Young Joseph, one of the leaders in the 1877 Nez Perce uprising, claimed that he was born in 1840, it is possible that he is the one whom Spalding baptized and called Ephraim. Of the first two native converts, Timothy was more faithful in his endeavors to live according to Christian principles, both during the mission period and in after-years, than was Joseph. Old Joseph lost faith in the white man when the United States Government in 1863 excluded his beloved Wallowa Valley in creating the Nez Perce reservation. He then reportedly renounced his Christian faith.

Several years after Conner became a member of the church, Spalding added this note after his name: “James Conner was suspended from the church for the sin of Sabbath breaking, neglect of religious duties & fighting, Febr. 4, 1843. It has since [been] proven that he has been guilty of polygamy, sending a challenge to fight a duel, and vending liquor.”

**The Visit of Thomas J. Farnham**

After returning from the fall Mission meeting of 1839, Whitman wrote a report of the year’s activities for the American Board. He mentioned the death of his little girl; the action taken regarding Smith’s move to Kamiah; the coming of the two independent missionary couples; and acknowledged the arrival of twenty-eight boxes of goods for the Mission which were then still at Fort Vancouver [Letter 70]. In this letter Whitman objected to the dual role he was obliged to play at Waiilatpu. He wrote: “I do not think it proper for me to hold the most difficult & responsible station in the mission where all contacts with Traders, Catholics, Travellers & adventurers of every description come in immediate contact & where I have to discharge all the duties of Minister & Physician to the Mission.” When Whitman selected the Waiilatpu site in the late fall of 1836, he was only dimly aware of its strategic location. Now, three years later, a fuller realization of its importance was apparent. Narcissa in her letter of May 2, 1840, to her mother, after emphasizing the fact that their home was on “the highway between the States and the Columbia River,” added: “[it is] a resting place for weary travelers, consequently a greater burden rests upon us than upon any of our associates.”

Those who visited Waiilatpu in the fall of 1839 were but the vanguard of a great host who followed. Geiger and Johnson were the first to arrive
and then came the Mungers. On September 23, Thomas J. Farnham arrived with three companions—Robert Shortess, Sidney Smith, and A. M. Blair. The Farnham party had started from Peoria, Illinois, with at least fourteen young men who had the avowed intention of establishing a settlement in the Willamette Valley. The expedition was torn by dissensions with the result that only the four here mentioned reached Old Oregon. This shows that the missionaries were not the only ones who quarreled while making the difficult overland journey. Shortess entered Whitman’s employ for the winter of 1839–40 for $6.00 a month; Smith continued on to the Willamette Valley with Farnham; while Blair went to Lapwai where Spalding hired him.\footnote{15}

After Farnham returned to the States, he published in 1841 his *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, which contained the first printed description of Waiilatpu and of the multitudinous duties being carried on by Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. Farnham found Waiilatpu bustling with activity when he and his companions dismounted on that Monday morning, September 23. He found Whitman shouting at the top of his voice “to some lazy Indians who were driving their cattle out of his garden.” A team of oxen was being yoked preparatory to being driven to the mountains to get timbers for the new house. Hall appeared with an axe on his shoulder. Munger came out of the house which was being constructed, pulling the shavings out of his plane. Farnham wrote of his welcome: “All seemed desirous to ask me how long a balloon line had been running between the States and the Pacific.” The reason for such an inquiry remains a mystery.

Farnham’s narrative for September 24, after mentioning the parched earth, so dry and dusty, says: “And yet when the smoking vegetables, the hissing steak, bread white as snow, and the newly-churned golden butter graced the breakfast table, and the happy countenances of countrymen and countrywomen shone around, I could with difficulty believe myself in a country so far distant from, and so unlike my native land, in all its features. But during breakfast, this pleasant illusion was dispelled by one of the causes which induced it. Our steak was horse-flesh! On such meat this poor family subsist most of the time. They do not complain.”\footnote{16}

Following breakfast, Whitman took his guests on a tour of the mission grounds. “The garden was first examined,” wrote Farnham, “its
location on the curving bank of the Wallawalla; the apple trees, growing thriftily on its western border; the beautiful tomato and other vegetables, burdening the grounds.”

After inspecting a new house being built, Whitman took the party to his corral where they saw “a fine yoke of oxen, two cows, an American bull, and the beginning of a stock of hogs.” After that, Whitman proudly escorted his new friends to his mill. Of this Farnham wrote: “It consisted of a spherical wrought iron burr four or five inches in diameter, surrounded by a counterburred surface of the same material. The spherical burr was permanently attached to the shaft of a horizontal water-wheel. The surrounding burred surface was firmly fastened to timbers, in such a position that when the water-wheel was put in motion, the operation of the mill was similar to that of a coffee-mill. It was a crazy thing, but for it the doctor was grateful. It would, with the help of himself and an Indian, grind enough in a day to feed his family a week, and that was better than to beat it with a pestle and mortar.”

Farnham, as an impartial observer, had great praise for what had been accomplished at Waiilatpu. Of the doctor, he wrote: “The industry which crowded every hour of the day, his untiring energy of character, and the very efficient aid of his wife in relieving him in a great degree from the labors of the school, are, perhaps, circumstances which will render possibility probable, that in five [sic] years one man without funds for such purposes, without other aid in that business than that of a fellow missionary at short intervals, should fence, plough, build, plant an orchard, and do all the other laborious acts of opening a plantation on the face of that distant wilderness; learn an Indian language, and do the duties, meanwhile, of a physician to the associate stations on the Clear Water and Spokan.” That was high praise indeed, especially when we note that Farnham thought that the Whitmans had been there for five years when in reality it was only three.

Farnham attended a session of the school and then wrote: “Forty or fifty children between the ages of 7 and 18, and several other people, gathered on the shady side of the new mission-house at the ringing of a hand-bell… The Doctor then wrote monosyllables, words, and instructive sentences in the Nez Perce language, on a large blackboard suspended on the wall, and proceeded first to teach the nature and power of the letters in representing the simple sounds of the language, and then
the construction of words and their uses in forming sentences expressive of thought.” Whitman did not believe in trying to teach the natives the English language. Rather, he concentrated on teaching in the native tongue. Farnham noted that the pupils were using a Nez Perce primer which had been printed on the Mission press at Lapwai the previous May. This little eightpage booklet was the first to come from the American press on the whole Pacific Slope of what is now the United States. Farnham called Mrs. Whitman “an indefatigable instructress.”

Farnham also described the manner in which Whitman conducted his worship services. On Saturday evening, Whitman would call one of the most intelligent of the Cayuses into his home and go over a passage of scripture with him and explain in detail the doctrines involved. He would ask the Indian to repeat what he had been told to make sure that he understood. “This was repeated again and again,” wrote Farnham, “until the Indian obtained a clear understanding of its doctrines.” At ten o’clock Sunday morning, the Indians assembled in the open air for their worship service. Farnham wrote: “The exercises were according to the Presbyterian form; the invocation, the hymn, the prayer, the hymn, the sermon, a prayer, a hymn, and the blessing; all in the Nez Perce tongue. The principal peculiarity about the services was the mode of delivering the discourse. When Dr. Whitman arose and announced the text, the Indian who had been instructed on the previous night, rose and repeated it; and as the address proceeded, repeated it also by sentence or paragraph till it was finished.”

Farnham gave A. B. Smith the credit for translating or composing the Nez Perce hymns which were sung. As has been stated, Spalding was also working on this project. “Everything,” wrote Farnham, “was conducted with much solemnity.”

On the whole, Marcus and Narcissa were pleased with the response of the Cayuses during the winter of 1839–40. The school was continued through the winter although Whitman reported that the average attendance fell to ten. In the spring the attendance went up to about fifty when many of the Indian families returned to Waiilatpu to prepare for the spring planting [Letter 74]. Both Whitman and Spalding found it extremely difficult to carry on school work when the Indians were so much on the move. Whitman was encouraged to see an increased number of natives planting crops in the spring of 1840. The more they depended
upon cultivation for subsistence, and the less upon the hunt, the easier it would be to educate and evangelize them.

**THE NEW MISSION HOUSE**

Farnham’s description of the new house shows that Whitman had been able to make considerable progress in its building after Smith had finished the first room during the first week of December 1838. Farnham’s account follows: “Then to the new house. The adobe walls had been erected a year. These were about 40 feet by 20, and one and a half stories high. The interior area consisted of two parlors of the ordinary size, separated by an adobe partition... Above were to be sleeping apartments.” Farnham was describing the top arm of the T-shaped building which, in addition to the two “parlors,” contained a bedroom for the Whitmans. This was the room at the south end that the Smiths had used. A larger room, located at the north end, was the Indian room, to be used as a schoolroom or for such other purposes as religious services. The center room was the Whitmans’ sitting or living room. “To the main building,” wrote Farnham, “was attached another of equal height designed for a kitchen, with chambers above for servants. Mr. Munger and a Sandwich Islander were laying the floors, making the doors, etc. The lumber used was a very superior quality of yellow pine plank.” When Munger began his work on the building during the first week of September, he noted in his diary that Whitman had on hand a supply “of good pine timber seasoned and piled up in the house ready to finish it off.”

In her letter of April 30, 1840, to her carpenter father, Narcissa said: “We still live in the house we first built although we built one of adobe the year our reinforcement arrived. Various hindrances prevented our getting into it, or attending to finish it. Indeed, there was no one to do it until last fall. The Lord sent us a good mechanic from Oberlin, Mr. Munger... A part of the house is nearly finished and will be a very comfortable and clean house to what this has been. Father cannot realize the difficulty and hardship we have had in getting what timber we must have for doors, floors, shelves, etc., for our house. No durable wood near us of any kind except alder, which we are trying to make answer for our tables, bedsteads, etc... All our boards are sawed by hand with a pit saw, which dear father must know is very hard work, and besides this,
the smoothing, daubing, and whitewashing of an adobe house is very tedious work and requires much time and labor. Husband is now engaged in it, preparing it for painting. We feel ourselves highly favored that we could obtain oil and paint enough and at a reasonable price, to paint the wood work and floors, so as to save my strength and labor."

Since the window glass which Whitman purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company was thin and expensive, he made shutters (referred to as Venetian blinds) to protect the windows. The shutters together with outside woodwork were painted green, thus giving the building with its whitewashed walls some resemblance to the neat colonial-type buildings in New York State which were usually painted white and trimmed in green. Regarding lime, Narcissa wrote: “There is no lime stone to be obtained near us and our alternative is to burn clam shells” [Letter 75].

After living for about three and one-half years in the first adobe house, Narcissa was eagerly looking forward to moving into the new house with its promise of more space, greater warmth in the winter time, and much desired privacy. In her letter of May 2, 1840, to her mother, she commented: “Could dear mother know how I have been situated the two winters past, especially winter before last, I know she would pity me. I often think how disagreeable it used to be to her feelings to do her cooking in the presence of men sitting about the room. This I have had to bear ever since I have been here—at times it has seemed as if [I] could not endure it any longer. It has been the more trying because our house has been so miserable and cold—small and inconvenient for us—many people as have lived in it. But the greatest trial to a woman’s feelings is to have her cooking and eating room always filled with four or five or more Indians—men—especially at meal time.”

She reported that when they would move into the new house, the Indians would not be permitted to go into their private quarters but would be restricted to the Indian room which had its own entrance. “They are so filthy,” Narcissa wrote, “they make a great deal of cleaning wherever they go, and this wears out a woman very fast. We must clean after them, for we have come to elevate them and not to suffer ourselves to sink down to their standard. I hardly know how to describe my feelings at the prospect of a clean, comfortable house, and one large enough so that I can find a closet to pray in.” Narcissa complained about the fleas and lice which the Indians always brought into her home.
“They are exceedingly proud, haughty and insolent people,” she wrote, “and keep us constantly upon the stretch after patience and forbearance. We feed them far more than any of our associates do their people, yet they will not be satisfied. Notwithstanding all this, there are many redeeming qualities in them, else we should have been discouraged long ago. We are more and more encouraged the longer we stay among them.” How interesting! Narcissa called the Indians “exceedingly proud, haughty.” Following the massacre, H. K. W. Perkins claimed that the Indians considered her to be “haughty” and “very proud” [See Appendix 6].

THE WHITMANS JOURNEY TO TSHIMAKAIN

In May, when Dr. Whitman was called to Tshimakain to attend Mrs. Walker, Narcissa decided to go with her husband. This was her first visit to the Spokane station. Tiloukaikt, the principal chief living in the vicinity of Wailatpu, could not understand the consideration that Whitman gave to his wife. “Why do you not go alone?” he asked. “What do you make so much of her for?” This gave Whitman a chance to explain the Christian conception of marriage. “This has often been brought up by them,” wrote Narcissa, “the way I am treated, and contrasted with themselves; they do not like to have it so; their consciences are troubled about it” [Letter 76].

The Whitmans reached Tshimakain on Thursday, May 14. Mary Walker gave birth to a daughter on Sunday, the 24th, who was named Abigail.18 The Whitmans began their return trip on the 26th. During their visit at Tshimakain, the Whitmans rode to Fort Colville which was the first time either had been there. Upon their return to Wailatpu, they moved into their new home to Narcissa’s great joy [Letters 78 & 76a]. The old house remained standing for nearly two years and was sometimes used by visitors. It was torn down early in 1842 and the adobe bricks used to build a blacksmith shop.

SECOND ARRIVAL OF HOME MAIL

On the first of June 1840, an Indian messenger from Fort Walla Walla arrived at Wailatpu with letters from home for the Whitmans. These were the first they had received from the States since the memorable July 11, 1838, to which reference has been made. Although the
Whitmans had retired when the Indian arrived, they quickly arose, lighted a candle, and read and reread the letters from loved ones so far away in both time and distance. The news the letters brought was then about a year old. One letter was from Narcissa's mother, the first she had received. Narcissa was overjoyed. “It was enough to transport me in imagination to that dear circle I loved so well,” she wrote in reply, “and to prevent sleep from returning that night... O, could my dear parents know how much comfort it would be to their solitary children here, they would each of them fill out a sheet as often as once a month and send it to the Board for us” [Letter 78]. It is hard to understand why there was an interlude of about two years between these two deliveries of home mail. Since the letters that Marcus wrote to his family are not known to be extant, we cannot tell how often they wrote.

“The Man Who Came With Us”

Would that it were possible to write the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board without describing the discord within it. The problems came to a focus in 1840, but the effects were not felt until the early fall of 1842. There were many reasons for the dissonance including honest differences of opinion regarding mission policies, personality clashes, frustrated hopes, and the physical hardships connected with their primitive living conditions. Also involved was a certain feeling of resentment which Spalding harbored toward Narcissa because of her rejection of his proposal for marriage. Although Spalding, before he left for Old Oregon, had reassured Judge Prentiss that he harbored no ill will toward Narcissa, the hurt feelings remained. The consequences of the dissensions which troubled the Oregon Mission of the American Board, especially during the years 1839–41, were too far-reaching to be overlooked.

The members of the 1838 reinforcement soon became aware of the strained feelings which existed between the Whitmans and the Spaldings after their arrival on the field. Why had the two couples established separate stations 120 miles apart? When asked, Spalding tactlessly replied: “Do you suppose I would have come off here all alone a hundred & twenty miles if I could have lived with him or Mrs. Whitman?”

On July 9, 1840, Spalding wrote in his diary regarding a quarrel that broke out at the Mission meeting: “…the Doct rose in great agitation
& said that either himself or me must leave the mission. That the root of all the difficulties in the Mission lay between us, viz, in an expression I made while in the States respecting his wife before she was married to Doct. Whitman, viz, that I would not go into the same Mission with her, questioning her judgment, but which we had certainly settled four times before.”

Smith, in a letter to Greene dated September 3, 1840, referred to this incidence and claimed that Whitman had accused Spalding of publishing “from town to town before he left the States that he would not go on a mission with Mrs. Whitman.”  

Gray, likewise, in his letter of October 14 to Greene, wrote: “Dr. Whitman stated that he thought, or believed, that the whole difficulty originated between him and Mr. Spalding before they left the States... He felt that he had been injured by Mr. Spalding by the reports he had circulated from town to town in the United States.”

Narcissa blamed Spalding for the action taken by the special meeting of the Mission held at Lapwai in February 1839, when the Whitmans were asked to turn Waiilatpu over to the Smiths and open a new station in some central location. At first the Whitmans indicated a willingness to consider moving but after some investigation, decided not to do so. Several years passed after her arrival in Oregon before Narcissa felt free to tell her family of the difficulties they were experiencing with Spalding. In a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, Narcissa wrote:

Our trials, dear father knows but little about. The missionaries’ greatest trials are but little known to the churches. I have never ventured to write about them for fear it might do hurt. The man who came with us is one who never ought to have come. My dear husband has suffered more from him in consequence of his wicked jealousy, and his great pique towards me, than can be known in this world. But he suffers not alone the whole mission suffers, which is most to be deplored. It has nearly broken up the mission.

This pretended settlement with father, before we started, was only an excuse, and from all we have seen and heard, both during the journey, and since we have been here, the same bitter feeling exists. His principal aim has been at me; as he said, ‘Bring out her character,’ ‘Expose her character,’ as though I was the vilest creature on earth.
At the end of this letter, Narcissa added: “Part of the contents of this sheet, ought not to be circulated; it may do hurt. I do not wish to make it public, for any one to make ill use of it.” This is the only reference in Narcissa’s extant writings to her rejection of Spalding’s suit and here the reference is indirect.

**Other Criticisms of Spalding**

For a variety of reasons, Spalding became the object of criticisms from all of the other members of the Mission except Walker and Eells. Of these, Gray and Smith were the most caustic in their letters of complaint sent to Greene. When the reinforcement of 1838 arrived at Wailatpu and plans were made as to where each couple was to live, no one wanted to live with the Grays. He had been too overbearing on the overland journey. It was Spalding’s misfortune to have had the Grays assigned to live with him at Lapwai. As has been mentioned, Gray became unhappy because he was not permitted to establish a separate station for himself. Gray blamed Spalding for the decision of the Mission. After spending some weeks during the fall of 1839 in idleness at Fort Walla Walla, and after refusing to assist Whitman in building at Wailatpu, Gray returned to the Clearwater with his family during the latter part of December. Hall warned Spalding about receiving him back again “as his disposition rendered him unfit to be associated with any one.” But there was no alternative for either Gray or Spalding, so Spalding let him return.

Spalding’s diary for the first half of 1840 contains repeated references to his difficulties with Gray. On April 2, for instance, Gray suddenly informed Spalding that “by the authority of the Mission,” he was taking possession of the premises and even forbade Spalding “to cultivate any of the land.” After a little more than two weeks, on April 19, Gray turned the premises back to Spalding and indicated his readiness to work with him as “an associate.”

As has been noted, Smith blamed Spalding for writing such optimistic letters about the eagerness of the Nez Perces to receive Christianity, lengthy extracts of which had been published in the Missionary Herald. Smith claimed that such reports had been the main reason why he had volunteered so suddenly to join the 1838 reinforcement. Spalding had no critic more bitter than A. B. Smith.

All this is the background of the Annual Meeting of 1840.
ANNUAL MEETING OF 1840

The Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission for 1840 was held at Lapwai beginning on Saturday, July 4. All of the men were present and three of the women—Narcissa Whitman, Mary Gray, and Eliza Spalding. Spalding’s diary throws much light on the strained feelings which existed even before the business meetings began. Walker and Eells were always a moderating influence and never caused trouble. They arrived on the 1st. Gray had by this time erected a log cabin for himself and his family and was thus prepared to receive guests. Walker was invited to stay at the Grays while Eells was entertained by the Spaldings. The Whitmans with Chief Joseph came on the 2nd. The Whitmans were also received by the Grays as were Rogers and Smith who arrived the following day.

With the majority of the voting members of the Mission in the Gray home before the meeting was officially opened, it may be assumed that several decisions were agreed upon in the absence of Spalding. It is evident that Gray was adamant in his demand that he be permitted to open a separate station. He had selected a site, called Shimnap, located near the mouth of the Yakima River where it flows from the northwest into the Columbia. Some of the Walla Walla Indians lived in that vicinity. The site is near present-day Richland, Washington. It is probable that Gray laid down an ultimatum: either he be allowed to move or he would leave the Mission. One of the first items of business on Saturday, the 4th, was to grant Gray permission to locate a mission at Shimnap. No doubt Spalding disapproved.

Another action taken, which was aimed directly at Spalding, was that no Nez Perce be received into the First Church of Oregon except by vote of all missionaries working in that language. Here a point of ecclesiastical polity was raised. When Spalding and Whitman had met as a session on November 17, 1839, and voted to receive Joseph and Timothy on confession of their faith, they were acting in strict accord with Presbyterian polity. Smith, who was a Congregationalist, had strongly objected. He felt that the two natives were not sufficiently indoctrinated to become church members. According to Congregational polity, all members of a congregation had the right to vote on the reception of new members. Smith’s views were accepted; this implied a censure, especially for Spalding. Although Spalding had a number of
natives he felt were ready for church membership, he felt obligated to postpone suggesting their names for consideration.

On Sunday, Spalding conducted religious services for what he called a “great number” of Indians who had assembled on the plain near his home. No doubt with the hope that the testimony of Joseph and Timothy would impress his associates, he invited the two chiefs to speak. Spalding wrote in his diary that they spoke “with much feeling.” Instead of receiving words of commendation from his associates, Spalding became aware of a spirit of hostility. That day he wrote in his diary: “There seems to be a labor. I know not what it means.”

**SPALDING CRITICIZED**

Spalding’s entries for July 7 and 8 indicate that the Mission was in a crisis which threatened its continuance. On the 7th, Spalding wrote: “It was proposed to have a conference, quite unexpected but not unacceptable. I perceive that the brethren feel that I am some what in their way. A strange doctrine was advanced, viz. that if one did not agree with the multitude he of course is in error & should be dealt with. I objected & said that God was always right, but not the multitude.” Before going into the meeting of that day, Eliza, knowing that her husband would be the object of much criticism, urged him to hold his temper. “My dear wife,” wrote Spalding in his diary, “had furnished me with several portions of select scripture on which I kept my eye almost constantly.” Thus he sat in silence as one after another poured out criticisms of what he had said or done. Spalding closed his entry of the 7th with the words: “I went home with a sick soul.”

On Wednesday, July 8, Spalding wrote: “Confessions again. [The meeting] had scarcely opened when the Doct. rose in great agitation & said that either himself or me must leave the mission.” Whitman, beginning with Spalding’s statement made before they left the States for Oregon regarding not wanting to go into the same mission with Narcissa because he questioned her judgment, rehearsed the history of their quarrel. “During the whole talk which [was] long,” wrote Spalding, “I kept silent with my eyes on my portion of scripture. After several had spoken, plainly betraying their object, I was requested to speak, but I saw clearly that the time had not come & consequently kept my eye fixed on my paper, a long silence ensued. Doct. Whitman’s
storm began to abate. He thought a reconciliation could be had, & began to admit that he might sometimes have said things that he should not have said. Mr. Eells said the object of this interview was to have every thing settled forever. I, for the first time, inquired, do I understand you to say forever? My inquiry was understood, as the matter to which Doct. W. referred had been settled several times. The Doct. saw his nakedness & apparently melted & declared he would henceforth strive with me & all the brethren in our common work.” Whitman’s spirit of penitence moved others to express similar feelings, with but one exception. Smith remained unrepentant and unforgiving. Spalding closed the entry of that day in his diary by writing: “I feel that our sins are the greatest obstruction to our work & for the honor of the cause we ought to be united. After several prayers, we separated.”

Walker, Eells, and Smith left for their respective stations before the week closed but the Whitmans decided to remain at Lapwai over Sunday to avoid traveling on that day. On the following Monday, July 13, the Whitmans with Gray and Rogers left for Waiilatpu. After the turbulent meeting, the Spaldings were glad to be alone; Mary Gray was their only guest and she was living in her own cabin. After arriving at Waiilatpu, Gray made some preliminary investigations regarding the possibility of establishing a station at Shimnap that fall and decided that it was too late to do so that year. He would have to wait until the following spring. In the meantime Gray made a second attempt to enter the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, applying by letter to Dr. McLoughlin for the position of schoolteacher. According to Spalding’s diary, Gray received a reply on August 26. There was no opening for him at Vancouver. This second rebuff only increased Gray’s feeling of hostility to the Hudson’s Bay Company.

**Griffin’s Failure to Establish a Mission**

When the Whitmans returned to Waiilatpu, they found Mr. and Mrs. Griffin there. The Griffins had left Lapwai on March 16, with six animals carrying supplies obtained from Spalding, for the Snake River country where they hoped to establish a self-supporting mission. They suffered incredible hardships while crossing the mountains which separate what is now northern Idaho from its southern part. The snow was still deep at the higher elevations so early in the season.
Writing to Mary Walker on July 25, Narcissa said: “On our arrival we found Mr. and Mrs. Griffin here & were rejoiced to see them alive, for we had given up nearly all hope of it. It would be in vain to attempt to describe the dangers of the way through which they forced themselves. We can only say that they have escaped with their lives.” In a letter dated November 16, 1840, Griffin described his experiences for a friend in Honolulu: “Our Indians left us in the mountains where we were obliged to remain alone without seeing a human form but once for about sixty days & not until I [we] was able to escape by crossing the mountains upon 15 ft. of snow in the last part of May, & travel a hundred miles or more through a most dreadful region of mountain & glen & swollen rivers which threatened our lives daily, were we permitted to behold the face of even a savage.”

Thus ended Griffin’s attempt to establish an independent and self-supporting mission. He finally realized how impractical and impossible was the venture he had so idealistically envisioned. He had evidently planned to establish a mission among the Snake Indians somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Boise.

**More Independent Missionaries**

On August 8, the faithful Joseph Maki, the Hawaiian, died of “inflammation of the bowels,” evidently appendicitis [Letter 78]. This was a great loss to the Whitmans as he had been a most faithful assistant. Another grave was dug in the little mission cemetery at the foot of the hill to the northeast of the Whitman home. Marie Maki was sent back to Honolulu in December of the following year.

About the middle of August 1840, six more independent missionaries unexpectedly arrived at Waiilatpu. They were the Rev. and Mrs. Harvey Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin T. Smith, and Mr. and Mrs. Philo B. Littlejohn. Narcissa had known Mrs. Littlejohn before leaving for Old Oregon as Adeline Sadler [Letter 217]. Of all the missionaries, Mrs. Littlejohn was the only one whom Narcissa referred to by her given name. As has been mentioned, the custom of the time among educated people was to refer to others by the proper title and the last name. There is no evidence that even in the hours of closest fellowship, either of the Whitmans ever called Mr. Spalding, “Henry,” or Mrs. Spalding, “Eliza.” The formalities of their Eastern training forbade such familiarities. The fact that Narcissa referred to Mrs. Littlejohn as Adeline
indicates a former acquaintance of a friendly nature.

Nothing definite is known as to why these three couples, who hailed from Quincy, Illinois, decided to go to Oregon as independent missionaries. Since they are believed to have been members of the Congregational Church, they would have been readers of the Missionary Herald and therefore influenced by the optimistic reports of the Oregon Mission which appeared so frequently in that publication during the years 1837–39. The three couples crossed the prairies and the Rockies during the spring and summer of 1840 under the protection of the caravan of the American Fur Company. The rendezvous that year was held again on Green River and was the last of the series which began in 1825. The mission party took two wagons with them as far west as Fort Hall.

The three women of this party also deserve special mention; their feat in crossing the Continental Divide opened the doorway to Old Oregon a little wider for the countless emigrants who were to follow. Altogether eleven missionary women—six under appointment by the American Board and five on an independent basis—had crossed the Rockies before the great Oregon emigration of 1843 rolled through South Pass.

**Introducing Father Pierre Jean De Smet, S.J.**

Among those present at the 1840 Rendezvous was the Belgian Jesuit priest, Father Pierre Jean De Smet, who was on his way back to St. Louis to obtain associates for a mission he had established among the Flathead Indians in what is now western Montana. In a letter addressed to the Hon. J. C. Spencer, who served as Secretary of War in President Tyler’s cabinet, dated March 4, 1843, Father De Smet gave the following account as to how the Jesuit mission to the Indians of Old Oregon was started:

It is now about 24 years ago since the Indians of the Flatheads acquired a slight knowledge of the civil institutions of Christianity through the means of four poor Iroquois Indians who had wandered beyond the Rocky Mountains. Anxious to obtain instructions, they sent about 20 years ago [i.e., in 1823] a deputation of three of their chiefs to St. Louis. They were carried off by sickness. As their Deputies did not return, they appointed five others who were massacred in passing through the territory of
the Sioux. In 1834 a third delegation arrived, an Iroquois accompanied it bringing with him his two children over a long and dangerous route. Owing to a want of means and members connected with the University of St. Louis to which application was made, their urgent request for proper persons to return with them could not be complied with.

In 1839 they deputed other missioners to communicate their wishes. It was on this occasion that I was requested to accompany the deputies on their return in order to ascertain the disposition of the nation.28

After spending several months with the Flatheads and after selecting a site for his mission station in the Bitter Root River Valley, De Smet was on his way to St. Louis for reinforcements when he attended the 1840 Rendezvous. His account of the various delegations sent to St. Louis by the Flatheads makes no mention of the 1831 Nez Perce delegation which gave rise to the Protestant missionary thrust into Old Oregon.29

Although the three independent missionary couples were at the same Rendezvous with Father De Smet, there is no evidence that any of the mission party actually talked with the Catholic priest, due to a strong anti-Catholic spirit rampant in that day throughout the Middle West among many Protestants. The Jesuit order was especially suspect.30 Without a doubt, however, the three couples would have informed Whitman of what they had heard at the Rendezvous of Father De Smet’s intentions.

THE FIVE INDEPENDENT MISSIONARY COUPLES AT WAIIATPU

Also at the 1840 Rendezvous was the mountain man, Robert or “Doe” Newell, with whom Whitman had traveled from the Rendezvous to the States in the summer of 1835. With the discontinuance of the Rendezvous and the break-up of the American fur trade, the mountain men were forced to scatter. Several, including Newell, decided to migrate to the Willamette Valley. Since the mission party needed an escort, they entered into an agreement with Newell to take them to Fort Hall. By the time the party reached there, the horses pulling the two wagons through the dense sage were so exhausted that the missionaries found it best to abandon the wagons and continue their journey on horseback.
Instead of receiving cash for his services, Newell agreed to accept the discarded wagons and the harness and to trade some fresh horses for the worn-out animals of the missionaries. Mention will be made later of Newell taking these wagons through to the Columbia River Valley. In company with the Joel P. Walker emigrant family, the three missionary couples continued their journey to Waiilatpu.

The Walkers and the missionaries arrived at Waiilatpu about the middle of August, shortly after the arrival of the Griffins from their ill-fated attempt to establish a mission in the Snake River country and after the return of the Whitmans from the Lapwai meeting. The Whitmans were now the reluctant hosts for all five of the independent missionary couples at the same time. Also present at Waiilatpu were the Grays who had moved there from Lapwai during the first week of September. A baby girl, named Caroline, was born to the Grays on October 16. No wonder that Narcissa in her letter to her mother dated October 9 said: “We are thronged with company now and have been for some time past and may be through the winter... As we are situated, our house is the missionaries’ tavern, and we must accommodate more or less the whole time.” Fortunately for the Whitmans, the new house was ready to receive some of the visitors so that they could still enjoy the privacy of their own quarters. The first adobe house was also still being used.

Secretary Greene had warned the members of the Oregon Mission against being too friendly with the independent missionaries; however, when these people arrived destitute, what else could the Whitmans and Spaldings do but receive them? Narcissa explained to her mother something of their problem: “We cannot sell to them, because we are missionaries and did not come to be traders; and if we did, we should help them to establish an opposition Board [i.e., a competing mission]. But we can give to them, and report to the Board, which is not agreeable to them.” One solution which appeared acceptable was to hire the men as day laborers.

Although the last three couples to arrive exercised poor judgment in believing that they could establish self-supporting missions in Old Oregon without the financial backing of an established mission board, otherwise they seemed to have been sensible Christian people. None of the three men had the instability of Munger or the fanaticism of Griffin. “They are excellent people,” wrote Narcissa, “and we wish
they were under the Board, for we need their labours very much.”

Faced with the necessity of making some provision for the new arrivals to tide them through the coming winter, it was finally agreed that the Littlejohns and the Clarks should remain with the Whitmans, and the Alvin Smiths should go to Lapwai. When the Smiths left Lapwai in August 1841, Spalding wrote to Greene regarding Alvin: “His kindness & patience & industrious habits & good judgment & ardent but consistent zeal, I have never seen combined in one man before.” Not one of the five couples was received into the membership of the Mission church, perhaps because of Greene’s advice regarding the treatment of the independent missionaries. The women, however, were made members of the Columbia Maternal Association.

**“Some Difficulties from the Catholic Priest”**

No history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board and no biography of Dr. Marcus Whitman would be complete without references to the conflicts and tensions which existed between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries working in the same field in Old Oregon at the same time. We must consider the religious rivalry which existed then, not in the spirit of the interfaith tolerance which is so common in our generation. In that generation the Protestants in the eyes of the Roman Catholics were heretics doomed to eternal damnation, while the Catholics were to the Protestants bigoted teachers of error. The claims and counterclaims were most confusing to the natives. As will be shown, this religious rivalry was one of several causes of the Indian unrest which preceded the Whitman massacre.

For two years the Protestant missionaries in Old Oregon had worked with the natives without any competition from the Roman Catholics. When Fathers Blanchet and Demers arrived in the fall of 1838, the situation began to change. Whitman in his letter of May 10, 1839, to Greene commented: “The prospects of [doing] good to the Indians are as favourable as ever if we are permitted to labour without molestation from the Catholics.” Here is the first indication in Whitman’s letters of his concern regarding the presence of the Catholic missionaries in Oregon.

During the summer of 1839, Father Demers spent a month at Fort Colville and vicinity and two weeks at Fort Walla Walla teaching and baptizing the natives. On September 19, Spalding wrote in his diary: “Doct
speaks of some difficulty from the Catholic priest. He is now at Walla Walla calling the Indians & telling the Indians that we are false teachers because we do not feed & clothe the people; that we have wives as other men, & wear pantaloons as common men & not frocks as he does. The people are told not to come near the Doct as he is a bad man, & has made no christians as yet but he [i.e., the priest] will fix them all for heaven soon.” 31

In his letter of August 27, 1839, to Greene, Smith had the following to say about Father Demers’ visit to Walla Walla: “Catholicism is now making its appearance, & the errors of that church are beginning to be diffused among this people. As this very moment, the Catholic priest is at Walla Walla instructing the people & the Indians are gathering together there to listen to the false doctrines which he inculcates. Already has the priest denounced us because we have wives & the people told that they are going to hell because they are unbaptized.” 32 Narcissa wrote in one of her letters: “A Catholic priest has recently been at Walla Walla and held meetings with the Indians and used their influence to draw all the people away from us. Some they have forbidden to visit us again, and fill all their minds with distraction about truths we teach, and their own doctrine; say we have been talking to them about their bad hearts long enough, and too long—say we ought to have baptized them long ago, etc., etc. The conflict has begun what trials await us we know not” [Letter 68].

An echo of Father De Smet’s work among the Flatheads and Nez Perces in the Bitter Root Valley is found in Smith’s letter to Greene of October 12, 1840:

A Catholic Priest from St. Louis has been in the buffalo country this season & from the accounts of the Indians, the Lawyer especially, he has already accomplished ten times as much as has been effected from the opposite quarter [i.e., by Father Demers]... A considerable number, the Indians say, a great many children both Flat Head & Nez Perces have been baptized & have been presented with the image of the cross or other emblems of Popery.

The Lawyer saw him two days & he says they tried to get the cross on him. He heard considerable from the priest & says the priest inquired of him about the mission [i.e., Spalding’s] & according to his account, he defended the mission very well... When they pretended that the cross was God, he said it was only
Kiswi, like the ring on his finger. He denied to the interpreter the saving efficacy of baptism, & when the priest said it was bad for us to have wives, he in a sarcastic manner asked the interpreter how the priest came into the world? If it was not by means of a father & mother? When the priest pretended that when he got established, he should give the people a plenty of food, he said to the interpreter: “I am very glad, my servant, I will come here & do nothing & load my horses with provisions & go home again.” So the Lawyer tells his story.\(^{33}\)

Whitman in his letter to Greene of October 15, 1840, also referred to Father De Smet’s activities but felt that the natives in the vicinity of Waiilatpu and Lapwai were “better prepared now to understand the truth than at any former period.” Since by that date, Father Demers had returned to the Cowlitz and Father De Smet had gone back to St. Louis, Whitman added: “We shall now have another year without further interruptions from the Catholics.”

Both Nez Perce Ellis and Spokane Garry, who, as his been stated, had been students at the Red River Mission school, joined Lawyer in his opposition to the coming of the Roman Catholic priests among their respective tribes. On December 12, 1841, Walker, writing from his station at Tshimakain to the Rev. William Cochran at the Red River school, stated: “Spokane Garry, though a most profligate wretch, has ever opposed the priests & they tried hard to bring him under their influence but cannot succeed.” \(^{34}\)

**IN SUMMARY, 1839–1840**

Marcus and Narcissa had their share of difficulties and heartaches during their fourth year of residence at Waiilatpu. The disension within the Mission became so distressing that Whitman again seriously considered leaving. The coming of the uninvited missionaries brought problems which involved the Whitmans more than it did any of their associates. Also during the year under review came the first conflicts with the Roman Catholic priests which aroused fears of greater difficulties to come.

On the other hand, Marcus and Narcissa could look back upon a number of achievements which gladdened their hearts. The new house which had been completed provided them with more room, greater...
comfort, and above all more privacy than they had previously enjoyed. The observations of the visitor, T. J. Farnham, tell much about the material improvements at Waiilatpu. In spite of the wandering habits of the natives, real progress had been made in the school where now a Nez Perce primer was available for use. Religious services were conducted regularly so long as natives were available. The Indians continued to be friendly and cooperative.

Perhaps the brightest aspect of the year’s work was the increased interest the natives were showing in farming. It is a mistake to think of the Cayuses of that day as herdsmen. They had no herds before the white man came except their horses. Neither were they farmers, but they quickly learned that it was far better to depend upon the products of the soil than to follow their age-old custom of depending exclusively on hunting, fishing, and digging for roots. On March 27, 1840, Whitman wrote in a letter to Greene: “There is no abatement in [their] interest in cultivation. A spirit of independence is manifesting itself among them which is seen in a desire to purchase ploughs & hoes for themselves, if they could be obtained.” Then he added the following significant statement: “They appear not to feel now as they used to formerly that it was to accommodate us that they plant & cultivate their lands.”
Chapter 14 Footnotes

1 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 277.

2 A son, Henry Hart, was born to the Spaldings on Nov. 24. When I first began my researches in the history of the Oregon Mission in the summer of 1934, I called on the widow of Henry Hart Spalding, who was then living at Almota, Washington. I secured from her at that time eight original Spalding letters, dating back to 1833, which are now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

3 Copy in Coll. O.

4 See section “Spalding Appointed by the American Board,” Chapter Seven.

5 Gray, Oregon, p. 185, states that Griffin was “the getter-up” of the mission.

6 Information from Robert S. Fletcher, “Oberlin, 1833–1866,” ms. in Oberlin College Library, pp. 98 & 216.


8 A copy of Greene’s letter to Spalding is in Coll. A.

9 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 111.

10 Ibid., p. 276, fn. 72.

11 Ibid., p. 117. Italics in the original.

12 A painting of Timothy by Rowena Lung Alcorn, made from a photograph, was reproduced in color in Drury, Spalding, p. 214. A collection of Mrs. Alcorn’s portraits of Nez Perces, painted in the 1930s, including this of Timothy are now on permanent display in the Indian Exhibit at Rocky Beach Dam, a few miles north of Wenatchee, Washington. Mrs. Alcorn painted a second portrait of both Timothy and Lawyer which are now at Whitman College, Walla Walla.

13 For reference to the communion silver, see Chapter Seven, fn. 46.

14 Asenath was the name of the Egyptian woman who became the wife of Joseph, Gen. 41:45.

15 Spalding to Greene, April 22, 1840: “Last. Oct. a miserable old man came to me, apparently in a state of starvation. On inquiry he proved to be one of a party of 16 who left Missouri last spring for this country.” Blair proved to be a skilled workman and helped Spalding build both a sawmill and a gristmill during the winter of 1839–40. In addition to Blair, Spalding had Gray, Conner, and Griffin assisting him. Perhaps during this winter, Gray built a log cabin for himself.


19 Walker to Greene, Oct. 14, 1840. Coll. A.

20 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 164.

21 Original letter, Coll. A.

22 Italics are the author’s.
23 Spalding to Greene, Oct. 15, 1842, Coll. A. Spalding quoted Hall as saying: “A man may do very well as a mechanic who would not do at all as an equal or associate.”


25 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 155 ff., gives Smith’s letter to Greene of Sept. 2, 1840, which contains the minutes of the 1840 Mission meeting.

26 Spalding made a mistake of one day in his entries. His entry, for instance, for July 8 is in reality for the 7th. Corrected dates are here given.

27 Griffin to S. N. Castle, Nov. 19, 1840. Coll. H.

28 Original De Smet letter in Archives of Indian Affairs, Oregon Superintendency, 1842–80, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

29 Father De Smet’s statement disproves the much later claim made by Father L. B. Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, Baltimore, 1894, p. 10, that the Indians who went to St. Louis in 1881 were Flatheads.

30 See Chapter Eight, fn. 2, for reference to anti-Catholic sentiment of that generation.

31 Italics are the author’s.


34 A copy of Walker’s letter to Cochran, in Walker’s handwriting, is in the Rosenbach Foundation Library, Philadelphia, Pa.
The Whitman House at Wailatpu
This sketch was drawn by the Canadian artist, Paul Kane, in July 1847. The roof line was irregular as two of the rooms had two stories. The number of chimneys corresponds with contemporary floor plans. Courtesy, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.

W. H. Jackson painting of the Whitman Mission
How the mission may have looked in 1845. The painting is based on descriptions of those who lived at or had visited the mission. By permission of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.
Floor Plan of the Whitman Home

Plan of the Whitman Mission House drawn in 1839 by Asahe Munger. Mr. and Mrs. Munger were independent missionaries who arrived at Wailatpu Mission in the fall of 1839. The Mungers soon realized that establishing a mission would be too difficult without support from a larger organization. They decided to stay at the Wailatpu Mission. Dr. Whitman hired Mr. Munger as a carpenter to help with projects; Mrs. Munger helped Narcissa with housework. By permission of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.
**Drawing of Whitman Mission, 1884**

The first known picture of the mission, viewed from the northeast. From left: the mill, the immigrant house, blacksmith shop, and the main Whitman home. A branch of the Oregon Trail passed the fence at the north. From Magazine of American History, September 1884.
Difficulties and discouragements multiplied for the Whitmans during their fifth year's residence at Waiilatpu. Many of the personality conflicts and differences of opinion regarding mission policies, which had disturbed the life of the Oregon Mission during the previous two years, continued. Now a new danger arose. Some of the natives, both Cayuses and Nez Perces, no longer enchanted by having missionaries in their midst, began to make unreasonable demands on their benefactors and even to threaten their lives. Like the low thunder of an approaching storm, these were the warnings of more serious trouble to come.

In response to the repeated pleas for additional workers made by both Whitman and Spalding, including their fantastic request for 220 made in their letter of April 21, 1838, the American Board commissioned two couples for the Oregon Mission in 1840, the Rev. and Mrs. John Davis Paris and Mr. and Mrs. William H. Rice. They sailed from New York in November of that year. Greene in his letter of November 4, 1840, to Whitman suggested that Paris be assigned to Waiilatpu, “as a preacher is so much needed at your station.” However, the two couples never arrived in Oregon. When E. O. Hall returned with his family to Honolulu in the fall of 1840, he gave such a discouraging account of the sad state of affairs in the Oregon Mission that when the reinforcement reached the Islands in May 1841, they were detained there.
The failure of the two couples to continue their voyage to Oregon was called by Whitman “a great evil to this mission.” In his letter of November 11, 1841, to Greene, Whitman said: “Our situation called only the more imperiously for them to come on... We are in no way unprepared for a reenforcement as we have no secret burnings among us... Nothing could have been more important than for them to come on.” No doubt Smith who, as will be mentioned later, arrived in the Islands in the spring of 1841 confirmed Hall’s pessimistic report. No further effort was made by the Board to reinforce its Oregon Mission, to Whitman’s intense disappointment.

**Critical Letters Against Spalding**

Several letters critical of Spalding were sent to the American Board in 1840 by Smith, Gray, Rogers, and Hall which had a direct bearing upon the reasons why Whitman went East in the fall of 1842. As one reviews the sequence of events which called forth the letters of criticism, it is well to remember that Spalding never wrote a single letter of complaint against any of his associates until after the Mission meeting of June 1841, when he learned for the first time of the letters which had been sent to Greene about him. Spalding then wrote his defense, but he was handicapped in not knowing exactly the nature of the charges which had been made against him. One must read Spalding’s diary to get his side of the controversy.

The sequence of these unhappy events for 1840 began in January when Whitman was called to Lapwai to consult with Spalding, Gray, Hall, and Rogers about the printing of a Nez Perce school book. On January 29, Spalding wrote in his diary: “Very unpleasant & unprofitable talk last night between Messrs. Gray, Whitman, Rogers & Hall on one side & myself on the other.” Smith happened to be in Kamiah at the time or he would surely have been among Spalding’s critics. According to Spalding, the charges against him were “unfounded.” Some of the criticisms were petty. The most serious charge focused on his attempts to settle the Indians. “What the brethren heard was true,” he wrote, “& a doctrine which I have always preached, but so far from being a conspiracy against the Mission, I consider it the life of the Mission. I will meet them on this subject before a reasonable world. God in mercy give me grace & wisdom to do my duty regardless of all slanders that grow out of jealousy.”
Although Whitman was present at this time, there is no evidence that he joined with the other three men in criticizing Spalding’s endeavors to settle the Indians. He and Spalding thought alike on that subject. Possibly Whitman brought up some personal matters. The confrontation made Spalding very unhappy. He felt that he was standing alone.

**Gray Recommends Spalding’s Dismissal**

On March 5, 1840, the Grays left Lapwai for Kamiah where they spent about a week with the Smiths. Gray and Smith had not been on speaking terms at times when crossing the country in 1838; now, however, they became very chummy as they shared their common grievances against Spalding. On March 20, after his return to Lapwai, Gray wrote a twelvepage letter to Greene filled with complaints against Spalding. He indirectly suggested that Spalding be recalled: “The [Prudential] committee may yet feel to recall some members of this Mission or to send an agent to enquire into the state of affairs. One or the other I would hope might be done soon.” Gray said that it was hopeless to expect the members of the Mission to reach an agreement on Mission policies, and asked: “Do you advise me under such circumstances to remain longer a member of this Mission?”

On April 15, Gray wrote another twelve-page letter to Greene in which he stated: “Let Dr. Whitman and Mr. Spalding or Mr. Lee order as many hundred ploughs, etc., etc., as they please. If they are engaged in teaching the Indians the value of their souls, I am confident they would not think so much about ploughs and mill irons, etc.”

Here is evidence that Gray and Smith were united in their opposition to the policy that Whitman and Spalding were following in trying to settle the Indians. A third letter from Gray to Greene, dated October 14, 1840, further criticized Spalding. Hall had joined the chorus of disapproval by writing to Greene on March 16, 1840.

**Smith Also Recommends Dismissal of Spalding**

Spalding’s most bitter critic was Asa B. Smith. In his lonely situation at Kamiah, Smith had ample time to brood over his misfortunes and write long letters to Greene. During 1840 he wrote seven such letters, dated February 6 and 25, August 5 and 31, September 3 and 28, and October 21. On page after page, Smith went into details regarding what
he considered to be the mistakes of Spalding. Smith was the keenest ob-
server of Indian customs of any of the Oregon Mission. Hence his let-
ters contain much valuable information about the customs, traditions,
language, and number of the Nez Perces. On the other hand, he was very
critical of the natives, calling them avaricious and selfrighteous. In his
letter of September 28, he wrote: “...no doubt is left in my mind as to
their motives in desiring missionaries. The principal motive evidently is
the temporal benefit which may be derived from them.” In all fairness to
Smith, we should remember that he and his wife were living under condi-
tions more primitive than those of any other family in the Mission and
that Sarah was a victim of a chronic illness which was gradually becoming
worse. Under such conditions, it was easy for Smith to be pessimistic.

The climax of Smith’s embittered feelings is to be found in his letter
of October 21, 1840, when he recommended to Greene that “the mission
had better be given up to the Methodists & Mr. Spalding advised to return home.
He made the same recommendation regarding Gray: “...it would be bet-
ter that he should return home rather than go to another field.” As will be
seen, the arrival of these letters of criticism caused the Prudential Com-
mittee of the American Board to issue its drastic order of February 1842
which dismissed Spalding, Gray, and Smith, and which called for the
closing of the work at Waiilatpu and Lapwai. The arrival of this order at
Wailatpu in September 1842 caused Whitman to leave on October 3 for
Boston. Of this more later.

**FIRST WAGONS OVER THE BLUE MOUNTAINS**

B

efore the Oregon Trail could be opened for covered wagons from
the Missouri frontier to the Columbia River, three great obstacles
had to be surmounted. It had to be demonstrated that (a) women could
cross the Rockies; (b) that wagons could cross the Snake River desert of
what is now southern Idaho; (c) and that wagons could be taken over the
Blue Mountains of what is now eastern Oregon.

The successful crossing of the Rockies by Narcissa Whitman and
Eliza Spalding in July 1836 opened the mountain gateway to Old Or-
egon. Whitman’s stubborn insistence in taking Spalding’s wagon, re-
duced to a cart, as far west as Fort Boise, had opened the Oregon Trail
to that point. There remained until 1840 the unconquered and formi-
dable barrier of the Blue Mountains.
Among those who crossed the plains and the Rockies in 1840 with the last caravan of the American Fur Company to go to the Rendezvous was the first non-missionary family to make the overland journey to Old Oregon. They were Joel P. Walker, his wife, a sister, three sons, and two daughters. Also traveling with this caravan were the three independent missionary couples previously mentioned. When Walker and the missionary party arrived at Fort Hall, Walker had one wagon and the missionaries had two. Walker sold his wagon at Fort Hall to Caleb Wilkins, a mountain man, and continued his westward journey, with his family, on horseback. When they arrived at Waiilatpu, the Whitmans were away, attending the Mission meeting at Lapwai. This is probably the reason why no reference to the Joel P. Walker family has been found in the extant Whitman correspondence. After spending the winter of 1840–41 in the Willamette Valley, the Walkers migrated to California in the fall of 1841 where Joel was later to play a prominent role in political affairs.

As has been mentioned, the three missionary couples met Robert Newell at the Rendezvous who traveled with them to Fort Hall. There Newell traded some fresh horses for the two wagons which the missionaries had managed to take that far west. Newell had with him his Indian wife and their three sons, the youngest of whom had been born on April 17, 1840, and who was named Marcus Whitman. Newell sold one of the wagons he had obtained from the missionaries to Francis Ermatinger, who was then in charge of Fort Hall. Ermatinger, wishing to have this wagon taken to the Columbia River, hired another mountain man, William Craig, as the driver. Craig and Newell had married Nez Perce women who were sisters. With Craig was his friend, John Larison (or Larrison).

Still another mountain man to join the party was Joe Meek, who had met the Whitmans and the Spaldings at the 1836 Rendezvous. Meek’s first wife, a Nez Perce woman, had deserted him after giving birth to a daughter whom he had named Helen Mar after Lady Helen Mar, the heroine of Jane Porter’s *The Scottish Chiefs*. Meek took another Nez Perce woman for his wife. Realizing that their trapping days were over, these five mountain men—Newell, Wilkins, Craig, Larison, and Meek—headed for the Oregon country west of the Blue Mountains to begin life anew. The men, with their three wagons, left Fort Hall on September 27. They were several weeks behind the Joel P. Walker
party, who had pushed on ahead. “In a few days,” wrote Newell in his diary, “we began to realize the difficult task before us, and found that the continual crashing of the sage under our wagons, which was in many places higher than the mules back, was no joke and seeing our animals begin to fail, we began to light up—and finally threw away our wagon beds and were quite sorry we had undertaken the job.”

The men, however, persisted and succeeded in taking the bare chassis of the three wagons over the Blue Mountains. The party arrived at Waiilatpu sometime during the first week of November. Thus the Oregon Trail had been fully traversed by wheeled vehicles, although three years had to pass before other wagons were taken over the same mountains.

Regarding the reception extended to him and his associates at Waiilatpu, Newell wrote: “In a rather rough and reduced state we arrived at Dr. Whitman’s station in the Walla Walla Valley, where we were met by that hospitable man and kindly made welcome and feasted accordingly. On hearing me regret that I had undertaken to bring the wagons, the Doctor said: ‘O you will never regret it. You have broken the ice, and when others see that wagons have passed, they too will pass, and in a few years the valley will be full of people.’”

In all probability one of the wagons was left at Waiilatpu, as Whitman in a letter to Walker dated May 8, 1841, made reference to a “wagon or cart” being at his mission. This is the first discovered mention of a wheeled vehicle being at Waiilatpu. The inventory of the property at Waiilatpu at the time of the massacre listed four wagons. Evidently Whitman had been able to obtain wagons from the immigrants who streamed by his station in great numbers in 1843 and following years. One of the wagons brought by the Newell party was evidently left at Fort Walla Walla and the third was taken down the Columbia River to the Willamette Valley.

While at Waiilatpu, Meek persuaded the Whitmans to take his two-year-old daughter, Helen Mar, into their home to be reared and educated. Narcissa later in a letter to her sister Jane wrote that the child’s body was dirty and covered with lice, and that she was half-starved. She found the child fretful, stubborn, and difficult to control [Letter 105]. Narcissa had kept the clothes that Alice Clarissa had worn and now used them. To a certain degree, the little half-breed girl filled the void in the hearts of Marcus and Narcissa, who could never forget their own little
girl who had been drowned a little more than a year before.

Craig and Larison did not go with the other three mountain men to the Willamette Valley but instead went to Lapwai, probably because their wives hailed from that area. Craig’s wife was a daughter of the principal chief of Lapwai Valley, Thunder Strikes or Thunder Eyes, whom Spalding had renamed James. On November 20, 1840, Spalding noted in his diary that the two men intended to spend the winter at Lapwai and added: “I have seen enough of Mountain men.” Craig later settled on Lapwai Creek about eight miles up from the Clearwater mission. He is usually given the credit of being the first non-missionary settler in what is now Idaho. He was unsympathetic towards Spalding and his work and would cause him much trouble over several years.

**First Trouble with the Indians**

The history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board can be divided roughly into two periods. The first extended from the founding of the Mission in the fall of 1836 to the fall of 1840 when the last of the complaining letters about Spalding was sent to the American Board. These years were marred by dissensions within the Mission which resulted in the Board’s drastic order of February 1842 to which reference has been made.

The second period began in the fall of 1840 with the first evidence of hostility to the missionaries on the part of the natives. There seems to be a direct relationship during these years, 1840–1847, between the steadily increasing number of Oregon immigrants and the growing restlessness of the Indians. The first Oregon immigrant family arrived in 1840; a few more came in 1841; still more in 1842; and then in 1843 the first great wagon train crawled over the Blue Mountains bringing about a thousand people. Each year after that the numbers increased, and the Indians became fearful that the white man was engulfing their land, even though none of the immigrants up to 1847 had settled in the upper Columbia River Valley.

The Whitman station, as an outpost on the Oregon Trail, became the focal point of conflict between the red man and the white; between the old life and the new which was being so suddenly thrust upon the natives. The time came when the Cayuses felt that Dr. Whitman was more interested in helping the white man than in helping them. It should be emphasized,
however, that had there been no Oregon Mission of the American Board, the changes for the natives would have been just as inevitable. The overflow of white population from the States was a terrible evil for the Oregon Indians which they could not resist. Partly because of the strategic location of the Whitman station, the Whitmans became the object of growing hostility on the part of a small band within the Cayuse nation.

**Trouble with the Nez Perces at Lapwai**

The first indication of opposition from the Indians came in October 1840, first against Spalding at Lapwai and then against Smith at Kamiah. Spalding’s difficulties arose out of two causes. The first had to do with trading, as he explained in a letter to Greene dated September 22, 1840: “Most of our perplexities with the natives, I believe arise from our trading in Indian goods. Our powder measure is not as large as that at Walla Walla… We do not give as much for this thing or that thing…” Spalding was unhappy about the necessity of using ammunition, knives, and blankets as payment to the Indians for any services they might render or in payment for horses purchased, but there was no alternative.

A more serious point of friction was the fact that some of the Indians whom he was encouraging to cultivate the soil—Old Joseph and Timothy, for example—had moved from their respective localities and had begun to farm small acreages in the Lapwai Valley. The Nez Perces and the Cayuses had developed no sense of individual ownership of specific lands at the time the missionaries settled among them; however, tribal bands did claim exclusive possession of certain general areas and resented the intrusion of other members of the same tribe. Joseph and Timothy no doubt moved to Lapwai in order to be near Spalding and, perhaps, to take advantage of farming implements which he freely loaned. Old James, however, whose band claimed the valley, resented this. Smith wrote: “Old James is trying to drive away Joseph & Timothy & all who do not belong there.”

One of the tactics used by Old James to harass Spalding was to send two of the young men of his band to disrupt the school that Mrs. Spalding was teaching. According to Spalding’s diary, two young painted Indians appeared at the school on October 9. Mrs. Spalding requested them to go away. “They came the nearer,” wrote Spalding, “& glanced their hellish looks directly at her. She moved to another part of the room…
They then commenced their savage talk.” Eliza called her husband who in turn sent for Old James as the two young men were from his lodge. James refused to call off the men. Among those who protested the outrage was Timothy and another Nez Perce, the Eagle. Spalding was heartsick over the incident as it portended further trouble from James.

Trouble with the Nez Perces at Kamiah

Four days after the disturbance at the Lapwai school, a more serious confrontation took place at Kamiah between Smith and a few dissident Nez Perces. Again ownership of the land being cultivated was the sore point. Smith wrote in his diary for October 18, 1840: “This has been a day of serious trial in respect to the Indians. We have, in the most absolute terms & in the most insolent manner, been ordered by the two principal men of this place to leave the station... They demanded pay for the land. I refused to say anything about it, telling them that the land was given a year ago & they had promised to say no more about it... They pretended that when they gave me the land, they expected that I would give them goods & food, but I had not done it &c... They then ordered me in the most absolute terms to leave on the morrow... I at length told them I would go, but could not get ready so soon. I must have time to get ready.” Smith sent a faithful Indian in the dark of the night to Spalding with an urgent plea for him and Whitman to come immediately.

The willingness of Smith to leave caught his antagonists by surprise. When the Nez Perce community at Kamiah learned what had happened, the majority rallied to the defense of their missionaries. Smith does not mention names, except referring to one called Meoway (or Meiway) who boasted of the fact that sometime previous he had “tied Mr. Pambrun & made him a slave.” Perhaps Lawyer and Ellis were among those who came to Smith’s defense the next day. Smith described an angry confrontation which took place in his house between the two troublemakers and some of the principal men of the tribe. “Much passion was manifested on both sides,” wrote Smith to Greene on October 21, “and it seemed to me that our house was filled with demons from the bottomless pit rather than human beings.” After several hours of angry debate, the Indians left the Smith home. Sarah was terrified at what had taken place. Asa was both angry and frightened, but secretly may have welcomed the incident as giving them a valid reason for leaving the field.
Spalding received word of the disturbance on Wednesday, October 14, and at once sent a messenger to inform Whitman. Spalding left on the 15th for Kamiah taking several Indians with him, including Joseph. They made the sixty-mile trip in one day. Spalding found Smith extremely discouraged. The Indians were quiet when Spalding arrived. On October 15, he wrote in his diary: “See a proposal coming first from Mr. Walker to Doct Whitman to sell out the Mission to the Methodists. My mind is thrown into confusion.” Here was a report, which turned out to be a baseless rumor, which Smith eagerly grasped as being possibly one way out of his situation. On the 17th, Spalding wrote: “The Indians confess their faults & wish Mr. S. to remain, but it seems his mind is made up & he will go.” Spalding remained at Kamiah over Sunday, the 18th, and on the 21st started back to Lapwai. He had proceeded but a few miles before he met Whitman with a number of pack animals which would be needed if it were decided to evacuate the Smiths. Spalding returned to Kamiah with Whitman.

Evidently Smith had written such an alarming report of his troubles to Spalding and Whitman that, when Whitman read it, he left as soon as possible for Kamiah fully expecting that it would be necessary to bring out the Smiths. We are not told just when Whitman left Waiilatpu, possibly on October 18, which was a Sunday. The urgency of the call was such that Whitman must have traveled on Sunday if he arrived at Kamiah, 180 miles from Waiilatpu, on the 21st. On October 30, Narcissa, in a letter to her sister Harriet, wrote: “Your brother [in-law] is not at home… Think of him traveling alone [in] this cold weather. The first [day] after he left his warm home the wind blew very hard and cold—he with but two blankets, sleeping on the ground alone; and since, it has rained almost every day, and sometimes snowed a little.” Although Narcissa here made two references to her husband traveling alone, she probably meant that no other white man was with him. Since Whitman took a string of pack animals with him, he would have needed some Indian assistants. No comments have been found in any of Whitman’s letters regarding his travel experiences when making such long trips on horseback. Did he take a small tent with him? What about his food? Did he cook one or more hot meals each day while on the trail? On this long ride to Kamiah in stormy weather, did he have to sleep each night in wet blankets? Nothing is said of such details.
Smith was still determined to leave Kamiah when Whitman arrived. The question arose as to when. Whitman favored an immediate withdrawal and reminded Smith that he had brought pack animals for that purpose. Sarah, however, was too ill to ride horseback. She would have to be taken down the Clearwater River in a canoe and, since no canoe was available, Spalding recommended that they wait until spring. Possibly those among the Kamiah Indians who wanted to keep the Smiths in their midst deliberately refused to make a canoe available. A favorable factor in the situation was the friendly attitude of the majority of the natives who urged the Smiths to remain. Perhaps it was Whitman who suggested that one of the independent missionary couples then at Waiilatpu, the Rev. and Mrs. Harvey Clark, be sent to Kamiah to give the Smiths companionship and assistance during the coming winter. The Smiths were agreeable to this suggestion as were the Clarks, who left for Kamiah shortly after Whitman returned to his home. In one of the rare instances when Asa Smith had something good to say of others, he wrote in his letter of February 22, 1841, to Greene: “(The Clarks) have been a great comfort to us in our lonely situation.”

**Should They Sell Out To The Methodists?**

Although evidence is lacking as to the exact sequence of events which led up to Smith’s proposal that the Oregon Mission of the American Board be turned over to the Methodists, it is probable that this is the story of what happened. When Smith heard of the arrival of the *Lausanne* at Fort Vancouver in June 1840 with the Methodist reinforcement of about fifty men, women, and children, he grasped at the idea of turning the American Board’s work in Old Oregon over to the Methodists. They had a surplus of missionaries. Moreover, comparatively speaking, there were only a few natives in the lower Columbia country. He reasoned that the Methodists, under those circumstances, would welcome the opportunity to enlarge their field of endeavor. Indeed, he came to the point of being willing to turn over the American Board’s work with or without compensation.

Possibly feeling confident that both Whitman and Spalding would object to the idea, Smith may have broached his plan in a letter to Walker, who then wrote to Whitman. On October 15, 1840, just two days after his confrontation with the two dissident Nez Perces at Kamiah, Smith
wrote to Greene suggesting that the Board’s work in Oregon be turned over to the Methodists. On that same day, Whitman wrote to Greene and, after reviewing the events of the preceding months and after giving a financial report, wrote: “Mr. Walker writes that he has written you in favour of the Board withdrawing this Mission on account of so many [i.e., Methodist missionaries] coming in among & around us. I feel to say, No: Do not withdraw it. We have not done what we could, & ought to do. It could not be withdrawing the mission, so to speak; but abandoning the cause of the Indians. Rather let us be reenforced to enable us to act most efficiently.”

As has been stated, when Spalding arrived at Kamiah on October 15 and learned of Smith’s proposal, he was shocked. After Whitman arrived, the three men seriously debated the idea. Although Whitman had written to Greene on the 15th of that month rejecting the proposal, he began to wonder whether this might not be a good idea when faced with Smith’s despondency and determination to leave. Spalding remained unalterably opposed and said that he would remain at his station even if the American Board abandoned its work and turned it over to the Methodists. The lowest ebb tide in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was reached there at Kamiah when Smith, Whitman, and Spalding debated the proposal to turn their work over to the Methodists. There is no indication that the Methodists ever knew of such a possibility.

After Spalding had returned to Lapwai, he wrote to Walker asking for an explanation of his recommendation to Whitman. Walker replied that he and Eells had no thought of selling out to the Methodists and that “the Doct must have misunderstood.” Mary Walker wrote in her diary on October 28: “We are astonished and somewhat indignant to think they should think of such a thing.” The whole incident reflected Smith’s despondency. He was looking for what he thought would be an honorable escape from his miserable situation.

On his return trip from Kamiah, Whitman spent the night of October 24 at Lapwai. While there he received a letter from Jason Lee which brought the news that Dr. Elijah White, who had served for three years as the physician in the Methodist Mission, had been dismissed and was to return to the States on the Lausanne. Lee expressed his fears that after White had arrived in the States, he would do “all he can to injure them [i.e., the Methodist Mission].” After White returned to the
States, he was successful in obtaining from the United States Government an appointment to be the first Indian Agent to Old Oregon. He returned to Oregon in 1842.

“Spalding has a disease in his head”

An incident occurred during Whitman’s visit with Smith at Kamiah which led W. I. Marshall in his Acquisition of Oregon to claim that “Dr. Whitman speaking as a physician as early as September [sic] 1840, had declared that Spalding was suffering from a disease of the head which was liable to make him insane.” This needs correction. Marshall based his opinion on a passage in Smith’s letter to Greene written at Kamiah on October 21, 1840, following Spalding’s departure for Lapwai but while Whitman was still there. Smith wrote: “From what I have seen & know of him [i.e., Spalding], I greatly fear that the man will become deranged should any heavy calamity befall him… The above remarks I have just read to Doct. W. & he concurs in what I have written & says moreover that Mr. Spalding has a disease in his head which may result in derangement especially if excited by external circumstances.”

This comment attributed to Whitman cannot be taken as a professional diagnosis. Whitman was not a co-signer of the letter. Smith’s opinion regarding Spalding’s mental condition should be read in the light of Smith’s own emotional attitude.

Although Whitman was offended by Spalding’s occasional references to the latter’s broken romance with Narcissa, he never joined Smith, Gray, Rogers, and Hall in writing letters of criticism about Spalding to the Board. In fact, it appears that Whitman was unaware that such letters had been sent; in his letter of October 15, 1840, to Greene, he said: “Mr. Gray has lately informed me that letters have been sent by him & others, setting forth difficulties that have existed in this mission. It was never my intention to trouble you with them.”

Whitman’s Reaction to the Proposal to Abandon their Mission

After his return to Waiilatpu, Whitman on October 29 wrote a letter of about two thousand words to Greene in which he reported on his trip to Kamiah. He began by saying: “Last evening I arrived home from my trip to Mr. Smith’s aid. I left my hired man to make a canoe for them to come down by water in case he still finds it necessary to leave
this fall. If he does not leave this fall, he thinks he shall in the spring. Mrs. Smith is indeed very lonely. I think they both suffer much from this cause. I regret that Mr. Smith should have been so anxious to go where he is, as he so easily falls into loneliness & despondency. The Indians, it is true, are very anxious to obtain property, but I do not think we shall be in danger of violence from them.”

Regarding the proposal to sell out to the Methodists, Whitman tried to be objective by presenting both sides of the question. In favor of selling, he mentioned Walker’s supposed recommendation, the “want of harmony” within the Mission, and finally, Smith’s determination to leave. Regarding the latter possibility, Whitman wrote: “In such [an] event, Mr. Gray would leave & also Mr. Rogers and only Mr. Spalding & myself would be left in the Nez Perce language. While all this would be going on, a bad influence would be exerted, & it would not be well for Mr. S. & myself to be left alone under such circumstances.”

In arguing against selling, Whitman mentioned such facts as: “An unusual interest & attention has been given to instruction at this station this fall… More people are brought to hear instruction in this Mission than in most of the Missions of the Board… Will it not be abandoning the Indians & in that way western America to the Catholics?” Even should the Methodists be interested in taking over the work, Whitman pointed out that there was certain to be a long interval during which the new missionaries would have to learn the language. As for the missionaries of the American Board, Whitman argued: “The language is acquired; we are on the ground.” In conclusion, he wrote: “My feelings are to live & labour for this people… If you sell the Mission, you will be at liberty to send me to any field where I may be needed as Physician, but not as here to fill the place of a Minister, a thing I have [tried] in vain to avoid.”

According to a penned notation on the back of Whitman’s letter, now on file in the Board’s archives, Greene received it on October 2, 1841. On that same day a number of other letters arrived from Oregon, including three long letters from Smith filled with complaints about Spalding. Whitman’s letter and the others were laid before the members of the Prudential Committee which met in Boston in February 1842. The Board took no action about turning their work in Oregon over to the Methodists, but did order other changes.
Shortly after writing to Greene on October 29, Whitman heard from Walker, who disavowed any idea of selling out to the Methodists. Walker stated that both he and Eells were opposed to the idea. With this report, all discussions about abandoning the Mission ceased. Whitman, Spalding, Walker, and Eells were determined to carry on even if Smith, Gray, and Rogers left.

**The Fall of 1840**

Whitman was spared trouble with the natives in the vicinity of Waiilatpu during the fall of 1840 and the following winter. In a letter to Greene dated March 28, 1841, he wrote: “The Old Chief Cut Lip died last winter, which has removed a very troublesome cause.” In all probability this Cut Lip was none other than Umtippe, to whom reference has already been made. Possibly also this was the Cut Lip whom George Simpson mentioned as being in league with an interpreter at Fort Walla Walla whom Simpson called a villain. After the death of Cut Lip, or Umtippe, Tilhoukaikt became the head chief of the Waiilatpu band and, as will be told, in turn caused Whitman much trouble.

A few weeks after the arrival of the three independent missionary couples at Waiilatpu in August 1840, Narcissa was taken ill with “inflammation of the kidneys.” In her letter to her mother of October 9, she said that she “was brought very low.” Whitman, in his letter to Greene of October 15, wrote: “Mrs. Whitman has been sick for nearly two months having first an attack of the kidneys, from which she is not perfectly recovered.” Here is the first reference in Whitman’s correspondence to Narcissa’s ill health. Such references became more frequent in their later letters.

Narcissa was also afflicted with poor eyesight. As early as September 30, 1839, she mentioned this in one of her letters. On March 1, 1842, she wrote again: “My eyes are much weaker than when I left home and no wonder, I have so much use for them. I am at times obliged to use the spectacles Brother J[onas] G[alusha] so kindly furnished me.” In those days, long before the development of modern ophthalmology, spectacles were little more than variations of magnifying lenses.

Marcus had his share of ill health during the fall of 1840 as he stated in his letter of March 28, 1841, to Greene: “Soon after I wrote you last fall, I became sick from overdoing in going to Mr. Smith’s & from hard labour, after I came home upon the mill race & preparing
for winter. After being recovered a little, I went to Walla Walla at the call of Mr. Pambrun to see one of his men that was sick. While there the water rose very high & in returning, I fell into one of the streams by the stumbling of my horse in crossing & got very wet. Mrs. W. being with me & some Indians at the same time being there in passing [and] having a fire, I was enabled to take off my wet clothes & wrap myself in blankets & so far dry them as to come home by substituting a blanket for my coat.” The exposure had its aftereffects which, as Whitman wrote, “held me to my bed for three weeks.”

Fortunately, Whitman had been able to harvest his crops before being taken ill. He reported to Greene: “My crops were good having two hundred & fifty bushels of wheat, one hundred & thirty of corn, peas not known, & a good supply of potatoesi [Letter 80]. Because the faithful Hawaiian, Joseph Maki, had died on August 8, and because the Grays did not move to Waiilatpu until September, Whitman was short of help. He welcomed the assistance the three men of the second party of independent missionaries were able to give. Griffin, who had arrived at Waiilatpu with his wife early in July 1840 after making a futile attempt to establish a mission on the Snake River, was surly and uncooperative. Whitman on October 15 wrote about him: “He did not employ himself a day.”

The uninvited presence of the five independent missionary couples at Waiilatpu for a short time in the fall of 1840 was an embarrassment for Whitman. “I do not know how to get along with the Free Missionaries,” he wrote to Greene. “I do not wish to be a supplier for them & yet I do not see how I can refuse them some grain… It is evident they have no funds to buy of the Company. I dare not oppose them. I dare not sell to them. To give them I am not able, and I cannot let them suffer” [Letter 80]. The most helpful of these independent missionaries was Munger who was hired by Whitman because of his skill as a carpenter. Munger’s work made the erection of the main mission house possible during 1840–41.

The Griffins remained at Waiilatpu until sometime after October 15, 1840, and then left for the Willamette Valley where Griffin took up farming on the Tualatin Plains.22 The Grays remained at Waiilatpu while waiting for spring, when they expected to open their new station at Shimnap. When Whitman first made application for an appointment
under the American Board in 1834, he was rejected because of ill health. He then stated that he had suffered pain in his left side from time to time ever since 1830. This condition had seemingly cleared up at the time of his appointment in 1835. The old trouble seemed to have returned during the fall of 1840 and following winter. Writing to Mary Walker on January 19, 1841, Mary Gray said: “Doct. W. has been very sick this winter with his side complaint, [but] is now so as to be about some.”

The Grays were able to take over some of the responsibilities at Waiilatpu which under normal conditions would have fallen on Whitman’s shoulders. Mary taught the Indian school during the winter of 1840–41. Whitman described the attendance as being poor, largely because so few Indians were in the vicinity during those months [Letter 83b].

**CAYUSES FIND CHRISTIAN STANDARDS DIFFICULT**

The Cayuses found the high ethical standards and the Calvinistic doctrines which the Whitmans practiced and preached difficult to accept. It should be remembered that Whitman was not an ordained minister, and had not received training in theology. He taught what he had learned as a youth in the home of relatives and friends in Massachusetts; in the church and school at Plainfield; and in his activities as a layman in the churches at Rushville and Wheeler, New York. His teachings reflected the Calvinistic theology and Puritanical background of his youth. Narcissa’s early experiences were much the same as those of her husband.

Narcissa analyzed the problem they faced in a letter dated October 10, 1840, to her father. She explained that the Cayuses were unhappy because “husband tells them that none of them are Christians; that they are all of them in the broad road to destruction, and that worshipping will not save them.” In other words, Whitman was telling the natives that it was not enough to observe the outward forms of Christian worship; that there had to be a change of heart. Narcissa’s account continues: “They try to persuade him not to talk such bad talk to them, as they say, but talk good talk, or tell some story... Some threaten to whip him and to destroy our crops, and for a long time their cattle were turned into our potato field every night to see if they could not compel him to change his course of instruction to them.” According to Narcissa, her husband was not intimidated by the threats of some of the Cayuses and, for the time being, life remained peaceful at Waiilatpu.
Students of Indian life have pointed out that primitive Indians were hedonists, responding to pleasure and pain. They were also pantheistic in their outlook, therefore not overly concerned about contradictions in religious tenets. Such a background, psychologically speaking, made it extremely difficult for the Protestant missionaries to reshape Indian thinking and conduct to make them conform to Calvinist doctrines and puritanical standards.

The Second Flour Mill

The biggest accomplishment made at Waiilatpu during the fall of 1840 was the digging of a millrace and the erection of a gristmill. The millrace tapped Doan Creek, a tributary of Mill Creek, and was about one-third of a mile long and five feet deep in places. Of necessity, the ditch was dug by hand labor. In January 1839, the Nez Perces had voluntarily dug a millrace for Spalding which was longer, deeper, and wider than that at Waiilatpu, because they realized that a mill would be of great benefit to them. The Cayuses, on the other hand, were less cooperative; they refused to work on the ditch unless paid. Of this Whitman wrote: “I cannot give them much powder, as I am so near the Fort. Tobacco I will not sell & shirts were not to be had to any extent; so that my labor has had to be either white men or Hawaiians in general” [Letter 80]. No doubt several of the independent missionaries assisted.

On December 7, Whitman wrote to Walker: “Mr. Gray is very busy in building the mill & seems happy. We have finished the race but we may still lower the head of it a few inches. We go for pine for the frame floor & shaft tomorrow. I will not say when it will run but I trust in a reasonable time.” The millstones, two feet in diameter, had been sent to Oregon by sea by Greene to replace the first mill with its iron burrs of only four or five inches diameter. Farnham had called the first mill “a crazy thing.” In all probability the first mill had been powered by a water wheel set directly in the river. The second mill had an underwater wheel about three feet in diameter set in the millrace. A wooden drive shaft extended up through the platform to turn the stones. Later Whitman installed a small threshing machine to utilize the same power. In his letter to Greene dated March 28, 1841, Whitman wrote: “The power is most complete, ample & safe, being altogether by a race & not requiring any dam... It will grind from one to one & a half bushels in
an hour.” A milldam with the resultant millpond made a larger mill possible about three years later.

**Munger Insane**

During the winter of 1840–41, Asahel Munger became insane. Of this Whitman wrote to Greene on March 28, 1841: “Mr. Munger, who has been with us for some time, has become a monomaniac & must be sent home with his family. He has become an unsafe man to remain about the Mission as he holds himself as the representative of the church & often has revelations. He has in mind to cut off the A.B.C.F.M. Mission from all rights to missionate [sic] among the heathen & only allows me to stay in the mission house for a time when he is to take it in some way from me. As he is not connected with any one in the country & having been employed by me & the mission, we must send him home even if it is at the expense of the Board. If he goes by land, it will not cost much, if any thing to the Board.”

As Munger’s condition worsened, the Whitmans were in a quandary, not knowing what to do. He had to be sent to the States, but how could that be accomplished? Robert Newell and Joe Meek had informed Whitman that the Rocky Mountain fur trade was over. There would be no more caravans of the American Fur Company to the Rendezvous, and there would be no more Rendezvous. Ermatinger of the Hudson’s Bay Company, with whom Whitman had discussed his problem, said he knew of a man who was planning to make the overland journey to the Missouri frontier in the summer of 1841; he thought that this man could be hired to take the Mungers with him [Letter 87a]. Whitman grasped at this possibility and obligated the Board to cover the costs involved. Ermatinger agreed to escort the Mungers with their year-old baby to Fort Hall, where he hoped he could turn them over to this unnamed man who would escort them on to the States.

Ermatinger, with the Mungers, left for Fort Hall sometime in the spring of 1841 but, to the dismay of the Whitmans, returned with them in the following August. For some reason, Ermatinger had been unable to make contact with the man he thought was going to the States, and, therefore, had no choice but to return the Mungers to Waiilatpu. We have only our imagination to suggest the anguish Mrs. Munger must have endured with an insane husband and her baby on their long horseback
journey twice across the desert wastes along the Snake River. She left no diary or letters to tell of her difficulties and experiences. Narcissa later wrote that Munger was rational enough to be glad to return to Waiilatpu, but “his poor wife did it very reluctantly” [Letter 104].

Somewhere along the way, either at Fort Hall or possibly at the recently established Fort Bridger, Ermatinger met his old friend, Jim Bridger. Bridger persuaded Ermatinger to take with him his five-year-old half-breed daughter, Mary Ann, to Waiilatpu for the Whitmans to rear and educate. Perhaps Bridger had heard of the Whitmans taking Helen Mar Meek into their home. Narcissa never had an opportunity to object to this new responsibility so suddenly thrust upon her, but she seemed to have accepted it in good spirit. Mary Ann was about a year older than Helen Mar. In a letter to her sister Jane, Narcissa wrote: “Mary Ann is of a mild disposition and easily governed and makes but little trouble” [Letter 105]. Indeed with two little half-breed girls in her home, Narcissa found some compensation for the loss she still felt because of the death of Alice Clarissa. “The Lord has taken our own dear child away,” she wrote to Jane, “so that we may care for the poor outcasts of the country and suffering children.”

The return of the Mungers to Waiilatpu made the Whitmans realize that the Oregon Trail leading east of Waiilatpu was now almost exclusively a one-way road. Traffic was westbound except for a few venture-some men who dared to go through hostile Indian country with little or no protection. Americans in Old Oregon were marooned except for the long and more expensive voyage around Cape Horn.

Sometime during the first part of September 1841, the two independent missionary couples, the Alvin Smiths and the Littlejohns, left for the Willamette Valley. They took the Munger family with them and turned them over to the care of Jason Lee. During the week before Christmas, the deranged Munger committed suicide. Of this Narcissa wrote: “He—after driving two nails in his left hand—drew out a bed of hot coals and burnt it to a crisp, and died four days later” [Letter 105]. In a letter to Mary Walker dated January 24, 1842, Narcissa commented: “What a mercy that we have been spared such a scene as that must have been.” As will be noted later, the Littlejohns returned to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843 when Mr. Littlejohn entered Whitman’s employ.
SPRING 1841

On January 11, 1841, fire destroyed the Eells home at Tshimakain at a time when the thermometer stood at $8\frac{1}{2}$° below zero. For several weeks, the Eellses had to live with the Walkers. Early in March, Walker traveled to Waiilatpu where he was able to persuade Gray to return with him and assist in the erection of a new cabin for the Eellses. Gray went reluctantly, as he was eager to begin work at his proposed new station at Shimnap. He remained at Tshimakain for about a month.

In spite of the action taken at the 1840 Annual Meeting approving Gray’s move, the sentiment within the Mission had by the spring of 1841 gradually reversed itself. Whitman explained to Greene in his letter of March 28, 1841, that the Mission would be overextending itself to open another station. Moreover, if Gray moved to Shimnap, he would be working in a different language and, of all the members of the Mission, he was the slowest in mastering an Indian tongue. Whitman argued that all of the cultivation should be done at Waiilatpu and that even the blacksmith shop, the printing press, and the mills should be centered there. He then could supply the material needs of the other stations, thus giving the ministers more time for their specialized duties. There is evidence that by the late spring of 1841, Gray had come to realize that it would be unwise for him to move to Shimnap. Final action by the Mission, however, was delayed until the Annual Meeting to be held the following May.

NARCISSA SEeks FORGIVENESS

When Walker left for Tshimakain with Gray in March 1841, he carried a letter from Narcissa to Mary. It seems that Narcissa had been going through a period of intensive self-examination. “For two or three days,” she wrote, “my distress was very great.” Moved by a deep feeling of self-humiliation, she poured out her confession. No one ever condemned her as strongly as she in this letter condemned herself. “Perhaps never in my whole life,” she wrote, “have I been led to see so distinctly the hidden iniquity & secret evils of my heart. Of all persons, I see myself as the most unfit for the place I occupy on heathen ground. I wonder that I was ever permitted to come... I see now as I never have before wherein I have been a grief to his [God’s] children by indulging in unholy passions & exhibiting so little of the meek, lowly & quiet spirit of our blessed Saviour. I have been blind to my own faults & have
not known what manner of spirit I was of. Proud & self confident have I been. I do not wonder that brother Spalding, if he saw this trait in my character, felt that he could not come into this field if I did. Neither is it strange that the other members of the Mission should feel that they could not live with us” [Letter 85].

After a full and frank confession, Narcissa begged the forgiveness of the Walkers and the Eellses. Mary made no comment in her diary on her reactions when she read the letter, but a few days after Gray had started back to Waiilatpu, she added this note to her diary: “Would give much to know how & what to do & whether it is I more than others who err. I know that I am a wicked wretch & fear my associates are no better.”

The mutual exchange of confessions and the willingness to forgive did much to establish the good relationship which thereafter existed between the Whitmans and their associates in Tshimakain.

**Agricultural Activities**

The introduction of agriculture among the Cayuses brought problems. The growing crops had to be protected from grazing animals. This meant that the fields and gardens had to be fenced or constantly guarded. The Indians would have to settle down in farming communities, abandoning their age-old customs of wandering from place to place in search of food. Another problem which arose among the natives grew out of an increasing appreciation of proprietory rights to the land that was being cultivated. In his letter to Greene of October 29, 1840, Whitman wrote: “I do not think the Indians can be collected together as to make a settlement in any one place on account of difficulties that will arise among themselves.” The reasons for this discouraging view were the failure of the Indians to build fences and the conflicting claims of pretended owners to the plots being cultivated.

When the time came for planting in the spring of 1841, Whitman became more encouraged as he found the Indians clamoring for plows. In 1838 Whitman had written to his brother Augustus asking for fifty plows and three hundred hoes. Augustus was authorized to draw upon some of Dr. Whitman’s personal funds to the extent of $200.00 to pay for such items. This request stirred the people of Rushville to send twenty-five plows, for on May 24, 1841, Marcus wrote to his brother to acknowledge the arrival of the plows at Fort Vancouver. He also stated
that the Board had sent ten. “The Indians are not backward in using them,” he wrote. “I help them make collars & harness of good quality & they have plenty of horses” [Letter 89]. The harness had to be made of the hides of such animals as deer, buffalo, and horses, laboriously sewed by hand with awls.

**THE SMITHS AND ROGERS LEAVE THE MISSION**

After the alarming confrontation with the two belligerent Nez Perces at Kamiah in the fall of 1840, Smith determined to leave the field as soon as possible. Harvey Clark, who with his wife had spent the winter of 1840–41 with the Smiths, told Whitman that Smith had given up all further study of the Nez Perce language and was instead “taking up a course of study in order to prepare himself for preaching in the States” [Letter 86]. The Clarks left Kamiah in early March and returned to Waiilatpu. Smith with his wife, still an invalid, made preparations to follow. He notified Spalding that he would leave Kamiah on April 12.

In the meantime, Eliza Spalding had been taken ill. Spalding wrote in his diary on March 25, 1841: “Last evening my dear wife was attacked with a severe hemorrhage, which soon reduced her to almost a corpse.” Henry did what he could to stop the flow of blood and sent an urgent message to Dr. Whitman asking for advice. Eliza’s weakness continued through the first part of April. On the 12th of that month, Spalding wrote again: “My dear wife has considerable fever & appears worse.” As with job of old, his troubles multiplied as the following diary entries indicate: “[April] 16. Little Henry quite sick last night… 17. Mr. Rogers very sick last night, up with him till late.” With three sick people on his hands, Spalding sent an urgent message to Whitman to come at once.

Whitman arrived at Lapwai on Wednesday, April 21, shortly after Asa and Sarah Smith had landed from the canoe which had brought them down the river from Kamiah. Spalding noted in his diary for that day: “Mrs. S. is not able to sit up much; but I am fully persuaded that this is not the principle reason of Mr. Smith’s leaving the Mission. He says he will go home in disgrace before he will remain longer in the Indian country. He considers the Indian race doomed to destruction.” Smith’s letter to Greene, written from Fort Walla Walla on April 29, gives a pathetic picture of his wife’s illness and of the intolerable conditions under which they had lived at Kamiah. When the Smith went down
the Columbia River, Sarah was still unable to walk; when portages had to be made, she had to be carried in a hammock slung from a pole carried by two Indians. On the other hand, Spalding was probably correct when he wrote that more than the illness of Mrs. Smith was involved in her husband's determination to leave. Even if Sarah had enjoyed robust health, Asa would surely have left about that time since he had become thoroughly disillusioned regarding the prospect of doing anything worthwhile as a missionary among the Nez Perces.

Rogers, sick and likewise discouraged, listened to what Smith had to say to Whitman and Spalding, and confessed that he felt much the same. As early as February 27, 1841, Rogers had written to Greene about his intention to leave the Mission. He then stated: “I will simply say that Mr. Spalding is felt by me to be the principal cause of my course.”

Not wishing to see the Smiths make the balance of the river trip to Fort Walla Walla alone, and also realizing that Rogers was not in condition to ride overland to Waiilatpu, Whitman decided to accompany the three down the river in a canoe. The four left Lapwai on April 22 the Smiths in one canoe with one or more Indian boatmen, Whitman and Rogers in another. Gray, with a pack train carrying Smith’s belongings and with Whitman’s horses, went overland. After a brief stay at Fort Walla Walla, where the Clarks joined them, the two couples continued their travels down the river. They arrived at Fort Vancouver on May 17. There Mrs. Smith came under the care of the Company’s physician, Dr. Forbes Barclay. In none of the letters of Whitman or Smith do we find any mention that Dr. Whitman was ever consulted regarding Mrs. Smith’s affliction. Since Asa had studied some medicine before leaving for Old Oregon, it may be that he felt himself as well qualified to prescribe for his wife as Dr. Whitman. The Clarks settled in the Willamette Valley where he became active in church and educational work.

The Smiths were obliged to tarry at Fort Vancouver until the latter part of December before being able to get passage on a ship bound for Honolulu. While waiting in the Islands for a ship to take them to the States, Sarah’s health so improved that they decided to remain for a time. Asa accepted an assignment under the Hawaiian Mission of the American Board to Waialua on the island of Oahu. After being in the Islands for three years, the Smiths sailed from Honolulu on October 15, 1845, on a ship destined around the Cape of Good Hope.
Asa Smith’s greatest contribution to the Nez Perce work during his two and a half years with the Oregon Mission was along linguistic lines. At the time he left Kamiah, Smith had a greater knowledge of the Nez Perce language than any of his colleagues. He had compiled both a dictionary and a grammar, copies of which are now in the archives of the American Board in Boston.\textsuperscript{34}

**Cornelius Rogers and Maria Pambrun Become Engaged**

An unexpected development took place following the return of Rogers to Waiilatpu: he became engaged to Maria, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Pierre Pambrun. In a letter that Whitman wrote to Walker on April 29, shortly after his return to Waiilatpu, he reported that Rogers had suffered a relapse and was then so ill that he was in danger of dying. Whitman’s fears proved to be unfounded, for Rogers recovered and was soon well enough to ride to Fort Walla Walla. Since Rogers was not assigned to any particular station, he had been free to travel hither and yon as he pleased. No doubt he had been a frequent visitor at Fort Walla Walla.

It is not known just when he began to notice the teenage Maria and think of her as a wife. Nor is it known whether Pambrun was the one who took the initiative in encouraging the betrothal. We do know that Pambrun was delighted when Rogers asked for the hand of his daughter for he rewrote his will in order to make a generous provision for his future son-in-law. Of this Narcissa wrote: “It was his [i.e., Pambrun’s] subject of conversation by day and by night while he was alive, and in his will he appropriated more to her on his account, than to his other children, besides giving him [i.e., Rogers] much of his personal property, and willing him over a hundred pounds sterling” [Letter 96]. The Whitmans felt that Maria was not worthy of Rogers, as she was an uneducated half-breed and knew very little English. Moreover, she was a Catholic. It is not known whether Pambrun told Rogers of the provisions made in his will but in all likelihood he did.

On May 11 when Pambrun and Rogers were riding together, Pambrun was guiding his horse by a rope looped Indian fashion around the animal’s lower jaw. Somehow the horse managed to eject the rope and then began to run and buck. Pambrun was thrown repeatedly against the horn of the saddle and finally to the ground. He was so injured in the groin that
he was unable to walk and had to be carried to his quarters. Dr. Whitman was summoned at once and upon his arrival discovered that Pambrun’s internal injuries were extremely serious [Letter 87d]. Pambrun suffered intense pain for four days. He begged Whitman to give him some medicine which would put him out of his misery, anything to make him die quickly. This Whitman refused to do.

Pambrun died on the 15th, leaving his wife with seven children. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Pambrun with her children left for Fort Vancouver. Pambrun’s body was taken to Fort Vancouver for burial. When Rogers left Fort Walla Walla, he also left the Oregon Mission. Since he had never been an officially appointed missionary of the American Board, his departure did not incur the same censure from his associates as was the case with Smith. But Rogers’ engagement to marry Maria Pambrun did bring criticism. Spalding, when he heard the news on June 7, wrote in his diary: “I am grieved... Is it possible? What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world & lose his own soul?” After hearing more details, Spalding wrote the next day: “He is to receive considerable property, which is probably the inducement. He leaves the Mission under painful circumstances.”

Narcissa, in her letter of October 1, 1841, to her sister Jane, gives further information: “We have since learned that she [i.e., Maria] refused to marry Mr. Rogers, and he has returned the property willed to him. We think he has no reason to regret it on his own account. But the consequence of it all has been, it has taken Brother R. out of our mission, and he has gone to settle on the Willamette.” In September 1841, Rogers married Miss Satira Leslie, a daughter of one of the Methodist missionaries. Since Rogers was able to speak the Nez Perce language, his services were soon in demand by the U.S. Government to go with official parties visiting the Nez Perce country. Rogers lost his life in a tragic accident on February 1, 1843, when he, his wife, and several others were swept over Willamette Falls in a boat. Maria married Dr. Forbes Barclay of Fort Vancouver in 1842.

**Dr. Whitman to Dr. Bryant**

When Whitman returned to Wailatpu following the death of Pierre Pambrun, he took with him some boxes of goods which had been sent by sea first to Fort Vancouver and then taken up the Columbia to Fort
Walla Walla. These boxes contained supplies and gifts from friends and relatives in Rushville. On May 24 Whitman wrote to his brother Augustus acknowledging receipt of the goods and reporting that the plows which had been sent were still at Fort Vancouver. These plows had been ordered in the spring of 1838. It took three years to secure their delivery.

In one of the boxes, Whitman found some writing paper which had been sent by Dr. and Mrs. Ira Bryant. The gift brought back memories of the days during 1823–25 when he was beginning his medical studies while riding with Dr. Bryant. Thus inspired, Whitman also wrote to the Bryants on that same May 24. He did not know that Dr. Bryant had died sometime in 1840. Whitman began his letter by writing: “For the first time I sit down to write you. I do not see as you will be likely to write me first. You do not know how it seems at this distance to be so much in the dark about old friends… We are cheered by every token of respect. But although the Doctor sent considerable paper, we did not find any which he had written on for us.”

In a friendly letter, Whitman gave his former mentor and his wife a quick review of life at Waiilatpu. He commented on the country, the climate, and his activities. “My medical duties call me much from home,” he wrote, “as I have to go one hundred & eighty miles to the remotest station.” He mentioned the death of Pierre Pambrun, but, strange to say, said nothing of any medical services rendered to the natives. Regarding his own health, he wrote: “In order to get established I have laboured most excessively but I am now so far broken that I cannot expect to accomplish much more manual labor.” Here is a reference to the ill health he had suffered during the preceding winter.

He told of the buildings which then stood at Waiilatpu: “In a summary way, let me say we have a good convenient new house. That the old one yet stands & is occupied for a dwelling generally for two families & besides a house for company, that is [for] people who want to stay a while or for passers is nearly finished.” The “house for company” was being built by Gray who started it during the winter of 1840–41. This was located about 400 feet east of the main mission house. It measured 32 x 40 feet; was a story and a half high; and was built, like the other two houses, of adobe bricks. Because of its pretentious size, it was first known as the mansion house, and then later as the emigrant house.
Whitman then told Dr. Bryant that: “Cultivation will require the aid of irrigation in order to make a business of it even in this valley.” Here is the first mention of irrigation in the Whitman letters. Perhaps the digging of a millrace suggested the possibility of irrigation for his garden. On January 24, 1842, Gray in a letter to Walker drew an outline of the premises at Waiilatpu which showed several irrigation ditches. [See illustration in this volume.] Gray said that the ditches were “4 feet in width, 2 ft deep,” and claimed that they had been dug by Indian labor.36 Because the summers in the Walla Walla area are often dry, Whitman believed that the upper Columbia country was better suited for raising cattle and sheep than it was for farming. Spalding held the same views. Neither ever dreamt that the region would become one of the best wheat raising areas in the nation.

Regarding the future prospects of the natives, Whitman wrote: “It will not be easy to settle the Indians in this region for it will require the recourse & enterprise of White men to develop its resources by means of saw mills in the mountains to furnish timber for fences as well as buildings.” 37 Here is the first indication in Whitman’s letters of his growing conviction that the Indians could never compete with the white men in occupying the land. Sawmills were needed to produce lumber for fences to protect growing crops, to build granaries for storage of grain, and for houses. The natives had not the resources, the knowledge, or the skills needed for such improvements. Even though Whitman became increasingly convinced that the white man would eventually occupy the country, he never ceased doing what he could to help the Indians make an adjustment to a new way of life which was being forced upon them.

Whitman showed his political interest in this letter to Dr. Bryant by writing: “All forget to tell me who is President or Governor. There seems to be a great fear of saying something that another has said.” In the closing paragraph of this letter, he wrote: “I have just heard that Harrison is President.” William Henry Harrison was inaugurated on March 4, 1841, but died a month later and was succeeded by the Vice President, John Tyler. Several months had to elapse before Whitman learned of this. Whitman also referred in this letter to Dr. Bryant of the expected arrival in the Columbia River of the United States Exploring Expedition under the command of Lieut. Charles Wilkes. Actually the
squadron had arrived at Fort Vancouver about a month before Whitman wrote, but communications were so slow in the Oregon country that he did not hear of it until sometime later.

**Political Developments**

The Wilkes Expedition was the first government party to visit Old Oregon after that of Lieut. William A. Slacum in January 1837. The arrival of the Expedition undoubtedly aroused speculation in Whitman’s mind about the future of the Pacific Northwest. What bearing, if any, would such an inspection trip have upon the settlement of the boundary issue with Great Britain? Undoubtedly Whitman knew of the Joint Occupation Treaty of 1818 and that no further official agreement had been reached between the United States and Great Britain regarding the location of the Oregon boundary. Whitman closed his letter to Bryant by writing: “We are all in the dark as to the situation of the U.S. Government about this Country.”

Although Whitman was seemingly unaware of the growing concern in official government circles over the boundary question, some important developments were taking place. On February 7, 1838, Senator Lewis F. Linn of Missouri introduced a bill which called for the establishment of U.S. jurisdiction over the Oregon country lying north of the 42nd parallel (i.e., where the California-Oregon border is now located), west of the Rockies, and without specifying where the northern boundary was to be drawn. That was exactly the question—where was the northern boundary to be located? Linn’s bill also called for the United States to occupy the territory with a military force. The bill failed to pass the Senate.

On December 11, 1838, after receiving the petition carried East that year by Jason Lee, Senator Linn introduced a second bill calling for the occupation of Old Oregon. This bill, like its predecessor, called for the occupation of the Oregon Territory and the protection of United States citizens residing there. In January 1839, Lee’s memorial was presented to the Senate and ordered printed. The Senate delayed taking action in favor of Linn’s bill because at that time the United States was trying to negotiate a settlement with Great Britain on several other disputes, including the Maine boundary. On the following December 18, Senator Linn again brought up the Oregon question. A series of resolutions was
referred to a select committee which, on March 31, 1840, made a report in which the claims of the United States were again asserted. Bancroft stated that: “The chief feature in these resolutions was a provision for granting to each white male inhabitant over eighteen years of age one thousand acres of land.” Such a promised bonanza whetted the appetites of thousands of would-be emigrants who were beginning to look with covetous eyes on the Oregon country. In due time Whitman was to hear of these developments. Actually, the United States could not make such land grants as long as the joint Occupation Treaty with England remained in effect. Such unilateral action would have been illegal.

**Annual Meeting of 1841**

During late April and early May, 1841, when convalescing in the Whitman home, Rogers poured out to Whitman a long list of complaints against Spalding. Even before Rogers had made known his intention to many Maria Pambrun, he had resolved to leave the Mission because of the “ill treatment” he claimed to have received from Spalding. Gray, who was also living at Waiilatpu when Rogers was there, corroborated much that the sick and despondent Rogers had to tell. After listening to the complaints, Whitman became thoroughly discouraged. Smith had already left the Mission, and now Rogers was planning to do likewise. Writing to Walker on May 8, Whitman said: “I have told Mr. Eells my utter despair of ever cooperating with Mr. Spalding. If you knew as much about this as I do, you would feel as much discouraged, I think, as I am.”

The 1841 Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission was scheduled to begin at Waiilatpu on June 9. Walker, not being in good health at the time, decided to make the trip to Waiilatpu by boat from Fort Colville to Fort Walla Walla. He would then ride out to the Whitman mission. When Walker arrived at Walla Walla, he heard so much news that he wrote two letters to his wife, the first dated May 15. He told of the departure of the Smiths, the death of Pambrun, and the engagement of Rogers and Maria. He learned that Pambrun had willed $1,200.00 to Maria, in addition to the sum given to Rogers, on condition that she marry Rogers. Walker was amazed at these developments and in a burst of sentiment, unusual to his taciturn nature, wrote: “After all, I had rather have my Mary as I took her than Miss Maria with her twelve
hundred dollars or more. But every one to his own fancy. It would, I think, take much love to hide all her Indian habits."

Whitman rode to Fort Walla Walla on May 31 to get Walker, and the two rode out to Waiilatpu the next day. On the four-hour ride, Whitman shared with Walker all that he had heard from Rogers and Gray in criticism of Spalding. Eells arrived on June 7, and the Spaldings came the next day with their two little children—Eliza, three and a half, and Henry, one and a half. Mrs. Spalding’s presence was unexpected but Walker noted in his diary that it was an “omen for good.”

The business meetings began on Wednesday, June 9, as scheduled, with Walker serving as moderator and Eells, secretary. The financial report was first considered. Because of the irregular intervals of time that elapsed between the time a bill was incurred at Fort Vancouver and payment made by the American Board in Boston, it is impossible to compile accurate figures to show the actual annual cost of the Oregon Mission. The best available figures are to be found in the annual reports of the Treasurer of the Board which were published at the close of each fiscal year which came on August 31. According to these reports [see Appendix 2], the Board paid $4,886.14 for the support of its Oregon Mission in 1840 and $3,783.07 in 1841. This meant that the average cost for each of the thirteen adults in 1841 was less than $300.00. These figures do not include the value of gifts sent to Oregon by the Hawaiian Mission; the supplies, especially clothing, sent in missionary barrels; or special gifts such as the plows donated by Whitman or by his relatives and friends in Rushville. To a remarkable degree, the Oregon Mission had become almost self-supporting.

Only routine items of business were considered on Thursday. On Friday tension arose when Whitman repeated some of the charges that Rogers had made against Spalding. Spalding wrote in his diary: “I was particularly grieved by being accused by Mr. Rogers through Dr. Whitman of using my knowledge of the Nez Perce language to the disadvantage of the Mission... I think that this charge is entirely without foundation.” Once Whitman began to criticize Spalding, he continued by dredging up from the past several incidents including, as Spalding wrote, “one or two small things which occurred in the States & were long since settled.” From this we can infer that what Spalding had said about not trusting Mrs. Whitman’s judgment had again come up for discussion. Spalding
felt that most of the charges made against him “were entirely untrue & have their origin either in Indian reports, misunderstandings, or jealousy.” Walker that night wrote in his diary: “Spent most of the day in conversation. It came so sharp that I was compelled to leave. It is enough to make one sick to see what is the state of things in the mission.”

On Saturday, June 12, the action of the previous Annual Meeting giving Gray permission to open a station at Shimnap was reconsidered. With the departure of the Smiths and the announced intention of Rogers to do likewise, even Gray had come to realize that such a move was inadvisable. So the proposal which had agitated the Mission for so many months was dropped. Gray agreed to remain at Waiilatpu where a number of projects called for his services including completing the building of the third house, digging more irrigation ditches, erecting a blacksmith shop, and also the building of a sawmill in the Blue Mountains.

At this June 1841 meeting, Spalding learned for the first time that Hall, Gray, Smith, and Rogers had all written to the Board severely criticizing him. He was astounded! “The Lord in great mercy look upon these men,” he wrote in his diary, “& forgive their sins & sustain his unworthy servant... under these accumulating trials.” Spalding listed Whitman as being one who had also written letters of criticism, but an examination of Whitman’s correspondence with the Board shows that his comments were mild. Be it said to Spalding’s credit that he never wrote letters complaining about his associates until after he had learned what the others had done.

No business was transacted on Saturday afternoon. Whitman and Spalding took advantage of the day to meet in private to talk out their differences. Subdued and contrite by what he had learned, Spalding wrote in his diary on Sunday, the 13th: “Had a familiar talk with Doct. & Mrs. Whitman, confessed that I had said a great many things which I ought not to have said & asked her pardon.” Although Narcissa had been willing to beg forgiveness from the Walkers, she showed no spirit of contrition in dealing with Spalding. Spalding noted in his diary: “Was astonished at self-righteousness manifested by our bro. & sis.”

Some good came out of this frank exchange of feelings as is indicated in Whitman’s letter to Greene of July 13, about a month after the Annual Meeting had closed. He wrote: “We never had a meeting which promised so much harmony among the members of the Mission as this. We had a
most plain talk with Mr. Spalding which resulted in his acknowledging himself to have been in the wrong in the leading causes of complaint & that he had been very jealous… I will not be too sanguine of the future but this much I can say, he has pledged himself that he will not be as jealous & that he will cooperate with the Mission & most especially with Mrs. Whitman and myself.”

On Sunday, the Mission family, now reduced to ten, and the Littlejohns observed the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Even though some bitter feelings had existed, this solemn service, so rarely held in their wilderness isolation, induced a deeper feeling of fellowship. Three small children were presented for baptism; Leverett, the month-old son of the Littlejohns; Caroline, the eight-month-old daughter of the Grays; and Helen Mar Meek, the three-year-old half-breed girl living with the Whitmans. The administration of baptism would normally have been Spalding’s prerogative as he was pastor of the Mission church, but, under the circumstances, he asked Eells to officiate.

The business meetings closed on Monday noon, and those who lived at a distance started back to their respective stations. Whitman and Gray rode with Walker and Eells for about five miles. After reviewing the events of the previous five days, the four men felt that the outlook for the future was hopeful. Walker wrote that day in his diary: “At the end, we had reason to say, it was good to be there.”

Evidence indicates, however, that all members of the Mission were apprehensive of what the Board might do in response to the letters of criticism about Spalding which had been sent to it. They knew that ordinarily it would take two years for a letter from Old Oregon to reach Boston and for a reply to be received. Greene’s answer, therefore, could be expected sometime in the fall of 1842. If only there had been some means of rapid communication, the Board could have been informed of the changed situation in the Oregon Mission following the departure of the Smiths and Rogers and after the Whitmans and Spaldings had settled their differences. Instead, a long year of suspense stretched before them. What action would the Board take?
SOME EVENTS OF THE SUMMER OF 1841

Much to the joy of the Whitmans, Archibald McKinlay, a Presbyterian from the Highlands of Scotland, succeeded Pambrun at Fort Walla Walla during the summer of 1841. In June 1840, McKinlay had married Sarah Julia, daughter of Peter Skene Ogden, a prominent Hudson’s Bay official. It had been the custom of Pambrun to buy off the trouble-makers among the natives in order to keep peace [Letter 97]. McKinlay refused to follow such a policy. This removed pressure from the Indians on Whitman, who was financially unable to be constantly giving presents in order to keep their goodwill. Once Narcissa wrote: “From the commencement of this station until the present time, it has constantly been a point with one or more of them to be urging for property to be given to keep them in subjection... It is difficult for them to feel but that we are rich and getting richer by the houses we dwell in and the clothes we wear and hang out to dry after washing from week to week, and the grain we consume in our families” [Letter 97]. Even the family wash drying in the sun awakened envy in the hearts of the natives. Any kind of cloth was expensive to them, and behold what the white people had in abundance!

Asa Smith’s letters are sprinkled with references to the cupidity of the natives. The following quotations are typical: “We find here an extremely selfish people, who most of them doubtless follow us more for the loaves and the fishes, then for any spiritual benefit.” “They seem to wish to make the stations their trading posts & the most they want of us is to supply their temporal wants.” “The temporal favors [we bestow] are not appreciated & only serve to increase the pride & insolence of the Indians.” “No doubt is left in my mind as to their motives in desiring missionaries. The principal motive evidently is the temporal benefit which may be derived from them.” Even Spalding, usually more charitable regarding this very natural desire of the Indians to secure property, later wrote to Greene, October 17, 1845: “Another cause of excitement is their land. They are told by the enemies of the mission, that people in the civilized world purchase their land & water privileges. This touches a chord that vibrates through every part of the Indian’s soul—that insatiable desire for property.”

McKinlay’s refusal to give presents to the Cayuse chiefs, although applauded by the Whitmans, added to the growing resentment of the
Indians against the white man. Here was another cause of the growing unrest among the Cayuses.

Pambrun’s friendship with the Roman Catholic priests had also given the Whitmans concern. In his letter to his brother Augustus, Whitman on May 24, 1841, wrote: “There is likely to be a strong Catholic division here for one thing. It has been fostered more or less by our late neighbor, Mr. Pambrun.” Pambrun was friendly with a Cayuse chief, Tauitau or Young Chief, who lived on the Umatilla River, about twenty-five miles south of Waiilatpu. Pambrun built a house for Young Chief in the fall of 1840. The site has been located on the north bank of the Umatilla River opposite Thornhollow, a small town about twenty miles east of present-day Pendleton, Oregon. As will be noted, this act of kindness by Pambrun was used by the Catholic priests in the fall of 1847 to gain a foothold among the Cayuse Indians living not far from the Whitman station.

During the latter part of July 1841, Marcus and Narcissa rode to Tshimakain, arriving there on the 21st. On July 27, Myra Eells gave birth to her first child, a son, whom they named Edwin. The Whitmans remained at Tshimakain for almost four weeks. Walker, in his diary, tells of an excursion that he and the doctor made to Spokane Falls, now in the heart of the city of Spokane, Washington. Walker wrote on the 14th: “The Dr. has been as full of Geology as if he had eaten half dozen great volumes on this subject.” Evidently the entertainment of guests in their limited living quarters was difficult for the Walkers, for Elkanah wrote in his diary on August 16 when the Whitmans left: “I must say I did not regret to see them depart.”

On August 9th, while still at Tshimakain, Whitman wrote to his brother Samuel and discussed a number of items of human interest.

“I am no more of an Abolitionist than I was for years before I left home,” he wrote. “I do not feel as much attachment to Illinois as I did & I think it is the last State I would live in on account of its heavy debt & taxes… Tell mother we are eating cheese of Mrs. Whitman’s make; that milk & butter are most abundant with us & so will cheese be if we choose to make it. Calves rennet is a scarce article for we value a calf the same as an old cow or ox for it costs nothing to raise them.” Rennet was a necessary ingredient for the making of cheese. The missionaries discovered that rennet secured from the stomach of a deer was nearly as effective as that from the calf of an American cow.
During the first part of July 1841, before the Whitmans left for Tshimakain, Joseph Drayton, a member of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition visited the Whitmans at Waiilatpu. He was the second person to have his impressions of the Whitmans and of their work published, the first being Thomas J. Farnham. Drayton’s report was included in the official Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition.48

The origin of the Exploring Expedition goes back to the report which Lieut. William A. Slacum submitted to Congress on December 18, 1837. On February 13, 1838, the Senate asked the Secretary of War to submit all the information he had regarding “Oregon” and to have a map made of the territory. Within eight months after Slacum’s return, the Navy Department sent a squadron of five vessels under the command of Lieut. Charles Wilkes to explore the Pacific Ocean from the Antarctic to the Oregon coast. The Expedition was gone for about four years.

Lieut. Wilkes with four ships of his squadron arrived in the Columbia River in April 1841. Several exploring parties were then sent into the interior, including one led by Drayton, who was deputized to visit Waiilatpu. Drayton was given a cordial welcome by the Whitmans and the Grays. In his report, Drayton said: “There are two houses, each of one story, built of adobes, with mud roofs, to insure a cooler habitation in summer. There are also a small saw-mill and some grist-mills at the place moved by water.” Here is the first mention of Whitman having a sawmill. It may be that Whitman had attached a saw of some kind to his waterwheel. Later, as will be indicated, he erected a larger and more efficient sawmill about twenty miles to the east of Waiilatpu in the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

Drayton’s account continues: “All the premises look very comfortable. They have a fine kitchen garden, in which they grow all the vegetables raised in the United States, and several kinds of fine melons. The wheat, some of which stood seven feet high, was in full head, and nearly ripe; Indian corn was in tassel, and some of it measured nine feet in height. They will reap this year about three hundred bushels of wheat, with a quantity of corn and potatoes. The soil in the vicinity of the small streams, is a rich black loam, and very deep.” The amazing height of the wheat and corn as reported by Drayton was due, no doubt, to the richness of the virgin soil.
Drayton reported that at the time of his visit there were only fourteen Indians, including men, women, and children, in the vicinity of the mission station. Whitman told Drayton that he had 124 natives on his school roll, but due to the wandering habits of the tribe, the average daily attendance was about twenty-five. Whitman explained that the band living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu would return during the latter part of July from the Grande Ronde Valley. Then after three or four months, they would “move off to the north and east to hunt buffalo.” After their return from the buffalo hunt, they would remain another short time at Waiilatpu and then would be off again. It was this wandering, seminomadic habit, which made both schoolwork and religious instruction so extremely difficult for the missionaries. Horatio Hale, the philologist of the Wilkes Expedition who did not visit Waiilatpu, reported that the Cayuses were a small tribe, “not numbering five hundred souls.” From other evidence, it is safe to say that Hale’s estimate was much too high.

Drayton had been told that the Cayuses were quarrelsome and at times turbulent. Yet he observed that: “These missionaries live quite comfortably, and seem contented; they are, however, not free from apprehension of Indian depredations. Dr. Whitman, being an unusually large and athletic man, is held in much respect by the Indians, and they have made use of his services as a physician, which does not seem to carry with it so much danger here, as among the tribes in the lower country, or further north.” Possibly Whitman gave Drayton a too optimistic picture of the lack of danger involved in practicing the white man’s medicine among this primitive people. We shall see that this was a factor in bringing on the Whitman massacre.

In the course of his inspection of the mission grounds, Drayton saw the irrigation ditches which were being dug. Whitman told of how some of the Indians, noticing how his gardens and fields had flourished after being irrigated, “desired to take some of the water from his trenches instead of making new ones of their own.” Very naturally Whitman objected and told them to dig their own ditches. This they did, but tapped the creek above the outlet for Whitman’s ditch and then dammed up the opening Whitman needed. “This,” reported Drayton, “had wellnigh produced much difficulty; but finally they were made to understand that there was enough water for both; and they now use it with as much success
as the missionaries.” W. D. Breckenridge, the horticulturist of the Wilkes Expedition, met Whitman at Fort Walla Walla on July 2, 1841, and wrote in his journal: “Dr. Whitman came down to pay us a visit; found him a very intelligent man.”

Farnham’s and Drayton’s descriptions of the Whitman station have much in common. Both observers had high praise for what the Whitmans and their associates had been able to accomplish.

**IN SUMMARY**

The fifth year of the Oregon Mission of the American Board marked the half-way point in its history. It was a year when a gradual transition was taking place from troubles within the Mission to increasing difficulties from without. Ever since the arrival of the 1838 reinforcement, the Mission had been agitated with personality difficulties and dissensions over Mission policies. With the departure of the Smiths and Rogers, the tensions eased somewhat, but, as will be seen, continued to some extent as long as Gray remained. On the other hand, we find during this year the beginnings of harassments and even hostility on the part of the natives. These were to increase during the following years.

A number of significant events took place during this year, 1840–41, which were portents of things to come. The first emigrant family passed the Whitman station on horseback in the fall of 1840. The first wagons, having been taken over the Blue Mountains, arrived a year later. The presence of the Wilkes Expedition’s exploring parties in the interior of Old Oregon was evidence of an awakened interest on the part of the United States government. No one appreciated more than did the Whitmans the strategic importance of Waiilatpu. Sitting astride the Oregon Trail, it was the first outpost of American civilization west of the Blue Mountains. Great events were before the Whitmans in the years immediately before them.

But, a great question haunted their minds. What action would the American Board take in response to the many letters it had received which described the turmoil within the Mission? A year would have to pass before the answer came.
Chapter 15 Footnotes

1 Hulbert. *O.P.*, VII:207.

2 Douglas McMurtrie, *The American Inventory of Idaho Imprints*, 1839–1890, lists five copies of this primer as being extant.


4 Copies of these letters, containing about 35,000 words, are in Drury, *Spalding and Smith*.

5 Italics are the author’s.


7 The Walker family traveled overland from Oregon to California with the ship’s company of the U.S. Peacock which had been wrecked at the mouth of the Columbia River on July 18, 1841. The Peacock was with the U.S. Exploring Squadron under command of Lieut. Charles Wilkes.

8 In 1878, when Walker was living at Sonoma, California, and eighty-one years old, he dictated his reminiscences. Original ms., Coll. B. Walker was a member of the California Constitutional Convention which met at Monterey in 1849.

9 Reared as a half-breed in a frontier community, Whitman’s namesakes, Marcus W. Newell, was often in trouble, once serving a term in the penitentiary for theft. He is reported to have been killed as a young man by the vigilantes. See article by Francis Haines on Robert Newell, Idaho Yesterdays, Spring 1965.

10 Johanson (ed.), Robert Newell’s Memoranda, p. 23, gives two dates for Newell’s departure August 5 and Sept. 27. The latter date is evidently the correct one.


12 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 193, from letter to Walker, Oct. 12, 1840. The whole subject of the Indian’s concept of land ownership at this time is rather vague and needs further study.


18 *Op. cit.*, 11:169. Marshall was in error as to the month when Smith wrote to Greene. It was October not September.

19 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 203. Italics are the author’s.

20 Probably a reference to Jack, the Hawaiian, whom Whitman had sent to Kamiah early in Oct. 1840. See Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 299.

21 Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, p. 137.
22 Being a person of strong opinions and fanatical prejudices, Griffin was often involved in controversies in church, community, and political circles. In the spring of 1849, Griffin ran for Congress on an “anti-monopoly and anti-Jesuit” platform but fell far short of being elected. See George N. Belknap, *McMurtrie’s Oregon Imprints, a Supplement*, Eugene, Oregon, 1950, p. 10.

23 Original letter in Coll. Y.


25 Garth, *P.N.Q.*, XXXIX (1948):131: “This mill was of the ‘tub’ mill type. Such mills had a horizontal wheel set as low as possible to obtain the maximum fall from a low head of water. The wheel was less than 8 feet in diameter, and from its center a wooden drive shaft extended up through the floor of the milling platform to drive the stones.”

26 Words in italics were underlined by Whitman. His strong temperance views evidently extended to the use of tobacco. Although Whitman here indicated that he was unable to use Indian labor, Gray in a letter to Walker dated Jan. 24, 1842 (Coll. Y.) stated that some Indians had been hired.

27 A son, Leverett, was born to the Littlejohns at Waiilatpu in May 1841.


29 The record is not clear regarding who actually paid for these plows. Did all or part of the cost come out of Whitman’s private funds, or were the plows paid for by the people of Rushville? We do not know.

30 Smith to Greene, June 2, 1841. Coll. A.

31 Original in Coll. A.

32 Clark organized the First Presbyterian Church at Willamette Falls (now Oregon City) on May 25, 1844, with three charter members, one of whom was the mountain man, Osborne Russell. See Chapter Nine, fn. 13. This church became the First Congregational Church of Oregon City in 1849; is reported to be the oldest Protestant church for white people with a continuous existence on the Pacific Slope of what is now the United States.

33 See Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 220 ff., for a brief summary of the experiences of the Smiths after they left Old Oregon. Both lie buried in the cemetery of the Congregational Church of Buckland, Mass., of which Smith was pastor from 1848 to 1859.

34 Horatio Hale, *Ethnography and Philology*, first published in 1846, was reprinted Ridgewood, N.J., 1968. This contains a summary of Smith’s Nez Perce grammar, pp. 542-61. Hale, who was the philologist for the Wilkes Expedition, met Smith at Astoria shortly before the Smiths sailed for Honolulu and, no doubt, secured his material from Smith at that time.

35 Pambrun was fifty-four years old when he died. He had been in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company for twenty-six years. See fn. 29, Chapter Ten.

36 Original letter in Coll. Y.


41 Originals in Coll. Wn.


43 The names of these children baptized by Eells were not entered in the record book of the Mission church, but Spalding did list their names in his diary.

44 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 98, 151, 175, & 184.


46 See Chapter Ten, section “Three Cayuse Chiefs.”

47 Identification of the location of Young Chief’s house was made through the kindness of Sister M. Florita, formerly of St. Andrews Mission, Pendleton, Ore. She wrote to me on March 3, 1971: “It is on the hill in Thornhollow. John Shoeship’s home is now on part of the property where Young Chief lived.” See trail map used as an illustration in this volume.


49 Hale, Ethnography and Philology, p. 214. See ante, fn. 84.

As early as May 1840, Narcissa in a letter to her mother had written: “A tide of immigration appears to be moving this way rapidly. What a few years will bring forth, we know not. A great change has taken place even since we first entered the country, and we have no reason to believe it will stop here. Instead of two lonely American females, we now number fourteen and soon may [be] twenty or forty more, if reports are true. We are emphatically situated on the highway between the States and the Columbia river, and are a resting place for the weary travelers, consequently a greater burden rests upon us than upon any of our associates—to be always ready.” The fourteen American women to whom Narcissa referred included the six wives in the Oregon Mission of the American Board, the two wives of the independent missionaries, and six women connected with the Methodist Mission in the Willamette Valley. A few weeks after Narcissa wrote, the Lausanne arrived in the Columbia River bringing the large Methodist reinforcement which included eighteen females. Three more independent missionary couples arrived in Old Oregon in the fall of 1840 and one immigrant family. Thus the number of American women in the Old Oregon country rose to thirty-six by that fall.
During the first part of September 1841, a party of twenty-four immigrants from the States passed Waiilatpu bound for the Willamette Valley. Narcissa wrote that included in the number were “two families with small children, from Missouri” [Letter 96]. A larger number had started, but some had branched off at Soda Springs and headed for California. Those who continued on to Oregon left their wagons at Fort Hall and completed their journey on horseback. In this party was a family with six children. “It was very pleasing to me,” wrote Narcissa, “to see such a mother with so many children around her, having come so far such a dreadful journey.” Included in the 1841 party was a Methodist minister, the Rev. Joseph Williams, who later published an account of his travels. Commenting on his visit with the Whitmans and the Grays, he wrote: “These were kind, friendly people. We heard the doctor hold a meeting on Sunday in a well-behaved congregation of Indians. I tried to preach to them myself that day. Here we had all kinds of garden vegetables, which they gave to us very freely.”

Activities of W. H. Gray

During the summer and early fall of 1841, Gray was busy finishing the house he was building for himself and his family. According to a map which Gray drew of the mission premises at Waiilatpu [see illustration in this volume], the new house had two main partitions which crisscrossed the interior, dividing it into four main rooms. Two of the rooms were then subdivided, thus giving six rooms on the ground floor. Whitman was able to hire two men from the 1841 immigration to help Gray place the roof, which was made out of “split timbers of cottonwood… covered with grass and slabs of dirt.” By November 11, Whitman reported: “The house was roofed & the walls are being hewed and plastered, & in a short time it will be fit to dwell in” [Letter 100]. The Gray family moved in during the latter part of November.

After finishing his house, Gray built a blacksmith shop, which measured 16 x 30 feet, out of the adobe bricks taken from the original mission house. The shop was located about midway between the main mission house and the emigrant house. On January 24, 1842, Narcissa in a letter to Mary Walker wrote: “The old house is entirely taken down… You will see quite a change in Waiilatpu when you visit us next spring as I hope you will be able to do.” In addition to these
three main buildings, the premises at Waiilatpu contained a number of smaller structures such as granaries, corn cribs, a smoke house, a hen house, and a corral. These improvements, with irrigation ditches, fenced fields and gardens, the flour mill, the young orchard and the grove of locust trees gave every appearance of a growing and thriving establishment.

Gray was not content to be just a manual laborer. He never forgot that he had studied medicine for a few weeks during the winter of 1837–38 at the Medical College at Fairfield, New York. In a letter to one of his former professors at Fairfield dated February 1841, Gray wrote: “The Doct. [i.e., Whitman] and I differ in some of his professional points, and so far as our practice goes, I do not know as I have lost any more patients than he has. I may not have had as severe cases, I cannot say.” No comment by Whitman regarding Gray’s practice of medicine has been found, but we may assume that he would have strongly opposed such actions.

**The Red River Emigration of 1841**

The fall of 1841 was noteworthy not only for the arrival in Oregon of the first overland party of immigrants from the States, but also for the arrival of a colony of immigrants from Red River which was sent to Oregon by the Hudson’s Bay Company. As has been told in a previous chapter, George Simpson was in New York City a few days before the Methodist Missionary Society sent out its large reinforcement of 1839 on the *Lausanne* under the leadership of Jason Lee. Simpson immediately recognized the political implications in the enlargement of the American colony in the Willamette Valley. As soon as he could, he alerted the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London to this threat to the territorial claims of England to Oregon. As a result, the Company decided to send a colony of French Canadians with their families from Red River to settle at the Cowlitz Portage. It is evident that the Company wanted to increase the number of British citizens living north of the Columbia River in order to strengthen British claims to that part of the Oregon territory. The emigrants left Red River on June 1, 1841, under the command of James Sinclair. This was the only emigration of that size sponsored by the Company for Oregon before the settlement of the boundary question in 1846. There is no
indication in the writings of any of the missionaries of the American Board that they saw a connection between the arrival of the Methodist reinforcement of 1840 and the Red River immigration of 1841.

Mary Walker in her diary tells of a visit that Sinclair made at Tshimakain on August 21. “He is conducting a company of emigrants from Canada,” she wrote. “They expect to settle at the Cowlitz. There are a hundred and twentyfive, 80 of whom are children. The women are mostly halfbloods. Several births have occurred on the way, & since leaving the buffalo country, they have been obliged to kill 8 oxen. An ox only lasts them a day or two. Thus we see Oregon fast filling up.” Being French Canadians, it may be assumed that all were Catholics.

The Red River party was at Fort Walla Walla at the time part of the Fort burned on October 35 Whitman mentioned the fire in his letter to Greene of October 22, saying that, although the Company’s loss was not great, “Messrs. Griffin, Clark, Littlejohn, & Smith were very heavy sufferers;” many of their personal belongings had been left there in storage. Narcissa in a letter to her parents said some property belonging to their mission, such as salt and a few precious plows, were also lost [Letter 97]. Under McKinlay’s energetic supervision, the destroyed buildings were soon rebuilt.

According to Spalding, who made the claim in a published article in May 1865, Whitman was called to Fort Walla Walla at the time of the Annual Mission Meeting of September 1842. While there, according to this account, word came of the arrival at Fort Colville of the Red River party, while a number were dining at the Fort. Upon hearing the news, a young priest sprang to his feet and shouted: “Hurrah for Columbia! [Oregon]. America is too late; we have got the country.” Spalding claimed that: “In an instant, as by instinct, Dr. Whitman saw through the whole plan, clear to Washington... He immediately rose from the table and asked to be excused, sprang upon his horse, and in a very short time stood with his noble ‘Cayuse’ [pony] white with foam, before his door; and without stopping to dismount, he replied to our anxious inquiries with great decision and earnestness: ‘I am going to cross the Rocky Mountains and reach Washington this winter, God carrying me through, and bring out an emigration over the mountains next season, or this country is lost.’”

Here is one of the main points of the discredited Whitman-Saved-
Oregon story so zealously disseminated by Spalding, Gray, and others. The main fallacy of Spalding’s account is that the Red River colony arrived in Old Oregon in the fall of 1841 and not 1842. However, there may be a core of truth in Spalding’s claim. Whitman may have visited Fort Walla Walla in the fall of 1841 when he heard of the arrival of the Red River colony at Fort Colville. He did comment on this news in his letter to Greene dated November 11, 1841, but said nothing about seeing any political significance in the colony’s arrival.

When the colonists arrived at the Cowlitz Portage, they found that the lands made available to them by the Puget Sound Agricultural Company were not well suited for farming. Attracted by the fertile acres and better climate of the Willamette Valley, they soon moved thither. No doubt the presence of a number of former employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Valley was an inducement. This was a disappointing development for Dr. McLoughlin and the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company who were eager to increase the British population at the Cowlitz Portage. Bancroft commented: “The failure of the Red River settlers to remain on the lands of the Puget Sound Company defeated whatever political design the formation of that organization favored.” But, as will be indicated, the increase of the number of French Canadians in the Willamette Valley gave the Hudson’s Bay Company a temporary advantage in its opposition to any move on the part of the Americans to establish a provisional government.

George Simpson estimated the population of the Valley in 1840 to be about five hundred, of whom sixty-five men were Americans and sixty-one French Canadians. Although the number of adult men was about evenly divided between the two groups, the French Canadians had a larger number of children than the Americans. When all or most of the Red River colonists moved to the Valley early in 1842, the French Canadians were in the majority until the arrival of the American immigration in the fall of that year. The annual subsidy of £100 given by the Hudson’s Bay Company to Father F. N. Blanchet for his services to the French Canadians in the Willamette Valley has been mentioned previously. This generous assistance to the Roman Catholics in the Valley was not at that time public knowledge. Why was the Company making such a large annual payment? The most apparent reason was that the Company felt a responsibility to provide for the spiritual welfare of its
former employees. A second reason was that the presence of a priest in the colony of illiterate but devout Roman Catholics was helpful in maintaining discipline. Lieut. Charles Wilkes, who visited the Valley in 1841, confirms this latter explanation when he wrote: “...the Catholic portion of the settlement, who form a large majority of these inhabitants, are kept under control by their priests.”

The Hudson’s Bay Company enjoyed an unexpected benefit on the removal of most of the Red River colonists to the Willamette Valley: it gained a temporary political advantage over the Methodist-dominated American settlement. As has been stated, prior to the arrival of these colonists, the French Canadians had joined the Americans in signing the first two memorials sent to the United States Congress asking for an extension of its jurisdiction over Oregon. When, however, the Americans in the fall of 1842 sought the cooperation of the Canadians in another similar petition to Congress, the Canadians not only declined to sign but actively opposed the idea. Bancroft states that this was “presumably by the advice of McLoughlin and their spiritual adviser, Blanchet.” The loyalty of the French Canadians to the Company was such that they could usually be counted on to vote or act en bloc as directed.

The formation of a provisional government was finally approved by a narrow majority of settlers meeting at Champoeg on May 2, 1843. Most of the Canadians on that occasion, still heeding the advice of Father Blanchet, voted against the proposal. However, a few voted with the Americans; thus permitting the provisional government to be established.

WAR, DIPLOMACY, OR EMI Grantion

The area of Old Oregon claimed by the United States and coveted by Great Britain was that part of the present State of Washington lying to the north and west of the Columbia River. The final settlement of the troublesome boundary question could have been by one of three methods—war, diplomacy, or emigration. The slogan: “Fifty-four forty or fight,” referring to the boundary line that far north, was often heard in the United States following the Presidential campaign of 1844, and yet going to war over a wilderness area in faraway “Oregon” was too preposterous to have been taken seriously by either nation. Diplomacy needed
a bargaining base before it could be effective, and this is exactly what emigration from the States provided for its diplomats.

As has been stated, Slacum was the first to recognize the strategic value to the United States of the Puget Sound region. He was insistent that the boundary line should be at the 49° parallel. Inspired by the dream that Slacum had imparted to him, Jason Lee had induced Whitman and Spalding to petition the American Board to send out a colony of 220 missionaries. Lee’s plan was for the Methodist Church to concentrate on enlarging its colony in the Willamette Valley while the American Board would plant its colony in the interior of Oregon. If this strategy were successful, Oregon would be won by immigration.

When the Joint Occupation Treaty came up for possible consideration in 1837, Senator John C. Calhoun advised Congress to delay. He argued that the whole question of the location of the boundary line would be decided by an influx of American settlers. “Let us encourage emigration,” he advocated, “and let the West send off its swarms; fill Oregon with its citizens, and it will become ours as certainly as a ripe peach drops to the ground in autumn.” 16

George Simpson was aware of this strategy when he met Jason Lee in New York shortly before the Lausanne sailed in October 1839. As has been mentioned, it was this knowledge that moved the Hudson’s Bay Company in London to take steps to counteract the American moves by sending its colony from Red River to Oregon in 1841. Evidently realizing that the number of emigrants who could be sent to Oregon from the Red River settlement would be strictly limited, the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company made plans to send some by sea. We find this plan mentioned in a letter from London to Dr. McLoughlin dated December 31, 1839: “In furtherance of the same object of protection to the fur trade, we have it in view to send by the ship to sail for the Columbia River in the month of September next, about twenty respectable, industrious agriculturists either with small families or single to be taken into the Company’s service or placed on the Cowlitz settlement, as may hereafter be found expedient, and we have it in view moreover to increase our numerical strength in your quarter by a regular system of migration from year to year as the means of conveyance may admit.” 17 Actually such a plan was never put into effect. If, however, the only practical way to colonize Oregon had been by sea, the Hudson’s Bay Company would have had a
distinct advantage over any private agency in the United States. If, on the other hand, Oregon was to be colonized by overland emigrations, the advantage lay with the United States.

While in the United States during that fall of 1839, Simpson learned of the proposal of the Oregon Provisional Emigration Society to send a colony of two hundred men “with whatever families they may have” overland to Oregon in 1840. When this was reported to the Company’s headquarters in London, the officials called it a “wild enterprise” which was unlikely ever to be realized. The consensus of British opinion seems to have been that, because of the long distance between the Missouri frontier and the Willamette Valley, the high mountains, and the barren deserts, no serious threat to England’s claim on Oregon would ever come from any American overland emigration. This view was summarized in the following statement in the July 1843 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*: “However the political question between England and America, as to the ownership of Oregon, may be decided, *Oregon will never be colonized overland from the Eastern States.*” 19 Ironically, at the time that issue of the *Review* appeared, the first large Oregon emigration, consisting of about a thousand people, was already moving across the western prairies. In that party were Dr. Whitman and his nephew, Perrin Whitman.

In 1841–42, Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Canada, made what he called an overland journey around the world. 20 This included crossing Siberia going west from the Pacific Coast. Simpson began his travels from Red River in June 1841 shortly after the colony left from that place for Cowlitz Portage. Simpson followed after them, passed them, and arrived at Fort Vancouver the latter part of August 1841. There he saw two of the ships of the Wilkes Expedition which were visible reminders of the interest the United States was taking in the Old Oregon country. Simpson sailed from Fort Nisqually on September 6 for Sitka. He wrote in his journal while at the 49° parallel near Point Roberts: “If this parallel, as proposed by the Americans, should become the international boundary... Britain would not only be surrendering all the territory of any agricultural value, but would also virtually cut off the interior and the coast of her own share from each other.” 21 As late as 1843, Sir George was still advocating that the boundary dividing the Old Oregon territory be the Columbia River.
By an interesting coincidence, the first emigration to Old Oregon from the States, with twenty-four in the party, arrived at Fort Vancouver shortly before the bateaux came down the Columbia with the Red River colonists. Although Simpson and the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London were skeptical that Americans ever could cross the continent in sufficient numbers to threaten England’s claim to the heartland of Old Oregon, surely Dr. McLoughlin and James Douglas at Fort Vancouver were not so uninformed. Yet, we may wonder whether McLoughlin and Douglas saw the real significance of the success of the 1841 immigration. All members of the Methodist colony in the Willamette Valley had been sent to Oregon by a mission board, with some possible help from the U.S. Government in the form of a subsidy for the Lausanne party. Not one of the Methodist missionaries paid for his or her passage to Oregon. Likewise, all members of the Red River colony had their traveling expenses covered by the Hudson’s Bay Company. On the other hand, no private or governmental subsidy helped the members of the 1841 emigration go to Oregon. These were entirely self-supporting. Here was a new factor introduced into the strategy of winning Old Oregon through emigration, which worked exclusively to the advantage of the Americans.

After witnessing the arrival of the second immigration from the States in 1842, consisting of about a hundred men, women, and children, James Douglas recalled the words of Senator Calhoun (previously quoted), who in 1837 had advised Congress not to be in any hurry to renegotiate the joint Occupation Treaty of 1818. In a letter to Simpson dated October 23, 1843, Douglas wrote: “The wily old lawyer is correct, and it would appear from the rush of emigration to this quarter, that his words have produced their effect, and there can be no doubt of the final success of the plan, if the country remains open a few years longer.”

During the year that elapsed after the arrival of the Red River immigration in the fall of 1841, Whitman had time to think about the political future of Old Oregon. Nowhere in Whitman’s letters do we find him stressing the strategic importance to the United States of securing title to the territory lying south of the 49° parallel. Instead, he was dreaming of a large American population, preferably Protestant, coming into the upper Columbia River Valley to establish homes, schools, communities, and industries. Although consistent in his continuing
efforts to civilize and Christianize the natives, he knew that the Indians could never compete with the superior numbers, skills, and industry of the white man. Whitman was only being realistic when he came to the conclusion that the country would eventually belong to the white man.

**WHITMAN’S LIFE THREATENED**

The first serious trouble that Whitman had with the Cayuses came in September and October 1841, about a year after Spalding and Smith had their difficulties with some Nez Perces at Lapwai and Kamiah. Whitman gave a detailed account of his harrowing experiences, when his very life was threatened, first in a letter to Archibald McKinlay dated September 30 and then in a longer account to Greene on November 11. In the latter he wrote: “The Indians at this station had been very quiet for the last year and a half, but for various reasons causes which have been operating upon them, they were prepared for agitation, thinking that that was the best way to obtain property.” Smith had repeatedly referred to the insatiable desire of the Nez Perces for the material things which the white man had, and Spalding had spoken in the same way about the Indians in his vicinity. Now Whitman was referring to it.

One of these “various causes” to which Whitman made reference arose out of a visit a certain Cayuse, called Iatin, had made to the Willamette Valley presumably in the spring or summer of 1841. While there he heard that it was customary for white men to pay for the land they cultivated and to buy the right to cut wood on land owned by another. “He was told,” wrote Whitman, “that when a man came on to the white man’s land & they wanted him to go off, if he would not, he was kicked off.” When Iatin told his fellow Cayuses what he had heard, their cupidity was aroused. Whitman had never paid them for the land he was occupying nor for the timber he was cutting in the Blue Mountains. The fact that they had initially urged Whitman to settle at Waiilatpu in 1836 with every promise of cooperation was overlooked or forgotten.

**AGITATION BY HALF-BREEDS**

A second source of difficulty arose out of some inflammatory remarks made by Joe Gray, a half-breed Iroquois. According to Whitman, Joe was “for a long time a servant of the H.B. Co.,” and lived “in the camp of the Waiilatpu & Walla Walla Indians from April until
Sept.” Joe, like Iatin, stressed the idea that the white man should pay for the lands taken from the Indians and became specific when he argued that Whitman should pay for the mission premises at Waiilatpu. Being a Roman Catholic, Joe further complicated the situation for Whitman by encouraging the Cayuses to forsake the teachings of the Protestants and accept the doctrines and practices of the priests.

Three half-breeds figure in the Whitman story. The first was Joe Gray in 1841; then Tom Hill, 1844–46; and finally the archvillain, Joe Lewis, who precipitated the Whitman massacre of November 1847. A half-breed was often an unhappy, frustrated person, frequently rejected by the white people and yet not willing to live as an Indian. Some of the half-breeds who drifted into the Oregon country came from the Eastern States and had first-hand knowledge of how the white men had dispossessed the Indians of their ancestral lands. According to Whitman’s report to McKinlay, this was one of the main points which Joe Gray stressed. Whitman claimed that Gray told Tiloukaikt “how the Indians did in his country and [how they] raised disturbances and by that means got property.”

The Cayuses listened to Joe and noted that much that was taking place about them confirmed all he was saying. White men were coming into the Oregon country in increasing numbers. Perhaps the day was near when they would take the lands and the horses of the Cayuses. The more Joe talked, the more fearful the Indians became. Iatin aroused the cupidity of the Cayuses; Joe stirred feelings of animosity against the missionaries. The guilt of the wrongs the white men had done to the Indians of the East was focused on Whitman. Disregarding all the good that he had done and was doing for them, Tiloukaikt and his subchiefs finally came to the point of being ready to force the issue; either Whitman was to pay for the land he was occupying or he would have to go. There is no evidence that the Indians ever asked for or received payment from the Hudson’s Bay Company for land that it had occupied. However, the Company was powerful and well able to impose its will without fear of reprisals. The missionaries were entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the natives.

**First Confrontation with Tiloukaikt**

The first confrontation that Whitman had with Tiloukaikt and members of his band came on or before Saturday, September 25, 1841.
In the letters that Whitman wrote to McKinlay and Greene, he gave the names of four of the ringleaders, each of whom was to play a leading role in the massacre which came some six years later. The first was Tiloukaikt, the successor to Chief Umtippe. He and his band had their home camping grounds within a mile or so west of Wailatpu. Whitman named a second Indian who took part in the disturbance “Sakiaph,” believed to be Tamsucky, also called Feathercap. Since the natives were often called by several names and nicknames, a positive identification is not always possible. A third Indian was Tomahas, who has sometimes been confused with Tamsucky as each has been referred to by survivors of the Whitman massacre as “The Murderer.” The nickname seems to have been given to one of these individuals because he had killed another Cayuse. The fourth was Ish-ish-kais-kais, also known as Frank Escaloom, a brother of Tomahas.

Tiloukaikt and his band, stirred by the inflammatory statements of Joe Gray, deliberately precipitated a confrontation with Whitman by turning some of their horses into Whitman’s fenced corn field. It so happened that Whitman had some Walla Walla Indians working for him who were being paid with Indian goods such as awls, shirts, etc. Even this had become a sore point with Tiloukaikt, as Whitman explained to McKinlay: “There is a great jealousy of the labouring Indians because they get food, shirts, and blankets, in distinction to themselves.” When Whitman saw the horses in his field, he ordered one of the Walla Walla Indians to drive them out. Tiloukaikt countermanded the order and told the man that he would be whipped if he obeyed Whitman. With admirable self-control, Whitman told Tiloukaikt that the fence had been erected to protect his crops, not to make a horse pen, “but if he thought [it] good [for the horses] to eat up our crops, I had no more to say about it.”

Tiloukaikt replied: “That this was his land, that he grew up here & that the horses were only eating up the growth of the soil; and demanded of me what I had ever paid for the land.” Whitman answered that he had paid nothing and that he would never give anything. “He then made use of the word, ‘Shame,” wrote Whitman. “I spoke to him of the original arrangement made for us to locate here & that we did not come of ourselves but by invitation from the Indians, & that the land was fully granted us. Here I left him” [Letter 100]. The question
of property rights had been raised. Whitman refused to press the issue and the horses remained in the field, for the time being, eating his corn crop.

Whitman related to Greene what followed: “In a short time one of the chiefs came to me & asked why I allowed those troublesome horses to eat up the corn? I related to him what had just passed & said I had no intention to remove them. While I was talking Tilkanaiks [Tiloukaikt] came along, having overheard, & came up to me & exclaimed that it was troublesome for me to talk so much & struck me severely twice on my breast & commanded me to stop talking. I simply replied that I had been in the habit of talking from my childhood & that I intended still to talk.” Evidently Tiloukaikt tried to provoke Whitman to strike back, but this he, very wisely, refused to do.

**Second Confrontation with Tiloukaikt**

A second incident involving Tiloukaikt occurred a few days later. An Indian entered W. H. Gray’s kitchen in defiance of a well-known rule and refused to leave when asked to do so. Maria Maid, who was still at Waiilatpu, called Gray, who also requested the Indian to leave. When he refused to do so, Gray forcibly ejected him. The Indian then went to the corral and roped one of Gray’s horses. Gray cut the rope and returned the horse to the corral. Tamuscky then threatened to kill all of the cattle belonging to the mission. Whitman told him: “You have now shown your heart & if you think so, you can kill them.”

By this time Gray, realizing that the Indians were spoiling for a fight, withdrew and began to work on the roof of his house. Some Indians followed but remained on the ground. Whitman climbed up to where Gray was working and warned him to say nothing, no matter how insulting the provocation. Tiloukaikt also climbed upon the roof and continued to harass Gray. Tiloukaikt ordered Gray to stop building and to make plans to leave the mission premises the very next day, which was a Sunday. When Whitman interceded on Gray’s behalf, Tiloukaikt turned on him and ordered him and his wife to leave also. In Whitman’s letter to McKinlay we can read: “I told him we could not consent to move on the Sabbath.” So thoroughly had the missionaries stressed the sinfulness of traveling on Sunday that Tiloukaikt under those strained circumstances actually accepted the logic of Whitman’s request for a delay.
After both Whitman and Tiloukaikt had climbed down to the ground, Tiloukaikt continued the quarrel. Whitman tells the story: “He complained of my taking the part of Mr. G. He said if he were to go to our country, he should be very careful how he conducted [himself] lest he should be sent off. I told him that if Indians came into Mr. G’s or my house & refused to do as we desired, it was right for us to put them out. He then took hold of my ear & pulled it & struck me on the breast, ordering me to hear, as much as to say we must let them do as they pleased about our houses. When he let go, I turned the other [ear] to him & he pulled that & in that way I let him pull first one & then the other, until he gave over & took my hat & threw it into the mud.” Whitman asked one of the Walla Walla Indians to retrieve the hat, which he put on his head again. Tiloukaikt then “took it off again & threw it to the same place. Again the Indian gave it to me & I put it on & again with more violence, he took it off & threw it into the mud & water of which it dipped largely. Once more the Indian gave it back to me & I put it on, all mud as it was & said to him, perhaps he was playing.” After reading Whitman’s detailed account of his terrifying experience, we are amazed at his forbearance and his bravery. He literally obeyed the New Testament injunction to turn the other cheek. Under the circumstances, this was the wisest course he could have followed.

Finally, after realizing his failure to provoke Whitman to some act of resistance, Tiloukaikt withdrew. In Whitman’s account to Greene, he added this amazing statement: “On the Sabbath all came to worship as usual.” This would have included Tiloukaikt.

When McKinlay received Whitman’s letter of September 30 which told of the disturbance at Waiilatpu, he sent a messenger with a stern word of warning to Tiloukaikt. Perhaps the Indians felt that since Pambrun was dead, the new Hudson’s Bay official in charge at Fort Walla Walla would be lenient. If so, McKinlay’s rebuke would have come as a shock. McKinlay warned Tiloukaikt that any insult to the Whitmans would be considered as a personal affront to himself; that the Company could cut off all trade with the Cayuses; and that if any harm befell the Whitman family, the Company would take immediate steps to avenge the deed. He referred to the fact that the personnel of the Company had but recently been increased by the arrival of the Red River colony which was at that time at Fort Walla Walla. In his letter
to Greene, Whitman referred to the presence of this colony, not as an indication that the British Government was strengthening its claim to Oregon, but rather as an added factor guaranteeing the safety of the American missionary stations.

**A Third Confrontation with the Indians**

The sharpest part of McKinlay’s rebuke was his reference to those who took part in the outrage against the Whitmans as “dogs,” a term of reproach particularly objectionable to the Cayuses. Smarting under the lash of McKinlay’s hot words, a group of Indians led by Tiloukaikt invaded the Whitman home. When the Whitmans had lived in their first house near the river, the Indians were given free access to the living room and kitchen, but when they moved into the second house, their private quarters were kept locked. This the Indians resented, and no doubt the natural desire on Mrs. Whitman’s part for privacy gave rise to the feeling among the natives that she was proud and haughty and “far above them.”

When the Indians forced their way into the kitchen, Narcissa called her husband. He persuaded the Indians to move into the living room. Narcissa was then able to lock one of the kitchen doors leading to the outside. For a few moments, all was confusion, as Whitman described in his letter to Greene: “...while we were talking... an old Indian was threatening Mrs. W. with a hammer through the window in order to force open the kitchen door & at the same time Sakiaph [Tamsucky] was trying to open another door in order to throw the house open.” The locks were broken with a hammer and an ax “& a horde of lawless savages entered & took possession of the house.”

One of the Indians threatened Whitman with an ax. Whitman’s account of what then happened follows: “After I took away the ax, he held to my collar & struck me with his fist on the mouth & tore my clothes. Mrs. W. took the ax from me & Mr. G. put both the ax & hammer up stairs & we then sat down again. Sakiaph soon returned with a club and advanced upon me. As I arose to take hold of the club, I avoided the blow he was leveling at my head. For this I was much ridiculed by the Indians as fearing death.” Sakiaph then went out and got his gun and threatened Whitman with it. “They persisted in saying,” wrote Whitman, “because I said I was not afraid to die that I challenged them to kill me, but I told...
them no—I did not challenge them nor did I want to suffer pain but still I did not fear to die.”

Whitman’s amazing coolness cowed his antagonists. They began to weaken by suggesting some compromise terms. Instead of demanding that the missionaries leave, they said that if the Whitmans would not lock their doors, they could live at Waiilatpu in peace. Whitman replied: “…that as long as we lived and occupied our houses, we should order our doors & if they wished to live in peace, they must not oppose the regulations we made.” Finally Tiloukaikt exclaimed that “it was impossible to bully us into fright.” Tomahas then spoke up and suggested that Whitman give them presents. “I told them,” wrote Whitman to Greene, “they would not get the value of a single awl or pin for their bad conduct & if they wanted property in that way, they must steal it.” Sensing that he had the upper hand, Whitman then accused them of being made dupes by Joe Gray. Tomahas admitted that Joe had told them of the experiences of the Iroquois who were given “a great deal of money” by the white men and “after that all lived together as brothers.”

Whitman added: “They now broke up & went away saying they would go & see if Mr. McKinlay dared call them dogs.” Alarmed at the possibility of the Indians attacking Fort Walla Walla, Whitman sent a messenger that night to warn McKinlay. “The next day was the Sabbath,” Whitman noted, “& it was a sad day for us. Many stayed away from worship & some went to the fort carrying their arms & others were insolent & reckless of evil. They did many violent acts such as troubling our animals & breaking our windows. We now felt that we had showed the example of non resistance as long as it was called for & as we went to bed, we put ourselves in a state of defence should any thing occur at the Fort & the Indians return upon us. We also resolved to go to the Fort with our families & stay for a time until we could arrange to go away or return as might seem best.” Here is the only discovered reference in any of the writings of Whitman of his willingness to use force if he felt that their lives were in danger.

**McKinlay Warns the Cayuses**

McKinlay was prepared to receive the band of armed Cayuses when they appeared at the Fort on Monday, October 4. Writing to Whitman that day, McKinlay said: “I told them I wished to know their hearts & at
the same time tell the state of my own.” He informed the Indians that he was about to trade for some of their horses but said he would not do so until he found out whether “we were to have war or not.” He stressed the fact that he was well able to defend the Fort and that if any harm befell the Whitmans, Chief Factor McLoughlin would send up a sufficient number [of men] to revenge the whole and that the plunder of their horses would be considered sufficient payment for the trouble.” The threat of losing their horses was something the Cayuses understood, and they at once calmed down. “Let it suffice,” McKinlay wrote, “that what one and all of them said expressed deep contrition for what had passed and made many promises that they would conduct themselves well in future... I think you will find it to the advantage of all concerned to forget & forgive the past. But pray put your face against paying them for their bad conduct.” McKinlay reassured Whitman that there was “every prospect of your being allowed to keep peaceful possession of your place & that you will not be further molested by the Indians.”

When George Simpson had passed through Fort Walla Walla, shortly before this disturbance took place, he met Asahel Munger, who, as Simpson reported, was “grievously disappointed with the country.” Simpson, who was always cynical regarding any good that missionaries might be able to do for the Indians, then added: “But the ministers of the Gospel, moreover, had a grievance peculiar to themselves, for, instead of finding the savages eager to embrace Christianity, as they had been led to expect, they saw a superstitious, jealous and bigoted people. They soon ascertained that they could gain converts only by buying them; and they were even reproached by the savages on the ground, that, if they were really good men, they would procure guns and blankets for them from the Great Spirit, merely by their prayers. In short, the Indians, discovering that the new religion did not render them independent of the traders, any more than their old one, regarded the missionaries as mere failures, as nothing better than imposters.”

“Among a People of No Law”

Following the receipt of McKinlay’s letter, Whitman had a meeting with Tiloukaikt and his followers on October 5. “We told them plainly,” Whitman reported to Greene, “that unless they were ready to protect us— & enforce good order we would leave them, that we did not come
to fight but to teach them.” The Indians appeared to be contrite and promised that they would not make further trouble. However, Whitman did tell Greene: “From the commencement of this station to the present time, it had constantly been a point with some one or more to be urging for property to be given them to keep them in subjection to order… I do not think we shall again be molested on these points very soon.”

Whitman had no more trouble with the Indians until his confrontation with Young Chief in November 1845. The unhappy episodes of October 1841 put a damper upon the educational and religious activities of the Whitmans. A bond of sympathy had been severed which made it much more difficult for the Whitmans to receive the cooperation of the natives.

Whitman’s bravery in standing up against the threats of the Indians even when his life was threatened was no doubt the reason why H. K. W. Perkins was able to give the following appraisal: “Though they feared the Doctor, they did not love him… And knowing him as I knew him, you would not need to be told that an Oregon Indian & he could never get along well together… I need hardly tell you he cared for no man under heaven—perfectly fearless and independent.”

Several years later, on April 10, 1846, Narcissa, in a letter to her father, made the following comment about the difficulties white settlers in the Willamette Valley faced: “To be in a country among a people of no law, even if they are from a civilized land, is the nearest like a hell on earth of anything I can imagine.” If such were her feelings regarding the more stable society in the Willamette Valley, how much more did her words apply to the situation that she and her husband faced when living among the lawless and uncivilized Cayuses.

More Disagreements within the Mission

On October 13, about a week after Whitman had settled his difficulties with the Cayuse chiefs, Spalding arrived at Wailatpu for supplies. A few days later Eells came on a similar errand. As would be expected with four of the five men of the Mission present, certain items of business came up for informal discussion. Again some things that Spalding had either said or done aroused the ire of Whitman. In the August preceding, Spalding had received two letters from Greene which made him feel that the Board fully supported the views he had advocated
regarding the policies to be followed in evangelizing the natives. These letters may have given Spalding too much confidence, and he may therefore have spoken too boldly in his criticism of others.

Another factor to be remembered is that the Grays had been living with the Whitmans for about a year, and no doubt Gray’s prejudices against Spalding had to some degree influenced Whitman. The Coe Collection in the Yale library contains several letters from Gray to Walker, written during the fall of 1841 and the following winter, which reveal Gray’s animosity towards Spalding. Over and over again, Gray accused Spalding of “duplicity.” The following quotation taken from his letter of March 28, 1842 is typical: “Duplicity you are well aware is one that holds a prominent station in all his correspondence & actions.”

Whatever the cause, this we know: Whitman had become deeply discouraged. No doubt his recent unpleasant experience with Tiloukaikt contributed to his depression. On October 22, a few days after Spalding and Eells had left for their respective stations, Whitman wrote to Greene saying that a Mission meeting would be called as soon as possible to settle their differences or else they would “mutually divide & leave the Board to fill our places with others more suitable.” He also wrote: “When I last wrote you, I thought we were prepared to cooperate together—but more recent facts have shown that hope to be vain, for Mr. and Mrs. Spalding have proved it otherwise.

He has again expressed a full desire to be reconciled to all in the Mission but as Mrs. Spalding was not present & wishing not to make reconciliation to be so soon broken, or of partial understanding, we did not go any farther than to agree to act as being under covenant [i.e., Christian] fellowship.”

From Spalding’s diary we learn that Whitman with a Mr. Cook, who was evidently in Whitman’s temporary employ, arrived at Lapwai on the evening of November 26, 1841, to help Spalding build a flour mill. The day happened to be Spalding’s thirty-eighth birthday. Spalding had been conducting another series of what he called “protracted meetings” for the natives and was giving special instruction to a number he felt were ready for church membership. On Sunday, the 28th, Whitman addressed the people.

On the following Wednesday, December 1, Spalding wrote in his diary: “Examine Five Crows who has been here since the commencement
of the protracted meeting & is surprisingly attentive to religious instruction & his book. Attends school regularly every day. I think he indulges a hope. Oh Lord, grant he may be really a child of thine."

Five Crows was a Cayuse chief, a half-brother of Old Joseph and a brother of Young Chief. Spalding also called him Hezekiah. Five Crows and his band lived along the Umatilla River. His interest in Christianity had induced him to travel to Lapwai sometime in the fall of 1841 and become a member of a class that Spalding was preparing for church membership.  

When Spalding presented Five Crows and a number of Nez Perces to Whitman as candidates for membership in the Mission church, Whitman, to Spalding’s great surprise, objected. Whitman allowed his personal pique to block Spalding’s laudable objective of receiving several Indian converts into the church. An entry in Spalding’s diary for December 8 tells the story: “Doct. W. is not willing that these persons who have been examined & who give satisfactory evidence that they are new creatures in Christ should be received into the church till our difficulties are settled. He read over a long list of charges against me, many of which were true & for which I told him I was willing and anxious to make any concessions, or do any thing he wished, if he would let me know his wish... but though he did not directly say what he wanted, still he gave us plainly to understand that nothing short of excision from the Mission would satisfy him & Mr. Gray. Many of the charges were facts perverted. And many of them were direct falsehoods got up by somebody.”  

Spalding’s mention of Gray is evidence that Gray was the one who was keeping old disagreements alive. As long as Whitman objected to the reception of Five Crows and the others whom Spalding had prepared for church membership, there was nothing that Spalding could do at that time.

When Whitman started back on December 7 for Waiilatpu, accompanied by Cook, he took with him the blacksmith equipment which had been at Lapwai. This was to be placed in the new shop which Gray had erected. Spalding kept the printing press and, at the time of Whitman’s visit, was working on a translation of the Gospel of Matthew into the Nez Perce tongue. Whitman took the first ten chapters of Spalding’s work
with him to review. Since Rogers spent some time at Fort Walla Walla and Waiilatpu during the winter of 1841–42 and the following spring, while working on a dictionary of the Nez Perce language, it is possible that he too went over Spalding’s translation.

**The American Board Takes Drastic Action**

Secretary Greene was stunned when he received four long letters from A. B. Smith on October 5, 1841. When these were added to previous letters that Smith had written, each of which contained criticisms of Spalding, and also to the letters of criticism written by Gray, Rogers, and Hall, Greene felt that the situation in the Oregon Mission was far too serious for him to settle alone. He decided to wait until the Prudential Committee would meet on the following February 15.

A major difficulty faced both by the American Board in Boston and by its missionaries in faraway Old Oregon were the long delays in the transmission of the mails. Since Greene had the custom of noting on the letters received the date of their arrival in Boston, it is easy to ascertain the time which elapsed between the time of writing and the time each arrived in Greene’s office. Letters carried by the Hudson’s Bay Company’s express across Canada were delivered in about seven months. Letters that went by sea often took twice as long. For instance, the letter which Smith wrote on February 24, 1840, did not arrive in Boston until October 5, 1841, about nineteen months later. This was longer than usual. On the average, it took about two years for an exchange of letters. This long interval made it impossible for the Board to write to Spalding and get his side of the controversy before taking decisive action.

The members of the Prudential Committee met in Boston as scheduled on February 15, 1842, and Greene laid before them the series of complaining letters. The Committee was faced with a distressing situation. The Oregon Mission had received extensive publicity through the Missionary Herald as being one of the most promising of all the missions of the Board. Any action to dismiss any of the members of that mission or to close any of the three stations would have been most painful. No account has been discovered of the agonizing discussions of the Committee which must have occurred as they debated what should be done.

On February 25, a day or so after the Prudential Committee had adjourned, Secretary Greene addressed a letter to “The Members of the
Oregon Mission” which summarized the actions taken. His introductory sentences reflect his heaviness of heart. He noted that the Committee had hoped that “the Stations at Waiilatpu and Clear Water” might have been continued “with the expectation of their being prosperous and highly useful, both to the Indian race, and as planting and nourishing the seeds of Christianity and Christian institutions in a country into which a white population will be pressing at no distant day.” Now those hopes seemed doomed to failure.

Greene then listed the five following resolutions passed by the Prudential Committee:

1. To discontinue the southern branch of the Oregon Mission.
2. To recall the Rev. Henry H. Spalding and wife, with the expectation that they would return to the United States by the earliest suitable opportunity.
3. Expressing the decided opinion that it is expedient for Rev. Asa B. Smith and wife and Mr. William H. Gray and wife also to return to the United States by the earliest suitable opportunity.
4. Transferring Doct. Marcus Whitman, and Mr. Cornelius Rogers, if he should be disposed to continue in the missionary work, to the north branch of the mission, to cooperate with Messrs. Eells and Walker.
5. Appointing Doct. Whitman and Mr. Rogers to dispose of the mission property connected with the south branch of the mission, to the Methodist mission, or in such other manner as they might deem advisable, in order to bring the affairs of those stations to a close more speedily and with the least loss to the Board.

The Prudential Committee did not know that the Smiths were in Hawaii at the time the above actions were taken or that Rogers had severed his connections with the Mission. The actions to close Waiilatpu and Lapwai and recall the Spaldings and the Grays were tantamount to closing all stations of the Oregon Mission, for it is extremely doubtful that the Whitmans would ever have consented to move to Tshimakain where they would have had to learn a different Indian language. Had the resolutions of the Prudential Committee been implemented, in all probability the Whitmans would have left the Mission by moving to the
Willamette Valley. The Walkers and Eellses, under those circumstances, would have been stranded at Tshimakain and no doubt would also have left the Mission. Thus the fate of the whole Oregon Mission was involved in the drastic action taken by the Board’s Prudential Committee.

In the closing paragraph of the letter addressed to all members of the Mission, Greene wrote: “It is a cause of much grief and disappointment, as you may well suppose, that a mission which seemed to promise so great and speedy results, as did yours for years, should be brought to such a close, and that too owing to disaffection among its members. The Christian community, when the catastrophe becomes known, will also be grieved and disappointed. And we fear that in the eyes of many... the missionary work will be dishonored and prejudiced.”

On that same day, February 25, 1842, on which Greene wrote a general letter to all members of the Oregon Mission, he addressed a personal note to Whitman. “In everything that relates to Mr. Spalding,” he wrote, “you will need to act with much discretion and kindness.” Greene recommended that the Spaldings, with their two small children, return to the States by the overland route since this would be much less expensive than going by sea around Cape Horn. Evidently Greene did not know that the fur trade was over and that there were no more caravans going to a Rendezvous. Nor did the Committee know of the Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission held in May 1841 when most of the personality differences involving Spalding had been brought out in to the open and amicably settled.

Greene’s two letters of February 25, 1842, were entrusted to Dr. Elijah White for delivery. White, who, as has been stated, had been dismissed from the Methodist Mission in 1840, had returned to the States and had received an appointment as a sub-Indian Agent for Old Oregon. White was planning to make the overland journey in the spring and summer of 1842 with a party of emigrants. Learning of this, Greene asked White to deliver the letters to Whitman.

A few days after the letters of February 25 were on their way to Oregon, Whitman’s letter to Greene of July 13, 1841, and also one from Spalding of the same date, reached Greene. Whitman gave an optimistic report of conditions then existing within the Mission which reflected the conciliations worked out at the Annual Meeting held in the previous May. Whitman wrote: “We are prepared so far as we can,
to labour together in harmony with the exception of some that may be waiting to see the result of the communications to the Board.” By that date, conditions within the Mission had greatly changed because of the departure of the Smiths and Rogers. Greene hastened to send another letter to Whitman to countermand the directives given in his February 25 letter to the Mission. Writing on April 28, Greene said that if the Committee had known what Whitman had reported in his July 13 letter, “they would almost necessarily [have] decided differently.” Since it was then impossible to call the Prudential Committee together on short notice, Greene suggested to Whitman that he ignore the actions taken and continue to carry on as before. Unfortunately for all concerned, Greene’s letter of April 28 failed to reach Whitman before he left for Boston on October 3 of that year.

**FALL 1841—SPRING 1842**

After depending upon horseflesh for their meat for about five years, the Whitmans were able in the fall of 1841 to butcher their first beef and hogs. Of this Narcissa wrote in a letter to her parents dated October 6, 1841, “We killed a very fat beef a short time ago, fed upon grass only, which yielded 148 pounds of tallow after it was tried.” She also reported that her husband had on that day butchered seven hogs. Since by that date, Whitman had a smokehouse, he could have thus preserved both pork and beef.

The winter of 1841–42 passed quietly at Waiilatpu with the Whitmans experiencing no serious difficulty with the Indians. The Walkers were expecting their third child in March, and Whitman was requested to be present. Whitman left Waiilatpu on Tuesday, March 1, and arrived at Tshimakain the following Saturday. Mary Walker gave birth to a son on the 17th and they named him Marcus Whitman.40 This was the fourth boy to be named after Dr. Whitman during his lifetime. Whitman did not start back to Waiilatpu until the 23rd. He arrived at his home on the 26th, having been absent for about four weeks.

A great feeling of loneliness swept over Narcissa after her husband left for Tshimakain. She began a letter that day addressed to her sister Jane and her brother, Edward, in which she gave intimate glimpses into her home life and also into her own mind and heart. She added postscripts on each of the eleven following days so that the letter became a
diary and grew until it contained about 6,000 words. After referring to the departure of her husband, she wrote: “I am once more left alone in this house with no other company than my two little half-breed girls, Mary Ann Bridger and Helen Mar Meek.” The Grays were in their new house nearby. Living in an Indian lodge on the grounds was a friendly half-breed, who may have been the “Mr. Cook” who accompanied Whitman to Lapwai a few weeks earlier. “He is the man,” she wrote, “who attends to my wants, such as milking, getting water, wood, etc.” The drinking water used by the Whitmans was dipped up out of the Walla Walla River. There was no well on the mission grounds.

Narcissa yearned for the company of her sister and brother “to enjoy my solitude with me,” and then she added: “Jane, I wish you were here to sleep with me, I am such a timid creature about sleeping alone that sometimes I suffer considerably, especially since my health has been not very good.” She again referred to her weak eyes and mentioned using the spectacles that her brother, Jonas Galusha, had given her. “I do not know what I could do without them,” she commented.

**David Malin Received into the Whitman Home**

On March 2, 1842, two Indian women called on Narcissa bringing with them “a miserable looking child, between three and four years old, and wished me to take him. He is nearly naked, and they said his mother had thrown him away and gone off with another Indian.” The little boy was the son of a Spaniard by the name of Cortez, who was once in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and a Walla Walla Indian woman. According to Narcissa’s account in her letter to Jane and Edward, his parents had deserted him and his Indian grandmother had cared for him for a time. “My feelings were greatly excited for the poor child and [I] felt a great disposition to take him.” She hesitated, however, to accept the responsibility of having a third half-breeder child to rear. Of this she wrote: “I, however, told them they might take him away and bring him again in the morning, and in the meantime I would think about it. The care of such a child is very great at first dirty, covered with body and head lice, and starved—his clothing is part of a skin dress which does not half cover his nakedness, and a small bit of skin over his shoulders.”

The forlorn and forsaken boy was returned to Narcissa the next day. Of this she wrote: “I could not shut my heart against him. I washed him,
oiled and bound up his wounds, and dressed him and cleaned his head of lice. Before he came his hair was cut close to his head and a strip as wide as your finger was shaved from ear to ear, and also from his forehead to his neck, crossed the other at right angles. This the [Indian] boys had done to make him look ridiculous. He had a burn on his foot where they said he had been pushed into the fire for the purpose of gratifying their malicious feelings, and because he was friendless.” In a letter to Maria Pambrun, Narcissa told how some of the boys had gratified their evil hearts “by burning his naked body with sticks of fire” [Letter 111].

When cleaned up, Narcissa saw that the boy was not more than two years old. The hardships through which he had passed had made him appear to be older. Having accepted the child, Narcissa wondered what name should be given to him. In memory she went back to her school days at Prattsburg and thought of a schoolmate, David Malin,41 who had married her friend, Mary Porter. So she called the boy David Malin.

The boy’s grandmother, delighted to know that Mrs. Whitman would take the lad, called on her a few days later and asked for food and clothing, “because I had got the child to live with me.” “So it is with them,” Narcissa wrote, “the moment you do them a favour, you place yourself under lasting obligation to them and must continue to give to keep their love strong towards you.” David proved to be a lovable child, much easier to handle than Helen Mar “who was so stubborn and fretful and wanted to cry all the time if she could not get her way.”

**More from Narcissa’s Letter**

On March 4, 1842, Narcissa added another note to her growing letter when she wrote about high winds and stormy weather. She thought of Marcus on horseback working his way some 140 miles to the north towards Tshimakain where the weather would in all probability be even more severe. “He has never been obliged to encounter so much snow before,” she wrote, “and I do not know how it will affect him.” Whitman had the foresight to take with him a pair of snowshoes so that if the snow became too deep, he could dismount and walk. “He is a courageous man,” wrote Narcissa proudly, “and it is well that he is so, to be a physician in this country. Common obstacles never affect him; he goes ahead when duty calls. Jane and Edward, you know but little about your brother Marcus, and all I can tell you about him at this time is that he is a bundle of thoughts.”42 Actually,
as Narcissa later learned, Whitman did meet with deep snow, but the top crust was so hard that it supported both horse and rider.

In the same entry for this day, Narcissa wrote: “I am blessed with a lovely sister and an excellent associate in Sister Gray, and I trust that I am in some measure thankful, for I have found by experience that it is not good to be alone in our cares and labors.” Mary Gray, already the mother of a boy and a girl, was expecting another child at any time. Since her husband had attended her on the two previous confinements, the Grays were not concerned about the absence of Dr. Whitman.

According to Narcissa’s entry in her letter of March 11, she became ill that day. She wrote: “Dear Jane, I am sick tonight and in much pain—have been scarcely able to crawl about all day.” She missed her husband and felt that if only he were present, “all the gloom that creeps over the mind in spite of efforts to the contrary,” would disappear.

On March 12th, she wrote: “Before I could get to bed last night, I was seized with such severe pains in my stomach and bowels that it was with difficulty that I could straighten myself. I succeeded in crawling about until I got something to produce perspiration, thinking it might proceed from a cold, and went to bed. About two o’clock in the morning, Sister Gray sent for me, for she was sick and needed my assistance. When I waked, I was in a profuse perspiration. What to do, I did not know. Neither of them knew that I was sick the day before.”

Narcissa felt it her duty to respond to Mary Gray’s call, so arose and got dressed. She called for Cook who made a roaring fire in the fireplace in her room. This warmed her, for the night was cold. “I bundled myself pretty well,” she wrote, “and went with Mr. C’s assistance, for I felt but very little better able to walk than I did the evening before, yet not in so much pain. When I arrived the babe [a girl] was born, and Br. Gray was washing it… I took the babe and dressed it, and have been there all day with my children, although I have not been able to sit up all day.”

On March 14, Narcissa noted the arrival of her thirty-fifth birthday and what would have been the fifth birthday of her own little girl had she lived. As far as she was able, Narcissa helped in the Gray household. For a time she took the two older Gray children, one three years old and the other eighteen months, to her home to be with her three half-breed children. After telling of her experiences, she gave the following advice to her brother Edward, who was thinking of becoming a minister or a missionary:
“You would do well to write a sermon on the word PATIENCE every day.” This was a virtue much needed in the mission field of Old Oregon.

On Saturday, March 26, to Narcissa’s great joy and relief, Marcus returned home. Eells was with him in order to get some supplies which had been shipped from Vancouver to Fort Walla Walla. “We are cheered,” Narcissa commented, “with an occasional visit from one and another, which is a source of comfort to us in our pilgrimage here.”

**Death of Cayuse Pitt**

From time to time references to one or more of the seven Oregon Indian boys who had been sent to the Red River Mission school occur in the correspondence of the Hudson’s Bay officials or of the missionaries of the American Board. On February 5, 1842, Whitman wrote to Walker and told of some difficulties he had experienced while trying to mediate a dispute between some Nez Perces and some Cayuses resulting from the death of Cayuse Pitt, possibly at The Dalles or in the lower Columbia River area. According to a statement in a letter Narcissa wrote to Jane on February 2, 1842, Cayuse Pitt could just as well have been called Nez Perce Pitt, for it appears that he was part Nez Perce. According to Whitman’s letter to Walker, the Cayuses blamed the Indians of the lower Columbia for the death of Cayuse Pitt and, therefore, demanded payment. Whitman wrote: “They have caused the Indians below to give them a great deal of property on account of Pitt’s death... [including] 10 horses, 2 blankets, 15 or 20 shirts, many kettles, besides guns & muskets, food, etc.” According to Narcissa, the trouble arose out of the Indians’ superstitious faith in the medicine man, the “te-wat” [Letter 104]. Evidently, the Cayuses felt that because the te-wat had failed to cure Cayuse Pitt when he was summoned to do so, the River Indians would have to pay a penalty. The Cayuses, a much stronger and more warlike tribe than the River Indians, threatened severe reprisals if payment were not made. Whitman reproved the Cayuses for what they had done, and this aroused their anger against him.

The Nez Perce chief, Meiway, who had made trouble for Smith at Kamiah and who claimed that he was a brother, or half-brother, of Cayuse Pitt, visited Waiilatpu and demanded a share of the loot received from the River Indians. When Whitman tried to arbitrate the dispute, “twelve or fifteen” Indians crowded into his home in a menacing manner,
one with a war club, and threatened his life [Letter 102a]. Finally Whitman was able to soothe the ruffled feelings. Narcissa’s comment on the blind faith of the Indians in the power of the tewat “to kill or make alive at pleasure,” reveals the dangerous situation in which Whitman was constantly being placed whenever he, a white te-wat, ministered to the sick and dying among the Cayuses.

After the death of Cayuse Pitt, only two of the seven Indians who had been sent to the Red River Mission were still alive: Spokane Garry and Nez Perce Ellis. Perhaps the one who had been the most sincere in his efforts to introduce Christianity among his people was Cayuse Halket, who returned from the school in the fall of 1834 when he was fifteen years old. He returned to Red River in the spring of 1835 or 1836 and died there in January 1837. On the whole the experiment of sending the Oregon Indian boys to the Red River school to be educated was not a success, although there were some benefits. Both Spokane Garry and Nez Perce Ellis had learned English, and become useful in their respective tribes as leaders of their people in their contacts with the whites.

**ROMAN CATHOLIC ACTIVITIES**

When Joseph Drayton of the Wilkes Expedition visited Waiilatpu in the summer of 1841, he described a picture that he had seen in Dr. McLoughlin’s home at Fort Vancouver. According to Whitman’s account in a letter to Greene, the picture represented “all Protestants as the withered ends of the several branches of Papacy falling off down into infernal society & flames.” Whitman was told that the priests gave copies of the picture to the Indians with an explanation of its meaning. “The possession of one of these manuscripts by an Indian,” wrote Whitman, “binds him not to hear any more instruction of Protestants so far as my observation can prove” [Letter 100].

Both the Protestants and the Roman Catholics discovered that the use of pictures was an effective way to teach religious doctrines. Gray tells how Spalding, wishing to emphasize the divine importance of labor, had his wife paint a picture of Adam with a hoe and of Eve with a spinning wheel. Sometime during the summer of 1839, Fathers Blanchet and Demers devised a plan of teaching Christian history by marking off the centuries on a board and then painting symbolic pictures in the separate sections. Father Demers is reported to have had a board ten feet tall
which was called a “ladder” because of the horizontal lines drawn across it to indicate the centuries. At the bottom were forty such lines to indicate the forty centuries before Christ; then came thirty-three dots to symbolize the years of His life on earth; and then eighteen more bars and thirty-nine dots to bring the chronology down to 1839. In the representation of the key events of the sixteenth century, the departure of such “heretics” as Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII from the Catholic Church was shown by their being cast into hell.

To counteract such teachings, Spalding devised a Protestant ladder which showed Luther leaving the broad road leading to destruction which the Catholic Church was following and taking the narrow way leading to salvation. Spalding showed “the Man of Sin,” i.e., the Pope, as the one being cast into hell.

Since the Indians looked upon pictures with an almost superstitious awe, the use of them in teaching by both the Protestants and the Catholics was most effective. Narcissa explained this in one of her letters: “The influence of Catholicism adds much to distract their minds. They are constantly told by the followers of the priest that all who attend upon our instructions are in the sure way to Hell—and all who go to the priests’ worship will go to heaven. They are certain of it for they have seen the road with their own eyes & see us & all who follow us falling off into Hell. They have a representative of this kind given them by the priests & they need nothing more to make them positive that it must be so” [Letter 114].

A letter from Whitman to Walker, dated April 14, 1842, contains two references to the efforts of the Catholics to win over to their faith some of the followers of the Protestants. “Richard has just come in from the Papist station above,” he wrote. “He appears well & disposed to stay with us.” Richard, one of the two lads Whitman took East with him in 1835, proved to be uncooperative and no doubt was a great disappointment to Whitman. Yet, Richard refused to turn Catholic. On the other hand Whitman passed on the surprising news to Walker: “Tackensuatis & Kansut [two Nez Perce chiefs] & their wives have been baptized.” Evidently this was done by Father Demers. As has been stated, Tackensuatis was one of the Nez Perces who gave the mission party such an enthusiastic welcome in 1836 and who was so eager that the Spaldings settle among his people. Spalding’s early letters carried
many laudatory references to this chief, yet by 1840 Tackensuatis had lost his zeal for the white man’s religion. Smith, writing to Greene on February 6, 1840, called the chief “a very wicked man.” The baptism of Tackensuatis and his wife by the Catholics must have caused dismay to both Spalding and Whitman.

Another convert won by the Catholics in 1842 was Dr. John McLoughlin. Reared as a Church of England communicant, Dr. McLoughlin from his earliest days at Fort Vancouver was accustomed to read the Anglican service on Sunday mornings at the Fort. He was a deeply religious man and personally gave every encouragement to the Protestant as well as to the Roman Catholic missionaries. Following the arrival of the Catholic priests, Dr. McLoughlin reexamined his own religious convictions and on November 10, 1842, after his “abjuration of heresy,” became a communicant member of the Roman Catholic Church. Nine days later, Father Blanchet solemnized the sacrament of marriage for “John McLoughlin and Margaret Wadin.” Mrs. McLoughlin, as has been stated, was the widow of Alexander McKay and the mother of Thomas McKay. In 1846, Pope Gregory XVI honored Dr. McLoughlin by making him a Knight of St. Gregory.

The Annual Mission Meeting of 1842

After his return from Tshimakain on March 26, Whitman turned to his spring planting which had to be completed before the annual meeting of the Mission was held in May. To his great satisfaction, more of the Cayuses were cultivating the soil that spring than ever before. In her letter to Mrs. Parker of July 25, 1842, Narcissa wrote: “The success of the Kayuses in farming is pleasing beyond description. There is scarcely an individual of them but what has his little farm some where & every year extending it farther & farther. A large number of the Walla Walla tribe are doing the same... The Nez Perces are a labouring people, far more so than the Kayuses. Mrs. S. has succeeded very well in teaching several girls to spin & weave, knit & sew some but the Kayuse ladies are too proud to be seen usefully employed. Those who labour for us are Walla Wallas principally. One has learned to spin & knit some & others to sew.” After giving further news of their situation, Narcissa wrote in the concluding paragraph of her letter: “Do not think me unhappy or discontented—neither would I murmur. No, in no wise—I would not
change places with any one so long as we may be permitted to remain &
do good to these benighted Indians."

In his letter to Greene written on the eve of the 1842 Annual Meet-
ing, Whitman gave the following optimistic report: “The natives at this
station never appeared better & more quiet than at present. They have
gone on with the cultivation with their usual energy & are gradually en-
larging their little farms, with the assistance of the plows, hoes &c. &c.,
furnished by the Mission & the H. Bay Company.” Here is evidence that
the Company was cooperating with Whitman in making agricultural
tools available.

Whitman, in this letter of May 12, 1842, to Greene gave a hint of
more trouble with Spalding by writing: "Mr. Spalding has notified us
that he shall not be present at the coming meeting... In relation to the
internal affairs of the mission, there is no change, at least all things
remain as they were last fall & no better understanding with Mr. Spald-
ing.” Looking into the future, Whitman added: “There will probably
be a large party of immigrants coming to this country in the spring
of 1843. Some young men are now returning with the expectation of
bringing out a party next spring.” Little did he dream that he himself
would be with the 1843 migration.

Narcissa also was conscious of coming immigrations. In her letter
to Mrs. Parker written on the following July 25, she said: “A party of
military and scientific men are expected across the mountains this fall.
What the effect will be upon the Indians, we know not. The rumor of
it may have a worse effect upon them than the reality.” Such quotations
from the Whitman letters show their awareness of the inevitability of
Oregon emigration. One could no more hold back the surge of Oregon-
bound Americans at that time than he could sweep back the incoming
tide on some ocean beach. Also, the Whitmans were beginning to won-
der what effect these immigrations would have upon the Indians and
particularly upon the volatile Cayuses.

**Visit of the Rev. Joseph Williams**

Among the visitors at Waiilatpu during the week beginning May 8,
1842, was the Methodist minister, Joseph Williams, who had ar-
ried in Oregon in the fall of 1841 and who was with the company of
young men, of whom Whitman wrote, returning to the United States. In
his *Narrative of a Tour*, Williams told of his second visit to Waiilatpu. “I lodged with Mr. Gray, my old friend,” he wrote, “who was very kind to me, as was also his wife.” On the 13th, when Walker and Eells were expected to arrive at Waiilatpu to attend the mission meeting, Williams with others “galloped out, about four or five miles into the plains,” to welcome them. The Walkers had with them their three children, the youngest but two months old, and the Eellses had their year-old son. The two couples were obliged to drive a fresh milk cow with them on the long 140-mile journey from Tshimakain. One night they had to camp in the snow. Because of some unexpected delays, the trip took longer than usual, as they were eight days on the road.

Since the missionaries had the rare experience of having a visiting minister with them, he was invited to preach on Sunday, May 15. Of this Williams wrote: “I tried to preach to the people there.” The expression “trying to preach” was often used by ministers of that day who wished to avoid giving the impression of excelling as pulpit orators. Williams throws further light on the day’s religious exercises: “They had with them a coarse violin, which was poor music on Sunday.” He was referring to the bass viol which Eells owned and which he cherished enough to take the trouble of packing it all the way from Tshimakain. Williams’ use of the word “coarse” in this connection is archaic and refers to an instrument larger than the ordinary violin and one that had six strings instead of the usual four. Williams also commented: “They [then] read two sermons, which was all the preaching that was done. They appeared very dull in religion.” Perhaps as a Methodist, Williams expected more emotion than the four missionary couples were accustomed to display.

**Another Unhappy Mission Meeting**

The four men of the Oregon Mission—Whitman, Gray, Walker, and Eells—opened the meeting as scheduled on Monday, May 16. Walker and Eells were reelected to their respective offices as moderator and clerk. Spalding was not present. His absence may have been due to some resentment he felt against Whitman for not agreeing to the reception of Five Crows and some Nez Percé into the Mission church the preceding December. Possibly there were other issues also which accounted for his absence. Spalding did send word to Whitman that he was too busy to attend. The four men found his reasons for his absence unacceptable and
sent a messenger to Lapwai requesting his immediate attendance. They then adjourned to await his coming. Spalding appeared on Thursday, May 26, and the Mission resumed its meetings the next day.

Since Spalding made no entries in his diary after April 28, 1842, except for a short section in March 1843, we do not have his side of the story. Both Elkanah and Mary Walker kept diaries for those days and from them we get many glimpses into what took place. After clearing such routine business as reading the most recent correspondence from Greene, the men turned their attention to the differences which had arisen between Whitman and Spalding. The women were invited to be present for the discussions. All members of the Mission were present except Mrs. Spalding who had remained in Lapwai.

Walker, in his diary, noted that it was decided to have each man present write out what he considered to be the chief difficulties within the Mission and then each was to give specific suggestions as to how the difficulties could be settled. This took all of Friday. No business sessions were held on Saturday and Sunday. When these were resumed on Monday, the individual specifications were read. That night Mary Walker wrote in her diary: “Hear much to make our ears tingle.” On Tuesday the discussions continued; many bitter words were said. Walker that night wrote: “Had a hard session today and there was so much bad feeling manifested that I said that I thought it was an abomination for us to meet and pray.”

Walker, according to his diary, placed most of the blame for the unhappy condition existing within the Mission on Whitman. Cornelius Rogers, who had been at Fort Walla Walla working on his Nez Perce dictionary, was invited to sit in on the discussions; evidence shows that he shared Walker’s views about Whitman’s unforgiving spirit. On Wednesday, June 1, Walker and Eells took a long ride in the rain. Walker wrote that they “felt that all hope was gone.” The Mission was on the verge of complete disintegration. The next day the men frankly faced the stark reality of what the consequences would be if a reconciliation were not reached. Walker wrote in his diary: “I felt much and said considerable, and hope that it was not in vain. I think there was a better state of feeling than there had been since the session began.”

However, Friday, June 3, was another unhappy day. Walker confessed: “My feelings have been anything but calm. I have been much
moved by some threats the Doctor made, that if he was not allowed to pursue his own course, he would leave the Mission. The Doctor asked to be allowed to go on in his own way without being checked.” Walker could scarcely sleep that night because of worry. His wife’s diary for the same day stated: “Soon after the opening of the session, Dr. W. began to call Mr. Spalding to account. Mr. Rogers thought Dr. W. wrong. Much talk followed and the Dr. was allowed to proceed... If any restraint is laid on the Dr. or if he suspects he is not to have his own way entirely, he immediately threatens to leave the mission.”

On Saturday Whitman and Spalding had a private conference, after which they asked all to assemble. Spalding began with a confession which Mary Walker described as being “as humble as could be wished.” When Whitman was questioned as to his threats about leaving the Mission, he replied that he did not mean for them to take his remarks seriously. According to Mary’s diary: “He said he saw nothing why he & Mr. Spalding could not come to a settlement. The minds of all were relieved.” Thus another crisis in the Oregon Mission passed. An enduring understanding had finally been reached by Whitman and Spalding.

**Mission Moves to Forestall Action by the Board**

After Whitman and Spalding had settled their differences, the Mission turned to other items of business which kept them busy for the next two days. The possibility of the Board taking some drastic action on the basis of the complaining letters about Spalding which had been sent to the Board in 1840 was discussed. To forestall any order disastrous to the welfare of the Mission, the men decided that if such an order arrived, the Prudential Committee should be informed of the new developments before implementing any such order. On June 8, Walker, Eells, and Spalding signed a letter addressed to Greene which stated that all difficulties had been settled and that they then had reason “to hope for permanent peace & harmony.”

This letter of June 8 also contained the following statement which, as later events proved, was of utmost importance to Spalding: “It was the unanimous opinion at the close of the investigation that, should the Prudential Committee have taken any action on any communication yet unanswered, that the Mission ought to wait until this communication can be answered.” This, in effect, nullified the yet unknown order of
the Board of the previous February. By an interesting coincidence, Elijah White, who was carrying the Board’s letter, left the Missouri frontier on May 16, the very day the 1842 Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission began its sessions.

Before the meeting was adjourned on June 1, the men passed a strange motion which called for Whitman and Spalding to exchange stations. This action was taken on the insistence of Gray. Eells, in his letter to Greene of October 3, 1842, said that “a rather hesitating assent was given to the resolution.” In July when both Walker and Spalding happened to be at Waiilatpu for supplies, they agreed with Whitman that no exchange should be made. For some reason Gray was adamant in his insistence and when he learned that the exchange had not been made, he expressed his regret “that he was connected with a mission which had not the courage to carry out such a vote.”

Gray, still unhappy with his place within the Oregon Mission, seized upon this incident as an excuse to resign. Before doing so, he felt it necessary to find a job in the Willamette Valley. He left Waiilatpu on September 1 to see what could be found. While in the Valley, Gray was successful in securing an appointment as Secular Agent and General Superintendent of the Oregon Institute, a Methodist school which later became Willamette University.

**Dr. Elijah White and the 1842 Emigration**

When Dr. Elijah White returned to the States in April 1841, he found a growing public interest in the possibilities of emigrating to Oregon, an interest which he assiduously promoted. By this time it was well known that white women had crossed the Rockies, and White was aware of the fact that Meek and Newell had taken their wagons over the Blue Mountains in 1840.

President John Tyler, in his message to the Twenty-Seventh Congress, which sat from December 6, 1841, to August 31, 1842, voiced his approval of the recommendation made by John C. Spencer, then Secretary of War, for the establishment of “a chain of military posts from Council Bluffs to some point on the Pacific Ocean within our limits.” This, he said, would benefit those engaged in the fur trade and be the means of establishing safe intercourse “between the American
settlements at the mouth of the Columbia River and those on this side of the Rocky Mountains.” President Tyler was assuming that all of the country south of the Columbia would become U.S. territory.

No member of Congress was more interested in extending United States jurisdiction over Oregon than Senator Lewis F. Linn of Missouri. Beginning as early as February 1838, he introduced a series of bills calling for that action. Congress for several years failed to act, but Linn’s bills did focus attention on what was coming to be known as the “Oregon question.” In January 1842, Senator Linn tried once again to induce Congress to act by introducing another bill which called for the extension of United States jurisdiction to all of Old Oregon south of the 49th parallel and for the granting of a section of land to every settler. Speaking in favor of his bill, Senator Linn in April 1842 said: “There should be no dispute about the right of the United States to all the region south of the Columbia River, a right which Great Britain had fully conceded. The only question was to the right of the United States to the territory north of the Columbia River.”

The arrival in the United States of Lord Ashburton from England on April 4, 1842, to negotiate a treaty caused Congress to postpone action on the Linn bill until after the treaty had been signed. The Webster-Ashburton Treaty was concluded on August 9, 1842. Even though Lord Ashburton had been instructed by his government to deal with the Oregon boundary, the Treaty had nothing to say about it. It dealt only with the boundary between Maine and Canada. Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, felt that the time was not opportune to settle the Oregon question and deliberately kept this subject out of their discussions.

In January 1842, Elijah White, with letters of testimony from persons of note, visited Washington, D.C., and called on President Tyler, Secretary Webster, Secretary Spencer, and Senator Linn. The White file in the Old Indian Bureau records in National Archives, Washington, D.C., contains a number of letters written by him which reveal his intense interest in the Oregon question. White was politically minded and asked for an appointment as sub-Indian Agent for Oregon which he succeeded in getting on January 27, 1842. His salary was fixed at $750.00 a year with the understanding that if the Linn bill passed, it would be raised to $1,500.00. White thus had the distinction of being
the first person to be appointed to some official position in Oregon by the United States Government.

**Some Details of the 1842 Emigration**

After receiving his appointment, White issued through the public press a call for families to go out with him to Oregon that year. His call was successful for he left Independence, Missouri, on May 16, 1842, with a party of 105 emigrants. White had with him the two sons of Tom McKay, John and Alexander, who had been taken East by Jason Lee in 1838 to be educated. Writing to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from Fort Hall on August 15, White stated that the number in his party had increased to 112.

The members of this migration left the Missouri frontier with nineteen wagons, none of which was taken west of Fort Hall. From that point all, including women and children, rode horseback. White’s letter of August 15 refers to certain funds that he had received from the Government to cover some expenses incurred by the emigration of that year. Such a subsidy lends support to the theory that Jason Lee also had received financial aid from some Government fund to help pay the costs of sending the *Lausanne* company to Oregon.

White left the main party of emigrants on August 23 and pushed on ahead. He arrived at Waiilatpu on September 9 and delivered Greene’s two letters of February 25 to Whitman. White spent the weekend of September 11 at Waiilatpu and left the next Tuesday for the Willamette Valley. Mary Gray noted in her diary that during those days she copied two letters from Greene which White had brought. These letters she gave to White with the request that, if on his way down the Columbia River he met her husband returning from the Willamette Valley, he should give them to him.

The 1842 emigration broke up into small groups. One of these parties arrived on Wednesday afternoon, September 14. In this group was Medorem Crawford who wrote in his journal that he was never more pleased to see a house or white people in his life. He reported that the Whitmans treated him and his fellow travelers with the utmost kindness and sold provisions on “very reasonable terms.” Here is the first reference to Whitman selling supplies to the emigrants. He was later accused of charging exorbitant prices for supplies and Elijah White was one of
his critics. Yet for the most part, this service was greatly appreciated.

Another member of the 1842 immigration who visited Waiilatpu and recorded his impressions was the lawyer, Lansford Warren Hastings. He wrote in his journal: “…the next place of note, at which we arrived, was a presbyterian mission, in charge of which, is a Dr. Whitman, who is a very kind and hospitable gentleman. He received us with the utmost kindness and attention, and insisted upon our remaining a few days with him, in order to obtain some relaxation of both body and mind.” Hastings spent a Sunday at Waiilatpu and attended religious meeting where Whitman “delivered a discourse to the Indians in their own language.” He also commented: “The doctor is not only a very kind and hospitable gentleman, but he is no doubt, a very good man, and a devoted Christian. He appears to be rendering a great service in christianizing and civilizing the natives.” 60

**White’s Arrival in Old Oregon Brings Dismay**

The unexpected arrival of Dr. White in the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1842 as an officially appointed Indian Agent brought dismay both to the colony of Methodist missionaries and to Dr. McLoughlin and his associates at Fort Vancouver. White’s return was an embarrassment, especially to Jason Lee, as he had been dismissed from the Methodist Mission in 1840. Now he was back again.

Dr. McLoughlin was disturbed but for different reasons. He at once informed Gov. Simpson, who on June 21, 1843, writing from Red River, stated: “I shall be glad to learn that the 100 emigrants you speak of as having accompanied Dr. White from St. Louis have proceeded to California as the rapidly increasing vagrant population in the Willamette is becoming too numerous for the safety of the Company’s interest in its immediate neighborhood.” Dr. McLoughlin had evidently reported that Hastings and some others were planning to move on to California, but Simpson’s hope that all of the 1842 party would do likewise was nothing more than wishful thinking.

When Dr. White arrived in the Willamette Valley, he notified Dr. McLoughlin of his appointment by the United States Government by letter, which the latter forwarded to Simpson. Simpson called the letter “a curious specimen of impertinence,” and wrote: “We cannot recognize Dr. White’s commission as sub-Indian Agent nor any other commission
of the U. States Government assuming authority in the country pending the adjustment of the Boundary question.”  

Simpson advised McLoughlin to notify all “gentlemen” in charge of the various Company’s posts in Oregon “that they are not to receive nor extend their hospitalities, nor afford any facility or assistance to strangers of any description assuming authority, unless you be perfectly satisfied that such authority is founded on an amicable adjustment of the Boundary question.” Simpson was still confident that the Columbia River “from its outlet to the source in the mountains by the northern branch [i.e., the Snake River], or Lewis & Clark’s route will become the boundary.”

When the London headquarters of the Company heard about White’s arrival in Oregon, the Governor and Committee wrote on September 27, 1843, to Dr. McLoughlin saying: “...no authority emanating from the Government of the United States is to be recognized west of the Rocky Mountains until the boundary questions shall have been settled.”

Legally the Hudson’s Bay Company and the British Government stood on solid ground. The appointment of Dr. White as an Indian Agent for Oregon was a unilateral act which contradicted the spirit of the joint Occupation Treaty of 1818. The fact that Dr. White confined his activities to the country lying to the south and east of the Columbia River did not, in the eyes of the British, lessen the seriousness of what they considered to be his illegal appointment.

**The Special Mission Meeting of September 1842**

We have no contemporary document which would reveal Whitman’s reactions when he read Greene’s two letters of February 25, 1842. We may assume that he was not surprised to read of the dismissal of the Spaldings but the recall of Smith and Gray may have been unexpected. Surely the order to close both Waiilatpu and Lapwai and for him to move to Tshimakain would have brought dismay to his heart. The southern stations were far superior in regard to agricultural possibilities than Tshimakain, as each had irrigation ditches, mills, fenced fields, and other improvements. With members of the 1842 immigration still streaming by his door, Whitman realized anew the strategic importance of Waiilatpu. To him it was unthinkable that his station and Spalding’s should be abandoned. The Board simply did not understand the situation. Moreover, conditions within the Mission had changed. A reconciliation had been
effected between him and Spalding which gave promise of enduring. Smith and Rogers had already resigned and Gray was preparing to leave. The Board’s order was out-of-date. Then, too, how impossible was the order for the Spaldings with two small children to return to the States by the overland route. There was no longer any Fur Company’s caravan going to the Rockies. How could a family cross the plains unescorted?

We learn from Mary Gray’s diary that Whitman received Greene’s letters on September 9, yet Elkanah Walker in his diary stated that he and Eells did not receive notification, of the call for a special meeting of the Mission until September 20.64 If we allow five days for a messenger to carry Whitman’s letter to Tshimakain, it is apparent that Whitman waited until September 15 before issuing his call for the special meeting. Why this delay of about six days when the issues to be decided were so urgent? A probable explanation for the delay is that Whitman wished to consult with Spalding before calling a special meeting. If he had sent a messenger to Lapwai, the round trip would have taken about six days. If this had been done, then Whitman would have learned that Spalding and his family were not at Lapwai. No one seemed to know where they were. Thinking that perhaps the Spaldings had gone to Tshimakain, Whitman sent Greene’s letter addressed to Spalding to Tshimakain, along with other correspondence received from Greene, with the request that he, Walker, and Eells leave as soon as possible for Waiilatpu.65

The next piece of this jigsaw puzzle, which is now being put together, is found in Medorem Crawford’s journal. As has been mentioned, Crawford was a member of the 1842 immigration. After spending the night of September 14 at Waiilatpu, Crawford and his party continued their journey, going overland to The Dalles. On September 20, when Crawford was forty-five miles below Fort Walla Walla, he wrote: “Mr. Spalding & Lady overtook us at noon… Mr. Gray called at camp on his return from Vancouver.” Just why the Spaldings with their two little children were at that place at that time remains a mystery. On September 21, Crawford noted: “Parted with Mr. & Mrs. Spalding who in consequence of some intelligence from Mr. Gray resolved to return.”66 Evidently Gray had met Dr. White en route to the Willamette Valley and had received from him the copies of the letters sent by his wife, including Greene’s letter of February 25. Thus Gray learned of the action of the Board dismissing both him and Spalding, which information he
had passed on to Spalding. Since Gray had already taken steps to leave the Mission, the order did not strike him with the same force as it did Spalding. Both, however, hastened to Waiilatpu, where they arrived on Thursday, September 22.

On Tuesday, September 20, Walker wrote in his diary: “Just as we were about to sit down to breakfast, the long looked for express came in with some letters from the Dr. & from Mr. Greene… The Dr. requested us to come down immediately.” Walker and Eells left the next day and arrived at Waiilatpu on Monday, the 26th, where they found the other three men of the Mission waiting for them.

**Gray Resigns**

The Special Meeting of the Oregon Mission opened that Monday evening. Greene’s letter of February 25, together with copies of communications sent to him giving the actions of the May–June meeting, was read. The men were thus reminded of the action taken which suspended the implementation of any order that the Board might send until it could be informed of the changed situation. Thus, neither Spalding nor Gray was in any immediate danger of being dismissed. Nevertheless, Gray presented his resignation. He informed his associates that he had found work in the Willamette Valley and was planning to leave with his family as soon as possible. Walker and Eells, with a high sense of loyalty to the commission each had received from the American Board, opposed the departure of Gray. They felt that it was a disgrace to resign. An appointment from the Board was for life. This had been their attitude when Smith left in the spring of 1841. Whitman voted in the affirmative with Gray. Strange to say, Spalding voted in the negative with Walker and Eells. Gray threatened to leave with or without formal acceptance of his resignation, and so, two days later, the action of Monday evening was reconsidered and a unanimous approval was given to his request. Thus ended Gray’s sixyear connection with the Oregon Mission of the American Board.

**Whitman Proposes Going to Boston**

According to Walker’s diary, nothing special happened at the Mission meeting on Tuesday, September 27. On Wednesday morning, when Walker, Eells, and Spalding were making preparations to return to their
respective stations, Whitman suddenly proposed that he go to Boston to intercede with the Board for the revocation of its drastic order of February 25. Walker and Eells with their customary reluctance to make any move without deliberate thought, were hesitant. They wanted time to think about it. Whitman urged the need for immediate action. If he could leave that fall, then he could return with the 1843 emigration. If he should wait to go East in the spring, he would not be able to return until the fall of 1844. Whitman stressed the fact that if he were to leave for the East that fall, the sooner he got started the better in order to cross the mountains before winter.

Walker and Eells brought up the question of care of the Waiilatpu property during his proposed absence. Finally, they gave their consent for Whitman to leave on condition that some satisfactory arrangements be made for the care of the station. Whitman assured them that he would get somebody to live at Waiilatpu during his absence. He then hastily wrote out the following:

Resolved: That, if arrangements can be made to continue the operations of this station, That Dr. Marcus Whitman be at liberty & advised to visit the United States as soon as practicable to confer with the Committee of the A.B.C.F.M. in regard to the interests of this mission.

Waiilatpu, September 28th, 1842

This was signed by E. Walker, Moderator; Cushing Eells, Scribe; and H. H. Spalding. Here in Whitman’s handwriting is the first statement given to explain why he wanted to go East. He was to go on mission business.

**Motives for Whitman’s Ride**

Whitman’s reasons for suddenly deciding to cross the Rocky Mountains in the late fall of 1842 and to travel on to Washington and Boston have been debated for over one hundred years. The subject is complex and the evidence in some particulars conflicting. We can list three apparent motives, but it would be unhistorical to say that any particular one took priority over the other two.
ON MISSION BUSINESS

Before Walker and Eells left Waiilatpu, it was agreed that each would write a letter to Greene which Whitman would carry should he go East. It was understood that Whitman would wait until the two had returned to Tshimakain, had time to write the letters, and then send them to Waiilatpu. By forced marches, Walker and Eells were able to return to their homes by October 1. They delayed in writing their letters, however, for Mary’s diary states that the letters were not sent until October 12. Since Whitman had become restless and had left for the East on October 3, the letters were mailed to Greene and arrived in Boston months after Whitman had been there.

The letters that Eells and Walker wrote are illuminating, as they throw light on what was discussed at the Special Meeting of the Mission. Eells in his fourteen page letter dealt especially with the Gray case. Walker in a longer letter of sixteen pages reviewed the reasons why Whitman wanted to make the journey. He wrote: “If necessity demanded that one branch of the Mission be abandoned, the north part could have been given up with far less disastrous consequences both as respects white settlers and the natives…” He also stated: “We do not approve the hasty manner in which this question was decided. Nothing it seemed to us but stern necessity induced us to decide in the manner we did. It seemed death to put the proposition in force, and worse than death to remain as we were.” 71 There is nothing in either of the letters that Walker or Eells wrote which indicates that the main reason, or even a secondary reason, for Whitman’s sudden decision to go East was anything other than mission business.

News of the Whitman massacre, which began on November 29, 1847, reached the offices of the American Board in time for the editor of the Missionary Herald to make a brief mention of it in the July, 1848, issue. Regarding the reasons for Whitman’s journey east in 1842–43, the editor wrote: “He made a visit to the Atlantic States in the spring of 1843, being called hither by the business of the mission.” 72

TO PROMOTE OREGON EMIGRATION

The text of the Resolution adopted by the Mission, which was carried to Boston by Whitman, and the letters of Walker and Eells do not give a complete answer as to why Whitman was moved to leave for the East on
such short notice in the fall of 1842. The unhistorical and often per-
verted explanations of Whitman’s motives, as found in Spalding’s later
Whitman-Saved-Oregon story, must be rejected; yet there were some
motives which moved Whitman to make the journey which had political
overtones [see Appendices 3 & 4]. When Mary Walker noted the return
of her husband on Saturday, October 1, she wrote that day in her diary:
“Messrs. W. & E. had much trouble with Gray & Co. The Mission have
concluded to send Dr. W. to the States to represent the Mission & obtain
a reinforcement or settlers or do something.” 73 Here is contemporary evidence that
Whitman was concerned about other issues beyond mission business.

Ever since Jason Lee’s visit to Waiilatpu and Lapwai in the early
spring of 1838, at which time Whitman and Spalding sent in their
amazing request for 220 additional missionaries, we find evidences of
Whitman’s growing interest in the political future of Old Oregon. The
limits of that interest need to be defined. As previously stated, he never
seemed concerned about the exact location of the boundary line which
would divide Old Oregon. Rather, his political interests centered on
(1) the promotion of the emigration of American citizens to Oregon,
especially those of the Protestant faith, and (2) the extension of the
jurisdiction of the United States over whatever part of the Oregon ter-
ritory would be granted it by treaty.

The arrival of the first wagons at Waiilatpu, which had been taken
over the Blue Mountains by Meek and Newell in the summer of 1840,
prompted Whitman to remark to them that the day was coming when
other wagons would follow, and “in a few years the valley will be full of
people.” Even though the emigrants of 1841 and 1842 had abandoned
their wagons at Fort Hall, and had completed their journey on horse-
back, Whitman believed that the emigration of 1843 would take its
wagons over the mountains into the Columbia River Valley. By the late
spring of 1840, both Marcus and Narcissa realized the importance of
Waiilatpu as an outpost on the Oregon Trail. Little, however, did they
dream of the demands which would be made upon their hospitality and
resources by the hungry, the weary, the sick, and the destitute in the
years just ahead.

On May 2, 1840, Narcissa wrote in a letter to her mother: “A tide
of immigration appears to be moving this way rapidly. What a few years
will bring forth, we know not. A great change has taken place ever since
we first entered the country, and we have no reason to believe it will stop here.” Writing to Greene on July 13, 1841, Whitman said: “It has been distinctly my feeling that we are not to measure the sphere of our action & hope of usefulness by the few natives of the country, but, by all that we can see in prospect, both as it relates to a white population & [to counteract a] Catholic influence.”

According to Dr. White’s biographer, White and Whitman had much to tell each other when they were together at Waiilatpu, September 9–13. “The visit was very agreeable to both,” wrote Miss Allen, “as he had much to tell Dr. White of Oregon affairs, and Dr. him of his two years’ residence in the States.” Undoubtedly White would have told Whitman of Lord Ashburton’s visit to the United States, of the expected settlement of the boundary in Old Oregon, and especially of Senator Linn’s bill which offered to give a section of land in Old Oregon to every emigrant including children. White would certainly have reported that all signs pointed to a large emigration in 1843. At the time the two men were together, they did not know that the Webster–Ashburton Treaty had been signed without containing any mention of the Oregon boundary and that Congress had adjourned without taking action on the Linn bill. Like a dry sponge soaking up water, Whitman’s mind avidly absorbed all that White had to tell him about the political prospects for the future of Old Oregon.

Another member of the 1842 immigration who visited Waiilatpu was a lawyer, Asa Lawrence Lovejoy, 1808–1882, with whom Whitman also discussed certain political matters relating to the Pacific Northwest. Lovejoy with a small party of immigrants arrived at the mission on Monday, September 19, when both of the Whitmans for some unknown reason were absent. Since Lovejoy was Whitman’s companion on his ride over the Rockies in the late fall of 1842 and the following winter, special attention must be given to his recollections of this journey. Lovejoy wrote three accounts describing his travels with Whitman, two of which have been published. Some minor differences are to be found when the three accounts are compared. When we note that Lovejoy wrote the earliest letter twenty-seven years after some of the events described had taken place, allowances should be made for the fallibility of human memory. On the whole, Lovejoy was a reliable witness and became a highly respected citizen of Willamette Valley after returning to Oregon with the 1843 emigration.
In Lovejoy’s letter of 1876, we may read: “I crossed the Plains in company with Dr. White and others, arrived at Waiilatpu the last of September, 1842. My party camped some two miles below Dr. Whitman’s place. The day after our arrival [i.e., on September 20], Dr. Whitman called at our camp and asked me to accompany him to his house, as he wished me to draw up a memorial to Congress to prohibit the sale of ardent spirits in this country. The Doctor was alive to the interests of this Coast, and manifested a very warm desire to have it properly represented in Washington; and after numerous conversations with the Doctor touching the future prosperity of Oregon, he asked me one day in a very anxious manner, if I thought it would be possible for him to cross the mountains at that time of the year. I told him I thought he could. He next asked, ‘Will you accompany me?’ After a little reflection, I told him I would. His arrangements were rapidly made.”

After spending a day or so in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, Lovejoy moved on to Fort Walla Walla. Whitman visited him at the fort shortly before the Mission opened its meeting on Monday, the 26th, and it may be that it was then that Whitman secured Lovejoy’s consent to accompany him across the mountains that fall. Lovejoy’s testimony indicates that Whitman was already planning the journey before he gained a reluctant consent from his associates to go. We have no indication that Whitman ever mentioned the possibility of Lovejoy going with him to his associates. Without that assurance, it is doubtful that Whitman would have attempted making the journey. The combined testimony of White’s biographer and Lovejoy’s accounts is evidence that Whitman was concerned with certain political issues involved in the future of Old Oregon. As later events indicated, he was deeply interested in promoting emigration to Oregon. Hence, his visit to Washington, D.C., before going to Boston.

**TO COUNTERACT THE ROMAN CATHOLICS**

A third reason which moved Whitman to make his sudden decision to go East was his concern over the growing influence of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the Northwest. This, to Whitman, was a threatening situation especially in view of the possible abandonment of the Oregon Mission of the American Board and the uncertain future of the Methodist Mission in the Willamette Valley. As has been stated,
Jason Lee wrote to Whitman in the early fall of 1840 telling of Dr. White’s dismissal from the Methodist Mission and of his intention to return to the States. Lee expressed his fears lest White might do “all that he can to injure them [i.e., the Methodist missionaries in the Valley]” after he got back to New York City. Lee’s fears were well founded; White did appear before the Methodist Missionary Society and declared that Lee was not qualified “for the important trusts which had been committed to him.” 77 White’s charges were reinforced by two other disgruntled returned Methodist missionaries, Rev. W. W. Kone and Dr. John P. Richmond. As a result of these criticisms, Lee was superseded by the Rev. George Gary in September 1843. Gary was sent out to Oregon in 1844 with instructions to close the Methodist work and dispose of the property. Just as the Oregon Mission of the American Board had its critics—Smith and Gray—so the Methodists had theirs—White, Kone, and Richmond. Thus the Methodist Mission in Oregon functioned for only ten years, 1834–44.

We have reason to believe that White gave Whitman a detailed account of the dismal prospects of the Methodist Mission. Such information would have been alarming to Whitman; if both the American Board’s Mission and the Methodist Mission in Old Oregon were abandoned, organized religious activities in the country would be monopolized by the Roman Catholics. We have already noted that the Belgian Jesuit, Father Pierre Jean De Smet, was at the 1840 Rendezvous on his way back to St. Louis after a visit to the Flathead country. In 1841 he returned to the Flatheads with a reinforcement of two priests and three lay brothers. With these assistants, De Smet established St. Mary’s Mission among the Flatheads in Bitterroot Valley, in what is now western Montana, in the fall of 1841.

After Narcissa had learned of the founding of St. Mary’s Mission, she wrote to her sister Jane on October 1, 1841: “Now we have Catholics on both sides of us and, we may say, right in our midst, for Mr. Pambrun, while he was alive, failed not to secure one of the principal men of this tribe [Young Chief] to that religion and had his family baptized.” Nearly a year later, Narcissa wrote again: “Romanism stalks abroad on our right hand and on our left, and with daring effrontery boasts that she is to possess the land. I ask, must it be so?... The zeal and energy of her [priests] are without a parallel... Two are in the country below us, and two far above...
in the mountains. One of the latter is to return this fall to Canada, the States and the eastern world for a large reenforcement” [Letter 115].

Father De Smet visited Fort Vancouver in the spring of 1842, where he consulted with Fathers Blanchet and Demers about the future of Roman Catholic work in Oregon. En route to Vancouver, he visited Tshimakain in April 1842, at which time he had some discussion with Elkanah Walker over the proper Flathead term to be used to express the idea of the Trinity. De Smet left Fort Vancouver on his return trip up the Columbia on June 30. He was back at St. Mary’s Mission about July 25.

There is a strong possibility that while going down or returning up the Columbia River, Father De Smet saw Dr. Whitman at Fort Walla Walla. For several years, the Oregon Historical Society displayed a copy of the Roman Catholic English translation of the Bible, known as the Rheims-Douai version, which had been presented by Father De Smet to Dr. Whitman. If the two pioneer missionaries met, Whitman would have learned of De Smet’s intention to go to Europe that year to enlist more missionaries for new stations to be established in the upper Columbia River country.

The increasing activities of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the upper Columbia River country gave the Whitmans much concern. What could be done to counteract their influence? Marcus remembered the extravagant request that he and Spalding had made in the spring of 1838 when they asked the Board to send out a reenforcement of 220 missionaries. He later apologized to Greene for signing such a request, but yet the hope of such a reenforcement was revived as he debated what measures could be taken to meet the Catholic threat. Finally, he came to the conviction that the answer lay in getting as large a reenforcement as possible from the Board and then also to recruit colonies of emigrants who would settle in the vicinity of each of the three stations. This seems to be the proposal which Whitman presented to his colleagues and which was reflected in the entry in Mary Walker’s diary, previously quoted, which stated that Dr. Whitman was to go to the States “to represent the Mission & obtain a reinforcement or settlers or do something.”
Whitman’s Statement of His Motives

On April 1, 1847, about four and one half years after the special meeting of the Oregon Mission, held in September 1842, Whitman, in a letter to Greene, looked back on that event and wrote: “From the year 1835 to this time, it has ever been apparent that there was to be a choice only of two things; one of the increase & continuation of British interests here to the easy exclusion of all other acquired rights in the Country; or the establishment of American interests by Citizens [i.e., by emigration].” Whitman then pointed out his conviction that the Roman Catholic interests were deeply rooted in the British establishment, even though he did not know that the Catholic priest in the Willamette Valley was then receiving an annual subsidy of £100 from the Hudson's Bay Company. Regarding the American interests in Oregon, Whitman wrote: “In thirty six [1836] Capt. Wyeth left the Country & with him closed for a long time nearly all of the American interests in the country but the Methodists and our Missions. In the fall of 1842, I pointed out to our Mission the arrangement of the Papists to settle in our vicinity and that it only required these measures to be completed for us to be obliged to close our Mission operations. This was urged [by me] as a reason for me to return home & try to bring those to carry on the affairs of the Mission stations and to settle in the Country who would stand on the footing of Citizens & not as missionaries. It may not be inappropriate to observe that at that moment [i.e., September 1842], the Methodist Mission as well as our own was on the point of dissolution.”

Two questions arise: (1) If the Oregon boundary had been settled before Dr. White left for Oregon and if he had carried such news to Whitman, would Whitman have made his journey merely on the need to correct the Board’s order of February 25, 1842? In my opinion, the answer must be No! (2) If the Board had never issued its drastic order and if Dr. White had informed Whitman of pending treaty negotiations which involved the Oregon boundary, would Whitman then have made his ride? Again, in my opinion, the answer would be NO!

In other words, there was a combination of motives which, taken together, prompted Whitman to leave for the East, and it is impossible to say which had priority. Whitman did ride on mission business; he did want to get the Board to rescind its order dismissing Spalding and closing the work at Waiilatpu and Lapwai. He was eager for the extension of United States jurisdiction over the disputed Oregon territory,
although, seemingly, he did not advocate any specific boundary line. He was concerned about the future of the Methodist Mission after hearing from Dr. White the story of dissension within its ranks, and he feared for the future of his own Oregon Mission. The failure of either or both of these Missions would, in his opinion, have made it easier for the Roman Catholics to achieve an amazing success in Oregon.

**Whitman Leaves for Washington and Boston**

Within twenty-four hours after Walker, Eells, and Spalding had left for their respective stations, Dr. Whitman announced his intention to leave for Washington and Boston on the following Monday, October 3. We can be sure that had he proposed such an early departure before Walker and Eells had left for Tshimakain, they would have objected. They wanted time to write their letters and to send them to Waiilatpu. This would have delayed Whitman’s departure by about two weeks. To Whitman, it was far more important for him to be on his way before winter came to the Rockies than to wait for letters which could be sent by other means. Therefore, it is possible that Whitman deliberately kept his intentions secret while Walker and Eells were still at Waiilatpu.

On Thursday, September 29, the day after the Mission meeting was adjourned, Narcissa wrote to Jane and Edward: “I sit down to write you but in great haste. My beloved husband has about concluded to start next Monday to go to the United States, the dear land of our birth; but I remain behind. I could not undertake the journey, if it was considered best for me to accompany him, that is to travel as he expects to. He hopes to reach the borders [of Missouri] in less than three months, if the Lord prospers his way. It is a dreadful journey, especially at this season of the year.” Narcissa made no direct comment regarding the purpose of her husband’s journey except to say: “He wishes to reach Boston as early as possible so as to make arrangements to return next summer, if prospered. The interests of the missionary cause in this country calls him home.” The wording of the last sentence is sufficiently ambiguous to include all three of the motives for Whitman’s ride discussed above. Jane and Edward Prentiss were then associated with one of Narcissa’s former Prattsburg teachers, the Rev. William Beardsley, in the Mission Institute at Quincy, Illinois. Jane may have been a teacher, while Edward seems to have been studying for the ministry. Narcissa begged her sister to return with Marcus the next spring.
Since Narcissa fully expected Marcus to call on her parents and other members of her family, she wrote to them on September 30: “You will be surprised if this letter reaches you to learn that the bearer is my dear husband, and that you will, after a few days, have the pleasure of seeing him. May you have a joyful meeting. He goes upon important business connected with the missionary cause, the cause of Christ in this land, which I will leave for him to explain when you see him, because I have not time to enlarge. He has but yesterday fully made up his mind to go, and he wishes to start Monday, and this is Friday.”

Narcissa returned to the object of her husband’s journey by adding: “As much as I do desire to see my beloved friends once more, yet I cheerfully consent to remain behind, that the object of his almost immediate presence in the land of our birth might, if possible, be accomplished. He wishes to cross the mountains during this month, I mean October, and reach St. Louis about the first of Dec., if he is not detained by the cold or hostile Indians... He has for a companion, Mr. Lovejoy, a respectable, intelligent man and a lawyer, but not a Christian, who expects to accompany him all the way to Boston, as his friends are in that region, and perhaps to Washington. This is a comfort to me...” It is significant that Narcissa here indicated her husband’s intention to visit Washington.

Narcissa mentioned that she expected to be “quite alone at this station for a season,” as the Gray family expected to leave for the Willamette Valley within a few days. She did not indicate that she was concerned over this as she had been left alone on a number of previous occasions when her husband was called away on professional business. The other men of the Mission also at times had left their wives alone at their stations for ten days or even longer. Narcissa did say in her letter to her parents that Marcus had asked Gray to see if he could secure the services of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers or the Littlejohns to take charge of activities at Waiilatpu until he could return. “Next spring,” she wrote, “I intend going below and spending some time in visiting for the benefit of my health.”

For the third time, Narcissa returned to the reasons why Marcus was going: “He goes with the advice and entire confidence of his brethren in the mission, and who value him not only as an associate, but as their physician, and feel, as much as I do, that they know not how to spare
him; but the interest of the cause demands the sacrifice on our part; and could you know all the circumstances in the cause, you would see more clearly how much our hearts are identified in the salvation of the Indians and the interest of the cause generally.”

Narcissa’s love and wifely concern for her husband is revealed in the following: “Forgive me, dear mother, if he is the sole theme of this letter; I can write about nothing else at this time. He is inexpressibly dear to me.” After explaining that she did not have time to write individual letters to each member of her family, she added this postscript: “…all others must receive my dear husband as my living epistle to them and write me by him.” Nowhere in any of the letters Narcissa wrote for her husband to carry east with him is there any hint of any question being in her mind as to the necessity of her husband’s journey. She was in full accord with his views.

Evidently Whitman rode to Fort Walla Walla on Thursday or Friday, September 29 or 30, to complete arrangements with Lovejoy and to inform McKinlay of his plans. No doubt McKinlay assured Whitman of his readiness to stand by and render Narcissa any assistance that might be needed, even though he was twenty-five miles away. Whitman has been censured for his willingness to leave his wife alone with the Indians for an indefinite period. His willingness to do so can only be explained by what he considered to be the great urgency of his mission. Whitman made such provisions as were possible under the circumstances. In addition to talking with McKinlay, Whitman had asked Gray to find someone to go to Waiilatpu and take care of the premises. However, it would have taken weeks for any party to arrive at Waiilatpu from the Willamette Valley. Whitman also confided in the Indians who lived nearby. Both Tiloukaikt and Tamsucky solemnly promised that they would protect both Mrs. Whitman and the mission property.

Like other ordinary human beings, the Whitmans were sometimes guilty of procrastination. The archives of the American Board contain copies of two questionnaires filled out by Marcus and Narcissa which gave information about their early lives, education, and spiritual experiences. The fact that they are dated October 3, 1843, the day Marcus left for Boston, shows one of them suddenly remembered their failure to answer the Board’s request for such information. The Spaldings received like questionnaires which were filled out and dated May, 1840.
The two questionnaires were carried east by Whitman along with the other letters that Narcissa had written.

Believing that McKinlay and Gray would find someone to go and live with Narcissa at Waiilatpu, and lulled by the promises of Tiloukaikt and Tamsucky to protect his wife and the mission property, Marcus kissed his wife goodbye on Monday morning, October 3, 1842, and started his long journey to Boston [Letter 119]. With him were Lovejoy and at least one Indian by the name of Aps. The men had with them several pack animals and a dog, called Trapper, which had once been a pet of Alice Clarissa’s. With a brave but heavy heart, Narcissa stood watching her husband and his companions ride up the trail that led to the Blue Mountains until they were lost to view. She then reentered the house knowing that about a year would pass before she would see her husband again. She was alone except for the three halfbreed children—Mary Ann Bridger, Helen Mar Meek, and David Malin—and the Hawaiian, Jack.

The Grays were still living in the emigrant house but they were planning to leave for the Willamette Valley the next day. Tiloukaikt and his band of about fifty men, women, and children had their lodges about a mile away.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME
Chapter 16 footnotes

3. See Chapter Twelve, section, “Reaction of the Hudson’s Bay Company.”
6. See Appendices 3 & 4 for a discussion of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. Spalding, writing some twenty-four years after the arrival of the Red River colony, made several errors in his series of articles which began appearing in the San Francisco *Pacific* with its May 23, 1865, issue.
8. Gray, in his *Oregon*, p. 288, embellishes Spalding’s fanciful account of what was supposed to have happened at Fort Walla Walla in the fall of 1842, by saying that after Whitman heard the taunt of the priest at the dinner table about the Americans being too late, he hastily withdrew, mounted his horse, and rode the twenty-five miles to Waiilatpu in two hours! Gray, who was at Waiilatpu in the fall of 1842, also stated: “I saw in a moment that he was fixed on some important object or errand.” Gray’s personal testimony gave weight to Spalding’s version as to why Whitman left for Washington so suddenly in the fall of 1842.
10. McLoughlin’s *Letters*, III:XXXIV.
11. See Chapter Thirteen, section “Roman Catholic Missionaries Arrive in Oregon.”
14. Accurate figures as to how all present at this historic Champoeg meeting voted are not available. Some writers claim that the Americans had a majority of two; others say six out of a total vote of over 100. A good account of the meeting is to be found in John A. Hussey, *Champoeg*, Portland, 1967, p. 154.
17. HBC Arch., B/223/c.
18. See Chapter Twelve, section “Reaction of the Hudson’s Bay Company.”
22. McLoughlin’s *Letters*, III:XXXIV.
23. Narcissa copied her husband’s letter to McKinlay in her letter to her father of Nov. 18, 1841.
24 Possibly the same John Gray, a half-breed Iroquois, who deserted Ogden’s Snake River brigade in Utah in 1825. See Josephy, Nez Perces, pp. 68 & 216.
25 See Chapter Ten, “Three Cayuse Chiefs.” In Whitman letters Nos. 100 & 101, the name is given as “Tilankaik.”
26 Cannon, Waiilatpu, p. 103, identifies Sakiaph as Tamsucky and also as Feathercap. Cannon gives five different ways by which this Indian’s name was spelled.
28 Also spelled Isai-shal-akis, Tsai-ach-alkis, or Isai-ashel-uckas.
29 Here is evidence that some of the chiefs would use this form of punishment on members of their bands. Hudson’s Bay Company’s officials also used the whip as is noted in letters from James Douglas to Angus McDonald, Jan. 25, 1842, and Feb. 23, 1842, Fort Vancouver Correspondence, Outward to 1845, Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C. In the latter letter Douglas advised: “Never apply the whip unjustly or without the clearest proof of the person’s guilt.” There is no evidence that Whitman ever used the lash in punishment. See Chapter Eleven, “Let Them Feel the Lash.”
30 Maria Maki, the wife of Joseph Malin, who died at Waiilatpu on August 8, 1840, remained at the mission until the fall of 1841 when she was sent to Fort Vancouver. There she joined the A. B. Smiths and returned with them to Hawaii in December of that year.
31 See Appendix 6 for text of the H. K. W. Perkins letter from which this quotation was taken.
32 McKinlay’s letter to Whitman was copied and sent to Greene [Letter 100].
33 Simpson, Overland Journey, p. 99. Simpson’s views on the avarice of the natives harmonized with that which A. B. Smith had written on that subject.
34 See Appendix 6. Words in italics are underlined in the original.
35 Italics are the author’s.
37 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 326.
39 Ibid., pp. 258 ff.
40 See Chapter Twenty-Four, section “Other Memorials” for reference to name-sakes of Dr. Whitman.
41 This David Malin, 1805–85, was pastor of a church in Philadelphia when Spalding visited him in 1870. Drury, Spalding, p. 391.
42 Italics are the author’s.
43 Drury, F.W.W., I:218 if; Gray, Oregon, p. 110.
44 Clarence Bagley, Early Catholic Missions in old Oregon, Seattle, 1932, p. 70; Carl Landerholm (translator), Notices & Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest, Oregon Historical Society, 1956, pp. 44 ff. An original Catholic ladder in Coll. B. is reproduced in this latter work.
45 An original painting of a Protestant ladder by Mrs. Spalding is in Coll. O; copy reproduced in Drury, F.W.W., I:218. Landerholm, op. cit., p. 45, quoting Bishop Blanchet as saying: “Protestant ministers stop at nothing in sowing tares in
the field of the family father. They have fabricated an imitation of our historic ladder, and have not hesitated to place a mark on it at the sixteenth century to indicate the rise of their religion.”


48 Williams, *Narrative of a Tour*, pp. 70–1. See ante, fn. 1.


50 Elkanah Walker’s diary covering these days in 1842 is in Coll. O.

51 Marshall, *Acquisition of Oregon*, II:118.

52 Ibid., II: 180.

53 Ibid., II: 126.


55 Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia*, Harper, 1957, have a chapter on “The Boundary Question” which gives a fine review of the activities of Senator Linn and others in behalf of the U.S. claims to Old Oregon.


57 White file, Old Indian Records, National Archives, Washington, n.c.


61 HBC Arch., B/223/c/7.

62 Ibid.

63 HBC Arch., B/223/c/210a.

64 Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:236.

65 Walker could not understand why Whitman had sent letters addressed to Spalding to Tshimakain. Marshall, *Acquisition of Oregon*, II:128, gives a transcription of this section of Walker’s diary.


68 After serving two years as General Superintendent of the Methodist Oregon Institute, Salem, Oregon, Gray moved first to Oregon City and then to Clatsop Plains, south of Astoria. He took an active and often stormy part in the political, community, and church affairs of the different localities in which he lived. Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Grays visited their old homes in the East. In 1870 Gray published his biased, but still important, *History of Oregon*.


70 This modifies the position taken in my Spalding biography, published in 1936, where I stated that Whitman rode primarily to save Spalding and the Mission. I now feel that there were other motives as well as that of concern for the Mission.
The original Eells and Walker letters are in Coll. A.

Italics are the author’s.

Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 166. Miss Allen was mistaken about the time Dr. White spent in the States. He arrived in April 1841 and left the Missouri frontier in May 1842.

Drury, *F.W.W.*, I:265, quoting from Mary Gray’s diary for Monday, September 19:

“Mr. Smith & family, Mr. Lovejoy & several other Americans arrived today. Mr. S. [identity unknown] said they were starving—wanted to buy food. As the Dr. was gone, I sold them some flour—took one dollar for it. Gave him some butter & cheese.” Feeling that he had not paid enough for the food received, Smith returned the next day and gave another dollar.

Lovejoy’s earliest account, a letter addressed to W. H. Gray dated Nov. 6, 1869, appeared in Gray’s *Oregon*, pp. 324–6; Spalding included a paraphrase of this letter in his *Senate Document*, p. 23. Lovejoy’s second account, also a letter, was sent to Dr. G. H. Atkinson, a pioneer Congregational minister of Portland, February 14, 1876, and was published in *Pioneer and Historical Society of Oregon*, pp. 13 ff., and in Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, pp. 304 ff. His third account, still unpublished, was written for the historian H. H. Bancroft, June 18, 1878, is in Coll. B, with photostats in Coll. O. Reference to any of these three accounts will be indicated by the abbreviations (L1), (L2), and (L3) used in the text, thus referring to the documents in their chronological order.


Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:226. Walker, in a letter to Chamberlain in Honolulu, Sept. 6, 1842, wrote: “I had some conversation with De Smet on the language. He remarked that as our belief was the same in regard to the Trinity, he thought we had better adopt one common phraseology. He gave me some of his phrases & my knowledge of this language would not allow me to adopt them.”


Fort Hall, founded by Capt. N. J. Wyeth in 1834, was sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1836.

Italics are the author’s.

See Drury, *Spalding*, pp. 317 ff., for an account of Spalding leaving his wife and year-old baby girl alone at Lapwai for several weeks in the summer of 1845 while he made a trip to The Dalles for supplies.

Archibald McKinlay to Dr. W. F. Tolmie from Lac La Hache, Dec. 9, 1884: “He came to Walla Walla a few days before his departure, not on a professional call but to bid me farewell. He was in my opinion a very superior man, his whole soul was devoted to christianizing and civilizing the Indians.” Also McKinlay to Myron Eells, Jan. 4, 1884: “Whitman did say to me before his departure that his objects in going east were to frustrate unfavorable reports sent the Board by discontented
members of the mission.” Original letters owned by descendants of McKinlay; copies in Kamloops Museum, Kamloops, B.C.

84 My attention was directed to these questionnaires by Ross Woodbridge of Pittsford, N.Y., who evidently was the first student of the Whitman story to discover them in the archives of the American Board.

85 I received this story about Trapper, the dog, about thirty-five years ago from the late Mrs. Edmund Bowden of Seattle who in turn heard it from the Rev. Cushing Eells.
Narcissa Prentiss Whitman
A painting by Drury Haight based on a Paul Kane sketch believed to be, by strong circumstantial evidence, an authentic likeness of Mrs. Whitman.
MARCUS AND NARCISSA
WHITMAN
AND THE
OPENING
OF OLD
OREGON

BY CLIFFORD M. DRURY
IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME 2

NORTHWEST INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
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Narcissa was so deeply concerned with the turn of events which caused her husband on so short notice to leave for the East that at first she did not think of herself. Her hours of loneliness came later. Her immediate concerns were for the safety and comfort of her husband. Aps returned to Waiilatpu on October 4 with a note from Marcus. Narcissa that same day began a letter to her husband which she addressed in care of her parents evidently with the hope that somehow it might reach him before he started back to Oregon. She wrote: “The line you sent me to-day did me great good. I thought I was cheerful and happy before it came; but on the perusal of it, I found that it increased my happiness four-fold. I believe the Lord will preserve me from being anxious about you and I was glad to hear you say with so much confidence that you trusted in Him for safety. He will protect you, I firmly believe. Night and day shall my prayer ascend to Him in your behalf and the cause in which you have sacrificed the endearments of home, at the risk of your life, to see advancing, more to the honor and glory of God. Mr. G[ray] and family did not leave until this morn;¹ they spent the night here, which was a great relief to me. I am sorry we forgot your pencil, comb, and journal.”
The next day, Narcissa added the following to her letter: “In arranging the cupboard to-day, I found that you had not taken the compass as you designed to. I fear you will suffer for the want of it; wish I could send it to you with the other things you have forgotten. I intended to have spoken to you about purchasing one or two pair of spectacles. Perhaps you will think of it.” Among the Whitman relics at Whitman College is a compass, which may be the one he had forgotten to take. At the close of her entry for October 5, Narcissa wrote: “Where are you to-night, precious husband? I hope you have been prosperous to-day and are sleeping sweetly. Good night, my loved one.” According to one of Lovejoy’s accounts, he and Whitman camped that night in the snow in the Blue Mountains.

### Attempted Assault on Narcissa

After Gray and his family left for Fort Walla Walla on October 4, Narcissa was the only white person at Waiilatpu. John, the Hawaiian, slept in a room in the Whitman home. Late in the night of the 6th, Narcissa had a terrifying experience of which she wrote the next morning to her husband: “My Dear Husband. I got dreadfully frightened last night. About midnight I was awakened by some one trying to open my bed-room door. At first I did not know what to understand by it. I raised my head and listened awhile and then lay down again. Soon the latch was raised and the door opened a little. I sprang from the bed in a moment and closed the door again, but the ruffian pushed and pushed and tried to unlatch it, but could not succeed; finally he gained upon me until he opened the door again and, as I supposed disengaged his blanket (at the same time I was calling John) and ran as for his life. The east dining room door was open. I thought it was locked, but it appears that it was not. I fastened the door, lit a candle and went to bed trembling and cold, but could not rest until I had called John to bring his bed and sleep in the kitchen…had the ruffian persisted I do not know what I should have done.” Evidently the Whitmans had an Indian war club, perhaps a souvenir in their bedroom. Of this she wrote: “I did not think of the war club, but I thought of the poker. [There was a fireplace in the bedroom.] Thanks be to our Heavenly Father. He mercifully ‘delivered me from the hand of a savage man.’” The quotation which Narcissa used is reminiscent of some verses of the Psalms.
Writing to Mary Walker on November 5, about a month later, Narcissa told of the incident: “…that week husband left, a saucy Indian got into the house about midnight & tried to force himself into my bedroom. John, Mr. McKinlay’s man, was sleeping in the house but not very near. But I made a great noise & called as loud as I could & he took to his heels & ran.” Elijah White, in a report submitted to the Indian Bureau in Washington, has given us more details of the incident: “He [i.e., Whitman] had hardly left for the States last fall when shocking to relate, at the hour of midnight, a large Indian Chief managed to get into the house, came to the door of Mrs. Whitman’s bedchamber and had succeeded in getting it partly open before she reached it. A white man [sic] sleeping in an adjoining apartment saved her from violence and ruin. The villain escaped. There was but one thing worse in this matter on the part of Doctor W.; and that was a great error, leaving his excellent lady thus unprotected in the midst of savages.”

Mungo Mevway, the half-Indian and half-Hawaiian lad, who had lived with the Whitmans from 1837 to the fall of 1841 and who then went to live with the missionaries at Tshimakain, unexpectedly arrived at Waiilatpu sometime during the night of October 6. Evidently he spent the night away from the mission house for he did not learn of the attempted assault on Narcissa until the next day. He was the first, besides John, to whom Narcissa spoke of her terrifying experience. Narcissa was haunted with the knowledge that the unknown Indian who had tried to force his way into her bedroom was living on or near the mission premises, no doubt he was from Tiloukaikt’s camp. Would he return? Who was there to protect her? Since the intruder had not spoken, she could not identify his voice.

Narcissa sent Mungo to Fort Walla Walla to notify McKinlay of the incident and to ask for someone to come and stay with her. She even suggested that possibly Mrs. McKinlay might be able to do so. Mungo, who was then seventeen or eighteen years old, realized the seriousness of the situation and left early on Friday morning, the 7th, for the Fort. He found the Grays still there and also Tom McKay. The two men with McKinlay agreed that Narcissa would have to be removed to Fort Walla Walla as soon as possible. Both McKinlay and Gray wrote letters to Narcissa informing her of their decision. McKay promised to go to Waiilatpu the next day and stay with her until she could be taken to the
Fort. Mungo was able to make the return trip the same afternoon, which meant that he made a round trip of at least fifty miles that day.

The best information available as to the identity of the intruder is found in Cannon's *Waiilatpu*; he wrote that “the Indian who attempted the assault upon Mrs. Whitman was a second chief of Tilaukait’s village named Tamsucky.” Cannon also identified Tamsucky as Feathercap. McKay arrived at Waiilatpu on Saturday and, after talking with Narcissa, got in touch with Tiloukaikt and members of his band. Of this Narcissa wrote to her husband: “In talking to Mr. McKay and Feathercap about it, I told them I should leave and go below [probably a reference to the Willamette Valley]—I could not stay and be treated so. I told them I came near beating him with the war club; they said it would have been good if I had done so and laid him flat so that they all might see who he was.” If indeed Feathercap (alias Tamsucky) was the guilty party, he showed amazing effrontery; he pretended innocence and gave assurances to Narcissa that “there will be no further danger.”

Narcissa’s letter to Marcus, which she had started on October 4, became a journal with almost daily entries. On Saturday evening, the 8th, she noted: “The Indians say more Americans are coming.” Here is evidence that the increasing Oregon immigration was beginning to give the Cayuses concern. On Sunday, Narcissa tried to carry on with some of the usual religious duties. Ellis from the Nez Perces happened to be at Waiilatpu that day, and since he had been a student at the Red River Mission school and had a fair knowledge of the main doctrines of Christianity, Narcissa asked him to take charge of the usual Sunday service for that day. That evening Narcissa wrote in her journal-letter: “Ellis ...was their minister today. This afternoon I had a Bible class in English with him, John, and Mungo, besides the time I spent with the children. He [Ellis] read and appeared to understand very well.”

Narcissa was not in good health when Marcus left for the East; we find a number of references in her letters to this fact. Following the strain of the confrontation which had taken place with the natives in September, the Special Mission meeting, the departure of her husband for the East, and then the frightening experience of the attempted assault, Narcissa suffered a nervous relapse. McKinlay had learned from Mungo that she should not be able to make the trip to Fort Walla Walla on horseback: so he put a “trundlebed” in a wagon when he drove out
to Waiilatpu on the following Monday to get her [Letter 118]. Narcissa, with the three half-breed children, made the trip to the Fort the next day. On the evening of Wednesday, October 12, Narcissa added a note in her letter to Marcus: “The Indians did not like my leaving very well—seemed to regret the cause. I felt strongly to prefer to stay there if it could be considered prudent, but the care and anxiety was wearing upon me too much. Good night, beloved husband.”

Although McKinlay provided the best accommodations possible at the Fort, Narcissa suffered for want of the conveniences and comforts of her home at Waiilatpu, primitive as it was when judged by modern standards. Her room was cold, as it had no stove, and the bedding was damp. A week passed before a stove was made available; it is possible that this was brought in from Waiilatpu. On the 14th, a second letter arrived from Marcus and on the 17th, Narcissa added the following to her journal-letter: “I undertook to write to you last Friday, but was too sick to do it and had to give it up. Took a powder of quinine and calomel that night—the next day and yesterday could scarcely go or lie in bed. I suffered much from the lack of conveniences of our dear home, …for I have been sick ever since I have been here.”

On October 22 Narcissa began another letter to her husband in the hope that somehow it could be carried East in time to reach him before he started back to Oregon. In this she wrote: “Almost three long weeks have passed since we exchanged the parting kiss, and many, very many, long weeks are yet to come before we shall be permitted, if ever in this world, to greet each other again ...I follow you night and day, and shall through the whole journey, in my imagination and prayers.” Here we see revealed Narcissa’s growing sense of loneliness. Stage by stage, she retraced the Oregon Trail in her mind—the Blue Mountains, Fort Boise, Fort Hall, South Pass, Fort Laramie, the Platte River, and finally Westport. She worked out what she felt would be his schedule, only to learn months later how wrong she had been. Finally, in her imagination, she pictured him back in the homes of their loved ones in New York State. “How will you feel, dear husband,” she wrote, “when you seat yourself in Sister Julia’s house, or with our mothers, and not see the windows filled with Indians, and the doors also; will you not feel lost?”

In this letter of October 22, she made the following reference to the motive which had taken Marcus from her side: “Stay as long as it is
necessary to accomplish all your heart’s desire respecting the interest of this country, so dear to us both—our home ... Read this letter, my husband, and then give it to my mother—perhaps she would like once more to peep into one of the sacred chambers of her daughter’s heart—it may comfort her, seeing she can not see her face again in the flesh.” This letter, and that begun on October 4, had to go by sea around Cape Horn and hence did not reach their destination until long after Whitman had left for Oregon. We can only imagine the alarm that members of their families felt when they read of the attempted assault on Narcissa and of her ill health.

**The Spaldings in Trouble with the Indians**

Before Whitman left for Boston, he sent word to Spalding asking him to take care of a number of items at Waiilatpu. This Spalding promised to do [Letter 122]. In Narcissa’s letter of October 22 to her husband, she wrote that Spalding had experienced “considerable trouble with the Indians which prevented his coming last week.” Although Narcissa did not give details, Dr. White in his report, to which reference has been made, wrote that Mrs. Spalding had been “grossly insulted,” and that a disgruntled Indian had “presented his loaded gun, cocked at the breast of Mr. Spalding, abused and menaced as far as possible without shooting him.”

Spalding finally was able to leave Lapwai and arrived at Fort Walla Walla on October 21 where he saw Narcissa. He then rode out to Waiilatpu. About a week later, a messenger arrived from Lapwai with a note from his wife, written in a trembling hand. She told of having suffered a severe hemorrhage. The realization that she was alone and ill, without anyone to help her except some friendly Nez Perces, caused Spalding to faint before he had finished reading the note. After recovering, he made immediate preparations to leave for Lapwai. He gave some hasty directions regarding matters at Waiilatpu, selected four of his strongest horses, and with an Indian companion set out for his home. The two left Waiilatpu about nine o’clock at night when it was raining. They stopped once during the night to give their horses a short rest and by daybreak found that they had covered sixty-five miles. They arrived at Lapwai before sundown on the second day of their journey having made the 120 mile trip in nineteen hours. This set a record in the annals of
the Oregon Mission. To Spalding’s great relief, he found Eliza alive and resting as comfortably as could be expected.

**Narcissa at Waskopum**

When the Rev, and Mrs. H. K. W. Perkins, Methodist missionaries stationed as Waskopum, also known as The Dalles, learned of Narcissa’s situation, they extended an urgent invitation for her to spend the winter with them. After making arrangements to leave David Maim with Mrs. McKinlay, Narcissa and the two little girls left Walla Walla on a Hudson’s Bay boat on October 27. The trip down the Columbia to Waskopum took two days. She was warmly greeted by the Perkins couple and also by the Rev, and Mrs. Daniel Lee and Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Brewer, who were also stationed there [Letter 122]. The Methodist mission at Waskopum was the first branch to be established by the Oregon Methodists outside of the Willamette Valley. The buildings were located about one mile from the south bank of the Columbia River.

In a letter to Mary Walker dated November 5, 1842, from Waskopum, Narcissa wrote: “Since I have been here, it has been difficult for me some of the time to walk & even to move my limbs without groaning. With quiet & rest I expect to be better. Without it I shall be worse. We both felt I was in a way to be better when the Doct. left but I have had so much to excite me, besides care & exposure, that I have not gained but failed since.” Writing to her parents on February 7 of the following year, Narcissa returned to the subject of her illness: “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.” One of her difficulties was her failing eyesight. “My eyes are almost gone,” she wrote, “my poor health affects them materially and writing is very injurious to me. I can neither read, write or sew without spectacles, and most of the time, and sometimes with them, I suffer considerable pain.”

This letter of February 1843 contains a sad note: the lack of home mail. “September 1840 is my last date from home,” Narcissa wrote. “I am expecting to hear soon when the ship comes in.” Probably she was here referring to the expected arrival of one of the Company’s ships at Fort Vancouver. We know from Narcissa’s extant letters that she was most faithful in writing to members of her family. We cannot understand why they did not write more often to her in return.
THE GRISTMILL BURNED AT WAILATPU

During the latter part of November 1842, Narcissa received a letter from McKinlay which told of the burning of the gristmill at Wailatpu together with about two hundred bushels of wheat and corn, and also some lumber and flour [Letters 121 & 124]. McKinlay felt that the fire had been deliberately set. Perhaps some later information reached Narcissa for in her letter of March 4, 1843, she intimated that the fire had been accidentally caused by a son of Feathercap (Tamsucky). She wrote: “Wap-tash-tak-mahl [Feathercap] says his heart is very sore. He does not know how you will think of him when you come to hear of the burning of the Mill—after leaving him in charge of the property. He weeps like a child about it …He has beat his son severely.” Two references in this quotation are worthy of comment. The first relates to Feathercap weeping. Other references in Whitman letters also reveal this Indian as being highly emotional, often subject to weeping. The second reference is to the son who was beaten, evidently because he had caused the fire. A son of Tamsucky, called Waie-Cat, figures in the Whitman massacre. Possibly he is the one involved in the fire incident. If so, he would have been then about fifteen years old.

According to a letter Narcissa wrote on February 7, 1843, her husband had intended to enclose the mill with adobes before he had to leave for the East, but was unable to do so. The part that was burned consisted of the platform which supported the machinery, the frame, the roof, and some nearby granaries. “The sensible part of the Cayuses feel the loss deeply,” she wrote, “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 the one means of making them a better people.”

On November 1, 1842, Mr. and Mrs. Littlejohn and William Geiger, Jr., arrived at Waskopum en route to Waiilatpu. Their services had been secured by Gray. Littlejohn had become disillusioned with the possibility of carrying on any independent missionary work in Old Oregon. Therefore, he and his wife had decided to make the overland trip back to the States in the spring of 1843 if they could find some party going that way. On the basis of that hope, they were willing to spend the winter at Wailatpu. Geiger, whom Narcissa had known at Angelica, New York, and who had arrived in Oregon in the fall of 1839, agreed to take charge of the mission premises at Wailatpu until Whitman returned. He proved to be a faithful man.
When Dr. White learned of the attempted assault on Mrs. Whitman and of how Spalding’s life had been threatened, he felt that it was his duty to go at once to Waiilatpu and to Lapwai to see what steps could be taken to give the missionaries greater protection. White was aware of the wording of the passports given by the Secretary of War to the missionaries when they went out to Old Oregon in 1836. These documents not only granted them permission to dwell in the Indian country but also called upon “officers of the Army of the United States” and “Indian Agents” to give such protection to them as circumstances might require. White made reference to this when he wrote his official report: “…their passport signed by the Secretary of War made it my imperative duty to protect them in their persons at least from outrage.”

White felt that this gave him the legal right to take whatever action he felt necessary to protect the lives and property of American citizens in territory which still came under the provisions of the Joint Occupation Treaty of 1818.

Since the Hudson’s Bay Company declined to provide river transportation to Fort Walla Walla, White had to make his own arrangements. He hired six men to go with him who “were armed in the best manner, a sufficient number to command respect and secure the object of our undertaking.” Perhaps these six also served as boatmen. White also secured the services of Tom McKay, who happened to be in the Willamette Valley at the time, and Cornelius Rogers, both of whom could serve as interpreters. Included in the party, perhaps as one of the armed men, was the half-breed, Baptiste Dorion, son of the Iowa Indian woman who figures as a heroine in Washington Irving’s *Astoria*. White and his party of eight or nine met set out for Fort Walla Walla on November 15. Buffeted by strong winds, they were unable to reach The Dalles before November 24. The weather was rainy and bitterly cold. McKay called their experience a “voyage of misery.”

Dr. White found Narcissa at the Methodist mission at The Dalles. Of his visit with her, he wrote: “Her noble and intellectual mind and spirit were much depressed and her health suffering …Our visit encouraged me.” Since travel by boat had been so difficult, White decided to continue his journey by land. Having secured horses, the party rode to Fort Walla Walla where they arrived on the 30th. Littlejohn and Geiger, who were still at The Dalles when White arrived, accompanied...
him to the Fort and then on to Waiilatpu. Mrs. Littlejohn remained at the Methodist mission.

In company with McKinlay, the White party rode out to Waiilatpu on December 1, where White was “shocked and pained at beholding the sad work of savage destruction.” His reference was to the burned mill and granary. Even though the premises had remained unprotected for several weeks, except for the possible presence of John, the Hawaiian, there appeared to have been no looting of the mission houses. To White’s disappointment, only a few Cayuses were in the vicinity of Waiilatpu when he arrived. Evidently embarrassed over the burning of the mill, most of Tiloukaikt’s band had fled. White left word that he would return to Waiilatpu after his visit to Lapwai, at which time he wanted to meet with the chiefs of the whole Cayuse tribe.

Spalding was delighted when he heard that White intended visiting Lapwai. He summoned all of the principal men of the tribe who lived within easy riding distance of the mission to assemble at Lapwai. White wrote: “Seldom was a visit of an Indian Agt. more desired and proper.” White had to wait two days after arriving at Lapwai before the Nez Perce chiefs could assemble. During this interval, White inspected the mission premises. Regarding the school, he wrote that he “was happily surprised and greatly interested at seeing such numbers so far advanced and so eagerly pursuing after knowledge.” He visited the farms being cultivated by the natives and again was deeply impressed with the progress the Nez Perces were making. Among the twenty-two chiefs who assembled at Lapwai was the venerable Hohots Ilppilp (literally Red Grizzly Bear), also known as Bloody Chief, who was at least ninety years old and who remembered Lewis and Clark. Also present was Five Crows from the Cayuse tribe.

After many speeches by White, McKinlay, McKay, Rogers, and Spalding on the one hand and Bloody Chief, Five Crows, and others, including perhaps Timothy and Joseph, on the other, the Nez Perces were ready to accept White’s suggestions. The first related to the adoption of the following code of eleven Articles which White, no doubt with Spalding’s collaboration, had compiled:

Art. 1. Whoever wilfully takes life shall be hung.

Art. 2. Whoever burns a dwelling-house shall be hung.
Art. 3. Whoever burns an out-building shall be imprisoned six months, receive fifty lashes, and pay all damages.

Art. 4. Whoever carelessly burns a house, or any property, shall pay damages.

Art. 5. If anyone enter a dwelling, without permission of the occupant, the chiefs shall punish him as they think proper. Public rooms are excepted.

Art. 6. If any one steal he shall pay back twofold; and if it be the value of a beaver skin or less, he shall receive twenty-five lashes; and if the value is over a beaver skin, he shall pay back twofold, and receive fifty lashes.

Art. 7. If any one take a horse and ride it, without permission, or take any article and use it, without liberty, he shall pay for the use of it, and receive from twenty to fifty lashes, as the chief shall direct.

Art. 8. If any one enter a field, and injure the crops, or throw down the fence, so that cattle or horses go in and do damage, he shall pay all damages, and receive twenty-five lashes for every offense.

Art. 9. Those only may keep dogs who travel or live among the game; if a dog kill a lamb, calf, or any domestic animal, the owner shall pay the damage, and kill the dog.

Art. 10. If an Indian raise a gun or other weapon against a white man, it shall be reported to the chiefs, and they shall punish him. If a white person do the same to an Indian, it shall be reported to Dr. White, and he shall redress it.

Art. 11. If any Indian break these laws, he shall be punished by his chiefs, if a white man break them, he shall be reported to the agent, and be punished at his instance.\textsuperscript{11}

Each of these laws proposed by Dr. White grew out of definite situations previously faced by either the Whitmans or the Spaldings or by both. The burning of the mill and granaries at Waiilatpu is reflected in Articles 2, 3, and 4. A reaction to the attempted assault on Mrs.
Whitman is seen in Article 5. The confrontation between Whitman and the Cayuses which took place at Waiilatpu in September 1841, when some of Gray’s horses were taken without his permission and turned into Whitman's gardens, may have inspired Articles 7 and 8. According to White’s report, the Indians at the Lapwai council themselves suggested Article 9 which referred to the keeping of dogs which killed domestic animals. Since the lives of both Whitman and Spalding had been threatened, Articles 1 and 10 were logical.

White stated that the suggested laws were presented “one by one, leaving them as free to reject as accept.” It should be pointed out, however, that this code of laws had not been requested by the natives. It was urged upon them by the show of authority by Dr. White, acting as the first United States Indian Agent for Oregon, and with the enthusiastic endorsement of Spalding. No doubt the presence of a Hudson’s Bay official, Archibald McKinlay, who evidently supported the proposed code of laws, carried great weight. As has been stated, Simpson had advised McLoughlin to notify all “gentlemen” in charge of the various Company’s posts in Oregon to have nothing to do with Dr. White. The very fact that McKinlay, Chief Trader at Fort Walla Walla, was willing to accompany Dr. White to Lapwai indicates that his concern about the increasing lawlessness among the Indians was greater than his fear of incurring the censure of his superiors. Evidently McKinlay felt that this plan of White’s to introduce a code of laws among the natives was worth trying. Also present at the Lapwai meeting were Tom McKay and Cornelius Rogers, both of whom spoke in favor of the Nez Perces adopting the laws. Since each was held in high regard by the Indians, their words carried weight.

In an atmosphere of good fellowship, the Nez Perce chiefs agreed to accept the laws. This was the first time that any tribe in Old Oregon voluntarily agreed to accept the white man’s system of jurisprudence. The experiment, however, was doomed to failure from the very beginning, as a great gulf separated the white man’s concept of a sovereign state and the red man’s primitive tribal structure. The code of laws called for sanctions. Here was a glaring weakness, for there were no courts, no police, and no law enforcement agencies among the Indians. Article 3 called for imprisonment, but there were no jails. Hanging was not an Indian method of punishment, and the fact that this was mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 leaves the impression that Dr. White wanted to warn
the Indians that this might be the penalty which could be inflicted by white men if circumstances warranted it. Article II gives the semblance of impartiality in claiming that the laws applied to the white men as well as to the red. This was impossible of fulfillment, as Dr. White had no authority whatever over the white American population of Oregon. The only sanction stated in the code which could have been used was the lash, as the Indians had already accepted this as a form of punishment.

**ELLIS MADE FIRST HIGH CHIEF OF THE NEZ PERCES**

After the chiefs agreed to accept the code of laws, Dr. White requested that one of their number be selected as Head or High Chief. This was an innovation, for the Nez Perces never had had a chief who exercised authority over other chiefs. Asa B. Smith, in his letter to Greene of February 6, 1840, explained that the Nez Perces had three kinds of chiefs: (1) the war chiefs who won their rank through prowess in battle; (2) chiefs who attained a position of influence through “making feasts & feeding the people;” and (3) the “tobacco chiefs” who won followers by distributing tobacco which they had gotten from the white men. Smith summarized: “The power of the chiefs amounts to very little & the people do that which is right in their own eyes.”

When Dr. White insisted that the Nez Perces have a High Chief, the first reaction of the council was that he should appoint one of their number. This he refused to do; he called on them to make their own selection. He pointed out the importance of some one having central authority who would act as a spokesman and an intermediary for the tribe. Dr. White gave the chiefs two hours to make their decision; meanwhile he and the other white men withdrew from the council. Describing the meeting in his report to the Indian Bureau, White wrote: “They seemed some puzzled and wished to know if it were proper to counsel with Messrs. McKay & Rogers.” White granted this request. After several hours of deliberation, the choice was narrowed to two—Apashwakaikt, also known as Meiway or Looking Glass, and Ellis. The former had been a leader in opposing Smith at Kamiah in October 1840. The latter was a grandson of Bloody Chief and had the distinction of having been a student at the Red River Mission school for about four years, 1830–34. Of him White wrote: “...a sensible man of thirty-two, reading, speaking & writing the English language tolerably well; has a fine small planta-
tion, a few sheep some neat [cattle] stock and no less than eleven hundred head of horses.” Ellis was chosen to the great displeasure of Apashwakaikt [Letter 122]. The fact that Ellis could speak English and was sympathetic to the missionaries, even though he had not openly professed Christianity, made him the evident choice by both White and Spalding.

After the conclusion of all business came the festivities. Dr. White paid for an ox which was butchered and the meat barbecued. Of the feast, White wrote: “Our ox was fat, and cooked and served up in a manner reminding me of the days of yore; we ate beef, corn, and peas to our fill, and in good cheer took the pipe, when Rev. Mr. Spalding, Messrs. McKinlay, Rogers, and McKay, wished a song from our boatmen; it was no sooner given than returned by the Indians and repeated again, again & again in high cheer.”

After spending about sixteen days at Lapwai, the White party started back to Waiilatpu on December 20. There they met some, but not all, of the Cayuse chiefs. White wrote: “Learning what the Nez Perces had done, gave them great concern and anxiety.” Even though one of their number, Five Crows, had been at Lapwai and evidently approved of what the Nez Perces had done, the other chiefs were hesitant to accept the code of laws. White agreed to return in the spring and resume negotiations, when he hoped that all of the Cayuse chiefs would be present. Favored with good traveling conditions on their return trip, White and his party reached Waskopum on December 25.

While at Waiilatpu, either before going to Lapwai or afterwards, the half-breed Dorion spread rumors of a coming large emigration of Americans. No doubt he had overheard some of Dr. White’s conversations.

In a letter to her husband dated March 4, 1843, Narcissa wrote: “They [i.e., the Cayuses] say they have been told by Dorion that the Kauises are all to be cut off. They do not like such threats. It is also said that they have heard that you have gone home and are coming back next fall with fifty men to fight them.” A few days later, Narcissa touched on this same subject when writing to a brother: “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 [i.e., the Columbia] this spring and are coming up with Dr. White to fight them [Letter 126].
The Cayuses had reason to be fearful and suspicious. The Oregon Trail cut across their homeland. They had heard of the probability of a large immigration of white people entering Oregon in 1843. Why had Dr. Whitman gone East so suddenly? Was he more interested in the white man’s welfare than he was in theirs? With such fears and suspicions in their minds, it was easy for them to believe the wild rumors spread abroad by Baptiste Dorion, who could always claim that he had overheard some remarks made by Dr. White. In February 1876, more than thirty years after he had crossed the Rockies with Whitman in the winter of 1842–43, Lovejoy, looking back on the events which led up to the massacre, said: “The Indians were very hostile to the Doctor for leaving them, and without doubt, owing to his absence, the seeds of assassination were sown by those haughty Cayuse Indians.”

Following the departure of Dr. White and his party, Spalding immediately made preparations for the printing of the *Laws of the Nez Perces* on the mission press. An eight-page booklet appeared with the imprint date of 1842, the fifth item to be printed at Lapwai. Dr. White’s name was phonetically spelled as “Taka Hwait.” Spalding’s great satisfaction in having such a code of laws adopted by the Nez Perces is reflected in a letter he wrote to Greene on February 26, 1843: “Thus far the laws promise much good to the nation and an important aid to the Mission. I have printed the laws & introduced them into the school. They were soon committed to memory by hundreds. I send you a copy.” When I first had opportunity to examine the files of the Oregon Mission of the American Board in Boston in 1935, I had the thrill of finding that rare Lapwai item attached to Spalding’s letter.

**The Winter of 1842–43**

Narcissa spent the winter of 1842–43 with her new Methodist friends at Waskopum. Her few letters written during those months bear frequent references to her continued ill health. Sometimes she was confined to her room, unable even to wait upon herself. In one letter she referred to having a “blister” put on her side and being bled [Letter 129a]. A sidelight into the religious customs of that day is found in Narcissa’s letter of April 11, 1843 to Mary Walker: “I did attend the Christmas party, a week longer [i.e., later] than was expected. It became a New Years party and a very pleasant one it was.” This is the only reference to Christmas found
in any of the Whitman letters. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians of that generation, true to the Puritan aspect of their heritage, did not observe Christmas which they considered to be a Roman Catholic custom. The Methodists, on the other hand, who had come out of the Anglican Church, celebrated the day. Thus the Methodist missionaries at The Dalles observed the day, which was a new experience for Narcissa. An examination of the diaries and letters of the members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board show that they occasionally observed Thanksgiving, which was not then a national holiday but just a New England custom, and also New Years and the Fourth of July.

A tragic accident took place on February 1, 1843: a canoe carrying Cornelius Rogers, his wife, and four others was swept over Willamette Falls at what is now Oregon City. All were drowned. George Abernethy, a member of the Methodist Mission who later served as the first Governor of Oregon, 1845–49, sent word of the accident to Narcissa in a letter dated February 4. She forwarded the letter to her husband in care of Secretary Greene with the instruction that if he had started back by the time the letter arrived, it should then be forwarded to Augustus Whitman [Letter 122]. Greene, perhaps knowing that the letter would not reach Marcus at his brother’s home, kept it in the Board’s files. In all probability Whitman did not learn of the tragedy until he returned to Oregon. Rogers’ death was a great loss not only to the missionary work in Oregon but also to the general public, as he had become proficient in the Nez Perce language and his services as an interpreter were increasingly in demand.

Narcissa’s letter to Mary Walker of April 11, 1843, told of the drowning of Leverett, the twenty-two-month old son of the Littlejohns in the millrace at Lapwai on March 29. The Littlejohns had gone to Lapwai the previous January where Littlejohn was employed by Spalding. Although the Spaldings had built a fence around their house, the little boy managed to find a hole through which he crawled. Unobserved, he scampere across the field to the millrace where he was drowned. Spalding conducted the funeral service, taking the text used for the service held for Alice Clarissa on January 26, 1839. The similarity between the loss of the Littlejohn boy and her own daughter, both very near the same age at the time of death, struck home to Narcissa. “How easy it is for the Lord to take away our comforts,” she wrote to Mary, “yes, and our lives too.”
In this letter to Mary Walker, Narcissa passed on some news she had received from McKinlay. The Cayuses continued to be aroused by the rumors originating with Dorion that the white men intended to wage war on them. According to McKinlay, the Cayuses believed that Dr. White was to visit them that spring “with an armed force to take away their lands & compel them to adopt & enforce laws to regulate their own people & redress the wrongs of the Whites.” Tom McKay had attended a meeting of some of the Cayuse chiefs when they reacted in anger to the implication that “If you do not protect the white, we will compel you to [do so].” Narcissa commented: “They call it threatening language & say that war is declared & they are making preparations accordingly.” She told that Five Crows took some of Spalding’s booklets giving the code of laws and gave them to the Cayuses. Of this Narcissa wrote: “A few received them while others threw them away with disdain.”

RESTLESSNESS AMONG THE CAYUSES

Narcissa wrote a long letter to her husband on March 29, 1843, in which she reviewed the excitement which stirred the Cayuses. The letter, sent in care of the American Board, arrived long after Dr. Whitman had left for Old Oregon, thus he never got to read it. The fact that the Nez Perces had adopted the code of laws and had selected a Head Chief while the Cayuses had not, had become a focal point of trouble. Narcissa explained: “The principal cause of the excitement is; the Cayuses do not wish to be forced to adopt the laws recommended by the Agent. They say the laws in themselves are good, they do not object to them—but do not wish to be compelled to adopt (and) enforce them.” The Cayuses had come to believe that the white man was trying to force the laws upon them in order to subjugate them. This, the Cayuses believed, was “a deep-laid scheme …to destroy them and take possession of their country.” They accused the Nez Perces of being too willing to accept the laws. The absence of Whitman at that critical time left the Cayuses with no one to whom they could turn for advice. The Nez Perces had Spalding; without his enthusiastic endorsement, perhaps they would not have adopted the laws. We can only speculate what Whitman’s attitude would have been had he been present, but in all probability he would have urged the Cayuses to follow the example of the Nez Perces.
Narcissa in her letter of March 29 to her husband told of the seriousness of the excitement. She wrote: “Mr. Geiger writes me that ‘the Indians are constantly talking about going to war with the Americans and will not believe anything else but that you have gone home for men to fight them.’ This last is most trying to me… They have never heard a lisp from me of the object of your visit to the States, no more than what you told them before you left & one would think they had seen enough of you to know that you had not the least desire of that kind toward them. Poor creatures, they know not what to do nor whither they are hastening.” The ambiguity of Narcissa’s reference to “the object of your visit to the States,” implies that there was some motive for his journey beyond mission business.

H. K. W. Perkins, who knew of the reports that Geiger had passed on to Narcissa, wrote to Dr. White about the same time that Narcissa was writing to Marcus and informed him of the restlessness existing among the Cayuses. Perkins stated that the Cayuses were making an effort to form a coalition of Indian tribes to fight the white men, and even a proposal to attack the 1843 Oregon immigration was being discussed. Perkins, speaking for the Methodist missionaries stationed at The Dalles, urged White to return to the upper Columbia country as soon as he could and quiet the fears of the natives.

Looking forward to Dr. White’s return visit that spring, Narcissa in her letter to her husband wrote: “I have some fears as to the consequences. But perhaps you will say that they are womanish fears. I grant it. Yet I cannot help feeling a great desire that you should be present at the transaction of so important business to the people among whom we are called to spend our lives. I am requested by the Agent to be there.” In this same letter, after expressing her concern, she wrote: “There are redeeming qualities in the character of the Kaiuses notwithstanding they are insolent, proud, domineering, arrogant, and ferocious.”

Responding to the request of Dr. White, Narcissa with her two girls left Waskopum on Monday, April 3, and arrived at Fort Walla Walla the following Saturday noon. They stayed at the fort until April 24 before going out to Waiilatpu. Narcissa was pleased to find everything peaceful at the mission. Geiger had done exceedingly well with his farm work in anticipation of a heavy demand for farm produce when the 1843 immigration would arrive. Narcissa was also pleased to see so many of the Cay-
uses at work on their small acreages. They too anticipated selling such farm products as potatoes to the incoming whites. The one disturbing feature which grieved Narcissa was the blackened ruin of the mill.

Sometime during the spring of 1843, a chief of the Walla Walla Indians, Peu-peu-mox-mox, also known as Yellow Serpent, went to Fort Vancouver to see Dr. McLoughlin. He wanted to know what the Hudson’s Bay Company would do if the Americans made war on his people and on the Cayuses. Dr. McLoughlin tried to quiet the chief’s fears by telling him that there was absolutely no evidence that the Americans intended to wage such a war and that, should this be the case, the Company would remain neutral. Yellow Serpent’s report did much to quiet the fears of the Cayuses.

McLoughlin was displeased when he learned that McKinlay had attended the Indian council held under Dr. White’s auspices at Lapwai in December 1842. When he learned that Dr. White was planning to return to the upper country to meet with the Cayuses, he wrote McKinlay warning him that until the boundary question was settled, the Hudson’s Bay Company could not “recognize Dr. White as an Indian agent.” McKinlay was to treat White only as a private individual. “You cannot permit his holding Council with Indians in the Fort,” he wrote, and then added a postscript: “To avoid any misapprehension, you will attend no Indian Council with Dr. White.”

**DR. WHITE RETURNS TO WAILATPU**

Sometime during the early part of April 1843, such alarming reports of the situation in the upper Columbia country reached Dr. White at Oregon City that he decided to leave as soon as possible for a return visit to the Cayuses. He now had no Cornelius Rogers to serve as interpreter. He turned to the Rev. Gustavus Hines, a member of the Methodist reinforcement which went out to Oregon on the *Lausanne in* 1838–39. Although Hines did not know the Nez Perce language spoken by the Cayuses, he did have some knowledge of the Chinook jargon which some of the Cayuses understood. Possibly White also expected Mrs. Whitman to help as an interpreter.

Judging by the excitement aroused by Dr. White’s first visit to the upper Columbia country, Narcissa was skeptical of any good coming out
of a second visit. Writing to a brother on April 14, she said: “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 were 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.” Here Narcissa indicated that her husband’s primary motive for his journey East was to strengthen the mission.

On his first visit to the upper Columbia country, White had had a bodyguard of six men. For his second visit, he hired twice as many, “mostly French Canadians,” according to Hines. Evidently the rumor-spreading Dorion was not included. White, Hines, and the twelve men left for Waiilatpu in at least two canoes on April 29. Some Indians were hired to help paddle the canoes. The party arrived at The Dalles on May 4; here, evidently for the first time, Dr. White was made aware of the main weakness inherent in his code of laws—that of enforcement. When White had visited the Methodist mission at Waskopum during the previous December, he had persuaded the natives to accept the code of laws and to select a High Chief. After trying to live according to the laws for four months, the chiefs found that offenders condemned to be whipped often resisted even to the point of using a knife. The chiefs did not know what to do in such situations and asked White for advice. He had no good answer for their problem.

Perkins joined the White party when it left The Dalles for the overland trip to Waiilatpu. When White arrived at the mission station on May 9, he was given a cordial welcome by Mrs. Whitman and Geiger. However, he found the Cayuses still in a state of excitement. In his report to the Secretary of War dated November 15, 1843, White wrote: “The Indians flocked around me, and inquired after my party, and could not be persuaded for some time but that I had a large party concealed somewhere near, and only waited to get them convened to open a fire upon them, and cut them all off at a blow. On convincing them of my defenceless condition and pacific intentions, they were quite astounded …I actually found them suffering more from fear of war from the whites, than the whites from the Indians.”
When White asked the chiefs to assemble, they asked for a delay, saying that they wanted Ellis and some of the Nez Perces to be present for the council. While waiting for the Nez Perces to arrive, White and his party visited the fields being cultivated by the Cayuses. Hines estimated that “about sixty of the Kayuses had commenced cultivating the ground.” Some had even erected fences around their fields. Feathercap (Tam-sucky) acted as guide for the white men and of him Hines wrote: “Of all the Indians I have seen, he has a countenance the most savage.”

**White’s Return Visit to Lapwai**

Finding that nothing could be accomplished at Waiilatpu for the time being, White decided to go to Lapwai. He hoped to see Ellis, whose cooperation was needed in persuading the Cayuses to adopt the laws. White and his party arrived at Lapwai on Saturday, May 13, and again Spalding was delighted to welcome the Indian Agent.

Spalding at once decided to take advantage of the presence of Dr. White and the Rev. Gustavus Hines to receive nine Nez Perces into the membership of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon. Spalding had wanted to do this as early as December 1841, but at that time Dr. Whitman had objected, not because the natives were not ready for church membership but because of personal pique Whitman bore toward Spalding. Now, Dr. Whitman was not present, nor was there an A. B. Smith or a W. H. Gray to object. Nine Nez Perces, four men and five women, were made members of the Mission Church on Sunday, May 14, including Asenath, wife of Joseph, and Tamar, wife of Timothy. This brought the total membership to eleven. After listing the names of the converts, Spalding wrote in the record book: “The Lord’s Supper was administered. Rev. Mr. Hines of the Methodist Mission assisted the pastor. Present also Rev. Mr. Perkins …Elijah White, M.D… & Mr. Littlejohn & wife & Mrs. Spalding.” Spalding’s joy overflowed. “The Lord be thanked,” he wrote. “To him be all the praise for these trophies of his victorious grace. Truly this is a glorious day…”

In a report regarding his work which Spalding submitted to Dr. White, he claimed that during the winter of 1842–43 and the following spring, his Sunday congregations numbered between two and five hundred. Of all the Protestant missionaries who served in Old Oregon, no one had greater success in evangelizing and civilizing the natives than Henry H. Spalding.

**CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  Narcissa’s Lonely Year, 1842–1843  21**
On May 18, during the absence of Dr. White and his party, Narcissa wrote a long letter to her husband in which she brought him up-to-date regarding developments at Waiilatpu. The excitement among the natives had subsided after Dr. White had assured them that the United States had no intention of waging war against them. Narcissa bemoaned the fact that such important decisions had to be made by the natives during her husband’s absence. “They seem to be and to feel ‘like sheep without a shepherd’,” she wrote. Narcissa also reported that in the expectation of a large immigration coming in the fall of 1843, Spalding and Geiger had made arrangements to send a pack train to Fort Hall with about 1,000 pounds of flour and other provisions which could be sold to those in need. No doubt this flour had been ground in Spalding’s mill. The pack train was placed in care of some trusted Nez Perces. Narcissa took advantage of its departure to send this letter of May 18 with the hope that her husband would get it at Fort Hall. Either the original or a copy was sent to the American Board in Boston.

THE CAYUSES FINALLY ACCEPT THE LAWS

Dr. White and his party returned to Waiilatpu on Friday, May 19, together with Chief Ellis and some four or five hundred Nez Perces. Ellis may have served as the interpreter for the council. The big day came when the Cayuses and the Walla Wallas were present, as Dr. White described the meeting, “in mass.” One by one the laws were read and explained. Hines gives the following account: “Yellow Serpent then rose and said: ‘I have a message to you. Where are these laws from? Are they from God or from the earth? …I think they are from the earth because, from what I know of white men, they do not honor these laws.” In answer, White explained that all laws establishing a moral order in society came from God and were binding on all men. “Yellow Serpent was pleased with the explanation,” wrote Hines, “and said that it was according to the instructions he had received from others, and he was very glad to learn that it was so, because many of his people had been angry with him when he had whipped them for crime, and had told him that God would send him to hell for it, and he was glad to know that it was pleasing to God.” 23

After the council had met for five or six days, the Cayuses and Walla Wallas finally agreed to follow the example of the Nez Perces and accept the code of laws. Five Crows was made Head Chief of the Cayuses.
meeting was followed by a great feast; Dr. White paid for two oxen which were butchered for the occasion. Contrary to Indian tradition, White invited the native women to join in the feasting. This, no doubt, was to their joy. Having successfully accomplished his objectives, Dr. White started back to the Willamette Valley on Saturday, May 17. With the adoption of the white man’s laws, a new era had begun for the Nez Percé and the Cayuses, but troubled days lay ahead. The adoption of the laws by the Indians was tantamount to the surrender of their independence. A realization of this basic fact is one reason why the Cayuses had been so suspicious and so hesitant to give their consent.

Following the selection of Five Crows as Head Chief of the Cayuse nation, Spalding took steps to receive him into the Mission church. Again, there was no one to object. The record books carry the following entry: “June 16, 1843, on profession of his faith in Jesus Christ, Hezekiah [Five Crows] was admitted to the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon, having been examined as to the grounds of his hope some 18 months before ... Has spent two winters in our school at this place.” Spalding’s exultation on this important addition to the church’s membership is seen in what he then wrote: “Go on thou King Immanuel, conquering & to conquer till all these kings & queens shall become nursing fathers & mothers in this little church which is now in the wilderness.” Years later when Spalding returned to the Nez Percé in his old age, he used that same record book to list the names of his new converts. Also at that time, he went back to the earlier entries and added certain notes. After Hezekiah’s name, he wrote: “Now dead, 1872.” Of the twenty-one natives who became members of the Mission church during the years 1838–47, Hezekiah or Five Crows was the only Cayuse. He will enter our story again.

**The Summer of 1843**

Although Narcissa was in better health during the spring of 1843 than she had been during the previous winter, Dr. White, as a physician, strongly advised her to go to Fort Vancouver and place herself under the care of Dr. Forbes Barclay, the Company’s physician. This she decided to do. Leaving Mary Ann Bridger and David Malin with Mrs. Littlejohn at Lapwai, Narcissa with Helen Mar Meek left Fort Walla Walla on June 1 for Vancouver. Undoubtedly the reason she took Helen with her was that...
she knew that the child’s father, Joe Meek, was then in the Willamette Valley and felt that perhaps they could get together.

Narcissa made the trip down the Columbia in one of the boats of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s brigade. Of that experience, she wrote: “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 [June 4]; displeased with myself and every one around me because of the profanation of the holy day of the Lord” [Letter 137]. This was the first time that Narcissa had been to Fort Vancouver since the mission party left in the late fall of 1836. After an examination of her physical condition, Dr. Barclay advised her to remain under his care for at least a month. We can rest assured that Dr. McLoughlin urged her to stay. There is no evidence of any lack of cordiality between either Marcus or Narcissa Whitman and Dr. McLoughlin after he joined the Roman Catholic Church in November 1842; however, Narcissa no longer made such kindly references to him as when they first met.

In a letter to her father dated April 12, 1844, Narcissa said that Dr. Barclay had “discovered an enlargement of the right ovary,” for which he prescribed “iodine to remove it.” Although Narcissa did not then know it, she was suffering from “a tumor near the umbilicus” which her husband discovered when he returned in the fall of 1843. In telling her father of her condition, Narcissa wrote that she felt her health was much improved by Dr. Barclay’s treatment but “had it not been for the other difficulty of the aorta which was not at that time discovered although it existed, I might have recovered my health. But the medicine I took to cure one tumor was an injury to the other.”

Narcissa remained at Fort Vancouver for about two months, or until the end of July, when she accepted an invitation to be a guest in the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Abernethy of Oregon City. She also spent some time with the Rev. and Mrs. Alvin F. Waller and was delighted to discover that Mr. Waller had once ridden a Methodist circuit out of Friendship in Allegany County, New York, and had met her father. A dispute between Dr. McLoughlin and the Methodist Mission, in which Waller was a central figure, was then in its early stages.

Shortly before Narcissa arrived at Oregon City, the Methodists had conducted a camp meeting, at Tualatin Plains, about thirty-five
miles distant, with Jason Lee, Gustavus Hines, and H. K. W. Perkins in charge. On Sunday, July 16, Jason Lee led a revival service; nineteen professed conversion, among whom was Joe Meek. In an emotional outburst, Joe cried out: “Tell everybody you see that Joseph Meek, that old Rocky Mountain sinner, has turned to the Lord.” There is evidence that although he may have become a Christian, he did not give up his drinking.

Although Narcissa was not present for the July camp meeting, she did attend one held in August which she described as being “a precious season” for her soul. The experience brought back memories of her youth in the church at Prattsburg. In her letter to her father, she wrote: “To witness again the anxious tear and hear the deep-felt inquiry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ as I once used to, filled me with joy inexpressible.” It is possible that she saw Meek at this August meeting and that he was then able to see his little girl, Helen Mar.

After spending about three weeks with the Abernethys and the Wallers, Narcissa went to Fort George, the former Astoria, to say good-bye to the Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Lee and some other Methodist missionaries who were about to sail for the States. The Methodist Mission in Oregon was gradually being dissolved. While at the Fort, Narcissa was entertained in the home of James Birnie, resident trader in charge of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s post located there. On Sunday, August 13, Narcissa attended a religious service in which both of the Lees, Jason and Daniel, took part. This was the last of many services in which uncle and nephew had joined. Narcissa had the unique pleasure of spending several nights aboard the ship, Diamond, on which passage had been booked for the departing missionaries, before she sailed. In her letter to her father, Narcissa reported: “I went down to the mouth of the Columbia river to see them depart and to get a view of the Pacific ocean” [Letter 149].

After the ship sailed on August 15, Narcissa returned to the Willamette Valley. She then spent several weeks in the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Gray, who were living at Oregon City. Sometime during the middle of September, the welcome news reached her of the coming that fall of a large party of immigrants who had with them about 140 wagons. She learned that her husband was with that party and the very thought of seeing him soon caused her great joy. Narcissa made immediate plans to
return to Waiilatpu. She and Helen Mar Meek left Oregon City during the last week of September in company with Jason Lee, who was bound for Waskopum. The trip up the river was most uncomfortable, for it rained. As a result of exposure, Narcissa caught a severe cold. They reached Waskopum on Saturday evening, October 7. To Narcissa’s great disappointment, Marcus was not there, even though most of the 1843 immigration had already passed on their way down the river.

Narcissa later learned that her husband had been called to Lapwai because the Spaldings were seriously ill with scarlet fever. After returning to Waiilatpu, he then had to leave for Tshimakain to attend Mrs. Eells, who was expecting her second child. As a result, Whitman was unable to go to Waskopum for his wife until the latter part of October. In her letter of April 12, 1844, to her father, Narcissa wrote: “It was a joyful and happy meeting and caused our hearts to overflow with love and gratitude to the Author of all our mercies, for permitting us to see each other’s faces again in the flesh.” By October 28, the Whitmans were at Fort Walla Walla on their way back to Waiilatpu. Days and weeks passed before each had opportunity to learn of all the experiences which had come to the other during the year of separation. It is easy to imagine Narcissa eagerly inquiring: “Now tell me, dear husband, all that has happened to you.”

“Adapted to a Different Destiny”

Although Narcissa was overjoyed to be with Marcus again, the prospect of going back to the isolation of Waiilatpu filled her with dread. In her letter of April 12, 1844, to her father, she wrote: “I turned my face with my husband toward this dark spot, and dark, indeed, it seemed to be to me when compared with the scenes, social and religious which I had so recently been enjoying with so much zest.”

Nearly two years after Marcus and Narcissa Whitman had lost their lives in the massacre of November 1847, Jane Prentiss wrote to the Rev. H. K. W. Perkins and asked why the Indians had committed the atrocity. Perkins replied on October 19, 1849, and in a kindly and sympathetic manner tried to explain the background of the massacre from the Indians’ point of view. Although, as explained in my introduction to the Perkins letter [Appendix 6], we cannot accept the explanation that Perkins gives as being the real cause for the massacre, his letter does throw light on the Whitman’s relationships with the natives.
Perkins, relying on his memories of Narcissa when she was living with the Methodist missionaries at Waskopum, described her as being ill, lonely, and discouraged. He wrote: “Mrs. Whitman was not adapted to savage but civilized life. She would have done honor to her sex in a polished & exalted sphere, but never in the low drudgery of Indian toil. The natives esteemed her as proud, haughty, as far above them. No doubt she really seemed so. It was her misfortune, not her fault. She was adapted to a different destiny. She wanted something exalted—communion with mind. She longed for society, refined society... I think her stay with us including her visit to the Willamette the pleasantest portion of her Oregon life ...She loved company, society, excitement & ought always to have enjoyed it. The self-denial that took her away from it was suicidal.”

Before accepting the opinions of Perkins, it is well to point out some qualifying circumstances. Perkins never met Narcissa during the first six years of her residence at Waiilatpu, and he could not, therefore, judge her attitude towards the natives during that time. No doubt Narcissa did crave the companionship of the Americans in the Willamette Valley, both missionary and non-missionary. Yet the fact that she was willing to return to Waiilatpu with her husband, when her heart cried out for a different environment, is to her everlasting credit.

With the gradual improvement of her health, with a household which grew to nearly twenty, and an ever increasing number of immigrants living for varying periods of time on the mission premises, Waiilatpu no longer was the “dark spot” in Narcissa’s thinking, but a hub of activity. As will be told, Narcissa regained her love for Waiilatpu.
CHAPTER 17 FOOTNOTES

1 E. C. Ross, Myron Eells, and W. H. Gray, *The Whitman Controversy* (Pamphlet), Portland, 1885, p. 36, states that Gray left Waillatpu on Oct. 15. Gray was mistaken in his recollection of the date.

2 Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 177. All references in this chapter to Dr. White’s reports concerning his visits to Waillatpu and Lapwai in 1843 are from this book.

3 *Op. cit.*, p. 67. One of the survivors of the Whitman massacre told Cannon that the Indian who attempted the assault was Tamsucky.

4 The original letters which Narcissa wrote to her husband, and which he never saw, were later sent to the Oregon Historical Society. See Appendix 1. Letter 119, once in Coll. O., is now in Coll. Y.


7 See Chap. Eleven, fn. 29. Wap-tash-tak-mahl is mentioned in Whitman letters 100 & 112. See also, Bagley, *Early Catholic Missions*, p. 120.


9 See Chapter Eleven, “Madame Dorion.”

10 Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 179.


12 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 139.


14 Cyrus Walker, in his reminiscences published in the *Pacific Homestead*, December 21, 1911, said: “As for me in earlier years, I knew no Christmas …as I remember, Christmas was not once named.” See index to Drury, *F.W.W.*, II, for further references to the non-observance of the day by the American Board missionaries.


16 *Ibid.*, p. 165. L. V. McWhorter, *Hear Ye My Chiefs*, Caldwell, Idaho, 1952, p. 94, claims that “Peopeo Moxmox” should be translated “Yellow Bird.” Oliver Frank, a full-blooded Nez Perce from Kamiah, Idaho, has informed me that Peopeo is difficult to translate into English. The meaning is nebulous but in general refers to something that is threatening such as a serpent or a large bird. Moxmox means yellow. Contemporary documents call this chief Yellow Serpent.


18 Hines, *Wild Life in Oregon*, supplements White’s account of the adoption of the code of laws by the Nez Perces and Cayuses as found in Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*.


21 See Chapter Sixteen, “More Disagreements Within the Mission.”
Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*, p. 203. Spalding’s report to Dr. White was written during Whitman’s absence in the East. The report shows Spalding’s ignorance of the native religion. He does not understand that a “wakin” (p. 207) or “wayakin” is an individual’s guardian spirit obtained by a young person in his spirit quest.


Minutes of the Synod of Washington, 1936, p. 291. According to Spalding’s records, he welcomed a Nez Perce into the church on May 14, 1843, who was also called Hezekiah. The Cayuse Hezekiah was received about a month later.


The words italicized are underlined in the original in Coll. W.
Whitman and Lovejoy left Waiilatpu for the States on Monday morning, October 3, 1842. Considerable detail regarding their experiences during the three months before they arrived at Bent’s Fort, in what is now southeastern Colorado, is to be found in the three accounts that Lovejoy wrote, to which reference has been made. Lovejoy’s reminiscences harmonize with statements that Whitman made about the journey and add many details that Whitman never mentioned. The two men followed the usual trial eastward to Fort Hall which, according to Lovejoy, was reached in eleven days. Several times Lovejoy mentioned the fact that Whitman refrained from Sunday travel, with but one exception. If Lovejoy meant eleven days of travel, then the two men arrived at Fort Hall on Friday, October 14. Since the distance between Waiilatpu and Fort Hall was about 530 miles, this meant that they averaged about forty-eight miles a day. It had taken the Whitman–Spalding party a month to cover that distance going westward in 1836.

At Fort Hall the two men met Richard Grant, the Hudson’s Bay trader then in charge of that post. Grant advised the two not to follow the usual route east through South Pass. Lovejoy explains: “He said it was just perfect folly. The Indians had been up there and murdered the Snake Indians that very season. He told us not to do it. So then
Whitman changed his course and goes by way of [Fort] Uinta, away out to Taos. And around to Santa Fe\textsuperscript{1}—away round that way. We were all winter. We made terrible work of it. When we got to Fort Hall, we took men from the Fort, a half breed from St. Louis by the name of Rogers” [L–3]. According to another report, Whitman secured the services of Black Harris, also known as Moses Harris, as a guide at Fort Hall.\textsuperscript{2}

There had long been a trail connecting Taos and Santa Fe, in what was then Mexico, with the headwaters of the Platte River. In 1776, the Franciscan explorer, Fray Vélez de Escalante, lead an expedition from Santa Fe into the Great Salt Lake Basin, thus opening the way for trappers and traders. Antoine Robidoux seems to have been in the Uinta Basin, in what is now northeastern Utah, as early as 1831.\textsuperscript{3} Robidoux established several trading posts along this old Spanish Trail, including Fort Uncompahgre at the mouth of the river by that name at what is now Delta, Colorado, and another on the Uinta River where it flows from the Uinta Mountains near present-day White Rocks, Utah. These two trading posts were about 150 miles apart.

When Marcus Whitman saw Horace Greeley in New York on March 28, 1843, he told him that his route from Fort Hall went by “Soda Springs, Brown’s Hole,\textsuperscript{4} Colorado of the West [i.e., Colorado River],\textsuperscript{5} the Wina [i.e., Fort Uinta], and the waters of the del Norte [i.e., the Rio Grande].”\textsuperscript{6} When Whitman and Lovejoy discussed with Grant at Fort Hall the route to be followed, Grant had considerable reliable information at hand on which to base his recommendations. T. J. Farnham had traveled over the Brown’s Hole route in 1839 as had Joe Meek. In all probability, Whitman, Lovejoy, and their guide left Fort Hall on Monday, October 17, for Fort Uinta having decided to take the southern route through what was then a part of Mexico in order to flank the Indian hazard.\textsuperscript{7}

An early winter storm struck the area through which Whitman and Lovejoy were traveling shortly after they left Fort Hall. Lovejoy refers to it as “terribly severe weather” [L–2]. This was but a foretaste of much worse weather which they were to encounter. Somewhere along their route in what is now Utah, perhaps at Fort Uinta, Whitman met Miles Goodyear. As a red-haired, nineteen-year-old youth, Goodyear had joined the 1836 mission party in its trek from the Missouri frontier to Fort Hall. Now after an interval of six years, Whitman and Goodyear met again. Good-
year had become an independent trapper. He is reputed to have been the first white settler in what is now the State of Utah. Goodyear wrote a letter dated “Frontier of Mexico, Rocky Mountains, November 1, 1842,” which he gave to Whitman to carry to the States. The date of this letter possibly indicates the time that Whitman and Lovejoy were at Fort Uinta.

Whitman hired a new guide at Fort Uinta, of whom Lovejoy wrote: “I think it was an Iroquois Indian and he went on with us. Then came on a big snow storm. We thought we were lost altogether. And this fellow could not go any further. But old Dr. Whitman was a man of great energy. He was going on to the States, he said. We got lost there, got snowed in, the snow buried us & we had to stay there until the storm was over” [L-3]. Lovejoy stated that they were “snowed in for some three or four days,” and that when the storm subsided, the weather became “intensely cold” [L-1].

Lovejoy’s reference to the cold weather is confirmed in a letter Spalding wrote to A. T. Smith on December 15, 1842, in which he said that the week beginning November 14 was the coldest he had experienced in the country. For three days the mercury was from six to fifteen degrees below zero. This is indeed a low reading for that early in the season for the Clearwater Valley near Lewiston, Idaho, which today is called the “banana belt” of the Inland Empire. Reference has already been made to the cold weather that Dr. White and his party experienced when they left the Willamette Valley on November 15 for Wailatpu.

The trail that Whitman and Lovejoy followed after leaving Fort Uinta, led down the Uinta River to the Green River. After crossing the Green, the men followed the White River to a tributary which brought them out on the crest of Book Cliffs in what is now east central Utah. The trail then led them over a watershed which divides the flow of the Green from that of the Colorado. They traveled, at what Lovejoy called “a snail’s pace,” through deep snow to what is now Grand Junction, Colorado. Lovejoy gave no dates for this part of their journey, but it appears that it took them at least two weeks to go from Fort Uinta to the Colorado River.

**Crossing the Colorado River**

When Whitman, Lovejoy, and their guide arrived at the Grand or Colorado River, they found that it was frozen about one-third of the way across on either side. Only the central part was open and that was be-
cause the current was so rapid that the water could not freeze, although, as Lovejoy wrote, “the weather was intensely cold.” Lovejoy’s account of their hazardous experience in crossing the river follows: “This stream was some one hundred and fifty, or two hundred yards wide, and looked upon by our guide as very dangerous to cross in its present condition. But the Doctor, nothing daunted, was the first to take the water. He mounted his horse, and the guide and myself pushed them off the ice into the boiling, foaming stream. Away they went completely under water—horse and all; but directly came up, and after buffeting the waves and foaming current, he made to the ice on the opposite side, a long way down the stream—leaped from his horse upon the ice, and soon had his noble animal by his side. The guide and myself forced in the pack animals; followed the doctor’s example, and were soon drying our frozen clothes by a comfortable fire” [L-1].

On July 4, 1917, the Mt. Garfield Chapter and the Grand Junction Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated Whitman Park in Grand Junction. This is an inner-city community park of one square block. A large glacial granite boulder, which measures about 6 x 4½ x 3 feet, was placed in the park bearing a plaque with the following inscription:

**Whitman Park**

In Honor of

**Marcus Whitman**

Who Swam the Grand River near this Site

On his Heroic Trans-Continental Ride

Mid-Winter, 1842–43

Which Saved the Great Northwest to the United States

The last line of the inscription shows that those responsible for the wording had accepted the Whitman-Saved-Oregon legend.”

After crossing the Colorado River, the men followed the Gunnison River, which empties into the Colorado at Grand Junction, to
the mouth of the Uncompahgre River where the Fort by that name was located. This is now the site of Delta, Colorado. There Whitman and Lovejoy remained for three or four days, resting, and obtaining some fresh supplies. Lovejoy stated that a new guide, a Spaniard, was hired to take them to Taos.

**Crossing the Continental Divide**

The journey from Fort Uncompahgre to Taos took them over the Continental Divide. This proved to be the most dangerous part of their travels. Shortly after leaving the fort, the men encountered a severe snowstorm. Lovejoy, looking back on their terrible experiences, wrote: “After spending several days wandering round in the snow without making much headway, and greatly fatiguing our animals to little or no purpose, our guide informed us that the deep snows had so changed the fact of the country, that he was completely lost, and could take us no further” [L-1].

Although greatly disappointed, Whitman was determined not to give up. “We at once agreed,” wrote Lovejoy, “that the Doctor should take the guide and make his way back to the fort, and procure a new guide, and that I should remain in camp with the animals until his return, which was on the seventh day,... With our new guide, traveling slowly on, we reach Taos in about thirty days.” The men ran out of provisions. One by one the pack mules were slain and eaten, and even the dog was not spared.

Just at the critical time when the three men were facing the possibility of famishing for want of food, they met a hunting party. “I shall never forget that time,” Lovejoy told Bancroft. “I know the old Dr. ate so much it liked to have killed him. We were nearly starved to death though. They told us where to go and put us on the track so that we soon reached Taos” [L-3].

The trail the men followed after leaving Fort Uncompahgre went along the river of that name past the present-day sites of Montrose and Ouray, Colorado. It then swung around the west side of the San Juan Mountains the ridge of which is part of the Continental Divide. The trail crossed the present-day Colorado-New Mexico border before turning eastward to go over the Divide. Although Lovejoy is not definite in giving dates, it seems that they arrived in Taos about the middle of
December 1842. It had taken Whitman and Lovejoy over two months to travel from Waiilatpu to Taos.

**FROM TAOS TO ST. LOUIS**

According to Lovejoy, he and Whitman remained in Taos for “some twelve or fifteen days” [L-1]. They secured fresh animals, bought clothing and other supplies. Lovejoy wrote: “There the Dr. gave us a new outfit.” Whitman drew upon the treasurer of the American Board for expenses incurred along the way. This caused some dismay at the Board’s offices when the drafts were received in Boston and had to be paid. If Whitman bought a new suit for himself at Taos, it must have been the buckskin he was wearing when he arrived in the East, and which attracted so much attention.

Whitman’s next objective on his eastward journey was Bent’s Fort, founded in 1833 near what is now Las Animas in southeastern Colorado, by several of the Bent brothers who were engaged in the caravan trade with Santa Fe. Located on the Arkansas River, it became an important station on the trail connecting Taos with Westport, Missouri. The trail from Taos crossed the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, east of Taos, and then angled off in a northeasterly direction towards the Arkansas River. Bent’s Fort was about 150 miles, as the crow flies, from Taos.

A detailed account of their travel experiences from Taos to Bent’s Fort was given by Lovejoy in his interview with Bancroft in 1878. In reading this report, we get the impression that Bancroft’s secretary, Amos Bowman, was taking down in shorthand all that Lovejoy was saying. One can almost hear Lovejoy chuckling as he recalled memories of his travels with Whitman made some thirty-five years and more earlier. “We got a new outfit,” Lovejoy said, “and then when we started, that was the wildest chase in the world.” He recalled the difficulties they encountered shortly after leaving Taos. “The snow looked just as hard as this floor and about two feet deep.” But in places the snow was deeper and the surface crust was not strong enough to bear the weight of the pack animals. “The first thing you saw,” Lovejoy said, “the mule would go out of sight & [you] would see nothing but her ears. Some days we would not travel out of sight of the smoke where we had slept. We had a Spaniard from Taos to guide us & nobody else. We used to lift out the mules & start them on again. Like as not they could not go over ten rods before
they went into another ditch. We could not see; there was no sign in the world. I think we were from 15 to 20 days traveling what ought to have taken two or three.”

When Whitman and Lovejoy were out from Taos about fifteen days, they met George Bent, one of the partners in charge of the fort, who gave Whitman the important news that a party of traders was about to leave Bent’s Fort for St. Louis. Whitman, who was impatient over the delays already encountered, decided to push on ahead of Lovejoy with the hope of joining the St. Louis party. Since Lovejoy was planning to return to Oregon with the 1843 emigration, tentative plans were made for the two to meet, perhaps at Fort Laramie. Lovejoy explained that Whitman “taking the best animal, with some bedding and a small allowance of provision, started alone, hoping, by rapid travel, to reach the fort in time to join the St. Louis party, but to do so he would have to travel on the Sabbath, something we had not done before” [L-2].

When Whitman, traveling alone, arrived at the Arkansas River, he believed that he was below Bent’s Fort and made the mistake of turning left and went upstream when he should have turned right and gone downstream. When Lovejoy arrived at Bent’s Fort on Tuesday, January 3, he discovered to his alarm that Whitman was not there. No one had seen him. The St. Louis party had already left and was encamped about forty miles below Bent’s Fort. At Lovejoy’s insistence, a messenger was hastily sent to the captain of the caravan asking him to tarry until the Doctor could be found.

Lovejoy’s account continues: “Being furnished by the gentlemen of the fort with a suitable guide, I started in search of the Doctor, and traveled up the river about one hundred miles. I learned from the Indians that a man had been there, who was lost, and was trying to find Bent’s Fort... I knew from their description that it was Dr. Whitman. I returned to the fort as rapidly as possible but found that the Doctor had not arrived. We had all become very anxious about him. Late in the afternoon, he came in very much fatigued and desponding; said that he knew God had bewildered him to punish him for traveling on the Sabbath. During the whole trip, he was very regular in his morning and evening devotions, and that was the only time I ever knew him to travel on the Sabbath” [L-2]. No doubt Whitman felt it wise to follow the curves of the river while Lovejoy and his guide might have cut across
the country at times. This would explain why Lovejoy passed Whitman twice, once while going up the river and again while returning, without them seeing each other.

Whitman remained at the fort overnight and on the following morning, Saturday, January 7, said good-bye to Lovejoy and hastened on to join the St. Louis party. Before leaving the fort, Whitman signed an order on January 6, 1843, on the American Board for $301.25 which Bent and Company cashed. With these funds, Whitman paid off his Spanish guide and covered other expenses.

Not a single reference has been found relating to the 400-mile trip that Whitman made with the caravan from Bent's Fort to Westport. We learn from a letter that he wrote to Greene on April 4, 1843, that he arrived at Westport on February 15. Ever since Narcissa bade her husband good-bye on October 3, 1842, she had been following in her imagination his progress across the country. By the time Marcus arrived at Westport, Narcissa figured that he was then with her relatives, for on February 7 she wrote to her parents: “I speak as if you were enjoying the society of my dear husband at this time.” Months passed before she learned of the long detour that he had been obliged to take in what has been called one of the worst winters of our history.

Whitman remained in Westport for about a week. This we know from a letter in the archives of Whitman College dated from Westport, February 22, 1843, and addressed to C. W. Boyers of Independence. The letter reads: “Dr. Sir. Allow me to introduce to you the bearer, Doctor Whitman, Suprintd. of American Boards Missions Oregon and of the Presbyterian order. Your attention to him will be duly acknowledged by your friend & Obt. Svt. A. G. Boone.” The identity of Boone is not known, but Boyers was an elder in the Presbyterian Church of Independence and the town’s postmaster. According to Perrin Whitman, his uncle left his animals with Boyers until his return in the late spring.

The next documented date which traces Whitman’s progress across the country is found in a letter from B. Clapp to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., dated at St. Louis on March 7, 1843. After referring to the draft for $301.25 which Whitman had cashed at Bent’s Fort, Clapp wrote: “Doctor Whitman brought the dft. himself from Bent & Co on his way from the Columbia, where he is established as a mission, being now [On] a visit to Boston. He left to day via the Ohio.” According to this,
Whitman was planning to go by river steamer up the Ohio, perhaps to Pittsburgh, and then overland to Washington.

As has been stated, Whitman carried several letters written by his wife to some of her relatives, including one to her sister and brother, Jane and Edward. Narcissa had hoped that Marcus would be able to deliver the letter in person at Quincy, Illinois, where they lived. The long detour to Taos, however, had caused such a delay that Whitman felt it imperative to hasten on to Washington; Narcissa’s letter to Jane and Edward was mailed in St. Louis. A notation on the back of the letter in Whitman’s handwriting reads: “Narcissa Whitman, Rocky Mountains, March 9:43.” The postmark bears the stamp of the St. Louis office for that date. Evidently there was a delay of at least two days after Clapp wrote before Whitman left St. Louis.

Whitman, a Guest of Dr. Edward Hale

During his stay of two or three days in St. Louis, Whitman was a guest in the home of Dr. Edward Hale, a dentist, with whom he also stayed on his return journey to Oregon. On July 19, 1871, when Hale was seventy years old, he wrote to H. H. Spalding: “I had the pleasure of entertaining Dr. Whitman at St. Louis on his last visit eastward to confer with the President & heads of departments in relation to the settlement of the N.W. boundary question with Gr. Britain by bartering away for a song the whole N.W. Pacific Territory.” Hale’s comments regarding the political purpose of Whitman’s ride reflect, almost literally, some of the exaggerated statements that Spalding was making in his promotion of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon theory. Spalding’s Senate Document was ordered to be printed on February 9, 1871; possibly Hale had this item on his desk when he wrote during the following July. Certainly, in view of the circumstances, we cannot take seriously Hale’s testimony regarding the political motives involved in Whitman’s ride.

Living in the Hale home at the time of Whitman’s visit, was a twenty-eight-year-old schoolteacher, William Barrows, who, forty years later, published his Oregon: The Struggle for Possession. “On his arrival in St. Louis,” wrote Barrows, “it was my good fortune that he should be quartered, as a guest, under the same roof, and at the same table with me… Marcus Whitman once seen… was a man not to be forgotten by the writer.” Barrows remembered him as being a man of “medium
height... large head... covered with stiff iron-grey hair, while his face carried all the moustache and whiskers that four months had been able to put on it.”

Although Whitman’s buckskin dress did not attract undue attention in St. Louis, we find several commenting on its strangeness as he traveled East. But Barrows, after forty years, had vivid memories and gave us the following description: “His dress would now appear much more peculiar than in those days and in that city. For St. Louis was then no stranger to blanket Indians, and Yellowstone trappers, in buckskin and buffalo [skin]. The Doctor was in coarse fur garments and vesting, and buckskin breeches. He wore a buffalo coat, with a head-hood for emergencies in taking a storm, or a bivouac nap,... heavy fur leggings and boot-moccasins... If memory is not at fault with me, his entire dress on the street did not show one square inch of woven fabric.” Barrows then stated that, notwithstanding his fur clothing, “he bore the marks of irresistible cold and merciless storms... His fingers, ears, nose, and feet had been frostbitten, and were giving him much trouble.”

**Whitman’s Promotion of Oregon Emigration**

Barrows remembered that the arrival of Whitman in St. Louis from faraway Oregon aroused great interest in a city of about twenty thousand inhabitants. As soon as news of his presence was spread abroad, Whitman was besieged by a flood of visitors, including “Rocky Mountain men, trappers, traders, adventurers, and contractors for military posts”—who asked a multitude of questions regarding the fur trade, Indian wars, the fate of those who had migrated to Oregon in 1842, and the possibilities of the future for Oregon.

According to Barrows, Whitman was more interested in asking questions than in answering. Elijah White had told him about the pending Webster-Ashburton Treaty which, it was hoped, would deal with the Old Oregon boundary, and the Linn bill which promised 640 acres of land to every white male over eighteen years of age who would settle in Oregon. Barrows remembered that Whitman asked: “Was the Ashburton Treaty concluded? Did it cover the Northwest?” He was told that the Treaty had been signed on the preceding August 9 but that it dealt with the Maine boundary and not with the Oregon.

The Linn bill came to a vote in the Senate on February 3, 1843, and
passed by a vote of twenty-four to twenty-two. The opposition claimed that the provisions of the bill violated the Treaty of Joint Occupation and that the boundary question had to be settled before the United States could legally extend its jurisdiction over any part of the Oregon territory. After passing the Senate, the bill was sent to the House, where it was lost in the rush of business which usually marks the closing days of any session of Congress. The third session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress had adjourned on March 4, 1843, but due to the slowness of communications of that time, this was not known in St. Louis when Whitman was there. Hoping that he could reach Washington before Congress adjourned, Whitman was eager to be on his way.

The sentiment on the western frontier at the time of Whitman’s visit to St. Louis was strongly pro-Oregon. It was generally believed that the Linn bill would eventually pass, and hundreds of men were ready to migrate to Oregon with their families in anticipation of that enactment. The promotion of the 1843 emigration had been started before Whitman arrived in St. Louis. No claim has ever been made, even by the most fervent adherents of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story, that Whitman was solely responsible for the large number who went to Oregon that year. There would have been an 1843 emigration had Whitman never gone East. On the other hand, we have evidence that Whitman was zealous in encouraging people to go to Oregon. A study of this influence was made by Myron Eells who published in 1883 his findings in a pamphlet under the title *Marcus Whitman, M.D., Proofs of His Work in Saving Oregon, and in Promoting the Immigration of 1843.*

In gathering information for this pamphlet, Eells wrote to all of the 1843 emigrants whom he could locate and made inquiry regarding the motives which inspired each to go to Oregon. Lindsay Applegate wrote that he had inserted a notice in the Booneville, Missouri, *Herald*, about March 1, 1843, announcing that a party would be going to Oregon and calling on those who wished to join such a party to meet at Westport about May 1. Several stated that they were induced to go to Oregon because of personal interviews with Whitman, through newspaper articles he had inspired or written, and two referred to a pamphlet he had published.21 Perrin Whitman, a nephew of Marcus who went out to Oregon with his uncle in 1843, claimed in 1898 that many of the emigrants of that year “had come as a result of hand-bills which he [i.e., Marcus]
distributed on the frontier as he went through [i.e., while en route to the East], saying that he must be back to start with them at the first peep of grass.” 22 It is most improbable that Whitman would have had time or opportunity to write and publish a pamphlet while passing through Missouri but he could have issued a handbill stating the advantages of migrating to Oregon, together with some simple directions as to what should be taken for an overland journey. If such a pamphlet was issued, no copy is known to be extant today.

Among those who were induced to go to Oregon by Whitman were the Hobson, Eyres, and Thomas Smith families, and a young lawyer, John Ricard. At the time Whitman was in St. Louis, Eyres owned a shop in the city which was a meeting place for many who were thinking of going to Oregon. It was there that Whitman met John Hobson. Mention will be made later of the two motherless Hobson girls, Emma and Ann, being received into the Whitman home at Waiilatpu. A reference to sheep in a letter that Whitman wrote to his brother-in-law, J. G. Prentiss, from the Missouri frontier on May 28, 1843, provides evidence that on his eastward journey through Missouri, he was giving advice to would-be emigrants. He wrote: “A great many cattle are going, but no sheep, from a mistake of what I said in passing.”

**Whitman in Washington**

Since Whitman planned to be back on the Missouri frontier in early May, he had but two months to make his journey to Washington, Boston, and then to western New York to see his relatives. Time was short, especially when we remember the conditions of travel of that day. The journey from St. Louis to Washington would have taken about two weeks, which would have put him in the capital city about March 21.

Whitman stopped at Cincinnati on his way up the Ohio River, where he called on Dr. George L. Weed, a representative of the American Board who frequently entertained its missionaries in their travels up and down the river. George L. Weed, Jr., in 1897 wrote his reminiscences of Whitman’s visit: “Most unexpected was his appearance at my father’s in Cincinnati, where he was a welcome visitor when on his journey across the continent, and where he had brought his bride seven years before. We thought him on the banks of the Columbia. It fell to me
to receive him at the door. My memory of that morning is still fresh with boyish wonderment. I stared at what seemed an apparition. He was still dressed in his mountain garb. His fur garments, buckskin breeches, fur leggins, boot moccasins, and buffalo overcoat with head hood, had been poor protection from the cold and storms of the fearful ride. His face and hands and feet had been frozen." 23

When Whitman asked to see the boy’s father, he was told that Dr. Weed was attending a prayer meeting at Dr. Lyman Beecher’s church. “Thither,” wrote George, Junior, “he hastened. His entrance created consternation, while everyone asked: ‘Who, what is he?’ “According to the son, Dr. Whitman remained in Cincinnati for only a few hours, perhaps just long enough for the river boat to discharge and take on cargo, and then he left.

Whitman’s visit to Washington has been a focal point of discussion in the Whitman controversy. The fact that he went to Washington is so well documented that it is no longer questioned by the severest critic of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. The strongest evidence of his presence in Washington is found in the following quotation from a letter that Whitman wrote to the Hon. James M. Porter, Secretary of War, which bears the notation of having been received on June 22, 1844: “In compliance with the request you did me the honor to make last Winter, while in Washington…” [Letter 143].

When Whitman was in Washington, he tried to get in touch with William C. McKay, whom he thought to be still studying at the Fairfield Medical College. At the time Whitman wrote, McKay had transferred to a medical school at Willoughby, Ohio. Dr. McKay, writing his recollection of the incident on January 30, 1885, stated that Dr. Whitman had written to him from Washington, but, since the original correspondence had been lost, he could not give the exact date. 24

The advocates of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story have stressed the fact, which can easily be documented, that Whitman visited Washington before going to Boston as evidence that his main motive for going East was political. W. I. Marshall, the caustic opponent of that theory, wrote: “It is altogether probable that he went to Washington from Boston, as he seems to have reached his home in Rushville, N.Y., about April 18th.” 25 However, the known chronology of Whitman’s travels makes Marshall’s theory untenable. We know that Whitman was in Boston as late as April 8 and that
he left Rushville for the Missouri frontier on the 20th. This twelve-day period is not long enough for him to have gone from Boston to Washington and then to Rushville with a week or more for visiting his relatives. The fact that Whitman went first to Washington and then to Boston neither proves nor disproves any theory as to which motive, the political or mission business, was primary in his thinking. The determining factor was simply that of convenience in a tight time schedule.

There is evidence that Whitman knew the Hon. John C. Spencer, 1778–1855, who was Secretary of War in President Tyler’s cabinet from October 1841 to March 1843, when he was made Secretary of the Treasury. Spencer hailed from Canandaigua, New York, the county seat of Ontario County, where he practiced law. Since Rushville is but ten miles from Canandaigua, it is altogether probable that Whitman, as a medical student riding with Dr. Bryant, had had opportunities to meet Spencer. The first entry in Jonathan Pratt’s diary, of which mention has been made, dated January 1, 1824, states that Jonathan had been to Canandaigua to hear Spencer speak. If Pratt knew Spencer, it is reasonable that Whitman did likewise.

Since Elijah White had been in Washington in the spring of 1842 and had received his appointment as Indian Agent for Oregon from Spencer, there is reason to believe that White had told Whitman of Spencer’s official position. All Indian affairs were then a part of the responsibilities of the Secretary of War. The Oregon Trail went through Indian country, thus the Secretary of War would have been the Government official most interested in the welfare of Oregon emigrants. When Whitman visited Washington, therefore, he had an important contact with a member of the President’s cabinet.

After his return to Wailatpu, Whitman told William Geiger, Jr., about his experiences in the capital city. According to Geiger, Whitman called on Spencer who introduced him to the Hon. James M. Porter, the new Secretary of War, and also to Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, and even arranged an interview with President Tyler. Another who claimed that Whitman told him that he had seen the President was Lovejoy, who wrote: “He often expressed himself to me about the remainder of his journey [i.e., from Bent’s Fort to Washington and Boston]... He had several interviews with President Tyler, Secretary Webster, and a good many members of Congress” [L-2]. Still others who
claimed that Whitman told them he had seen President Tyler include Spalding, Gray, Perrin Whitman, and David Lennox. It is inconceivable that so many different people would have deliberately concocted the story of Whitman’s interview with President Tyler.

In Spalding’s account of Whitman’s meeting with Secretary Webster and President Tyler, we come to the very core of his Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. After pointing out that Whitman and Webster came from the same state, Spalding wrote: “Mr. Webster lived too near Cape Cod to see things in the same light with his fellow statesman who had transferred his worldly interest in the Pacific Coast.” Possibly, when Whitman told Spalding of his interview with Webster, he told of the latter’s desire to obtain for the United States some rights to a cod-fishery off the Newfoundland coast. Writing more than twenty years later, Spalding’s memory could have misled him when he tried to recall exactly what Webster had told Whitman, for Spalding wrote that Webster “had about traded it [i.e., Oregon] off with Gov. Simpson to go into the Ashburton Treaty, for a cod fishery.” There is no documentary evidence to support this part of Spalding’s Whitman-Saved-Oregon story.

Another point brought out by Spalding in his published lectures is the undocumented claim that Governor Simpson deliberately misrepresented the nature of the Oregon country in order to mislead Webster as to its worth and consequently lessen the interest of the United States in that distant territory. Spalding considered such an alleged degradation of Oregon to be part of a diabolical plot of the Hudson’s Bay Company to help England get title to Oregon. Regardless of whether or not Webster had heard the alleged misrepresentations, it would have been perfectly logical for Webster to make inquiry of Whitman regarding the potentialities of the Oregon country.

In reviewing the writings of both Whitman and Spalding regarding the extension of United States jurisdiction over Oregon, we find that neither had anything definite to say about the location of the boundary. Whitman’s interest seems to have been centered on emigration; he evidently believed that the boundary question was secondary in importance to getting a large American population to settle in the country.

Regarding Whitman’s interview with the President, Spalding wrote:

The Doctor next sought an interview with President Tyler, who at once appreciated his solicitude and his timely representations
of Oregon... He said that, although the Doctor’s representations of the character of the country, and the possibility of reaching it by wagon route, were in direct contradiction to those of Gov. Simpson, his frozen limbs were sufficient proof of his sincerity, and his missionary character was sufficient guarantee for his honesty, and he would therefore, as President, rest upon these and not act accordingly; would detail Fremont with a military force to escort the Doctor’s caravan through the mountains; and no more action should be had towards trading off Oregon till he could hear the result of the expedition. If the Doctor could establish a wagon route through the mountains to the Columbia River, pronounced impossible by Gov. Simpson and Ashburton, he would use his influence to hold on to Oregon.²⁹

As has been stated, there is evidence to indicate that many in England believed that Oregon could never be colonized by overland emigration from the United States;³⁰ hence this statement of Spalding’s as to what Simpson said in this regard may be accepted as factual.

No doubt Government officials, including the President, were delighted to have the opportunity to talk with Whitman about Oregon. Never before had anyone arrived in Washington from that distant territory so well informed, so qualified to speak with authority about its resources, its Indian tribes, travel conditions on the Oregon Trail, and the desires of the American population already there. Elijah White, who had been in the capital city the previous year, had spent only three years in Oregon; Whitman had spent six. White had gone to and from Oregon by sea; Whitman had made the round trip overland. Moreover, Whitman’s arrival in Washington was most timely; the Oregon question was becoming increasingly a subject of great popular interest as well as of official concern.

**SYNOPSIS OF WHITMAN’S BILL**

The best indication of the subject of Whitman’s interviews with such officials as Porter, Webster, and Tyler is the contents of a bill which he drew up for Congressional consideration, and which he sent to the Secretary of War after he had returned to Waiilatpu.³¹ It is possible that Porter or Tyler, after hearing Whitman stress the necessity for the Government to provide protection to the Oregon-bound emigrants, asked
Whitman to put his recommendations in writing. Much that Whitman had to say struck a responsive chord in Tyler’s thinking. In his message that he delivered at the opening of the Twenty-Seventh Congress on December 6, 1841, Tyler had endorsed a recommendation made by the then Secretary of War, John C. Spencer, for the establishment of “a chain of military posts from Council Bluffs to some point on the Pacific Ocean within our limits.” When Senator Linn introduced a new Oregon bill early in the Congressional session of 1842–43, he included a provision that the Government build “a line of forts from our western frontier to the mouth of the Columbia River.”

Whitman in his proposed bill stressed the need for the protection and welfare of the Oregon emigrants. Whereas the Linn bill called for the establishment of “a line of forts,” Whitman suggested “a chain of agricultural posts or farming stations.” In Section 1 of his proposal, Whitman stated: “Which said posts shall have for their object to set examples of civilized industry to the several Indian tribes, to keep them in proper subjection to the laws of the United States, to suppress violent and lawless acts along the said line of frontier, to facilitate the passage of troops and munitions of war into and out of said territory of Oregon, and the transportation of the mail…”

Section 5 of the proposal outlined the duty of the superintendents of said posts, calling upon each to cultivate up to 640 acres of land in areas where such was possible, in order to raise produce which could be used by the military and the passing emigrants. Whitman in his accompanying letter to Porter was more specific on this point than he was in his bill. He wrote that if produce were raised at these “farming stations,” it could be sold to the emigrants, thus “diminishing the original burdens” of the travelers and at the same time helping “to defray the expenses of such posts.” Each post was to be equipped with storehouses, blacksmith, gunsmith, and carpenter shops.

Whitman also thought about the transportation of the mails. In his letter to Porter, he wrote: “I need only add that contracts for this purpose will be readily taken at reasonable rates for transporting the mail across from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia in forty days, with fresh horses at each of the contemplated posts.” The Pony Express, which Whitman here proposed, did not become a reality until April 1860, nearly seventeen years later, and then it served California rather
than the Pacific Northwest.

There was a political purpose in Whitman’s visit to Washington, how else is it possible to explain his presence in the city and the contents of his proposed bill? Even though no treaty affecting the Pacific Northwest was then under consideration, Whitman, as an enthusiastic booster of Oregon, was able to pass on much valuable information to high Government officials. Although we have no evidence that he discussed the possible location of the Old Oregon boundary, we do know that Whitman stressed the importance of promoting Oregon emigration and the necessity of protecting those traveling over the Oregon Trail. Whitman was eager for the extension of the jurisdiction of the United States over Oregon, and he was convinced that this could best be obtained by first establishing a large American colony in that region.

**Whitman in New York**

Whitman could not have tarried in Washington for more than two or three days, as he was in New York on Saturday, March 25, 1843. He took passage on a ship bound for Boston on Monday evening, the 27th. During his two-day stay in New York, Whitman made two important calls. The first was on Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Daily Tribune*. When Whitman knocked at the door of Greeley’s office, a woman received him. She was so surprised to see a man standing before her clad in such strange garb that, when Whitman asked to see Mr. Greeley, she curtly told him that he was not in. Disappointed, Whitman turned to go away. In the meantime, Greeley inquired regarding the visitor and was probably told that the stranger, dressed worse than a tramp, had been turned away. Greeley hurried to the window and caught a glimpse of Whitman. Greeley, himself none too particular in matters of dress, saw something in Whitman which attracted his attention. He hurried to the door and called Whitman back. After due apologies, the two men had a long visit.

An account of the interview which Greeley had with Whitman appeared in the March 29 issue of the *Daily Tribune*. It was evidently written on the 28th, for Greeley began by writing: “We were most agreeably surprised yesterday by a call from Doctor Whitman from Oregon, a member of the American Presbyterian Mission in that territory. A slight glance at him when he entered our office would convince any one that
he had seen all the hardships of a life in the wilderness. He was dressed in an old fur cap, that appears to have seen some ten years of service, faded, and nearly destitute of fur; a vest whose natural color had long since faded, and a shirt—we could not see that he had any—an overcoat, every thread of which could be easily seen, buckskin pants, etc.—the roughest man we have seen this many a day—too poor, in fact, to get any better wardrobe. The doctor is one of those daring and good men who went to Oregon some ten [sic] years ago to teach the Indians religion, agriculture, letters, etc. A noble pioneer we judge him to be, a man fitted to be a chief in rearing a moral empire among the wild men of the wilderness.”

Greeley passed on to his readers information that Whitman had brought about those who had gone out to Oregon in the 1842 migration. He outlined the route that Whitman had followed on his hazardous journey, mentioning the fact that he had gone along the western side of the Anahuac [i.e., the San Juan Mountains] before crossing the Continental Divide. Greeley also had the following story to tell of an unhappy experience Whitman had had when he first arrived in New York: “We are sorry to say that his first reception, on arriving in our city, was but slightly calculated to give him a favorable impression of the morals of his kinsmen. He fell into the hands of one of our vampire cabmen, who, in connection with the keeper of a tavern in West Street, three or four doors from the corner near the Battery, fleeced him out of two of the last dollars which the poor man had.”

Several critics of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story have wondered why Greeley’s article about Whitman did not mention the latter’s desire to promote Oregon emigration. Greeley’s silence on this point, however, is understandable as he was opposed to Oregon emigration. Although he is reported to have said, “Go West, young man, go West,” he evidently did not advocate that any go as far west as Oregon. When he learned of the large 1843 emigration, he called the men associated with the venture insane.

The second important call that Whitman made while in New York was on Edward R. Ames, secretary in charge of the Oregon Mission of the Methodist Missionary Society. Ames informed Whitman that because of dissension in the Oregon Mission, Jason Lee had been recalled. Among those most critical of Lee was Elijah White who had passed on unfavorable reports to the Missionary Society when he was in the East
in the spring of 1842. As will be told later, Whitman was the first to tell Lee of this action by his church.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{WHITMAN IN BOSTON}

Whitman secured passage on the steamer, \textit{Narragansett}, which sailed from New York, Monday evening, March 27, for Boston. The vessel met with rough weather in the Sound, which caused the captain to put in at New Haven at midnight. The inclement weather kept the ship in port until Wednesday morning, the 29\textsuperscript{th}, when she was able to continue her voyage. Thus Whitman was not able to arrive in Boston until the late afternoon or evening of that day.

Among the passangers was a man who, attracted by Whitman, wrote the following sketch of his impressions which appeared in the New York \textit{Spectator}, April 5, 1843.\textsuperscript{38} The unknown reporter signed his article “Civis.” Under the caption, “The Rev. Dr. Whitman From Oregon,” Civis wrote:

\begin{quote}
We also had one who was observed by all—Doctor Whitman, the missionary from Oregon… Rarely have I seen such a spectacle as he represented. His dress should be preserved as a curiosity; it was quite in the style of the old pictures of Philip Quarles and Robinson Crusoe. When he came on board and threw down his traps, one said ‘what a loafer!’ I made up my mind at a glance that he was either a gentleman traveler, or a missionary; that he was every inch a man and no common one was clear.

The Doctor had been eight years [sic] at the territory; has left his wife there; and started from home on the 1st of October. He has not been in bed since, having made his lodging on buffalo robe and blanket, even on board the boat. He is about thirty-six or seven years of age, I should judge, and has stamped on his brow a great deal of what David Crockett would call ‘God Almighty’s common sense.’ Of course when he reached Boston, he would cast his shell and again stand out a specimen of the ‘humans.’

I greatly question whether such a figure ever passed through the Sound since the days of steam navigation. He is richly fraught with information relative to that most interesting piece of country, and I hope will shortly lay it before the good people of Boston
\end{quote}
and New York. Could he appear in New York Tabernacle—in his traveling costume—and lecture on the Northwest coast, I think there would be very few standing places. Much of his route was on foot and occasionally on horse or mule back, with a half-breed guide. To avoid the hostile Indians, he had to go off to the Spanish country, and thence to Santa Fe. ⁴⁹

Civis then told the story of how Whitman had been victimized by a “rascally hackman” in New York City. The fact that Civis considered Whitman to have been “about thirty–six or seven years of age,” when he was forty, speaks well for Whitman’s physical appearance. Early on Thursday evening, March 30, 1843, Whitman called on David Greene in the offices of the American Board in Boston. Although the two had exchanged correspondence for nearly nine years, they had never met before. It is easy to imagine Greene’s surprise when he first saw his buckskin-clad visitor. If he was shocked at the outlandish dress of the stranger, he was even more so when the visitor introduced himself as Dr. Marcus Whitman from Oregon. “Why did you leave your station?” Greene demanded. Whitman hastily explained that the Board’s order dated February 25, 1842, which dismissed Spalding and Gray and which called for the closing of the stations at Waiilatpu and Lapwai, was the reason. He then presented the original copy of the action taken by the Mission at its September 1842 meeting which was signed by Walker, Eells, and Spalding, and which authorized him to go East to confer with the “Committee of the A.B.C.F.M. in regard to the interests of the Mission.” On the back of this page, now in the files of the American Board, is the notation in Greene’s handwriting that it was received on March 30, 1843. It had taken Whitman six months to travel from Waiilatpu to Boston.

After his return to Waiilatpu, Whitman told Geiger that he had been given a cool reception in Boston. Henry Hill, Treasurer of the Board, was also shocked at his appearance and asked, quite roughly: “What are you here for, leaving your post?” Hill gave Whitman some money and told him: “Go, get some decent clothes.” ⁴⁰

The next day, Whitman, now properly clad, was back in Greene’s office where his reception was more cordial. On this occasion, Greene brought Whitman up-to-date on the actions of the Board regarding its Oregon Mission subsequent to its February 1842 order. Greene showed Whitman a copy of a letter written to him on April 28, 1842, in which
Whitman read: “When the case of your mission came up in February, it seemed to be a perfectly clear case that the Committee should decide upon it as mentioned in my letter to yourself and the mission written about the first of March... But had your letter of 13th of July [Letter 92] and Mr. Spalding’s of the same date, 1841, been before the Com., they would almost necessarily [have] decided differently.” Greene, in this letter, authorized Whitman “to go on as you were going before those instructions were received.”

After telling of this favorable development, Greene explained to Whitman how further correspondence from Oregon had changed the picture again. He referred to Whitman’s letter of May 12, 1842, in which Whitman had written that there was “no better understanding with Mr. Spalding.” This letter was written a few days before the scheduled Annual Meeting which Spalding at first refused to attend. Greene then told Whitman how he had laid all of this latest information before the Prudential Committee which met on March 21, a little more than a week before he had so unexpectedly arrived in Boston, and how, as a result, the Committee had voted to abide by the fateful order issued in February 1842.

Thus Whitman learned that, had he not gone to Boston, Spalding would have been dismissed, the two southern stations of the Oregon Mission would have had to be closed, and he and Narcissa would have been expected to move to Tshimakain. Whitman pled for the opportunity to appear before the Prudential Committee. He insisted that conditions had changed. Three of the main complaints against Spalding—Smith, Gray, and Rogers—were no longer in the Mission. A new understanding had been established with Spalding which promised to endure. Whitman argued that it was folly to abandon the flourishing fields at Waiilatpu and Lapwai for the Spokane station with its limited agricultural possibilities. No doubt he emphasized the strategic importance of Waiilatpu as the first outpost in the Columbia River Valley on the Oregon Trail. Perhaps Whitman threatened to leave the Mission and move to the Willamette Valley if the Committee continued to insist that he and his wife move to Tshimakain. Greene was sufficiently impressed with the seriousness of the situation that he agreed to call a special meeting of the Prudential Committee for the following Tuesday, April 4, so that Whitman could present his case in person.
Although eager to be on his way as soon as possible in order to visit relatives in western New York State before leaving for the Missouri frontier, Whitman had to be patient. No record remains as to how he spent those days of waiting. Perhaps one of the Board secretaries would have invited him to his home as a guest. We are told that while in Boston Whitman had his silhouette drawn by a Mr. R. K. Cummings. Whitman considered the result so unsatisfactory that he did not even get a copy for his mother.\textsuperscript{42} Daguerreotypes were then being made in Boston, but the cheapest, as then advertised in the daily papers, cost $3.50. No doubt Whitman felt that this was more than he could afford.

**The Fateful Order of February 1842 Revoked**

The archives of the American Board contain the minutes of the meeting of the Prudential Committee for April 4, 1843. Seven were present including Greene and Hill. Included with the minutes is a document which seems to be a secretary’s summary of what Whitman told the Prudential Committee. It states: “Left the Oregon country 3d October 1842, & arrived at Westport Mo. 15 February & in Boston 30 March 1843. Left unexpectedly & brought few letters. The difficulties between Mr. Spalding & the others were apparently healed. Mr. S. promises to pursue a different course. The mission wish to make another trial, with Mr. Smith & Mr. Gray out of the mission.”

Whitman succeeded in persuading the Committee to revoke its former action; for it adopted the following: “Resolved, That Doct. Marcus Whitman & the Rev. H. H. Spalding be authorized to continue to occupy the stations at Waiilatpu & Clear Water, as they did previous to the adoption of the resolutions referred to above.” Whitman had the great satisfaction of realizing that one of the main purposes of his long journey had been accomplished. He then brought up Gray’s case and asked that his request for release be granted. This was a mere formality, for the Grays had already left the Mission; but for the sake of the record, his resignation was officially accepted.

**Whitman’s Plans for the Future of the Oregon Mission**

According to the unsigned document of April 4, Whitman gave an optimistic report regarding the response of the Indians to the Christian message. He claimed that “half the year from 30 to 100 & the other
half from 100 to 300 attend worship [weekly] at Waiilatpu & Clear Water, each—(giving good) attention & advancing somewhat in knowledge—their temporal condition much improved & improving.” The reference to “half the year” reflects the custom of both the Cayuses and the Nez Perces to be gone in search of food for the other half of the time.

In the spring of 1838, Whitman and Spalding, moved by Jason Lee’s over-optimistic dream of the political and religious future of Oregon, had asked the Board to send out 220 additional workers. Now, five years later, Whitman had a more realistic understanding of the situation as it affected both the work in Oregon and also the resources of the Board. Hence, his requests for a reenforcement were very modest. In his presentation of the needs of the field, he made reference to the “influx of Papist” missionaries and the need to counteract their influence. He also referred to the expected large 1843 Oregon emigration and to ever increasing migrations in the years to come. He pointed out the demands which the incoming whites would make on the Waiilatpu station for supplies and other forms of assistance. Whitman urged the Committee to appoint an ordained man who could be stationed at Waiilatpu and relieve him of his religious duties.

Whitman also had the following practical recommendation to make: “[That] a company of some five or ten men... be found, of piety & intelligence, not to be appointed by the Board or to be immediately connected with it, who will go to the Oregon country as Christian men and who, on some terms to be agreed upon, shall take most of the land which the missions have under cultivation with the mills & shops at the several stations, with most of the stock & utensils, paying the mission in produce, from year to year, in seed to the Indians, & assistance rendered to them...” Whitman felt that if a few Christian laymen could be found who would settle in the vicinity of each of the three mission stations, they could relieve the three ministers and himself of “the great amount of manual labor, which is now necessary for their subsistence, & permit them to devote themselves to appropriate missionary work among the Indians, whose language they now speak.” There is no evidence that Whitman gave any consideration to possible Indian reaction to the establishment of colonies of white people in the vicinity of the mission stations, except the assumption that this would be for their benefit. The Prudential Committee gave a lukewarm endorsement to the idea, but
stated that the Board could accept no financial responsibility for the plan and that he was to do the recruiting. Since Whitman had less than two weeks before leaving for the Missouri frontier, there was little possibility that he could enlist men to go to Oregon that year on such short notice.

Whitman raised the question of making a claim on the Government for the value of the horses and other property taken by the Sioux Indians from Gray at Ash Hollow in the summer of 1837. Permission was given Whitman to follow up the claim that Gray had submitted on August 7, 1837, for $2,096.45. An examination of the correspondence bearing on Gray’s claim, now in the National Archives, shows that the well-known fur trader and Indian Agent, Major Joshua Pilcher, was asked to investigate the merits of the claim. In his report, Pilcher wrote that he was convinced that “the difficulty arose from Mr. Gray’s own imprudence and that most of the claim is altogether unfounded.” He recommended that nothing be done.

Whitman wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from Boston on April 8. His request for indemnity was courteously worded: “We do not wish to press the subject, but leave it with your department to do what you deem proper.” He pointed out that: “The horses for which an indemnification is asked belonged in part to the Mission and in part were received by the Mission from the Indians to be vested in cattle & cattle were to be given the Indians in return. As the horses were lost, the Mission has had to pay the Indians for them in cows. There was a considerable abridgment of our, at that time, very small stock.” The letter closes with the following: “As missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M., we have no private salary or emolument so that neither Mr. Gray nor myself can have any private interest in the indemnity we ask for the Board. The money would enable us, however, to import more stock to the Indians than we have been able thus far to do.” There is no evidence that the claim was ever paid.

Whitman was asked by the Prudential Committee at its meeting of April 4 to write an account of his work, the customs of the natives, their superstitions, legends, etc. In response Whitman penned an illuminating report of about 2,500 words dated April 7, which bears a notation by Greene of being received on the 8th [Letter 128]. In his comments on the customs of the Indians, Whitman noted that if an Indian medi-
cine man, a “te-wat,” failed to cure a patient, then “very often in cases of this kind, nothing can save the Conjurer but one or more conspire to kill him.” Whitman added: “The number & horror of the deaths of this kind that have come under my observation & knowledge have been great.” More than four years later, Dr. Whitman, himself as a white “te-wat,” who had been unable to check the ravages of a measles epidemic which was taking a heavy toll of life among the Cayuses, was to become a victim of this custom.

Since the motives for Whitman’s ride East have been under such scrutiny, it is well to give the Board’s explanation as found in its Annual Report which appeared in September 1843: “Early in the autumn of last year, and immediately after receiving instructions of the Prudential Committee to discontinue the southern branch of the Oregon mission, a meeting of the missionaries from all the stations was held to consider the course to be adopted. In their estimation, the circumstances of the mission and its prospects were so far changed, that they should be justified in going forward with the mission as it then was, until the case could be again referred to the Committee; and it was thought expedient that Doct. Whitman should proceed immediately to Boston with the hope that he might return to his labors early in the ensuing spring.”

An amplification of the above was given in the September issue of the Missionary Herald: “Another object of Doct. Whitman, in making the above mentioned visit, was to procure additional laborers. He desired to induce Christian families to emigrate and settle in the vicinity of the different stations, that they might relieve the missionary of his secular responsibilities, and also contribute directly, in various ways, to the social and moral improvement of the Indians.”

As far as the Board was concerned, Whitman went East on mission business. Nothing was said in its printed accounts of his visit to Boston about a prior visit to Washington. Whitman’s modest request for an ordained man to be appointed to serve with him at Waiilatpu was never granted. The financial report of the Board for 1843 shows that the expenditures for the Oregon Mission for that year totaled $3,043.33 [See Appendix 2]. The figures, however, do not indicate just how much of this was incurred by Whitman on his Eastern journey.

Another item from the Board’s Annual Report for 1843 should be mentioned. Whitman had so stressed the importance of location of
Waiilatpu that Greene wrote: “In view of the subject, the importance of sustaining the mission becomes much more obvious & great. It is seen to have new, wider and more permanent bearings... They anticipate the wave of white population which is rolling westward.” Whitman, during his visit to Boston, had succeeded not only in inducing the Board to revoke its disastrous order of February 1842, but also in having it recognize that its missionaries in Old Oregon had a responsibility to that “wave of population rolling westward.”
CHAPTER 18 FOOTNOTES

1 There is no evidence that Whitman and Lovejoy visited Santa Fe beyond this statement by Lovejoy. Whitman in his report to the Board mentioned only Taos. To have gone to Santa Fe would have required a detour of at least two day’s duration and there was no reason for making such a trip. Lovejoy’s memory was in error.

2 Alanson Hinman, in an article in O.H.Q., II (1901):268, refers to Black Harris as “the guide who conducted Doctor Whitman across the Rocky Mountains.” Hinman taught school at Waiilatpu in 1844–45 and, no doubt, received this information from Whitman.

3 Although Robidoux was with Fremont in California, Mount Robidoux, near Riverside, was named for his brother, Louis.

4 Brown’s Hole was on or near the 42° parallel near Green River, in what is now southwestern Wyoming.

5 Whitman evidently believed that the Green River to be the Colorado River and not merely a tributary. Because of another river in Texas, also called the Colorado, the larger river was then designated as “Colorado of the West.”


7 Rufus B. Sage traveled from Fort Uinta to Fort Hall, Oct. 29–Nov. 5, 1842. See his Rocky Mountain Life, Boston, 1857. Possibly Sage met Whitman and Lovejoy while making this trip.

8 Charles Kelly and Maurice L. Howe, Miles Goodyear, Salt Lake City, 1937, p. 43, gives the text of Goodyear’s letter which Whitman carried.

9 Actually at the time Whitman was in his fortieth year and Lovejoy was six years younger. Rather strange that Lovejoy should have referred to him as being “old.”

10 Original Spalding letter in Spokane Public Library.

11 Information supplied by the Rev. J. Frederick Speer in a letter to me dated December 5, 1965, when he was pastor of the First United Presbyterian Church of Grand Junction, Colo.

12 An embellished and highly dramatic account of Whitman’s ride over the Rockies is in Spalding’s Senate Document, p. 21. No doubt Spalding did receive some information from Whitman about the hardships he had endured on this transcontinental journey.

13 The San Juan Mountains were first known as the “Sierra de Anahuac.” Whitman once referred to the “Anahua Mountains.”

14 This was the third Spaniard or Mexican that Whitman had hired as a guide. In his letter to Greene of May 30, 1843, he referred to paying “the Spaniard who came in with me from Taos.”

15 Here Lovejoy gives an exact date which can be confirmed from other sources.

16 My attention was drawn to this order by Erwin N. Thompson, once historian at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Original in Chouteau Collection, Folder 1843, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

17 Perrin Whitman to Myron Eells, Feb. 10, 1882, Coll. W.

18 Original in Chouteau Coll., Folder 1843.

19 Original letter in Coll. W.

20 Barrows, Oregon, pp. 174 ff.
Eells, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 ff. Eells quotes from letters written by two people who claimed knowledge of a pamphlet that Whitman is alleged to have written. The evidence is doubtful.

W.C.Q., II (1898):2:34.

Ladies Home Journal, Nov. 1897; Sunday School Times, Aug. 23, 1903. Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:54, gives an account of Dr. Weed entertaining members of the 1838 reinforcement on their way to Old Oregon. Dr. Weed conducted a bookstore in Cincinnati.


Marshall, *Acquisition of Oregon*, II:68. He also wrote: “The claim that he went to Washington first has not a particle of contemporaneous evidence to support it.” Eells, *Marcus Whitman, M.D.* (Pamphlet), p. 20, quotes Mrs. F. F. Victor as writing in 1880: “There still remains the romantic, though unfortunately foundationless story of Dr. Whitman’s visit to Washington with a political purpose.” Eells also quote the Hon. E. Evans who, in 1881, wrote: “There is no authentic evidence that Dr. Whitman visited Washington City at all during that journey.” Today no reputable scholar makes such claims.


Ibid.

Marshall, *Acquisition of Oregon*, II:65, quoting from one of Spalding’s lectures which appeared in the San Francisco Pacific, Nov. 9, 1865.

San Francisco Pacific, Nov. 9, 1865.

See Chapter Sixteen, “War, Diplomacy, or Emigration.”

See Appendix 7 for a copy of Whitman’s proposed bill.


Greeley’s article was reprinted in *O.H.Q.*, IV (1903):168 ff.; also in Hulbert, *O.P.*, VII:111 ff.

Italics are the author’s.


“Civis” could easily have confused a reference to the Santa Fe Trail to the city of Santa Fe. See ante, fn. 1.

Whitman to Greene, April 1, 1847: “I often reflect upon the fact that you told me you were sorry I came.”

Greene several times referred to the order of Feb. 25, 1842, as having been written “about the first of March.”

Mary Alice Wisewell to Myron Eells, March 10, 1882, Coll. W. All efforts to locate a copy of this silhouette have failed.

During the spring of 1843, an awakened interest in Old Oregon stirred the United States from Boston to Westport, and from Chicago to New Orleans. This is evidenced by the number and frequency of editorials and articles about Oregon which appeared in the public press. The Boston Daily Evening Transcript for April 4, 1843, called it, “the pioneer’s land of promise.” The editor declared: “Hundreds are already prepared to start thither with the Spring, while hundreds are anxiously awaiting the action of Congress in reference to that country as the signal for their departure... The Oregon fever has broken out, and is now raging like any other contagion.” 1 Since Whitman was in Boston at that time, it is possible that the article came as a result of a call he had made on the editor.

The accounts of Oregon found in such books as Samuel Parker’s Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains and T. J. Farnham’s Travels in the Great Western Prairies 2 found avid readers. The Cleveland Daily Herald of March 1, 1843, quoted from a letter Dr. Elijah White had written on August 17, 1842, while en route to Oregon. White advised those planning to migrate in 1843 to take strong light wagons and no baggage except their cooking utensils and provisions for four months. In a bombastic editorial, the Cleveland Plain Dealer of March 8, 1843, sang the glories of Oregon: “There is enchantment in the word. It signifies a land of pure
delight in the woody solitudes of the West... That is a country of the largest liberty, the only known land of equality on the face of the earth... there is the place to build anew the Temple of Democracy.”

The Baltimore Niles National Register of April 22, 1843, told of “a large meeting” which was held in St. Louis on the previous March 28 “in favor of colonizing Oregon.” Among the resolutions adopted was one which stated that the most effective way “to take possession of Oregon” was by colonization and that this was best promoted by “individual enterprise.” Had Whitman been present at that meeting and had he been asked to word the resolutions adopted, they could not have reflected his views more accurately.

This westward surge of population was characterized by a restless energy, a longing for something new, and a desire for free land. The phrase, “the Oregon fever,” became popular. The Ohio Statesman, in its issue for April 26, 1843, stated: “The Oregon fever is raging in almost every part of the Union. Companies are forming in the East, and in several parts of Ohio, which added to those of Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, will make a pretty formidable army. The larger portions of these will probably join the companies at Fort Independence, Missouri, and proceed together across the mountains. It is reasonable to suppose that there will be at least five thousand Americans west of the Rocky Mountains by next autumn.”

The Painesville, Ohio, Telegraph carried the following in its May 24 issue:

**Westward Ho**

The tide of emigration flowing westward this season must be overwhelming. Besides the hundreds and thousands that daily throng the steamboats on the Lakes, there is a constant stream of “movers” on land. From ten to fifteen teams have passed through this town every day for the last three weeks, winding their way to Wisconsin and Iowa, and some, we understand, are bound for the “far west” which in these latter days means a country somewhere between the Rocky Mountains and sundown. Those we noticed had the appearance generally of intelligence, respectability and wealth and gave indication of that enterprising and energetic character which alone takes upon itself the hardships and privations incident to the settlement of a new country.
Such newspaper reports reflect a growing interest in Oregon throughout the nation. Along the western frontier, especially in Missouri, the interest was keen. “The Oregon fever” was contagious. It was “Westward Ho” for the most daring and the most courageous. Whitman took note of what was happening and was delighted.

**Whitman Returns to Rushville**

Whitman was in Boston for about nine days. Since he wanted to be back at Westport on or about May 1, he was eager to be on his way. Under normal traveling conditions of that day, it would have taken him nearly a month to go from Boston to Westport. Every day he spent in Boston meant one day less that he could spend with relatives in western New York State. We cannot be certain when Whitman left Boston. Possibly it was on Saturday, April 8, after he had submitted his report to Greene of that date and after he had written to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Since Whitman submitted his report to Greene on Saturday, April 8, 1843, it does not appear that he was able to leave for Rushville before that morning. By the spring of 1843, a railroad connected Boston and Buffalo, which passed through Albany. The fare from Boston to Albany, a distance of about 20 miles, was $4.00. A train leaving Boston at eight o’clock in the morning would arrive at Albany that evening. Knowing of Whitman’s reluctance to travel on Sunday, he may have spent that day in Albany and then continued his rail journey on Monday. The train passed through Canandaigua where Whitman could have taken a stage for Rushville. This would have been Whitman’s first experience riding on a train.

According to Perrin Whitman’s recollections, his uncle had only three days to visit his mother and relatives before starting back to Oregon on April 20.² Perrin, however, may not have included the time Marcus spent with Narcissa’s relatives. In May 1842, Judge and Mrs. Prentiss became members of the Presbyterian Church of Cuba, a small community in western Allegany County. All of Narcissa’s letters to her parents after February 7, 1843, were directed to Cuba.

A few scattered references tell of Whitman’s visit with his relatives in Naples and Rushville. Martha Wisewell, a daughter of Whitman’s sister Alice, wrote that the first indication his mother had of the presence of her
son in the States was through reading the account of his visit with Horace Greeley. Perrin claimed that his grandmother gently rebuked her son for going to Boston before visiting her in Rushville and that Marcus replied: “Business before pleasure, mother, but I am here now to visit you.” According to Whitman’s nephew, Frank Wisewell, so great was the pressure of time on him that he “spent only a single night at his sister’s home in Naples.” This town is about fifteen miles from Rushville.

Among the children in the Wisewell home was Martha, then between eleven and twelve years old, whose recollections were published in the *Sunday School Times* for June 10, 1903. Martha wrote: “While he was there, our house was a gathering place for the neighbors and friends, who listened to his narration of his life and work. I well remember that one day he dressed up in his buckskin suit, that they might see his appearance as he journeyed.” A Rushville tradition states that Whitman left his heavy buffalo coat there when he left for Westport. Martha Wisewell’s account continues: “I remember standing opposite him in the room when he had a lasso in his hand. This he threw over my head and drew me up to him, to show the manner of catching animals in the West. And I have not forgotten how this frightened me... Dr. Whitman possessed a singularly pleasant and winning manner. Child as I was, I shall never forget his Christian bearing and conversation. Never solemn nor morose, he was always jovial, lighthearted, and happy.” Martha remembered how once her father said to Dr. Whitman: “The Indians are so treacherous, I am afraid they will kill you.” Whitman dismissed this fear with the remark that his life was in the Lord’s hands. While in the Wisewell home, Marcus became acquainted with a namesake, Marcus Whitman Wisewell, who had been born in 1838.

Whitman spoke in the Presbyterian church in Naples about his experiences as a missionary in Oregon. [In May 1938, I had the pleasure of calling on a lady who had been present on that occasion. She was then nine years old and remembered the event clearly. She recalled that the congregation raised $100.00 that evening for the Oregon Mission. This lady, Mrs. Eliza Ann Housel, died October 10, 1938, at the age of 104.]

Whitman also spoke in the Congregational Church of Rushville at which time a seventeen-year-old lad, James Clark Strong, son of the Rev. Henry P. Strong who had served as pastor of the church for about three years before his death in 1835, was present. In later years, J. C.
Strong became a Brigadier General in the U.S. Army and lived for a time as a civilian in the Pacific Northwest. In his autobiography, General Strong gave the following account of Whitman’s plea for Oregon: “He described the Indians, the country, and the climate so vividly that when he said he wanted to get as many as he could to go back with him to settle in the country, I asked him to take me, but he said he wanted only married men.” At this meeting Whitman, no doubt, expressed his appreciation for the twenty-five plows which had been sent to Waiilatpu by members of the Rushville church in 1840. In his letter to Greene of May 12, 1843, Whitman reported that the church had made a further contribution of $12.00 to the American Board.

From these two instances, we may assume that Whitman was taking advantage of every opportunity to speak in behalf of the Oregon Mission and to urge all who would listen to migrate to Oregon and settle in the vicinity of the mission stations. The time, however, was too short to recruit settlers who could go out with the 1843 emigration.

Long after Whitman had started back to Westport, word reached the Rev. Samuel Parker in Ithaca of his presence in the States. Parker wondered why Whitman had not called on him and wrote to the Board in June 1843: “I had wished to have known something more definite about Doct. Whitman; his object of returning and prospects, etc. I have heard from his brother in Rushville that he is on his way back to the station.” Whitman was much too pressed for time to call on Parker.

Perrin Whitman, Nephew of Marcus

When Marcus Whitman made his horseback ride from Rushville to St. Louis in the spring of 1835, while on his first journey to the Rockies, he stopped to see his brother Samuel and his family who were then living at Danville, Illinois. In the home was a five-year-old boy called Perrin Beza. In September 1841, Samuel returned with his family to Rushville. There his wife died a year later leaving him with four children, of whom the eldest was Perrin. In later years Perrin told of his memories of his uncle’s visit to Rushville in the spring of 1843 and of how his uncle’s accounts of the midwinter ride over the Rockies had filled him with wonder. “His personality captivated me,” wrote Perrin. “He seemed to have drawn me by some power, for he at once began to plead with my father to gain his consent for me to accompany him on his
return trip to Oregon.” Samuel’s problem in raising four motherless children made him responsive to his brother’s plea. Looking back on those days, Perrin wrote: “My father reluctantly consented after three days’ pleading, that the doctor should adopt me and take me with him if I was willing to go. My boyish instincts were aroused, and with the promise of a gun, a saddle, and a donkey, my consent was not delayed.”

Although Perrin stated that adoption papers were drawn up, actually New York State had no adoption laws before 1873. Possibly Samuel and Marcus drew up a contract such as was then used when a boy was hired out as an apprentice. A family tradition states that Samuel gave Marcus $500.00 to be invested for his son. So it was arranged for the thirteen-year-old Perrin to go with his Uncle Marcus to Old Oregon where he was destined to play an important role in the history of the Pacific Northwest.

Last Farewells

At the most, Marcus could not have had more than a week to visit relatives and friends at Rushville, Naples, Prattsburg, and Wheeler. The hour for the last farewells rushed at him. After being away for seven years, it seemed a pity that his visit was to be so short, but the need to be on the frontier in plenty of time to join the emigration gathering there was paramount. Marcus knew that in all probability he would never see his mother and other loved ones again in this world. It was difficult to say good-by.

Writing to his mother on May 27 from the Shawnee Mission near present-day Kansas City, Kansas, Marcus said: “Oh My Dear Mother!—how often have I thought how reluctant you were for me to go to Oregon & how many fears you had for my safety & comfort.” He claimed that he was returning to Oregon with no regrets. Outside of the joy of being with relatives and friends, he said that he had seen nothing which made him want to return to New York State. “Oregon has all my attractions,” he wrote. “Oregon has the strength of my affections of body & mind.”

When Marcus had returned to Rushville as an eighteen-year-old youth in 1820 after spending ten years with relatives in western Massachusetts, he had wanted to enter the ministry. To his deep disappointment, his mother had objected. In Whitman’s first letter to the American Board in which he inquired as to the possibility of receiving an appointment as a missionary, he had mentioned that, although his
mother “professes a hope,” she was not a member of any church. When he was with his mother in April 1843, he found that she still had not joined the church. This troubled him. His letters to her show that he held her in high esteem. She was a good woman, faithful and true as ever a mother could be. Evidently she was a woman of strong and independent ideas; although she attended church, she would not make a public confession of her faith and become a member.

Whitman’s letter to his mother written from the Shawnee Mission reveals his concern over her spiritual welfare. “Let me say in conclusion,” he wrote, “that I feel most desirous to know that my Dear Mother was determined to live the rest of her days witnessing a good profession of godliness. What keeps you from this? Is it that you are not a sinner, or if not that, is it that there is no Saviour of sinners, or is it that you have too long refused & neglected to love & obey him?” He closed his plea for her to make a public confession of her faith in Christ with these words: “The word & idea of Mother fill me with tenderest emotions for I have a Mother & have buried a Father. While I am about to say Adieu, let me [say] God is our Father. From your Affectionate Son, Marcus.”

**Whitman’s Visit With His Wife’s Relatives**

According to Perrin Whitman, he and his uncle left Rushville on April 20 for West Almond in the adjoining county of Allegany to visit Narcissa’s brother, Jonas Galusha Prentiss, who owned a store there. There is an abundance of evidence to show that Whitman was constantly seeking those who would be willing to go to Oregon. In a letter to Myron Eells, J. G. Prentiss referred to Whitman’s eagerness to get him to migrate. Writing to Prentiss from the Shawnee Mission on May 28, Whitman made reference to a Government “secret service fund” which might be at the disposal of Oregon emigrants. It is possible that Dr. White, who had received some aid from such a fund, had told Whitman about it. The occasional references to a “secret service fund” in the correspondence of the missionaries indicate its existence. There is no evidence that Whitman himself ever received any help from this source.

After Marcus and Perrin had made a brief visit in his home, Jonas took them to Cuba, a village about thirty-five miles further west, where they called on Narcissa’s parents and on her sisters, Clarissa and Harriet. The former was married to Norman Kinney and the latter to
John Jackson. Whitman did his best to induce each of these two couples to migrate to Oregon. In his letter of May 28, 1843, to J. G. Prentiss, Whitman wrote: “I shall by no means be surprised to see some if not all of you on our side of the Mountains. Jackson talked favourably.” Whitman was too sanguine in his hopes, for neither couple went to Oregon. Whitman also called on another sister of his wife’s, Mary Ann, who, with her husband, the Rev. Lyman P. Judson, lived somewhere in the vicinity of Cuba. Judson had been a New School Presbyterian minister but had left that denomination when he became enamored with the vagaries of the New England prophet, William Miller, who was preaching the imminent second coming of Christ.

Whitman’s visit with Narcissa’s relatives was all too short. Writing to Clarissa more than a year later, Narcissa confided: “My husband’s visit was very short, too much so to gain all the information I was in hopes he would bring me” [Letter 155]. Whitman delivered in person the letters that Narcissa had written to her relatives and, no doubt, carried letters from them back to Oregon.

“My Plans Require Time and Distance”

William Miller, a New England farmer, began in August 1831 to preach that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world were at hand. At first his prophecies attracted little attention, but as the announced date for the second coming, March 21, 1843, drew near, the excitement became intense. Whitman was either approaching Washington or in the city on Miller’s day of doom and was aware of the excitement that reigned in some circles. Estimates of the number of Miller’s followers vary from fifty thousand to a million. The fateful day came—and went—and nothing happened. Miller, although deeply disappointed, went back to his Bible and did some refiguring. He claimed that he had made a mistake of one year and set, therefore, a second date for Christ’s second coming—March 21, 1844. Strange to say, Miller was able to hold the allegiance of a large number of his followers after this admission of failure, including Lyman P. Judson. The second date passed without the prophecy being fulfilled. A third date, October 22, 1844, was set and it too proved to be false. This ended Miller’s efforts to fix an exact date, but the movement he started continued and in time developed into the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
In the thinking of William Miller and of his followers, including Lyman P. Judson, there was no need to plan for the future. Why do so if the end of the world were at hand?

On November 5, 1846, several years after he had seen his brother-in-law, Whitman wrote to him. After calling attention to the fact that he was in the East when “the famous time came for the end of the world,” Whitman stressed the point that he did not permit such a prophecy to prevent him proceeding with his plans. He wrote: “I did conclude that inasmuch as you had adopted such sentiments, you were not prepared for any work calling for time in its execution,… I was content to pass you in silence. For to my mind, all my work & plans involved time & distance & required confidence in the stability of God’s government…” 15 Here was the reason why the practical-minded Whitman did not try to persuade the visionary Judson to go as a missionary to Old Oregon.

[Mention will be made in the concluding chapter of this work of the monuments and memorials which have been erected to honor the Whitmans. Among these is a statue of Marcus Whitman which has been placed in Statuary Hall of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., which bears on its base the words:

My Plans Require Time and Distance

These words were taken from Whitman’s letter to Judson, as quoted above, with some changes.]

Westward Bound

Marcus and Perrin left on or about April 24 from Cuba, New York, for Buffalo where they expected to take passage on a vessel bound for Cleveland. When the two arrived in Buffalo, they found that the harbor was still blocked with masses of floating ice. The winter of 1842–43 had been uncommonly severe throughout the nation. According to a news story which appeared in the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary for June 1886, judge James Otis of Chicago stated: “In the month of April 1843, Dr. M. Whitman and myself were at the same hotel in Buffalo, N.Y., waiting for the ice to leave the harbor so that we could take the steamboat to Cleveland, Ohio. After some four days, we took the stage to Dunkirk [N.Y.], and thence went by boat to Cleveland.”
Living in Cleveland at that time was one of Whitman’s cousins, Freeman Whitman, son of his Uncle Freeman, with whom Marcus had lived during part of the ten years spent at Cummington, Massachusetts, as a boy. In the home was Freeman’s son, known only by his initials, B.F., who later wrote his recollections of the visit of Dr. Whitman. B.F. wrote: “He spent a day and a night there, at our home, almost persuading my father to join the new enterprise.”16 B.F.’s reminiscences not only confirms the report that Whitman went through Cleveland on his way back to Westport, it also reflects Whitman’s continued eagerness to recruit settlers for Oregon.

From Cleveland, the two Whitmans traveled to Cincinnati by stage, probably arriving there in time to spend Sunday, April 30, in the home of Dr. George Weed. At Cincinnati they boarded a river steamer which carried them to St. Louis, where they disembarked on or about May 6 [Letter 135]. Upon their arrival in this gateway to the West, Whitman learned that the Oregon emigration would not get started before the end of May because of the lateness of the season. Reports had already reached St. Louis of hundreds who planned to go that year to Oregon with thousands of cattle, horses, and mules. The emigrants could not start until the prairie grass was high enough to provide food for the animals. Thus Whitman found that he had some extra time on his hands.

In all probability Marcus and Perrin were guests in the home of the dentist, Dr. Edward Hale, whom Marcus had visited on his eastward journey. Many years later, Perrin told about his uncle having had a tooth filled with gold by Dr. Hale while he watched with fascination the first dentistry he had ever seen. Dr. Hale had no drill to grind out the decayed matter in the tooth, such as modern dentists use, but had to rely on scraping out the cavity with small scalpels. After the tooth was cleaned, thin strips of gold leaf were pounded in, thus filling the cavity.17

**Whitman Calls on Jane Prentiss**

Since he had some free time, Whitman decided to visit Jane and Edward Prentiss at Quincy, Illinois, a little more than one hundred miles up the Mississippi River. Edward happened to be away when Marcus and his nephew arrived, but Jane was there. There were no members of either the Whitman or the Prentiss families whom Marcus and Narcissa were
more eager to persuade to go to Oregon than Jane and Edward, with the single exception of Perrin. Neither Jane nor Edward was married. Both Marcus and Narcissa had dreamed of Jane as a teacher in the Mission school and they hoped that Edward, after completing his studies for the ministry, could take charge of the religious duties at Waiilatpu. In a letter written to Edward from the Shawnee Mission on May 27, Marcus expressed regret at not having seen him at Quincy, and then, in a joking manner, wrote: “Tell Jane two or three young lawyers will be in the party for Oregon but I hope this will not deter her from coming if she has an opportunity.”

In another letter addressed to the two, written from Waiilatpu on May 15, 1846, Marcus said: “Narcissa wants Jane to come and I want Edward, but it is not for us that you should come but for yourselves and the Lord. Edward would do well to have a wife and then come, and Jane will be agreeable with or without a husband, as suits her best; for if she comes without one, I shall try to convince her of her duty to marry.” All of the endeavors and urgings of both Marcus and Narcissa to induce some of their relatives, in addition to Perrin, to migrate to Oregon were in vain. The only other near relative of any member of the Oregon Mission to go to Oregon during the Mission period was Horace Hart, a brother of Eliza Spalding’s, who migrated in 1846.

**Advice to Emigrants**

Whitman was back in St. Louis on May 12. On that date he wrote a short letter to Greene. He reported that he had been unable to find any families who were willing to migrate to Oregon that year. He referred again to a subject which was troubling him, namely, the growing threat of the Roman Catholic missions in Oregon. Somewhere along his line of travel, perhaps in St. Louis, he had purchased for one dollar a copy of Father P. J. De Smet’s *Letters and Sketches* which had been published that year in Philadelphia. He called the book to the attention of Greene and added: “It gives a good account of their Mission in Oregon. You will see by that how things are likely to affect us in that country.” Whitman reported that De Smet was then in Westport making arrangements for the departure of a Catholic reinforcement destined for the Flathead country, and that De Smet planned to return to Europe that summer for more missionaries.
Whitman was alarmed over this information. He urged Greene to get the book and read it. “I think a carefull consideration of this book, together with these facts & movements, you will realize our feeling that we must look with much interest upon this the only spot on the Pacifick [sic] coast left where Protestants have a present hope of a foot hold. It is requisite that more good, pious men & Ministers go to Oregon without delay, as Citizens or our hope there is greatly clouded if not destroyed.” Whitman’s concern over De Smet’s activities is also found in letters he wrote to his mother on May 27 and to J. G. Prentiss on the 28th. Whitman’s failure to find some Protestant families willing to move to Oregon was a source of great disappointment. He was troubled, also, over the apparent lack of concern on the part of Secretary Greene and the Prudential Committee over his proposal to take some positive steps to counteract the Roman Catholics.

A second book which Whitman saw in St. Louis which gave him concern was Philip L. Edwards’ Sketch of the Oregon Territory; or, Emigrants’ Guide, which had been published in 1842 at Liberty, Missouri. Edwards, who had gone out to Old Oregon with the Jason Lee party in 1834, had returned to the States with Lee in 1838, and had settled in Missouri. Since he had made the round trip between the Missouri frontier and Oregon on horseback, his recommendations as to what emigrants should take and how they should travel were received as authoritative. Here was one who could speak from experience.

Whitman was aroused over what he considered to be the disastrous advice which Edwards had given regarding the impracticability of taking wagons all the way through to the Columbia River Valley. Edwards had written: “And were I to join a company of emigrants, I should always prefer horses and mules to any other mode of conveyance; and inconvenient as it may seem, I should always prefer packing the few necessaries of the journey to the encumbrance of wagons. If the latter are employed at all, let them be light but substantial, and drawn by horses and mules. Let it also be understood, that they are to be abandoned by the way.” Moreover, the St. Louis New Era of May 25, 1843, carried an article by Edwards which filled two columns of fine print. Here Edwards repeated his conviction that wagons could not be taken into the Columbia River Valley and recommended that all emigrants who started their journey with them should be prepared to abandon them.
along the way and complete their travels on horseback.

Whitman knew far more about the possibility of wagons going through to the Columbia River than did Edwards. He realized the supreme importance of taking wagons all the way when so many women and children were to be included in the 1843 emigration. Therefore, Whitman did what he could to counteract Edwards’ advice. While in St. Louis, Whitman assisted the Eyres and Hobson families “in purchasing wagons and mules” 20 J. W. Nesmith, a prominent member of the 1843 emigration, testified that: “Dr. Whitman was persistent in his assertion that wagons could proceed as far as the Grand Dalles of the Columbia River, from which point, he asserted, they could be taken down by rafts or batteaux to the Willamette Valley.” 21 No doubt Whitman frequently reminded inquirers that he and Spalding had taken their wagon as far west as Fort Hall, and then the two-wheeled cart as far as Fort Boise. He could also have told that some mountain men had taken three wagons over the Blue Mountains in 1840. To Whitman the success of the 1843 Oregon emigration was crucial, and the key to its success was the ability of the emigrants to take their wagons all the way through to the Columbia.

Following the adjournment of the Twenty-Seventh Congress on March 4, 1843, the senior Senator from Missouri, Thomas H. Benton, had returned to his home in St. Louis. Benton was keenly interested in western exploration and thus became intimately associated with John C. Frémont, who had led several such expeditions into the Far West and who had married Jessie, one of Benton’s daughters. According to Perrin Whitman, he and his uncle called twice on the distinguished Senator. “I was with him both times,” wrote Perrin. 22 Since Frémont was also in St. Louis at the times Whitman called on Senator Benton, it is reasonable to believe that he met Frémont in the Benton home. 23 Whitman, in his letter of May 27 to Edward Prentiss, said: “Lieut. Fremont of the U. States Engineers Corps goes out with about thirty men to explore for the Government and expects to return this fall.” Although Whitman may not have previously met Benton and Frémont, their common interest in the political and economic future of the Oregon country would have established an immediate bond of sympathy.

Frémont and his company left St. Louis by river steamer for Westport on Saturday, May 13, and arrived at their destination on the 18th.
Circumstantial evidence indicates that Whitman and his nephew were passengers on the same vessel. Because of the lateness of the season, Whitman found that the emigration was not yet ready to start. In his letter to his mother written on the 27th, he commented: “I regret I did not stay longer at the east as the companies are so slow in starting. I might about as well have been three weeks later but as I could not know before hand, it was better to be safe.” Shortly after arriving at Westport, Whitman and his nephew went to Independence where Whitman reclaimed the animals and camping equipment, which he had left with the Presbyterian elder, C. W. Boyers, the previous February. Possibly at this time, Marcus bought a riding animal for Perrin and another pack animal.

**The Emigrants Gather**

As soon as the prairie grass was high enough to provide pasturage to livestock, the emigrants began to assemble along the Kansas River beginning a few miles out of present-day Kansas City, Kansas. Peter H. Burnett, who was one of the most influential members of the 1843 emigration and who was to become, seven years later, the first Governor of California, arrived at the emigrants’ rendezvous on May 17. Burnett states in his journal that a meeting of the emigrants was held on the 18th and that a committee was appointed to consult with Dr. Whitman. Another committee was appointed to inspect wagons and a third to draw up rules and regulations to govern the migration on its trek across the country.24

George Wilkes, a young unmarried man who was also a member of the 1843 emigration, gives more details about this meeting in his journal: “A meeting was held... which resulted in appointing a committee to return to Independence, and make inquiries of Doctor Whitman, missionary... respecting the practicabilities of the road, and an adjournment was made to the 20th to Elm Grove, a little distance off, for the purpose of making final arrangements for the regular government of the expedition.”25 Whitman attended the Elm Grove meeting.

Estimates vary as to the number of people in the 1843 emigration. Nesmith claimed that a roll compiled on May 20 listed 295 males over the age of sixteen who were capable of bearing arms.26 Burnett thought that there were at least 800 in the emigration, while other estimates go up to one thousand with at least 120 wagons.27 The latter figure is usually
accepted. This number would include the latecomers who were not present at the Elm Grove meeting. The officers elected at the organizational gathering on May 20 included Peter H. Burnett, captain; J. W. Nesmith, orderly sergeant. Captain John Gantt, a former Army officer and mountain man, was hired to guide the emigration as far as Fort Hall. A code of rules was adopted which included the proviso that all young men sixteen or older could vote. This was logical; a sixteen-year-old boy was expected to do a man’s work in bearing arms, standing guard, and herding the animals. Women were not permitted to vote. For the sake of efficiency, the emigration was divided into companies, each having about forty wagons. On Monday, May 22, the first wagons began rolling westward.

After meeting with the emigrants on Saturday, the 20th, the Whitmans went to the Methodist Mission founded in 1830 at Shawnee, about six miles southwest of present-day Kansas City, Kansas; there they remained until May 31. Some of the original brick buildings of the Mission are still standing. The fact that Whitman and his nephew spent about ten days at the Methodist Mission probably accounts for a few references to him by some emigrants as being a Methodist missionary.

Four letters which Whitman wrote while at the Shawnee Mission, dated May 27 (2), 28, and 30, are extant. Writing to his mother, Marcus said that his health was good, that he had lost about ten pounds since leaving Rushville, and that Perrin “has been a good boy & is happy.” In a letter to J. G. Prentiss, Whitman estimated that the emigration contained “over two hundred men, besides women & children.” Whitman was enthusiastic over the prospects of such a large emigration. “It is now decided in my mind that Oregon will be occupied by American citizens. Those who go only open the way for more another year. Wagons will go all the way, I have no doubt, this year.” In this same letter, Whitman also wrote: “Lieut Fremont is camped about two miles off for the night.” Marcus and Perrin spent the night of Thursday, June 1, with Frémont and his party. Theodore Talbot, a member of the Frémont expedition, noted in his journal: “Dr. Whitman, the Baptist [sic] Missionary, established at Wallawalla on the Columbia, was our guest tonight. He is behind the main body of emigrants, but can of course easily overtake them. He expresses much anxiety for their safe journey, and is determined to do all in his power to assist them, a promise of much value, as well from his practical good sense as his general knowledge of the route.”

28
WHITMAN’S CONTINUED CONCERN
ABOUT THE CATHOLICS

Whitman’s continued concern about Roman Catholic activities in Oregon is found in his letter of May 30 written to Greene while he was still at the Shawnee Mission. Whitman again called Greene’s attention to the book which Father De Smet had published: “We cannot feel it to be at all just that we do nothing while worldly men & Papists are doing so much. De Smet’s business to Europe can be seen, I think, at the top of the 233 page of his Indian Sketches &c. You will see by his book, I think, that the papal effort is designed to convey over the country [i.e., Oregon] to the English.” If Greene had secured a copy of De Smet’s book and if he had turned to the page indicated by Whitman, he could have read: “In my opinion, it is on this spot [i.e., Old Oregon] that we must seek to establish our holy religion. It is here that we must have a college, convent & schools... Here is the field of battle where we must in the first place gain the victory.”

Although De Smet was evidently referring to a spiritual victory, both Whitman and Spalding were suspicious of the political motives of the Roman Catholic missionaries in Oregon. The fact that Fathers Blanchet and Demers came from Canada and that their transportation had been provided by the Hudson’s Bay Company gave grounds for such suspicions. There is plenty of evidence that in the early years of the Catholic Mission in Oregon, the sympathies of the priests were closely allied with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Spalding, in later years, stressed what he considered to have been the sinister designs of the Catholic missionaries to help the British Government secure title to the Oregon country. This became a major emphasis in his Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. The quotation given above from Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 30, 1843, shows that he found political implications in what was evidently a simple statement by Father De Smet of his spiritual objectives.

Whitman was discouraged over the prospects of the future of Protestant missions in Oregon. When he was told by Secretary Ames of the Methodist Missionary Society of the dismissal of Jason Lee, he no doubt was also informed that the Society had appointed the Rev. George Gary as Lee’s successor and had instructed Gary to close out the Methodist work in Oregon. Gary was then on his way to Oregon by sea.
When Whitman was in Boston, he learned more of the financial difficulties of the American Board. The dream that he and Spalding had cherished in 1838 of a reenforcement of 220 missionaries was nothing more than a dream. While in Boston, Whitman, with a more realistic understanding of the financial resources of the Board, limited his request for a reenforcement to just one—he wanted a minister to be sent to Waiilatpu—but even this modest request was denied.

Now faced with the possibility of an enlarged Catholic contingent of missionaries to Oregon, Whitman turned to the only possible alternative to counteract their influence—that of encouraging Protestant settlers to migrate to Oregon. He brought up this possibility again in his letter of May 30 to Greene: “We do not ask you to become the patron of emigration to Oregon but we desire you to use your influence that in connection with all the influx into the country there may be a fair proportion of good men of our own denomination... Also that the Ministers should come out as Citizens or under the Home Missionary Society... I think our greatest hope for having Oregon at least part Protestant now lies in encouraging... good men to go there while the country is open.” Even though Whitman’s proposal made no demands upon the slender financial resources of the Board, his pleas fell on deaf ears; there is no evidence that the Board acted in any way on his recommendations.

“TRAVEL, TRAVEL, TRAVEL”

Whitman and Perrin started their westward journey on Friday morning, June 2, after spending the previous night with Lieut. Frémont. They had but little baggage which was carried by two, possibly three, pack animals. The cynical Peter Waldo, a member of the 1843 emigration wrote: “I fed him the first part of the road. He had nothing to start with but a boiled ham... I reckon he expected that ham to last him and his boy all the way across. After we crossed the Snake River, we had to feed him again. I did not like it much. But he was an energetic man and I liked his perseverance. He had not much judgment but a great deal of perseverance. He expected the emigrants to feed him and they did.” 29

Waldo’s statement about Whitman taking only a ham as his total food supply needs some comment. In all probability, unknown to Waldo, Whitman was promised some food supplies when he met with the
emigrants at Elm Grove on May 20 in return for the services he could render both as a supplemental guide to Captain Gantt and also as the doctor for the emigration.

The emigration consisted of a fine type of people. The Liberty Banner of Clay County, Missouri, described the men as being of “fine intelligence and vigorous and intrepid character, admirably calculated to lay the firm foundation of a future empire.” Estimates vary as to the number of cattle driven to Oregon by the 1848 emigration. According to a statement made by one of the emigrants: “There are over 3,000 and perhaps 5,000 head of cattle, mules and horses attached to the company. Captain Applegate has over 200 head, and others over 100 head.” The presence of so many cattle became a controversial issue; some of the emigrants did not want to help guard or drive them and wanted to move faster than cattle could travel. After the main body of emigrants had crossed the Big Blue River in what is now northeastern Kansas, those owning cattle formed a separate company which was called the “Cow Column.”

At first the emigrants were careless about their food, throwing away portions after each meal which should have been saved, and generously inviting others to eat with them. They soon learned that every scrap of food, even bacon rinds, had to be conserved. Captain Gantt killed an old buffalo bull on June 15. The wanton killing of the majestic shaggy beasts of the prairies by thoughtless white men, who were slaughtering the animals for their hides or for the thrill of killing, was already beginning to decimate the great herds. Because of the lack of buffalo, some of the emigrants were obliged to butcher some of their cattle.

The vanguard of the emigration came to the South Fork of the Platte River about July 1. There wagon boxes were covered with buffalo skins and made into boats which were used in crossing the river. Whitman and his nephew overtook the main body of the emigrants at this place. Here Whitman rendered valiant service in helping the families cross. Because the late spring had delayed the departure of the emigration from the frontier, Whitman repeatedly warned of the necessity of constant travel. Perrin later wrote: “He never allowed them to stay two nights in one place. Kept them moving every day, if it was only for a little way, so as to change grass for the stock.” Jesse Applegate stressed the same fact: “From the time he joined us on the Platte until he left us at Fort Hall, his great experience and indomitable energy were of
priceless value to the migration column. His constant advice, which we knew was based on a knowledge of the road before us was ‘travel, travel, TRAVEL…. nothing else will take you to the end of your journey; nothing is wise that does not help you along; nothing is good for you that causes a moment’s delay.’”

Comments of Emigrants

One of the 1843 emigrants, J. W. Nesmith, described Whitman in these words: “He was of a powerful physical organization, and possessed a great and good heart, full of charity and courage, and utterly destitute of cant, hypocrisy, shams and effeminacy, and always terribly in earnest.” Regarding Whitman’s services to the emigrants, Nesmith wrote: “While with us he was clad entirely in buckskin, and rode one of those patient long-eared animals said to be ‘without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity.’ The Doctor spent much of his time in hunting out the best route for the wagons, and would plunge into streams in search of practical fords, regardless of the depth or temperature of the water, and sometimes after the fatigue of a hard day’s march, would spend much of the night in going from one party to another to minister to the sick.”

Applegate also commented on Whitman’s services to the members of the emigration as a doctor. He tells that one day a wagon swung out of the train and stopped. In it was an expectant mother and Dr. Whitman, who had been riding alongside the wagon for some time. A tent was pitched, a fire kindled, and water put on to boil. The other wagons rolled by, some wondering why one family should drop out of line and make camp at that hour of the day. The long emigrant train moved on leaving the lone covered wagon far in the rear. Here is Applegate’s description: “There are anxious watchers for the absent wagon, for there are many matrons who may be afflicted like its inmate before the journey is over… But as the sun goes down, the absent wagon rolls into camp, the bright, speaking [sic] face and cheery look of the doctor, who rides in advance, declare without words that all is well, and both mother and child are comfortable.”

The successful delivery of the child firmly established Whitman’s reputation and give confidence to the whole emigration. Applegate further commented: “His great authority as a physician and complete success in the case referred to, saved us many prolonged and perhaps
ruinous delays for similar causes, and it is no disparagement to others to say, that to no other individual are the emigrants of 1843 so much indebted for the successful conclusion of their journey as to Dr. Marcus Whitman.” At the end of the day when the first baby of the 1843 emigration was born, several of the men of the cow column gathered at the tent of the pilot, with whom Whitman lived, “listening, to his wise and energetic counsel.” The pilot sat silent at one side, “quietly smoked his pipe for he knows the brave doctor is ‘strengthening his hands.’”

Looking back on his experiences in crossing the country, one member of the 1843 emigration came to the conclusion that it was not wise to depend on buffalo or other wild game for food. Writing from Fort Vancouver on November 11, 1843, S. M. Gilmore advised any in the States who were thinking of migrating to Oregon: “You should bring 200 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of bacon, for every member of the family that can eat, besides other provisions. Make no calculation on getting buffalo or other wild meat, for you are only wasting time and killing horses and mules to get it.” He also recommended that wagon beds should be so constructed that they could be converted into boats and used in crossing streams. Such wagon beds should be well covered “so they will not leak, or your provisions and clothes will spoil.”

The vanguard of the emigration reached Fort Laramie on July 14. There the emigrants were astounded at the high prices being asked for food items and other supplies. According to Burnett, the following prices were charged: “Coffee, $1.50 a pint; brown sugar, the same; flour, unbolted, 25 cents a pound; powder, $1.50 a pound; lead, 75 cents a pound; percussion caps, $1.50 a box; calico, very inferior, $1.00 a yard.” As will be noted, some emigrants of 1843 and following years, who found it necessary to buy food supplies at Waiilatpu, criticized Whitman for what they thought were exorbitant prices he asked. Yet Whitman charged only five cents a pound for flour when it sold for twenty-five cents at Fort Laramie.

The Laramie River was high because of the melting snows in the mountains. Since it could not be forded, the wagon boxes again had to be converted into boats. Waldo reported: “No one was willing to risk himself in swimming the river and carrying the line but Dr. Whitman, which he did successfully.” A. L. Lovejoy, whom Whitman had left at Bent’s Fort the previous January 7, had crossed the country and joined
the emigration somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Laramie in order to return with it to Oregon.

**LETTERS FROM NARCISSA**

When Whitman was at Fort Laramie or a little west of it, he had the thrill of meeting a messenger who carried a letter for him from Narcissa which had been written at Waiilatpu on May 18, about two months before. This was the first letter he had received from his wife since he left for the East on October 3 the previous fall. For the first time, Whitman learned of the burning of the mill, an event which had taken place more than eight months before. Believing that he had received some of the letters she had sent to him at eastern addresses, Narcissa made only a passing reference to the incident. Her letter dealt mainly with the excitement which stirred the Cayuses because of the rumors of the coming of American soldiers “for their destruction.” She told of Dr. White’s meeting with the Nez Perces; of the selection of Ellis to be that tribe’s first Head Chief; and of the adoption of the code of laws. She wrote of the reluctance of the Cayuses to accept the laws and of how much they needed their missionary. “They seem to be and to feel ‘like sheep without a shepherd,’” she wrote. “It may be,” she added, “that I am addressing the dead instead of the living. I hope that it is otherwise, and may you be preserved to return in peace... for my anxious heart longs to greet you. The mission sends four horse loads of flour to Fort Boise & Fort Hall for you and your Company.” This was welcome news indeed.

Having an opportunity to send letters back to the States, Whitman wrote to Greene on July 20 from “Bigbute Creek, 100 miles west of Laramie’s Fork.” He forwarded his wife’s letter. “I am in no way solicitous for the loss of the Mill,” he wrote, “or on account of the excitement [among the natives] & hope no change will be made in the Mission & that you will be able to reinforce us next year.” The last sentence of this letter drew attention to one of the hazards of wagon train travel; individuals, especially children, would accidentally fall under a moving wagon and be run over. This often resulted in broken bones or in death. Whitman wrote: “We buried a small boy this morning that died from a wagon having passed over the abdomen.”
ARRIVAL AT FORT HALL

The company with whom Peter Burnett traveled, crossed the Continental Divide during the first week of August. Whitman, who had by this time pushed on ahead, heard of a new cutoff which shortened the distance to Fort Hall. Burnett referred to this when he wrote: “On the 12th of August, we were informed that Doctor Whitman had written a letter stating that the Catholic missionaries had discovered, by the aid of their Flathead Indian pilot, a pass through the mountains by the way of Fort Bridger, which was shorter than the old route.” Burnett’s party arrived at Fort Bridger, on Black’s Fork of the Green River, on August 14, and at Fort Hall on the 27th.

At Fort Hall, Whitman met again Captain Richard Grant, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s trader in charge, whom he had seen the previous October. Grant had escorted Mrs. Whitman from Waskopum to Fort Walla Walla with the Hudson’s Bay express early in April 1843 and thus was able to give Whitman some recent information regarding his wife and the state of affairs at Waiilatpu. Whitman found several Nez Perce Indians waiting for him at Fort Hall with pack animals loaded with flour, which had been sent by Spalding. What Whitman charged for this flour, which he sold to the emigrants, is not known. Nesmith, in his “Diary of the Emigration of 1843,” reported that Grant asked “25¢ per pint” for the flour that he sold. Also at Fort Hall were some other Nez Perces and Cayuses who were returning from the buffalo country. Among them was the Cayuse chief, Stickus, to whom reference has already been made. Of him, Nesmith wrote: “He was a faithful old fellow, perfectly familiar with all the trails and topography of the country from Fort Hall to the Dalles.” Stickus and his band joined the 1843 emigration at Fort Hall, traveling with Whitman.

Edward H. Lenox, also a member of the emigration, wrote in his reminiscences that Whitman received a letter from his wife at Fort Hall on August 28 which contained the plea: “Do hurry home.” Whitman was eager to press on ahead of the emigration but the critical question which arose at Fort Hall in regard to the feasibility of the emigrants taking their wagons further west caused him to delay.
CONFRONTATION WITH CAPTAIN RICHARD GRANT

The members of the Oregon emigration of 1843 faced a crisis when they arrived at Fort Hall with their 120 wagons and large herds of cattle, horses, and mules. Possibly some thought that Fort Hall marked the end of the Oregon Trail as far as wagons were concerned. Captain Gantt, having piloted the emigration to that point according to his agreement, left with a small party bound for California. Since returning to the States was unthinkable, the emigrants had to choose between two alternatives: leave their wagons and continue their journey on horseback, or attempt to take their wagons across the desert and over the Blue Mountains into the Columbia River Valley, something which many said could not be done.

Among those who strongly recommended the first course of action was Captain Grant, who reinforced his arguments by showing the emigrants the wagons left at the fort by members of the 1842 emigration. Grant had traveled the route between Fort Hall and Fort Walla Walla several times on horseback and was probably sincere in the advice that he gave. Adherents of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story, however, have argued that Grant, realizing that the American claim to Oregon would be immeasurably strengthened if a wagon road to the Columbia were opened, deliberately did what he could to prevent it.

An indication that Captain Grant might have been aware of the political implications of the successful opening of a wagon road to the Columbia is to be found in the following quotation from George Wilkes’ History of Oregon: “Some of the members [of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Hall] told us that they could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the immense stretch of our [wagon] line, the number of our lowing herds, and the squads of prancing horsemen, and they inquired laughingly if we had come to conquer Oregon, or devour it out of hand.” Any joking that Captain Grant, or any of his associates, may have made about the intention of the Americans to take over the Oregon country, could have reflected a realization that that was exactly what was happening.

Burnett, in his Recollections, wrote: “I consulted Mr. Grant as to his opinion of the practicability of taking our wagons through. He replied that, while he would not say it was impossible for us Americans to make the trip in our wagons, he could not himself see how it could be done.”
Some of the emigrants, probably those without small children, heeded Grant’s advice, as Nesmith reported: “Part of the company went on pack animals, leaving their wagons.” 47

In 1897, Perrin Whitman stated in an interview: “When we arrived at Fort Hall, I heard the commandant [i.e., Captain Grant] tell the immigrants that Dr. Whitman would starve them all to death in the Green [the reference should have been to the Snake] River country. He said that they could never get their wagons to the Columbia Valley in their lives. I went and told Dr. Whitman about it, and he got the immigrants together and gave them a harangue. He told them he would get them to the Columbia River if he lived; that they had just to stick to their wagons and follow him, he would get them through.” 48

The emigrants had to face some practical problems. How would it have been possible to mount some eight hundred or more people, including about five hundred women and children, and conduct them safely over five hundred miles of deserts and mountains to Fort Walla Walla? How could a young mother, riding side-saddle, providing such were available, carry an infant child for so great a distance? What about the transportation of supplies? Whitman insisted that if Captain Grant’s advice were to be followed, the emigration would end in a tragic disaster. He told them again that wagons had been taken over the Blue Mountains and what had been done once could be done again. “Had we followed Grant’s advice,” wrote Nesmith, “and abandoned the cattle and wagons at Fort Hall, much suffering must have ensued besides, wagons and cattle were indispensable to men expecting to live by farming in a country destitute of such articles.” 49

The majority of the emigrants accepted Whitman’s advice and kept their wagons, but evidently upon the condition that he serve as pilot for the remainder of the journey. Whitman was reluctant to accept this responsibility, as he wanted to push on ahead with a small party of single men including Lovejoy. The words of his wife were echoing through his mind: “Do hurry home,” but the urgency of seeing the emigration safely through to its destination outweighed personal desires.

In a letter to Greene written from Fort Walla Walla on November 1, 1843, Whitman explained: “My journey across the Mountains was very much prolonged by the necessity for me to pilot the Emigrants. I tried in vain to come ahead at different points but found it would be at the risk
of disaster to the emigrants of having to leave their wagons without the possibility of obtaining a sufficient number of horses to take any considerable part of their families & necessary food & clothing.”

OPENING THE WAGON ROAD TO THE COLUMBIA

There was no effort to organize the emigration into separate companies after it had reached Fort Hall. No longer were the emigrants faced with the danger of attack from hostile Indians. Individual groups pushed on as fast as they could. Whitman usually was with the vanguard company. The Snake River was crossed at Salmon Falls, where one of the emigrants, Miles Eyres, whom Whitman had met in St. Louis and whom he had encouraged to go to Oregon, was drowned. Eyres had all of his money in a belt around his waist. His body was not recovered; thus his wife and three children were left almost destitute. They spent the winter of 1843–44 with the Whitmans at Waiilatpu, being among the first of many unfortunate victims of the Oregon Trail to seek the hospitality of the mission station.

About September 20, the first of the emigrants arrived at Fort Boise, where they were kindly received by Francis Payette, the Hudson’s Bay trader in charge. For the most part, the emigrants had experienced no difficulty in taking their wagons across the Snake River desert. The most difficult part of their route, however, lay before them in the rugged Blue Mountains. Since it was getting late in the season, Whitman urged them not to tarry but to press on with all possible speed. Perhaps he reminded the emigrants that he had encountered snow in the Mountains during the first week of October of the previous year. In his letter of November 1 to Greene, Whitman wrote: “By taking a light horse wagon, I was enabled to come ahead from Fort Boise.” Although Whitman and Spalding had left the latter’s light wagon at Fort Boise in 1836, it does not appear that this was the wagon which Whitman used in 1843. Possibly he borrowed such a wagon from some member of the emigration and with it pioneered the wagon road over the Blue Mountains.

Whitman was assisted in guiding the long wagon train over the mountains by his Indian friend Stickus. Nesmith wrote that although Stickus knew not a word of English and the Americans knew nothing of the Indian language, yet “he succeeded by pantomime in taking us over the roughest wagon route I ever saw. Stickus was a member of Dr.
Whitman’s church, and the only Indian I ever saw that I thought had any conception of and practiced the Christian religion.”\textsuperscript{51} Actually Stickus never became a member of the Mission church. Since he and his band lived at some distance from Waiilatpu, he could not have attended very often the religious services Whitman conducted. The Whitman letters contain references to Stickus and always with respect. What Timothy was to Spalding, Stickus was to Whitman.

**Whitman Called to Lapwai and Tshimakain**

While in the Grande Ronde Valley, Whitman received a letter written by Elkanah Walker from Lapwai which carried the distressing news that both Henry and Eliza Spalding were critically ill with scarlet fever. Eliza had been stricken first and for two weeks had hovered between life and death. Believing that her end was near, Henry sent word to Geiger at Waiilatpu and to the two couples at Tshimakain to come and attend her funeral. Geiger arrived at Lapwai on September 14 and Walker on the 15\textsuperscript{th}. They found Eliza out of danger but Henry had been stricken and then, a few days later, the children. As soon as Walker arrived at Lapwai, believing that Whitman would be drawing near to his station at that time with the 1843 emigration, he sent an Indian messenger to intercept him with the urgent plea that he go at once to Lapwai.

Whitman responded by turning over the guiding of the emigration to Stickus and hastened to Lapwai, where he arrived on September 25. He found both of the Spaldings out of danger; the children were still sick but not dangerously so. After staying at Lapwai for only one night, he left on Tuesday, the 26\textsuperscript{th}, for Waiilatpu. Naturally, Whitman told Spalding of his successful intercession with the American Board and of the rescinding of the disastrous order of February 1842. In his letter to Greene of November 1, Whitman wrote of Spalding: “He has expressed a much better state of feeling towards the members of the Mission and the Board since his sickness, and the reception of your letter and my return, than ever before.” Contemporary documents do not indicate any further friction between Whitman and Spalding during the remaining years of the Mission. The years of dissension within the Mission were over.

Whitman arrived back at Waiilatpu perhaps by Thursday evening, September 28. By that time Narcissa had heard of her husband’s return and was either en route to or had arrived at The Dalles, expecting to
meet him there. When Geiger was called to Lapwai, he left only an Indian in charge of the premises at Waiilatpu. When Whitman returned to his station, he discovered that the advance party of the emigration, consisting of men on horseback, had arrived during Geiger’s absence and had broken open his house and “left it open to the Indians although wheat, corn, potatoes, garden vegetables, hogs & cattle were in abundance outside” [Letter 142]. Whitman was shocked at the irresponsible, even reprehensible, actions of those whom he had helped.

Whitman was home for only one day before an urgent message came from Cushing Eells. His wife was expecting her second child, and the doctor was needed. After giving hasty instructions to Geiger regarding the selling of supplies to the emigrants, Whitman set out on his 140-mile ride to Tshimakain where he arrived sometime during the night of October 1. According to Mary Walker’s diary, Whitman was exceedingly restless during the week he was waiting for the Eells baby to be born; on October 6, she wrote: “Dr. W. very uneasy, regrets he came too soon.” 52 No doubt he was constantly mindful of the emigrants streaming by Waiilatpu, many of whom were in need of food, medical attention, and advice. Moreover, he had the natural desire to see his wife as soon as possible. A baby boy was born early on the morning of the 7th, who was named Myron. 53

At noon of the day the baby was born, Whitman started back to Waiilatpu. En route he overtook Walker and five-year-old David Malin, who had started from Tshimakain a day or so before he did. During Narcissa’s absence from Waiilatpu, David had spent most, if not all the time with the Walkers at Tshimakain. Whitman found upon his arrival at Waiilatpu, on October 10, that the main body of the emigrants had already passed. Geiger had been there to meet their needs. “All came in their turns,” wrote Whitman, “and were supplied with provisions.” Somehow Whitman had obtained a pair of small millstones and soon had the mill in operation, “so that the latter part of the emigration got grinding done. My wheat, beef & most of my hogs & corn & many of my potatoes have been furnished them” [Letter 142].
SUCCESSFUL END OF THE 1843 EMIGRATION

Upon their arrival at The Dalles, most of the emigrants decided to complete their journey to the Willamette Valley by going down the Columbia River with their wagons and equipment on boats or rafts. The herds of cattle, horses, and mules were driven through the heavy forests which cloak the sides of Mt. Hood into the Valley. A few venturesome men took their wagons over the mountains. In places the terrain was so precipitous that large trees had to be cut down and tied to the descending wagons to serve as a brake. Thus the first great emigration to Oregon came to a successful end. The feasibility of taking wagons through, not only over the Blue Mountains to the Columbia River, but also over the Cascades into the Willamette Valley, had been demonstrated. The wagon road to Oregon was opened at last!

Several years before the 1843 emigration arrived in the Valley, the Rev. Josiah L. Parrish, one of the Methodist missionaries, told Dr. McLoughlin: “Before we die, we will see the Yankees coming across the mountains with their teams and families.” McLoughlin scoffed at the idea and said that they might as well undertake a trip to the moon. When some of the emigrants arrived in the Valley, the skeptical McLoughlin went to see them. Meeting Parrish, he exclaimed: “God forgive me, Parrish, but the Yankees are here, and the first thing you know they will yoke up their oxen, drive down to the mouth of the Columbia River and come out at Japan.” And again he said: “The devil is in the Americans, the devil is in you people.”

That which had seemed to Dr. McLoughlin as improbable as going to the moon had actually come to pass [and now, in our generation, even going to the moon has become an actuality].

WHITMAN ACCUSED OF CHARGING “EXORBITANT PRICES”

After their arrival in the Willamette Valley, some members of the 1843 immigration criticized Whitman for charging what they claimed were exorbitant prices for food supplies sold to them at Waiilatpu. Dr. Elijah White became the spokesman for the critics in his report of November 15, 1843, sent to his superiors in Washington: “The Presbyterian Mission, however, for the first time have fallen very heavily under censure from the immigrating party this fall, from the fact principally,
as I understand, of their exacting most exorbitant prices for supplies of provisions. I have only ex–parte statements, which if but half true, they deserve the just reprobation of mankind.”

Nearly two years later, when Whitman was called to Oregon City on business, he met White on the street and demanded an explanation of the criticisms that White had been spreading abroad. B. F. Nichols, an early Oregon immigrant, tells the story of what happened:

I was present in Oregon City, some time in the month of June 1845, when Dr. Whitman and Dr. White had what you might call a public controversy. Dr. White from a sectarian jealousy, had written a letter to some of the eastern papers, charging Whitman with misusing immigrants. Dr. Whitman came down and happened to meet Dr. White in Oregon City, when they had a dispute. Dr. White proposed to establish what he had said, so a meeting for a public investigation was called at the Red House. Dr. White called Mr. Geiger, who still lives in Oregon City, as his first witness.

When asked to state how Dr. Whitman had treated the immigrants, Mr. Geiger told a very different story than White had counted on. Instead of telling how Dr. Whitman had misused them, he told of his many kindnesses to them, and what a friend he had always been to them. When White saw that the tables were turned against him by his own witnesses, he jumped up and said: “Mr. Geiger, you can take your seat, sir; I will acknowledge that you can outlie me.” He failed to prove a single allegation that he had made, so the investigation proved to be a great triumph for Dr. Whitman.

Burnett also came to Whitman’s defense by writing: “This foolish, false, and ungrateful charge was based upon the fact that he asked us a dollar a bushel for wheat, and forty cents for potatoes. As our people had been accustomed to sell their wheat at from fifty to sixty cents a bushel, and their potatoes at from twenty to twenty–five cents, in the Western States, they thought the prices demanded by the doctor amounted to something like extortion, not reflecting that he had to pay at least twice as much for his own supplies of merchandise, and could not afford to sell his
produce as low as they did theirs at home.” According to Burnett, some of the immigrants felt so strongly about the high prices that Whitman was asking that they refused to buy and, as a result, ran out of food before they got to the Willamette Valley and were obliged to borrow from others.

Whitman was also criticized by some because of the terms he was asking for trading fresh, fat oxen for the worn-out cattle of the immigrants. Of this Daniel Waldo wrote in sharp terms: “Whitman lied to me like hell at Waiilatpu. He wanted my cattle and told me the grass was all burnt between his place and the Dalles. I told him I would try it anyhow. The first night I left for the Dalles, I found the finest grass I ever saw, and it was good every night.”

Lenox, in a less critical spirit, said: “My father found it necessary to get new oxen, ours were so worn out, so we traded our five oxen for two fresh ones with Mr. Geiger, working our cows to make out a full team.” Another immigrant, J. B. McClane wrote of trading two head of worn-out cattle for a fat ox, but made no criticism of what he considered to be a fair transaction made with Whitman. Whitman frequently extended credit and often was never paid. In this respect his experience was similar to that of Dr. McLoughlin and the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, where credit was likewise given to immigrants who later neglected or even refused to settle their accounts. Geiger and Whitman sold so much of the produce of the Waiilatpu fields in the fall of 1843 that Whitman was obliged to call upon Spalding to furnish supplies for the winter [Letter 142].

An Appraisal of the Results of Whitman’s Ride

As outlined in an earlier chapter, evidence indicates that Whitman had three motives for making his journey to Washington and Boston in 1842–43, namely: mission business, political interests, and the desire to counteract Roman Catholic influences. We can now ask: To what extent was Whitman successful in the realization of these objectives? Regarding his concern for the future welfare of the Oregon Mission, he succeeded in inducing the Board to rescind its action of February 1842. Spalding was not to be dismissed nor were the stations at Waiilatpu and Lapwai to be closed.

Linked with his concern over the future of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was his desire to counteract the growing influ-
ence of the Roman Catholic missionaries in Oregon by persuading the American Board to send out a reinforcement to its Mission in Oregon and also to promote the emigration of Protestant families. In this objective, Whitman failed, for the Board never sent another missionary to Oregon and seemingly did nothing to encourage Protestants to emigrate and settle in the vicinity of the Mission stations. The four couples already under appointment carried on in their respective stations at Waiilatpu, Lapwai, and Tshimakain without additional help.

**Political Results of Whitman’s Ride**

The most far-reaching results of Whitman’s ride are to be found in the political realm. Whitman’s interests were not centered upon any possible treaty that the United States might sign with Great Britain which would fix the location of the Oregon boundary. Rather, Whitman’s emphasis was on emigration. He was tremendously interested in having the United States Government extend its jurisdiction over Oregon, but nowhere in his correspondence does he indicate any opinion as to just where the border was to be located. He evidently reasoned that the boundary question would automatically be settled if enough American citizens could be induced to settle in Oregon. All the efforts of statesmen and diplomats to fix the boundary at some line favorable to the United States would have been fruitless without a large and growing American colony in Oregon.

A new era in Oregon’s history began with the arrival of the large 1843 emigration. The wagon road from Fort Hall to the Columbia River was the magic key which unlocked Oregon’s doors to the restless thousands on America’s western frontiers. The success of the 1843 emigration guaranteed that other large emigrations would follow. The larger the number of Americans in Oregon, the greater would be the pressure on the government to extend its jurisdiction over the territory.

Whitman remembered with glowing pride the part he had played in the opening of the road to the Columbia. Perhaps the most revealing comment, reflecting his appraisal of the importance of the services he rendered for the political future of Oregon, is in the following extract from his letters to Greene dated November 1, 1843:

> I do not regret having visited the States for I feel that this country must either be American or else foreign & mostly Papal. If I never
do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the Mountains & prevent the disaster & reaction which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present Emigration & establishing the first wagon road across to the border of the Columbia River, I am satisfied. I cannot feel that we can look on & see Papal & Foreign influence making its greatest effort & we hold ourselves as expatriated & neutral. I am determined to exert myself for my country & to procure such regulations & laws as will best secure both the Indian & white man in their transit & settlement [and] intercourse.⁶²

Shortly after his return to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843, Whitman wrote out the draft of his proposed bill for Congressional consideration, the contents of which he had discussed with government officials while in Washington during the previous March.⁶³ He also wrote a letter to the “Hon. James M. Porter, Secretary of War.” On the back of the letter, now on file in the National Archives along with the draft of his bill, is the notation: “Marcus Whitman. Enc. synopsis of a bill with his views in reference to impot. [importance] of the Oregon Terry... Rec. June 22, '44.” Whitman’s letter to Porter is undated but from internal evidence and from the date of its receipt, we know that it was written sometime in the fall of 1843. Since the letter and the proposed bill are not known to have been published since 1905, both are given in Appendix 7 of this book.

Whitman’s letter to Porter is important as it gives a detailed report about the 1843 Oregon emigration and needs to be read carefully. After making reference to “the immense immigration of families to Oregon” which had taken place that year, Whitman wrote: “I have since our interview, been instrumental in piloting across the route described in the accompanying Bill, and which is the only eligible wagon road, no less than... one thousand persons of both sexes with their wagons, amounting in all to more than one hundred and twenty, 698 oxen and 973 loose cattle.” He referred to the “incredible hardships” suffered by the immigrants and claimed that their success in taking their wagons and effects through to the Columbia River had “established a durable road from Missouri to Oregon... contrary to all the sinister assertions of those who pretend it to be impossible.” Whitman prophesied that larger numbers of people would be going to Oregon in “each succeeding year.”
In this letter to Porter, Whitman pointed out the necessity of extending United States jurisdiction to Oregon so that its citizens could execute legal documents. “At present,” he wrote, “no person is authorized to administer an oath or legally attest a fact from the western line of Missouri to the Pacific.” Such lack of law often meant real economic hardships.

Aware of a provision in a bill before Congress which would have given 640 acres to every white male over sixteen who would settle in Oregon, Whitman began thinking of how he might claim the land at Waiilatpu. Under the proposed law, no provision was made for such institutions and organizations as the American Board to make such a claim for its mission sites. Whitman touched on this subject when he wrote to Greene on April 8, 1844: “Perhaps in some way, as we have so eminently aided the Government by being among the first to cross the mountains, and the first to bring white women over, and last but not least, as I brought the late emigration on to the shores of the Columbia with their wagons contrary to all former assertions of the impossibility of the route, we may be allowed the right of private citizens by taking lands in the country.”

In his letter to Greene of July 22, 1844, Whitman repeated his conviction that it was he who had saved the 1843 emigration from disaster: “No one but myself was present to give them the assurance of getting through.” In the last letter he wrote Greene, dated October 18, 1847, just six weeks before his death, we find the following:

Two things, and it is true those which were the most important; were accomplished by my return to the States. By means of the establishment of the wagon road, which is due to that effort alone, the emigration was secured & saved from disaster in the fall of forty-three. Upon that event the present acquired rights of U. States by her Citizens hung. And not less certain is it that upon the result of emigration to this country, the present existence of this Mission & of Protestantism in general hung also.64

In these various statements Whitman summarizes his conviction that the opening of Oregon to American settlement hinged upon two events: (1) the successful crossing of the Rockies by the two white women in the summer of 1836, and (2) the successful piloting of the 1843 emigration across the Snake River desert and the Blue Mountains to the Columbia
River. The emigrations of 1844 and later years did not take the risks taken by that of 1843. The 1843 emigration had no precedent to give them assurance of success except the knowledge that three wagons had been taken over the Blue Mountains in 1840 and Whitman’s conviction that what had once been done could be done again. The strength of America’s position at the diplomatic bargaining table when the boundary issue was finally settled in 1846 with Great Britain, was due to the success of American immigration. That part of Old Oregon up to the 49° parallel was won by the United States largely because of the numerical strength of the American colony in that territory, even though most of the immigrants had settled south of the Columbia River.

**REACTION OF THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY**

When George Simpson had visited Fort Vancouver in the summer of 1841, he studied the idea of moving the headquarters of the Columbia Department of the Hudson’s Bay Company from Fort Vancouver to some point on Vancouver Island. Several reasons dictated the move, one being the proximity of Fort Vancouver to the Americans in the Willamette Valley, whom Simpson profoundly distrusted. On March 1, 1842, McLoughlin was directed to establish a new depot at the southern end of Vancouver Island. A site was selected and the construction of a new post was begun in 1843 at what is now Victoria, British Columbia. The arrival of the 1843 immigration caused the Company to accelerate its plan of transferring its fur trade from Fort Vancouver to Fort Victoria. By 1845 Fort Vancouver had become little more than a mercantile establishment serving the needs of all Oregon settlers who might apply.

The Governor and Committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company in London took note of the increased American activities in Oregon and their correspondence with McLoughlin reflects their alarm. In a letter dated September 27, 1843, to McLoughlin, we may read: “We notice the arrival of Dr. White in the Columbia District with a fresh party of emigrants, and we entirely approve of the course you pursued towards that person. No authority emanating from the Government of the United States is to be recognized west of the Rocky Mountains until the boundary question shall have been settled.” This was a reasonable stand to take as long as the Treaty of Joint Occupation remained in effect. “There is little doubt,” the letter continues, “that this man is an instrument in
the hands of that party in the United States who have been for sometime past urging the Government of that country to take military possession of the Oregon Territory.”

The writer of this letter may have known of the large emigration of that year when he wrote: “To their misrepresentations respecting the fertility of the soil and other natural advantages of the valley of the Walamet may be attributed the great influx of Americans to that quarter of late, it being their policy to give the American interests an apparent superiority over the British and thus to strengthen the claim of the United States to the disputed territory.” 65 This was precisely the position which had been taken by Marcus Whitman.

On June 21, 1843, before he had heard of the successful American emigration of that year, Simpson wrote to McLoughlin from Red River. Regarding the diplomatic negotiations involving the Oregon border, Simpsonoptimistically commented: “I am very much of the opinion that the negotiations in regard to it will be brought to a close in the course of this year. The impression on my mind, from all that has reached me, is that the Columbia River from its outlet to its source in the mountains by the Southern branch or Lewis & Clark’s route will become the boundary.” 66 Simpson evidently knew that Lord Ashburton had been in Washington in the preceding summer and optimistically assumed that the British diplomat would insist upon the location of the border at the Columbia River, which had long been advocated by officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

The full effect of the successful emigration of 1843 was not felt until 1845, as it took time for the news to get back to the States. The emigration of 1844 numbered only about 1,500 people, whereas that of 1845 totaled nearer three thousand. With the immigrants pouring into Oregon by the thousands, James Douglas, one of the Chief Factors at Fort Vancouver, in a letter to Simpson dated March 5, 1845, pointed out the consequences of continued delay in settling the boundary question: “I am sorry to hear that the settlement of the Boundary question is likely to drag on, from year to year, without being settled, as the Americans will soon leave nothing to settle. The people of the West are crowding into the country by sea and land as fast as they can come. Every vessel from the Sandwich Islands brings some addition to their number, and about 1,500 persons arrived last autumn overland from St. Louis, bringing with them nearly
200 wagons and upwards of 1,000 head of cattle. They are branching out into every direction, and settling wherever fancy leads them.” 67

Some students of Northwest history have claimed that since only a few Americans settled north of the Columbia River before 1846, the presence of so many in the Willamette Valley could not have had much influence on the willingness of the British Government to abandon its claim to the disputed territory north of the River when the boundary was fixed at the 49° parallel that year. However, a letter from Douglas dated October 8, 1845, to Sir George F. Seymour of H.M.S. Collingwood, gives a different picture. After urging the Admiral to send a vessel to the Columbia “for the support of British influence and the protection of British interests and property in the Columbia River,” Douglas explained: “The reasons for this opinion are principally founded on the great and increasing American population who are settling without any regard to the claims of Great Britain in every part of the Territory, North and South of the Columbia River. These people not being under the control of any government, and having no generally acknowledged code of laws, and being animated with a spirit exceedingly hostile to Great Britain may, as they have already done, attempt to intrigue upon the improvements and invade the property of the British subjects settled in the country.” 68

How different would have been the history of the Pacific Northwest had Great Britain, instead of the United States, been able to send thousands of her citizens to that territory during those crucial years, 1843–45.
CHAPTER 19 FOOTNOTES

1 Italics are the author’s.

2 See Bibliography for data about these two works.


4 _Sunday School Times_, Jan. 10, 1903.

5 Perrin Whitman interview, _Portland Oregonian_, Jan. 29, 1899.

6 Naples, _New York, Record_, Sept. 19, 1913.

7 _Centennial Celebration_ booklet, p. 36, Rushville Congregational Church, 1902.

8 Information by kindness of Miss Caroline House of Naples.

9 James Clark Strong, _Biographical Sketch_, Los Gatos, Calif., 1910, p. 4.

10 From copy in possession of the late L. Alexander Mack, grandson of Parker.


12 Samuel Whitman’s notebook (see Chapter Three, fn. 3) has this item: “July, 1868, Perrin B. Whitman came home—to see me, twenty five yrs. gon.” Information by courtesy of Robert Moody of Rushville.

13 Original letter, Nov. 18, 1883, Coll. W.


15 Italics are the author’s.

16 Cleveland _Plain Dealer_, May 7, 1895. It is not possible to reconstruct with accuracy the chronology of Whitman’s journey westward. Judge Otis may have been mistaken when he claimed that he and Whitman spent four days in Buffalo.

17 _W.C.Q._, II (1898):3:36. Dr. Hale was one of the first three dentists who practised in St. Louis for any length of time. He retired in 1864.

18 Only one copy of the original pamphlet is known to exist; it is in Coll. Y. Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, Wash., brought out a reprint edition, 1971, 20 pp.

19 Italics are the author’s. Most of the emigrants who made the overland journey to Oregon found that oxen, although slower, were more reliable than horses. See George Wilkes, _History of Oregon_, New York, 1845, p. 68.


22 Perrin Whitman, ms., Coll. Wn.

23 Theodore Talbot, _Journals_, Portland, 1931, p. 3, states that Fremont and members of his party left Cincinnati on May 4 and arrived in St. Louis on the 7th.


27 Bancroft, _Oregon_, I:895 ff., gives an incomplete list of the male members of the 1843 emigration and also quotes various authorities as to the number of individuals, wagons, and animals in this party.

28 Talbot, _Journals_, p. 9.
Chapter Nineteen

"Westward Ho!" 1843

29 Original Waldo ms., Coll. B. Partly reprinted in Bancroft, Oregon, I:405.
30 Reprinted in National Intelligencer, June 6, 1843, and in Washington Globe, June 8, 1848.
31 Iowa Gazette, July 8, 1843. Jesse Applegate was a member of the 1843 emigration.
32 T.O.P.A., 1876, with article by Applegate, “A Day with the Cow Column.”
33 W.C.Q., II (1898):2:34.
34 See ante, fn. 82, and O.H.Q., I (1900):381 ff.
36 Ibid., 1876, p. 63.
38 Peter Burnett, Recollections of an Old Pioneer, New York, 1880, p. 112.
39 Quoted by Eells, Marcus Whitman, p. 215.
40 There is some question as to the identity of this creek. The late Dale Morgan of Bancroft Library, Berkeley, in a letter to me dated June 2, 1970, wrote: “It is evidently the stream called Squaw Butte Creek in several of the journals of 1843… and the present La Prele Creek, 17 miles east of ‘Big Deer Creek’… Apparently the Oregon emigrants of 1843 somewhat overestimated the distance from Fort Laramie.” Hubert, O.P., VII:322, identifies the creek as being “just west of Deer Creek.”
41 O.H.Q., V (1904):76.
42 Grant remained in charge of Fort Hall from 1842 until 1851. The Company abandoned the post in 1855.
46 Op. cit., p. 83. Italics are the author’s.
48 W.C.Q., II (1898):2:35.
49 Eells, Reply to Bourne, p. 112.
50 W.C.Q., II (1898):2:34 quoting Perrin Whitman in 1898: “He [i.e. Dr. Whitman] showed me some of the pieces [of the wagon] at Boise seven years after he had brought it out … It had just laid there by an old adobe building until it had rotted and sunk into the ground.”
52 Drury, F.W.W., II:259.
53 Myron Eells in later years was to become one of the foremost champions of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. See Appendix 4.
55 White’s original report is in Old Indian Files, National Archives. Miss Allen omitted this from her book, Ten Years in Oregon.
56 W.C.Q., II (1898):1:34.
“Westward Ho!” 1843


58 Waldo ms., Coll. B.


60 McClane ms., Coll. B.

61 See Chapter Sixteen, “Motives for Whitman’s Ride.”

62 Italics are the author’s. See Foreword to this work.


64 Italics are the author’s.

65 HBC Arch., B/223/c. Italics are the author’s.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid. Italics are the author’s.

68 Ibid. Italics are the author’s.
The success of the large 1843 emigration, followed by ever larger immigrations in each succeeding year, precipitated a cultural conflict for the Indians of the upper Columbia River country. Although none of the immigrants, during the years 1843–47 inclusive, settled on land in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, social and economic changes were introduced among the natives which threatened their mode of life. These were years of transition for both the Indians and the whites in Old Oregon.

Mission activities at Waiilatpu were no longer the same as they had been before Whitman left for Boston. Although Whitman tried to carry on his religious, educational, and agricultural activities as before, things were different. The increasing attention that the Whitmans had to give to the immigrants, especially to those who found it necessary to winter at Waiilatpu, aroused the suspicion and finally the resentment of the Cayuses. Whitman’s ride East in 1842–43 was a watershed in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board. The first six years were characterized by dissension among the members of the Oregon Mission and by the friendliness of the natives. After Whitman’s return, the situation was reversed. The four couples remaining in the Mission worked together in full harmony, but there was growing hostility to the missionaries on the part of the Indians, especially the Cayuses.
When Whitman returned to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843, he learned that a Provisional Government had been formed at a meeting of Willamette Valley settlers held at Champoeg on May 2, 1843. The restless Americans living in the Valley, tired of waiting for their Government to fill a legal void, decided to take matters into their own hands. A few French Canadians, defying the instructions of their priest and the wishes of the Hudson’s Bay Company, voted with the Americans. Until the arrival of the 1843 immigrants, most of the French Canadians and the officials of the Company refrained from giving the Provisional Government their support. After the arrival of the 1843 immigration, some changes were made in the charter of the Provisional Government which made it more acceptable to the French Canadians and, as a result, they voted in the 1844 elections. Dr. McLoughlin also changed his attitude and decided that the Hudson’s Bay Company should support the new government in order to secure some degree of protection for the Company’s interests. Upon his return to Waiilatpu, Whitman learned that not only had the white settlers in the Willamette Valley adopted a code of laws, but so also had the Cayuses. Whitman soon discovered, however, that the laws which Dr. White had induced the Indians to accept were highly unpopular. In a letter to Greene dated April 8, 1844, Whitman wrote: “It is in vain to urge that the Indians adopted the laws of themselves. The principal chief [i.e., Five Crows] said that they would have preferred their own, if left to their own choice. They have become a mere form as there are none to execute them. They wish mostly to use them to establish complaints against white men rather than punish offenders of their own people.”

Whitman was critical of the manner in which Dr. White had forced the Cayuses to accept the laws, yet he realized that the extension of United States jurisdiction over the Indians was both necessary and inevitable. “I have no confidence in two codes of laws for one country,” he wrote. “If the Indians are not wise enough to either give laws to their own country, both for themselves and others, or to partake with the whites in the formation of them; they must submit to laws of the immigration that comes among them, as others do. For it is evident that there should be but one code of laws for both the natives and the settlers in the same country.” It may be that Dr. White’s accusations that Whitman charged exorbitant prices for his produce arose out of White’s awareness of Whitman's
criticisms of the laws. There is no record that Dr. Whitman ever tried to get any of the Cayuse chiefs to enforce any provisions of the code.

Another new factor which greatly affected missionary life at Waiilatpu after 1843 was the necessity thrust upon the Whitmans to meet the material needs of the annual immigrations. In addition to selling provisions and helping all who were able to travel to continue their journey to the Willamette, special attention had to be given to those who, for various reasons, were unable to go further. Always in the wake of the passing wagon trains was this flotsam of unfortunate people—the sick, the weary, the old, the destitute, the widows, and the orphans—who found Waiilatpu a haven of refuge. Out of human kindness and Christian charity, the Whitmans had no choice but to receive these people and to care for them during the winter months or until they were able to continue their travels. The time, attention, and resources they had to give to the immigrants meant a corresponding diminution of activities in behalf of the natives. For instance, the large room called “the Indian room,” which had been built in the main mission house for the purpose of being used as a schoolroom or an assembly room for the natives, was turned into an apartment for the immigrants during those months when the Cayuses were most available for instruction.

1843–1844

When Dr. Whitman left the 1843 emigration while in the Grande Ronde Valley in order to go to Lapwai, he entrusted the care of his nephew, Perrin, to someone who promised to take him to Waiilatpu. Perrin arrived at the mission station on September 27,¹ one day before his uncle and Geiger returned from Lapwai. While at Lapwai, Whitman again met the Littlejohns, who, for nearly a year, had been living with the Spaldings. Since Mrs. Littlejohn was expecting to be confined about the first of November, plans were made for the couple to go to Waiilatpu where she would be under the doctor’s care.

As has been told, Whitman had gone to Tshimakain the day after his return to Waiilatpu in order to attend Mrs. Eells in her confinement. Upon his return to Waiilatpu on October 10,² he found some of the immigrants still streaming by his home, many of whom were in need of provisions. Geiger, eager to return to the Willamette Valley, asked to be relieved of his duties at Waiilatpu. Whitman settled accounts with
him by paying him $30.00 for each month he had been at the station. Whitman was well pleased with Geiger’s services. “Few could have done better,” he wrote [Letter 142]. Littlejohn, who with his wife had by that time arrived at Waiilatpu, was asked to take over Geiger’s duties.

Eager to get his wife whom he knew to be at The Dalles, Whitman left for that place about the middle of October. Reference has already been made to the “joyful and happy meeting” of the two after a separation of more than a year. Jason Lee, who had escorted Narcissa to The Dalles, had waited in order to see Whitman. “It was pleasing,” wrote Narcissa, “to see the pioneers of the two Missions meet and hold council together” [Letter 149]. While in New York in the spring of 1843, Whitman had called at the offices of the Methodist Missionary Society where he was told that Lee had been dismissed and that a successor, the Rev. George Gary, was already on his way to Oregon to close out the Methodist Mission. Whitman was the first to pass on this distressing news to Lee.3 “When we parted with Mr. Lee,” wrote Narcissa to her father, “we little thought that our first news from him would be that he had set his face toward his native land. But it was, indeed so.”

On December 25 of that year, Lee boarded a ship bound for Honolulu on his return voyage to the States. After his arrival in the East, he appeared before the Methodist Society and, after answering the accusations which had been made against him by some dissatisfied associates, including Dr. Elijah White, he was completely exonerated. Lee died on March 12, 1845. According to Spalding, Whitman felt that Lee had been dismissed because of “his stern patriotism and his efforts to Americanize this country.”4 Here is a possible reference to the role that Lee played in inducing the Methodist Society to send out the large reinforcement on the Lausanne in the fall of 1839.

**Narcissa, Sick and Discouraged**

The boat trip up the river from The Dalles to Fort Walla Walla was a disagreeable experience for both Marcus and Narcissa. It was rainy and cold. Narcissa was sick, and the exposure increased her suffering. They reached Fort Walla Walla late on Saturday afternoon, October 28 [Letter 141a]. Since Narcissa was too weak to attempt to make the twenty-five mile trip to Waiilatpu on horseback, it was agreed that Marcus would go out to Waiilatpu and return with a wagon. Moreover, Mrs.
Littlejohn’s time was near, and the doctor felt that he must be there. After writing a letter to Greene dated, November 1, Whitman left for his station. The Littlejohn baby, a girl, was born on the 3rd.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Narcissa dreaded going back to Waiilatpu. Her feelings were reflected in several letters she wrote at this time, the first of which was to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Abernethy of Oregon City, with whom she had spent several weeks during the summer of 1843. After thanking them for their gracious hospitality, she wrote: “Never shall I forget the precious seasons of social and religious enjoyment I have been blessed with in your society. Withdrawing my mind from these pleasing reminiscences, 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 is 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 sometime think of me almost alone in the midst of savage darkness” [Letter 141a]. Evidently a band of Indians was holding a war or ritualistic dance of some kind at the Fort near Narcissa’s room and within range of her hearing.

Narcissa’s ill health contributed to her feeling of despondency. While in the Willamette Valley, she had consulted with three doctors: Dr. Elijah White, Dr. Ira L. Babcock of the Methodist Mission, and Dr. Forbes Barclay at Fort Vancouver, but, because of the lack of medical knowledge of that day, there was little they could do to relieve her sufferings. Whitman, in his letter of November 1 to Greene, reported: “Mrs. Whitman’s health has been poor for the last year, having had an enlargement of the Ovarid [ovary?].” In his letter of January 29, 1844, to H. B. Brewer, a member of the Methodist Mission stationed at The Dalles, Whitman was more specific: “Mrs. W’s health does not promise to be any better. She is now about [the] house & takes considerable care but she has a throbbing tumor near the navel (umbilicus) which I fear is an aneurism of the main artery. Consequently I have little expectation of her ever enjoying health again.”

The ballooning of a large artery, referred to as an aneurism, can now be corrected by surgery but such a technique was unknown to that generation. Narcissa described her affliction in a letter to a sister dated
January 30, 1844: “I have not suffered from the disease I took medicine for last summer, but a new and more precarious one has discovered itself, since my return, yet of long standing. It consists of an organic affection of the main artery below the heart, a beating tumor which is liable to burst and extinguish my life at any moment. There is no remedy for it, so I never expect to enjoy better health than I do at present; never do I expect to continue long on the earth.”

Several months later, on April 12, Narcissa gave further details about her poor health in a letter to her father: “While I was at Vancouver, I placed myself under Doctor Barclay’s care... He discovered that I had an enlargement of the right ovary and gave me iodine to remove it. I was very much improved by his kind attentions for that complaint, and had it not been for the other difficulty of the aorta which was not at that time discovered by Doctor Barclay, although it existed, I might have recovered my health. But the medicine I took for the cure of one tumor was an injury to the other, and for three months after my husband’s return, my situation was a source of deepest anxiety to him and he greatly feared that he was about to be bereaved.”

Narcissa’s despondency appears in both of these letters. In the letter to her sister of January 1844, she wrote: “I felt such a dread to return to this place of moral darkness, after enjoying so much of civilized life and Christian privileges.” And in the letter to her father, she repeated the same sentiment: “I turned my face with my husband toward this dark spot, and dark, indeed, it seemed to be to me when compared with the scenes, social and religious, which I had so recently been enjoying with so much zest.”

**Back to Waiilatpu**

Among the families whom Whitman met and encouraged to go to Oregon when he passed through St. Louis in the early spring of 1843 was that of John Hobson. Somewhere along the trail, it appears Mrs. Hobson had died, leaving her husband with three girls—one in her mid-teens; Ann, who was thirteen; and Emma, seven. Even as Whitman had felt a responsibility for the wife of Miles Eyres and her children, so in the Hobson case, he promised the distracted father that the three girls could be left at his mission station [Letter 145]. When Narcissa arrived at Fort Walla Walla, she met the Hobson family. By that time the
older girl had plans to go to the Willamette Valley with another party. The two younger girls had been hesitant about being left at Waiilatpu, but they quickly changed their minds after meeting Narcissa and begged to be taken into the Whitman home. Narcissa was hesitant. She already had Mary Ann Bridger and Helen Mar Meek. Also at Waiilatpu were David Malin and Perrin Whitman. To her sister, Narcissa wrote: “The girls were so urgent to stop that I could not well refuse them.” And so it was arranged that the Whitman household should be increased by two more girls, making six children in all under their care.

On Saturday, November 4, Whitman loaded his family into the wagon, which he had brought in from the mission, and they started the long ride to Waiilatpu. Narcissa, commenting on the difficulties of the ride, wrote: “I was not well when I left W.W., yet I thought I could endure to ride here in one day in a wagon, but it proved too much for me. We were in the evening late before we could reach home, as they [i.e., the animals] had to go slow on my account, and I took cold. For six weeks after, I scarcely left my room and most of the time was confined to my bed [Letter 145].” During December, a combination of complications brought her “very near the gates of death.” After passing the crisis, her health slowly but gradually improved, although by the following May, she wrote that she was still weak. Because of her ill health and also because of her enlarged family responsibilities, Narcissa was able to carry on few if any activities for the natives. As far as the Indians were concerned, her main missionary duties were over.

Narcissa’s ill health should be remembered when we read H. K. W. Perkins’ appraisal of her [Appendix 6]. He never saw her during the first six years of her life at Waiilatpu when she was well and enthusiastic about her work with the natives. Perkins remembered her as being ill, dreading to go back to Waiilatpu. He was correct when he wrote that “her stay with us including the visit to the Willamette, [was] the pleasantest portion of her Oregon life.” In view of her physical condition, we can understand why Perkins wrote: “The natives esteemed her as proud, haughty, as far above them. No doubt she really seemed so. It was her misfortune, not her fault. She was adapted to a different destiny.” As will be told later, Narcissa’s health greatly improved within a few months after her return to Waiilatpu and she became able to carry on her household duties without the handicap of ill health.
“THE FOREIGN INHABITANTS OF WAILATPU”

When Narcissa, exhausted from the long, slow wagon trip from Fort Walla Walla, arrived with her husband and the four little girls at Wailatpu, she found the main mission house and the dwelling that Gray had erected, crowded with emigrants. The Littlejohns with their newborn baby were in the Whitmans’ bedroom and for the time being could not be moved. Every room in the two dwellings was occupied except the dining room. There the Whitmans and the two Hobson girls slept for about five weeks. Five emigrant families and four single men were crowded into the other rooms. Jesse Looney, his wife, and six children occupied the Indian room together with a young man by the name of Smith. Mr. and Mrs. John W. East and their four children had the schoolroom east of the kitchen. A French Canadian, whom Narcissa called Alex, a mountain man, and who, she claimed “stops with us without invitation,” made his bed in the kitchen, the most used room in the mission house. David Malin and Perrin had their beds in the attic room over the living room, and Helen Mar and Mary Ann slept in the same room with the Littlejohns. This meant that a total of twenty-seven were living in the main mission house of whom fifteen were immigrants and one, a mountain man.

When the Gray house was erected in 1841–42, it was so pretentious, as compared with the dwellings occupied by the other members of the Mission, that it was called at first the “mansion house.” This building had six rooms on the first floor and an unknown number on the upper half-story. Possibly the interior of the Gray house was not finished by the fall of 1843, as only twelve emigrants and two “hired men” were living there when the Whitmans returned to Wailatpu on November 4. Thirty emigrants were being housed in this building at the time of the Whitman massacre. Narcissa does not list the names of all who were living in the Gray house but did mention in her letters a widow with three children, no doubt Mrs. Eyres whose husband had been drowned in the Snake River; a family with four children, and “an aged couple” [Letters 146 & 149]. Writing to her sister Clarissa on May 20, 1844, Narcissa expressed the hope that her parents might migrate to Oregon and live with them at Wailatpu. She cited the example of the old couple who had gone out to Oregon to be with their children and commented: “They were considerably older than father and mother.”
Thus, the total number of white people, whom Narcissa referred to as “the foreign inhabitants of Waiilatpu,” living there in the late fall of 1843, was forty-one, of whom thirty were emigrants or mountain men. The immigrants of 1843 set a pattern for the annual migrations which followed, for each year the number of immigrants enjoying the hospitality of the Whitmans varied from thirty to nearly sixty.

Those who had been given shelter in the fall of 1843 also needed food. The occupants of the emigrant house and the Looney family in the Indian room managed to do their own cooking. The others, eighteen in all not counting the Littlejohn baby, ate at the Whitmans’ table. In her letter of January 31, 1844, Narcissa described their fare as being scanty, consisting of “potatoes, corn meal, with a little milk occasionally, and cakes from the burnt wheat.” She found the diet a great change from “the well furnished tables of Waskopum and Willamette.” Writing to Brewer on January 29, Whitman said: “Our entire living has to come from Mr. Spalding’s. We live almost entirely without bread, having little flour and prospect of less until harvest. We have nearly consumed three of the largest & fatest oxen already which we got from Mr. Spalding & now have to look to the Indians for more.” Sometimes Narcissa felt resentful when she remembered that the best of their produce had been sold to the passing immigrants.

November and December of 1843 were months of great trial for Narcissa. Even though she was a semi-invalid during most of this time, most of the responsibility of running her household fell on her shoulders. Narcissa missed the privacy of her own bedroom during the first weeks after their return, or until December 10 when the Littlejohn family was able to move into new quarters. With twenty-three children on the grounds, there were many annoyances especially on cold or rainy days when the children could not play outside. Of those trying days, Narcissa wrote: “During all this period and for some time after, I was too sick to make any effort at arranging my house or to have the care of my family, and the confusion and noise distressed me exceedingly.” She said that the children, including those under her care, “were as wild and uncontrollable as so many wild animals” [Letter 146].

Realizing the imperative need for more living space, Whitman, with the help of some of the emigrant men, added a room to the east end of the main mission house. This later became the schoolroom for white
children. The Littlejohns were able to move into it when it was ready. The Looney family of eight moved in December to “the Prince's house up the river” [Letter 146]. Narcissa may here have been referring to the house built by Pambrun for Young Chief in the fall of 1840 on the Umatilla River. The East family with one of the Eyres girls went to live with the Spaldings. This reduced the number of residents at Waiilatpu to twenty-six and made space available for a school to be opened for white children. This was taught by Mrs. Littlejohn who had an enrollment of fifteen. “Now our children are quite tame,” wrote Narcissa, “and manageable and we feel that they are all enjoying a great privilege.” This marked the beginning of the Waiilatpu school for white children which was continued in following years up to the time of the massacre.

Whitman hired Littlejohn to take care of cultivation on the condition of giving him one-third of the produce which he would be free to sell to the emigrants of 1844. We have no evidence that Whitman asked for or received any compensation from any of the emigrants for the hospitality they enjoyed at Waiilatpu. No doubt the women helped Narcissa in household duties and regarding the men, Whitman wrote: “I intend to give employment by the job in cutting & splitting rails; making fence & breaking new land.

When Narcissa wrote to the Abernethys from Fort Walla Walla on October 31, she stated: “Fremont, the scientific explorer’s party have just arrived to-day with ten carts.” On his way to the Fort, Frémont had stopped at Waiilatpu, where he had hoped to get some flour but was disappointed to find that none was available. He wrote in his Narrative that he had to be satisfied with some “excellent potatoes.” Judging by an order drawn on the government dated from “Wascopum, Oregon Territory” on November 24, 1843, payable to Dr. Whitman for $183.31, Frémont got more than potatoes, possibly a beef or some hogs. Narcissa also made reference to a big mule, which Frémont left at Waiilatpu, which the Whitmans called Uncle Sam [Letter 220]. Frémont also left at the mission some extra cannon balls for his howitzer, which fact was remembered by the Indians at the time of the massacre.
The Continuing Activities at Waiilatpu

After reviewing the several references to Narcissa’s ill health, it comes as a surprise to learn that Marcus himself was suffering from a disability during the same time which made it difficult for him to carry on his work. Writing to his mother on May 20, 1844, he said: “My whole journey to and from the States seems a dream.” He regretted that he had had so little time to spend with his mother and with other relatives and friends. He mentioned the pleasure of seeing “the little growing sprigs under the relation of Nephews; Nieces or Cousins.” His mother had been concerned about the dangers and hardships of his return journey. When with her, he laughed off her fears, but, after returning to Waiilatpu, he was ready to admit that the long journey home was “one of fatigue and some danger.” Then he added: “But you know Mother, I have long discarded both those as not to be counselled either in matters of duty or pleasure or convenience. I had a lame foot on the road which left me with a tumor on my instep which has given me much solicitude & may give me still much more inconvenience.”

Shortly after Marcus and Narcissa arrived at Waiilatpu during the first week of November, an urgent call came from the Walkers at Tshimakain for the doctor to visit them, because Elkanah had come down with scarlet fever. Mary in her diary tells of sending their dependable Indian servant, Solomon, to Waiilatpu on November 13. Solomon returned on the 21st without the doctor but with a note which he had written on the 17th. Whitman explained that his wife’s illness and his own affliction made it impossible to respond to the call. He gave some advice: “I think it was favourable that you were bled,” he wrote to Elkanah. This is one of the few references in Whitman’s correspondence to his approval of the practice, common in that day, of bleeding a patient as a remedy for all manner of diseases, even for scarlet fever. In time Elkanah made a good recovery.

Whitman’s foot became so sore in the spring of 1844 that he had to use a crutch. As late as July 22 of that year, he informed Greene that, although his foot was then better, he was still lame and unable “to walk with activity.” Summarizing his missionary activities with the natives, Whitman, in his letter to Greene of April 4, 1844, stated: “For the winter we have had few Indians and no school, but were able to hold meetings every Sabbath with a small congregation.” Again in the same
letter, he reported: “A congregation of from two to three hundred have been in attendance on the Sab.—since some time in Feb.—besides many more who come & go & have more or less opportunity of instruction.”

The increasing proselytizing activities of the Catholic missionaries in the vicinity of Wailatpu gave Whitman continued concern. The Indians were quick to take advantage of the rival claims of the Protestants and the Catholics by playing one against the other to see which would give them the largest material benefits. Regarding this Whitman informed Greene that there was an “apparent desire on the part of some to try and make use of the difference between us to enable them to secure some selfish purpose.” Whitman believed that the best defense against the Catholics was education. He told Greene that the “gradual increase in knowledge” on the part of the natives would promote a lessened regard for “Papal forms.” His difficulty, however, was to find some one able to conduct a school for the Indians as he was far too busy to undertake this responsibility himself. In earlier years, Narcissa had helped in the school but now, because of her ill health and increased household duties, she was unavailable. Whitman tried to hire one of the emigrants to take over the Indian school, but this experiment proved fruitless. So, for the time being, the Indian school was abandoned.

Whitman’s work at Wailatpu was repeatedly interrupted by calls for his professional services by his associates in the Oregon Mission and also by members of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s residents at Fort Walla Walla. Sometimes these calls entailed days of travel on horseback. During the first week of February 1844, Walker notified him of his wife’s expected confinement on or about February 25. A son, their fourth child, came on February 10, earlier than expected and ten days before the doctor arrived. Writing in her diary on February 22, perhaps with some glee, Mary noted: “Dr. W. arrived in the evening. I met him at the door with my babe in my arms.” 10 Another confinement case came under Dr. Whitman’s care in May 1844 when Mrs. McKinlay, wife of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s official in charge of Fort Walla Walla, moved to Wailatpu where she could be under the doctor’s care for the birth of her second child. Narcissa explained that “there are no females at the Fort” [Letter 155]. A son was born on May 20.

Profiting by his experience in the fall of 1843 when the immigrants drained him of all provisions except potatoes, a few hogs, and some
scorched wheat left in the ruins of the burnt mill, Whitman made every possible effort to be ready for those he expected to arrive in the fall of 1844. In his letter of October 25, 1844, to Greene, he stated that he had from fifteen to seventeen “beeves” which he was selling for six cents a pound. He also planted as many potatoes and garden vegetables as time and cultivated land permitted.

Whitman realized the necessity of getting a suitable gristmill in operation as soon as possible to replace the one which had been destroyed, in order to meet the needs of the residents at Waiilatpu and to be ready for the immigration of 1844. By October 1844, Whitman was able to report to Greene: “Since harvest I have made with the aid of Mr. East a run of fine granite Mill Stones, forty inches across the face & I have got them in good operation so that I shall be able to supply flour & meal which I do at five dollars for unbolted & six for bolted flour per hundred & four for unsifted & five for sifted meal.” The mill was placed at the same site as the one that had been burned and another undershot water wheel was made. There is no evidence that the mill at this time was enclosed.

Gradually during the spring and summer of 1844, the immigrants who had wintered at Waiilatpu left for the Willamette Valley. John Hobson sent for his daughter Ann but placed Emma with the Walker family at Tshimakain, where she stayed until May 1845. Most of the immigrants who wintered at Waiilatpu during the years 1843–47 inclusive, moved on the Whitman stage for a few short months and then disappeared into the obscurity of unrecorded history. Not all who made the difficult overland journey were young or middle-aged people. Bancroft in his Oregon refers to the death of Jesse Looney on March 25, 1869, at the age of eighty-eight. This means that Looney was sixty-two when he ventured to take his large family over the Oregon Trail to the Pacific Coast.

The Littlejohns left for the Willamette Valley early in the fall of 1844 [Letter 164]. This meant that on the eve of the arrival of the vanguard of the immigration of that year, Waiilatpu was emptied of all its “foreign inhabitants” except the Whitmans, the four children under their care, and perhaps one or two hired men. Writing to his mother on May 20, 1844, Whitman said: “Perrin is a good boy and I think is not homesick.” Perrin quickly picked up the Indian language and in this his uncle gave him every encouragement. In his letter to his mother, Whitman wrote that the boy’s “articulation will be purely native. No sound is inaccessible
to him.” Whitman foresaw the day when Perrin would be of great service to the government as an interpreter, as indeed proved to be the case.

**More Natives Received into the Mission Church**

No missionary who ever served in Old Oregon under either the American Board or the Methodist Society was as successful in his evangelistic and civilizing work with the natives as Henry H. Spalding at Lapwai. Spalding was favored in being located in a larger and more friendly tribe than any other Protestant missionary, and also he was the only Protestant missionary in Oregon who ever returned to his former field after the Whitman massacre. Much of Spalding’s success during the years he served under the American Board was due to his strategy in concentrating on winning the chiefs.

As has been noted, Spalding’s first converts were Timothy and Old Joseph. During the winter of 1841–42, he conducted a school at Lapwai which enrolled “two hundred and thirty pupils, including most of the chiefs and principal men.” In addition to trying to teach a large assemblage of people of all ages, Spalding selected a small group of the most influential men and gave them special attention. On February 14, 1842, Eliza Spalding wrote to her friend, Mrs. A. T. Smith, then in the Willamette Valley, and called the roll of this class: “Joseph, Timothy, Luke, Lawyer, Stephen, Jason, Five Crows (Joseph’s brother)…” Of this number, only Five Crows was from the Cayuse tribe. He and Joseph had the same Cayuse mother, but Joseph had a Nez Perce father.

Sometime during the summer of 1841, when on his overland journey around the world, George Simpson met with some of the Cayuses at Fort Walla Walla. “Their chief,” wrote Simpson, “who rejoiced in the name of Five Crows, was said to be the richest man in the country, possessing upwards of a thousand horses, a few cattle, many slaves, and various other sources of wealth. Having in addition to all this, the recommendttion of being young, tall, and handsome…” According to Simpson, Five Crows became enamored of the daughter of a Hudson’s Bay official, perhaps Maria Pambrun, and after “dismissing his five wives,” presented himself at Fort Walla Walla to claim his lady love. “To his dismay,” wrote Simpson, “and perhaps also to his astonishment, his suit was rejected.”
Polygamy was practiced to a limited extent by the Nez Perces and Cayuses, but it was the firm policy of the missionaries to discourage the custom. Several years after the incident Simpson told about Five Crows, the charge was made in an eastern publication that members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board had received polygamists into the Mission church. When news of this accusation was made known to Spalding, he wrote a vigorous denial to the Board which was published in the Missionary Herald. “There is no person now in the church,” he declared, “and never has been who has had two wives.” Spalding did admit that some of the church members had been polygamists but insisted that they had abandoned the practice on being baptized. The name of Five Crows does not seem to have been mentioned in the published criticism, but the reference may have been to him.

Polygamy posed moral problems for the missionaries and sometimes economic issues for the natives, as can be seen in the following story which has come down through the years. One day a Nez Perce, who had a domineering second wife, approached Spalding and asked if it would be necessary to put away his second wife should he wish to be baptized. “Absolutely,” replied Spalding. “Polygamy is a sin. You will have to send your second wife away.” The Indian was quiet for a time and then said: “You tell her.”

Whitman was called to Lapwai in June 1844 to assist Spalding in examining the Christian faith and experience of several natives who wished to join the Mission Church. Here is evidence that the two men were working together in harmony. Whitman no longer objected, as he had done in December 1841, to the reception of natives into the membership of the church, and Spalding had shown a much more cooperative spirit after Whitman’s return from his eastern journey, no doubt being grateful for Whitman’s intercession in his behalf. Spalding, as the minister, and Whitman, the elder, constituted the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon which, under Presbyterian polity, was authorized to receive and dismiss members. After due examination, ten were received as members including a French Canadian. Several others who had applied were advised to wait and receive more instruction. “It was an occasion of much interest,” Whitman wrote to Greene, “& Joseph, one of the two oldest members, distinguished himself for his discretion & Christian zeal” [Letter 160].
The ten converts were baptized on Sunday, June 23, and publicly welcomed into the membership of the Mission Church. The nine Nez Perces received that day brought the total native membership of the church to twenty-one of whom only Five Crows was a Cayuse. No more natives were received during the remaining three and a half years of the history of the Oregon Mission. If the success of the evangelistic endeavors of the members of the Oregon Mission during its eleven-year history be measured solely by the number of natives who joined the church, then it might be claimed that the Mission was a failure. However, the spiritual results of preaching and teaching the Christian message defy tabulation. The seed had been sown and years later, when Spalding returned to the Nez Perces in his old age, the harvest was reaped when about a thousand Cayuses, Nez Perces, and Spokanes were baptized and received into the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon.

**WHITMAN COMMENTS ON VARIOUS ISSUES**

Since the Indians had no historian to record their reactions to a number of contemporary events affecting their lives during the 1840s, and since no council was held during that decade with Government officials at which stenographers took down the words of the Indian speakers, we must rely on the correspondence of the missionaries for information about how the natives reacted to the rapidly changing events. How did the Cayuses respond to the thousands of immigrants who each fall crossed their lands? How did they feel about Dr. White’s efforts to impose a white man’s code of laws upon them? What was the attitude of the land-hungry immigrants towards both the natives and the missionaries? These and many tangent subjects occupied Whitman’s attention when he wrote letters during the year under review.

One of the first reactions of the Cayuses to the incoming whites was to profit as much as possible by selling them farm produce or by exchanging fresh horses and cattle for worn-out animals. Whitman, in his letter to Greene of April 8, 1844, said that he thought the Indians had gained much more in these transactions than did the Waiilatpu mission. On May 18, he wrote: “The Indians want settlers among them in hopes to get property from them.” Eager to monopolize the market with the immigrants, some of the Cayuses even forbade Whitman “to break a new field as I desired lest I should make money out of their lands by supplying Emigrants” [Letter 148].

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Although most of the natives seemed to be eager to make as much money as possible through the sale of provisions to the immigrants, Whitman noted that a few took a long-range view and were “solicitous about so many coming into the Country” [Letter 156]. Even though all of the immigrants of 1844 moved on to the Willamette Valley, Whitman realized that the time was coming when some would want to settle in the Walla Walla Valley. “It will not be long,” he wrote, “before there will be settlers among us, when we may look for trouble as the Indians will not like either to respect the interests of the Whites as they ought, nor the Whites to forbear with the Indians.”

One of the most penetrating analyses of the developing situation is found in the following taken from Whitman’s letter to his mother dated May 16, 1844: “Although the Indians have made and are making rapid advance in religious knowledge and civilization, yet it cannot be hoped that time will be allowed to mature either the work of Christianization or civilization before the white settlers will demand the soil and seek the removal of both the Indians and the Mission. What Americans desire of this kind they always effect, and it is equally useless to oppose or desire it otherwise. To guide, as far as can be done, and direct these tendencies for the best, is evidently the part of wisdom. Indeed, I am fully convinced that when a people refuse or neglect to fill the designs of Providence, they ought not to complain at the results... The Indians have in no case obeyed the command to multiply and replenish the earth, and they cannot stand in the way of others in doing so. A place will be left for them to do this as fully as their ability to obey will permit, and the more we can do for them, the more fully will this be realized. No exclusiveness can be asked for any portion of the human family... The Indians are anxious about the consequences of settlers among them, but I hope there will be no acts of violence on either hand.”

In a similar vein Whitman wrote to Greene on May 18, 1844: “Although the Indians are doing much by obtaining stock & cultivating as well as advancing in knowledge, still it cannot be hoped that a settlement [of white people] will be so delayed as to give time for the advance to be made so that they can stand before a white settlement. For when has it been known that an ignorant, indolent man has stood against money, intelligence & enterprise.” Whitman was a realist. He saw that the day was inevitably approaching when the Walla Walla Valley would be dotted with the homes and towns
of white men. He knew that the natives could never compete with the superior knowledge and the numerical superiority of the incoming Americans. These were critical years of transition for the Indians, and there were none so concerned about helping them as were the missionaries. With the increase of the white population, Whitman also realized that there would be an inevitable shift of emphasis in his missionary work.

In his letter of May 16, 1844, to Narcissa’s parents, he wrote: “I have no doubt our greatest work is to be to aid the white settlement of this country and help found its religious institutions.” And he added this significant statement: “As I hold the settlement of this country by Americans rather than by an English colony most important, I am happy to have been the means of landing so large an emigration on to the shores of the Columbia, with their wagons, families and stock, all in safety.”

Whitman’s realistic appraisal of the superiority of the white man’s civilization over the primitive culture of the natives, especially in matters referring to future survival, undoubtedly affected his work after his return to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843. This opinion is reflected in a letter that H. K. W. Perkins wrote on October 19, 1849, when he tried to give reasons why the Cayuses should have killed the Whitmans: “He looked upon them [i.e., the Indians] as an inferior race & doomed at no distant day to give place to a settlement of enterprising Americans. With an eye on this he laid his plans & acted. His American feelings even while engaged in his missionary toils, were unfortunately suffered to predominate. Indeed it might almost be doubted whether he felt half the interest in the natives that he did in the prospective white population. He wanted to see the country settled” [Appendix 6]. This rather harsh criticism of Whitman should be kept in mind as we review his activities with the Indians during the years after his return.

Whitman wanted the Americans to settle in Old Oregon, yet when faced with the possibility of land-hungry immigrants crowding into the Walla Walla Valley, he began to fear the inevitable complications. He expressed this concern in a letter to his brother Augustus dated May 21, 1844. After repeating his conviction that the Indians could never compete with the white men, he turned to what he thought might happen to the Waiilatpu mission: “As soon as we cease to be needed as it were for the benefit of white settlers, for all other sources have not done so much for the settlement of Oregon as the Missions, & we become in the way of the interests of the
settlers, either by occupying lands they desire or enabling the Indians to hold more firmly to their land by teaching & aiding them to cultivate, we are sure to become the objects of hatred & efforts will be made to get rid of us... We must do our duty & be ready to retire at the shortest warning.”

Ten days after writing to his brother, or on May 31, Whitman addressed a letter to A. B. Smith, who was then serving under the American Board at a mission station near Honolulu. Whitman, in referring to his journey to Boston, wrote: “I am happy to know that I was enabled if nothing more to reverse the action of the Board in relation to—this Mission.” Smith, who was partly responsible for the Board’s drastic order of February 1842, could hardly have been pleased with that information. Whitman made mention of the encouragements the government was giving to emigrants, especially in the way of offering free land to all who would settle in Oregon. He then touched on the problem he faced: Was his primary mission to be for the Indian or for the white man? This was the issue he raised when he wrote to Smith: “I do not know how much longer we shall be called to operate for the benefit of the Indians. But be it longer or shorter, it will not diminish the importance of our situation. For if the Indians are to pass away, we want to do what can be done in order to give them the offer of life & then be ready to aid [the immigrants] as indeed we have done & are doing, to found & sustain institutions [of] learning & religion in the Country.”

Looking into the future of Oregon, Whitman added: “Could I have staid at home longer, I should have tried to have raised the means of establishing some Academies & Colleges, but I trust to influence others to do so.” Here is the first time Whitman mentioned in his letters his dream of founding a college in Oregon. On the following October 25, in a letter to Greene, Whitman returned to this subject by writing: “This is a place most advantageous for the commencement of what may soon be an Academy & College, both on account of its fine & healthy climate & of its eligible situation.” Whitman made several references in his later correspondence to this dream of seeing a college established in the Walla Walla Valley; a dream which Cushing Eells was to bring into reality in 1859. This story, however, belongs to a later chapter.
Whitman’s correspondence for the year following his return in the fall of 1843 reveals his awareness of growing discontent, even hostility in some places, on the part of the Indians to the white men in general and to the Protestant missionaries in particular. A study of Whitman’s writings shows that he attributed most of this restlessness to three sources—(1) the agitation of Eastern Indians and half-breeds; (2) the proselytizing efforts of the Roman Catholic missionaries; and (3) the critical attitude of a mountain man, William Craig, who, with his Nez Perce wife, had settled in Lapwai Valley in November 1840, within a few miles of Spalding’s mission on the Clearwater.

By the spring of 1844, Whitman had a twofold fear of future developments if the number of Oregon immigrants increased each year, as he fully expected would be the case. The first was from the immigrants themselves. This concern he expressed in a letter to the Methodist missionary, H. B. Brewer located at The Dalles, in a letter dated May 25, 1844: “Immigrants will have this country & Indians & Missionaries must give place as soon as they cease to continue to be necessary stepping stones.” However, Whitman felt that the missionaries had more to fear from the Indians than from the white men for he also said in this letter to Brewer: “I have no doubt but the situation of missionaries among Indians will become more & more trying in this country as our work advances & they become more familiar with the whites in general and especially as all the variety of influences operate upon them… To all this may be added the influence of the Shawnees, Delawares & Iroquois & half breeds have in explaining to them the Indian wars on the borders of the States & all resulting in the Indians getting large amounts of money from Americans or whites in general.”

The agitation caused by eastern Indians in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company had become a serious problem for both Whitman and Spalding by the spring of 1844. Whitman explained in a letter to Greene of April 8: “Some most arch grievances were brought against our course which were based on the authority of Tom Hill, a Delaware Indian, who is now in the mountains with the Nez Perces and Flat Head Indians.” Hill had settled among the Nez Perces about 1837 and by 1844 had secured for himself a dominant position in the tribe. He was an agnostic and a bitter critic of the way the white men had treated...
the Indians in the East. Spalding called him a “blasphemous and de-based infidel.”

Spalding felt the efforts of Tom Hill’s anti-missionary agitation more directly than did Whitman, yet the latter was involved, as the Cayuses were receptive to many of the ideas that Hill was spreading abroad. According to Whitman, Hill was friendly with the Catholic priests, thus encouraging distrust of the Protestants. Hill touched sensitive nerves among the natives when he dealt with economic issues. “The Indians say,” wrote Whitman to Greene, “they are told that we ought to expend more liberally on them and that it is peculiarly our duty to do so. That we do not give… large prices for all we get of them and break their lands for nothing. These are among their greatest grievances. They complain that they have been obliged to teach us their language and we have not taught them ours in return. They have always caused themselves to be paid for teaching us language and even then a teacher has been hard to obtain and keep.” Tom Hill will enter our story again.

Whitman’s letters during this year carry frequent references to the negative influences of the Roman Catholic priests on the Protestant work. “The Indians say that they have been told by the Papists not to be afraid we should leave them by their pressing us,” Whitman told Greene, “but if we should be vexed to remove, to be calm and see us go off… One of them told me that Mr. Blanchet told him that if they would send me away, he would send a mission among them. I tell them all plainly that I do not refuse to go away if they prefer the Papists to us—and urged them to decide if they wished me to do so, but that I should not go except at the full expression of the people, desiring me so to do.”

In addition to the difficulties mentioned above, Whitman and Spalding were both affected by the unfriendly acts and agitation of an ex-mountain man, William Craig, who had settled near Spalding’s station. He was the first white settler in what is now the State of Idaho. His wife, a Nez Perce, was the daughter of Old James, the chief whose band lived in that Valley. In order to understand the point of Whitman’s comments about Craig, it must be pointed out that Spalding had encouraged such converts as Timothy to cultivate land in the vicinity of the Clearwater station. Old James considered this an intrusion on his rights to the Valley.

Whitman wrote in his letter to Greene of April 8, 1844: “William Craig, a white man from the mountains, whose wife is a native, & a
connection of Old James, the reputed owner of the valley in which Mr. Spalding’s station is located, is living near the station and has been for several years. He is said both by the Indians & others to be the mover of the measure of the Indians to send Timothy off his land. He is busy in trying to excite the people against the laws as recommended by Doct White and also says much in favour of the Papists, a prediliction of no long standing. The family with whom he is connected say they are determined to obtain a Papal Priest to come among them.”

**In Summary, 1843–1844**

Beginning with Whitman’s letter of November 1, 1843, we find that his every letter to the Board carried some reference to the political future of Oregon and to his responsibilities to the incoming white people. He was keenly interested in the importance of the Board encouraging the right kind of people to migrate to Oregon. He never gave up the hope of having “pious laymen” settle in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. His letters during these last years of his life reflect a blending of his missionary ideals with what he considered to be the larger objective of promoting the development of American institutions in Oregon. Whitman referred to the Oregon immigrations as “a part of the onward movement of the world and therefore more to be moulded than to be turned aside” [Letter 157]. The very numerical superiority of the immigrants over the Indian population of Oregon made changes inevitable. There were more people in the 1843 immigration than were in the combined membership if the Cayuse and Walla Walla tribes.

Looking back on the history of the Oregon Mission through the perspective of more than 125 years, we see that most of the factors which precipitated the final tragedy of November 1847 were already present by the fall of 1844 when the Whitmans began their ninth year of residence at Waiilatpu. Indeed, in view of the explosive nature of some of the points of friction, it is surprising that the massacre did not occur at an earlier date.

**1844–1845**

Profiting by his experience in the fall of 1843, when the immigrants drained him of all provisions excepting potatoes, Whitman made every effort to be ready for those who would arrive in 1844. With the help of one or more hired men and possibly some of the Indians, the harvest
was gathered in, the flour mill was put into operation, and cattle and hogs were at hand ready for sale. Narcissa looked forward to the coming of the immigrants with a heavy heart. To her friend, Mrs. Brewer at The Dalles, she wrote on August 5: “We are all of us, I suppose, on the eve of another such scene as last fall—the passing of the emigrants and as it falls the heavier upon my friends at the Dalles, I hope that they have laid in a good stock of strength, patience and every needed grace for the siege.”

The Dalles marked the end of the land route of the Oregon Trail for most of the immigrants, as only the most venturesome tried to take their wagons over the Cascade Mountains. The majority preferred completing their journey by going down the river in boats or on rafts. The animals were driven over the mountains. Although the Methodist missionaries at The Dalles were called upon to provide food, we have no evidence that any of the immigrants asked to spend the winter there. Being so close to their destination, they managed somehow to get to the Willamette Valley.

The Indians likewise profited by the previous year’s experience. In their eagerness to get American cattle, they rode forth to meet the immigrants and some went as far as Fort Hall, where they traded fresh horses for the travel-worn cattle. Those who were cultivating small acreages eagerly sold or bartered their produce to the incoming whites. This trading the Whitmans welcomed, as they knew that the demand was greater than their ability to supply. The natives would thus be encouraged to do more farming.

The vanguard of the 1844 emigration arrived at Waiilatpu on Tuesday, October 1, having been delayed by a late spring on the Missouri frontier. Among the first to stop at Waiilatpu was a group of young men, and, to the surprise of Dr. Whitman, he found Newton Gilbert of Rushville among them. Years before, Gilbert had been one of his students in both a day school and the Sunday school in Rushville [Letter 178]. Because of the delay in leaving the frontier, many of the immigrants were caught in the snows of the Blue Mountains. Narcissa explained the situation in a postscript dated October 25 to her letter begun on the 9th of that month: “It is now the last of October and they have just begun to arrive with their wagons. The Blue Mountains are covered with snow, and many families, if not half of the party, are back in or beyond the mountains, and what is
still worse, destitute of provisions and some of them of clothing. Many are sick, several with children born on the way. One family arrived here night before last, and the next morn a baby was born; another is expected in the same condition... Here we are, one family alone, a way mark, as it were, or center post, about which multitudes will or must gather this winter. And these we must feed and warm to the extent of our powers. Blessed be God that He has given us so abundantly of the fruit of the earth that we may impart to those who are thus famishing.”

The 1844 emigration numbered about 1,500. In his letter to Greene of October 25, Whitman said: “The immigrants are passing and must be for some weeks yet, as the season is now so far advanced, and many desire to winter with us. I have given no one any encouragement for staying...” Even though Whitman urged all who could do so to continue their journey, they could not out of Christian charity refuse hospitality to the needy. By October 25, when both Narcissa and Whitman took time to write letters, Waiilatpu was already crowded with immigrant families who wanted to remain through the coming winter, and there were still more to come. In her letter to her parents, Narcissa wrote: “I cannot write any more, I am so thronged and employed that I feel sometimes like being crazy, and my poor husband, if he had a hundred strings tied to him pulling in every direction could not be worse off.”

Among the early arrivals who asked to stay at Waiilatpu over the winter was a blacksmith, a hatter, and two Methodist ministers [Letter 164]. A cross section of American life was on the move westward. Among those who paused at Waiilatpu was a young man from New York State, Alanson Hinman, who was induced by Whitman to stay and teach the school for white children. Hinman proved to be a most helpful assistant and played a minor role in the Whitman story during the next three years. He not only taught school; he also helped Narcissa in many household duties, especially in the care of the children. A year later Narcissa wrote: “I feel that I never can be too thankful for the mercies of the Lord in placing such a good young man in our family to do this work for us when my health was so inadequate” [Letter 176]. In her letter of October 9, 1844, to her parents, Narcissa made the following comment: “My health has been improving remarkably through the summer, and one great means has been daily bathing in the river. I was very miserable one year ago now, and was brought very low and poor; now I am better
than I have been for some time, and quite fleshy for me. I weigh one hundred and sixty-seven pounds; much higher than ever before in my life. This will make the girls [i.e., her sisters] laugh, I know."

By October 25, the Whitmans learned that "there are more than five hundred souls back in the snow and mountains. Among the number is an orphan family of seven children, the youngest an infant born on the way, whose parents have both died since they left the States." Some concerned persons in the emigration had sent word ahead to the Whitmans asking them to be prepared to receive the children, as they had no relatives or friends to whom they could turn in Oregon. "What we shall do, I cannot say," Narcissa told her parents. "We cannot see them suffer. If the Lord casts them upon us, He will give us His grace and strength to do our duty to them."

**The Seven Sager Orphans**

When the "Oregon fever" broke out in the western states in 1842 and 1843, Henry Sager was one who caught the contagion. Oregon became for him the promised land. Sager was a restless soul, always dreaming of greener pastures over the western horizon. From the year of his marriage in 1830 to Naomi Carney, to 1839, he and his family lived on a farm in Ohio. He then moved his family to Indiana, then to eastern Missouri, and finally to western Missouri. By the spring of 1844, just before leaving for Oregon, the Sagers had six children—John, age 13; Francisco, better known as Francis, 11; Catherine, 9; Elizabeth Marie, 7; Matilda Jane, 5; and Hannah Louise, 3. Naomi was then expecting her seventh child sometime during the latter part of May.

Sometime in the fall of 1843 Henry sold his farm and blacksmith shop and moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, which was the departure point for many who were planning to leave for Oregon in the spring of 1844. Naomi, remembering her condition, looked upon the journey with deep forebodings. With prophetic insight she declared that she would never live to see Oregon, but Henry remained optimistic and insistent.

The Sager family, with their goods loaded in a large wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, joined a company of emigrants which met at a point west of St. Joseph, on May 20, to organize. Sager had at least three other oxen and two cows. Following the precedent set by the 1843 emigration, an organization was perfected along military lines for defensive
purposes in case of an Indian attack, with Cornelius Gilliam in over-all command. As will be told later, Gilliam figures in the events following the Whitman massacre. Since the emigration was so large, consisting of about 1,500 people, it was broken up into four companies. The one to which the Sager family was assigned was led by William Shaw.

On the evening of May 30, when the Sager family was camped on the Nemaha River in what is now southeastern Nebraska, Naomi gave birth to a daughter who was named Henrietta Naomi. The baby arrived in the midst of a downpour of rain with the mother lying in a damp canvas tent. The birth was difficult, and Naomi was too weak to be moved the next day. The wagon train remained in camp for three days, the resumed the westward trek on Monday, June 2. Naomi and her baby rested on a bed in the springless, jolting wagon. She never fully recovered her strength after her confinement. A series of misfortunes dogged the progress of the Sagers across the country. On July 30, a few days before the wagon train arrived at Fort Laramie, Catherine had the misfortune to fall under the wagon while it was in motion, and one of the back wheels ran over her left leg, breaking it severely. As has been noted, this was a common accident on the Oregon Trail. Although there was a German doctor, known as Dr. Degen, in the emigration, he was not in Captain Shaw’s company with which the Sager family was traveling. A messenger was sent to get him. In the meantime, the father set the broken bones to the best of his ability and applied a splint. When the doctor arrived, he declared that the leg had been set as well as he could have done. Catherine was placed in the wagon on a bed near her mother and baby sister. Then the wagon moved on with Dr. Degen now riding alongside.

Captain Shaw’s company moved through South Pass on August 23. About this time Henry Sager came down with what was vaguely described as “camp fever.” He too was put to bed in the wagon and a young man was hired to drive the oxen. Henry died on August 26, just before the wagon train crossed Green River. Shortly before he died, Henry called Captain Shaw to his side and begged him to see that the family was taken to the Whitman mission. In the meantime, Naomi’s health continued to decline. Even though she found lying on her bed in the jolting wagon when the dust stirred up by the many wagon wheels was at times almost stifling, there was no alternative to continuous travel. The
Shaw company arrived at Fort Hall on September 1, about a month later than the schedule followed by the mission party of 1836. Five hundred miles of desert and mountains stretched before them before they could reach Waiilatpu.

Catherine, looking back in later years on those trying days, wrote: 22 “Soon after leaving Fort Hall, she [i.e., Naomi] became seriously ill and delirious. She suffered intensely and even was unable to make her wants known. We were traveling over a road so dusty that a cloud of dust covered the train all day, and to screen Mother as much as possible from this, a sheet was hung across the front of the wagon, making the air within close and suffocating. In her delirium she talked continually of her husband, at times addressing him as though present, and beseeching him in pitiful tones to relieve her suffering.” On September 11, only sixteen days after her husband had died, Naomi Sager followed him in death. 23 The Shaw company was then camped on the south bank of the Snake River near present-day Twin Falls, Idaho. Shortly before she died, Naomi expressed her wish that her children could be kept together. Her last words were: “Oh, Henry! If you only knew how we have suffered.”

**SAGER ORPHANS TAKEN TO WAIILATPU**

Following the death of Naomi Sager, sympathetic members of the wagon train came forward and took care of the seven orphans. A woman, possibly one who was nursing her own baby, assumed the responsibility of caring for the Sager infant. Catherine wrote: “The rest of us [were] kindly cared for by everybody in the train; in fact, we were literally adopted and everyone... was ready to do us a favor.” 24 Dr. Degen continued to drive the oxen and serve as temporary foster father for the seven children. Somewhere along the line of march, the wagon was reduced to a two-wheeled cart. This was all that was needed to carry the meager possessions of the children. Since Dr. Degen succeeded in taking through to Waiilatpu six oxen and one cow that Henry Sager had owned, it may be assumed that the two Sager boys were given the responsibility of driving the animals not needed to pull the cart. Added to the miseries of cold weather and snow in the Blue Mountains was the lack of food. Their flour supply was exhausted and, during the last days of travel, Dr. Degen and the children had nothing more to eat than dried meat.
The exact date of the arrival of the Sager children is not fixed; we know that it was sometime after October 25 and before the end of the month [Letters 187 & 191]. Catherine never forgot her thrill when, as a nine-year-old girl, she first saw Waiilatpu and met Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. She wrote in her reminiscences: “We arrived at the station between ten and eleven o’clock. For weeks this place had been our talk by day and formed our dreams at night. We expected to see log houses occupied by Indians and such folk as we had seen about the forts [i.e., Forts Laramie, Hall, and Boise]. Instead we saw a large white house surrounded by a palisade.” 25 After commenting briefly on the buildings, the gardens, and the irrigation ditches, Catherine wrote: “We drove up and halted near a large ditch. Captain Shaw was in the house conversing with Mrs. Whitman. Glancing through the window he saw us and turned to her and said, ‘Your children have come. Will you go out and see them?’ He then came out and told the boys to help the girls out and get their bonnets. Alas! It was easier to talk about bonnets than to find them. After much searching one or two were found. By this time Mrs. Whitman had come out.

“Here was a perfect scene,” wrote Catherine, “for the pen of an artist. Foremost stood the little cart with the tired oxen lying down. Sitting in the front end of the cart was John, bitterly weeping. On the opposite side stood Francis, with his arms resting upon the wheel and his head in his arms, sobbing aloud. On the near side the little girls stood huddled together, bareheaded and barefooted, looking first at the boys and then at the house, dreading we knew not what! Nearby stood the Doctor and the Captain watching the scene with suppressed emotion. It was thus that Mrs. Whitman found us.”

Catherine described Narcissa as being “a large, well-formed woman with beautiful auburn hair, a rather large nose, and a large pair of grey eyes. She wore a dark calico dress and a gingham sunbonnet, and we thought, as we shyly looked at her, that she was the prettiest woman we had ever seen. As she came towards us, she spoke kindly to us; but like frightened rabbits, we ran behind the cart and peeped shyly at her. She then addressed the boys, adding, ‘Poor boys, no wonder you weep.’” Seven-year-old Helen Mar Meek, wearing a “green dress, white apron and neat sunbonnet,” then joined the group. The personal belongings
of the children were carried into the house. “As we neared the steps,” remembered Catherine, “Captain Shaw asked if she had any children of her own. Pointing to a grave at the foot of a nearby hill, she said, ‘The only child I ever had sleeps there.’ She remarked that it was a great pleasure [i.e., comfort] to be able to see the grave from the house.” Since the Oregon Trail passed on the north side of the mission house, there was no obstruction cutting off the view of the hill and the little cemetery. Inside the house, the Sager children met Mary Ann Bridger “about nine years old washing the dishes.”

Although Captain Shaw and Dr. Degen had fulfilled their promise to the dying Henry Sager that his family would be taken to the Whitman mission, the first reaction of both Marcus and Narcissa was that the responsibility of rearing the seven children was far heavier than they should accept. Several days were spent in debating the problem. Dr. Whitman even suggested sending the boys to Tshimakain to be under the care of the Walkers and the Eellses [Letter 164a]. Captain Shaw, however, reminded the Whitmans of the deceased father’s wish that the children be kept together. Whitman raised the question of what the reaction of the American Board might be. He had been sent to Oregon to minister to the Indians and therefore the Board might not wish to allow any money to be spent for the support of white children. “To this,” wrote Catherine, “the Captain argued that as the Doctor had been sent out as a missionary that whatever came under that head was his duty, whether natives or whites, and we certainly were objects for missionary charity.”

Three days after the older six Sagers had arrived at Waiilatpu, the Sager baby came. Of this Narcissa wrote: “She arrived here in the hands of an old filthy woman, sick, emaciated and but just alive... She was five months old when she was brought here—had suffered for the want of proper nourishment until she was nearly starved. Husband thought we could get along with all but the baby—he did not see how we could take that; but I felt that if I must take any, I wanted her as a charm to bind the rest to me. So we took her, a poor, distressed little object, not larger than a babe three weeks old. Had she been taken past at this season, death would have been her portion, and that in a few days” [Letter 192].

On November 6, 1844, Captain Shaw and Dr. Whitman signed a paper which stated that the seven children were placed in the charge of the latter together with the property of the deceased Henry Sager consisting
of “three yoke of oxen, one wagon, one cow and one old steer and several articles of clothing...” 26 The document also stated that if Walker and Eells did not wish to take the boys and if the Whitmans did not want the responsibility of keeping all seven, then Whitman could take all of the children to Oregon City where Captain Shaw would care for them. A few days after Captain Shaw had left, Marcus and Narcissa decided that they would keep all seven. According to Catherine’s reminiscences, Dr. Whitman mounted his horse and rode after Shaw, catching up with him just before he reached The Dalles. Whitman gave Shaw the assurance that he and his wife would keep the children and that the Captain should feel no further concern about them.

In the spring of 1845, Whitman visited the Willamette Valley and while there appeared before Judge J. W. Nesmith of the Probate Court and on June 3 was made the legal guardian of the Sager children. 27 The estate of the late Henry Sager was valued at $262.50, which Whitman held in trust for the family. The Whitmans considered adopting the children, thus having them take the name of Whitman, but Captain Shaw advised against it.

THE SAGER MYTH

Among the myths and legends, which have developed around the name of Marcus Whitman, is the completely unhistorical story spun from the imagination of Mrs. Honoré Willsie Morrow. According to this imaginative tale, the thirteen-year-old John took charge of his younger brother and sisters after the death of their mother and escorted them alone over the Oregon Trail nearly five hundred miles to the Whitman mission. They had only one horse and a cow. According to the novelist, there had to be a cow to supply milk for the baby. Perhaps the horse was needed to carry their baggage. Mrs. Morrow gave no explanation as to how the children got food and shelter during the days when they would have been traveling through the snow of the Blue Mountains. She described in vivid imagery how John staggered into the Whitman mission carrying the five-month-old baby and leading the emaciated cow on whose back “were perched a sister aged eight, with a broken leg, and a sister of five who helped support the leg... A sister of three and one of seven walked, besides his eleven-year-old brother, Francis.” This incredible story first appeared in the January 1926 issue of *Cosmopolitan*; was reprinted in the
December 1940 Reader’s Digest; again in the August 1960 issue of the Digest under the caption, “Child Pioneer,” and with an introduction by Mark O. Hatfield, then Governor of Oregon! Descendants of the Sager children have found great offense in the myth. Protests from historians to the editors of Reader’s Digest brought no retraction, only the assurance that it would not be published again.

The true story of the Sager orphans is obtainable from the reminiscences of the three Sager girls, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda; from the writings of the Whitmans; and also from the published recollections of members of the 1844 emigration. The documented story of the Sager children is so dramatic, it needs no embellishment by writers of fiction.

**WINTER OF 1844–1845 AT WAILATPU**

By November 11, 1844, Whitman was able to tell Walker that all of the immigration had passed Wailatpu with the exception of seven wagons still to come [Letter 164a]. Writing to Greene on April 4, 1845, Whitman stated that: “After supplying all that came with provisions and urging all to go on that could, twelve families wintered with us.” A school for white children was conducted through the winter months with Alanson Hinman as the teacher. Twenty-six were enrolled including sixteen from the immigrant families and ten from the Whitman household. Living with the Whitmans was seven-year-old Eliza Spalding who, according to Catherine Sager, had made the 120-mile trip from Lapwai “accompanied only by an Indian woman” in order to attend the school. Although Whitman did not indicate in his letter to Greene the exact number of immigrants who had wintered at Wailatpu, the total must have been over fifty-five. This would have included the adults in the twelve families, possibly some single or older people, the sixteen school children and an unknown number of pre-school children. The Whitman household, including Hinman and the Sager children, numbered at least fourteen. Thus the total white population, including the three half-breed children, at Wailatpu would have been about seventy. Again the mission buildings must have been crowded and, perhaps, even the blacksmith shop was used as a dwelling.

Whitman was responsible for supplying food for this large company for a period of four or five months, or until the immigrants found it possible to continue their journey to the Willamette Valley. In his letter
to Walker of November 11, 1844, Whitman reported that after providing supplies to the immigrants who had already passed, he still had “a hundred bushels of wheat, two or more [hundred] of corn left yet & more than a thousand bushels of potatoes & plenty of beef & hogs.” Whitman, however, underestimated the amount of food that seventy people could eat over a period of four or five months. In his letter to Greene written during the following April, he reported that he was then drawing on Spalding for additional food supplies and added: “I had to do the same last year.”

Catherine Sager remembered that from twenty to twenty-five people ate at the Whitman table during the first winter she lived there. Other kitchens on the grounds served the other people. Alanson Hinman in his published reminiscences stated, with perhaps some exaggeration, that the Whitman family “had nothing in the way of meats for their own use but the necks of the beef which were made eatable by boiling, while the better parts were distributed among the immigrants. Mrs. Whitman was not always so long-suffering as her husband, and would sometimes protest that it was not fair that the immigrants should get all of the best parts, while only the leavings were available for the family. To these protests Dr. Whitman would reply in a jesting tone, that he could stand the scoldings of his wife far better than the complaints of the immigrants, and so it went on through the winter.”

No documentary evidence remains to indicate how much Whitman was able to collect from the immigrants for the accommodations provided, but it is evident that some were able to pay something. In Whitman’s report to Greene of April 8, 1845, he stated that he had been able to pay in cash for all supplies received from the Hudson’s Bay Company besides satisfying a claim for £50/4/4 made by Dr. White and wages due Littlejohn amounting to $128.36. Dr. White’s claim may have covered expenses of the meeting held with the Cayuses in the spring of 1843. In addition Whitman reported that he had accepted over $500.00 in notes from the immigrants who had been unable to pay in cash and also “some ten or twelve oxen.” He stressed the fact that he did not want to make money out of the sale of provisions to the immigrants, but did want to meet expenses. “It is impossible for us to refuse those who are hungry,” he wrote, “even although they cannot pay us and in some cases cannot ever secure payment. Situated as we are, necessity compels us to become supplyers to immigrants and we may as well make the best of it we can.”
Greene was not pleased with these developments. Writing to Whitman on April 6, 1846, in reply to Whitman’s letters of the fall of 1844 and spring of 1845, Greene said: “We are glad to hear of your prosperity in secular matters, and that you may be able, by means of your grain and your stock, to defray a large part of your expenses. All this is well. Still we are not quite sure that you ought to devote so much time and thought to feeding the emigrants, and thus make your station a great restaurant for the weary pilgrims on their way to their promised land. Such a work is very humane & good work; but the work of guiding men to Christ is a better one and coincides better with the vocation of a missionary laborer... We fear the effect of this on your own mind & heart—that you will become too exclusively a man of business: —and upon the Indians, that they will have their thoughts engrossed about improving their outward condition, while they will be led to think their spiritual interests are of little consequence... There is danger also that your mission, like that of the Methodists, will get the name and character of a trading or money making establishment, and thus bring discredit not only on your own station, or mission; but on the missionary work generally...”

Secretary Greene’s letters to the Board’s Oregon missionaries reflect the wise advice of a man of great experience, yet in this instance, he failed to appreciate Whitman’s position. What other course could Whitman have followed as long as he remained at Waiilatpu? If he had not fed the hungry, ministered to the sick, and sheltered the needy, he would have been severely criticized. Whitman brought out this point when on April 1, 1847, he replied to Greene’s letter of April 1846 by writing: “If we are not legally, religiously nor morally bound to relieve the passing immigrants, we are necessarily; for the sick and hungry cannot be sent away however penniless.”

The total cost to the American Board of its Oregon Mission for the fiscal year ending March 29, 1845, amounted to $1,822.62. This covered all expenses of the four families, or on the average of a little more than $450.00 for each. As has been stated, none of the missionaries received a salary [Appendix 2]. Through the efforts of Whitman and Spalding, the Mission was becoming increasingly self-supporting. The total expense for the fiscal year ending in March 1847 was only $584.39.
ERECTION OF A SAWMILL

On April 8, 1845, in another letter to Greene, Whitman told of the fulfillment of another dream that he had had for his mission. A sawmill had been erected. He wrote: “Partly in order to give employment to those who wintered with us, but more from the necessity of having boards and timber for the use of the Station and [to] supply the Indians—last but not least to prepare fencing for ourselves & the Indians, I have been building a saw mill—which is now in a state of forwardness & which I hope to start soon after planting is over. I have mostly paid for the work as I went along in provisions. The Mill is about twenty miles off in the Blue Mountains where we have an abundance of timber—and a fine seat [i.e., location] with a good road to reach it. We had most of the irons on hand.”

The mill was located on a creek, later called Mill Creek, almost directly east of Waiilatpu. As has been stated, Whitman had chosen the confluence of Mill Creek and the Walla Walla River as his mission site. The present city of Walla Walla is about six miles upstream on Mill Creek; the mill site is further upstream. Whitman obtained his sawmill machinery from the dismantled mill which Spalding had erected at Lapwai in the winter of 1889–40. Spalding claimed that he had gotten the irons from Fort Vancouver. In his letter to Greene, Whitman indicated his need for lumber to build a shelter over his gristmill, to place new roofs on his buildings, and to provide the natives with boards. A power driven saw was a great advance over the laborious method of whipsawing which had been his only means to get boards. Looking into the future, Whitman wrote: “In this way the mill will be ready for future use—for ourselves, the Indians, and perhaps a settlement. I do not think it will detract from my ability to meet my expenses as most of [those] whom I employ would owe me and not be able to pay” [Letter 168]. Whitman also managed to have a log cabin erected at the mill where, in later years, some of the immigrants, who were wintering at the mission, were able to stay.

Whitman took advantage of the presence of a millwright among the 1844 immigrants to rebuild his gristmill. Large millstones were shaped and placed, and by April 8, 1845, Whitman was able to write: “I have since had a new set of cogs put in, and the mill does well.” This was the third gristmill that Whitman had erected at Waiilatpu.
ACTIVITIES WITH AND FOR THE INDIANS

The presence of so many immigrants at Waiilatpu during the winter of 1844–45, the building of the sawmill and the rebuilding of the gristmill, together with other responsibilities, left Whitman little time to devote to the natives. On April 8, 1845, he reported: “We have had no native school—nor is it likely we can have [one] before next winter.”

In the earlier years at Waiilatpu, Narcissa had sometimes helped in the school, but this she was unable to do in the fall of 1843 and the following winter. Her failing health and many household duties prevented her sharing in what she had once enjoyed doing. Moreover, the enthusiasm that the Cayuses had at first manifested in the school had waned. The novelty of having missionaries living in their midst had worn off. It also appears that fewer Cayuses were living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu after Whitman’s return than had been the case in previous years. This made it difficult to carry on religious instruction for them.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW IN NEZ PERCE

One of the greatest accomplishments of the missionaries working with the Nez Perce and Cayuse Indians during the eleven-year history of the Oregon Mission was the printing at Lapwai in 1845 of the Gospel of Matthew in Nez Perce. After Smith and Rogers had left the Mission, the main responsibility of preparing items in the Nez Perce language, such as primers, fell on Spalding. According to a notation in his diary, he began on December 20, 1841, to translate the Gospel of Matthew into the Nez Perce tongue. He sent some of his work to Waiilatpu for Whitman and Gray to review early in 1842, but, the manuscript was returned in April without any corrections having been made. Gray was too poor in the language to make any constructive criticism, and by this time Spalding was so far ahead of Whitman that the latter did not feel qualified to make changes.

Writing to Walker on January 27, 1845, Whitman said: “We have hired a printer who has been printing a book of Nez Perces & English and now is going to print Matthew’s gospel. I am going up to see to its preparation but shall not stay long as I have to go again in March.” On March 5, he wrote again to Walker: “I suppose the Gospel of Matthew is now printed & we look every day for an arrival from Mr. Spalding when the Printer will come to go to Willamette.” Whitman was then expecting
to go to Lapwai during the latter part of that month to be present when Mrs. Spalding expected to be confined for the third time. A daughter, Martha, was born on March 20.

The printer to whom Whitman referred was a young French Canadian, Medare G. Foisy, who had accompanied Father Joseph Joset into the Flathead country and who was hired by Spalding and Whitman in the fall of 1844 to assist in operating the Mission press at Lapwai.

Although no exact figure is found in the contemporary writings of Whitman and Spalding as to the number of the Gospels printed, we can estimate the total to be not more than 450. Evidently only a few copies were actually distributed among the Nez Perces and Cayuses, as only a few were sufficiently advanced in learning to be able to read much of the book. After the Whitman massacre, Spalding listed in the inventory of the property lost or destroyed at Lapwai “400 copies of Gospel of Matthew not bound.” Today this volume is exceedingly rare, fewer than six copies are known to be extant. Educated Nez Perces, who know their native language, say that Spalding’s translation is inaccurate. Even so, to reduce a language to writing, to make a translation, and then to print it was a major achievement. Whitman’s part in the project was small. The major credit goes to Spalding.

CONTINUING AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Whitman never ceased to encourage the Cayuses to cultivate the soil. In his letter to Greene of April 8, 1845, he wrote: “Some of the Indians are hiring land broken for them by those [i.e., the immigrants] who are here still, which is done at the rate of from three to five acres for an inferior horse. Ploughs are in great demand. I have sold even my last cast plough from the States—as they are the ones preferred by the Indians.” Whitman asked Greene to send out fifty more plows, explaining: “A horse is given for a plough and the horses are sold for from ten to fifteen dollars to meet expenses.”

The success that the Cayuses had of selling produce to the immigrants in the fall of 1845 gave them further encouragement to do more in the way of farming. Writing to Greene on May 15, 1846, Whitman asked for another shipment of twenty plows, and in a letter to Walker dated July 20, he wrote: “An improved spirit of agriculture is manifested among the Indians this year which bids well for the future. For
the first time this year, they have fenced so that I do not have to guard my cattle.” The Indians had held Whitman responsible if any of his livestock strayed into their fields and ate their crops. Now this problem was solved by the erection of fences, possibly made from boards brought from the sawmill.

**THE SAGER CHILDREN IN THE WHITMAN HOME**

The unpublished and published reminiscences of the three Sager girls—Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda—open many windows through which we can look into the Whitman home. Elizabeth Sager recalled how, shortly before their arrival at the Whitman mission, her older sister, Catherine, then only nine and a half years old, had washed their clothes so that all would look respectable—“but when I saw little Helen Meek with such pretty clothes, I thought our clothes didn’t amount to much.” Regarding Mrs. Whitman, Elizabeth wrote: “People who didn’t like her, said she was stuck up, said she had red hair; but she was not stuck up, and she didn’t have red hair. She was rather reserved, and her hair was a copper gold.”

Catherine recalled how hungry she, her brothers, and sisters were when they arrived at Waiilatpu. “It required all the attention of the Doctor and his wife to keep us from overeating and endangering our health,” she wrote. Extra attention had to be given to the baby who was dangerously undernourished when she arrived. Matilda wrote that after being fed: “The first thing Mrs. Whitman did was to cut our hair, wash and scrub us.”

The problem of discipline became an immediate issue. “The Whitmans were New England people,” Matilda explained, “and we were taken into their home and they began the routine of teaching and disciplining us in the old Puritan way of raising and training children—very different from the way of the plains.” Of this Catherine also wrote: “We had been so long without restraint as to become very unruly and hard to manage. The Doctor and his wife were strict disciplinarians and held the reins of household government with steady hands, and while any deviation of the laid down rules met with instant and severe punishment, every effort made to win their approval was rewarded with their smiles.” In her letter of August 9, 1845, to Mrs. Brewer, Narcissa confessed that the children “were said to be very bad when they were left; but there was a reason for that. Left without restraint in such a journey,
it could not be expected otherwise.” She added, however, that they were not difficult children to manage and that she did not have to use the “rod” very often.

According to Elizabeth, Mrs. Whitman did most of the disciplining: “Dr. Whitman was a very jolly, kindly man. He loved to romp with us children. We didn’t feel at all in awe of him as we did of Mrs. Whitman. She enforced all the discipline in the family. Elizabeth gave the following revealing touch in regard to Whitman when she wrote: “He never strolled or walked slowly—he always walked as if he was going somewhere and was on his way.”37 Matilda gave further details about her foster mother: “Mrs. Whitman had the New England idea of discipline. There was no danger of any of us becoming spoiled. She would point to one of us, then point to the dishes or the broom, and we would instantly get busy with our assigned tasks. She didn’t scold much, but we dreaded that accusing finger pointed at us. The way we jumped when it was levelled at us, you would have thought her forefinger was a gun and was likely to go off.”38

The five older Sager children were enrolled in the school taught by Alanson Hinman. Although Marcus reported that Hinman kept an “excellent school” and Narcissa wrote praising him as “a good and faithful disciplinarian” [Letters 168 & 176], the older Sager girls never forgot his harshness in meting out punishment. Catherine wrote: “He was a small-souled tyrant of a man [who] took delight in torturing helpless children… He certainly bestowed on my brothers some of the most cruel whippings it was ever the lot of boys to endure.” Catherine remembered that she and others “were too timid and bashful to complain” but that some of the immigrant families “took the matter up and at one time there was indication of trouble.” The one who resented such treatment the most was Francis Sager. He became a rebel.

**Oregon Mission Meeting, May 1845**

No meeting of the Oregon Mission was held after Whitman’s return in the fall of 1843 until that held at Waiilatpu beginning May 8, 1845. The Walkers with their four children, ranging in ages from one to seven years, and the Eellses with their two sons, one and four years old, made the 140-mile trip on horseback from Tshimakain. Mrs. Spalding was the only adult member of the Mission not present. She remained at Lapwai with her little boy and two-months old baby girl. The meeting
Reporting on events in his letter of May 20 to Greene, Whitman wrote: “The meeting was eminently one of the utmost harmony of views, interest, and feeling. This state... has been apparent ever since my return from the States.” A business meeting of the Mission church was held on Sunday, the 11th. Among the actions taken was the following: “Dr. Whitman was appointed a comt. to inquire after Compo now on the Wallamette.” Since Whitman had been commissioned by the Mission to visit the Willamette Valley to take care of some other matters, this request to inquire about Compo was logical.\(^{39}\)

Disturbing reports had been received about James Conner who had been baptized and received into the church on November 17, 1839, along with Joseph and Timothy. Conner had moved to the Willamette Valley, where he was accused of operating a distillery. In January 1844 his case was brought to the attention of Indian Agent White who ordered the confiscated equipment to be destroyed. Conner then challenged White to a duel. Conner was taken before the circuit court of the Provisional Government, fined $500, and disenfranchised for life.\(^{40}\) After becoming informed of these developments, the members of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon voted to excommunicate Conner for such “crimes” as “Sabbath breaking, fighting, neglect of worship, to which he has added polygamy & intent to fight a duel, & liquor vending.”\(^{41}\)

Sunday was always an important day during the Annual Meetings of the Oregon Mission, for then the missionaries could meet together in worship and observe the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Walker was the preacher for Sunday, May 11. Before the Lord’s Supper was served, Spalding baptized Alanson Hinman, the five Sager girls, and Mary Ann Bridger.\(^{42}\) Hinman was then received into the membership of the church. The two Sager boys were not baptized. The explanation given by Catherine in her reminiscences is that her brothers did not wish to be baptized except by immersion, because their mother had been a Baptist. They had no objection, however, to their sisters being baptized. Narcissa wrote: “We felt it our duty to have them baptized, as many as were willing to be, and according we did so, the girls only consenting” [Letter 176]. Possibly the fact that Hinman was baptized and made a member of the church reacted unfavorably on both of the Sager boys, who may have felt that he was hypocritical in claiming to be a Christian when he had been so harsh in disciplining them. Mary Walker noted in
her diary for the following day: “Mr. Hinman had fits in the evening, occasioned probably by excitement on the sabbath.” It is possible that he was afflicted with epilepsy.

**Francis Sager Runs Away**

As soon as the Mission meeting closed, Dr. Whitman made preparations for his trip to the Willamette Valley. Emma Hobson, who had been returned to Waiilatpu by the Walkers when they came to Waiilatpu, was to accompany Dr. Whitman as was also Alanson Hinman. The three left Waiilatpu on Monday, May 26. One of the last, if not the last of the immigrant families to leave for the Willamette Valley was the Perkins family, who evidently left one week after Whitman’s departure. It appears that Perkins sympathized with the Sager boys in their resentment against Hinman and urged them to go with him to the lower valley. John refused, but Francis eagerly accepted the invitation.

According to Catherine, Francis told her late on the Sunday evening after Dr. Whitman left that he was planning to leave the next day. “I did not put much faith in his assertions,” she wrote, “as I did not think he would go away and leave us. His reason for going was that he thought the discipline was too strict.” Evidently John, who learned of his brother’s intentions, told Mrs. Whitman, who wept on hearing the news. Catherine’s account continues: “Monday morning when I came down to breakfast, I read in the tearful faces of Mrs. Whitman and John the truth of his assertions. Dr. Whitman was not at home, having gone below earlier... When breakfast was ready, Mrs. Whitman sent one of the children to call Francis to breakfast. He refused to come and she then went after him herself and he returned with her, sat down at the table and ate in silence. No one mentioned the subject that filled the minds of all.

Francis arose from the table, took his hat and started for the door. Mrs. Whitman arose from her seat and said in a loud but firm voice, ‘Francis, you must not go. You must stay with me.’ He replied: ‘I must go, I cannot stay.’ She motioned to John to bolt the door but before he could do so Francis ran out, mounted a horse and left.” He rode away from the mission and later joined the Perkins family and went with them to the Willamette Valley.

While passing through The Dalles, the Perkins family and Francis called on the Brewers at the Methodist Mission. In a letter to Narcissa,
Mrs. Brewer passed on some of the criticisms made by Perkins of the situation in the Whitman home. Replying on August 9, Narcissa wrote: “I read your letter to John; he seemed quite hurt about Mr. P’s charges and said that he [Mr. P.] asked him several times if he did not wish to go to the Willamette... I endeavour in all things to act towards the children as if they were my own.” Narcissa was deeply hurt over the incident. Catherine wrote: “[She] mourned long over this affair and said it seemed as though someone in the family had died.”

Narcissa was left alone at Waiilatpu with the ten children after the departure of the Perkins family. The two fourteen-year-old boys, Perrin and John, had the responsibility of looking after the livestock and milking the cows. Narcissa felt that if only her husband had been home, Francis would not have gone. She wrote to Marcus and told him what had happened, no doubt with the hope that he would find Francis and bring him back. On June 29, while at Fort Vancouver, Marcus in a letter to his sister Alice wrote: “Narcissa has written me since I left home and says she will not allow me to leave home again without she goes with me. She is not in strong health and her spirits flag when I am from home and so much care comes upon her.”

It was on this trip to the Willamette Valley that Whitman had his confrontation with White. He also appeared in the Probate Court at Oregon City on June 3 and was appointed the legal guardian of the Sager children. Whitman was able to meet Francis. Of this Catherine wrote: “[He] did not urge him to return as he wanted him thoroughly satisfied with his visit below.” After Whitman had returned to Waiilatpu, about July 1, in time for the wheat harvest, he talked with John. Whitman assured John that he would be willing to give some cattle and horses to each of the boys so as to put them “in the way of acquiring property.” John wrote of this arrangement to Francis and urged him to return. According to Catherine, “a horse was dispatched for him and soon after harvest, we had the pleasure of welcoming Francis home.” Possibly the fact that the court had made Dr. Whitman the legal guardian of the Sager children had some influence on the boy. Certain adjustments in personal relationships were evidently made in the Whitman home, as we hear of no further difficulties. The time came when the older Sager children, along with the younger, were calling Marcus and Narcissa father and mother.
“A Cause of Much Anxiety”

Whitman’s letters to Greene of April 8 and May 20, 1845, refer to four potentials for future trouble. The first of these involved the Indians’ superstitions regarding their “tewats” [medicine men]. Whitman explained this situation in his letter of April 8: “A cause of much anxiety has arisen in connection with... the death of a young man of apoplexy. It is the custom of the Canadians—who are as superstitious as the Indians themselves—to awe them through their superstition of sorcery—by telling them that such and such white men are [more] largely endowed with supernatural power than even their own Tewats.” Such reports planted in the minds of the natives gave the idea that Dr. Whitman was a tewat with superior magical powers. As a result, wrote Whitman, “they have been saying I caused the death of the young man who died of apoplexy.” Whitman saw the danger to himself if such rumors continued to circulate. He wrote: “An impression of this kind among them if strengthened by such circumstances and by the countenance of such men as the Canadians—and perhaps by the Priests—would make my stay among them useless & dangerous—and might induce me to leave at once.” Whereas the illiterate and superstitious Canadians might have ascribed such powers to Whitman, it is inconceivable that any of the Catholic priests would have been guilty of such gross accusations.

Whitman gave Greene a second example of this superstition. During the terminal illness of a local chief: “His son came to me as he was dying and in a passion told me ‘I had killed his Father and that it would not be a difficult matter for me to be killed.’ You are aware already of their habit to kill their own Medicine Men... when an excuse offers by the death of some of their friends.” Whitman knew of the danger which threatened him if one of his Indian patients should die.

The second issue which caused “much anxiety” to Whitman was the possibility of the Roman Catholics opening a mission in the vicinity of Wailatpu. Whitman informed Greene that Father De Smet had made an appointment to meet the Indians at Fort Walla Walla sometime during the month of April 1844. On March 5, Whitman informed Walker: “The Indians are all notified to meet De Smet at Walla Walla when the grass is about five or six inches long.” The height of the grass was a primitive method of indicating time.
After Father De Smet had come and gone, Whitman on May 20 wrote to Greene: “He was seeking an invitation to locate a station among these Indians but I do not know as any one gave him any. I have little doubt, however, but he will manage to obtain his wishes in this respect.” Whitman explained that some of the Cayuses thought that having Catholic missionaries settle among them would “create competition” in making available “such supplies as the Mission is wont to furnish them.”

There is no evidence that the Roman Catholic missionaries ever made any promises to the natives to give them material rewards for favors received, but the property-conscious natives were hopeful. After explaining this problem to Greene, Whitman wrote: “I do not think I could be induced to come to such a people were it to be done again with the present experience—but it is quite different when the question is of continuance or abandonment. I look upon our situation here as having done enough for the cause of Christianity & Civilization to more than compensate for all the labours & expense incurred…”

In similar words, Whitman wrote to Walker: “I should not feel to stay among the Indians in itself considered, but as we are here now, I do not see how we can leave without exposing the cause of religion to reproach” [Letter 167a].

The third source of trouble which Whitman faced was the anti-American and anti-missionary agitation of the Delaware half-breed, Tom Hill, who had a Nez Perce wife and was living with her people. Whitman wrote that he was a person of “considerable talent,” who was exerting “a strong influence against all whites—but most especially against us as missionaries” 46 [Letters 173 & 180a].

The fourth “cause of much anxiety” involved the murder of a Walla Walla Indian, Elijah Hedding, son of Chief Peu-peu-mox-mox [Yellow Serpent] at Sutter’s Fort in California by an American in the late fall of 1844. Elijah had spent several years in the Methodist Mission school on the Willamette and had been named after a prominent Methodist bishop. All of the Indians of the upper Columbia River Valley were eager to get cattle by 1844. Knowing about the successful cattle drive sponsored by some of the white settlers of the Willamette Valley in 1837 when about 630 head were driven into Oregon from California, a number of Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Spokane Indians decided to go to California and
exchange some of their furs and horses for Spanish cattle. In the party was Elijah Hedding.

At first all went well when the Indians arrived at Sutter’s Fort. They were given a cordial welcome and arrangements were made for trading. A serious difficulty arose when the Oregon Indians in a skirmish with local Indians captured twenty-two horses and mules from them. These animals were driven to Sutter’s Fort where some of the Americans claimed them as their property saying that they had been stolen. In the argument which ensued, an American, Grover Cook, known for his anti-Indian attitude, killed Elijah Hedding in cold blood while within the Fort. Whitman in his letter of May 20, 1845, to Greene, stated: “It was indeed a barbarous act if we may credit the report of the Indians—which alone we have—for even if they had done any wrong—they were in the fort & might easily have been humbled without resort to capital punishment.”

Following the murder, the Oregon Indians hastily left for their homes. They were angry and burning with the desire for revenge. Upon their return, Ellis, as Head Chief of the Nez Perces, was asked to call on Indian Agent White to see what he could do about the outrage. No doubt Ellis referred to the provision in the Tenth Article of the code of laws which White had persuaded the Nez Perces and Cayuses to accept, which contained the provision that if a white man raised a gun against an Indian, “it shall be reported to Dr. White and he shall redress it.” The incident must have been most embarrassing to White, as it had occurred in Mexican territory over which the United States had no jurisdiction. All that he could do was to promise to write to the Mexican authorities asking them to redress the wrong. He also sought to appease the Indians by promising them many benefits, including the establishment of a boarding school for Indian youth in the upper Columbia country. Dr. White returned to the States in the fall of 1845, leaving no one to redeem the promises he had made. The whole incident reveals how unrealistic was the White code of laws.

In Whitman’s letter of May 20, 1845, to Greene, he stated: “While most of the Indians have been for peace in these parts, some have urged that, as Elijah [Hedding] was educated and was a leader in religious worship and learning... so in revenge one of the same grade must be killed of the Americans.” Whitman then reported that both he and Spald-
ing were “proposed as suitable victims.” The uncertainty as to what the aroused Indians would do gave Whitman deep concern.

The troubled situation which threatened the peace and effectiveness of the Oregon Mission was discussed by the missionaries at their Annual Meeting held at Waiilatpu in May 1845. Looking back on that gathering, Mary Walker noted in her diary that both Mr. and Mrs. Spalding were “discouraged,” and that “Dr. Whitman [was] entertaining fears that his people intend taking his life.” \(^47\) Whitman informed Greene that some Indians at Lapwai had ordered Spalding to leave “as soon as he was done planting.” After reviewing the darkening situation, Whitman concluded: “Notwithstanding all these discouragements, we do not think we are in danger so as to warrant us to leave our post at present” [Letter 173].

When Whitman was at Fort Vancouver in the latter part of June 1845, he discussed with Dr. McLoughlin the threats that had been made against his life. Dr. McLoughlin had heard about one Indian, supposedly in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who had threatened to kill Whitman. “Do you know about it?” asked Dr. McLoughlin. “Yes,” replied Whitman, “I have known it for two years.” “You have known it for two years and you told me nothing!” exclaimed Dr. McLoughlin, “Tray tell me his name.” Whitman replied: “His name is Thomas Hill.” After thinking for a few moments, Dr. McLoughlin said: “We have no man by that name in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company.” \(^48\)

Another reference to a warning given Whitman by Dr. McLoughlin is found in the reminiscences of Judge Nesmith: “I know that Dr. Whitman had cause to dread the vengeance of the Indians long before it overtook him. I heard him, in the spring of 1845, express his apprehension on that subject to Dr. McLoughlin, at Oregon City, and the latter agreed with him upon the danger of his situation, and advised him to come to the Willamette Valley.” \(^49\)

1845-1846

Since it took about a year for reports to reach the States of the success of the 1843 emigrants in taking wagons over the Blue Mountains, this achievement had little direct effect on the size of the emigration which started for Oregon in the spring of 1844. Since no news of any disaster had filtered back to the States, the assumption was that the 1843
emigration had been successful. As has been indicated, about 1,500 migrated to Oregon in 1844. By the spring of 1845, however, it was well known throughout the States that the wagon road to the Columbia River had been opened. As a result about three thousand joined the Oregon emigration of that year, three times the number who had gone west in 1843. The arrival of the 1845 immigration in the Willamette Valley doubled the previous American population of Oregon.

The success of these emigrations greatly strengthened the position of the United States Government in its negotiations with Great Britain over the location of the boundary. If there had ever been a serious question in informed British circles about the ability of large numbers of Americans to cross the Rockies and the Blue Mountains with their families, their wagons, and their herds of livestock, such must have been answered when they learned of the success of the 1843 and 1844 emigrations. After 1843 there are no further known references in the writings of Hudson’s Bay Company officials or British diplomats to making the Columbia River the boundary; still there was a reluctance on the part of the British Government to accept the 49° parallel.

Frederick Merk has characterized the Oregon section of President Polk’s message to Congress of December 2, 1845, as being “tough.” Although Polk had shown sympathy to the popular demand to have the boundary fixed at 54°40’, he expressed a willingness to draw the dividing line at the 49th parallel. According to Merk, Polk reported that “the British had rejected it out of hand.” Polk then withdrew the offer and Congress was asked “to serve notice on England of intention to terminate the 1827 agreement of joint occupation.” Congress was also asked to pass laws to authorize the granting of land in Oregon to settlers and emigrants regardless of what England might say or do.

The great public interest in Oregon emigration, especially manifest on the western frontier, provided the background for the letter that Greene wrote to Whitman on February 25, 1846, which contains what one writer calls a delightful bit of “exceedingly typical Atlantic anti-expansion sarcasm.” Greene wrote: “Relative to Oregon affairs, there is no great change, in fact, though an increasing interest, especially in our western states, in obtaining immediate possession of it. The population of the Mississippi Valley—that little strip of bottom land!—are all in a panic lest they should be pressed to death, if some outlet cannot be
found for the surplus beyond the Rocky Mountains... The probability now is that measures will be adopted before Congress rises, to terminate the joint occupancy [treaty], preparatory for our taking possession of all as high as the 49th parallel.”

THE EMIGRATION OF 1845

The emigration of 1845, having enjoyed favorable weather conditions, arrived in Oregon about a month earlier than that of the previous year. Consequently fewer immigrants arrived at Waiilatpu in a destitute condition. Writing to Walker on September 29, 1845, Whitman reported: “Few of the immigrants call on us. Four hundred and fifty wagons passed Fort Hall but from seventy to one hundred went to California.”

Somewhere along the Snake River, Dr. Elijah White and his small party, eastward bound, met the westward emigration. Some asked White if they could obtain supplies at the Whitman station. Although assuring them that they could, White recommended they by-pass both Waiilatpu and Fort Walla Walla by following, after crossing the Blue Mountains, the Umatilla instead of the Walla Walla River to the Columbia. This recommendation reflects White’s antipathy to Whitman which was evident at the confrontation the two men had at Oregon City the previous May. To Walker, Whitman explained: “Doc. White told them how plenty & cheap provisions would be at the Dalles.”

White was not the only one who gave advice to members of the 1845 immigration. When the immigrants arrived at Malheur River, some two hundred families were induced by Stephen H. L. Meek, an elder brother of Joseph L. Meek, to take a new cut-off which would shorten the distance into the Willamette Valley. Under Meek’s guidance, this party followed a trail that led around the southern end of the Blue Mountains and then headed across barren desert land to the Deschutes River. Both grass and water were extremely scarce. The feet of the oxen became so sore because of the rocky soil that some animals refused to travel. At least twenty immigrants are reported to have died during this ordeal, and still others died later from exposure. Meek’s life was threatened. He was saved by a friendly immigrant who concealed him in a wagon. It may be that White’s enthusiasm for such a cut-off was largely responsible for the venture, but Meek got all the blame. After reaching
the Deschutes River, this party followed it to the Columbia, where they rejoined the Oregon Trail.

**Whitman Saves Some Immigrants from an Indian Attack**

According to an account given by Sarah J. Cummins, who was the seventeen-year-old wife of one of the 1845 immigrants, Whitman was instrumental in saving a party of immigrants from an Indian attack while they were in the Blue Mountains. Being told by some friendly Indians that a party of Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians intended to attack the immigrants while they were in the mountains, Whitman hastened to ride forth to meet them. He met the immigrants in the Powder River Valley during the first week of September. The confrontation with the hostile Indians came in the Grande Ronde Valley. The war party was surprised to discover that the immigrants had been forewarned and that Whitman and some friendly Nez Perces were with them. Sarah Cummins has given us the following account: “Ere the twilight faded, and as it was apparent that great numbers of the Indians were gathering within range, Dr. Whitman began to talk to the chief of the Walla Walla’s. The chief of the Cayuses now spoke vehemently in the style of true Indian eloquence. The Doctor spoke again and again, and the chief replied, still defying us to go on. Then Doctor Whitman rose to almost super-human height and, in a stern voice, told them in emphatic terms that the Great Father of the ‘Bostons’ would send men to defend these travelers, and that ship loads of soldiers and guns would arrive to kill all the Indians who molested his people on their way to the distant valley.”

Fearful of an attack during the night Whitman succeeded in keeping the Cayuse chief in the immigrant camp as a hostage. Once when the chief tried to escape, Whitman sternly told him: “Move and my man shoot you like a dog.” Sarah Cummins remembered that this warning had its desired effect, but she added: “It was a night of terror to all, not a breath of sleep except the younger children.” The next day a party of friendly Nez Perces arrived, having been sent by Spalding, and this greatly-relieved the strain of the situation. The immigrants then continued their march without further threats.

Although Sarah did not name any of the chiefs, in all probability the Walla Walla chief was Peu-peu-mox-mox, father of the slain Elijah Hedding. Several Cayuse chiefs could have been involved including
Tiloukaikt, Tomahas, and Tamsucky. Possibly the Nez Perce chief was Timothy. In this incident we see the evidence of growing hostility of the Indians living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu.

LOSS OF SALES AT WAIILATPU

Most of the 1845 immigrants, after crossing the Blue Mountains, followed White’s advice and went down the Umatilla River past present-day Pendleton, Oregon, to the Columbia River. This route shortened the distance to the Columbia and was, therefore, a logical road to follow. White was mistaken, however, in telling the immigrants that they could get all the supplies they needed at less cost at The Dalles than they could at Waiilatpu.

Learning that most of the immigrants would be taking the Umatilla route, Whitman loaded his wagon with flour and other supplies and rode to the Umatilla to meet them. John Ewing Howell, one of the immigrants of that year, wrote in his diary on September 17, 1845: “…camped on the Umatallow river… Dr. Whitman and lady visited our camp this morning and travelled with us and camped with us. He had a wagon-load of flour alone, not bolted, $8 pr. 100 lbs.”

Whitman was greatly disappointed in the small amount of sales he was able to make to the immigrants. “I had much less call from them than last year,” he wrote to Greene on October 26. “The money I took from them was less than one hundred and fifty dollars and about fifteen dollars trust—three cows and two small steers.” Although Whitman sold flour at $5.00 per hundredweight at his station, he charged an extra $3.00 if he had to carry it the twenty-five or more miles to the Umatilla.

In Whitman’s letter of April 13, 1846, to Greene, he again blamed White for his loss of sales. “I wrote you in the fall about my dealings with the immigrants,” he said, “& told you I had not much call from them. This was owing to Doct. White’s telling them they could get a full supply of flour at the Dalls [sic]. The result was that they would not buy of me at five dollars a hundred, but they had to give eight and ten at the Dalls & what was worse it was not there to supply them, & in consequence there was much suffering.” Whitman felt that the lack of supplies at The Dalles added “to the deaths that were induced by a wild attempt at a southern route from Boise to the Dalls.”
Whitman warned Greene: “I would desire you to keep a lookout for Doct. White’s course in the States and especially that he does not take up a self constituted Agency to collect funds to establish a manual labor school among the Nez Perces, which I have no doubt was a favorite plan of his. He went so far as to promise it to the Indians in such a way as to commit this Mission for its fulfilment or to involve us in its failure” [Letter 179]. Here is evidence of one of White’s proposals to appease the Indians of the upper Columbia River country following the murder of Elijah Hedding. Nothing further is heard of this project, and Dr. White no longer figures in the Whitman story.

**Imigrants at Waiilatpu, Winter 1845–1846**

Life was easier for the Whitmans during the winter of 1845–1846 than it had been the previous year because there were fewer immigrants wintering at their station and also because there was a surplus of food supplies. Moreover, Narcissa was enjoying better health.

In his letter of April 13, 1846, to Greene, Whitman wrote: “A few families wintered with us. Three were Mechanics which I hired, one as a mill wright, another a chair maker and wheel maker, and the other as a Black Smith.” Whitman commented on the difficulties involved in obtaining much benefit from strangers whose skills were unknown to him and who usually wanted to leave for the Willamette as soon as possible in the spring. The shortness of the days and the inclement weather during the winter also militated against the immigrants doing much useful work.

Among those who spent the winter at Waiilatpu was a gunsmith. Whitman, when writing to Walker on October 29, 1845, made it clear that he would have nothing to do with the “armory business.” Whitman was a pacifist by conviction and consistently refused to use force when meeting with angry natives in some tense confrontation. As has been stated, once when slapped by Tiloukaikt, he literally turned the other cheek.

The only known recorded incident in which Whitman is reported to have threatened to use force is the story given to us by Sarah Cummins quoted above. Mrs. Cummins’ account was published in 1914, nearly seventy years after the reported incident is supposed to have occurred. She might have been mistaken in her recollections of the event. The
frightened immigrant holding the gun could have been the one who threatened to shoot the Cayuse chief if he tried to flee.

Shortly after the A. B. Smiths were forced to leave Kamiah, the natives of that place began to ask Whitman and Spalding to send another missionary to them. On April 8, 1844, Whitman referred to this in his letter to Greene: “The Indian with whom Mr. Smith had the difficulty at Kamiah... has showed both here and at Lapwai how much he regrets his leaving... and that ever since his heart has wept.” Among the early arrivals of the 1845 immigrant at Waiilatpu was a young man, Jacob Rynearson, whom Whitman hired to go to Kamiah to open a school for the purpose of teaching the English language to any who might be interested. At first Rynearson met with success as Whitman reported that “about twenty-five [were enrolled] among which were two Delawares & Ellis, the principal Chief” [Letter 191].

Rynearson, however, found the project too difficult and returned to Waiilatpu after spending only a month at Kamiah. He then left for the Willamette Valley [Letter 182]. Thus ended all efforts of the Oregon Mission to carry on educational work for the natives at Kamiah.

One of the most welcomed immigrants to spend the winter of 1845–46 at Waiilatpu was the millwright, Josiah Osborn [or Osborne].

He had with him his wife and three children—Nancy, five and a half years old; John, two; and a baby boy who might have been born after the family arrived at Waiilatpu. Osborn repaired the gristmill at Waiilatpu and put it in good running condition. By the end of February 1846, the dam at the sawmill in the mountains was completed and the mill ready for operation [Letter 183b]. Osborn succeeded in attaching a lathe to the water wheel and, as a result, Whitman was able to tell Walker: “Mr. Osborne is at work at chairs & spinning wheels with his lathe... A dozen chairs for each of your families besides an arm chair and an arm rocking chair for sick people are under way.” In their primitive situation, even a rocking chair was considered a luxury.

In his letter to Greene of April 13, Whitman wrote: “I could not think to live without the Mill as my house wants a new roof, never having had any but dirt roofs, & besides my Flour Mill has no house over it & I am in want of all the means to thresh & secure our grain, having no barn threshing floor or granary. I hope to do much with the Mill for the Indians also.” Whitman used the slabs left over from the logs for fences.
The archives of Whitman College contain an account book of Josiah Osborn which throws light upon the prices Whitman was receiving for supplies. The records began on August 21, 1845, and continued to the following March 7. Whitman was then paying Osborn $1.50 per day, which was given in produce. The following entries are typical:

- 25 lbs flour at 5 cts per pound ................. $1.25
- 1 bushel beets ..................................... 40
- 1 bushel potatoes ................................. 40
- 69 lbs. beef ...................................... 3.79½
- 8 squashes ....................................... 1.00
- 20 lbs. pork ..................................... 1.40
- 1 lb. sugar ...................................... 20
- 51 lbs. meal ..................................... 2.04
- 6 ft. tobacco .................................... 60

The tobacco, which came in twisted strands and was sold by the foot, was used in trading with the Indians. The prices here listed give a refutation, if such be needed, to the accusations that Whitman was charging exorbitant prices for his supplies. The Osborn family moved to the Willamette Valley in the spring of 1846, but returned, on Whitman’s urging, in the fall of 1847.

**INTRODUCING ANDREW RODGERS**

Traveling with the Osborn family was a sandy-haired, gentle-spirited young man by the name of Andrew Rodgers, who also decided to spend the winter at Waiilatpu. Whitman was delighted to learn that Rodgers was willing to teach the school for white children. He was hired forthwith, and thus another problem that Whitman faced was solved. “We have the best prospects for a good school for the children,” Whitman wrote to Walker on October 29. “The teacher is mild but I have no doubt of his faithfulness and integrity. He was well recommended.” The Walkers sent their eldest son, Cyrus, to the school, and the Spaldings sent their daughter, Eliza. Three of the children of the immigrants were also enrolled, which brought the total in the school to fourteen.
Also traveling with the Osborns was their cousin, Joseph Finley, who had ventured to make the long journey to Oregon for health reasons. Narcissa wrote: “His disease was consumption, and deep-seated when he left the States” [Letter 186]. Catherine Sager remembered how the friendship between Rodgers and Finley “was like unto that of Jonathan and David.” The two men took up quarters in the emigrant house.

In her recollections of Rodgers, Catherine wrote: “He was a well educated man of deep piety... his modest and gentlemanly manner completely won Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. Mrs. Whitman was especially attracted to him by his beautiful voice and his knowledge of singing.”

Rodgers had carried his violin with him on his long trek to Oregon. To Narcissa’s great enjoyment, he joined her in singing familiar church hymns. Rodgers had been a member of the small Associate Presbyterian Church, one of the branches of the Scottish Covenanter movement that traced its roots back to the early years of the eighteenth century. A principal characteristic of this denomination was its refusal to sing “man-made” hymns but, instead, only paraphrases of the Psalms. Rodgers had been excommunicated by his church “for using Watts Psalms & Hymns.” 59

As has been mentioned, Marcus could not sing. Narcissa had tried to teach him certain tunes on their honeymoon journey across the country without much success. Now there came into her life at Waiilatpu, which must have been very dull at times, a talented and friendly person who could sing and also play the violin. Narcissa was delighted. Rodgers became a welcome member of the Whitman household. Catherine remembered his keen sense of humor.

Despite his hopes regarding the possible beneficial effects of a change of climate and the fervent prayers of those who ministered at his bedside, Finley found that his health was steadily declining. About the middle of January 1846, the Whitmans moved the sick man into their own bedroom and made arrangements to sleep elsewhere. Narcissa wrote about how the sick man, when he realized that death was near, began to ask questions on religious subjects. “He was without a well-grounded hope when he came here,” she wrote on April 2, 1846, “and the Lord was pleased to bless our efforts for his salvation.” Finley expressed a desire to be baptized and be received into the Mission church. Spalding was sent for. According to the minute book of the church, both Finley
and Rodgers were examined as to their faith on February 27, 1846, and after Finley was baptized, both were received into the membership of the church. These were the last persons to join the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon during the mission period.

“Being in my family,” wrote Narcissa to Jane, “I was very much with him and read and prayed with him almost daily towards the close of his life. He grew in grace steadily and felt that he was over-privileged to die in such a quiet place, where he could have the society of those who cared for his soul” [Letter 187]. Finley died on March 28, 1846, in his thirty-second year, and was buried in the little cemetery at the base of the hill near the Whitman home. Spalding again rode to Waiilatpu in order to conduct the funeral. Catherine Sager noted that Finley was “the first white man buried there;” the other two adults were a Black and an Hawaiian.

**Rodgers Studies for the Ministry**

After joining the Mission church, Rodgers decided to study for the ministry. The Mission appointed Elkanah Walker to supervise his studies, and on May 15, 1846, Whitman wrote to Greene and ordered eleven text books. Six of this number were for Hebrew and Greek studies. On November 2, 1846, Narcissa wrote to Mrs. Spalding saying: “Mr. Rodgers acts as our minister and maintains the station with considerable ministerial dignity. He bids fair to be a useful man.” Thus to Andrew Rodgers belongs the distinction of being the first candidate for the Protestant ministry on the Pacific Slope of what is now the United States.

Rodgers received at least part if not all of the books ordered. Among them was “Robinsons Greek Lex[icon] of N.T.” When those who were held captive at Waiilatpu following the Whitman massacre were evacuated, they were able to take with them most of their personal belongings. Someone took some of the items that Rodgers had owned. After the arrival of the former captives in the Willamette Valley, a question arose as to who should receive the possessions of Rodgers. Since he had no relatives, it was decided that the items should be given to the Rev. Wilson Blain, a pioneer Associate-Reformed Presbyterian minister, who was then living in the Valley. This was a logical decision since Rodgers had once been a member of the Associate Church.
About 1940, I learned that Blain’s grandson was living in San Leandro, California. I then knew nothing of any connection Blain had had with the property of Andrew Rodgers. I did know that Blain had served as editor of Oregon’s first newspaper, the *Oregon Spectator*. Hoping to find some copies of that pioneer publication, I called on the grandson. Although he had no copies of the *Spectator*, he did give me a box of old books from his late grandfather’s library. I found among them Robinson’s Greek Lexicon with the signature of Andrew Rodgers on a flyleaf page. This volume is now in the museum of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

**Activities at Waiilatpu, 1845-1846**

Among the 1845 immigrants who visited Waiilatpu that fall was Joel Palmer, who returned to the States the following spring to get his family. Palmer in his published *Journal* tells of the call that Dr. and Mrs. Whitman had paid on the party of immigrants with whom he was traveling while they were encamped in the Grande Ronde Valley on September 17: “They came in a two horse wagon, bringing with them a plentiful supply of flour, meal, and potatoes.”

Palmer spent a few days at Waiilatpu and had high praise for what the Whitmans had accomplished. “Their privations and trials have been great,” he wrote. “The fruits of their devotion are now manifest and if any class of people deserve well of their country, or are entitled to the thanks of a Christian community, it is the missionaries.” 61 Whitman told Palmer that he had found it necessary to butcher thirty-two horses for his table before he was able to turn to his stock of cattle and hogs for meat. Palmer later played an important role in the political life of Oregon, serving as a general in the Cayuse War of 1848.

Whitman’s activities with and in behalf of the natives, during the months under review, continued according to established patterns. The excitement which stirred the Indians when they learned of the death of Elijah Hedding at Sutter’s Fort died down when they heard that there had been an uprising in California against the Mexican Government and that Captain Sutter had been captured and imprisoned. This was an incident of the Mexican War of 1846. The Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians looked upon the imprisonment of Sutter, which proved to
have been only temporary, as a kind of retribution for their own personal grievances. As a result, Whitman was able to write to Greene on October 26, 1845: “They have taken a course most favourable to a good understanding with the whites.” But, as will be told, the Cayuses had not forgotten; the murder of Elijah Hedding continued to be a cause of dissatisfaction.

Whitman and Spalding never equated civilization with Christianity, although they were convinced that the two could not be separated. Shortly after their arrival on their mission fields, their letters show that they foresaw an inevitable clash between the Indian culture and that of the white man. Spalding especially stressed his conviction that if the Indians were to survive, they would have to abandon their manner of life and settle down and become farmers and herdsmen. Whitman shared this opinion. As far as the Indians were concerned, there was no alternative. Moreover, the missionaries realized that they could not educate or evangelize a people who were, as Spalding said, “always on the wing.” Therefore, both men did all that they could to encourage the natives to farm and to raise cattle, sheep, and hogs. Whitman and Spalding were following the pattern set by government agents working with Indian tribes in the States.

In order to improve his breed of sheep, Whitman ordered “one Merino & one Leiscester buck” from the Hudson’s Bay Company in April 1846 [Letter 191]. In his letter of April 13 to Greene, Whitman reported that he then had one hundred ewes in his flock which he expected would drop “200 or more lambs in the course of the coming year as they give two sets a year.” In his letter of May 15 to Greene, he asked for six sheep shears. The sheep that Whitman and Spalding together owned produced far more wool than could have been used on the few spinning wheels at the two stations and on Spalding’s loom. What was done with the excess is not known. Possibly it was sold or traded with the Hudson’s Bay Company.

As a boy Whitman had tended a carding machine which processed wool for spinning and weaving [Letter 191]. Because of this experience, Whitman asked Greene to send a complete set of irons for a carding machine and also requested that some person skilled in the manufacture of woolens be sent to Oregon to run the proposed project. Whitman’s dream of establishing a woolen industry in Oregon did not receive
Greene’s approval. On November 13, 1846, Greene answered four of Whitman’s letters including his letter of April 13, 1846, in which he had asked for carding irons. Greene’s reply may have been received by Whitman before his death; if so it was the last letter from the Board that Whitman read. In it Greene wrote: “We do not send the mechanist or the manufacturers which you mention as desirable, partly because we do not know where to find them,… and partly, because as a missionary society, we do not think it advisable for us to have much to do with such matters.”

Thus ended Whitman’s attempt to initiate the manufacture of woolens in Oregon.

The old debatable question as to the advisability of teaching English to the natives faced Whitman again in 1846. Writing to Brewer on February 6 of that year, Whitman said: “I do not know when we can hit upon a plan to educate the Indian children. Their own language does not satisfy them and they have not perseverance enough to learn English.” Whitman agreed with Dr. White’s idea that the only solution to the problem would be to take the children from their parents and put them in a boarding school. Such a project, however, would be expensive and the Mission had neither the funds nor the personnel for such an undertaking.

In his letter of April 13 to Greene, Whitman wrote: “Situated as I am alone, I am not able to give the regular attendance upon school teaching that is requisite for success. No one can teach English to any effect but one that has the medium of both languages for communication.” Whitman’s experience in sending a man to Kamiah in the fall of 1845, who did not know the Nez Perce language, and expecting him to teach the natives English, proved his point. Whitman added in his letter to Greene that Perrin, then sixteen years old, had made such progress in mastering the Indian language that he would “soon be able to teach.” Perrin later became an interpreter for the government.

In addition to the multitude of duties which fell on his shoulders, Whitman found that practically all religious instruction given to the Cayuses devolved upon him. He was as conscientious as circumstances permitted in conducting Sunday devotions for the natives. In his letter of July 20, 1846, to Walker, he commented: “A general good attention is given by the Indians to religious instruction. Gambling, however, is the besetting sin of many especially of the young.” Other members of
the Oregon Mission made references in their letters to this tendency of
the natives to gamble.

Regarding the possibility of a Roman Catholic mission being es-
established near Waiilatpu, Whitman told Walker: “We are to pass at least
another year without a Roman Catholick [sic] Station among us. The
influence of Ellis is against it & the Indians in general also. Still the
Jesuits could obtain what would be to them an invitation to locate among
them.” Both Whitman and Spalding were inclined to refer to all of the
Roman Catholic missionaries as belonging to the Jesuit order when in
fact the only one in the area that did belong was Father De Smet.

In the midst of his many cares and responsibilities, Whitman had
the misfortune during the first part of December 1845 to suffer a se-
verely bruised left knee as the result of his horse falling on him. For over
two months, he had to use a crutch. During the latter part of the follow-
ing January, Whitman received a call from the Walkers asking him to
attend Mrs. Walker when she expected to be confined about the middle
of February. Whitman replied on February 3 and explained that he was
unable to make the horseback ride because of his injured knee. “Mrs.
Walker has the best reason to hope and trust for a safe delivery from
her former experience,” he wrote. “Let nature have its unobstructive
course… Remember that delivery is a natural process” [Letter 183b]. A
son, named Jeremiah, their fifth child, was born on March 7.

FROM NARCISSA’S LETTERS

Narcissa’s letters written during the spring of 1846 give us some of
her thoughts and feelings on a variety of subjects. To her father
she wrote on April 10: “I have received no letters from father, mother
or any of the sisters or brothers in Allegheny county since husband
returned. I wonder why, sometimes, and feel a little like complaining.”
Again, it is hard to explain either the failure of her relatives to write
or the possible loss of letters in transit. On November 3 of that year,
Narcissa in a letter to her mother wrote: “Mothers dated Mar. 26,
1846, was sent from Boston to Westport and reached me in about five
months after it was mailed. This brings me very near home. Indeed it
is the first I have received since those sent by Husband.” In other
words, this was the first letter from her “home” that she had received
for three years!
Narcissa repeatedly urged members of her family, especially Jane and Edward, to migrate to Oregon. In her letter of April 10, 1846, to her father, she even suggested that he had her mother make the overland journey. “If my dear father and mother were here,” she wrote, “I think they would be very well contented, for we could give them a comfortable home and enough to eat and do, and if the distance were not so great, I should hope they would come and finish their days with us.” Narcissa, however, confessed: “But it is a dreadful journey to perform to get here, and I ought not to ask such a sacrifice of them for my comfort merely... It is not so difficult to get here now as when I came, for families come in wagons all the way. The fatigue is great, however, and the dust from Fort Hall here is very afflicting; aside from that, with food enough and teams enough, no loading except necessary clothing, it would not be difficult.”

After mentioning the physical hardships of the overland journey, Narcissa turned to the spiritual effects. “The greatest affliction,” she wrote, “would be to the pious soul—it is continually vexed with the ungodly conversation and profanity of the wicked, and is so often brought into straitened circumstances with regard to his own duty in obeying the commands of God, such as keeping the Sabbath, etc., that he often is wounded to that degree that it requires many months, if not years, before he is restored to his wonted health again... I do not say that the journey cannot be performed and the Christian enjoy his peace of mind and continued communion with God all the way. But this I know, that the experience of all proves it to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. It is often said that every Christian gets so that he can swear before the journey is completed.”

In her letter of April 2, 1846, to Edward, Narcissa again pleaded for him and Jane to write. “I cannot see how it should be difficult for you or the girls to write me, and should you think you might write me five or six times a year instead of once in two or more years.” And then Narcissa gave the following description of what was taking place around her as she was writing: “Think of me now while I am attempting to write—half a dozen children making a noise around me, and to put on the climax, the doctor must come in, and taking a paper sit down and read aloud or talk to Mr. Rodgers who is sitting in the room; then in comes an Indian woman or two to sell some dry berries, and I must stop to attend to them, until I am quite lost and scarcely know what I am thinking about,
especially when I have nearly twenty letters to write, and but little time to accomplish it in.”

Narcissa thanked her brother for sending a box of incidental articles. “I was in hopes,” she wrote, “of finding one little article more, that is needed more than most any other because it cannot be obtained here; namely a pi-la-ain, as the Indians call it (louse trap). You will understand me, I suppose—the finest fine combs cannot be obtained here, for that reason I was in hopes of finding one in the box.” The lodges of the Indians were always infested with various kinds of vermin which often made life miserable for the white people who came in close contact with the natives.

**Reminiscences of the Sager Girls**

The reminiscences of the three Sager girls—Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda—give us many intimate glimpses into the Whitman home during those years 1844–47. Through their reminiscences, we learn, not only many details of life at Waiilatpu, but also much about the Whitmans themselves. Here we see Marcus and Narcissa in their lighter moments when they laughed, played, and sang with the children.

Catherine, as the eldest of the three girls, has given us the longest and the most reliable account of life in the Whitman home. Here is one of her recollections:

Some... may be curious to know how this washing was done for so large a family. About four o’clock in the morning, all hands were called into the kitchen by Mrs. Whitman. Tubs and all necessary paraphernalia were produced. The men and boys with long aprons tied around them brought water and plied the pounders, while the women did the rubbing. With much joking, all went off in good humor and by school time, which was nine o’clock, the clothes were on the line.64

Regarding their religious training, Catherine wrote: “On Sabbath morning each child was reminded that it was the Sabbath and each one was admonished to keep quiet.” Those who could read were encouraged to do so. Sunday school was held at eleven o’clock. A worship service for the white residents of Waiilatpu was held at three o’clock. Dr. Whitman or Andrew Rodgers usually “read the sermon.” The religious instruction
of the children continued through the week, with emphasis on memorizing Bible verses. Catherine remembered that: “Prayer meeting was held on Thursday evening during the winter for adults.”

Elizabeth recalled many memories of her life at Waiilatpu in her old age when she granted an interview with a newspaper reporter. Among the immigrants of 1846 was a young woman in her late teens, Mary Johnson, who was hired by Dr. Whitman to assist his wife in the house. According to Elizabeth, one day Mary put on Narcissa’s “wrapper” while working in the kitchen. While standing at the stove with her back to the door, Dr. Whitman entered and saw her. Pretending that he mistook her for his wife, the doctor tiptoed up to her and suddenly threw his arms around her and gave her a big hug. “She was greatly embarrassed and scandalized,” said Elizabeth, while “the Doctor was as solemn as an owl and protested he thought she was his wife.” Elizabeth added: “I could tell by the way his eyes twinkled, he was playing a joke on her.”

Each of the three Sager girls remembered Narcissa’s love for flowers and how she encouraged each to cultivate a small garden each spring. They also recalled how she would take them on walks or horseback rides, especially on Saturday afternoons. Both Catherine and Elizabeth remembered a picnic held in the fall of 1847 when Mrs. Whitman led the children to a site about a mile and a half from their home. Francis pulled a small hand wagon which contained the food and dishes. The most exciting event of the excursion happened when Elizabeth and Helen threw clods of dirt at a wasps’ nest which resulted in both Helen and Mrs. Whitman being stung. For punishment the two girls were sent to bed that evening without their supper.

Narcissa took delight in teaching the children to sing. Catherine wrote: “It was the custom for Mrs. Whitman, when she had company, to show off what she called her ‘family stairway’... All the children were called and placed in a line standing according to height. After being formally introduced, we entertained the company by singing, accompanied by Rodger’s violin. During these exercises the Doctor and his wife looked on, their eyes sparkling with pleasure.”

Writing to her sister Harriet on April 13, 1846, Narcissa said: “Every one of my girls goes to the river all summer long for bathing every day before dinner, and they love it so well that they would as soon do without dinner as without that.” Since their main meal was served at noon,
the bathing took place late in the morning. A secluded spot was used where the girls could bathe in the nude, always with Narcissa or some other woman watching. When the annual Mission meeting was held at Waiilatpu in May 1845, Mrs. Eells took the girls to the river. At that time eight-year-old Emma Hobson nearly drowned. Seeing the little girl struggling in the water, Mrs. Eells frantically screamed for help. Elizabeth wrote of the incident: “An Indian got Emma out and, as she had no clothes on, he took off his blanket, wrapped her up in it, brought her back and handed her gravely to Mrs. Eells.” After that a safer place for the girls to bathe was selected.  

The children went barefooted in the summer and wore moccasins in the winter. Mrs. Whitman made dresses for the girls out of “hickory shirting” purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company. The Whitman family often slept out-of-doors during the summer months. Catherine commented on the food: “The Doctor ignored fine flour and used un-bolted flour or corn meal. As a matter of economy, tea or coffee came to the table only on rare occasions, such delicacies being very hard to procure in Oregon at that time. The country abounded in wild fruits of all kinds which were purchased from the natives. Our good garden supplied the vegetables. Cakes and pastry were served only on holidays. Add to the list, plenty of milk, butter and cheese and you have our diet.” Matilda remembered that their most common dish for supper was “corn meal mush and milk.” Matilda also recalled how the children would cut watermelons in half and string them together and put them in the river as little boats, playing with them by the hour.

Mrs. Whitman was opposed to the girls associating with the Indian children; thus the Sager girls did not learn the native language. Eliza Spalding at Lapwai had more freedom in this regard and, as a result, she could speak Nez Perce; this proved of great importance to the captives at the time of the Whitman massacre. On the whole, the three Sager girls looked back with appreciation on their three years at Waiilatpu and were generous in praising their foster parents.

On April 10, 1846, in a letter to her father, Narcissa wrote: “I am sometimes about ready to sink under the weight of responsibility resting upon me, and would, were it not that an Almighty hand sustains me. Bringing up a family of children in a heathen land, where every influence tends to degrade rather than elevate, requires no small
measure of faith and patience, as well as great care and prayerfulness watchfulness.” The refusal of Mrs. Whitman to permit the girls to play with Indian children may have been one reason why the Indians considered her to be “haughty.”

**Whitman Considers Leaving Wailatpu**

Several alarming confrontations with the natives which occurred in the fall of 1845 caused Whitman seriously to consider the advisability of moving his family to the Willamette Valley. Catherine Sager has given us the following account of the first incident: “It was the Doctor’s custom to grind grain for the natives at his mill, those coming first having their grain ground first. One day Tomahas came to the mill and wanted his corn ground. Not getting it done as soon as he thought he would, and being a fractious fellow, he became enraged. While eating dinner, we heard the mill making a strange sound. The miller, followed by the Doctor, ran to the mill where he was knocked down by Tomahas. He then struck at the Doctor but was seized around the waist by Tiloukaikt. Tomahas roared and foamed like an enraged lion but Tiloukaikt held him fast. He finally promised to leave if released. Then he mounted his horse and rode away and was not seen about for a long time.” Catherine explained that Tomahas, impatient because he had not been given prompt service, had put sticks into the hopper of the mill which caused the strange sounds which in turn alerted Whitman and the miller.

Catherine told of another incident which involved Tomahas. She wrote:

One day while the Doctor was engaged in his field, Tomahas... rode up to the fence in a very preemptory manner and ordered Dr. Whitman to go and grind some corn for him. The Doctor replied that he was not in the habit of doing things for people unless they asked in a proper manner. He [i.e., Tomahas] started off around the field but as he had to go around, the Doctor was able to reach the mill first by cutting across the field, and soon fixed the mill so that it could not be operated.

The Doctor then took an iron bar in his hand, retired a short distance and awaited the coming of Tomahas. He soon ar-
rived and after trying in vain to start the mill, he rushed at Dr. Whitman with his club but seeing that he was armed, he stopped and ordered the Doctor to put down his weapon. To this the Doctor calmly replied that he would put his down when the Indian put his own down.

Tomahas dropped his club but as soon as the Doctor put down his bar of iron, the Indian rushed at him with his club. The Doctor picked up his iron bar and was able to ward off the blow. Tomahas told him to leave the country, that he did not want him there. To this the Doctor replied that if all the Indians wanted him to leave, he would gladly do so, but he could not leave, just because one Indian wanted him to go. He also told him that if he would behave himself, he would do his grinding for him. To this he agreed and they parted in a friendly spirit.

The Doctor, exhausted in body and spirit, came into the house and threw himself on a couch, relating the whole affair, saying that if the Indians would say so, he would gladly leave as he was tried almost beyond endurance.70

**Confrontation with Young Chief**

A situation, more ominous than the threats of physical violence by the excitable Tomahas, faced Whitman on November 24, 1845, when he experienced a frightening confrontation with Young Chief. Tomahas was only a subchief in Tiloukaikt’s band; Young Chief, on the other hand, was one of the most influential of the Cayuse chiefs and when he rehearsed all the complaints that the Indians had against the white men in general, and the missionaries in particular, Whitman was deeply disturbed.

The next day Whitman in a long letter to Walker summarized what had happened. He began his letter by saying: “I have given the Indians from now to next spring to consider whether I shall leave them or not. My reasons for doing so arise out of a talk I had yesterday with the Young Chief.” Whitman had approached Young Chief regarding the possibility of opening a school for the Indian children. Even before this project could be discussed, Whitman was confronted with “a long list of counts” which Young Chief brought up. Although some of the criticisms made by Young Chief were of an incidental nature, three were in his mind very
important. Each of these became a factor in the growing unrest among the Cayuses which came to a tragic climax two years later. In this letter to Walker, Whitman’s report of what Young Chief said gives the Indians’ side of their conflict with the white men.

Young Chief began by referring to the death of his nephew, Cayuse Halket, at the Red River Mission school. The school’s records show that the young man was buried on February 1, 1837. Young Chief maintained that his nephew “was killed at Red River,” and said that the white men were responsible for his death. The notation about his death and burial in the school’s records gives no hint that Cayuse Halket met a violent death. Young Chief then referred to the killing of Elijah Hedding by Americans at Sutter’s Fort in California. Since both of these young men had been educated in a white man’s school and had been killed, Young Chief said that he could not be expected to send any more of the Cayuse children to a mission school.

Young Chief then turned to a more serious problem the Indians were facing. Whitman wrote: “He spoke of the Americans as having a design to obtain their country & property.” Three great immigrations, totaling about five thousand people, had already passed through the Cayuse country on their way to the Willamette Valley and the Indians had a reason to be afraid of this great influx of white people.

Young Chief had been told by Eastern Indians who had drifted into the Oregon country, such as Tom Hill, what had happened to the Indian lands of eastern United States. Tom Hill had warned the Nez Perces and the Cayuses of their coming fate if white men continued to arrive in Oregon.

It is not known to what extent Young Chief was aware of Whitman’s activity in promoting Oregon emigration. For him it was enough to know that Whitman was a “Boston man”; that he had helped guide the immigration of 1843 west of Fort Hall; and that he had given shelter and assistance to scores of immigrants who had passed by his station or who had spent the winter there.

A third complaint had more sinister overtones. Whitman wrote: “He also alluded to the death of a friend of his last year who died of Dysentery with two of his children as the result of diseases which Americans placed among them.” Here was a fact that Whitman could not deny. The white man had introduced new diseases among the native tribes of
Oregon. “As he advanced in his remarks,” wrote Whitman, “he made me responsible for or conniving at these things or as having all these agents at my disposal.”

Here Young Chief touched on what was perhaps the most important single reason for the Whitman massacre. The whole point of Young Chief’s accusation was that the white men were prepared “with poison and infection” to kill off the Indians in order to gain possession of their lands and horses. Young Chief even accused Whitman of having poison “to kill the people with.” He even expressed his fear of eating with white people for fear of being poisoned with the food. Whitman vehemently denied being responsible for the spread of disease and that he was not “accountable for such base things as they might have been told.” Young Chief cynically replied: “It is not expected that you would confess it even were it true.” Whitman was deeply troubled because of what Young Chief said, for he saw the connection between the Indians’ fears and superstitions and his own practice of medicine among them.

Whitman warned Young Chief that such inflammatory language might “remove all restraint from the reckless and that I would have no assurance but that I might be killed on the most slight or sudden occasion.” Whitman threatened to leave the field. Young Chief replied that he did not want him to go just then but that if they did decide to go, it must be on their own initiative. “That is,” explained Whitman to Walker, “he insists not to let the Indians have the responsibility of sending me off but only agitate enough to get us to go as it were of ourselves.”

Although Whitman did not write to Walker until the next day, the recollection of what Young Chief had said was so alarming that he wrote with a quivering pen. Whitman confessed: “I am so nervous that I cannot govern my hand.” The original letter, now in the Coe Collection in Yale University library, gives evidence of Whitman’s shaky handwriting. Whitman entrusted the letter to Mungo, the half-Hawaiian and half-Indian servant, and told him to carry it to Tshimakain. The Walkers received the letter on Tuesday evening, December 2. Mary noted in her diary that it was of “a disheartening character,” and that Dr. Whitman “fears he must leave his people.”

When Whitman had the confrontation with Tiloukaikt and Tomahas four years earlier, in September 1841, he reported the incident to McKinlay at Fort Walla Walla, who then issued a stern warning to the two chiefs. This quieted the Cayuses for the time being. There is no
indication that Whitman informed McKinlay of these later developments. Although faced with these ominous threats of violence, Whitman felt that there was nothing to do at that time but to stay on and continue with his work. He knew that he had the support of many of the Cayuses including Stickus and Five Crows. Whitman also felt a responsibility to the immigrant families who were wintering at Waiilatpu. The season was too far advanced for all to make the journey to the Willamette Valley.

The only extant letter of Narcissa’s written during the fall of 1845 or the following winter is one dated November 28 and addressed to Mrs. Brewer at Waskopum. After referring to the fact that the last of the immigrants not planning to spend the winter at Waiilatpu, had left for the Willamette Valley, she wrote: “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 was past for this country, at least for a season. It may be that you are suffering under the same commotions that affect us, and perhaps more so.”

Writing at the same time to Mr. Brewer, Whitman said: “I have lately told the Indians we should leave them in the spring unless they treat us better and hold forth a very different sort of language to us.” By the following February 6, Whitman was able to write to Brewer: “I have not brought the question of our leaving before any meeting of the Indians but what is as good or better is that a full & free expression from the most important men has been given me showing a desire for us to stay. I am not preparing to go but am going on the same as before.” Thus another crisis was passed.

THE VISITS OF TOM HILL TO WAIILATPU

It so happened that both Ellis and Tom Hill from the Nez Perce country called on Whitman on the evening of the day that he had the unpleasant talk with Young Chief. Ellis was friendly and said that, although he knew that some at Lapwai and at Waiilatpu were in favor of the Whitmans leaving, such was not his recommendation.

Hill, the agnostic, was always critical of missionaries trying to convert the natives to Christianity. He argued that “religion was too sacred a thing for fallible beings to practice and, in as much as they could not
keep its holy requirements as not to come short and sin, it was better to have nothing to do with it.” Hill was much more impressed by Whitman than he had been by Spalding. After conversing with the natives at Waiilatpu and observing at first-hand what Whitman had been able to accomplish, Hill frankly told Whitman that he had been deceived by false reports. He now had a better opinion of Whitman [Letter 181b].

Hill returned to Waiilatpu about the middle of February 1846 when Whitman invited him and some of his Nez Perce friends to a feast. Catherine Sager had vivid memories of that event. Here is her description:

Tom Hill… was a finely formed man, being, I should judge, nearly six feet tall and spoke English and the Cayuse [i.e., the Nez Perce] language well… [The feast] was held in the Indian room… A fire was kindled in the yard and a large kettle holding nearly twenty gallons of water was suspended over it. This was to prepare the mush, an indispensible article for an Indian’s table… The mush cooked, the kettle was carried in and placed on the floor near the upper end of the room and a small stand covered with a white cloth was placed near it.

A tea tray filled with food was placed on this stand. The Doctor’s chair was placed near it, and on one side of the room was a bench for his family. The hour having arrived for the feast, the Doctor having distributed plates and spoons among them, he took his place as master of ceremonies. The chiefs sat around the kettle and the others filed in according to their rank or standing. While the Doctor and the chiefs dipped their food out of the kettle, the others were served out of vessels which they held in their hand. Meat, bread, and other food were handed to them by those serving as waiters. In honor of the occasion, Mrs. Whitman served them tea sweetened with sugar. This she poured into bowls and cups in the dining room and the waiters distributed it from there. We laughed heartily to see how lavish the Indians were to the use of sugar, wanting their tea as sweet as sugar itself and watching them scoop up bits of mush from the floor and eating it.

The feast was held after night, and the room was well lighted with candles and was densely crowded, and when the Indians became overheated, they would go into the open air to cool off.
They all ate quietly in the fashion of Indians with the silence broken only by the supping noises of eating or a remark made by Dr. Whitman... Tom Hill was the orator of the evening. He spoke for two or three hours. Dr. Whitman, his wife, and Mr. Rodgers all spoke very highly of this speech but unfortunately I could not understand him.

Tom was richly and gorgeously dressed on this occasion in full Indian costume. His hunting shirt was of deerskin dyed red and cut full of holes and fringed. This was worn over a striped shirt. His pants were of the same material as his hunting shirt and fringed down the side. On his feet he wore moccasins decorated with porcupine quills, and his long hair hung about his shoulders. During the feast our risibilities had often gotten beyond control, and Mrs. Whitman had to send us outside to indulge our mirth, and here I would like to say that during all the time we lived with her, she never permitted us to show any disrespect or in any way to be discourteous to the Indians... Mrs. Whitman set us the example by always treating them politely and thanking them for any favor that they did.

The gala event did much to create a better feeling between Whitman and the natives and, perhaps, influenced Hill to modify some of his apprehensions. According to a report given by Father Brouillet, when Tom Hill returned to the Lapwai Valley after his visit with Dr. Whitman, William Craig asked him “how he and the Doctor got along.” Hill replied: “He was a heap better man that Spalding; he had asked him into his house sometimes.” Craig added, however: “After that the Doctor told me that Tom had done some mischief with the Indians in that place.”

After the reception of some natives into the membership of the Mission church in June 1844, no further converts were won during the remaining three and a half years of the Mission’s history. Surely part of this failure can be traced to Hill’s negative influence. Marshall, in his Acquisition of Oregon (II:257), stated that Hill “could get much closer to the heart of the Indians than any white missionary ever could do, and influence them vastly more to discard all the white man’s words and works and cling to their ancient ways and superstitions.” Marshall makes the pointed judgment: “It is doubtful if any other one influence
was as potent as Tom Hill in promoting the decadence of the Spalding-Whitman-Eells Mission, and so bringing on the Whitman massacre.”

After the feast Whitman gave Hill and his friends, we find no further mention of Hill in the Whitman correspondence. Writing on February 27, undoubtedly after the feast had been held, Whitman stated: “I have & am receiving more assurances of kindness, confidence, good will & affection from the Indians than at any former time. Individual expression has been full & free for me not to leave them. No sympathy has been shown for the remarks of Tautai [Young Chief] which he made last fall.” And Narcissa, writing to her friend Mrs. Brewer on July 17, 1846, echoed her husband’s judgment: “The Indians are very quiet now and never more friendly.”

The International Boundary Settled

The negotiations which the diplomats of the United States and Great Britain had carried on for years, regarding the location of the international boundary in Old Oregon, came to an end on June 15, 1846, when a treaty was signed which fixed the dividing line at the 49° parallel. The United States thus gained the Puget Sound area which Lieutenant Slacum in 1837 had recognized as being of such great strategic importance for the country’s naval and commercial interests. Great Britain secured title to all of Vancouver Island, including that part which lay south of the 49° parallel.

The United States Senate ratified the treaty on June 17, too late for the news to be carried overland to Oregon by the emigration of that year. The news was sent across Mexico to Hawaii and from there to the Willamette Valley, where it was received sometime in November. Although the boundary question was settled, the Provisional Government in Oregon carried on for more than two years before Congress authorized a Territorial Government.

The first indication that Whitman knew of the boundary settlement is found in his letter to Greene of April 1, 1847. After referring to his hazardous journey across the country during the winter of 1842–43, he wrote: “I often reflect upon the fact that you were sorry that I came. I did not at that time nor has it since changed my views... American interests acquired in the Country, which the success of the Immigration of ’43 alone have &
could have secured, have become the foundation and cause of the late treaty with England & the U. States in regard to Oregon.” 76 This statement together with others previously given, reveals the great significance Whitman saw in the role he had played in opening a wagon road to the Columbia River in 1843.

Following the retirement of Dr. McLoughlin early in 1846, the administration of the Columbia Department of the Hudson’s Bay Company devolved upon Chief Factors Peter Skene Ogden, 1794–1854, and James Douglas, 1803–1877. Following the establishment by the Company of Fort Camosun, later called Victoria, on Vancouver Island in 1843, the fur trade was gradually transferred to that post. Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River became little more than a mercantile establishment for the benefit of American immigrants until a detachment of the United States Army occupied the site in 1849.
Chapter 20 footnotes

1 Perrin Whitman to his father, Sept. 27, 1868: “It is just 25 years to-day since I arrived at Uncle’s place.” Original in private hands; copy in Coll. W.

2 Whitman, in his letter 142, stated that he arrived on “Tuesday, the ninth.” That particular Tuesday in October 1843 was the 10th. Without the convenience of modern printed calendars, the missionaries often erred in identifying the days of the week.


6 Chapter Seventeen, section, “Adapted to a Different Destiny.”

7 Chapter Sixteen, section, “Activities of W. H. Gray.”

8 John C. Fremont, *Narrative of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the year 1842*. Syracuse, 1848, p. 219. The original Fremont order is in Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

9 Eells ms., Coll. W., bearing date of October 1865. H. B. Brewer, in a letter dated Nov. 7, 1843, to L. L. Giddings, stated: “Lieut. Fremont of the U.S. Army arrived here [i.e., The Dalles] three days ago... He left the States with 40 men armed & well equipped besides 1 cannon & two Howitzers, a part of his men have not yet arrived. One Howitzer & his carriage is with this part of his company—but what surprises us most is he shall take his carriage no further but leaves it for our use.” Original in Coll. W.S.H.S.

10 Drury, *F.W.W.*, II: 265. This boy, named Joseph Elkanah, went as a missionary to China under the American Board in 1872, where he served for about fifty years.


13 Ibid., p. 273.

14 Simpson, *An Overland Journey*, p. 101. [See Chapter Sixteen, fn. 20.] Simpson’s reference to Five Crows owning slaves recalls a reference in the record book of the Mission church which states that on May 14, 1843, “a middle aged man, Joseph’s companion of Snake origin, having been taken a slave when young” was among those received into the membership of the church. He was named Lyman. Italics are the author’s.


16 Italics are the author’s.

17 Italics are the author’s.

18 Spalding to Greene, Jan. 24, 1846. Coll. A. See also Chapter Sixteen, section, “Agitation by Half-Breeds.”

19 Bancroft, *Oregon*, I: 338, estimated the number of immigrants for that year at 1,475.

20 Pringle ms., p. 3. (For reference to Pringle ms., see “Manuscript Sources” under Bibliography). Catherine Sager states that the baby was born on May 22, but contemporary accounts, as found in the journals of other members of the 1844 emigration, give May 30. See Thompson, *Shallow Grave*, p. 13.
21 Dr. Degen’s name is also spelled as Dagon or Dagen. On Nov. 9, 1844, he signed his name on a receipt as “Theophilos Degen, Md [sic], Doctor.” Original in Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon.

22 Pringle ms., p. 6.

23 Capt. Shaw, in his manuscript, “Mississippi & Columbia River Pioneer Life Compared,” Coll. B., p. 13, stated that Naomi Sager died “about 16 days after” her husband.

24 Pringle ms., p. 6.

25 A board fence consisting of slabs of wood set upright was called a “palisade” by Catherine.

26 Thompson, Shallow Grave, pp. 41-2, quoting from the original document in the Oregon State Archives. A postscript dated June 22, 1845, added: “One old cow, blind in one eye, recovered from the Indians at five and a half dollars expense.”


28 O.H.Q., II (1901): 268 ff. B. F. Nichols in W.C.Q., I (1897): 3:20 gives a fine description of Mrs. Whitman’s appearance. He also wrote: “I have heard her pray, and she could offer up the finest petition to the Throne of Grace of any person I have ever heard in my life. She was always gentle and kind to the Indians, as she was to every one else.” This view contradicts the opinion of H. K. W. Perkins [see Appendix 6].

29 Hulbert, O.P., VIII: 165. A few of Greene’s letters to members of the Oregon Mission are included in this series.

30 W.C.Q., II (1898): 2:34 gives account of interview with Perrin Whitman, April 27, 1898, who then claimed that the sawmill machinery was carried to Oregon in a wagon in 1843. No contemporary account verifies this claim. Spalding, in the inventory he compiled for his station following the Whitman massacre, stated that he got the sawmill irons from Fort Vancouver and that they were later “taken to Wailatpu.” Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 361.

31 According to a letter from Larry J. Waldron, Chief Park Interpreter, Whitman Mission National Historic Site, to the author on March 28, 1972, the museum there has a millstone 18 inches in diameter and that another millstone, 40 inches in diameter is buried near the site of the original mill. This later may be the millstone mentioned in Drury, Whitman, p. 352, fn. 6, as then being in the garden of a resident of Yamhill, Oregon. Waldron claims that this larger stone was obtained in January 1961 from Mrs. F. L. Trullinger of Portland, Ore. These large granite stones may have been secured from the same quarry near Lapwai where Spalding got his.

32 Drury, Spalding and Smith, p. 365.

33 Copies are in Colls. O. & Y. In 1934 I received a copy, bound in elk hide, from John Frank, a Nez Perce Indian who lived at Kamiah, Idaho. This is now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. The American Bible Society reprinted the 1845 edition in 1871.

34 Since Catherine was the eldest of the three, she had the clearest recollections of life with the Whitmans and of the massacre.

35 Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 328.

36 Delaney, A Survivor’s Recollections, p. 8.
38 Ibid., p. 345.
39 See my article on Charles Compo in Hafen, *Mountain Men*, VIII: 87 ff. Following the publication of this book, I learned that Compo returned to the Catholic Church and had his children baptized by a priest, one on June 28, 1848, and others on later dates. See St. Louis Register of Baptisms, St. Louis, Ore. Information received through kindness of Mrs. Harriet D. Munnick, West Linn, Ore.
41 Minutes of the Synod of Washington, 1936, p. 292.
42 Presumably Perrin Whitman had already been baptized. Why Helen Mar Meek and David Malin were not baptized with the other children is not known.
43 Possibly Joel Perkins, a founder of the city of Milwaukie, Oregon.
44 See Chapter Nineteen, section “Whitman Accused of Charging Exorbitant Prices.”
45 Italics are the author’s.
46 According to a statement made by Dr. McLoughlin in T.O.P.A., 1880, p. 36, Tom Hill “had been educated at Dartmouth College.” In reply to an inquiry, the librarian of Dartmouth in a letter to me stated that the college had no record of any Indian by that name having studied there.
48 T.O.P.A., 1880, p. 36.
49 Ibid., p. 23.
51 Ibid., p. 78.
55 Sarah J. Cummins, Autobiography and Reminiscences, La Grande, Ore. (1914?), Chapter VIII.
56 The Indians of Old Oregon called the Americans “Boston men,” since the first Americans they met were sailors who came from Boston. Englishmen were referred to as “King George’s men.”
58 See Appendix 5 for list of writings of Josiah Osborn and of his daughter Nancy Osborn Jacobs.
59 Minutes of the Synod of Washington, 1936, p. 292.
60 A full list of the textbooks ordered by Whitman is in Hulbert, *O.P.*, VIII: 181.
63 Italics are the author’s.
64 Pringle ms., p. 12.
65 From undated clipping, now in Eastern Washington State Historical Society, from Portland Journal containing an article by Fred Lockley about Elizabeth.

66 Delaney, A Survivor’s Recollections, p. 9.

67 See Appendix 6.

68 See Chapter Sixteen, fn. 27.

69 Pringle ms., p. 15.

70 Ibid., p. 18.

71 Italics are the author’s.

72 Pringle ms., pp. 16–7.


74 Whitman Letter 184, with postscript dated Feb. 27.

75 The news was published in the Nov. 12, 1846, issue of the Oregon Spectator, under the heading “HIGHLY IMPORTANT NEWS.”

76 Italics are the author’s.
The Whitmans began their tenth year of residence at Waiilatpu in the fall of 1846 under favorable circumstances. In his letter to Greene of September 6, Whitman wrote: “I think we have at no time been as much in the affections of the people as now. A much kinder disposition is manifested toward us, now more than at any former period,—exhibiting the feeling that they could not do without us.” On November 3, he wrote again to Greene: “I have never felt more contented in my work and that I was usefully employed than for the last year and at present.”

Narcissa expressed similar views in her letter of February 8, 1847, to Mrs. Alvin T. Smith: “We some times talk about going to the Willamette ourselves to live—not that we wish to leave the Indians so long as they will let us stay among them—but if the necessity should come that we must leave them, then we shall find it pleasant to seek some quiet spot among the society of our friends where we may enjoy something of the foretaste of our eternal rest... As it regards the Indians at this station, we feel that our influence for good was never greater among them, than now.” And on the following May 19, Whitman in another letter to Greene wrote: “We think the affairs of this Station in regard to the Indians [are] in a very favorable state, such as gives promise of still continued prosperity.” But this was the lull before the storm; the prelude to the final tragedy.
It should be remembered that these favorable conditions prevailed after Dr. McLoughlin, Nesmith, and others had advised Whitman in the spring of 1845 to move from Waiilatpu. The fact that he had weathered several crises gave Whitman a false feeling of security. He relied too much on the goodwill of the natives.

An unfavorable development for the safety of the Whitmans at Waiilatpu came in the summer of 1846 when Archibald McKinlay, who had been so influential in restraining the violence of the Cayuses, was succeeded by William McBean as Chief Trader in charge of Fort Walla Walla. In 1832 Simpson had written the following appraisal of McBean: “...a half breed—about 25 years of age—4 years in the service, writes a fair hand and understands common accounts which is the extent of his education—neither bright nor useful and as yet being equal to the charge of a small Post.” McBean had been given charge of a small post at Fraser’s Lake, New Caledonia, in 1841, where, evidently, he had made good or he would not have been given the responsibility of being placed in charge of Fort Walla Walla. Whitman informed Greene of the change of command in his letter of September 8, 1847, and stated that McBean was a “papist.” McBean did not have the force of character of McKinlay and thus was unable to control the impetuous Cayuses. Being a Roman Catholic, he was sympathetic to the plans of the priests when, in the fall of 1847, they attempted to establish two missions in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. Of this, more will be said later.

Another change in the affairs of the Hudson’s Bay Company in Oregon is worthy of note. Dr. McLoughlin retired in the spring of 1846 and moved to Oregon City where, in 1849, he took out American citizenship. McLoughlin ruled, as some have said, as the “uncrowned king of Oregon” for twenty-two years, 1824–1846. So great was his influence over the Indian tribes of Oregon during those years that none dared make war against the whites. It appears to be more than a coincidence that, within eighteen months of his retirement, the Cayuse Indians attacked Waiilatpu. It may be that these Indians had become aware of the declining influence of the Hudson’s Bay Company and, therefore, felt free of former restraints.
The Emigration of 1846

The emigration of 1846 was smaller than that of the preceding year. Bancroft estimated that about 2,500 left the Missouri frontier that year, of whom 1,500 or 1,600 went to Oregon, the others going to California. A new route to the Willamette Valley, which branched off the Old Oregon Trail below Fort Hall, had been explored and opened by Jesse and Lindsay Applegate. It followed the Humboldt River, crossed some mountains to the Pit River, then by way of the Klamath Lakes, it finally reached the Willamette. With the opening of the road along the Umatilla in 1845, and this new southern route across the Cascades in 1846, the Whitman mission no longer enjoyed a favored position on the Oregon Trail. It was now on a side road, and only those in urgent need of provisions, the sick, or the weary took the longer route past Waiilatpu. To Whitman’s disappointment, these new developments meant that he was unable to sell sufficient provisions to the immigrants to bring his station to a self-supporting basis.

In his letter to Greene of September 8, Whitman said that the immigration had arrived in Oregon much earlier than had been the case in previous years and that: “Thus far no calls have been made upon me for provisions.” He also reported: “Mrs. Spalding has a brother who arrived here this morning and is on his way to the station [i.e., to Lapwai].” Horace Hart, a younger brother of Eliza, remained with the Spaldings for more than a year until the family was forced to leave Lapwai after the Whitman massacre. He was the only near relative of any member of the Oregon Mission who went out to Oregon during the mission period. To Narcissa’s keen disappointment, no member of her family was among the 1846 immigrants.

Among those who called at Waiilatpu that fall was Anson Sterling Cone, who in later years told how he and his brother Aaron had arrived at the mission about the middle of October and, being in need of a pack horse, proposed to Whitman that they be allowed to work out the price of a horse. “Boys,” replied Whitman, “you had better take ‘Bob’ there and all the provisions you need and go at once. At the end of the season, there will be those coming who will have to stay here anyhow and I had better have work for them.” So the Cone brothers took the horse, a trusty white Cayuse pony, and the next summer paid Whitman $25.00 for it and for the provisions received. Anson Cone remembered the doctor
as being “sociable and a good joker.” Later he served on the jury which convicted the five Cayuses for their part in the Whitman massacre.

From previous experience, Whitman knew that he could expect some needy families of the immigration to stop over at Waiilatpu. Such was the case in the fall of 1846. On November 3, Whitman reported to Greene: “...a party came this way and as is usual with the last of the [immigration]... some among [them] were in very needy circumstances, their teams being very much reduced and quite unfit to proceed. A number also were sick and stopped to winter with us. Six families and some young men remain. The families do not expect to go on until they can pass the Cascade Mountains in June. I shall try to employ them to the advantage of the Mission and the Indians, so as to give them a living, but not to call for funds from the Board. I wish much to have the Indians aided in fencing and ploughing their land.” Among those who remained at Waiilatpu to work for Whitman was Joseph Stanfield.  

In Whitman’s letter to Greene of April 1, 1847, we find more details regarding the 1846 immigration. He wrote: “Of those who stopped, four were very sick. Two or three must have died in all probability if they had not stopped & obtained Medical aid & rest. Three births have occurred also among those who stopped: —the expectation of that event caused them to stop with us for the winter. In all six families besides eight young men wintered with us.”

By the time Whitman wrote this letter, he had learned of the great suffering endured by the part of the immigration which had taken the Applegate cut-off. This news caused him to write: “The disaster was great again last year to those who left the track which I made for them in 1843 as it has been in every attempt to improve it. Not that it cannot be improved but it shows what it requires to complete a safe passage and may not fail to demonstrate what I did in making my way to the States in the winter of 42 and 43 after the third of October. It was to open a practical route & safe passage and [make] a favourable report of the journey... which, in connection with other objects caused me to leave my family & brave the toils & dangers of the journey... In connection with this let me say the other great object for which I went was to have the Mission from being broken up just then which it must have been as you will see by a reference to the doing of [the Prudential] Committee which confirmed the recall of Mr. Spalding only two weeks before my arrival in Boston.”
Here again Whitman commented on the reasons for his journey East in 1842–43: to promote Oregon emigration and to save his Mission.

**THE WINTER OF 1846–1847**

Although exact figures are lacking it appears that between forty-five and fifty white people were living at the Whitman mission during the winter of 1846–47. This number would have included the three families and the five single men who were living at the sawmill [Letter 210]. The fact that Whitman sent eight men to the mill is evidence of the importance he placed on getting rails split for fences and lumber sawed for buildings.

By the fall of 1846 Whitman realized that no real progress could be made in inducing the Indians to cultivate until their fields could be fenced. When away on expeditions for food they had to leave their fields unattended with the result that their crops were often destroyed by wandering horses or cattle. Sometimes the offending animals belonged to Whitman with the result that he was blamed for the damage.

Commenting on his work with the natives Whitman wrote to Greene on April 1 1847: “The Indians continue to give the same degree of attention to religious instruction as formerly. I have made large preparation to aid them in cultivating by getting near 20 thousand rails split for them & I hope to plough additional prairie for them as much as they can fence.” On the following May 19, he reported having men plowing with “two large ploughs with strong ox teams for three weeks, and shall continue for about two weeks more” [Letter 215].

Whitman’s great desire to see the Indians settled never abated. He firmly believed that they would have to abandon their age-old habits of going hither and yon in search of food and settle down and be farmers before they could be educated and Christianized. As has been stated, this was exactly the policy of the United States Government in its dealings with the eastern Indians, except that the government was not especially interested in Christianizing but rather in civilizing them.

As the Whitmans entered upon their tenth year of residence at Waiilatpu, Marcus was able to tell Greene that his wife’s health was “better than in some former years” [Letter 200]. Certainly her letters written during these months reflect a happy, contented spirit. On November 3, in a letter to her mother, Narcissa wrote: “We set the table
for more than twenty every day three times—and it is a pleasing sight.” Nineteen-year-old Mary Johnson, a daughter of one of the immigrant families, was hired for $1.50 a week to assist Narcissa. The services of a kindhearted, motherly woman by the name of Mrs. Pugh were also secured. Of her Whitman wrote to Walker: “We have a fine, pious old lady, fifty-seven years old, who does work for her board but keeps her own sugar & coffee. It is sewing that she does mostly” [Letter 209a]. With better health and reliable help in the home, Narcissa was able to write on November 2: “I never have been more comfortably situated for the winter than I am now."

Whitman was called to Lapwai during the first part of December to attend Mrs. Spalding, who gave birth to a daughter on December 12. She was called Amelia and was the last of the four Spalding children. In addition to three babies born to immigrant women at Waiilatpu that fall, Whitman was also called to Fort Walla Walla on an obstetrical case before the end of the year.

Since Andrew Rodgers was concentrating on his ministerial studies and at the same time trying to master the Nez Perce language, the Whitmans hired William Geiger to teach the school for white children. Geiger, who had taken care of the Whitman station during most of the time Whitman was away in 1842–43, had gone to the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1843. He was a reliable person whom the Whitmans were delighted to welcome back to Waiilatpu.

In her letter to Mary Walker dated November 6, 1846, Narcissa said: “Mr. Geiger is one of the best teachers and managers of children I ever saw. He has concluded to stay until Feb.” Whitman wrote to the Methodist missionaries at The Dalles and offered to provide room and board to any of their children whom they might wish to send to the school for $1.25 per week [Letter 199]. The Spaldings sent their two eldest children, Eliza and Henry, and six or seven from the immigrant families attended. The total enrollment, therefore, was about eighteen.

The Whitmans, especially Narcissa, continued to enjoy the fellowship of Andrew Rodgers. She felt that he would have made a good husband for her sister Jane and was instrumental in getting the two to exchange a few letters. Writing to Jane on April 15, 1847, she said: “I can assure you it is no small comfort to have some one to sing with who knows how to sing, for it is true, Jane, I love to sing just as well as ever.
From what I have heard of Edward, it would be pleasant to hear him again; as for you, kala tilapsa kunku (I am longing for you continually to sing with), and it may be, put us all together, with the violin which Mr. Rodgers plays, we should make music such as would cause the Indians to stare.” And in this same letter, she wrote: “We talk, sing, labour, and study together; indeed, he is the best associate I ever had, Marcus excepted, and better than I ever expect to get again, unless you and Edward come and live with me.” Rodgers was able to relieve Whitman in taking over much of the responsibility for the Sunday worship services for white residents at Waiilatpu. Often a sermon by the well-known Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Albert Barnes of Philadelphia, would be read. Occasionally Rodgers would read “a discourse of his own composition in the form of a dissertation,” as a part of his theological course [Letter 208].

**Severity of the Winter Weather**

The severity of the winter of 1846–47 in the Old Oregon country has sometimes been listed as one of the causes contributing to the restlessness of the natives. Catherine Sager wrote: “This was the coldest winter ever known in this country. Snow lay three feet deep on the ground for several weeks and the winter was bitterly cold. The mill stream was so frozen that no grinding could be done for some time, and so we lived on boiled wheat and corn in the meantime.”

Spalding reported that the winter was “the severest winter as to snow, cold weather, & want of grass ever known by the oldest Indians in the region.” On the 16th and 17th of January, the thermometer at Lapwai dipped to 30° below zero. The Indians in their skin or woven mat lodges were ill-prepared for such severe cold weather. Spalding estimated that the Nez Perces lost about one half of their horses and cattle. Wild game likewise suffered, which in turn meant less food from the hunt. The diaries of Elkanah and Mary Walker tell of the great loss of horses and cattle suffered by the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Indians of their area. On March 1, 1847, Walker noted that only twenty horses had survived from the Company’s herd of 220 at Fort Colville and on April 6, he wrote that one of the chiefs of the Spokane Indians had only two head of cattle left out of a band of fifty. Walker and Eells were able to save most of their animals because they had laid up a supply of grain and fodder,
but even so they were obliged to cut down trees in order to give their
horses and cattle a chance to eat the pine needles and the tree moss.

Since Waiilatpu was located in a more southerly zone, the loss of
animals was not as great there as further north; nevertheless Whitman,
in his letter to Greene of April 1, 1847, wrote: “At our station we have
had a heavy loss in sheep, calves, and some cattle (old cows), colts &
horses.” Since Whitman had not been able to sell much, if any, corn
and wheat to the immigrants of 1846, he had a supply on hand to feed
his livestock. His reference to a “heavy loss” was to that suffered by the
natives. The Indians in the vicinity of Waiilatpu did not lose as many
horses and cattle as did the Nez Perces and the Spokanes, yet the severe
winter seems to have contributed to their restlessness. Catherine Sager
wrote: “The natives blamed the white people for bringing the cold.”

**Trouble at Lapwai**

Although the attitude of the natives at Waiilatpu remained friendly
during the winter of 1846–47, such was not the case at Lapwai. On
February 3, 1847, Spalding wrote a long letter of twenty-seven foolscap
pages to Greene in which he gave a gloomy picture of the situation he
faced. A rough element among the Nez Perces, inspired by Old James,
the medicine man and chief who lived in the Lapwai Valley, had so ter-
rorized those who wanted to continue in the mission school that it had
to be closed. Windows were broken, property stolen or destroyed, and
the lives of the Spaldings threatened. 8 “What heart have I to replace the
windows and repair the roof to the meeting house,” wrote Spalding,
“when it is almost certain that the windows will be immediately broken
out again. If I build a good fence, it is with the probability that it will
be burnt up by those who may camp near it… We are now called upon to
pay for the water we use, the wood we burn, the trails we travel in, and
the air we breathe.”

When Whitman heard of the harassments which the Spaldings
were experiencing, he became increasingly concerned about what might
happen at Waiilatpu. If a small band of unruly Nez Perces could cause
so much trouble, what might the more volatile Cayuses do if they got
stirred up. Whitman found it necessary to go to Fort Vancouver for sup-
plies in the early spring of 1847. In a letter written at the Fort on April
1, he said: “…we live at all times in a most precarious state not knowing
whether to stay or go nor at what time nor how soon. Whether it may be
 demanded by the Indians or the Board, I think in the course of the en-
suing summer I shall locate claim for land in this lower Country to be
ready in case of retirement."

**THE METHODISTS GIVE WASKOPUM**

**TO THE AMERICAN BOARD**

A surprising development came in 1847: the Methodists gave their
Waskopum station to the American Board. Seven years earlier,
some members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board, espe-
cially A. B. Smith, had been considering giving their work in Oregon to
the Methodists. Now the very opposite happened.

Here is the background of events. The Rev. George Gary who suc-
cceeded Jason Lee as superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Or-
egon, arrived in the Willamette Valley on June 1, 1844, with instructions
to liquidate the Mission property as soon as possible. The last station to
remain in Methodist hands was Waskopum at The Dalles where the Rev.
A. F. Waller was in charge, assisted by the layman, H. B. Brewer. It is
possible that Gary had written to Whitman sometime before September
1846 suggesting that the American Board assume the responsibility for
Waskopum. In his letter to Greene of September 8, Whitman brought
up the subject: “The Methodists have been upon the point of relin-
quishing their last station at the Dalls [sic]. A most important point to
be kept. This would make a good addition to us.” Whitman appreciated
the strategic location of Waskopum on the road linking upper Oregon
with the Willamette settlements.

Whitman was most receptive to the suggestion that the American
Board take over the Methodist work at The Dalles, for this possibil-
ity dovetailed into another plan which Whitman had in mind. He had
repeatedly urged Greene to send a minister to assist him at Waiilatpu.
On February 25, 1846, Greene wrote to Whitman: “I am aware that
you are alone—that your profession is not that of a preacher—and that
if you give a larger share of your time to the spiritual concerns of the
Indians, not a little of what you are now doing must be neglected, or
at least attended to imperfectly. And it is in view of your destitution of
helpers that I suggested in one of my letters whether Messrs. Eells and
Walker should not abandon or suspend their operations at Tshimakain
and remove one of them to your station, and the other to some point—perhaps Kamiah.”

Greene’s suggestion that Tshimakain be closed and its ministers reassigned suggested the possibility that one of them might go to Waskopum.

Of the three stations of the Oregon Mission, that among the Spokanes was always the least promising. The field did not offer the same agricultural possibilities as the Clearwater and Walla Walla Valleys. Spokane Garry, who had spent several years at the Red River Mission school, and from whom so much was expected, had failed to cooperate. His refusal to give up polygamy may have been a reason for his attitude.

The two missionary couples lived at Tshimakain for eight years without having the joy of seeing a single Spokane Indian convert join the Mission church. Greene’s suggestion, therefore, that Tshimakain be abandoned was reasonable. A serious objection, however, lay in the fact that the two couples had learned the Spokane and not the Nez Perce language. This meant that if they were transferred, they would have to use interpreters or set themselves to the laborious task of learning another language.

We do not know when Whitman received Greene’s letter of February 25, 1846; circumstantial evidence indicates that he had received it before he called on Superintendent Gary of the Methodist Mission at Oregon City in March 1847. When Gary asked Whitman whether the American Board was interested in taking over Waskopum, the latter replied: “...if they had not taken that station in the spring of 1838, we should have done so in the fall” [Letter 215]. Gary and Whitman made no final arrangements at that time for the transfer of the property as Whitman wanted to discuss the proposal with his associates. Undoubtedly Whitman was then considering the possibility of having the Eells family live at Waiilatpu and the Walkers move to The Dalles. A meeting of the Mission was scheduled for Tshimakain during the last week of May or the first of June. Final decisions on this important matter had to be postponed until that time.

When Marcus returned to Waiilatpu and told Narcissa of the possibility that the Oregon Mission might obtain the Methodist station at The Dalles and of the need to have the Mission vote on this proposal at its annual meeting, Narcissa felt that she should attend. Writing to Mary Walker on March 30, she said: “I shall be strongly tempted to go to
Tshimakain... I mean I would go if I could, and shall be tempted to try, or would if I could ride native fashion, but I do not know how, neither do I think I can learn.” Narcissa had not been to Tshimakain since the summer of 1841 nor had she left Waiilatpu since the late fall of 1843. Her desire to go overcame her scruples about the impropriety of white women riding astride for, as will be told, she made the trip.

Sometime during the middle of May, Eells arrived at Waiilatpu in order to get supplies which Whitman had brought up the river from Fort Vancouver. This gave Whitman an opportunity to discuss with him the idea of closing Tshimakain and of having the Eells family move to Waiilatpu and the Walkers to Waskopum. Eells was inclined to accept the plan but wanted to discuss it with the Walkers before giving his final decision. After arrangements were made for Mary Johnson to take care of all of the children except Catherine Sager, who was to go, Eells with Mrs. Whitman, Rodgers, and Catherine set out for Tshimakain on May 18. Whitman who was able to travel much faster than the Eells party, remained at Waiilatpu for a few days to help the last immigrants who had wintered there leave for the Willamette Valley.

On May 18, just a few hours before the Eells party left, Whitman received a letter from Waller and Brewer stating that they had been authorized by Gary to give the Waskopum station complete with buildings and improvements “without charge” to the Oregon Mission. Reporting this new development in a letter to Greene dated May 19, Whitman stated that the Methodists wanted to transfer the property during the course of that summer or early fall. Whitman wrote: “This will open a new field for our Mission and one we can by no means fail to occupy. For if we allow the Papists to take this station, we might as well give up this [Waiilatpu] also. Immediate action will be had in the matter at our coming meeting... Your letters to the Mission in regard to Tshimakain Station may have something to do with the taking of the station at the Dalls [sic].”

The Eells party, traveling by easy stages, arrived at Tshimakain on Thursday, May 27. One of the Cayuse Indians who went along to help with the packing and the care of the animals was Frank Escaloom (Ish-ish-kais-kais). Members of the Eells party quickly told the Walkers of the prospective closing of Tshimakain and of their possible transfer to Waskopum. Both Elkanah and Mary were dismayed. Elkanah wrote in
his diary on the 29th: “I wished I was out of the mission.” Mary showed a more determined spirit when she wrote in her diary the next day: “Our minds are made up, let others do as they may, we will remain where we are at present.” Narcissa, who enthusiastically favored the idea of having the Oregon Mission take over the Waskopum station, tried to persuade Mary to agree to the transfer. On June 1, Mary wrote in her diary: “Mrs. W. took dinner & supper with us. In the afternoon we talked over the disagreeable matters.”

Whitman and Spalding, coming over separate trails, arrived at Tshimakain on Wednesday evening, June 2. Thus all members of the Mission were present except Mrs. Spalding, in what proved to be their last business meeting. Early Thursday morning, Whitman asked Walker to join him in a walk. “He opened the subject to me of my going to the Dalles,” wrote Walker in his diary. “I told him that he should not think of my going there.” Whitman outlined the plan to Spalding who at once enthusiastically endorsed the idea. When Eells discovered the opposition of the Walkers, he tried to take a neutral position. On Friday, Walker, after considerable persuasion, finally consented to visit Waskopum and make a first-hand investigation. Mary wrote in her diary that evening: “The Mission expressed a unanimous wish that we should go & Mr. W. concluded to harken… Much feeling was manifested on the occasion. We find it very trying to our feelings to think of separating or of leaving these people.” Narcissa, in her last extant letter to her mother dated July 4, 1847, told of the decision and wrote: “All seemed to feel that we had come to an important crisis and that God alone could and must direct us.”

The Whitmans and the Spaldings left for their respective homes on Monday, June 7. Walker left two days later. He rode first to Waiilatpu where Whitman joined him in the ride to The Dalles. In spite of all the arguments that Whitman was able to muster in favor of the Walkers moving to Waskopum, Walker was unconvinced. He saw the importance of keeping this station in Protestant hands. He knew that he was the logical choice of his brethren to occupy that strategic place. Yet, the very thought of starting life in another frontier post in the midst of a tribe speaking a different language filled him with dread. After being away from his home for three weeks and after a weary 600-mile horseback ride, Walker returned to Tshimakain on June 30. He found his wife deeply opposed to the suggested move. She was pregnant and was to give
On July 4, 1847, Alanson Hinman unexpectedly arrived at Waiilatpu. After serving as a teacher of the school for white children at the Whitman station during the winter of 1844–45, Hinman had gone to the Willamette Valley, where, for a time, he was employed by the Methodists to teach in their Oregon Institute. He had married a young woman, Martha Gerrish, who had gone out to Oregon with her family in 1845, and they had become the parents of a child. Hinman had returned to the upper Columbia country with the idea of borrowing the Mission press “for the purpose of printing another paper in the Willamette” [Letter 217]. Whitman was agreeable to the plan, but asked Hinman to call on the three other men of the Mission to get their consent. All agreed; thus Hinman was able to take the press to The Dalles. Thus it escaped the fate of being lost or destroyed when the Spaldings were obliged to abandon their station.

On July 13, Whitman still had not heard of Walker’s decision not to go to The Dalles, for on that day he wrote to Walker and told of the arrival in the Willamette Valley of the Rev. William Roberts, who was the successor to Gary. Roberts, however, was to concentrate on Methodist work for white settlers. He was, therefore, as eager as his predecessor to transfer the Methodist property at Waskopum to the American Board.

Sometime before July 26, Whitman received a letter from Walker stating that he and his wife were unwilling to go to The Dalles; they would remain at Tsimakain with the Eellses. Whitman was deeply disappointed. Narcissa in her letter to her mother, begun on July 4, wrote: “Mr. W. is unwilling to remove with his family this year, on account of Mrs. W. being in a state of pregnancy, which was known at the time of the meeting but not made an objection.”

In Whitman’s last extant letter to Walker, dated July 26, he expressed his regret that Walker could not act “in accordance with the action of the Mission.” On July 30 Mary noted in her diary: “Mr. W. received a rather severe letter from Dr. W.” The whole affair caused the Walkers much unhappiness.
Walker’s refusal to move with his family to The Dalles placed Whitman in a difficult position. Negotiations with the Methodists had already proceeded to such an extent that he felt he could not honorably withdraw. On August 3, Whitman in a letter to Greene said: “We cannot let this station go into other hands than ours if they [i.e., the Methodists] give it up. Should it fall into other hands, it might at once become a papal station or a petty trading post—if not a grog shop.” The season was too late for another Mission meeting to be called. The only course open to Whitman was to hire someone to take temporary possession of Waskopum in the hope that the American Board would send out a qualified missionary to occupy the station. Circumstantial evidence indicates that Whitman was able to see Hinman before the latter left for The Dalles with the mission press and that Hinman expressed his willingness to accept the responsibility of taking charge of the Waskopum property for the time being.

Whitman then thought of his nephew Perrin, who had by that time acquired an excellent command of the Nez Perce language and who had often conducted religious services for the Cayuse Indians “much to their satisfaction.” Perrin expressed his willingness to go and spend the winter with the Hinmans at Waskopum. In his letter to Greene of September 13, Whitman explained the arrangements: “The religious instruction of this place will devolve on Perrin B. Whitman, my nephew, who will only be eighteen years old in April. But in many respects he is promising & has had a good degree of experience with me… Neither Mr. Spalding nor myself can at all compare with him in speaking or reading the Nez Perce language.” The Indians at The Dalles, however, spoke the language of the Walla Walla Indians which differed from the Nez Perce tongue. Anticipating his new responsibilities, Perrin began a study of the Walla Walla language using some linguistic aids prepared by H. K. W. Perkins before he left Waskopum [Letter 219].

In Whitman’s letter to Greene of August 3, he mentioned the fact that the Mission at its June meeting had accepted his proposal to build “houses at this Station, so that the Mothers of the families of this Mission might winter here and send their children to school… I have an abundance of lumber sawed—but recent developments show that the houses will not be required this year for any except it may be for Mrs. Spalding.” Whitman’s plan was for all of the women of the Mission with
their children to spend the winter months at Waiilatpu so that those of school age could attend the Mission school. The inventory of the property left at Waiilatpu after the massacre includes the item: “40,000 feet sawed lumber including timber & boards for two houses (32 x 26), ½ drawn to station, 20 miles at $25.00 per thousand. $1,000.00.” Whitman’s vision of what could be done for the welfare of the Mission families far outran the willingness of his colleagues to accept his practical suggestions. Although the Walkers had two children of school age and the Eellses had one, neither family was willing to enroll them for the term beginning in the fall of 1847. Perhaps this reluctance grew out of a sensitivity engendered by the troubled Waskopum situation.

Whitman was not confining his building plans just to the accommodation of the families of the Mission. In his letter of September 13 to Greene, he wrote: “We must have two schools. One for the children of the Mission, and a boarding school for the natives.” Here is evidence of Whitman’s plans to expand his work for the natives at Waiilatpu before he learned of the intentions of the Roman Catholics to establish two missions in his vicinity.

**The Hinmans and Perrin Whitman Move to Waskopum**

Hinman with the mission press left for The Dalles sometime in August. After leaving the press at the Methodist mission, Hinman continued on to the Willamette Valley to get his family. Whitman and his nephew left for Oregon City about the middle of August, as Whitman needed to see Roberts about the transfer of the Waskopum station to the Oregon Mission. Whitman learned that Waller had come to feel that it was a great mistake for the Methodists to abandon their work at The Dalles. In his letter of September 13 to Greene, Whitman quoted Waller as saying: “He could not bear to have his denomination abandon the heathen of Oregon as it would do if they gave up this Station.” Under Methodist polity, however, the superintendent, acting under instructions of the Methodist Missionary Society, could overrule the opinions of local workers. While in the Valley, Whitman made arrangements for a boat to carry the Hinman family and their possessions up the river to The Dalles, and then for the same boat to take the Waller and Brewer families and their possessions down the river.
Whitman, the Himans, and Perrin arrived at The Dalles sometime before September 7, as is indicated in the following taken from Whitman’s letter of the 13th to Greene: “I write to let you know that our Mission has now taken this Station. Mr. Wallers and Brewers families left here on the 7th. instant when we came into possession according to previous arrangements.” Whitman reported that the cost to the Mission was $721.13, which included the value of farming tools, some grain, livestock, household furniture, and moving expenses. The Methodists made no charge for the buildings, material improvements, or for their claim to 640 acres of land. Of this amount, Whitman was able to pay $69.75 which left a balance of $651.38 due to be paid the next year. In this letter, Whitman again urged Greene to send at least “one ordained Minister at the earliest date.”

Having made the best possible arrangements for the occupation of Waskopum, Whitman hastened back to Waiilatpu to make such preparations as he could for the coming immigration.

**Artist Paul Kane Visits Waiilatpu**

During the summer and fall of 1847, two artists visited Waiilatpu and made sketches of natives. The first was Paul Kane, a Canadian, who traveled through the Pacific Northwest that summer sketching and painting pictures, especially of Indians. In his *Wanderings of an Artist*, he tells of his visit to Fort Walla Walla in July. After making an excursion to see Palouse Falls, he rode to Waiilatpu where he arrived on July 18. Kane reported that the day was “intensely hot” and that there was no shelter along the way to give relief from “the scorching rays of the sun.” The Whitmans gave Kane a cordial welcome and he remained with them for four days. He was impressed with the material progress he saw at Waiilatpu and wrote of Whitman: “He had brought forty or fifty acres of land... under cultivation, and had a great many heads of domestic cattle, affording greater comfort to his family than one would expect in such an isolated spot.”

Whitman took Kane to Tiloukaikt’s camp. Kane wrote his impressions as follows: “These Indians, the Kye-use, resemble the Walla-Wallas very much. They are allies in war, and their language and customs are almost identical, except that the Kye-use Indians are far more vicious and ungovernable.” It should be noted that Kane published his account of
his visit to Waiilatpu after he had learned of the Whitman massacre and had discovered that two of the Cayuses he had sketched were ringleaders in it. This knowledge no doubt colored his description of the tribe and the following account of his experience with Tomahas: “Dr. Whitman took me to the lodge of an Indian called To-ma-kis, that I might take his likeness. We found him in his lodge sitting perfectly naked. (Evidently it was another hot day.) His appearance was the most savage I ever beheld, and his looks, as I afterwards heard, by no means belied his character. He was not aware of what I was doing until I had finished the sketch. He then asked to look at it, and inquired what I intended doing with it, and whether I was not going to give it to the Americans, against whom he bore a strong antipathy... I in vain told him that I should not give it to them; but, not being satisfied with this assurance, he attempted to throw it in the fire, when I seized him by the arm and snatched it from him. He glanced at me like a fiend and appeared greatly enraged, but before he had time to recover from his surprise, I left the lodge and mounted my horse, not without occasionally looking back to see if he might not send an arrow after me.”

According to J. Russell Harper, editor of *Paul Kane’s Frontier*, Kane often made “minor and sometimes major changes” when he redrew and then painted his drawings. The original sketch of Tomahas shows a benign, peaceful looking individual whereas the painted portrait corresponds with his description: “His appearance was the most savage I ever beheld.” [See comparison of Kane’s sketch and the later portrait in this volume.] Kane also made two black and white sketches of “Til-au-kite.” Although they differ from each other in several features, neither bears any likeness to the portrait, labelled to be that of Tiloukaikt, which is in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada. The sketches show Tiloukaikt to be an old man, and so he was called by Catherine Sager, whereas the painted portrait gives the likeness of a much younger man.

Among the Kane sketches in the Royal Ontario Museum is one labelled “The Whitman Mission.” The drawing was made while the artist was looking towards the southwest. The building as sketched appears to be a hodgepodge of rooms, some one story and others higher, without any uniform gable line, yet the location of doors, windows, and chimneys agrees rather closely with the floor plan of the house as drawn under the direction of Elizabeth Sager Helm. [See illustration...
in volume one.] It should be remembered that Kane was not making a finished drawing. This was nothing more than a rough sketch hastily drawn from which he may have expected to redraw a better picture at a later time. The grove of trees to the right of the house may have been the apple orchard which Whitman had planted in that location. Kane indicated a woodpile outside the central door which is also shown in Elizabeth Sager’s outline. The absence of a uniform gable line and the lack of a distinct indication of the “T” shape have made positive identification difficult, yet indications, including the label, point to its being a completely authentic picture.

**Possible Sketches of Marcus and Narcissa**

In August 1968, Ross Woodbridge, an enthusiastic student of the Whitman story, went from his home near Rochester, New York, to Toronto in order to study a collection of between four and five hundred Kane sketches and paintings in the Royal Ontario Museum in that city. Knowing that Kane had spent several days with the Whitmans, Woodbridge was hoping to find something of interest in addition to the two known pictures labelled Tomahas and Tiloukaikt. Woodbridge was happy to find not only Kane’s drawing of the Whitman house, but also two sketches which, although not labelled by Kane, might be of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. Woodbridge was the first to propose this possibility. This tentative identification is based only on circumstantial evidence, yet, as will be indicated below, this is most convincing.

Before reviewing the evidence, it is well to note Kane’s method of working. Drawing paper was scarce in the wilderness of Oregon and, therefore, the artist had to be parsimonious in its use. The Kane sketches in Toronto, of what might be Marcus and Narcissa, are on paper either torn or cut from a notebook or from some larger sheet. The page with the sketch of what might be Narcissa Whitman measures only 4 x 5 1/8 inches (Museum No. 946.15.299) and that of what might be Marcus Whitman, 3 1/2 x 4 3/8 inches (No. 946.15.293).¹⁹

The description of Narcissa given by those who knew her harmonize with the Kane sketch thought to be of her.²⁰ She is reported to have weighed 167 pounds in 1844, and the drawing shows a woman who is rather plump. Gray wrote that her form was “full and round,” and the Rev. Levi Fay Waldo mentioned her “well rounded features.” Kane’s
sketch shows a woman with full breasts. Matilda Sager wrote: “She had reddish colored hair, parted in the middle and combed back and twisted in a knot.” Others referred also to her custom of parting her hair in the middle, and this is the way Kane pictured her likeness. Matilda Sager has given us conflicting testimony regarding whether or not Narcissa would have worn a low-necked dress as indicated in Kane’s sketch. In Matilda’s pamphlet, A Survivor’s Recollections, she tells that the half-breed Joe Lewis looted a wooden chest at the time of the massacre, which contained Narcissa’s clothing, and gleefully displayed “five nice, fancy gauze kerchiefs of different colors, made to wear with a medium low-necked dress.” Yet, according to another account given by Matilda on March 26, 1928, in her eighty-ninth year and just eighteen days before she died, Mrs. Whitman “never had her bare neck exposed.” Summer temperatures in the Walla Walla Valley often rise above 100°; when high-necked dresses under those conditions would have been most uncomfortable. Kane, as has been stated, referred to extremely hot weather at the time of his visit to Waiilatpu. It is also possible that he took certain liberties with the neckline of the dress, making it lower than it actually was.

The drawing thought to be of Marcus has much stronger circumstantial evidence to support the identification. Several who knew Whitman commented about his carelessness of dress. In this sketch, Kane pictures a man wearing a buckskin jacket and what might be called a slouch hat. Several of the descriptions of Whitman refer to his prominent aquiline nose. An undated clipping from the Corning, New York, Leader, commented on a picture of Samuel Whitman, a younger brother of Marcus, as follows: “There was a marked family resemblance, and the picture shows how Dr. Whitman would have looked had he lived to an old age.” When a picture showing the profile of Samuel, taken in his old age (which may have been the one referred to by the editor of the Corning paper), is compared with the sketch made by Kane, a striking similarity can be seen.

The most convincing circumstantial evidence to support the theory that this is an authentic drawing of Marcus Whitman is found in another sketch which, on first glance, appears to be nothing more than some idle doodling by the artist. This sketch is in the lower right hand corner of the drawing. When the page is turned upside down, one sees a sketch...
of what appears to be a girl with a long pole or rake in her hands standing by a bonfire or a pile of wood. The suggestion has been made that since Kane had been along the Palouse River before going to Waiilatpu, this might be a girl standing by a stream holding the handle of a fish net. However, would the artist put such a sketch on his page before he had drawn the likeness of Whitman?

A more plausible explanation connects this small drawing with an incident related by Matilda Sager Delaney in her pamphlet, *The Whitman Massacre*. Matilda, who was eight years old at the time Kane visited Waiilatpu, wrote: “An artist named Kane was sent out by the British Government. He took [i.e., drew] pictures of the Mission. We children were cleaning up the yard and varying labor by trying to balance the rake [handle] on our fingers. Mrs. Whitman reproved us, saying she did not want that in the picture.” This indeed might be a sketch of a Sager girl standing by a bonfire and holding the handle of a rake. If this be true, then the presence of the smaller sketch on the page with the picture of a man gives strong endorsement to the identification of the drawing as being a likeness of Marcus Whitman.

The head of the girl in the original drawing measures only two millimeters in height, thus being too small for the artist to draw a face. However, under the left arm of the man is the face of a white girl. Was Kane planning to redraw this scene after he had returned to his studio and give the girl holding the rake this face? Perhaps so. Another unexplained mystery was the letter “W” which, when Woodbridge first examined the sketch, could be seen to the left of the brim of the hat the man was wearing. Did this letter stand for “Whitman”?

After reviewing the evidence above mentioned, I am convinced that these sketches by Kane are authentic likenesses of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. In this conviction, I am joined by a number of informed students of the Whitman story who, after making a similar study of the evidences, have come to the same conclusion. A few, however, remain doubtful. At my request, an artist friend of mine, Drury Haight, has redrawn and then painted the Kane sketches. This addition of color surely adds a note of brightness to help the imagination. These paintings have been reproduced as the frontispieces in this work.
The second artist who made a tour of the Pacific Northwest during the summer and fall of 1847, and who also visited Waiilatpu, was John Mix Stanley. Stanley, who hailed from the States of New York and Ohio, was touring the Great Plains and the Far West painting Indians. When he had completed his project, his portfolio contained pictures of Indians from forty different tribes. Stanley arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Saturday, September 25, where he spent a week or more painting Walla Walla Indians before going out to Waiilatpu where he hoped to meet the Whitmans and paint some Cayuse portraits. Unfortunately, when Stanley arrived at Waiilatpu, he found that both Dr. and Mrs. Whitman had gone to meet the immigrants on the Umatilla.

When Whitman and Perrin left Waiilatpu for the Willamette Valley about the middle of August 1847, they drove teams with two wagons to The Dalles where they left them and proceeded by boat down the Columbia the rest of the way to the Valley. Whitman found goods at Fort Vancouver which had been sent out by the American Board including a corn sheller, valued at $15.00 in the Whitman inventory, and a thresher worth $100.00. Whitman had requested Greene to send these items in his letter of October 25, 1844. It took about three years for them to arrive. On his return trip, Whitman took the machinery and other supplies by boat to The Dalles where they were loaded onto the wagons. Leaving Perrin with the Hinmans at Waskopum, Whitman returned to Waiilatpu with the two wagons having, perhaps, the assistance of an Indian. He arrived at his station about the middle of September.

On his way to The Dalles, Whitman had followed the road taken by the immigrants of previous years. Finding this filled with obstacles, Whitman on his return trip explored a new route. Of this Whitman wrote to Greene in his letter of October 18, which is the last extant letter that he wrote: “By following a small stream & then a dry ravine, I was enabled to avoid most of the hills & heavy obstacles to the old wagon road... After I came home, I went a second time which took me near two weeks and completed the route from the Utilla [i.e., Umatilla] to the place where I struck the old road before... This road takes them [i.e., the immigrants] a much shorter & better route by which they avoid many bad hills as well as all the sands of the Columbia and what is still more desirable, they have grass in abundance...”
A few days after Whitman left to guide the immigrants over the new road he had explored, Spalding arrived at Waiilatpu with a pack train loaded with wheat which he hoped to sell to the immigrants while they were along the Umatilla. Hearing of this, Narcissa decided to take the two Manson boys, John and Stephen, and Catherine Sager and go with him to the Umatilla, where she expected to meet her husband on his way back home.

Narcissa had a special reason for wishing to meet the immigrants; she was hoping to find a young woman who would be willing to teach the school for white children at Waiilatpu. Catherine in her reminiscences of the trip recalled that they did meet Dr. Whitman and that on Sunday, October 3, Spalding conducted a religious service for a party of immigrants. Because of the illness of a young man among the immigrants, the Whitmans were obliged to tarry for a few days, while the other members of the party returned to Waiilatpu on Monday, the 4th.

In her reminiscences, Catherine wrote that when they got back, they found “a young man there by the name of Stanley, just arrived from the lower country. He was an artist and was going on a tour through the country. He left next morning for Chimakain.” During the absence of the Whitmans from Waiilatpu at the time of his visit, Stanley spent several days painting portraits of at least four Cayuses: Tiloukaikt, Tamsucky, Edward (son of Tiloukaikt whom Stanley called Painted Shirt or Shu-ma-hic-cie), and Waie-cat (son of Tamsucky). Stanley, disappointed in not seeing the Whitmans, promised to return in November, when he hoped to meet them and perhaps paint their portraits.

With the aid of some Indians, Stanley made his way up the Columbia River in a canoe to Fort Okanogan, stopping occasionally to paint. He then went to Tshimakain where, according to Mary Walker’s diary, he arrived on Sunday, October 24. Stanley spent about a month at Tshimakain and Fort Colville continuing with his project of painting portraits of the natives. He started a portrait of eight-year-old Abigail Walker but, when she and some of her brothers came down with the measles, he had to lay the picture aside for several days. He went to Fort Colville on October 28 and returned to Tshimakain on November 9, when he completed Abigail’s portrait and also painted her father. The fact that the Walker children had measles is evidence that the epidemic, sweeping the Oregon country, had reached the Spokane area.
**The Introduction of Measles**

During the late summer of 1847 and the following fall and winter, a virulent form of measles and dysentery spread with devastating effects through all of Old Oregon, leaving an appalling harvest of death among the Indian tribes. Evidence of the presence of these diseases in the Walla Walla area before any of the 1847 immigration had arrived is to be found in an account told by the artist, Paul Kane.

A party of about two hundred Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians had left Fort Walla Walla about February 1, 1846, to go to Sutter’s Fort in California to avenge the death of Elijah Hedding. After being gone for about eighteen months, many at Walla Walla began to believe that all had been killed. A dramatic incident took place at the fort the day after Kane had returned from his visit to Waiilatpu during the latter part of July, when a son of Peu-peu-mox-mox, a brother of the slain Elijah Hedding, suddenly arrived bearing sad news.

Kane, who was an eyewitness, wrote: “No sooner had he dismounted from his horse than the whole camp, men, women, and children, surrounded him eagerly inquiring after their absent friends, as they had hitherto received no intelligence, beyond a report that the party had been cut off by hostile tribes. His downcast looks and silence confirmed the fears that some dire calamity must have happened, and they set up a tremendous howl, whilst he stood silent and dejected with the tears streaming down his face. At length, after much coaxing and entreaty on their part, he commenced the recital of their misfortunes. After describing the progress of the journey up to the time of the disease (the measles) making its appearance, during which he was listened to in breathless silence, he began to name its victims one after another. On the first name being mentioned, a terrific howl ensued, the women loosening their hair and gesticulating in a most violent manner. When this had subsided, he, after much persuasion, named a second and a third, until he had named upwards of thirty.”

Kane became alarmed for the safety of the Whitmans when he learned that the Indians were inclined to blame the Americans for the introduction of the disease. He consulted with McBean who shared his concern. “I, therefore,” wrote Kane, “determined to go and warn him [i.e., Whitman] of what had occurred. It was six o’clock in the evening..."
when I started, but I had a good horse, and arrived at his house in three hours. I told him of the arrival of the messenger, and the excitement of the Indians, and advised him strongly to come to the fort, for a while at least, until the Indians had cooled down; but he said he had lived so long amongst them, and had done so much for them, that he did not apprehend they would injure him. I remained with him only an hour, and hastened back to the fort, where I arrived at one o’clock a.m."

Kane was surprised to see how calmly Whitman took the news. Evidently Whitman correctly evaluated the attitude of the Indians at that time. He had been warned repeatedly of the danger of remaining at Waiilatpu, but somehow every crisis had passed. Whitman had a streak of obstinacy in him which also might be called a sense of commitment to his task. In July 1847, when the above incident took place, Whitman was making preparations to meet the needs of another immigration. A high sense of duty, plus a strong faith in the providence of God, kept him at his station.

The deadly effects of the measles and dysentery epidemics, which swept through the Old Oregon country in 1847, were aggravated by the age-old custom of the Indians to use their sweat-house for the treatment of disease. The sweat-house was a low, dome-shaped hut in which the sick person would sit naked while steam would be generated by pouring water over hot stones. After spending some time in the superheated, steam-filled atmosphere, the patient would then rush out and plunge into a cold stream. The shock to the body was often all that was needed to kill a person if, at the time, he had a high fever.

**The Roman Catholics Begin Two Missions Near Waiilatpu**

When Whitman was still at The Dalles in September, the first of the 1847 Oregon immigration began passing. He heard reports of the thousands who were on their way to Oregon and became convinced of the importance of being back at Waiilatpu in order to furnish supplies to those in need. Whitman arrived at Fort Walla Walla on his return trip on September 23 where he found seven Roman Catholic missionaries under the newly appointed Bishop of Walla Walla, the Right Rev. A. M. A. Blanchet, and learned to his dismay that the Catholics were planning to establish a number of stations in the upper Columbia River country,
two of which were to be in the vicinity of Fort Walla Walla.

Bishop Blanchet was a younger brother of the Rev. Francis Norbert Blanchet, who was made the first Archbishop of Oregon. As has been stated, Fathers F. N. Blanchet and Modeste Demers were the first Roman Catholic missionaries to arrive in Oregon, having arrived in the fall of 1838. A. M. A. Blanchet was consecrated at Montreal on September 27, 1846, for the newly created missionary diocese of Walla Walla which included the vast territory lying between the Rockies and the Cascade Mountains north of the Mexican border. Bishop Blanchet with several priests and lay workers, including Father Pascal Ricard, a Superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Father J. B. A. Brouillet, arrived at Fort Walla Walla on September 5, where they were cordially welcomed by William McBean. According to Father Brouillet, Bishop Blanchet knew that “Towatowe [Young Chief], one of the Cayuse chiefs, had a house which he had destined for the use of the Catholic missionaries, and he intended to go and occupy it without delay.” As has been stated, Pambrun built a log cabin for Young Chief on the north bank of the Umatilla River, in the fall of 1840. Since Young Chief was known to be friendly to the Roman Catholics and since he had made his cabin available to the priests, the Catholic missionaries were assured of a base of operations within the Cayuse tribe. Since Young Chief was absent on a hunt when the Catholic missionaries arrived at the Fort, the Bishop and his party were delayed in going to the Umatilla. Hence they were at the Fort when Whitman arrived on the 23rd.

**SITE FOR THE SAINT ROSE MISSION SELECTED**

While waiting for Young Chief to return, Bishop Blanchet and his associates consulted with Peu-peu-mox-mox about a possible site for a mission among the Walla Walla Indians. According to Father Ricard’s journal, this chief was reluctant at first “to receive priests in his territory,” but finally offered a location “on the right bank of the Columbia, at the mouth of the Yakima.” This site was none other than that which W. H. Gray had selected for the station that he wanted to establish in the fall of 1839 and which was known as Shimnap, “about a day [journey] above Walla Walla.” The site is near present-day Richland, Washington.

Father Ricard wrote as follows of his visit to the proposed site: “I... there met several savages who were so well-disposed that, in spite of the
poorness of the land and the lack of timber, I decided to establish myself there. I had promised to place the first mission of the Oblates in Oregon under the protection of Saint Rose of Lima. I therefore named the area ‘Saint Rose,’ and my mission ‘Saint Rose Mission.’”  

Father Ricard moved his few belongings to the site on October 12 after hiring two French Canadians at Fort Walla Walla to help him in the erection of a cabin. His mission work with the natives had barely gotten started before the Whitman massacre occurred, which brought everything to an abrupt end.

**Whitman Meets Catholic Missionaries at the Fort**

For several years before the coming of the Roman Catholic missionaries to Fort Walla Walla, Young Chief had indicated his preference for the Catholics, whereas, his brother, Five Crows was a Protestant. When Dr. White met with the Cayuses in May 1843, for the purpose of persuading them to accept his code of laws and then for them to select one to be High Chief, Young Chief was the first choice of the tribe to be appointed to this position.

Young Chief, however, stepped aside because he favored the Catholics while the majority of the people preferred the Protestants. So his brother, Five Crows, was then chosen. This difference in religious preference may have caused a spirit of rivalry to grow up between the brothers. We know that two of the Chief Traders at Fort Walla Walla, Pierre Pambrun and William McBean, were Catholics and extended favors to both the Catholic priests and to Young Chief. In November 1847, just a few days before the Whitman massacre, Young Chief turned his log cabin over to Bishop Blanchet and Father Brouillet, who named it the Saint Anne Mission.

The following extract from the unpublished journal of Bishop Blanchet tells of his meeting with Dr. Whitman: “September 23 & 24. Mr. Whitman stopped at the Fort on his return from the Dalles. He is very unhappy over the arrival of the Bishop of Walla Walla. He admits that he does not like Catholics as such. He even goes so far as to declare that it is not necessary to be baptized to be a Christian. He attributes the Bishop’s appointment to the influence of Tawatoe (the Young Chief). He is going to do all that he can to keep the Indians from becoming Catholics. He accuses the Catholics of always having persecuted the Protestants..."
and he has promised to color the catholic ladder with blood to demonstrate the intolerance of the Catholics. This he has already begun to do by saying many harmful things about the priests to Yellow Snake[^41] [i.e., Peu-peu-mox-mox], chief of the Walla Wallas.”

The reference to the “catholic ladder” needs an explanation. As has been stated, both the Roman Catholics and the Protestant missionaries in Oregon used what was called a “ladder” to present their respective versions of church history. This consisted of a board, perhaps ten feet tall and a foot wide, which had horizontal lines drawn across it to indicate the centuries following the birth of Christ. Pictures were drawn within each segment to illustrate certain aspects of history which either group wished to emphasize. The ladders were mutually uncomplimentary. Whereas the Catholic ladder gave a vivid picture of such “heretics” as Luther and Calvin being cast into a fiery hell, the Protestant ladder showed the victim to be the Pope.[^42]

According to Ricard, Whitman was so agitated over the arrival of the Catholic missionaries at Walla Walla that one day, after butchering a steer, he “splashed the animal’s blood” over a Catholic ladder and gave it to an Indian, as a symbol of what might happen if the Catholic priests were permitted to remain among the Cayuses.[^43] On December 20, following the massacre, when Ogden met with some of the Cayuse chiefs, Edward, a son of Tiloukaikt, gave Ogden one of these blood-smeared ladders, and claimed that Whitman had said: “You see this blood! It is to show you that now, because you have the priests among you, the country is going to be covered with blood! You will have nothing but blood.”[^44]

Bishop Blanchet claimed that Whitman resorted to this dramatic gesture in order to demonstrate “the intolerance of the Catholics.” Could it not be conjectured that this act revealed a deep latent fear in Whitman’s mind regarding his own safety? Could he not have been afraid that the very presence of the Catholics would unleash forces among the natives, unknown to the Catholic missionaries, which would eventually take his life? If so, the animal’s blood on the Catholic ladder would have been a symbol of his own blood.

On September 27, Bishop Blanchet noted: “Mr. McKay just arrived with his group from Vancouver. When he passed through the Dalles, Canassissi [a chieftain of that area] told him that the Indians desired to have some priests... Mr. McKay stated that two miles below the Meth-
odist Mission, there is a wonderful site for a mission.... This same gentleman also said that Dr. Whitman paid 600 dollars for the mission property of the Dalles.”

This “Mr. McKay” whom Bishop Blanchet mentioned was none other than Thomas McKay who was at the 1836 Rendezvous, where he first met the Whitmans and the Spaldings. It was he who, when he first realized that white women had crossed the Rockies, had said: “There is something that Dr. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the country so easily.” And it was he who consulted with Whitman in the spring of 1838 regarding the education of his three sons when they were traveling to the States with Jason Lee. Although McKay remained friendly with Whitman, he had by the fall of 1847 thrown his sympathy so much toward the Roman Catholic missionaries that he was willing to recommend a site at The Dalles within two miles of the Methodist property which Whitman had just purchased.

George Simpson’s “Character Book,” in the archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company, contains the following appraisal of McKay: “One of the best shots in the country and very cool and resolute among Indians; has always been employed on the most desperate service in the Columbia and the more desperate it is, the better he likes it. He is known to every Indian in that Department and his name alone is a host of strength carrying terror with it as he has sent many of them to their ‘long home,’ quite a ‘blood hound’ who must be kept under restraint; possesses little judgment and a confirmed liar but a necessary evil at such a place as Vancouver; has not a particle of feeling or humanity in his composition.”

Being fully aware of McKay’s reputation among the Indians, Whitman tried to hire him so that he would be at Waiilatpu. Of this McKay, in a statement made September 11, 1848, said: “Last fall, during my stay at Fort Walla Walla… the Doctor asked me to go and pass the winter with him, saying that he was afraid of the Indians. I told him I could not on account of my business… He told me also several times last fall that he would leave certainly in the spring for the Dalles. I am aware, moreover, that the Cayuses have a great many times ill treated Dr. Whitman.”

Father Brouillet baptized McKay at Fort Walla Walla on October 29, 1847. Following the example of his illustrious stepfather, Dr. McLoughlin, McKay “made an abjuration of heresy and a public confession of the
Catholic faith.” McKay was then forty-seven years old. Bishop Blanchet noted in his journal for Sunday, November 7: “First Communion and Confirmation for Mr. Thomas McKay, the half-breed man, a few days ago became a convert from Anglicanism.”

CATHOLICS NEGOTIATE WITH YOUNG CHIEF AND TILOUKAIKT

Bishop Blanchet’s journal reveals the fact that he was discussing with both Young Chief and Tiloukaikt the possibility of establishing a mission in the vicinity of Wailatpu. Whitman was fearful of just such a move and this, no doubt, accounted for his outspoken opposition to the coming of the Catholic missionaries to the vicinity. After having lived with Cayuses for eleven years, he knew that this would mean trouble.

Father Brouillet wrote regarding the conference Whitman had with the priests at Fort Walla Walla on September 23 and 24: “He refused to sell provisions to the bishop, and protested that he would not assist the missionaries unless he saw them in starvation.”

Ignoring Whitman’s objections to the establishment of a mission in the vicinity of Wailatpu, and with little knowledge of the Cayuse character or appreciation of the explosive issues involved, Bishop Blanchet and his clergy went ahead with their plans to establish the desired mission. Bishop Blanchet called Tiloukaikt to the fort on October 2 and asked him if he would have any objection “to Dr. Whitman’s selling him some lumber.” The very fact that the Bishop sought Tiloukaikt’s permission to buy some of the lumber Whitman had on the grounds at Wailatpu indicates the dictatorial power that Tiloukaikt was then exercising over Whitman. Tiloukaikt gave his consent for the purchase of the lumber, but wanted to consult his brother chiefs regarding the payment. He told the Bishop that “the Indians had prevented Mr. Spalding from building near Dr. Whitman.” This evidently refers to the house that Whitman had proposed building for Mrs. Spalding and her children to be used during the school term, but which, for some reason, was not erected.

Bishop Blanchet’s entry for October 2 continues: “He [Tiloukaikt] complained that Dr. Whitman had promised them many things but had not made good his promises. He related that he himself had told the Doctor that the Young Chief was master of all of his lands and that he had it in his power to permit the planting of a cross [a Catholic mission]
there if he so chose; that the piece of ground where he (the Doctor) resided belonged to him.” Here we see evidence that the Cayuses had come to appreciate their rights to land ownership. This had never been raised as an issue when, in 1836, they were eager to have missionaries settle in their midst.

On October 26, Young Chief called on Bishop Blanchet at the Fort. According to the Bishop’s journal, when Young Chief was asked whether the Cayuses would welcome Catholic missionaries, he replied: “…that he would welcome them warmly, but suggested that they reside near Dr. Whitman. He said that through his wife he had rights over the land belonging to Tilocate [Tiloukaikt]; that he is willing to turn over some of this land to the Missionaries if Tilocate consents to it and that he would be very happy if the Mission were to be erected at the afore mentioned place.”

Bishop Blanchet then sent his interpreter to interview Tiloukaikt about the possibility of getting land for a mission. The evident willingness of Bishop Blanchet to establish a Catholic mission adjacent to the Protestant station at Waiilatpu is astounding. Tiloukaikt sent back word that there was indeed “enough land for the Missionaries to locate on his domains,” but added that he wanted to consult with the other chiefs first. He would then call on the Bishop. On Thursday, November 4, Tiloukaikt with several of his subchiefs, including one whom Brouillet called “Toursakay” [possibly Tamsucky] arrived at the Fort. A conference was held with the Bishop in the presence of McKay and, according to Brouillet, “all the persons at the fort who chose to witness it.” 48

Blanchet’s account of the interviews is as follows: “Tilocate led the conversation and asked many questions, among others: whether the Pope was the one who had sent the Bishop; whether he was the one who had told him to ask for land; how did the priest live in the Bishop’s homeland—that is to say, who supplied them with the necessities of life; whether the priests would give gifts to the Indians; whether they would cultivate their land; whether they would help them build houses; whether they would provide food and clothing for the children, and many other questions. After hearing what the Bishop had to say, Tiloukaikt stated that “he would give land for the Mission.” 49

Brouillet, in his report of the November 4 meeting at the Fort, wrote that Bishop Blanchet told Tiloukaikt that “he would not make presents to the Indians; that he would give them nothing for the land he asked;
that in case they worked for him, he would pay them for their work, and no more; that he would assist them neither in ploughing their lands nor in building houses, nor would he feed or clothe their children.”

The nature of many of the questions Tiloukaikt asked the Bishop reveals his interest in the material advantages which he hoped to receive should he permit the Catholics to build near Waiilatpu. The Bishop’s clear statement that he would not pay for the land, nor would he give gifts or assist in ploughing, must have been deeply disappointing to Tiloukaikt. Whitman, Tiloukaikt knew, had helped the Indians plough and fence their fields, and then had built a mill and had ground their grain. Upon reflection, Tiloukaikt had some second thoughts.

On November 8, Bishop Blanchet sent Father Brouillet to inspect the site that Tiloukaikt had tentatively offered to make available for the Catholic mission. After meeting with the chief, Brouillet reported that Tiloukaikt “had changed his mind and refused to show it to me, saying that it was too small. He told me that he had no other place to give me but that of Dr. Whitman’s, whom he intended to send away.” Could it be that Tiloukaikt even then was planning to kill the Whitmans?

Bishop Blanchet gave a slightly different version of Brouillet’s report by writing on November 10 in his journal: “He found that the Cayouse of Dr. Whitman are well disposed toward the [Catholic] missionaries. Tilocate and his young braves want to break away from Dr. Whitman. They have even proposed to Fr. Brouillet that he take up residence near them for the winter and they promised to give him Dr. Whitman’s land early enough in the spring for planting. This offer, of course, could not be accepted because the Doctor could then say that the priests are trying to make him leave. Consequently, Fr. Brouillet went to see Tawatoe immediately and found him ready to donate his house and part of his land as he had formerly promised.”

**Saint Anne Mission Established on the Umatilla**

On November 11 Bishop Blanchet sent one of the priests of his party, Father Rousseau “with two men and a wagon to make repairs on the house of Tawatoe.” Rousseau returned to the Fort on Friday, November 26, with the report that the house had been renovated and was ready for occupancy. The next day the Bishop, Father Brouillet and Deacon LeClaire left Fort Walla Walla for the Umatilla and arrived at their des-
tination about 3:30 p.m. The Bishop noted in his journal that the roof of the house had been “recovered with sod, the floors sealed, the doors and door-frames squared up and the chimneys rebuilt. Rush mats cover the floor…” Then in his characteristic style, referring to himself in the third person, he wrote: “The Bishop is happy to be able to say, along with his associates, that he is in his own house now, or at least that he has found shelter... This mission foundation among the Cayouse is under the protection of Saint Anne.”

The Mission of Saint Anne was destined to have an existence of only a few weeks as the massacre at Waiilatpu began on the Monday following the arrival of the Bishop and his associates at Young Chief’s.

AN APPRAISAL OF ROMAN CATHOLIC INVOLVEMENT

After the massacre, the Roman Catholic missionaries were severely criticized for their endeavor to establish a mission among the Cayuses so close to Waiilatpu. They should have realized, said some, that their very presence would have made trouble for the Protestants. In answer to such criticism, Father Brouillet wrote that at the time Bishop Blanchet and his party arrived at Fort Walla Walla, “it was publicly known that he had been for years speaking of leaving the Cayuse country.” Brouillet made mention of Whitman’s purchase of the Methodist station at The Dalles. “Under such circumstances,” Brouillet wrote, “it would not have been unnatural to believe that he would have liked to dispose of his property the same as any other individual.” Since Bishop Blanchet and his priests were new to Oregon, it could not be expected that they would appreciate the danger to which Whitman and his family were exposed by their proposal to establish a rival mission in the vicinity of Waiilatpu.

As has been stated, Whitman’s concern about the activities of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the Oregon country dated back to 1838 when the first two arrived. One of the reasons why Whitman made his ride East in 1842–43 was to induce the American Board to take some steps to counteract the growing Catholic influence in Oregon. His best suggestion was for the Board to sponsor the settlement of some Protestant families near its stations, especially near Waiilatpu.

In his last letter to Greene, dated October 18, 1847, Whitman mentioned hearing a report that the Catholics planned to establish colonies in the Walla Walla area. He then wrote: “I cannot blame myself that the
plan I laid down when I was in Boston was not carried out. If we could have good families, say two & three together, to have placed in select spots among the Indians, the present crisis which I feared would not have come." 53

We have no evidence that either the Cayuse or the Catholic missionaries ever had any suspicion of Whitman’s plan to have Protestant families settle in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. If the Board had cooperated in such a plan, surely the Indians would have had added reason to be aroused. It is inconceivable that the presence of some Protestant families in the area would have prevented the massacre. On the other hand, this could well have hastened the tragedy.

The establishment of Saint Rose Mission, about forty miles to the northwest of Waiilatpu, and of Saint Anne Mission, about twenty-five miles to the south, marked the beginning of the end of the Oregon Mission of the American Board. Even had there been no measles epidemic and no subsequent massacre, the Whitmans would undoubtedly have moved to The Dalles in the spring of 1848, after having been flanked on two sides by Catholic missions. In that case, surely the families at Tshimakain and possibly the Spaldings at Lapwai would have been obliged also to leave their fields.

THE OREGON EMIGRATION OF 1847

The Oregon emigration of 1847 was larger than that of any preceding year. The best estimates indicate that over one thousand wagons and between four and five thousand people made the western trek that year. Chief Trader Grant at Fort Hall likened the straggling procession which filed past his post to a “travelling mob.” 54 There was no over-all organization. Groups of immigrants banded themselves together for mutual protection. Young single men and small family parties were able to push on ahead of the main body. By August 23, Narcissa was able to write: “For the past two weeks immigrants have been passing, probably 80 or 100 wagons have already passed and 1,000 are said to be on the road” [Postscript to Letter 217].

Never before had the Cayuse Indians who lived along the Oregon Trail or the natives along the south bank of the Columbia River been so inclined to steal and to harass the immigrants as they were that fall. When Whitman was on his way back to Waiilatpu from his trip to The
Dalles for supplies in September, he heard many accounts of the Indians stealing livestock and personal property from the immigrants. In a few instances, Whitman was able to recover the stolen property. After his return to Waiilatpu, Whitman, as has been stated, hastened to the Umatilla to guide the immigrants over a new road to The Dalles. He then did what he could to warn the immigrants to be on their guard. John E. Ross told of meeting Whitman on the Umatilla who advised him to use great caution. Ross and his party later “found four families who had been robbed of their cattle and stripped of their clothing. Six women and some children were left naked.”

Another account by a member of the 1847 immigration, who was a child at the time, remembered how Whitman was able to retrieve some items belonging to her family which had been stolen by Cayuse Indians. Elizabeth Ann Coonc, in her old age, wrote: “Upon our robbery being reported to Dr. Whitman, he called the Indians together; they gathered in a half-circle in front of the doctor, wrapped in their blankets, many with their faces painted with war paint, and the doctor began to arraign them about the theft. I looked on, standing beside my father (John Fenn) and holding his hand. As the doctor proceeded and the guilty consciences of the Indians were awakened, from time to time, a knife, fork or frying pan would be dropped by an Indian from beneath his blanket and when Dr. Whitman had finished, most of the stolen property was lying about on the ground at the feet of the Indians. One of the Indians threw down a skillet with considerable force and, as I thought, at the doctor, but father said, ‘No, they are mad.’”

**Whitman Memoralizes Congress**

After his return from the Umatilla during the first part of October 1847, Whitman, stirred by what he had seen and heard of the harassments inflicted on the immigrants by the Indians, decided to memorialize Congress in an appeal for government protection. His memorial, dated October 16, was addressed “To the Honorable the Secretary of War, To the Committees on Indian Affairs & Oregon in the Senate & House of Representatives of the United States.”

The memorial embodies many of the suggestions he had included in his proposed bill which he had submitted to the Hon. James M. Porter, Secretary of War, following his return from his visit to Washington and
Boston in 1843. Again Whitman pled for the government to establish “a line of posts along the travelled route to Oregon at a distance, of not more than fifty miles [apart].” As in his proposed bill, he stressed the importance of these being “farming stations” where agricultural products could be raised and made available both to the military and to the passing emigrants. The military units attached to such posts would be responsible for keeping the Indians in subjection, suppressing the traffic in “ardent spirits,” and facilitating the transportation of the mails. Whitman estimated that “with a change of horses at every fifty miles,” the mail could be carried from “one hundred to one hundred & fifty miles in twenty four hours.” Here, again, he proposed a pony express.

Stressing the need of protection from marauding Indians, Whitman wrote: “Immigrants now lose horses and other stock by the Indians, commencing from the border of the States to the Willamette. It is much to the praise of our countrymen that they bear so long with the Indians when our Government has done so little to enable them to pass in safety. For one man to lose five or six horses is not a rare occurrence.” Whitman mentioned especially the harassment suffered by the immigrants along the Columbia River: “The timid Indians on the Columbia have this year in open day, attacked several parties of wagons from two to seven, & robbed them, being armed with guns, bows & arrows, knives & axes.” He referred in particular to a “Mr. Glenday from St. Charles, Mo.,… [who] with Mr. Bear his companion, rescued seven wagons from being plundered & the people from gross insult, rescuing one woman when the Indians were in the act of taking all the clothes from her person. The men were mostly striped of their shirts & pantaloons at the time.” The Indians by sudden guerilla attacks would catch the white men unprepared and their assaults were effective even with their primitive weapons. Whitman sent this memorial with his letter of October 18 to Greene with the request that copies be made and sent “to such members of Congress & other influential men as you think will favor the object proposed.”

On the same day that Whitman was writing his memorial, Dr. McLoughlin wrote to the U.S. Secretary of War from Oregon City and gave similar recommendations for the protection of Oregon immigrants. He wrote: “I am convinced that the manner in which the Immigrants travel from Fort Hall to his place will lead to trouble unless the Measures
I suggested to Dr. Whitman when he left here to go home are adopted.” He advised the government to establish a post at Fort Hall, and in this connection, he recommended the appointment of Robert Newell “as a person well qualified for the office of Agent.”

**Last Whitman Letters**

No more convincing proof of the faith that Narcissa and Marcus had in the future of Oregon may be found than that contained in letters that Narcissa wrote to members of her family, especially after her husband’s return from his eastern journey in 1843, urging them to migrate thither. Her eagerness, especially for her younger sister Jane to go to Oregon, was echoed over and over again in her letters to Jane written after 1843. She yearned for Jane’s companionship. In a postscript dated August 23 to a letter begun on July 4, 1847, Narcissa told her mother: “I am expecting to see Jane and Edward this fall; but from those who have already passed, we can hear nothing from them.” Hopefully, Narcissa added: “They may be on the road, for among so many, it is not expected that all will be known to each other.”

Matilda Sager remembered: “Mrs. Whitman’s sister, Jane Prentiss, was coming out to be a teacher. She planned to be out that fall—the fall of 1847. A few weeks before the Indians killed Dr. and Mrs. Whitman and the others, Mrs. Whitman was cleaning the house very thoroughly. I said to her, ‘This isn’t spring, mother—why are we cleaning house now?’ She said, ‘Didn’t you know that we are looking for your Aunt Jane to come out soon?’”

Narcissa began a long letter to her mother on July 4, 1847, to which she added a postscript dated August 23, a part of which may have been written in September. She told of the arrival of the two half-breed sons of Donald Manson, a Hudson’s Bay employee, who were to be educated by the Whitmans. They were John, age thirteen, and Stephen, eleven. She also reported that the P. B. Littlejohns, one of the independent missionary couples who had gone out to Oregon in 1840, had returned to the States. According to Narcissa, Mrs. Littlejohn “was very unwilling to leave the country, but her husband had become such a hypochondriac that there was no living with him in peace. He wanted to kill himself last winter. It is well for him that he has gone to the States, where he can be taken care of... He seems to be very much
like Mr. Munger, the individual we had here that became crazy.”

Narcissa’s last extant letter, dated October 12, was written to Jane, who was then teaching at Quincy, Illinois, and still unmarried. The whole burden of the letter was an appeal for her to come to Oregon. The last paragraph reads: “Jane, there will be no use in your going home to see ma and pa before you come here—it will only make the matters worse with your heart. I want to see her as much as you. If you will all come here, it will not be long before they will be climbing over the Rocky Mountains to see us. The love of parents for their children is very great. I see already in their movements, indications that they will ere long come this way, for father is becoming quite a traveler. Believe me, dear Jane, and come without fail, when you have so good an opportunity.61 Farewell. N.W.”

Both of the two extant letters that Whitman wrote in the fall of 1847 were sent to the American Board. In his September 13 letter, he wrote: “I have sent to the lower country for a good Mechanic or hired man that wintered with me the year before last.” The reference was to Josiah Osborn, who, with his family, had spent the winter of 1845–46 at Waiilatpu. Whitman called on Osborn when in the Willamette Valley in August 1847 and persuaded him to return to Waiilatpu that fall to re-build the mills. Whitman agreed to pay him $300.00 a year if he would stay for a two-year period. This shows that at that time Whitman had no intention of moving away from Waiilatpu. These plans were made before Whitman had learned of the intentions of the Roman Catholics to establish two stations in his vicinity. Osborn had been working for the Methodist Mission but was attracted by Whitman’s offer and agreed to go.62 As will be told, he came to regret the move. The Osborns with their four children, the eldest being a girl seven and a half years old, arrived at Waiilatpu on October 18 and were quartered in the Indian room of the main mission building. That was just six weeks before a combination of circumstances exploded in tragedy.

Whitman had had the misfortune to injure a knee in the late fall of 1845 when the horse he was riding fell on him. For a time he had to use crutches. Evidently the injury continued to be a handicap, as Whitman in his letter of September 13 written while at Waskopum, said: “I have not been able to work for the last six months from a weakness in my knee joint... I feel as though I must employ more help & not work myself. I
now intend to devote my whole time & strength to instruct the people. Indeed I ought to itinerate all the time if I would in any good degree meet the Jesuits.” Whitman told Greene of his desire to have two schools at Waiilatpu—”One for the children of the Mission, and a boarding school for the natives.”

While at The Dalles Whitman had another opportunity to see the passing immigrants and to realize their need for provisions. He wrote: “There are no provisions here more than the Station needs and at my place I have much poorer crops than usual. But we cannot remove ourselves out of the way & must meet the trial the best we can… The first passers never give us any trouble. The weak teams & needy persons come last as also gradually the sick.” With a much larger immigration arriving that fall, Whitman realized with apprehension that there would be more calls that year for shelter and care at Waiilatpu than ever before.

Whitman’s last letter to Greene, dated October 18, 1847, was written shortly after he had returned from guiding the immigrants, and after he had met Bishop Blanchet and his clergy at Fort Walla Walla. After seeing hundreds of immigrants and scores of wagons streaming westward, Whitman had the subject of Oregon immigration very much on his mind. This was the reason for writing the memorial to Congress which he mailed to Greene with this letter. Again in this letter, as has been previously stated, Whitman stressed the importance of the service he had been able to accomplish in 1843 when he opened the wagon road to the Columbia. “Upon that event,” he wrote, “the present acquired rights of U. States by her Citizens hung.” Altogether Whitman had witnessed five large Oregon immigrations, including that of 1843. The total number of people involved was about 13,000, some of whom went to California. From about a hundred wagons taken to Oregon in 1843, Whitman saw the number grow annually until there were over a thousand in 1847. Small wonder that he took pride in the role he had played in opening the Oregon country for American settlement.

In this last letter to Greene, Whitman again urged the Board to do something to induce colonies of church people with their ministers to move to Oregon with the hope that they would settle in the interior, seemingly unaware that this would arouse the enmity of the natives. “The Interior of Oregon is unrivalled,” he wrote, “probably by any Country for grazing of stock of which sheep are the best. This interior
will now be sought after…” He wanted the very best people to migrate, for this was a work “that needs good men.” He argued: “Why will not the best men do good & benefit themselves as readily as worldly minded men? Why will Pastors regret to select their best & worthiest men to do good by their persons & their property & influence? Can a mind be found so narrow as not to be willing to part with a Pastor; or a Pastor not to part with a Church member; simply because they are good men & useful where they are?” Whitman was confident that the interior of Oregon would soon be settled and he wanted Americans instead of “the half breed & French population from the Willamette, as they show a disposition to sell out there & come here.”

Here in his last letter to Greene, Whitman returned to his hope of having a college established somewhere in the interior. “I know of no place so eligible as at the Dalls close by our station,” he wrote. Whitman never ceased looking into the future and dreaming of things that might be. Although this last letter reveals his continued interests in the political future of Oregon, it also shows his continuing concern for the spiritual welfare of the natives. The last sentence of this last letter to Greene was a plea for a missionary for The Dalles: “I hope the want of a man for Dalls Station will not escape your notice. With Esteem, Yours Truly, Marcus Whitman.” No letters from either Marcus or Narcissa remain which might have been written during the last six weeks of their lives. Thus we have no direct evidence of any apprehension they may have felt of the coming tragedy. For the events of those weeks, we must turn to the writings of others.

**LAST LETTER FROM GREENE**

Greene answered Whitman’s letter of October 18, 1847, on the following March 17. It seems evident that some returning traveler to the States had carried Whitman’s letter and his memorial to Congress. Greene wrote that he had forwarded the memorial to the Hon. Roger S. Baldwin, U.S. Senator from Connecticut, with the request that it be given consideration. Nothing further is known of the fate of this memorial. Regarding Whitman’s plea that the Board do something to induce colonies of Christian people to migrate to Oregon and settle in the interior, Greene wrote: “I must say that I cannot regard it as my duty to make any efforts at all in any form.”
Greene was not happy with all the time and energy that Whitman was giving to the immigrants. Surely if Whitman had lived to receive and read the following in Greene’s reply, his heart would have been heavy: “We are aware that you must have many secular cares on your hands—much to occupy your mind & time of things which it seems necessary should be done, and [when] no one else seems disposed to do them, you are inclined to undertake them, and spend strength & time about them, which it would be more appropriate & really better for the community around you, for you to spend on efforts aimed more directly at the spiritual welfare of the people. You are known to be a missionary man in your relations and profession, & the people expect you to be mainly occupied in that which is peculiarly missionary work. We doubt the wisdom, taking an enlarged view of the matter, of your spending much time on exploring routes of travel, making roads, etc.… Do not feel that all Oregon is on your hands, & that the planning, providing & laboring for all its interests are devolved on you.”

But the man who was thus being rebuked for an excess of patriotic zeal and social concern was already in his grave when that letter was written.

**Crowded Waiilatpu**

Waiilatpu was crowded with seventy-five people, including forty-five children, at the time the massacre began on Monday, November 29, 1847. Of this number, fifty-two had crossed the mountains with the immigration of that year. Regarding them, Narcissa wrote sometime in September: “Poor people—those that are not able to get on, or pay for what they need—are those that will most likely wish to stop here, judging from the past; and connected with this, is a disposition not to work, at any rate, not more than they can help.” The Whitmans had learned from previous experience that most of those who sought shelter at Waiilatpu for the winter months were either unable or unwilling to work. Possibly some felt that the missionaries were well subsidized by their mission boards and were, therefore, able to extend free hospitality. Narcissa added in the postscript to her letter: “The poor Indians are amazed at the overwhelming numbers of Americans coming into the country. They seem not to know what to make of it” [Letter 217].
Two of the immigrant families who remained to spend the winter of 1847–48 at Waiilatpu did so because one or more of each family had been employed by Whitman. While Dr. and Mrs. Whitman were on the Umatilla River during the first part of October, they met Judge and Mrs. L. W. Saunders and their five children. The Saunders family belonged to a small company of immigrants which hailed from Oskaloosa, Iowa. They had two wagons, with Isaac Gilliland, a tailor, as the driver of one. Mrs. Saunders in later years wrote her reminiscences of the journey across the country and of her experiences at Waiilatpu during the Whitman massacre and subsequent captivity.\textsuperscript{64} Among her interesting stories is the description of their custom of putting the cream from their milk in a churn which would be hung on the back of a wagon. The jiggling of the wagon as it rolled along the trail resulted in “sweet fresh butter” by the end of the day.

“We passed by what the Indians called the Priest’s House on the Umatilla River,” wrote Mrs. Saunders, “and on the seventh of October we met Dr. Whitman... [who was] looking for a teacher. The Doctor offered such strong inducements that my husband agreed to turn back and go as a teacher to Dr. Whitman’s mission.” Gilliland consented to stay with the family for a few weeks, as Whitman promised him some work as a tailor. They arrived at Waiilatpu on October 12. Since Saunders had had some legal training, Whitman called on him to help write the memorial to Congress which was dated the 16\textsuperscript{th}. Judge Saunders opened his school on the 19\textsuperscript{th} in a room in the long arm of the T-shaped mission building. The schoolroom must have been crowded as there were thirty-two children at the mission between the ages of four and seventeen, although some of these were sick with the measles and were unable to attend.

According to Mrs. Saunders’ reminiscences, Mr. and Mrs. Elam Young and their three grown sons—James, Daniel, and John—arrived at Waiilatpu on the 20\textsuperscript{th}. Whitman succeeded in hiring the four men to work for him at his sawmill and they took up residence in the cabin at the site. A little later, the Joseph Smith family, with five children arrived. They too were sent to the sawmill site, except fifteen-year-old Mary who stayed with the Saunders family in order to attend school. Others who came asking for shelter were Mr. and Mrs. Peter D. Hall and their five children; Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L. Kimball with five children; Walter Marsh, his daughter and grandson; Mrs. Rebecca
Hays, whose husband had died on the trail, and her two little boys; and a single man, Jacob Hoffman.

Among those who paused briefly at Wailatpu were Mr. and Mrs. John W. Bewley and their seven children, including a son Crocket, and a daughter, Esther Lorinda, usually called by her second name. Both were in their early twenties. Lorinda noted in her diary that after their arrival at Wailatpu: “Mrs. Whitman prevailed upon me to stay with her until next spring. She said it was late in the season and as my health was not very good, I consented to stay. My mother thought it would be for the best. My oldest brother Crocket, decided to stay with me.” Lorinda took the place of Mary Johnson, who had worked for the Whitmans during the winter of 1846–47 and who had gone to Lapwai in the summer of 1847 to help Mrs. Spalding. Amos Sales, a young man who had been traveling with the Bewley family, also decided to stay. Also included in the residents at Wailatpu on the eve of the massacre were two men whom Whitman had hired, Joseph Stanfield, a French Canadian, and Nicholas Finley, a half-breed from the Spokane country.

On November 7, the W. D. Canfield family, with five children, from Oskaloosa, Iowa, arrived and begged to be received. This was the fifth family, each with five children, to seek accommodations at Wailatpu that fall. Since every available room had been taken, the Canfields had to camp out until suitable quarters could be arranged for them in the blacksmith shop. Mrs. Osborn was pregnant when she and her husband returned to Wailatpu in October 1847. Her baby was born on November 14 and died the same day. One of the Osborn girls died of measles two days later. On Monday, November 22, Spalding arrived at Wailatpu with his daughter, Eliza, who was to attend school. With her coming, all who were destined to be either among the fourteen victims or the forty-six captives in the final tragedy had assembled.

Joe Lewis, the Chief Villain

In the last company of immigrants to arrive at Wailatpu in early November was a half-breed by the name of Joe Lewis. According to an anonymous author, who is believed to have been Peter Skene Ogden, Lewis was “a Spanish Creole.” Both Spalding and Catherine Sager claimed that Lewis had been born in Canada and educated in Maine.
Spalding wrote: “He was a good scholar and good mechanic, and had the appearance of an eastern half-breed, spoke the English [language] as his native tongue, and was a devoted Catholic.”

Father Brouillet stoutly denied that Lewis was a Catholic and pointed out that there were then “no Catholic churches, no priests, nor any means whatever of receiving Catholic instruction” in Maine.

Catherine Sager claimed that Lewis had served with Frémont in the Mexican War and then had drifted to Fort Hall. Captain Grant refused to let Lewis stay at the fort. Lewis then attached himself to a party of emigrants but, according to Catherine, was so “thoroughly disliked” by the time they had arrived at Waiilatpu that they refused to let him continue with them. Mrs. Saunders wrote that Lewis was a Delaware Indian who was “sick and in need of clothing” when he arrived at the Whitman station. She added: “The Doctor clothed him and cared for him until he recovered and sent him away with a family who were going to the Willamette Valley. He returned in three days and refused to leave. It was a case of warming a viper in one’s bosom.” Joe Lewis moved into the lodge of Nicholas Finley which was located within a few hundred yards of the mission house.

The Roll-Call of Those at Waiilatpu

The following is a list of the residents at the Whitman mission on that fateful Monday, November 29, 1847. The names of the fourteen victims are in italics. The ages of the children and young adults are given in parentheses.

Main Mission House

Dr. and Mrs. Marcus Whitman and their family consisting of the seven Sager children—John (17), Francis (15), Catherine (13), Elizabeth (10), Matilda (8), Louise (6), and Henrietta (4); five half-breed children—Mary Ann Bridger (11), Helen Mar Meek (10), David Malin (Cortez) (8), John (13) and Stephen (11) Manson; Eliza Spalding (10); and Andrew Rodgers.

Also, Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Osborn and their children—Nancy A. (7 1/2), John L. (4), and Alexander (2); Crocket Bewley, and Lorinda Bewley (adults).
Emigrant House  Total 31
Judge and Mrs. L. W. Saunders and their children—Helen M. (14), Phoebe (10), Alfred (6), Nancy (4), and Mary A. (2); Mary Smith (15); Mrs. Rebecca Hays and her children—Henry Clay (4), and infant son, Rapolean; Mr. and Mrs. Peter D. Hall and their children—Gertrude (10), Mary C. (8), Ann E. (6), Rebecca (3), and Rachel (1); Mr. and Mrs. Nathan L. Kimball and their children—Susan M. (16), Nathan, Jr. (12), Byron E. (8), Sarah S. (6), and Nina A. (1); Walter Marsh and his daughter, Mary E. (11), and grandson, Alba Lyman (2); Isaac Gilliland, Jacob Hoffmann, and Joseph Stanfield.

Blacksmith Shop  Total 8
Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Canfield and their children—Ellen (16), Oscar (9), Clarissa (7), Sylvia (5), and Albert (3); Amos Sales.

Sawmill Cabin  Total 11
Mr. and Mrs. Elam Young and their sons—James (24), Daniel (21), and John Q. (19); Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Smith and their children—Edwin (13), Charles (11), Nelson (6), and Mortimer (4).

In an Indian Lodge  Total 2
Half-breeds, Nicholas Finley and Joe Lewis.

Grand Total 75

Not counting themselves, the French Canadian Stanfield and the two half-breeds, the Whitmans found themselves responsible for the welfare of seventy people, of whom sixteen were men, nine were women, and forty-five were children under the age of eighteen. There were nineteen boys and twenty-six girls, including the five half-breed children. Possibly the two older Smith boys, listed above as being at the sawmill cabin, were actually at Waiilatpu so that they could attend school. In addition to Lorinda Bewley, three of the girls were fifteen or sixteen years old, thus making them eligible to being taken as wives by their captors.
Chapter 21 Footnotes

1 Simpson’s “Character Book,” HBC Arch.
2 Bancroft, Oregon, 1:552.
3 Walla Walla Union, August 12, 1936.
4 Pringle ms., p. 24. states that Stanfield was in the 1846 immigration.
5 A rare instance of Mrs. Whitman using Cayuse words in her letters.
6 Pringle ms., p. 18, where the wording is somewhat different from the author’s copy.
7 Drury, Spalding, p. 327.
8 Ibid., p. 326, quoting from a letter from Spalding to A. T. Smith, Feb. 22, 1847.
10 Drury, F.W.W., II:315.
11 Ibid., p. 317, fn. 30.
12 This historic press is now in the Oregon Historical Society’s museum, Portland.
13 From postscript dated August 23.
14 Richardson, Whitman Mission, p. 149.
15 Kane, op. cit., p. 195.
16 From letter from Harper to me, October 25, 1971.
17 Hines, Wild Life in Oregon, p. 166, wrote in a similar manner about Feathercap (Tamsucky): “He has a countenance the most savage.”
18 J. Russell Harper (ed.), Paul Kane’s Frontier, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, 1971, gives a reproduction of a drawing of “Til-au-kite,” p. 232. A second drawing by Kane, also labelled as Tiloukaikt, is reproduced as an illustration in this work. The painting in the Royal Ontario Museum was used in Drury, F.W.W., I, p. 168, and Whitman, p. 400, with the painting of Tomahas, but in both instances, the identification was erroneously reversed.
19 Harper, Paul Kane’s Frontier, p. 231 gives picture of a drawing Kane made of “Mrs. Whitman’s fan” apparently made out of long feathers.
20 See Chapter Seven, section “Their Personal Appearance.”
21 Matilda Sager Delaney to Mrs. Edmund Bowden, March 26, 1928, Coll. Wn.
23 Ibid., passim.
24 From undated clipping, possibly 1905, in Coll. Wn.
25 Drury, Whitman, p. 25 gives pictures of Whitman’s sister, Alice, and his three brothers. Copy in Coll. Wn.
27 Ross Woodbridge was the first to note that the smaller sketch in this Kane drawing could refer to the incident mentioned by Matilda Sager.
28 The letter “W” appears on the picture of this sketch used as an illustration in this book. After the picture of the sketch was taken, some accidental cleaning of the sketch removed the letter “W.” The first publication of the sketches, without a discussion of their possible authenticity, came in Thompson, Shallow Grave at
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Waiilatpu, p. 38. Ross Woodbridge was the first to publish an article which dealt with the identification of the sketches. See Whitman College Alumnus, February 1970.

29 Half-breed sons, ages 13 and 11, of Donald Manson, a Hudson's Bay employee, who had sent his boys to the Whitman mission early in the fall of 1847 to be educated.

30 See Drury, Walker, frontispiece and p. 203, for reproductions of Stanley's paintings of Elkanah and Abigail Walker.

31 Kane, Wanderings of an Artist, pp. 196–7.

32 This practice was sometimes followed by women if the sweat-house were in a secluded place.

33 See Chapter Thirteen, fn. 45, for reference to the four Catholic priests in Old Oregon who had the family name of Blanchet.


35 See Chapter Fifteen, fn. 47, for reference to Young Chief's house.

36 See Chapter Fourteen, section “Gray Demands a Station for Himself.” Also, Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 156 and 295.


38 Because of the Cayuse War which followed the massacre, the work at Saint Rose Mission was abandoned. Many years later a settler, Burwell W. Russell, laid claim to the site. The Catholic Church contested the claim in court but lost; title was granted to Russell on April 10, 1882. Information from U.S. Department of Interior, in a letter to me dated December 30, 1936.


40 Bishop Blanchet's original “Journal of First Trip to Walla Walla” is in the archdiocesan archives, Roman Catholic Church, Seattle. The translation from the French was made for me through the kindness of the Rev. A. L. Morisette, S.J.

41 See Chapter Seventeen, fn. 16. Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, plate 9, gives a sketch of Peu-peu-mox-mox with the note “Yellow Bird but called Yellow Serpent by the whites.”

42 See Drury, F.W.W., I:218 ff., for a discussion of the Protestant and Catholic ladders and for a picture of Mrs. Spalding's representation. A copy of a Catholic ladder is in Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission, translated by Carl Landerholm, Oregon Historical Society, 1956, p. 44.


44 Brouillet, House Document, p. 44. Italics in the original.


48 Ibid., p. 34.

49 Italics in the original account by Blanchet. See ante, fn. 40.

51 Ibid., p. 53.

52 See Chapter Sixteen, “To Counteract the Roman Catholics.”

53 In this letter Whitman called all the Catholic missionaries in the Blanchet party “Jesuits.” This, of course, was not the case. Spalding, Gray, and other Protestants were too ill-informed on the Catholic orders to be accurate.

54 HBC Arch., B/223/b/33. Douglas & Grant to Governor & Committee from Fort Vancouver, in a letter dated Sept. 20, 1847, quoting Grant.

55 Bancroft, Oregon, I:645.

56 Reminiscences of Elizabeth Ann Coonc in Walla Walla Union, August 12, 1936. Her account was written before 1900.

57 Hulbert, O.P., VIII:237 ff., gives the full text of the memorial.

58 See Chapter Eighteen, “Synopsis of Whitman’s Bill.”

59 Original McLoughlin letter in Old Indian Bureau files, National Archives.

60 Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 332.

61 Narcissa’s letter to her sister was carried to the States by a Mr. Glenday, who was planning to return to Oregon the following year with a party. Narcissa wanted Jane to travel with this group.

62 From Osborn letter, April 7, 1848, Coll. W.

63 Hulbert, O.P., VIII:251 ff. Italics are the author’s.

64 Only one copy of this excellent pamphlet by Mrs. Mary Saunders, The Whitman Massacre, Oakland, Calif., 1916, is known to be extant. This is in the Library of Congress. A typewritten copy is in Coll. B., from which a xerox copy was made for me. Pagination used in footnotes of this book is to this copy and not to her published pamphlet.

65 Pringle ms., pp. 24 & 39 mentions two sons of Mrs. Hays, a fact usually overlooked in the various listings of those at Wailatpu at the time of the massacre. In the Pringle scrapbooks, Coll. W., Catherine named the boys, John and Rapolane (possibly Napoleon). Pringle ms., p. 39 mentions death of the Hays baby.

66 Pringle ms., author’s copy, contains a postscript giving quotations from Lorinda Bewley’s diary from which this quotation is taken.

67 See ante, fn. 4, of this chapter.

68 A son of Jacques (Jacko) Finley (or Finlay) who helped build Spokane House in 1810. Two of the brothers of Nicholas lived in the vicinity of Tshimakain and figure in the story of Walker and Eells.

69 Traits of American Life, by a Fur Trader (Peter Skene Ogden?), San Francisco, 1933, p. 54.

70 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 28.

71 Brouillet, House Document, p. 56.

72 For list of residents at Wailatpu at the time of the massacre, see Spalding, Senate Document, p. 27; Cannon, Wailatpu, pp. 106-7; Bancroft, Oregon, I:647-8; Eells, Marcus Whitman, pp. 287-8; Pringle ms., p. 24. The lists vary in several particulars.
Tomahas, who Killed Dr. Whitman
Both are by Paul Kane who visited Waiilatpu, July 1847. Several years after he drew the sketch at left, he learned that Tomahas was convicted of the murder of Whitman and was hanged at Oregon City, June 3, 1850. He then, using artistic license, painted the picture at the right. In his Wanderings of an Artist (page 195), he wrote as though to justify his second picture: “His appearance was the most savage I ever beheld.”
Courtesy, Peabody Museum, Harvard University; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Tiloukaikt, Chief of the Wailatpu Cayuses
One of three dissimilar portraits by Paul Kane of this chief. Two are in the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, and one is in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Courtesy, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.
Paul Kane’s Sketches Believed to be of the Whitmans
These are possibly authentic sketches of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman drawn in July 1847. For evidence used in verification, see volume two, page 174 ff. On the sketch of Marcus, note the face of a girl below the left shoulder, the letter “W” before the brim of the hat, and at lower right, inverted, is a figure at a bonfire with the handle of a garden tool. By permission of Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Kane sketches 946.15.293 & 946.15.299.
Both the immigrant’s covered wagon and the Indian’s lodge or tepee were to be seen at Waiilatpu in late November 1847. How symbolic! The one brought the aggressive white people, skilled in the arts and crafts of their civilization; the other sheltered members of a proud race, still clinging to many of their age-old customs. In between these symbols was the Whitman mission.

Whitman, realizing that the Indians would have to make an adjustment to the encroaching white man’s civilization in order to survive, had tried to help the natives bridge the gap from the old to the new. In this, he was only partially successful. Time was too short for such a transition. Even though not a single immigrant had settled in Cayuse territory nor had any member of the tribe been killed by white men passing through their land; yet the very presence of the covered wagons and the tepees at Waiilatpu illustrated the conflict then taking place between the two cultures. The other missions at Lapwai and Tshimakain were too far removed from the Oregon Trail to feel the conflict of cultures focused at Waiilatpu. Only at the Whitman station could a massacre have occurred.
No other member of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was so involved in a conflict of loyalties as Marcus Whitman. As far as the natives were concerned, he continued to do all that was humanly possible to improve their material, educational, and spiritual welfare. His last letters reveal the extensive plans that he was making for their betterment.

At the same time, Whitman could not ignore his responsibilities to meet the needs of the immigrants. Each year, beginning with the fall of 1843, the Whitman mission had been a place of refuge where the hungry were fed, the sick cared for, the orphans given a home, and the destitute clothed. The mission became a hostel for all who, for various reasons, were unable to continue their journey to the Willamette Valley. Here is the basis for the criticism that Whitman was more concerned about the welfare of the white man than the red man; but, located as he was, how could he have done otherwise?

When H. K. W. Perkins tried to explain to Jane Prentiss why the Whitmans were killed [Appendix 6], he commented on the fact that Whitman had lost the confidence of the Indians. Perkins claimed that the Cayuses came to fear rather than to love the Doctor. He wrote: “Dr. Whitman in pursuing his missionary labors never so identified himself with the natives as to make their interests paramount. He looked upon them as an inferior race & doomed at no distant day to give place to a settlement of enterprising Americans.”

If Whitman felt that the Cayuses were doomed if they did not make a quick adjustment to the white man’s civilization, history has shown that he was correct in that judgment. There is no indication of any diminution in Whitman’s efforts to help the Cayuses; yet the very fact that he gave aid and comfort to the white people aroused hostility in the minds of the natives. If one accepts the blood feud theory common to primitive people, the Cayuses had a strong case against Whitman. He was the representative of the white race, and therefore shared the guilt of all the wrongs white men had inflicted on the red men. To the Cayuses, whatever aid Whitman gave the immigrants was tantamount to helping their enemies. He thus became the logical target for their hostility.
Although a variety of factors contributed to the Whitman massacre, the final precipitating cause was the ravages of the measles epidemic. As has been stated in the previous chapter, both measles and dysentery had been taking their toll of native lives during the summer of 1847, and there is evidence that an especially virulent form of measles was introduced into Oregon with the immigration of that year. Unfortunately we have no writings of either of the Whitmans after October 18 to tell what they saw taking place; hence we must rely on the testimony of others.

So many white children at Waiilatpu came down with measles in November that the school, which Judge Saunders had hopefully opened on the 19th of that month, had to be closed. Even some adults were stricken, including Mrs. Osborn who, before she had recovered, gave birth on the 14th to a baby girl. As previously stated, this child died the day she was born. All of the other four Osborn children were ill with measles and on the 24th, six-year-old Salvijane died. Years later Nancy Osborn wrote: “An Indian came into the room where the form of my sister lay. Mrs. Whitman asked leave to show him the dead child. She wanted the Indians to know the measles were killing the white people as well as the Indians and thus hoped to allay the growing distrust of the red men. The Indian looked long at my sister, then cruelly he laughed, to see the paleface dead.”

Mrs. Saunders, who has given us one of the most revealing accounts of those tragic days, mentions the death of the Osborn child. She tells of how Narcissa tried to comfort the grief-stricken mother by saying: “Perhaps God thought it for the best that your little child should be called away; it may calm the Indians to see a white child taken as well as so many natives, for otherwise we may all be compelled to leave within two weeks.” Spalding also commented: “We hoped that this afflictive providence would show the Indians that the whites in common with themselves were exposed to the ravages of the disease.” Matilda Sager recalled that eight of the children of school age in the Whitman household were unable to attend school when Saunders reopened it on the morning of the first day of the massacre, November 29, and that “most of the children of the immigrant families wintering there were [also] unable to attend.” The epidemic was severe even among the adult employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Ogden, in a letter to Simpson.
dated March 12, 1848, reported that fourteen of the “servants” of the Company had died. 5

**The Dying Cayuse Tribe**

A smallpox epidemic, originating in the upper Missouri River country, had swept through Old Oregon to the Pacific Ocean in 1781–82 with devastating effects. A second scourge of “fever and ague,” perhaps malaria, ravaged Oregon in 1830–31. Such diseases as tuberculosis, measles, and venereal infections took their frightful toll of lives. Whole tribes, especially along the Pacific Coast, disappeared. Samuel Parker quoted Dr. McLoughlin as saying that nine-tenths of the Indian population of the lower Columbia River region had been swept away. 6 According to another authority, Leslie M. Scott, the white man’s diseases had claimed about ninety-five percent of the aboriginal population of the lower Columbia River country before the immigration from the States had begun. Scott wrote: “Without this desolation of the savages, settlement by ox-team pioneers would have been delayed one or two decades, and then would have encountered protracted horrors of savage warfare.” 7 Thus in Oregon, history repeated what had happened to the aborigines living in the vicinity of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, just prior to the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620.

Although the tribes in the upper Columbia country were not as seriously affected, they did not escape these epidemics without severe loss. Exact statistics are lacking regarding the number in the Cayuse nation during the year, 1835–47, and estimates made by contemporary writers vary greatly. Parker claimed that they numbered about 2,000, 8 but such an estimate included the Walla Walla tribe, which probably numbered over 1,000. A. B. Smith, with the aid of Cornelius Rogers, was the first to attempt to take a census of those speaking the Nez Perce language. He requested the head of each band to give him a bundle of sticks with each stick representing a person. After collecting and counting the sticks, Smith in a letter to Greene dated February 6, 1840, estimated that there were not more than 3,000 Nez Perces and Cayuses. A year later, he revised his figures downward to 2,400. 9 According to the latter estimate, the Cayuse could not have numbered more than three hundred. Even before the measles epidemic struck in the fall of 1847, the Cayuses were a dying nation.
Following the death of a Cayuse child at Fort Walla Walla during the first week of October 1847, the fatalities grew rapidly.\textsuperscript{10} It was hard for the Indians to understand why so many of their number died, both children and adults, when only one white child at Waiilatpu was taken. They knew nothing of immunity. Mrs. Saunders explained in part the reason for the greater mortality among the natives when she wrote: “Dr. Whitman treated the Indian children, but with very little success owing to the ignorance and superstition of their savage parents. They would take the medicine that he gave them, but at the same time, they still clung to their old remedy for all sickness, i.e., a sweating process followed by a plunge into cold water. The inevitable effect of such a treatment was ... in almost every case... death. Altho Dr. Whitman explained to them the danger and warned them against it, his words were of no avail, and in their ignorance and superstition they blamed their kind friend for the death of their children and suspected him of trying to kill them off.”\textsuperscript{11}

Spalding, who arrived at Waiilatpu on Monday, November 22, later wrote of what he saw the next day:\textsuperscript{12} “On the 23d three Indians died, including a child. The Doctor, as usual, had coffins made for them and winding sheets prepared, and assisted in burying the dead... It was most distressing to go into a lodge of some ten fires,\textsuperscript{13} and count twenty or twenty-five sick with measles, others in the last stages of dysentery, in the midst of every kind of filth, enough of itself to cause sickness, with no suitable means of alleviating their almost incurable suffering, with perhaps one well person to look after the wants of the sick ones.” Cath erine Sager remembered that just before the massacre: “The Indians all had the measles, and owing to their manner of living, dying by the dozen. I have seen from five to six buried daily.”\textsuperscript{14}

William McBean, writing from Fort Walla Walla on November 30, 1847, to the “Board of Managers” of the Hudson’s Bay Company gave the first account of the massacre. Referring to the Cayuses living in the immediate vicinity of Waiilatpu, he stated: “About thirty souls of the Cayuse tribe died, one after another; who evidently believed the Doctor poisoned them.”\textsuperscript{15} On July 11, 1848, William Craig made a statement for Father Brouillet in which he claimed that a Cayuse Indian had told him that “one hundred and ninety-seven Indians had died since the im migration commenced passing...”\textsuperscript{16} If that number is correct, then the
Cayuses lost more than one-half of their estimated total of 350 during the fall of 1847.

Craig’s figures are confirmed by a report made by Dr. Anson Dart, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon, who made an inspection tour through the upper Columbia River country in the spring and summer of 1851. Dart met with eight Cayuse chiefs at Fort Walla Walla on June 20 and in his report to Washington stated: “We ascertained the whole number of their tribe to be one hundred and twenty six. They were once a numerous and powerful nation, and are still a proud and haughty race, but very superstitious.” The Cayuse tribe was indeed dying at the time of the Whitman massacre, and we need not wonder that the chiefs in their desperation and anguish became receptive to the wildest rumors regarding the cause of their misfortunes.

More details regarding the reactions of the natives to the introduction and extent of the measles epidemic are to be found in a letter sent to Sir George Simpson by Ogden and Douglas from Fort Vancouver on March 16, 1848. After referring to the large immigration of 1847 from the States and to the common report that the immigrants had brought the disease with them, the two wrote: “...that highly contagious disease has since extended its ravages over the whole country from Fort Walla Walla to Nisqually, and destroyed one-tenth of the Indian population. That appalling circumstance and the well-known fact that the disease was contracted from the immigrants excited a strong prejudice in the minds of the Indians who believe that the Americans are resolved to destroy them. Such feelings took so firm a hold on the mind of the Cayouses that, in a fit of desperation, they attacked the American Mission at Waiilatpoo near Walla Walla, and murdered Dr. Whitman, his accomplished Lady and 11 other American citizens with a most heartless and revolting barbarity.”

**WHITMAN ACCUSED OF POISONING THE INDIANS**

When scores of the Cayuses were dying of measles and when white children recovered while Indian children and even adults did not, it was only natural for the natives to recall some past events which gave credence to the theory that Dr. Whitman was poisoning them in order to gain possession of their horses, cattle, and land. One incident recalled occurred in 1841 when Gray injected a strong emetic into
watermelons to discourage the Indians from stealing them. To the natives, the emetic was “bad medicine” or poison, and they remembered. Archibald McKinlay wrote that they often spoke of the incident and, although Gray was the culprit, Whitman got the blame and was called a “dangerous medicine man.”

A far more serious reason which made the Indians feel that Whitman was poisoning them arose out of the practice followed by both Whitman and Spalding of poisoning the predatory animals which preyed upon their sheep. When Father Brouillet was collecting material for his House Document, he secured the following testimonial from John Young:

“I spent the winter of 1846 in Dr. Whitman’s employment. I generally worked at the sawmill. During the time I was there, I observed that Dr. Whitman was in the habit of poisoning the wolves. I did not see him put the poison in the baits for the wolves; but two young men of his house, by his order, were poisoning pieces of meat and distributing them in the places where the wolves were in the habit of coming, a short distance around the doctor’s establishment.

“The Doctor gave me once some arsenic to poison the wolves that were around the saw-mill. By his order I poisoned some pieces of meat, which I fixed at the end of short sticks about a quarter of mile from the saw-mill. Some Indians who happened to pass there took the meat and ate it; three of them were very sick, and were near dying... Some days afterwards the Doctor told me, laughing, that they would have certainly died if they had not drunk a great quantity of water to excite vomiting. ‘I had told them very often,’ said he, ‘not to eat of that meat which we distributed for the wolves, that it would kill them; they will take care now, I suppose.’”

It is difficult to believe that Whitman would have treated so serious an incident as lightly as John Young claimed, for he surely knew that his own life would have been in danger had any of the Indians died from eating the poisoned meat. If the supposed incident took place in the winter of 1846–47, as claimed, it means that Whitman had probably been using poison to kill predatory animals for eight years. If the Indians actually ate meat containing arsenic poison, it is highly improbable that they would have recovered. The significant fact is that such stories were being circulated among the natives at the time of the measles outbreak.

McBean, in his letter of November 30, 1847, to the officials at Fort Vancouver, repeated what he had learned from the half-breed,
Nicholas Finley, who was the first to carry news of the massacre to Fort Walla Walla. According to Finley, the Indians killed the Whitmans in retaliation, believing that Dr. Whitman was poisoning them in order to get their property. Furthermore, Finley claimed that Andrew Rodgers had told the Indians that he had overheard Whitman and Spalding plotting to poison them. Finley claimed that Rodgers had been induced to tell what he had heard by being promised immunity by the Cayuses. Of this McBean wrote: “It was reported that it was not their intention to kill Mr. Rodgers, in consequence of an avowal to the following effect, which he is said to have made and which nothing but a desire to save his life could have prompted him to do. He said ‘I was one evening lying down, and I overheard the Doctor telling Mr. Spalding that it was best you all should be poisoned at once, but that the latter told him it was best to continue slowly and cautiously, and between this and spring not a soul would remain, when they would take possession of your lands, cattle, and horses.’ Since Rodgers had been killed in spite of the supposed immunity promised him, some explanation of this had to be made, so, according to Finley’s report to McBean, it was claimed that: “One of the murderers, not having been made acquainted with the above understanding, shot Mr. Rodgers.”

McMean refused to believe such an incredible story. In his report to Fort Vancouver, he wrote: “These are only Indian reports, and no person can believe the Doctor capable of such an action without being as ignorant and brutal as the Indians themselves.”

A variation of this story is found in a statement made by a Cayuse Indian to William Craig who, in turn on July 11, 1848, relayed the account to Father Brouillet. Now instead of Andrew Rodgers being the eavesdropper, it was the half-breed Joe Lewis who, strange to say, claimed to have been lying half-asleep on a settee in the Whitmans’ private living room. The Cayuse Indian reported: “Joseph Lewis said that Dr. Whitman and Mr. Spalding had been writing for two years to their friends in the east, where Joseph Lewis lived, to send them poison to kill off the Cayuses and Nez Perces; that they had sent them some that was not good, and they wrote for more that would kill them off quick, and that the medicine had come this summer. Joseph Lewis said he was lying on the settee in Dr. Whitman’s room, and he heard a conversation between Dr. Whitman, Mrs. Whitman, and Mr. Spalding,
in which Mr. Spalding asked the Doctor why he did not kill the Indians off faster. ‘Oh,’ said the Doctor, ‘they are dying fast enough; the young men will die off this winter, and the old ones next spring...’ One of them said, ‘That man will hear us,’ alluding to Joseph Lewis. ‘Oh no,’ said another, ‘he cannot hear; he is sleeping sound.’ They talked rather low, but Joseph Lewis said he could hear all that passed. This Indian messenger stated that Joseph Lewis had made this statement in a council of the Cayuses on the Saturday night previous to the murder, and... [he] told the Cayuses in the council that unless they [the Indians] killed Dr. Whitman and Mr. Spalding quick they would all die.”

Spalding, in a letter to Narcissa’s parents dated April 6, 1848, claimed that plans for the massacre were made in Finley’s lodge several days before the killings began. Since Joe Lewis lived with Finley, he was, therefore, a party to the conspiracy and no doubt inflamed the anger of the Cayuses at that time with his lies about what he claimed to have overheard in the Whitmans’ living room. Josiah Osborn, in his account of the massacre dated April 7, 1848, wrote regarding Lewis: “One day he was at work for an Indian named Tamsicky, harrowing in wheat and told him that the Doctor and Mrs. Whitman were scattering poison into the air, and would kill them all off... He then proposed that if they would agree to it, he would help them kill the Doctor and his wife, and all the Americans in their country.”

Of all who took part in the massacre, there was no one more active in precipitating the murders than this half-breed with the twisted soul who harbored a deep grudge against Americans in general and the Whitmans in particular. Why was Lewis so eager for revenge? Possibly because Whitman had tried to get rid of him shortly after he had arrived at Waiilatpu. Taking advantage of the accumulated grievances of the Cayuses against the white people, Lewis whipped their anger to the explosive point when they finally decided to kill their benefactors. Several of the contemporary accounts of the massacre by survivors accuse Lewis of playing a leading role in the tragedy. He was the chief villain.

**DR. WHITMAN, A WHITE TE-WAT**

Another contributory cause of the massacre was the Indians’ superstitious faith in the magic power of their medicine men or *te-wats* and the right of the relatives of a deceased person to kill the *te-wat* who had
treated the patient. In a letter to Dr. W. F. Tolmie, who had served as physician at Fort Vancouver for a number of years, Archibald McKinlay claimed that the Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians were the most superstitious of any of the Oregon tribes. Regarding the custom of killing unsuccessful te-wats, McKinlay wrote: “They shot seven of their own medicine men by the fort during my five years’ stay there, and probably over three times that number altogether.”

Both Marcus and Narcissa were aware of this practice, and realized the danger when ministering to sick natives [Letter 41]. At times Dr. Whitman refrained from prescribing treatment when he felt that the patient was near death and that he would be blamed if the person died.

As the natives ascribed supernatural powers to their te-wats, they believed that Whitman, as a white te-wat, also had the ability to cast a magic spell which could cause death. This is illustrated in an incident that took place at The Dalles in September 1847, which was, to the Indians, full proof of such a power. Whitman passing there on his return from the Willamette Valley, had occasion to confront some Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians who had been involved in an altercation with some immigrants which resulted in the death of a man by the name of Shepard. Whitman refused to shake hands with an Indian who had taken part in the killing of the white man. It so happened that this young man choked that night on a piece of dried buffalo meat and died. As a result, many of the Indians believed that the doctor had cast a spell which had caused his death, and was, therefore, more to be feared than any native te-wat. Mrs. Whitman gave a feast for the Cayuses in an effort to regain their confidence, but the incident was remembered.

The Conspirators Identified

The Whitman massacre did not come as the result of the premeditated approval of the leaders of the Cayuse tribe. Perrin Whitman declared in 1897: “Not one-third of them knew a thing about it.” Although some members of bands of Young Chief, Five Crows, and Stick-us, who lived along the Umatilla River, seem to have known what had been planned, there is no evidence that any from these bands were involved. Father Brouillet probably assessed the situation correctly when he wrote: “It was in Tilokaikt’s camp, and by his Indians only, that the Doctor had been killed; then, the Indians of that camp only could be
called murderers, and even but a small portion of them, since twelve or thirteen only have been designated as guilty.”

Positive identification of the murderers is difficult because their Indian names were spelled in different ways. Some of the Cayuses had been given white people’s names. Narcissa, for instance, bestowed the names of members of her family and of friends on several of the young people of the tribe who were among the first to attend classes conducted for their benefit. Some of the adult Cayuses were also known by nicknames such as “Feathercap.” Thus it was not unusual for the same person to be known by three or more different names. Before turning to the story of the massacre, it is well to have the culprits identified.

Although we have nineteen eye-witness accounts of the massacre and the subsequent captivity, little help can be gained from such writings in the way of identifying those guilty of participating in the killings. The immigrants had not been at Waiilatpu long enough to get to know many of the Indians by name. Of all the survivors, not counting the half-breeds, only ten-year-old Eliza Spalding knew the native language, and she did not write her reminiscences until her old age. Those of the two older Sager girls, also written in their old age, are helpful.

Our most important source of information as to the identity of the culprits is to be found in two letters written by William McBean, who had taken over the management of Fort Walla Walla following the retirement of Archibald McKinlay in February 1846. Since he was well acquainted with the principal men of the various bands of the Indians living in the vicinity of the fort, there was no one better qualified than he to get accurate information regarding the identity of the guilty.

McBean, in his letter of November 30, 1847, to the Company’s officials at Fort Vancouver, gave the names of six Cayuses as being the ringleaders in “the horrible butchery.” More than a year later, on January 6, 1850, McBean in a letter addressed to Joseph Lane, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Oregon, gave the names of fourteen whom he thought guilty. This list included four whom he had mentioned in his first letter. Several listed in the second letter were either innocent or had no evidence brought against them. Further identification of the guilty is to be found in the records of the District Court of Oregon which met in Oregon City in May 1850 and which condemned five to be hanged.
Because of the great variation in spelling and the difficulty in keeping unfamiliar Indian names in mind, the following listing has been compiled which gives the variant spellings in the following order: (a) that used in the text of this work, not including quotations; (b) that given by McBean; (c) that found in the court records, here given in italics; and (d) other variants found in the writings of the Whitmans or of the survivors. For the sake of comparison and simplification, the longer Indian names are hyphenated. A few references to sources will be indicated.

1. (a) Tiloukaikt; (b) Teloquoit; (c) Teloquoit; (d) Tilkanaiks [Letter 100].
2. (a) Tomahas; (b) Tomah Hash; (c) Tamahas; (d) Tau-mau-lish, To-ma-kus.
3. (a) Clokamas; (b) Tlocoomots; (c) Clokomas; (d) Klakamas, Klokamas.
4. (a) Ish-ish-kais-kais or Frank Escaloom, a brother of Tomahas; (b) Tsy-ah-yas-tstah-kess; (c) Isia-ashe-luckas; (d) Sia-sa-luchus, Tsai-ash-alkis, Isaia-holo-kus, Ish-hol-hol, Isaklome or Wet Wolf. (Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 104, identifies Frank Escaloom with Tintinmitse.)
5. (a) Kia-ma-sump-kin; (b) Ky-ah-mah-shum-kain; (c) Kaim-asum-kin; (d) Qui-ah-may-sun, Quia-ma-shou-skin. Also called Panther’s Coat, or Left Hand.
6. (a) Tamsucky or Feathercap; (b) Tomsucky; (d) Tum-suc-kie. Possibly Sakiah or Wap-task-tak-mahl. See fn. 31, Chapter Eleven, and fn. 7, Chapter Seventeen.
7. (a) Wai-e-cat; (b) “Tomsucky’s Son.”
8. (b) E-you-e-ah-nish, possibly Edward, son of Tiloukaikt, or Shu-ma-hici or Painted Shirt, also called son of Tiloukaikt.

The names of six others whom McBean gave in his letter of January 6, 1850, were not linked with the death of any one person, and, therefore, are not given in the above list. McBean failed to mention the two sons of Tiloukaikt, Edward and Clark, who are known to have helped kill two sick men, unless he gave their Indian names which remain unidentified.
McBean did not mention the chief villain, Joe Lewis, who, as will be stated, had fled long before McBean wrote this second letter.

**Serving Oregon Through Death**

When Spalding and his daughter arrived at Waiilatpu on Monday, November 22, just a week before the massacre began, they found that the school which Eliza was to attend had been temporarily closed because so many of the children were ill with measles. Spalding had taken with him a pack train of seventeen animals loaded with grain to supplement Whitman’s diminishing store. These animals, under the care of a Mr. Jackson, then in Spalding’s employ, were sent back to Lapwai on the morning of the ill-fated day, November 29.

Spalding has given the following description of conditions he found at Waiilatpu at the time of his arrival on the 22nd: “All the doctor’s family had been sick, but were recovering; three of the children were yet dangerously sick... Mrs. Osborn and three children were dangerously ill; one of their children died during the [following] week. A young man, Mr. Bewley, was also very sick. The doctor’s hands were more than full among the Indians; three and sometimes five died in a day. Dear sister Whitman seemed ready to sink under the immense weight of labor and care. But like an angel of mercy, she continued to administer with her ever-ready hand to the wants of all. Late and early, night and day, she was by the bed of the sick, the dying, and the afflicted.”

On Thursday, November 25, Spalding and Rodgers rode to Yellow Serpent’s lodge near Fort Walla Walla, where they spent the night. Although this chief had rather reluctantly granted the Catholic priests permission to establish Saint Rose Mission in his territory, yet he remained friendly with the Protestants. While in the chief’s lodge, a Nez Perce entered and asked: “Is Dr. Whitman killed?” as though he were expecting an affirmative answer. The incident troubled Spalding, as it seemed to indicate that some of the Indians were planning to kill the doctor. On Friday Spalding and Rodgers rode to Fort Walla Walla, where they dined with Bishop Blanchet and some of his clergy. Of this Spalding wrote: “They asked and I cheerfully agreed to furnish them all needed supplies from my station.” In this respect, Spalding showed a more tolerant spirit than Whitman had exhibited. At this meeting Spalding argued with the Catholic missionaries over their views regarding the theory of
transubstantiation which claimed that the wine and bread in the Mass were changed into the actual blood and body of Christ. Spalding later wrote that he had had “an animated discussion on changing the biscuit into ‘God,'” and claimed that: “I showed them plainly they must be deceivers or cannibals.” Following the massacre, Spalding became obsessed with the idea that the Catholic priests not only knew about the intentions of the Indians to kill the Whitmans but even gave their tacit approval to the crime. Such a calumny must be rejected in toto. Although the endeavors of the Catholics to establish two missions in the vicinity of Waiilatpu were most untimely, the massacre would have occurred even if they had not been in the vicinity.

Whitman Warned of the Impending Tragedy

Whitman received several warnings of the hostile intentions of the Cayuse Indians during the summer and fall of 1847. Among the immigrants who spent the winter of 1846–47 at Waiilatpu was the John Settle family. Whitman had hired Settle to work for him and as a result the Settle family was still at Waiilatpu until the late fall of 1847. According to a statement Settle made, some friendly natives approached him in November of that year and urged him “to induce Dr. Whitman to leave the Mission.” Settle, being convinced that the Indians did intend to kill Dr. Whitman if he remained, “used every argument possible to get him to leave but Dr. Whitman hardly would listen to him and in fact ridiculed his fear.” Settle, convinced that some tragedy was impending, loaded his possessions onto his wagon and with his family and his livestock left Waiilatpu on Friday, November 26, and started for the Willamette Valley. That was only three days before the massacre began.

In trying to understand Whitman’s refusal to act on this warning, we must seek to appreciate his situation. Where could he go? He was responsible for the welfare and even the lives of more than seventy men, women, and children, some of whom were seriously ill. The nearest place of refuge was Fort Walla Walla, but the accommodations there were totally inadequate to receive so many even if McBean had been willing to receive them. Moreover, it would have been impossible for all at Waiilatpu to go to the fort without the knowledge of the natives. How would it have been possible to feed so many if they had moved? These and many other problems were involved in any consideration of leaving Waiilatpu. The idea of
Marcus and Narcissa deserting about seventy people while seeking safety only for themselves was unthinkable.

Some critics have wondered why Whitman did not warn the men on the grounds of a possible attack and so put them on their guard. Such a possibility with its suggestion of armed resistance would have brought new perils which Whitman no doubt realized. If the Indians were determined to kill and met resistance, the inevitable outcome would have been a general massacre of all including women and children. It should be remembered that throughout Whitman’s eleven-year residence at Waiilatpu, he had consistently followed a policy of non-resistance. Although some of the immigrants at Waiilatpu are known to have had firearms, the only guns that Whitman had were one or two rifles and a pistol which had been used to kill animals to be butchered.

A net of circumstances was closing around the Whitmans during the last days of November 1847 from which there seemed to be no escape. Since to flee was impossible and to resist unthinkable, there seemed to be no alternative except to stay and hope and pray for the best.

**The Night Ride to the Umatilla**

Spalding and Rodgers returned to Waiilatpu on Saturday morning, the 27th. When Whitman told the two of the warning Settle had given and of his departure for the Willamette Valley, Spalding in turn related the account of the Indian who had entered Yellow Serpent’s lodge and had asked if the doctor had been killed. All evidence pointed to a plot being hatched by Tiloukaikt and his band. Spalding also passed on the information that Bishop Blanchet, and Fathers Brouillet and LeClaire had left Fort Walla Walla that morning for Young Chief’s house on the Umatilla, where they were to open Saint Anne’s Mission. Sometime that morning, a messenger arrived from Five Crows and Young Chief with a plea for Dr. Whitman to visit their camps and minister to the sick. Since there were so many dangerously ill in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, among the immigrants and in Whitman’s household, it may be doubted if Whitman would have responded to the plea were it not for the fact that a possible solution for the dangerous situation he was facing had entered his mind.

Although Whitman had strongly objected to the coming of the Roman Catholic missionaries to the Walla Walla area, now that they were there, he was considering the possibility of turning over Waiilatpu to
them if this were the wish of the Cayuse chiefs. Such a move might have appeased the hostility to him and have permitted him and his family to withdraw from the field in peace. A comment made by Spalding nearly twenty years later supports such a view. Spalding wrote: “Dr. Whitman twice during the last year [i.e., 1847] called the Cayuses together, and told them that if a majority wished, he would leave the country at once… Dr. Whitman held himself ready to sell the Waiilatpu station to the Catholic mission whenever a majority of the Cayuses might wish it.” 38

Knowing that the Bishop and some of his clergy would be at Young Chief’s house, Whitman decided to respond to the plea from Five Crows and Young Chief. He could then talk over with the Catholic missionaries the possibility of them taking over the Waiilatpu station. The situation at Waiilatpu had become so threatening that Whitman felt no time should be lost, so he made preparations to leave that Saturday evening. Of this Spalding wrote: “The Doctor requested me to accompany him to the Umatilla, leaving dear Sister Whitman… greatly exhausted with her long and incessant watching with the sick, with three of her own and one of Mrs. Osborne’s [children] dangerously ill, to require her constant attention, Mrs. Osborne not yet able to leave her bed…” 39 Narcissa was reluctant to see her husband go. At dusk that Saturday evening, with tears in her eyes, she bade him and Spalding goodbye. It was the last time that Spalding was to see Narcissa, the one whom he had loved in his youth.

Spalding’s account of their night’s ride to the Umatilla is as follows: “The night was dark, and the rain beat furiously upon us. But our intercourse was sweet; we little imagined it would be our last. With feeling of deep emotion we called to mind that eleven years before we had crossed this trail the day before we reached Walla Walla, the end of our seven months journey from New York. We little thought the journey of life was so soon to close. We called to mind the high hopes and thrilling interest which had been awakened in the years that followed; of our successful labors and the constant devotedness of the Indians to improvement… But the principal topic of conversation that dark night was the danger that threatened from another source… We felt that the present sickness among the Indians afforded the Catholics a favorable opportunity to excite them to drive us from the country…” 40

According to Spalding, as the two rode through the darkness and the lashing rain, Whitman said: “…that unless the Indians requested
us to leave, his [Whitman’s] days were few—or words to that effect but consoled himself by saying, ‘If I am to fall, through the machinations of Papists, my death may do as much good to Oregon, as my life can.’” 41 The reference to the Roman Catholics must be viewed in the light of Spalding’s later bitter anti-Catholic attitude. As a doctor, Whitman was fully aware of the danger that he faced in ministering to the sick as a white te-wat. Yet, what did he mean by saying that he believed his death would do as much good for Oregon as could be accomplished by living? Was he not thinking of the political future of Oregon? Ever since Jason Lee’s visit to Waiilatpu in 1838, Whitman had been increasingly eager for the United States to extend its jurisdiction over Oregon as a territory. The draft of the bill which he had submitted for Congressional consideration in the fall of 1843 and the memorial of October 16, 1847, embodied his recommendations for government protection of Oregon emigrants and for the establishment of an orderly government in the Northwest territory. Even though the boundary question had been settled in 1846, only a weak Provisional Government had been established whose influences hardly extended beyond the confines of the Willamette Valley.

Marcus could have heartily endorsed what Narcissa had written to her father on April 10, 1846: “To be in a country among a people of no law, even if they are from a civilized land, is the nearest like a hell on earth of anything I can imagine.” Although she was referring to some difficulties with lawless white settlers in the Willamette Valley, her sentiments were especially apropos for those living among the Indians in the interior of Oregon. Literally, the Whitmans and all other white people who were living in the upper Columbia River country in the fall of 1847 were in a land without law, subject to the passions and undisciplined conduct of the natives. Elijah White’s efforts to introduce a code of laws in 1843 had ended in failure. How logical for Whitman, when facing the possibility of being killed, to believe that should this happen, the news of his death would reverberate across the nation and move a lethargic Congress to act. Then an official Territorial Government would replace the weak Provisional Government for the benefit of Indians and settlers alike. If such was Whitman’s reasoning, then what he said to Spalding is understandable: “I believe my death will do as much for Oregon as my life can.”
WARNING FROM STICKUS

Whitman and Spalding headed for the lodge of Stickus which evidently was located on the north bank of the Umatilla River near present-day Thornhollow, Oregon. Although Stickus never joined the Mission church, perhaps there was no one among the Cayuses more deserving to be included than he. Catherine Sager stated: “When the Whitman mission was established, he soon became an earnest listener and was really converted to the Christian faith. All his life thereafter he lived as a consistent Christian.” As has been stated, it was Stickus who, at Whitman’s request, guided the 1843 emigration over the Blue Mountains. There was no member of the Cayuse tribe, not excepting Five Crows, who was more friendly to the whites in general and the missionaries in particular than Stickus. How natural it was, therefore, for Whitman and Spalding to seek the hospitality of this chief after their long night ride from Waiilatpu through wind and rain.

Spalding wrote: “We arrived at the lodge of Stickus thoroughly wet. In coming down the hill to the lodge, my horse fell and rolled partly over me, causing severe pains in my head and one leg during the night and next day. We spread our blankets by a good fire in the lodge and lay by it until morning.” On Sunday morning, Stickus conducted his family devotions after which “a good breakfast of potatoes, squash, fresh beef, and wheat bread of his wife’s make” was served to his two guests. Spalding commented later on how gratifying it was for them to note the advancement the Cayuses had made by comparing “their present abundance of comfortable living… [with] their wretchedness and starvation when we came among them, eleven years before.”

Stickus later testified at the trial of the five accused murderers held in Oregon City in May 1850 that Whitman “was at his lodge on the Umatilla the day before his death, that during the visit… he told him that the Indians about the Mission were talking bad about him… & that he said Whitman was in danger.” Stickus warned Whitman especially about the evil intentions of Joe Lewis and reported that Tamsucky had said that “they were going to kill” him. This warning from Stickus, following that so shortly before given by Settle, gave Whitman added reason for consulting with Bishop Blanchet about the advisability of asking the Cayuses to decide whom they wanted to be their missionaries, the Protestants or the Roman Catholics.
After breakfast with Stickus, Whitman left to visit the sick in the camps of Five Crows and Young Chief on the south bank of the Umatilla River. Sometime during the day he returned to the north band and called on the Bishop and his two priests at their newly established Saint Anne Mission in Young Chief’s house. Of this Father Brouillet wrote: “...we were visited by Dr. Whitman, who remained but a few minutes at the house, and appeared to be much agitated. Being invited to dine, he refused, saying that he feared it would be too late, as he had 25 miles to go, and wished to reach home before night. On parting, he entreated me not to fail to visit him when I would pass by his mission, which I very cordially promised to do.” Although Brouillet gave no details as to what was discussed, his comments support the theory that Whitman had become so alarmed over what Stickus had said that he felt it imperative to return to Waiilatpu that night. The eagerness with which Whitman urged one of the priests to visit him early during the next week indicates that Whitman was ready to withdraw from Waiilatpu should this be the wish of the majority of the chiefs.

Spalding’s account of Whitman’s meeting with the Catholics confirms this interpretation. He wrote: “About four, the Doctor returned, much fatigued, but said the sickness in his family made it necessary to return. Said he had taken tea with the Bishop and two of his priests... Said he had invited them to come and see him, which they had promised to do in a short time. The Doctor was much pleased with the idea, hoping that we might come to some understanding and bring it before the Indians to say who should be their missionaries.”

As Whitman mounted his horse for his lonely ride back to Waiilatpu, Stickus again told him “to be careful for the bad Indians would kill him.” In giving this warning, Stickus was risking the possibility of incurring the anger of those of his tribe who were planning the evil deed. Whitman thanked the chief for his warning. Since Spalding was still suffering from his fall, he was unable to return with Whitman. Years later Spalding wrote: “My dear brother bade me good evening and left about sundown, though greatly in need of sleep and rest. My eyes saw him for the last time as he passed at good speed over the hill in the distance...” Their fellowship as co-workers in the Oregon Mission of the American Board, which had begun at Howard, New York, in February 1836, had come to an end.

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Since the rain had ceased, Whitman made better time on his return trip than he and Spalding had made going the opposite way during the previous night. He returned to his home about ten o’clock Sunday evening. Narcissa, exhausted with her many cares, had gone to bed, leaving John and Francis Sager to watch over the sick, two of whom, Helen Mar Meek and Louise Sager, were dangerously ill. Catherine Sager, also down with the measles, was sleeping on a settee in the living room. Years later she recalled with vividness the events of that night and the following days.

After the doctor had greeted his wife, he sent the two Sager boys to bed, saying that he would take care of the sick during the remainder of the night. One by one, Whitman examined each patient. “When he came to Helen Meek,” wrote Catherine, “he thought her dying; he sat by her and watched her for some time, but she finally revived... I could see that Father [i.e., her foster father] was much troubled about something and I supposed it was about the sick children.” After making the rounds, Marcus called Narcissa. She arose and the two sat by the stove in the living room, where they talked in low tones. Catherine wrote: “He related to her what Stickus had told him that day; also that he had learned that the Indians were holding councils every night.” After a long talk, Marcus told Narcissa to return to her bed. He promised to call her if he saw any change for the worse in any of the children.

After blowing out the candle, Marcus sat down at the end of the settee on which Catherine lay. “He was apparently deep in thought,” she later wrote, “and his manner and portions of their conversation which I had heard kept me awake. Father observed my wakefulness and seemed to understand the reason. He soothed me with kind words until I finally fell asleep and slept until morning.”

November 29 dawned cold and foggy. Catherine noted that her father, although “more serious than usual,” kept his emotions under control. “We saw nothing of Mother,” wrote Catherine. “She did not come out for breakfast. Elizabeth took some food on a plate and a cup of coffee and carried it to her. She was sitting with her face buried in her handkerchief, sobbing bitterly. Taking the food she motioned the child to leave. The food was there, untouched, the next morning.” 47
Mrs. Saunders, in her account of those tragic days, reported that three children of Tiloukaikt’s lodge had died of the measles during the night. It may be that one or more of these were his children. Whitman was notified and offered to conduct a burial service. While waiting for the bodies to arrive, Whitman talked with Rodgers about the warning Stickus had given. According to Catherine, after discussing “the trouble that seemed to be brewing; the discontent of the Indians; the Catholics coming in so quickly, and the insinuations of Joe Lewis,” the two considered what could be done to improve relations with the natives. Catherine remembered Dr. Whitman as saying: “If things do not clear up by spring, I will make arrangements to move my family to the [Willamette] Valley.”

Whitman decided to ask the half-breed, Nicholas Finley, who lived with his Cayuse wife in a lodge about one hundred yards from the Whitman home, what he knew about any supposed plot. Finley was sent for and when he arrived, Whitman asked him: “I understand the Indians are to kill me and Mr. Spalding. Do you know anything about it?” Although Finley was fully aware of what was to happen, since the conspirators had met in his lodge when they agreed on their course of action, he brazenly professed ignorance by replying: “I should know doctor; you have nothing to fear; there is no danger.”

In addition to Whitman and Rodgers, ten adult white men, including Joseph Stanfield, were on the premises. Both Bewley and Sales were confined to their beds because of illness. There were also the two Sager boys, John and Francis. All were busy with their appointed tasks. Saunders, the schoolteacher, reopened his school that Monday morning after an interlude of about a week caused by the illness of so many of his pupils. Gilliland, the tailor, was at work on a suit of clothes for Dr. Whitman. He preferred to sit cross-legged on top of a table while plying his needle. Osborn was laying a floor in the former Indian room then being occupied by himself and his family; Hall was busy building an extension to the east end of the stem of the T-shaped mission building. Marsh was grinding wheat at the mill. Stanfield and Francis Sager had been sent to the range to select an animal to be butchered. The animal was shot by Francis and the carcass hung up at a spot between the mill and the blacksmith shop. Hoffman, Kimball, and Canfield were given the task of butchering it.
The bodies of the three Indian children who had died during the previous night arrived at the mission about 11:00 a.m. By this time Narcissa had arisen and without eating her breakfast began to minister to the needs of the sick. Whitman accompanied the dead to the cemetery for burial and was surprised to note that only a few Indians were present, when usually there would be many for such an occasion. He mentioned this to Narcissa on his return and remarked that he thought the butchering of the beef had kept them away. After his return from the cemetery, Narcissa told Marcus that Lorinda Bewley, who was confined to her bed in an upstairs room over the Whitman’s parlor, needed his attention. After seeing her, Catherine remembered the doctor saying to his wife: “Poor Lorinda is in trouble and does not know the cause. I found her weeping, and she said that there was a presentiment of evil on her mind that she could not overcome.”

The Massacre

Nineteen who survived the massacre and the month’s captivity which followed have given us their reminiscences [Appendix 5]. Some were written within a few days of the events described, and others many years later. In addition several people, including Spalding, Brouillet, and McBean, who were not at Waiilatpu at the time of the tragedy but who were involved in contemporary events, have given us their stories. Often these various accounts contradict each other in certain minor details. A conscientious effort has been made to weave these various accounts together to make a single credible narrative.

After the noonday meal on Monday, November 29, 1847, the men returned to their respective tasks and the children went back to school. John Sager went to the kitchen where he continued winding a skein of brown twine preparatory to making a broom. Mary Ann Bridger was in the kitchen washing the noonday dishes. Mrs. Osborn, who had been confined to her bed in the Indian room for about three weeks, ventured to get up and get dressed. She was very weak. She walked into the living room where she saw Dr. Whitman reading and Mrs. Whitman bathing the two older Sager girls. A tub of water had been placed on the floor in the room. Catherine had just been bathed and was dressing; Elizabeth was still in the tub.
The tragic events began when Narcissa went into the kitchen to get milk for some of the sick children. She found the room full of boisterous Indians whose manner alarmed her. One demanded the milk she was carrying. According to Catherine’s account: “She told him to wait until she could give her baby some. He followed her to the door of the sitting room and tried to force his way in, but she shut the door in his face and bolted it.”

**Marcus Whitman, Mortally Wounded**

As soon as Narcissa was able to fasten the door, an Indian began pounding on it, calling for the doctor and asking for medicine. Dr. Whitman, laying aside his book, arose and answered the knock. As he unbolted the door, an Indian tried to force his way in, but the doctor succeeded in keeping him out. The Indian demanded medicine, which the doctor promised to get. Whitman closed and locked the door; went to the medicine cabinet located in a closet under the stairway, and got what was needed. As he returned to the kitchen door, he advised Narcissa to lock it after him. It was then about two o’clock in the afternoon.

Catherine tells what then happened: “We could hear loud and angry voices in the kitchen and occasionally Father’s soft, mild voice in reply... Suddenly there was a sharp explosion—a rifle shot—in the kitchen, and we all jumped in fright for the outside door.” Narcissa’s first impulse was to rush into the kitchen to see what had happened, but she quickly controlled herself. Her immediate concern was for the safety of those with her. She called back those who were starting to go out-of-doors. She began dressing Elizabeth who had leaped out of the tub. Turning to Mrs. Osborn, she told her to go to her room and lock the outside door. Mrs. Osborn called her husband to do this. He, not having a hammer handy, used a flatiron to drive a nail over the latch.

Suddenly Mary Ann Bridger, who was the only eyewitness to the attack on Dr. Whitman and John Sager, burst into the living room through the west door. She had fled out of the north door of the kitchen and around the north end of the building. At first the child was so incoherent with fright that she could not speak. Narcissa grabbed her and asked: “Did they kill the doctor?” Mary Ann finally stammered: “Yes.” Catherine recalled that Narcissa cried over and over: “My husband is killed and I am left a widow!”
Soon Mary Ann was able to tell what she had seen. She told that the Indians had crowded into the kitchen, including Tiloukaikt and Tomahas, the latter being the one who had demanded the medicine. When Whitman entered the room, he sat down at a table facing Tiloukaikt. According to Spalding’s account, who drew upon the child’s recollections: “While... [Tiloukaikt] engrossed the doctor’s attention, Tomahas stepped behind him, drew a pipe tomahawk from under his blanket, and struck the doctor’s head. He fell partly forward. A second blow on the back of the head brought him to the floor.” Catherine added more details: “Tiloukaikt chopped the doctor’s face so badly that his features could not be recognized.” An Indian shot the doctor in the neck, causing profuse bleeding. This was the shot which those in the living room heard. Although fatally wounded, Whitman remained alive for several hours, most of the time unconscious.

As soon as John Sager became aware of the attack on Dr. Whitman, he grabbed a pistol, which might have been the gun he had used to kill the beef then being butchered, and shot twice, wounding two of the Indians. John was then shot by Tamsucky. He received a severe wound in the neck which began to bleed profusely. He had enough consciousness to stuff a part of the scarf he was wearing into the wound to staunch the flow of blood. A sudden commotion outside caused the Indians in the kitchen to rush pell-mell through the south kitchen door to join in the killings taking place there. They left Marcus Whitman and John Sager, both mortally wounded, lying on the floor.

**The Attack Out-of-Doors**

Following the noon meal on that fateful Monday, Judge Saunders had reassembled his pupils in the schoolroom. The number was smaller than usual because so many of the children were ill. The sudden shooting and the tumult outside naturally brought all activities in the schoolroom to a sudden halt. The half-breed boy, John D. Manson, who was thirteen years old at the time, in his recollections of that tragic day, wrote: “While out at school recess, we saw eighteen or twenty Indians standing around the Mission Premises and they were watching three men dressing a beef. They were clothed with blankets strapped around their waists with belts. When Mr. Saunders, our teacher, rang the bell, we went back to the school room. Very soon a number of shots were fired and Mr. Saunders
looked out and saw Mr. Kimball running to the Doctor’s house. His arm was hanging limp and bleeding. Mr. Saunders crossed the room and said, ‘I must go to my family’... We boys went to the window and saw that the Indians had dropped their blankets and were running about with their weapons in their hands, shooting and shouting.”

Pandemonium reigned. It is impossible to give an accurate chronological account of what took place, for the eyewitness accounts differ. Perhaps the first to be killed was Marsh who was operating the gristmill. His death was probably instantaneous as none of the survivors listed him as being among the wounded.

Another killed during the first few minutes of the attack was Hoffman, who was the only one of the victims who was able to offer any effective resistance. Catherine wrote: “Mr. Hoffman was butchering beef and fought manfully with an ax and was seen keeping several Indians at bay. He felled several with powerful blows from his ax, and split one of his assailant’s feet before he was finally overpowered. They disemboweled him.” No doubt this mutilation was the result of the angry resentment of those whom he had wounded. There is no evidence that the Indians scalped any of their victims.

Catherine Sager, who was standing with Narcissa looking through the upper part of the east door of the living room, which was a window, saw the Indians attack Saunders. Of this she wrote: “Mr. Saunders had commenced school at one o’clock. Hearing the explosion [i.e., the rifle shots] in the kitchen, he ran down to see what caused it. Mother saw him just as he got to the door. She motioned to him to go back. He ran back, and had just got to the stairway [consisting of two or three steps] leading up to the school, when an Indian seized him, but being an active man, the Indian could not master him. I watched the struggle from the window. Sometimes the savage would throw him, but he would bound to his feet again, never losing his hold of the first one. I looked till my heart sickened at the sight. Mr. Saunders wrestling for life with those ruthless murderers, and they with their butcher knives trying to cut his throat. He got loose from them and had got almost to his door... before he was overpowered. His body was pierced with several balls when he fell. They beat his head till it was mashed to pieces.”

Elizabeth Sager testified at the Oregon City trial, held in May 1850, that she saw Ish-ish-kais-kais shoot Saunders. Osborn in his
testimony given at the same trial said that Tomahas was one of those who took part in the attack. Mrs. Hall, who was watching the horrifying events from a window in the emigrant house, thought that the Indians were attacking Dr. Whitman, and so testified at the trial. She then claimed that Tiloukaikt was one of the assailants. Both Catherine and Elizabeth Sager, however, claimed that Mrs. Hall was mistaken, as Dr. Whitman was never able to leave the kitchen after being struck down. Matilda Sager remembered that after the Indians had killed Saunders, they cut off his head. 55

Among those who witnessed the attack of the Indians on the three men who were butchering the beef and on the schoolteacher was twelve-year-old Nathan Kimball, Jr. After more than fifty years, Nathan was able to recall with vividness the events of those days. Regarding the mutilation of the bodies of the victims, he wrote: “The bodies, or pieces of them, lay scattered all around, an arm here and a leg there. Some of the men had their breasts torn open and their hearts taken out. I saw two Indians each with a stick and a human heart stuck upon it, which they showed to the women, and told them that they belonged to their husbands, and that they were going to eat them. I don’t think they did but I don’t know.” 56

Three men, Gilliland, Kimball, and Rodgers, after being seriously wounded managed to find temporary refuge in one of the mission buildings. Gilliland, according to Catherine’s account, “was sitting upon his table sewing, (when) an Indian stepped in, and shot him with a pistol.” 57 Mrs. Saunders, who was in a room of the emigrant house next to that occupied by Gilliland, ran to see what had happened after hearing the gunshot. The Indian later identified as Ish-ish-kais-kais, pointed his pistol at Mrs. Saunders. 58 She turned and fled to her room. Gilliland soon followed. In terror, Mrs. Saunders closed the door, shutting out Gilliland, as she thought he was an Indian. Finally, hearing him call: “Let me in, let me in,” she opened the door and admitted him. Catherine wrote: “He ran and hid under the bed but soon came out saying, ‘It’s no use to hide.’ He lay down on the bed and died quietly about midnight.”

Nathan Kimball, Jr., saw an Indian shooting at his father who was trying to escape. The father had been shot in the arm and the son remembered: “My father had on a white shirt, and I could see that his arm
was broken at the elbow, for it was red with blood.” 59 The father ran around the south end of the mission house and entered the living room through the west door. Elizabeth Sager remembered that when he burst into the room, holding his bleeding arm he cried out: “The Indians are killing us—I don’t know what the damned Indians want to kill me for—I never did anything to them. Get me some water.” 60 Since Kimball was a religious man and never swore, the expression “damned Indians” seemed so incongruous to the little girl that she began to giggle. She fully expected Mrs. Whitman to rebuke him “for swearing in the presence of children,” but to her surprise nothing was said. Instead, her foster mother hastily got water and began washing the wounded arm.

Rodgers was at the river getting a pail of water when the shooting began. Hidden by the fringe of willows which grew on the banks, he could have escaped detection and fled to Fort Walla Walla for protection. Instead, he rushed back to the mission house. Catherine tells us: “Mother, while ministering to the wounded, went here and there looking out to see what was going on. She had missed Mr. Rodgers from his room and was anxiously watching to see if she could see anything of him. At last she saw him running desperately toward the house, several savages, their knives and tomahawks glinting in the sun, close at his heels. She dashed to the door to open it, but not before he had broken the window with his hand as he sprang against it. As soon as the door closed upon him, the Indians raised a deafening yell and went to find new victims. He was shot through the wrist and tomahawked behind the ear.” 61

TERROR IN-DOORS

Narcissa’s immediate concern, after hearing the commotion in the kitchen, was the fate of her husband. After the Indians there had rushed out-of-doors and silence had come to the kitchen, Narcissa ventured to enter. To her horror, she found Marcus lying half-conscious on the floor with his head in a pool of blood. Just at that time, three of the women who were living in the emigrant house—Mrs. Hays, Mrs. Hall, and Mrs. Saunders—burst in through the north kitchen door. With their help, Narcissa half carried and half dragged Marcus into the living room and placed him on a settee. Of the scene that followed, Catherine wrote: “She fastened the door and placed a pillow under his head, and kneeling over him tried to stop the blood that was flowing from a wound
in his neck.” Narcissa took a towel and some wood ashes from the stove and with these tried to stop the bleeding. She asked him if he knew her. He replied: “Yes,” “Are you badly hurt?” “Yes.” “Can I do anything to stop this blood?” “No.” “Can you speak with me?” “N-no.” “Is your mind at peace?” “Yes.” He spoke only in monosyllables. Again and again, Narcissa cried out: “That Joe! That Joe! He has done it all. I am a widow!” When Rodgers burst into the room so suddenly, he at once saw the doctor lying on the settee and asked if he were dead. Whitman heard the question and answered with a weak “No.” This was the last word he spoke; he then lapsed into unconsciousness.

Several times during those terrifying minutes following the first shootings, Joe Lewis came to the door of the living room and tried to enter. Catherine wrote: “He had a gun in his hand and when Mother would ask, ‘What do you want, Joe?’, he would instantly leave.” Soon after Rodgers had entered the room, Narcissa went again to the east door to look out through its window. It was then that Ish-ish-kais-kais (Frank Escaloom), who was standing on the steps leading into the schoolroom, raised his gun and shot her. Catherine wrote: “Mother was standing looking out at the window when a ball came through the broken pane, entering her right shoulder. She clapped her hand to the wound saying, ‘Oh! Oh!’ and fell backwards. She now forgot everything but the poor, helpless children depending on her, and she poured out her soul in prayer for them, ‘Lord save these little ones!’ was her repeated cry.” Catherine also recalled how Narcissa prayed for her parents, saying: “This will kill my poor mother.”

Catherine’s account of what then happened follows: “The women began now to go upstairs; and Mr. Rogers, too much excited to speak, pushed us upstairs. I said, ‘Who will take care of the sick children?’ Let me take them up, too; don’t leave them here alone.” Catherine was thinking of her two sisters, Louise and Henrietta, and Helen Mar Meek, who were probably in beds in the Whitman bedroom. From this time onward, Catherine assumed a responsibility far beyond her years and became a real heroine of those tragic hours. The sick children were carried to the attic room. Altogether thirteen frightened people sought the doubtful safety of the upstairs room. These included two wounded men, Kimball and Rodgers; five women, including Lorinda Bewley who was in her sick bed; and the four Sager and the two half-breed girls.
In the meantime, Osborn, remembering that the floor boards of the Indian room in which he and his family were living, had not been nailed down, lifted several and hastily got his wife, their three children, and himself under the floor. A three-foot space gave them plenty of room to hide. “We lay there listening to the firing,” Osborn wrote in a letter dated April 7, 1848, “—the screams of women and children the groans of the dying—not knowing when our turn would come. We were, however, not discovered.”

Years later, Nancy Osborn, who was only nine years old at the time, had the following to tell: “In a few minutes our room was full of Indians, talking and laughing as if it were a holiday. The only noise we made was my brother, Alexander, two years old. When the Indians came into the room and were directly over our heads, he said: ‘Mother, the Indians are taking all of our things.’ Hastily she clapped her hands over his mouth and whispered he must be still.”

EXPERIENCES OF THE SCHOOL CHILDREN

As soon as the school children realized what was happening out-of-doors, they quickly shut and locked the door. Francis (also called Frank) Sager suggested that they climb up into a loft which had been built over part of the room for use as a bedroom. Since there was no stairway to the room, nor was a ladder then available, the children moved a table under the door of the loft and piled some books on it. One of the older boys then climbed up and helped the girls to enter. Among them was Matilda Sager, who, many years later, wrote: “Frank told us all to ask God to save us and I can see him now,... as he kneeled and prayed for God to spare us.”

Just how long the children remained hidden in the loft is not known, but sometime early in the afternoon Joe Stanfield came calling for the two Manson boys and David Malin. These came down from the loft and were then taken by Stanfield to Finley’s lodge which was located to the north of the main mission house. Stanfield assured the boys that since they were part Indian, they would not be harmed. The next day Finley took the three boys to Fort Walla Walla where they were given into the custody of William McBean.

Soon after Stanfield had taken the three half-breed boys to Finley’s lodge, Joe Lewis entered the schoolroom looking for Francis Sager in particular. For some reason Joe had a special grudge against Francis
and was bent on revenge. After discovering that Francis and the other children were in the loft, Joe demanded that all come down at once. They were then taken out into the yard and lined up to be shot. After the departure of the Manson boys, only Eliza Spalding could understand what was being said by the Indians. She remembered that some of the Indians were opposed to killing the children. Convinced that they would be killed, frightened Eliza covered her face with her apron “so that she would not see them shoot her.” 68

Catherine wrote: “There they stood in a long row, their murderers leaning on their guns, waiting for the word from the chief (possibly Tiloukaikt) to send them into eternity. Pity, however, moved the heart of the chief for, after observing their terror, he said: ‘Let us not kill them.’”

The children were then taken into the Indian room. As they passed through the kitchen Francis saw his brother lying mortally wounded on the floor. He leaned over and by some sudden impulse pulled at the scarf which John had stuffed into the wound in his throat. This was the wrong thing to do, as it opened the wound and the blood began to pour out. John tried to speak but could not. He died soon afterwards.

Francis sobbed and said: “I will follow him.” Some of the Indians taunted Joe Lewis and said that “if he was on their side, he must kill Francis Sager to prove it.” 69 After being thus taunted, Joe grabbed Francis by the nose, jerked him forward, and called him “a bad boy.” The Osborns under the floor heard Francis pleading for his life: “O Joe, don’t shoot me!” Then came the crack of a gun, “as Lewis proved his loyalty to the red men.” Francis fell at the entrance of the north door leading out of the Indian room. At the trial of the five accused murderers held in Oregon City, Clokamus admitted “that he assisted in dispatching young Sager.” 70

Mrs. Saunders’s Brave Intercession

In the meantime, Mrs. Saunders, not knowing what had happened to her husband or to the Whitmans, and fearing for the safety of all the white women and children, decided to make a desperate appeal for mercy to Chief Tiloukaikt through Nicholas Finley. She bravely ventured to leave the comparative safety of her room in the emigrant house in order to call on Finley in his lodge. John Manson was at the lodge when Mrs. Saunders arrived and has given us the following account of what
happened. Since he was able to understand what the Indians were saying, his recollections have special significance.

Soon Mrs. Saunders came up to the lodge where Mrs. Finley [an Indian woman], her sister and several other Indian women were standing. Besides the Cayuse Indian women, there were some Walla Walla Indian men. The women seemed friendly to Mrs. Saunders.

About four hundred feet away from the lodge was a hill that had three Indians on it, looking over the plains. [Possibly looking to see if anyone were approaching.] One of the Indians rode down to kill Mrs. Saunders, but Mrs. Finley expostulated with him and he rode off. Then Chief Tiloukaikt rode down, shaking his hatchet over his head. He threatened Mrs. Saunders with it, but again Mrs. Finley urged him to desist and he rode off. Then Edward Tiloukaikt, the oldest son of the Chief, rode down very rapidly, shaking his tomahawk over his head and that of Mrs. Saunders with fury. She had sunk down on a pile of matting in front of the lodge. But the Indian women shamed him and talked to him. Then he rode off.

Mrs. Saunders then came to me [John Manson] and kneeled down. She begged me to interpret for her to the Chiefs, as she did not understand the language of the natives. She said: “Tell the Chiefs that if the Doctor and men were bad, I did not know it. My heart is good and I want to live. If they will spare my life, I will make caps, coats, and pantaloons for them.”

John interpreted for her as she pled with Tiloukaikt for the life of her husband and for the women and children. In all probability her husband by that time had been killed, but of this she was unaware.

“What do they say, John?”

“They are talking about it.”

After some consultation, Tiloukaikt and the other chiefs agreed that none of the women and children would be killed. Mrs. Saunders then begged to let all who were in the main mission house go to the emigrant house. Tiloukaikt gave his consent.
Mrs. Saunders then turned to John, while still on her knees, and begged: “John won’t you go home with me?” John replied: “I do not dare to go, but I will ask.” Tiloukaikt then told Stanfield to take Mrs. Saunders back to her quarters and to get her some meat. John’s account continues: “Then Mrs. Saunders rose from her knees and went with Joe Stanfield. The Chiefs and all the natives then left the lodge. They went to Dr. Whitman’s house. Very soon, several shots were fired there. Mr. Finley came and told us that three more had been killed. They were Mrs. Whitman, Mr. Rogers, and Francis Sager.”

The Deaths of Narcissa Whitman and Andrew Rodgers

The rampaging Indians, after searching the main floor of the Whitman home for Mrs. Whitman and other members of her family, finally came to the door leading to the attic rooms. This had been locked from the inside but the Indians soon smashed it open. “We thought our time had come,” wrote Catherine. While the Indians were still breaking down the door, Kimball said that if they only had a gun, they could keep them at bay. Someone remembered that there was the barrel of a broken gun in the attic room. Rodgers got it and held it over the railing of the stairwell. As soon as the Indians, who began ascending the stairs, saw the gun barrel, they hastily retreated.

None of the eyewitness accounts pinpoint the rapidly passing events by giving the time. In all probability all of the events described above, following the firing of the first shot, came within an hour period. Catherine remembered that, following the retreat of the Indians from the stairway, all was quiet before for about half an hour. “We began to think,” she wrote, “that the Indians had left, when we heard footsteps in the rooms below, and a voice at the bottom of the stairs called Mr. Rodgers. Mr. R. would not answer for a time. Mother finally prevailed on him to speak, remarking, ‘God maybe has raised us up a friend.’” The Indian was Tamsucky. It was he who, according to the best available evidence, was the one who had tried to force his way into Narcissa’s bedroom shortly after Marcus had left for the East in October 1842. In a friendly voice, he told Rodgers that he had just arrived on the mission grounds, knew nothing of the terrible events which had taken place, and was then offering his help. Narcissa, eager to grasp at any offer of aid in her hour of desperation, was ready to throw herself upon Tamsucky’s
promise of aid and deliverance. Catherine, however, had recognized Tamsucky as one of the Indians who had killed Judge Saunders and advised caution. After some consultation, the adults in the upstairs room decided that they should listen to what Tamsucky had to say.

Catherine tells us what then happened: “Mr. Rodgers told him to come upstairs. He replied that he was afraid we had white men there who would kill him. Mr. Rodgers assured him of his safety. He then asked for Mother, and was told that she was badly hurt. Mr. Rodgers finally went to the doorway and talked with him, and succeeded in having him come where we were. He shook hands with us all and seemed very sorry Mother was hurt; consoled with her on what had happened until he won her confidence.” When Tamsucky saw the wounded Kimball lying on the floor, he muttered: “Bad Indian. Indian shoot.”

Tamsucky then passed on the terrifying information that the Indians were planning to burn the mission house and that Mrs. Whitman and those with her should leave immediately for the lodge of an Indian who lived ten miles away. Narcissa, realizing that she was in no condition to travel and also that it would soon be dark, told him that they could not go at that time. Tamsucky then told her to go to the emigrant house and spend the night there. In reality Tamsucky was scheming to get her and Rodgers out-of-doors where the Indians could complete their bloody designs. Narcissa was completely deceived by his duplicity, but then, what else could she do except to follow his advice? She grasped at his specious promises of protection.

Eager to return to their families in the emigrant house, the three women hastily left. Going with them was Lorinda Bewley who had arisen from her sick bed. Rodgers helped Narcissa go down the stairs. She was so weak from the loss of blood that she had to lie down at once on a settee. With her was Elizabeth Sager, then ten years old, who never forgot how Narcissa averted her face when she saw her husband, still alive but unconscious. The sight of the bloody, mutilated head was too horrible to endure. Kimball decided not to risk leaving the attic room, perhaps suspecting that Tamsucky’s promise of safe conduct to the emigrant house did not apply to him. Since no one had been willing or able to carry the sick little girls to the emigrant house, Catherine decided to remain with them. Also in the attic room was Mary Ann Bridger.
Shortly after Narcissa went down stairs, the Indians ordered Rodgers to help Joe Lewis carry her on the settee over to the emigrant house. Even though Rodgers had been wounded in the wrist, he seems to have been able to lift his end of the settee. They moved from the living room through the kitchen and out the north door of the kitchen. Elizabeth, who was following, noted that her brother John’s body “was lying across the doorway.” As soon as the settee bearing Narcissa had cleared the doorway, some Indians standing near started firing. Elizabeth remembered: “I was still on the sill when a shot from a row of Indians standing there struck Mrs. Whitman on the cheek. I saw the bullet as it hit her. Mr. Rodgers set the settee down on the platform at the doorway saying ‘Oh, My God!’ and fell.” He, too had been struck with bullets. As Elizabeth turned to flee to the upstairs room to rejoin her sister Catherine, she passed through the living room where she slipped in a pool of blood. Upstairs, she stammered out her story of what had happened. “The terror of that moment cannot be expressed,” she wrote. “There were no tears, no shrieks.” The awfulness of what had happened stunned all, even the younger girls, into silence.73

After a volley of bullets had been fired into the bodies of Narcissa and Rodgers, one of the Indians upset the settee and rolled her body into the mud, possibly into an irrigation ditch. With fiendish delight, one Indian lifted up Narcissa’s head by grabbing her hair, and lashed her face with his braided leather quirt.74 Circumstantial evidence indicates that Narcissa died at the time of this attack or shortly thereafter. Rodgers, although mortally wounded, lingered on for several hours in a conscious condition.

“As soon as it became dark,” wrote Nancy Osborn, “the Indians left for their lodges... Everything became still. It was the stillness of death.” The school children, released by their captors, had fled to the emigrant house where Mrs. Saunders received Matilda. Those in the emigrant house were ignorant of the fate of Kimball and of the four girls who had been left in the attic room, but no one dared go and investigate.

Nancy remembered that while she with the other members of her family were still in hiding under the floor of the Indian room, the stillness which had come to the mission house was broken only by the groans of the dying. Dr. Whitman died about nine o’clock that evening; Rodgers died later. “All we could hear were the dying groans of Mr. Rodgers,
who lay within six feet of me,” wrote Nancy. “We heard him say, ‘Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ Afterwards he said faintly, ‘Sweet Jesus.’ Then fainter and fainter came the moans until they ceased all together.

The carnage for the day was over with nine people dead—one woman, six men, and two boys.

Thus ended the earthly life of Narcissa Whitman who, at the time of her death, was approaching her fortieth birthday. And likewise the life of Marcus Whitman who had lived nearly three months beyond his forty-fifth birthday. They were the first Protestants to suffer martyrdom on the Pacific Slope of the United States.\textsuperscript{75}

**Some Were Weeping**

Waiilatpu was a place of contradictions on that bloody Monday afternoon. The violence precipitated a dichotomy of emotions among the Cayuses themselves. Mingled with hideous war cries were pleas of mercy. While some were killing, others were weeping. Again it should be emphasized that only a small minority of the Cayuses took part in the massacre, and they were largely if not exclusively from Tiloukaikt’s band. Most of the members of the Cayuse tribe were either unaware of what had been planned or had refused to join in the conspiracy.

Among those who objected to the violence, and who did much to ameliorate the lot of the captives after the massacre, was one whom the survivors called Chief Beardy.\textsuperscript{76} Possibly “Beardy” was a nickname bestowed upon him at the time of the massacre by the grateful survivors. No mention of a chief by this name has been found in the writings of the Whitmans nor do we know his Indian name. The Sager girls and Mrs. Saunders make frequent mention of him. He was described as having been one of the most faithful attendants at Whitman’s religious services. No doubt the nickname was given because of his hirsute appearance, unusual among the Indians.

Catherine wrote that when Mrs. Saunders went to Finley’s lodge, “She saw an Indian at Dr. Whitman’s house, talking and gesticulating for some time. He rode toward her, and she saw that he was weeping.”\textsuperscript{77} It was Beardy who was vainly trying to get the other Indians to stop their killings. Mrs. Saunders called to him, and he rode to her and went with her to the lodge. Catherine wrote: “Whether it was her intercession or the speech of the chief [i.e., Beardy] that turned the tide, I know not what,
but the chief [Tiloukaikt] heading the murderers said, ‘It is enough, no more blood must be shed. The Doctor is dead. The men are all dead. These women and children have not hurt us and they must not be hurt.’ “Actually at that time, not all the men had been killed. Four more were to die, but the women and children were spared. Perhaps much of the credit for this act of mercy should go to the influence of Beardy.

Catherine, in summarizing the events of the next day, November 30, noted that some of the Indian women “cried over us and gave us many things.” Again and again in the reminiscences of the survivors, we find references to the grief of many of the Cayuses who were shocked by the violence committed by some of their own tribe.

**Tuesday, November 30, 1847**

Monday night was a night of terror for Catherine Sager, who, although only thirteen years old, was trying to be a mother to her two younger sisters and to the two half-breed girls. Three of the girls in the attic room were very ill. Kimball was in too much pain as the result of his wound to be of any help. No one can read Catherine's account of the massacre and the subsequent captivity without feeling great admiration for the way she tried to measure up to the responsibilities so suddenly thrust upon her.

In Catherine’s account of the night of November 9th, we may read: “The Indians seemed to be making preparations to set fire to the house. We heard them ask for fire and splitting up kindlings. We fully expected to perish in the flames but this was more desirable than to be killed by the savages. Night came on. The Indians seemed to have left. We sat on the bed hardly daring to breathe in our fright. I took all the children on one bed. Their clothes were saturated with blood where they had lain on the bed with Mrs. Whitman. I tried to soothe them but they were perishing for water… They cried almost all night.” Finally, one by one, the children fell asleep leaving Catherine and Kimball still awake. She remembered hearing “the yowls of the cats” in the room below and the striking of the hours by the clock. No doubt the cats were yowling because of hunger. No one had fed them. “Never shall I forget that awful night,” wrote Catherine. “I think of it now with a shudder… I knew not what the new day might bring.” Finally, towards morning, out of utter exhaustion, Catherine lapsed into sleep.
When day began to break, Kimball awakened Catherine and said that he was going to try to go to the river for a pail of water. Since everything was quiet in the house, the two felt that perhaps no Indians were around. There is no evidence that the Indians left any guards at Waiilatpu during the night to keep check on its residents. Although Kimball and Catherine talked in low tones, still their conversation awakened the children who at once began to cry for water. Before leaving for the river, Kimball felt it best to have his arm bandaged, as it pained him greatly. He told Catherine to tear up one of the sheets and use that as a bandage. Catherine’s initial reaction to the idea of tearing up a good sheet was such that she exclaimed: “Mother would not like to have the sheets torn up.” “Child,” replied Kimball, “don’t you know that your mother is dead, and will never have any use for the sheets?” Reluctantly Catherine tore the sheet into strips and bound up the wounded arm.

Kimball disguised himself the best he could as a blanketed Indian. Taking a pail, he started for the river which he reached in safety. As he was about to return, he noticed that some Indians had arrived on the grounds. Fearful of being detected, Kimball hid in some bushes which grew along the river where he remained all day. About sundown, thinking that the Indians were all gone, Kimball started back to the house. Just as he was climbing over a fence, he was seen by Frank Escaloom who immediately shot him. Catherine wrote: “As he fell the Indian gave a brutal laugh.” Evidently death came to Kimball instantly. He thus became the tenth victim of the massacre.

Attracted by the crying of the children early that Tuesday morning, some Indians came to the foot of the stairway leading to the attic and inquired what was the matter. Catherine begged them to get water, which one did and he also got some bread. Since the children cried for more water and the Indian refused to get any more, Catherine decided to go for some herself. Of this she wrote: “I could not bear to hear the piteous calls for water.” Going down stairs, she found her shoes where she had left them the day before and went to the river. Upon returning with her pail of water, her life was threatened. She wrote: “Some Indians were sitting upon the fence; one of them pointed his gun at me. I was terribly frightened, but walked on. One sitting near him knocked the gun up and it went off in the air.”
As Catherine moved through the lower rooms of the house, she could not have avoided seeing the dead body of Dr. Whitman and one or both of her brothers. She knew from Elizabeth’s account that Mrs. Whitman and Rodgers had been killed and that their bodies were lying outside the door of the Indian room. Added to the horror of such sights was the threat to her life. All in all, she had a traumatic experience which found relief in an outburst of weeping after she returned with the water. The other children in the attic room joined her. Of this Catherine wrote: “We were weeping over the slain when Joe Stanfield came in. He told us to stop that noise; that they were dead and it would do them no good, and if the Indians saw us crying, they would be mad.” Stanfield told Catherine to take the children to the emigrant house.

Since three of the younger children were too ill to walk, Catherine carried six-year-old Louise, and Elizabeth managed to carry four-year-old Henrietta. These four with Mary Ann started for the emigrant house. Helen Mar Meek had to be left behind but Catherine assured her that she would return and get her. Someone in the emigrant house saw the four children on their way and several rushed out to meet them. “For a few moments,” wrote Catherine, “we wept together.” Catherine, accompanied by one or more of the women, hastened back to get Helen Mar. “We found her,” Catherine wrote, “sitting in the bed, surrounded by Indians and screaming at the top of her voice.” She thought she had been deserted.

Sometime during Tuesday, all of the survivors of the massacre were brought into the emigrant house. This included the Canfield family and the two sick men, Crockett Bewley and Amos Sales. As will be told, Hall, Canfield, and the Osborn family had managed to escape. With the exception of the two families still at the sawmill, all of those who were later rescued, numbering over forty, were in the emigrant house. The five Sager girls, now twice orphaned, were together again.

The Hudson’s Bay Company Informed of the Massacre

William McBean at Fort Walla Walla first learned of the massacre when Peter D. Hall arrived at the fort about seven o’clock Tuesday morning, November 30. Hall had been busy in carpenter work in the room being added to the east end of the main mission building when the
The Whitman Massacre

attack began. When the sound of firing in the kitchen was heard by the Indians outside, several rushed to attack Hall, one with a gun which misfired. Hall grappled with the Indian who had the gun and succeeded in getting possession of it. Catherine wrote: “By pointing the gun, he kept them at bay until he reached the river where he plunged boldly in and swam for the opposite shore. His pursuers, seeing him out of reach, yelled defiantly and shot their guns at him without effect.”

Shielded by the protecting willows which lined the river banks, Hall cautiously made his way down stream towards Fort Walla Walla. He was able to travel the twenty-five miles during the night and was the first to give McBean the news of the attack at Waiilatpu. His information was fragmentary. He reported that “the doctor and another man were killed,” perhaps referring to the death of Marsh at the mill. He could give McBean no details regarding the identity of the murderers nor how the attack originated. In his excited state, he was sure that his wife and children and all white people at Waiilatpu had been slaughtered.

Father Ricard, founder of the Saint Rose Mission, happened to be at Fort Walla Walla on that Tuesday morning and recorded the event in his journal: “I was at the fort with Mr. McBean when, at 7 o’clock, the American brought us the news of the massacre. At 11 o’clock a native Catholic woman arrived, quite breathless, and told us that the Cayuses had resolved to come to the fort and kill all the whites there. At this far from reassuring news everyone in the fort, namely Mr. McBean, Fr. Pandosy, three hired men, and myself, closed the doors, loaded our guns, and prepared to defend ourselves. This was in vain for the Cayuses did not appear. Nevertheless, as a precaution, we kept the doors closed from then on.”

Hall was greatly agitated, being fearful that the Indians would seek him out at the fort and kill him. McBean wrote:

He finally resolved to leave and make for The Dalles. I remarked to him that it was rash and imprudent... The fort being enclosed, doors locked day and night, and fortified with two bastions, he would be safer in it than he would be on the open plain. My arguments had no force. I then asked him if he left a wife and children at the Mission. He replied he had, but supposed them all killed. I observed that it was only a supposition—they might still be living, and that it was wrong to leave them without ascertainment.
taining their fate. With tears in his eyes, he begged and entreated me to let him go, being sure to reach The Dalles.

Finding he was determined, I provided him with a coat, shirt, provisions and other necessaries for his voyage, and advised him to take the route less frequented by the Indians (across the Columbia river), and to travel only during the night, when he would have a better chance of evading any camp by noticing their fire. I saw him safely across and the last tidings I had of him was that he had safely reached within a few miles of the Deschutes; but unfortunately having taken a canoe from the Indians and being near a rapid, he run down [i.e., attempted to navigate the rapids], and was drowned.\footnote{85}

It should be noted that McBean wrote this account some seventeen years after the events described had occurred. In some particulars, his version of his treatment of Hall has been questioned. Hall’s body was never found. Although he was not killed at Waiilatpu, Hall is included in the total of fourteen victims because his death is attributable to the events which had taken place at the mission.

McBean was alarmed at the news that Hall had brought to him. Eager to get more information as to what had actually taken place at Waiilatpu, he sent his interpreter, a man by the name of Bushman, on Tuesday morning to make inquiry. In the meantime, Nicholas Finley left the mission with the three half-breed boys that same morning for Fort Walla Walla. Mrs. Saunders, learning from Joe Stanfield that Finley was going to the fort, hastily wrote a note to McBean for Finley to carry in which she listed the names of eleven people she thought had been killed. She included the names of Osborn and Canfield, as she was unaware that both had escaped. Catherine, in her account of what happened on Tuesday, said that when Bushman arrived at Waiilatpu, he was so frightened by what he saw and heard that he “came only to the door and as soon as they assured him that it was so, he left.” \footnote{86}

Catherine also reported that on Tuesday, Joe Stanfield was busy digging a grave in the mission cemetery “three feet deep and wide enough for all to lie side by side.” Stanfield had some help from Beardy and two Walla Walla Indians. From other evidence, it appears that the grave was not as deep as Catherine indicated. It was shallow, and this may have
been due to the fact that digging was difficult. Until the bodies were collected on Wednesday morning for burial, they lay where each person had fallen. Some bodies had been covered with blankets.

About two o’clock Tuesday afternoon, the unsuspecting James Young was killed while driving a team of oxen hitched to a wagon loaded with lumber which he had brought down from the sawmill. The murder took place as he was passing an Indian camp a mile or so to the east of Waiilatpu. The name of his assailant is not known. Spalding reported that the Indians, in their frenzied anger against the white men, even killed the two oxen. Later Stanfield buried the body near the place where Young was killed. Hall and Young were the eleventh and twelfth victims. There were still two more to die.

Bushman made the fifty-mile round trip from Fort Walla Walla to Waiilatpu in the same day. On the evening of his return, McBean wrote to the officials of the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, giving them their first news of the massacre. The arrival of this letter at Fort Vancouver on December 6 started the sequence of events which, after about a month, brought about the release of the captives. This story will be told in the next chapter.

**Canfield Escapes**

Among those who were wounded and who succeeded in finding temporary refuge in one of the mission buildings at the time the attack began, was W. D. Canfield. He and his family, being late comers to Waiilatpu, had to be content with some makeshift accommodations in the blacksmith shop. When the attack began, Canfield was butchering a beef with Hoffman and Kimball. Catherine tells us what happened: “He [i.e., Canfield] saw his family standing in the yard and ran over toward them. As he did so, he was wounded in the side [by a rifle bullet]. Snatching up his youngest child, and calling his family to follow him, he rushed into the house [possibly, the blacksmith shop]. Going upstairs, he concealed himself under some old lumber and rubbish where he lay until night.” The Indians did not pursue him into the building. Sometime during the early part of Monday night, Joe Stanfield came and showed him the trail that led to Lapwai. Evidently by this time, Canfield was convinced that the Indians did not intend to kill the women and children; that his life would be in grave danger should he
remain on the premises; and that Mrs. Spalding and her family should be warned of their danger. He therefore started out on the 120-mile journey to Lapwai on foot even though he carried a rifle ball under the skin on one side of his body.

Canfield had never been over the trail before, but after being directed to the trail, he followed the well-beaten road which led in a northeasterly direction. Catherine wrote: “After traveling for a day or two, he fell in with an Indian and his boy driving cattle.” Evidently they were friendly Nez Perces who had no objection to having a white man accompanying them. Canfield arrived at Lapwai on Saturday, December 4, having taken about four and a half days to make the journey. Mrs. Spalding, Mary Johnson (who had previously worked for Mrs. Whitman) and the three younger Spalding children were in the Spalding home. Horace Hart and Mr. Jackson were temporarily absent. Spalding tells of Canfield’s sudden appearance. After being received into the home, he asked: “Has Mr. Spalding yet come?” Mrs. Spalding replied: “No, but we expect him every day.” “The stranger replied: ‘I have heavy tidings, they are all murdered at the Doct’s.’ All were silent for a minute. My dear wife simply rose to her feet & with an unfaltering voice said, ‘I was not prepared for this, but go on, Sir, let me hear the worst.’ ‘Mrs. Whitman is murdered & your husband without doubt shared the fate of all the women & children who I expect are butchered.’” 88

Mrs. Spalding then said that she would inform the Indians at Lapwai as to what had happened. Canfield remonstrated as he feared that they might do what the Cayuses had done, but Mrs. Spalding knew the character of the Nez Perces. She called for Timothy and Eagle and sent a messenger to Craig’s home located about eight miles up the valley from Lapwai. Craig, who had a Nez Perce wife, was the only white man who had settled in the vicinity of the Spalding mission. Although at times Craig had given Spalding much trouble, now he willingly offered shelter to Mrs. Spalding and her family. The next day, Sunday, an Indian arrived from Waiilatpu with the report that Spalding had fled on a horse, possibly headed for the Willamette Valley. Although Eliza was relieved to hear that her husband was alive, she remained concerned not only about his safety but also of her daughter who was among the captives being held at Waiilatpu.
When Canfield, Jackson, and Craig urged Mrs. Spalding to move on Sunday to the Craig home, she refused to do so. So strongly did she cling to the Puritan conception of strict Sunday observance that she would not travel eight miles even when grave danger threatened. “We will rest on the Sabbath,” she said and then, paraphrasing a Biblical promise, added: “for he that obeyeth the commandment shall be rewarded.” The example that Mrs. Spalding set that day in refusing to travel on Sunday was long remembered by the Christian Nez Perces.

On Monday morning, December 6, when Mrs. Spalding and her household were about to leave for the Craig home, a party of dissident Nez Perces from Chief Joseph’s band suddenly appeared at Lapwai with evident hostile intentions. As with the Cayuses, these Nez Perces constituted only a small minority of the Nez Perce tribe and, since they lived near the Cayuses, had been adversely influenced by what had taken place at Waiilatpu. They arrived at Lapwai just as Craig and a party of friendly Nez Perces were about ready to escort Mrs. Spalding up the valley. The hostile band, seeing that they were outnumbered, refrained from acts of violence for the time being, but as soon as the Craig party left, they looted the Spalding home. Mrs. Spalding, eager to learn what had happened to her daughter at Waiilatpu, sent two of the most trusted Nez Perces, Timothy and Eagle, to make inquiry.

**Artist Stanley’s Narrow Escape**

Before the story of the escape of the Osborn family from Waiilatpu can be told, it is necessary to review what happened to the artist, John Mix Stanley, for his experiences dovetailed with those of Josiah Osborn. As was told in the previous chapter, Stanley had visited Waiilatpu during the first days of October 1847 but missed seeing the Whitmans as they had gone to meet the immigrants on the Umatilla River. When Stanley left Waiilatpu for Tshimakain on October 4, he promised to return at some later date in order to meet the Whitmans. After spending several weeks at Tshimakain and vicinity, Stanley set out for Waiilatpu on Tuesday, November 28, having with him one of the most faithful of the Spokane Indians for a guide, whom the Walkers had named Solomon. Fortunately for Stanley, Solomon could speak Nez Perce as well as his mother tongue. Stanley and Solomon camped on Tuesday evening, November 30 about twenty miles from Waiilatpu. On Wednesday
morning, when within about six miles of Waiilatpu, they met an Indian woman and a boy who gave them the frightening news of the massacre and that the lives of all Americans, or “Boston men” as they were known by the natives, were in danger. The Indian woman warned Stanley that he would surely be killed if he continued on to Waiilatpu.

Heeding the warning, Stanley and Solomon turned their horses towards Fort Walla Walla but they had not proceeded far before they met an armed Cayuse who immediately asked Stanley: “Are you a Boston man?” Solomon, being able to understand what the Cayuse was saying and wishing to protect Stanley, answered for him by telling a lie and saying: “No.” The Indian then asked: “What then?” Having come recently from Ohio, Stanley, aware of the danger of saying that he was a “Boston man,” replied: “A Buckeye.” This was a new nation to the Cayuse who had never heard of the nickname for residents of Ohio. “Oh,” said the Indian, “Elysman [English man],” to which Stanley answered: “Yes.” After that, according to Stanley’s account, “…the villainous wretch suffered me to pass.” Commenting on his deception, Stanley added: “Let those laugh who will.” For him, the whole terrifying incident was no laughing matter.

Thoroughly alerted by this time as to their danger, Stanley and Solomon left the trail for fear of meeting other Cayuses and spent the rest of that day and the following night in hiding. They reached Fort Walla Walla early on Thursday morning, December 3, where they were given more detailed information from McBean regarding the massacre. Feeling the necessity of informing the Walkers and the Eellses as to what had happened, Stanley, as soon as he was able to do so, addressed a short letter to them. He began by saying: “It is my melancholy duty to inform you of one of the most tragical massacres on record in Oregon.” He then gave the names of nine of the victims including Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Andrew Rodgers, and the two Sager boys. His letter includes the following: “Some attribute the cause to the poisoning of the Indians, although there are many rumors. As I have been here only one-half hour, and hearing so much, and running the gauntlet for two days myself, I am perfectly unnerved and bewildered. Solomon has been faithful to the last; may God bless him! I am informed that a party of Indians started to Mr. Spalding’s to complete their horrid butchery, also to the Dalles. Mr. McBean has sent an express to Vancouver requesting them to send up boats for such as may escape.”
As soon as the letter was written, Solomon was sent on his way to Tshimakain. He arrived there on Thursday, December 9. The two families were horrified at the news he brought. Walker and Eells questioned Solomon closely to make sure that his story was correct and that it confirmed what Stanley had written. In a letter to Greene, written the next day, Eells stated: “Almost all Natives will exaggerate & distort the truth, but I have confidence to believe that Solomon has endeavored to state to us pretty nearly as he received it from others. He says moreover that all the different individuals gave the same account. Or to give a more literal translation of his expression, ‘the speech of all went along in the same track.’”

**The Flight of the Osborns**

The Osborn family had a harrowing experience in their flight from Waiilatpu to Fort Walla Walla. While hiding under the floor of the Indian room, they had heard the shooting of Mrs. Whitman, Andrew Rodgers, and Francis Sager, and had heard the dying groans of Rodgers until late in the evening. Even though Mrs. Osborn had only that day arisen from her sick bed and even though their four-year-old son, John, just recovering from the measles, was too weak to do much walking, the Osborns decided on making the attempt to get to the Fort. There was no other way than to walk the twenty-five miles.

According to Nancy’s recollections, they left about ten o’clock that Monday night. Groping their way through the darkness of the Indian room, they searched for some clothing, blankets, and food. “We could find but little,” wrote Nancy, “and did not linger long.” Osborn wrote: “Taking John Law on my back, and A[lexander] Rogers in my arms, we started. The first step outside was in the blood of an orphan boy [Francis Sager].” According to Nancy, they struck out across the field to the confluence of Mill Creek with the Walla Walla River. The night was dark as a half moon did not rise until about midnight.

Osborn recalled: “We could see no trail and not even the hand before the face. We had to feel out the trail with our feet. My wife almost fainted but staggered along.” In addition to carrying his two sons, Osborn also had to carry some of the bedding and some provisions. No doubt the little girl helped, but Mrs. Osborn was too weak to assist.

When they came to the ford across the Walla Walla River, they found the water waist deep and icy cold. Osborn had to cross five times, to take
each of the little boys, his nine-year-old daughter, and finally his wife to the other side. Of this last trip, he wrote: “My wife, in her great weakness, came near washing down, but held to my clothes, I bracing myself with a stick.” Only the great fear of being killed prompted them to stagger on. After traveling about two miles, Mrs. Osborn fainted. Since they could go no further, they lay down in the mud among some willows. When daylight came, they could hear Indians coming and going on the trail that paralleled the river. The temperature was near freezing. All of Tuesday was spent in hiding and later Osborn wrote: “The day seemed a week.”

On Tuesday night, November 30, they continued their slow journey. Now they left the bank of the river with its tangle of willows and shrubbery and ventured to walk on the trail. Several small streams had to be waded. After only a few hours of walking, Mrs. Osborn fainted again. Of their misery that night, Osborn wrote: “[We] crawled into the brush and frozen mud, to shake and suffer from hunger and cold without sleep. The children, too, wet and cold, called incessantly for food, but the shock [i.e., the memory] of groans and yells at first so frightened them that they did not speak loud.”

Another day was spent in hiding. When Wednesday night came, Mrs. Osborn was too weak to stand. She urged her husband to take one of the boys and go to the fort for help. They were then at least fifteen miles from their destination. At first Osborn rejected any suggestion of leaving his wife and the children, but she insisted. Finally he agreed to go, as this seemed to be the only possible way all might be saved. Taking John with him, whom he had to carry, Osborn started for Fort Walla Walla. Since Osborn also had had the measles, he found it necessary to rest frequently. He arrived at the fort early Thursday morning, December 2, and to his dismay was given a cool reception by McBean.

In a letter sent to relatives in the States dated the following April 7, when memories were still fresh, Osborn wrote of McBean: “He gave me about a half pint of tea, and two small biscuits. When we had got warm, I asked for assistance to bring in my family, but was unable to procure any.” Since McBean had sent his interpreter, Bushman, with news of the massacre to Fort Vancouver, he had only two hired men with him besides the two priests. By Thursday morning, McBean had learned of the dispatch of two bands of Indians—one to Lapwai to kill Spalding if he could be found; the other to The Dalles to inflict a like fate on
Perrin Whitman and others who might be at that mission. Without a doubt, McBean was frightened at the possibility of the Cayuses attacking Fort Walla Walla, especially if they learned that he was harboring one of the Americans and his family who had escaped from Waiilatpu. This seems to be the only rational explanation for McBean's inhospitality to both Hall and Osborn. He was made craven by his fear of an attack by the murdering Cayuses.

Osborn's account continues: “[I] begged Mr. McBean for horses to get my family, for food, blankets and clothing to take to them, and to take care of my little child till I could bring my family to his fort. Mr. Hall had come in on Monday night, but he could not have an American in his fort, and he had put him over the Columbia River; that he could not let me have horses, or anything for my wife and children, and I must go to Umatilla.” In other words, McBean was trying to get Osborn and his family to seek refuge with the Catholic missionaries at the newly established Saint Anne Mission.

Osborn's account of his reception by McBean raises serious doubts as to the truthfulness of McBean's account of Hall's disappearance in his letter to the Walla Walla Statesman in 1866, to which reference has been made. We have no way of learning how Hall felt about McBean's alleged insistence that he continue his journey to The Dalles. Bancroft, in his Oregon, gives this judgment: “McBean was 'below the salt' when compared with other gentlemen in the company.”

After McBean's adamant refusal to provide horses and supplies or to receive Osborn and his family if they could have managed to get to the fort, Osborn in his desperation appealed to the priests: “I next begged the priests to show pity, as my wife and children must perish, and the Indians would undoubtedly kill me, but with no better success. I then begged to leave my child, who was now safe in the fort, but they refused.” As guests of McBean, the priests found themselves placed in an embarrassing situation. Evidently they agreed with McBean's proposal that Osborn take his family to Saint Anne's Mission on the Umatilla.

At this opportune moment, when Osborn's every plea for help had been rejected, Stanley and Solomon arrived at the fort. No doubt McBean was appalled to have still another American seeking refuge in his undermanned post. There were, however, some extenuating circumstances which made Stanley's presence more acceptable than
Osborn’s. Stanley had not fled from troubled Waiilatpu and hence had not been involved in the events which had occurred there. Moreover, he had led a hostile Cayuse to believe that he was an Englishman. Finally, in case of an attack, here was another man who could shoot a gun.

**Rescue of the Osborn Family**

As soon as Stanley arrived, Osborn turned to him with his frantic appeal for help. Stanley’s response was immediate and sympathetic. After having spent more than a day and a night in hiding in fear for his own safety, he could understand Osborn’s concern. Stanley offered the use of his two horses and also gave Osborn some food and clothing. Osborn, greatly relieved, then asked if Solomon could go with him as he felt the need for a guide, and someone to help him. Stanley, however, declined this request as he felt the urgency of sending Solomon back to Tshimakain with word of the massacre as soon as possible in order to put the missionaries there on guard.

McBean, seeing that there was a good probability of Osborn finding his family and bringing them to the fort, then offered to provide a Walla Walla Indian guide with the distinct understanding that if Osborn were able to find them, he should take them to the Umatilla mission. McBean even specified that if he could not find them, then Osborn himself was to go to the Umatilla. Osborn, in his letter of April 7, 1848, said that one of the priests gave him a letter of introduction to Bishop Blanchet. Osborn had no alternative but to accept McBean’s terms, as he needed the Indian guide to help him find his family.

Osborn wanted to leave his son, John Law, at the fort and Stanley expressed his willingness to care for the boy, but McBean refused. Fearful of being seen by the watchful Cayuses, Osborn, his son, and the guide did not set out on their search until nightfall that Thursday evening, December 2. Since he had left his family during darkness and since the terrain was strange to him, Osborn had difficulty in locating them. He dared not shout for fearing of being discovered by hostile Indians. The whole night was spent in a fruitless, frustrating search. Friday morning dawned. In desperation Osborn continued looking for his family in the daylight. Early that morning, to the great joy and relief of all, they were found.
Osborn wrote that they had “almost perished with hunger and thirst.” While the Walla Walla Indian went for water, Osborn gave them food. As soon as possible, Osborn helped his wife mount one of the horses, and after dividing the children among the three, they started for the Umatilla mission. They had not gone more than a couple of miles before they met an armed Cayuse who threatened to kill Osborn. The Walla Walla Indian shamed the Cayuse by asking if he would “kill an old man that was sick, with a sick wife and children?” The Cayuse put down his gun and allowed them to proceed. He warned Osborn, however, that he would surely be killed if he attempted to go to the Umatilla. Osborn then decided, regardless of the promises he had given to McBean, that he would return to Fort Walla Walla.

Just when the family arrived at this destination is not clear, possibly on Saturday morning, if Osborn had felt it prudent to go into hiding the rest of Friday. When the Osborns arrived at the gate for admission, McBean at first refused to admit them. Mrs. Osborn said that she would “die at the gate, but she would not leave.” Reluctantly, McBean admitted them and provided a room where they could stay. Osborn wrote: “We had hardly got warm before McBean came to me and wanted me to leave my family with him, and go down to the valley by myself; but I refused to leave the fort and would not go.” It is also reported that McBean provided blankets only after Osborne had signed a promissory note in payment. The Osborns remained at the fort until all the captives were released and then accompanied them down the river to the Willamette Valley during the first week of January. Shortly after their arrival in the Valley, four-year-old John Law died. The exposure he suffered, no doubt, was a contributory cause of his death.

In his letter of April 7, 1848, to which reference has been made, Osborn recounted the terrifying experiences through which he and his family had passed and told of the death of his three children, including the baby who died the day she was born. He ruefully recalled how happy he and his family had been in the Willamette Valley before Dr. Whitman had persuaded him in the late summer of 1847 to accept work at Waiilatpu. “Not being satisfied with doing well,” he wrote, “I consented to go.”
**Events of December 1 to 5**

Following the death of the Whitmans, Joe Lewis, Joe Stanfield, and the Indians reveled in looting. Joe Lewis found Narcissa’s trunk filled with her most prized possessions, among which were some gauze handkerchiefs which she used to wear with her low-necked dresses. The trunk was soon emptied of its contents.

Joe Stanfield, who appreciated the value of such items as watches and money more than did the Indians, was accused by several of the captives of helping himself to everything of this kind that he saw. Nathan Kimball, Jr., many years later wrote: “There was another brute there by the name of Joe Stanfield. When the massacre commenced, he went through the houses plundering and breaking open trunks and taking whatever he could find of value. Father had a silver watch hung on a nail on the wall. He grabbed it in such a hurry that he left the ring of the watch still on the wall.”

Tamsucky helped himself to all of the clothing that had belonged to Judge Saunders. Mrs. Saunders wrote that the Indians broke into all the rooms of the mission buildings and took whatever struck their fancy. “When they had finished,” she recalled, “we were left only with what we were wearing and some of our bedding, but we were so glad to have our lives spared that we did not worry over these losses.”

Several of the survivors told about the Indians breaking the windows and the doors. Books, papers, and items of no interest to them were left strewn on the floors where members of the Expeditionary Force, sent from the Willamette Valley early in the spring of 1848, found them. Even the kitchen stove, which had been such a treasure for the Whitmans and which the Indians evidently could not use, was maliciously smashed into pieces. The Indian women who looted Narcissa’s kitchen quarreled among themselves for the choicest kettles and pans. “The work of destruction went on for some days,” wrote Catherine, “...nothing but the walls were left of our once happy home.”

Spading had left his best Sunday suit at Waiilatpu when he went with Whitman to the Umatilla. It had a Prince Albert coat, then much in style for ministers. This was stolen, and perhaps Tiloukaikt or some other chief found great pleasure in parading around wearing it. Amid all the confusion and turmoil, now and then something would take place which caused the children to laugh. “One day,” wrote Catherine, “a young
brave came riding up to the door with a large school map thrown over his saddle, almost covering the small pony. We children were highly amused to see him riding on top of the world.” Catherine wrote that Tiloukaikt made the members of his band return many of the things taken. “At another time,” she wrote, “one of them came in and gave me a pocket compass belonging to Dr. W., and a bucket of syrup. The squaws would also give us shoes and things they had taken.”

**Father Brouillet Visits Waiilatpu**

Because of his leg injury, Spalding had tarried two days at the Umatilla after Whitman’s departure. On Monday evening, the day the massacre began, Spalding dined with Bishop Blanchet and Father Brouillet. According to the latter, Spalding was most companionable and manifested none of the bitterness towards the Catholics which he displayed after the massacre. Brouillet wrote: “During the conversation, he happened to say that the Doctor was unquiet [i.e., worried]; that the Indians were displeased with him on account of the sickness, and that he had been informed that the murderer (an Indian) intended to kill him.” Spalding brushed aside the doctor’s fears, and Brouillet added that he “suspected as little as we did what was taking place at the mission of the Doctor.” In fact, at the time Spalding was dining with the priests, Dr. Whitman had already been struck down by the tomahawk of Tomahas, the Murderer, and was lying unconscious on a settee in his living room.

During the evening’s visit, Spalding told Brouillet that he intended to start back to Waiilatpu on Wednesday morning. As will be told, this information later saved Spalding’s life. Brouillet left Saint Anne Mission on Tuesday morning, after he had baptized some sick Indian children who were near death. He arrived at Tiloukaikt’s camp early in the evening of that day, November 30. “It is impossible to conceive my surprise and consternation,” he wrote, “when, upon my arrival, I learned that the Indians the day before had massacred the Doctor and his wife, with the greater part of the Americans at the mission. I passed the night scarcely closing my eyes. Early in the morning, I baptized three sick children, two of whom died soon after.”

Later Spalding severely criticized Brouillet for baptizing the “blood stained children of these bloody murderers.” Spalding’s criticism
arose out of his ignorance of Roman Catholic doctrine regarding the importance of administering the sacrament of baptism to a dying person who had never previously been baptized. According to Protestant doctrine, baptism is an initiatory rite for church membership. To the Roman Catholics, however, baptism is necessary for salvation. Brouillet was only doing his duty, as he had been taught by his church, when he baptized the sick and dying Cayuse children. Spalding was in error when he interpreted such acts as an indication of Brouillet’s supposed sympathy for the murderers.

Early on Wednesday morning, Brouillet “hastened to the scene of death to offer to the widows and orphans all the assistance” in his power. He found six women and more than thirty children in the emigrant house in a situation which he reported as “deplorable beyond description.” The massacre had suddenly deprived the immigrant colony at Waiilatpu of all male leadership, for the men, with the exception of two who were confined to their sick beds, were either killed or forced to flee. In this emergency, Mrs. Saunders stepped forward and assumed responsibility. No other person at Waiilatpu played such a heroic role as Mrs. Saunders during those days when the Indians were still seeking out their victims and during the month’s captivity which followed the massacre.

She was the one who, on Monday, risked her life when she made a desperate appeal for mercy for the women and children to Tiloukaikt. It was she who, after learning that Finley was to take the three half-breed boys to Fort Walla Walla, wrote an account of what had happened in a letter to McBean. It was she who took the initiative on Tuesday morning to get the five children, who were in hiding in the upstairs room of the main mission house, moved over to the emigrant house. Elizabeth wrote how she, twice bereft of a mother, was welcomed: “Mrs. Saunders, who until she saw me had not known if any of us were alive, met me with tears and kisses and said, ‘Your dear mother is dead! I will be a mother to you,’ and most sacredly did she fulfill that promise.” 107 And it was Mrs. Saunders who, taking bed sheets and a bolt of muslin cloth she somehow located, mustered the help of the other women and the older girls and made shrouds for each of the ten dead bodies.

When Father Brouillet arrived on the grounds Wednesday morning, Mrs. Saunders gave him breakfast and solicited his aid in giving
the dead a Christian burial. This took place on that same morning. Joe Stanfield had dug a shallow grave and also had washed the bodies before they were wrapped in their shrouds. He then hitched a yoke of oxen to a wagon on which he and the priest placed the dead.

Catherine remembered a gruesome incident which occurred: the oxen became frightened and ran away, upsetting the wagon and dumping the bodies out on the ground. After the animals were caught and quieted, the wagon was reloaded and the improvised hearse, followed by the mourning women and children, made its way to the cemetery. Among the women were two who witnessed the burial of the bodies of their husbands and two who had not learned the fate of their husbands who had fled. According to the recollections of Elizabeth Sager, the body of Narcissa Whitman was the first to be laid in the grave and then one by one the other bodies were placed. Each time a body was lowered into the grave, there was a fresh outburst of sobs and weeping from the spectators. After all the bodies were in the grave, Father Brouillet read the Roman Catholic burial service. Years later, some of the survivors recalled that he used a strange language, Latin, which they could not understand.

Following the burial service, Stanfield began shoveling the earth back into the grave. It was no small task; Catherine wrote that it was night before he had finished his work. The grave, however, was too shallow and the layer of earth which covered the dead too thin; marauding wolves came that night and dug into the grave.

**Spalding Escapes**

In her account of the funeral service, Mrs. Saunders wrote: “Father Brouillet came back to the house to say a few words of encouragement. I offered him coffee and some food. He accepted the coffee, but refused the food, saying that he had some with him and that he must hurry away to intercept Rev. Spalding before he should reach the Mission.” By this time, Brouillet knew that the Indians were disappointed in not having found Spalding at Waiilatpu when the Whitmans were killed, as they had planned to kill him also. At considerable risk to himself, Brouillet decided to set out to warn Spalding. He had with him his interpreter. As the two left Waiilatpu, Edward, one of the sons of Tiloukaikt, joined them. At first Brouillet was not concerned about Edward’s presence but as they continued riding down the trail and Edward did not turn back,
Brouillet became fearful as he noticed that Edward was armed with a pistol. “I knew that the Indians were angry with all Americans,” Brouillet wrote, “and more enraged against Mr. Spalding than any other. But what could I do in such a circumstance? I saw no remedy.”

After the three had ridden about three miles, the interpreter asked Edward for a smoke. Brouillet tells what then happened: “They prepared the calumet [Indian pipe], but when the moment came for lighting it, there was nothing to make fire. ‘You have a pistol,’ said the interpreter, ‘fire it, and we will light.’ This was done and then Edward, absent-mindedly, neglected to reload his pistol. A few minutes later, the three saw Spalding galloping towards them. “In a moment,” Brouillet wrote, “he was at my side, taking me by the hand, and asking for news. ‘Have you been to the Doctor’s?’ he inquired. ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘What news?’ ‘Sad news.’ ‘Is any person dead?’ ‘Yes, sir.’” Spalding was thinking of some of the sick children who might have died because of measles. “Who is dead?” he inquired. “Is it one of the Doctor’s children?”

Brouillet hesitated to tell Spalding what had happened for fear that this would alert Edward and prompt him to shoot. Brouillet then spoke to the interpreter, perhaps in French as it appears that Spalding was unaware of what was being said, and requested him “to entreat the Indian, in my name, not to kill Mr. Spalding.” The situation was most delicate as Brouillet explained: “I was waiting for his [i.e., Edward’s] answer, and did not wish to relate the disaster to Mr. Spalding before getting it, for fear that he might, by his manner, discover [i.e., disclose] to the Indian what I had told him; for the least motion like flight would have cost him his life, and probably exposed mine also.” Edward hesitated for a few moments to give an answer to Brouillet’s entreaty and then replied: “…that he could not take it upon himself to save Mr. Spalding, but that he would go back and consult the other Indians; and so he started back immediately to his camp.”

As soon as Edward left, Brouillet passed on to Spalding the dreadful news regarding what had happened at Waiilatpu, giving also an account of the funeral service he had so shortly before performed. ‘The Indians have killed the Doctor!’ cried Mr. Spalding, ‘they will kill me also, if I go to the camp!’ ‘I fear it very much,’ said I.” In fear and consternation, Spalding asked: “What shall I do?” Again and again, he said: “Is it possible! Is it possible… they will certainly kill me.” Brouillet told Spalding...
that the Cayuses had sent out war parties to Lapwai and to The Dalles to kill all Americans in the country. He advised Spalding to flee at once as a party of Cayuses would surely soon come when informed by Edward of Spalding’s presence on the trail. The interpreter advised Spalding to take the trail that led to The Dalles; this became the basis for the report which reached Mrs. Spalding through a friendly Nez Perce on Sunday, December 5. Brouillet turned over to Spalding some food he happened to be carrying. Brouillet wrote that “Spalding was frightened and discouraged,” and that as they parted, he wished him “a happy escape,” and promised to pray for his safety. “In quitting him [i.e., upon leaving him],” wrote Brouillet, “I was so much terrified at the thought of the danger with which he was threatened, that I trembled in every limb, and could scarcely hold myself upon my horse.”

Within twenty minutes after Spalding had left Brouillet and taken the trail that led towards The Dalles, three armed Cayuses rode up and demanded of the priest the whereabouts of Spalding. They became very angry when they learned that Spalding had fled and blamed Brouillet for aiding him in making his escape. Off they set in pursuit. Brouillet wrote: “They must inevitably have overtaken him, had not the approaching darkness of night and a heavy fog that happened to fall down prevented them from discovering his trail, and forced them to return.”

After reviewing Brouillet’s account of his meeting with Spalding, we can turn to Spalding’s letters written on January 8 and 24 and March 16, 1848, in which he gave detailed descriptions of the ordeal he suffered in his travels back to Lapwai. Instead of following the trail to The Dalles, as suggested by the interpreter, Spalding decided to try for Lapwai. Darkness came shortly after he left the priest and, as he wrote, “a dark fog opened its bosom to receive me.” As has been stated, a half-moon did not rise until midnight.

Spalding described his experiences as follows: “I pushed my horse to the extent of his strength, through the night, keeping up a known stream [probably the Touchet]. Next day [Thursday, December 2] secreted myself in a ravine, and the next night kept up the same stream, till I came to a known trail, which the horse took and followed himself.” At midnight, Spalding paused for a short rest. He was so worried about the fate of his family and about his own safety that he could not sleep. He mounted his horse and continued his travels. Hearing the sound of
horses coming behind him, he “wheeled my horse to the right and lay fiat upon him, hoping that in the thick darkness, they would pass without discovering me. But in a moment I found I was wheeling into them. I reined back instantly, and seized my horse by the nose, to prevent him from calling out.” The Indians passed without seeing him.

In the early hours of Friday morning, Spalding, exhausted from riding and lack of sleep, stopped to rest. He neglected to hobble his horse and it got away, leaving him on foot in December weather about ninety miles from his home. His shoes, perhaps a gift from some missionary barrel, were so tight that they had to be discarded. He bound his leggings around his feet. The food he had received from Brouillet lasted only a day or so. Unfortunately, Spalding was still suffering from the knee injury received just before he and Whitman arrived at the Umatilla; this made walking difficult. His rain-soaked blankets became too heavy to be carried, so they were discarded along with his shoes. Fearful of being seen by hostile Indians, he remained in hiding all of Friday and that night continued his travels, walking about thirty miles. The same schedule was followed on Saturday.

Of the ordeal of those days and nights, he wrote: “Saturday night [December 4], I made 80 miles more. My feet suffered from the frozen ground. I avoided the places of encampment and forded the streams far from the trail, lest the Cayuse might be way-laying. I secreted myself on the Sabbath—and hunger, pain in my feet, and weakness were very great; I wanted sleep, but could get none, for the cold. From the moment I stopped traveling in the morning till I started at night, I shook to the center of every bone with cold.” Spalding’s caution saved his life, for sometime during Saturday or Sunday, the party of Indians from Joseph’s band passed him on their way to Lapwai with murderous intent.

When darkness came on Sunday evening, Spalding resumed his painful trek. He came to Timothy’s village at Alpowa, where he wanted to cross the Snake River and thus for safety’s sake proceed up the north bank to its confluence with the Clearwater River. A cold rain was falling. He began searching in the darkness for Timothy’s lodge. He hoped that if he could locate the right lodge, he would creep in and awaken his friend and through him learn “the fate of my family, the extent of the war, or murders, my own danger, obtain food, a blanket, and help over the river.” Cautiously he crept through the encampment. He heard singing
in one lodge where the Indians were having evening worship. Spalding crept close, hoping that he would hear Timothy's voice. He did not know that Mrs. Spalding had sent Timothy and Eagle to Waiilatpu to find out what had happened to Eliza. Since Spalding dared not make himself known to any other person but Timothy, he did not enter the lodge. Some dogs discovered his presence and broke out in a chorus of barking and snarling. Although he did not recognize the voice of the Indian who was praying, he was comforted by hearing him say that no one had been killed at Lapwai. “Oh, what an angel of mercy to the human family is hope!” wrote Spalding. He also learned that the Indians thought that he had been killed along with the Whitmans. Unable to find Timothy, Spalding decided to continue his journey during that night.

Finding a canoe, he crossed the Snake River and was able to arrive at the mouth of the Clearwater River before Monday morning. There he located another canoe and crossed to the south side, and by dawn was within five miles of Lapwai. For the first time during his flight, Spalding was cheered by warm rays of the sun. He was in such a weakened condition that he felt he dared not do anything else but stumble on his way. His feet were swollen and bleeding. Hunger gnawed within. Upon coming within sight of his home from the top of the hills which border the south bank of the Clearwater, he was dismayed to see a band of Indians about the mission premises, some of whom were engaged in looting. Spalding did not then know that his wife and family had been escorted to the Craig home. Fearful of being discovered, Spalding concealed himself and waited until darkness came before trying to learn the fate of his family. Before evening on that December 6 clay, a friendly Nez Perce woman found him and told him that his family was safe. He was directed to the lodge of Luke, one of the faithful Nez Perce members of the Mission church, who with loving tenderness ministered to his needs. Spalding was soon restored to the company of his family, as he explained: “more dead than alive, from starvation, want of sleep, freezing, horrible swollen and mangled feet, having miraculously escaped…” The Spalding family remained with Craig until they were escorted by friendly Nez Perces to Fort Walla Walla during the closing days of December.

Several of Spalding contemporaries, including Walker and Eells, felt that the shock of the massacre and the terrible ordeal through which he had passed during his escape affected his mind. Spalding’s
anti-Catholic utterances and writings after the massacre became caustic and extravagant. When his wife died in January 1851, he even had the following inscribed on her tombstone: “She always felt that the Jesuit Missionaries were the leading cause of the massacre.” 113 Spalding became obsessed with the idea that the Catholics were in league with the murderers. He even neglected to give due credit to Father Brouillet, who risked his life in order to give him the warning which permitted him to escape. A bitter controversy resulted, which extended over the remaining years of Spalding’s life and was even carried on by his friends after his death [Appendix 4].

**Events of December 5 to 8**

Three of the children, who had been very sick with measles when the massacre began, died shortly thereafter. Louise Sager, age six, passed away early Sunday evening, December 5; Helen Mar Meek, eleven, died Wednesday, the 8th; and the Hays infant, Rapoleon, died on the 9th. Again, Joe Stanfield was the grave-digger. No one was present to read a burial service. It is possible that one or all of these three children would have survived, if Dr. Whitman had been alive to have cared for them.

After dark on Sunday evening, December 5, Daniel Young arrived at Waiilatpu from the sawmill to find out what had happened to his brother James, who had been sent to the mission with a load of lumber on the preceding Tuesday. Daniel had managed to pass undetected the Indian village near Waiilatpu where, unbeknown to him at the time, his brother had been killed. He went to the emigrant house, where Mrs. Saunders gave him the dreadful news of what had happened, including the death of his brother. She warned him to claim that he was an Englishman and not an American should he be questioned. Joe Stanfield also warned him about trying to return to the mill without the consent of Tiloukaikt.

Shortly after Daniel’s arrival, Tiloukaikt came to the emigrant house and discovered Daniel’s presence. Then a most curious thing happened: Tiloukaikt upbraided Daniel for traveling on Sunday and also “embraced the occasion to admonish the captives that they should not under any circumstances make shirts on the Lord’s day.” 114 He was referring to sewing that some of the Indians had demanded of the women. Tiloukaikt, responding to what appealed to him, was not concerned
with inconsistencies. To him it was quite permissible to kill, but not to travel or sew on Sunday! Here is a reflection of the emphasis that the missionaries had placed on Sunday observance.

Although only a few days had passed since the Indians had killed Marsh at the mill, they had begun to feel the need for someone to grind their wheat and corn. Since Whitman had never taught any of the Indians to run the mill, they felt the need of a white man to do this. When Tiloukaikt learned that Daniel’s father was a miller, he sent the young man back to the sawmill under the watchful eyes of three armed Cayuses to bring the two families there down to Waiilatpu. Tiloukaikt promised Mrs. Saunders that all those who were then alive would be saved and would be released in the spring. Thus a safe-conduct was promised to the Young and Smith families. Within a few days the Youngs, with their two grown sons, and the Smiths with their younger children, arrived at the mission and were quartered in the emigrant house.

Timothy and Eagle, the two Christian Nez Perces whom Mrs. Spalding had sent to Waiilatpu to get her daughter Eliza if possible, arrived at Waiilatpu sometime during the first part of the week of December 5. When Eliza saw Timothy, she wept for joy. He clasped the little girl in his arms and mingled his tears with hers. “Poor Eliza,” he said, “don’t cry, you will see your mother.” Catherine wrote: “The Indians refused to let Eliza go. The Indians [i.e., the Nez Perces] who had been sent after her laid plans to kidnap her at night but the Indians, suspecting this, said that if they did so, they would be pursued and the little girl killed, so they returned home without her.” The Cayuses needed Eliza as an interpreter, as she was the only one among the captives who understood the native language.

Matilda remembered how Timothy went to see Helen Mar shortly before she died. She wrote: “Timothy… fell on his knees by the side of her bed, praying in his own language; when he arose, he pointed upward, indicating that the spirit had flown.” Even though Timothy and Eagle had to return to Lapwai without Eliza, they did carry back to Mrs. Spalding the comforting assurance that her daughter was well and that Tiloukaikt had assured them of the safety of all the women and children.

The massacre which had begun on Monday, November 29, 1847, ended with the killing of Crocket Bewley and Amos Sales on Wednesday, December 8. Why this should have occurred after Tiloukaikt had told
Mrs. Saunders on the preceding Sunday that there would be no more killing is not certain. However, judging by the accounts of some of the survivors, it was a sadistic act by three young men—Edward (son of Tiloukaikt), Wai-e-cat [see reproductions of their portraits by Stanley in this volume], and Clokamas. Evidently Tiloukaikt had lost control over these young men from his band. Catherine gives the following account: “At the time of the massacre both were very sick and were spared by the Indians. They were so far recovered as to be able to sit up part of the time. The Indians told them they must take squaw wives and live among the Indians. Mr. Bewley would make no reply to these things; but Mr. Sales, who hated them bitterly, would swear at them and say that he would do no such thing; that he was going below to the valley when he got well.”

When Narcissa first arrived at Waiilatpu, she gave names of some of her brothers and sisters and other relatives to the native children. Tiloukaikt’s son was called Edward after one of her brothers. Edward was the leader in this atrocity when the two sick men were murdered, as is seen in Elizabeth Sager’s account: “One day Edward Tiloukaikt came in. He had taken a bed post and fixed it up as a war club. Eliza Spalding and I and some of the other children were in the room. Crocket Bewley and Amos Sales were lying in bed. They had the typhoid.” Edward Tiloukaikt raised his war club and hit Crocket Bewley on the head. We children screamed and ran out of the room. [Edward] Tiloukaikt came out and said, ‘Come on back, you must stay in the room till we are finished.’ We had to go back while the Indians beat Amos Sales and Crocket Bewley over their heads till they had killed them. When they had battered their heads for quite a while, they dragged them out into the yard. Next day Joe Stanfield... came with a wagon and yoke of oxen and took the bodies away and buried them.”

Their deaths brought the total number of victims killed by the Cayuses to thirteen. To this number added the name of Peter Hall, who was drowned while trying to escape, thus bringing the total to fourteen. This number does not include the three children who died of measles during the month’s captivity.

In a previous section of this chapter, entitled “The Conspirators Identified,” William McBean at Fort Walla Walla listed eight Cayuses he believed had taken an active part in the massacre. Included in this list were the following three who were linked with the killing of the two sick men: “[#3] Tloocomots said to have given his assistance in
killing the sick... [#7] Tomsucky’s son—a chip of the [old] block who is accused of assisting in the murder of Mr. Buly—sick at the time... [#8] Ex-yow-e-ah-nish, said to have dragged a sick man out of his bed whom he murdered with his axe.” Since McBean made no mention of Edward as being one of the guilty parties, as claimed by Elizabeth Sager, it may be that E-yow-e-ah-nish was Edward’s Indian name. [See pages 238–9.]

When the artist, John Mix Stanley, visited Waiilatpu during the first part of October 1847, he painted at least four portraits of Cayuse Indians, namely Tiloukaikt, Tamsucky, and a son of each of these chiefs. On the portrait of one of the young men, he wrote: “Shu Ma Hici or painted Shirt. Edward, son of Telocoit, Cayuse,” and on the other, “Wai e cat, son of Tum[sucky], One that flies, Cayuse.” Both of these portraits are reproduced as illustrations in this work. The picture of Edward shows a handsome fellow with a light complexion. His countenance is almost that of a white man. This agrees with the description that Catherine wrote of him: “His color was quite light, and he had a proud and noble bearing.”

**Summary of the Fate of the Waiilatpu Residents**

The following table outlines the fate of the seventy-four people who were at Waiilatpu when the tragedy began on November 29, 1847:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Killed, including the drowning of Hall...</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died in captivity...</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escaped...</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Released, three half-breed boys...</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult half-breeds, Finley and Lewis...</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captives, including Stanfield...</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Canfield and Smith families were the only ones to come through the massacre without the loss of at least one member by violence, accident, disease, or neglect.
The Whitman Massacre

1 Pringle ms., p. 25, quoting Spalding’s diary. Nancy Osborn Jacobs, however, in Waitsburg, Wash. Times, Feb. 2, 1934, states that her sister died on Nov. 16.

2 Saunders ms., p. 7. See Chapter Twenty-One, fn. 64.

3 Pringle ms., p. 25.


5 HBC Arch., D/5/21.


7 O.H.Q., XXIX (1928):144, in article, “Indian Diseases as Aids to Pacific Northwest Settlement.”

8 Parker, Journal, p. 314.

9 Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 129 & 207.

10 Pringle ms., p. 25.

11 Saunders ms., p. 7.

12 Pringle ms., p. 25. Also in Oregon American, July 19, 1848.

13 The lodges of both the Cayuses and Nez Perces constructed out of hides, bark, or reeds placed over a framework of poles were oblong in shape and often long enough to accommodate several families, each with its own fire for cooking.

14 Pringle ms., p. 30.


16 Brouillet, House Document, p. 27.

17 Dart, Report to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Sept. 4, 1851, in Records of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1850–55.

18 HBC Arch., D/5/21. Ogden and Douglas did not include in their total Peter Hall, who evidently was drowned in the Columbia River while trying to escape. He was not among those killed at Waiilatpu.

19 T.O.P.A., 1884, p. 34.

20 See Chapter Eleven, “Meeting the Threat of Marauding Animals.”

21 Brouillet, House Document, pp. 22–3. This John Young is not to be confused with John, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Elam Young, who with his parents and brother arrived at Waiilatpu in the fall of 1847.

22 See ante, fn. 15.


26 T.O.P.A., 1884, p. 35.

27 Bancroft, Oregon, I:652.


29 Brouillet, House Document, p. 52. Brouillet, in a letter dated July 4, 1850, which was published in the July 15, 1850, issue of the San Francisco Weekly Pacific News, reported: “Five of the Indian murderers of Dr. Whitman and family, the only ones that
remained alive out of eleven who had been accused of having participated in the murder.

30 See Appendix 5.
32 Records of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, 1850, National Archives.
34 Father Ricard’s journal, p. 76: “Reluctant at first to receive priests in his territory, he finally offered us, amicably enough, a piece of land…”
35 *Oregon American*, August 1848.
36 From undated ms. of Hilman F. Jones, a nephew of John Settle, Coll. W.S.H.S.
37 Pringle ms., p. 28.
38 Ibid., p. 29.
39 Ibid.
40 Pringle ms., p. 29.
41 Spalding’s letter to Dudley Allen of Kinsman, Ohio, March 16, 1848, found in the Philadelphia *Observer*, Oct. 28, 1848. Italics are the author’s.
42 Clarke, *Pioneer Days*, II:568 ff., devoted a chapter to “Istachus, the Christianized Indian.” His name is spelled Stickus, Stickas, and Sticcas. See also Records of the District Court, May 1850, Oregon State Archives, Salem; and *Oregon Spectator*, May 30, 1850.
46 Pringle ms., quoting Spalding.
47 Catherine Sager’s two accounts, one in the Pringle ms., and the other in Clarke, *Pioneer Days*, vary in some details. The quotation here given is a synthesis of the two.
48 Pringle ms., p. 32.
49 Both Coll. W. and Coll. O. claim to have the original tomahawk used to kill Dr. Whitman. See illustrations in Drury, *Whitman*, pp. 408–9.
50 When the bones of the victims were exhumed in 1897, at the 50th anniversary of the massacre, the skull of Dr. Whitman showed that he had received two blows from tomahawks. One cut out of the back of the skull a piece about the size of a dollar; the other cracked the skull on top. *Oregon Native Son*, I:63; Spalding, *Senate Document*, p. 27.
51 Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:659. Bancroft, however, does not give the source for this information.
53 See Chapter Twenty-One, fn. 29. The two Manson boys, John and Stephen, were present during the first day of the massacre and were then taken to Fort Walla Walla by Nicholas Finley. On July 29, 1884, John, then fifty years old, wrote his
recollections of what he had seen and heard at the time of the massacre. These are important since he and his brother knew the Indian language, thus he was able to report what he had heard. My attention was called to the Manson statement by Larry J. Waldon, Chief Interpreter of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site, in a letter dated July 1, 1972.

54 Clarke, Pioneer Days, XI:582. Probably quoting Catherine Sager.
57 Clarke, op. cit., II:534.
58 Saunders ms., p. 8. Since she did not know the Indian by name, she identified him simply as being the one who later shot Mrs. Whitman.
60 Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 338.
61 Pringle ms., p. 32.
63 Oregon Spectator, May 30, 1850, reported that “Isaiaasheluckes (Frank Escaloom)” confessed that he had shot Mrs. Whitman. Elizabeth and Matilda Sager claim that she was wounded in the left breast; Spalding and Catherine Sager, the right.
64 Clarke, op. cit., II:532.
65 Hulbert, O.P., VIII:262.
66 See Appendix 5, for a listing of articles by or about Nancy Osborn Jacobs.
67 Delaney, A Survivor’s Recollections, p. 17.
68 Pringle ms., p. 35. Also, Eliza Spalding Warren in Ladies Home Journal, August 1913, p. 38.
70 Oregon Spectator, May 30, 1850.
71 The identity of the Indian who was willing to receive Narcissa is unknown. The fact that Narcissa was asked to travel ten miles before dark is an indication that the incident described occurred about 2:30 or 3:00 p.m. This is one of the few references to time in the contemporary accounts of the massacre.
72 Saunders ms., p. 11. Mrs. Saunders claimed that Narcissa “fainted at the sight of her husband lying dead before her.”
73 From an interview with Elizabeth Sager Helm, W.C.Q., I (1897):2:22.
74 Delaney, A Survivor’s Recollections, p. 19.
75 The first Roman Catholic martyr, in what is now the Pacific Slope of the United States, was Padre Francisco Garcés, who was killed by Indians in 1781 at his mission across the Colorado River from what is now Yuma, Arizona.
76 Even though Five Crows had been appointed by Elijah White to be the Head Chief of the Cayuses, the head of each family group or band was often referred to as a chief.
77 Pringle ms., p. 35. Italics are the author’s.
78 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 33.
Pringle ms., p. 35. Delaney, A Survivor’s Recollections, p. 20, gives a different account of the death of Kimball. Matilda claimed that Kimball started back to the house as soon as he had gotten the water and was then killed.

Clarke, Pioneer Days, II:538, quoting Catherine.

Pringle ms., p. 37.

How Catherine learned these details is not known. Possibly she got the story from Joe Stanfield.

Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 128.


McBean letter of March 12, 1866, published in the Walla Walla Statesman. Spalding, in a series of “lectures” published in this paper beginning February 9, 1866, made serious charges against McBean. McBean was answering these charges in this letter of March 12.

Following Bushman’s return to Fort Walla Walla, McBean on Nov. 30, 1847, wrote an account of what had happened at Waiilatpu to Ogden and Douglas at Fort Vancouver. Published in Oregon Spectator, Dec. 10, 1847; Victor, Early Indian Wars, pp. 128 ff.; and in Cannon, Waiilatpu, pp. 135 ff.

Pringle ms., p. 54. Catherine states that Canfield rushed his family into the emigrant house. In the author’s copy of her manuscript, she intimates that he fled to the blacksmith shop and then hid in the lumber stored over the rafters. This latter seems to be the more reasonable of the two accounts.


Ibid.

See ante, fn. 73 of this chapter.

Philip Fox, once Director of Adler Planetarium, Chicago, in a letter to me dated Aug. 28, 1934, wrote: “...in the dates 30 November to 6 December 1847, the Moon was in the last quadrant of its journey, on November 30 rising about midnight as a Half Moon in the sky of course until dawn. Toward the end of this period, on December 6, the Moon would be an exceedingly small crescent, rising just before dawn.”

Spalding, Senate Document, p. 32, includes Osborn’s account.


Bancroft, Oregon, I:661.

Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 357, quoting Nancy Osborn Jacobs.

Brouillet, House Document, p. 54, quoting from a statement made by Stanley. McBean’s letter of March 12, 1866 (see ante fn. 85), contains statements which do not agree with earlier accounts given by Osborn and Stanley.

Nathan Kimball, “Recollections of a Survivor,” T.O.P.A., 1903, pp. 189–201. See also recollections of John Q. Young in 1964 Clark County History, Fort Vancouver Historical Society, p. 30. The watch and some money Stanfield had taken from Mrs. Saunders were restored to her after the captives arrived in the Willamette Valley.
Saunders ms., p. 12.

100 See reproduction of Mrs. Spalding’s painting of a “Protestant Ladder” in Drury, *F.W.W.*, I:219, where she depicted the twelve apostles wearing Prince Albert coats. Spalding valued this suit at $50.00 in his inventory of lost property compiled after the massacre. Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 366.

101 Pringle ms., p. 39. The pocket compass is now in Coll. W.


103 Undoubtedly a reference to Tomahas, who was known even among the natives as “The Murderer” because he had killed an Indian.

104 The late T. C. Elliott of Walla Walla informed me many years ago that he had examined the baptismal records of Father Brouillet without finding mention of these baptisms. This does not, however, mean that the children were not baptized.


106 Spalding, *Senate Document*, p. 33. Spalding was not alone in his reaction to the report of Brouillet baptizing the children, for the editor of the *Missionary Herald*, July 1848, p. 237, wrote: “It certainly seems very extraordinary that baptisms should have been administered to the children of the murderers in such circumstances.”


109 See reproduction of portrait of Edward by Stanley in this volume.

110 Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 88. Other quotations from Brouillet in this section are from this source.

111 Spalding’s letters of January 1848 are in Coll. A.; that of March 16, 1848, was published in the Philadelphia *Observer*, Oct. 28, 1848.


113 Ibid., p. 361. Walker to Greene, July 8, 1848, Coll. A.: “Some doubtless attach too much blame to the Catholics. I am yet to be convinced that they had any direct agency in it… that they put the natives up to the deed, I do not believe.” When Mrs. Spalding’s remains were moved to the cemetery at Old Lapwai, now called Spalding, Idaho, in September 1913, the Presbyterian Church buried the original tombstone with the body and a new monument was erected over the graves of both the Spaldings.


117 Saunders ms., p. 15. Pringle ms., p. 38, gives a different date, Dec. 10, and in another version, Catherine gives the 13th. Mrs. Saunders’ date is to be preferred.

118 Pringle ms., p. 38. See also, Delaney, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

119 Lockley, *Oregon Trail Blazers*, pp. 340 ff. Elizabeth made this statement many years after the massacre occurred. There is no evidence that Dr. Whitman had sufficient knowledge of the disease that Bewley and Sales had to diagnose it as typhoid.

120 Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 340.

121 Pringle ms., p. 43.
Shu-ma-hici, or Painted Shirt
Two participants in the massacre; hitherto unpublished portraits painted at Waiilatpu by John Mix Stanley, October 1847. Stanley’s note indicates Shu-ma-hici was a son of Tiloukaikt; he was named Edward by Mrs. Whitman after her brother. Stanley often drew Indians with white features. Courtesy of the owner who prefers anonymity.
Wai-e-cat, or One That Flies
When news of the massacre reached Fort Vancouver and Oregon City, the reaction was swift and effective. Chief Factors Ogden and Douglas of the Hudson’s Bay Company were concerned with the necessity of securing the release of the captives; Governor George Abernethy and other officials of the Provisional Government of Oregon took steps to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of the crime.

**Actions Taken by the Hudson’s Bay Company**

William McBean, in charge of Fort Walla Walla, first learned of the massacre on Tuesday morning, November 30, when Peter D. Hall staggered into the fort almost exhausted from his night’s ordeal. McBean then wisely sent his interpreter, Bushman, to investigate. Bushman made the fifty-mile round trip to Wailatpu and back in one day. He confirmed all that Hall had told and gave many more details.

In the meantime, Finley with the three half-breed boys had arrived at the fort. Finley delivered to McBean the letter that Mrs. Saunders had written which listed the names of those she believed had been killed. On the basis of this information, McBean wrote that Tuesday evening to the “Board of Management” at Fort Vancouver and reported what he had heard. He also repeated a rumor that Finley had brought to the effect that the Cayuses were planning to attack Fort Walla Walla. “Let them
come!” wrote McBean, “if they will not listen to reason. Though I have only five men at the establishment [which number included two priests], I am prepared to give them a warm reception. The gates are closed day and night, and the bastions in readiness.”

McBean deputized Bushman to carry the letter to Fort Vancouver, since he could add his own testimony regarding the massacre to what had been written. Bushman left early on Wednesday morning, December 1, and made the first part of his journey on horseback to The Dalles, where he expected to get a canoe and then continue by water. Judging by circumstantial evidence, it appears that McBean gave Bushman strict orders not to say anything to Perrin Whitman or others at The Dalles regarding what had taken place at Waiilatpu. Evidently McBean was fearful that if the Cayuses should discover that he had written to Fort Vancouver, they would become angry and attack his fort.

Bushman arrived at The Dalles on the following Saturday morning where he found six Americans with Perrin Whitman. They were Mr. and Mrs. Alanson Hinman and their small child; Mr. and Mrs. William McKinney, an immigrant couple; and Dr. Henry Saffarans, who had but shortly before been appointed U.S. Indian Agent for The Dalles. Bushman was so nervous and so insistent on getting a canoe at once and pursuing his trip down the river that both Perrin and Hinman became somewhat apprehensive. Hinman asked if there had been some difficulty at Fort Walla Walla. Bushman replied by telling a falsehood. Hinman reported: “He said four Frenchman [i.e., the Company’s employees] had died recently and he wished to get others to occupy their places.” A canoe was secured, and Hinman decided to accompany Bushman in order to get some medicine for the natives in the vicinity of Waskopum who had been stricken with measles.

When the two men were nearing the Cascades, about midway between The Dalles and Fort Vancouver, conscience-stricken Bushman confessed that he had lied; he then told the story of the “horrid massacre that took place at Waiilatpu” the preceding Monday. Hinman was aghast at the news, and at once was deeply concerned over the safety of those at The Dalles, including his wife and child. He upbraided Bushman for not warning them, but Bushman defended himself by saying that he was obeying McBean’s order to say nothing.
Hinman and Bushman reached Fort Vancouver on Monday evening, December 6, just a week after the Whitman had been killed. Ogden and Douglas were stunned at the news the two men brought. McBean stated in his letter that he had heard that the Cayuses were sending war parties to the sawmill, to Lapwai, to Tshimakain, and to The Dalles to kill Americans in those places. When Douglas read that, he turned to Hinman and asked: “My God, Hinman why are you here?” The report that the Cayuses were planning to attack The Dalles was new to Hinman, and filled him with alarm. “Why was that Frenchman forbidden to tell me?” he cried. Douglas, seeking to calm his anxiety, replied: “You must remember that [that] man was in trying circumstances.”

The next morning Douglas wrote to George Abernethy, a former Methodist missionary then serving as Governor of the Provisional Government of Oregon, informing him of the massacre. He enclosed a copy of McBean’s letter, but the sentence referring to the intention of the Cayuses to send war parties to Lapwai and The Dalles to kill Americans in each of those places was deliberately omitted. Evidently, Douglas, knowing that publicity would be given to the letter, felt it best to edit McBean’s letter so as not to alarm the Americans in the Willamette Valley unduly.

On December 9, Douglas wrote to S. N. Castle, a member of the American Board’s Mission in Hawaii, giving the details of the massacre, and included a copy of his letter of the 7th which he had sent to Governor Abernethy. Castle forwarded this letter to the editor of The Friend, a Honolulu paper, which published it in its March 1 issue. By an interesting coincidence, the ship which carried the letter from Douglas also carried a letter from Whitman, of unknown date, to Castle. In all probability this was the last letter Whitman wrote and, although the original is not known to be extant, Castle did make a quotation from it when he wrote to the editor of The Friend on February 2, 1848. Castle wrote: “By the same conveyance, we received a letter from Dr. Whitman informing us of the intention of the mission to erect a school house at his station for the children of the mission, a meeting house for Indians, and also to aid the Indians in erecting some permanent store houses, and requesting us some supplies for that purpose; thus showing that to the last he was devising means for the benefit of those by whose hands he fell.”
Following the arrival of Hinman and Bushman at Fort Vancouver, Douglas and Ogden made immediate preparations to send a rescue party to Fort Walla Walla to secure, if possible, the release of the captives. Three boats under the command of Ogden left Vancouver on Tuesday, December 7. The expedition arrived at The Dalles on the 15th. Progress up the river was slow, partly because the heavy boats had to be carried over the portages, one being five miles long at the Cascades. The Ogden party reached Fort Walla Walla on the 19th. Ogden at once sought to communicate with the Cayuse chiefs. He realized the great importance of rescuing the captives before the Cayuses heard of any intention of the Provisional Government to send a punitive expedition into their country as Ogden knew it would.

When Douglas and Ogden wrote to Sir George Simpson in London on the following March 16 to report the massacre and the actions they had taken, they said that the primary purpose of sending the large company of employees to Fort Walla Walla was “for the protection of the Company’s establishment.” They also stated that it was then their hope “to rescue the surviving members of the unfortunate mission family, who remained in the hands of the Indians.” It may have been from fear of Simpson’s disapproval of their actions that they put the material interests of the Company ahead of humanitarian considerations.

**Cayuses Threaten to Kill Perrin Whitman**

The report that McBean sent to Douglas and Ogden about the intention of the Cayuses to attack Waskopum proved to be true. About twenty minutes after Hinman and Bushman left The Dalles for Fort Vancouver, some of the local Indians crowded into Perrin Whitman’s home. After sitting quietly for a time one asked: “Why are you not crying?” “Why should I be crying?” asked Perrin. “Because your father and mother [i.e., the Whitmans] are dead. All the Americans at Waiilatpu are dead; the Cayuses have killed them.”

“How do you know?” Perrin anxiously inquired. “The Frenchman told us that he saw them lying dead about the doctor’s house before he started.”

Dr. Saffarans, in a sworn statement made February 9, 1849, stated that Bushman was the first to tell the Indians at The Dalles about the massacre. Although Bushman had been given strict orders not to tell
the white people at The Dalles about the massacre, evidently he did not feel that such an order prevented him from communicating with the natives.

Perrin found it difficult to believe the report of the killings at Waiilatpu which had been relayed to him by the local Indians. On December 12, more than a week after Bushman had called at The Dalles, a friendly Nez Perce arrived at Waskopum and confirmed the news of the massacre. Looking back on those terrifying days, Perrin recalled that the Nez Perce told him that the Cayuse chiefs had offered “one hundred horses... for my scalp.”

When the Indians at The Dalles heard rumors that the white people in the Willamette Valley planned to send soldiers into the upper Columbia River country, they fled to the mountains. Thus Perrin and those with him were left without any possible assistance from friendly natives.

After being warned by the Nez Perce Indian, Perrin and his companions made such preparations as they could to meet any attack. They all gathered in one house. Perrin, who was only seventeen years old, had the main responsibility as neither of the two men with him knew the Indian language. Moreover, one of the men was ill. “We fitted up some old flintlock guns,” Perrin recalled, “and, armed with these and some axes and other weapons... determined to resist any attack the best we could. I stood at the doorway all night with an ax ready to hew down the first Indian that tried to enter. I knew an ax was longer than a tomahawk, and figured that I had the advantage.”

At daybreak on the morning of the 13th, Perrin heard a party of Cayuses stealthily approaching the house. “With bated breath,” he said, “I listened and heard murmurings.” Fortunately, Perrin could understand what they were saying. “I heard the Indians say the white soldiers are coming. ‘We must have the boy,’ they said. ‘He knows us all’... All hope left me. I awaited an attack in a terrible suspense. But again, just in time, some friendly Nez Perces galloped into view, and the Cayuses, guilty and suspicious, thought they were the volunteers. The attacking party fled, and this alone saved my life.”

Later Perrin learned that the Cayuses had planned to call him out of the house on “a pretended truce,” at which time he would have been killed. Perrin stated that he would “readily have fallen into the trap” in the hope of saving the others at Waskopum dependent on him.
To Perrin’s great relief, Ogden and his party from Fort Vancouver arrived at The Dalles two days after this incident. With Ogden was Hinman. Ogden brought word that a company of volunteers was being raised in the Willamette Valley and that an advance contingent would soon be arriving. By this time it was clearly apparent to both Perrin and Hinman that the usefulness of Waskopum as a mission station had come to an abrupt end. The very night of the day that Ogden and his party arrived at The Dalles, Perrin, the Hinmans, the McKinneys, and Dr. Saffarans left for the Willamette Valley. Perrin joined the Oregon Volunteers, being the youngest member of that punitive expedition, and was with a company which arrived at The Dalles in April 1848.

Experiences of the Captives

Forty-seven men, women and children (including Stanfield) were captives of the Cayuses from the time the massacre began on November 29 to the day they arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Wednesday, December 29. Thus they lived through one month of terror before being rescued. During the first week of their captivity, their fate was undecided. Such hot-headed Indians as Tomahas, Tamsucky, and Frank Escaloom were in favor of killing all, even the women and children, but Tiloukaikt hesitated. When Mrs. Saunders and Beardy interceded with Tiloukaikt in behalf of the women and children, he then assured them that there would be no more killings. On Tuesday, McBean’s interpreter, Bushman, arrived and told Tiloukaikt that the Hudson’s Bay Company was shocked at what had happened. Bushman passed on McBean’s stern warning that there should be no more killings. No doubt Tiloukaikt was loath to incur the displeasure of the Company, as the Indians were dependent upon it for many supplies such as guns and ammunition for their hunts.

Stickus is known to have visited Waiilatpu shortly after the massacre, and it is safe to assume that he too registered his protest. When the Christian Nez Perces, Timothy and Eagle, arrived, they too protested.

Tiloukaikt, however, was unable to control some of the young men of his band. There was a generation gap even in that day. The murder of James Young on the day after Tiloukaikt had promised that there would be no more killings, was evidently done without the chief’s knowledge or consent. The murder of the two sick men, Sales and Bewley, took place
when Tiloukaikt was away and when his son, Edward, seemingly was in charge. At the time of the trial of the accused murderers in Oregon City in May 1850, Tiloukaikt was charged with complicity in the deaths of only Dr. Whitman and Judge Saunders. His participation in these cases is not clear for he may not have been the one who struck the fatal blows.

Years later, in her reminiscences, Catherine Sager wrote: “Old Teloukite was a man who intended to do right, as far as he knew... was ever after [the massacre] a heart-broken conscience-stricken man. I used to feel sorry for him as I saw him moving about, viewing the wreck of a once happy home.” Even though at least three of the girls were taken as wives by natives, the fact that forty-seven survived the month’s captivity was due largely to the restraining influence of Chief Tiloukaikt.

Catherine and Mrs. Saunders have given us the best account of the experiences of the captives prior to their release. “They supplied us with an abundance of food, both meat and vegetables,” wrote Catherine. “We were allowed to have all the sugar found in Dr. Whitman’s house.” Both the captives and the Indians dipped freely into the stores of supplies which Dr. Whitman had laid up to meet the needs of his large family and the immigrants through the winter of 1847-48. Stanfield, whom Mrs. Saunders called “a necessary evil,” undoubtedly continued to perform such chores as milking the cows and getting wood and water for the comfort and survival of the captives. Catherine noted that often he did such things reluctantly.

During the first days of the captivity, the Indians often crowded into the rooms occupied by the women and children, sometimes lingering until late into the night. The women and children at first were fearful of going out-of-doors. Ten-year-old Eliza Spalding was in great demand as an interpreter. Of this Catherine wrote: “She had been born and brought up among the Indians, and could speak the language well. All day long she was here and there interpreting every silly thing the natives wished to say to the captives, sitting for hours at the mill in order to interpret for the men at work at the mill. The exposure, with anxiety for the fate of her father and mother, weighed on her till she gave out. Taking a fever, she lay very low for days.” She was still on her sick bed when Timothy and Eagle visited Waiilatpu in an effort to obtain her release.
The Cayuses found a quantity of calico and muslin in Whitman’s storeroom. This they carried to the women and demanded that they sew shirts for them. They also set the women to work knitting socks. At least during the first days of the captivity, the women were also required to cook for the Indians. “The Indians commenced coming early [in the morning],” wrote Catherine, “and stayed until one or two at night. We had to give them their meals but they would not eat until we had first tasted it for fear of poison. They would sit down at the table and make us eat some from each dish.”

Catherine related an incident which throws light upon the constant danger the captives faced from the capricious and suspicious Cayuses. Because of the harassment suffered at the hands of some of the unruly young men of the tribe, Mrs. Saunders asked Beardy to stay with the women and children each evening until after the young men had returned to their lodges.

By this time Beardy was the most trusted Indian at Waiilatpu. In order to show her appreciation, Mrs. Saunders made him some peach pies from some dried peaches she had found in the Whitmans’ storeroom. Evidently Whitman had secured this delicacy at Fort Vancouver at the time of his visit during the preceding summer. Beardy found the pies so delicious that he ate too heartily of them one day and as a result became violently ill.

Catherine wrote: “He vomited the peaches and thought it was blood, and came at once to the conclusion that he had been poisoned, and resolved to have us all put to death. As soon as he recovered, he made his decision known to his people. We were informed that they would kill us the next day. The Indians came armed and with dark brows. Taking my little sister in my arms, I quietly sat on the floor behind the stove determined to meet my fate with her in my arms.”

At that critical time, an Indian woman by the name of Katherine, the wife of a Hudson’s Bay employee, arrived at Waiilatpu. Knowing some English, she quickly diagnosed the situation and told Beardy that there was nothing wrong except he had gorged himself on peach pies. After being convinced that he had no one to blame but himself, Beardy calmed down and later treated the whole incident as a huge joke. But at the time it was no joke for the captives. “We lived in constant fear of death,” wrote Catherine. The Indian women, whose intercession had
saved the captives from harm, brought the cheering news that Ellis, Head Chief of the Nez Perces, was coming in from the buffalo country, and would set them free.

Unknown to Catherine, however, Ellis and about sixty members of his band had died of measles, while in what is now western Montana, sometime before the massacre. Moreover, Lawyer, who later became Head Chief of the Nez Perces, was also in the buffalo country. The absence of these two men left the Nez Perces without the leadership which might have effected the release of the captives sooner than was the case.

**Lorinda Bewley Raped**

The old adage “to the victor belong the spoils” again proved to be true in the days following the outbreak of violence at Waiilatpu. From time immemorial, captors have ravished their women captives; so it is not surprising to read about the rape of at least three young women at Waiilatpu who were left without male protection. They were: Esther Lorinda Bewley, age twenty-two; Susan Kimball, sixteen; and Mary Smith, fifteen. There may have been others, for Spalding made two references to girls being raped who were so young that “the knife had to be used.”

Lorinda’s ordeal began the day before her brother, Crocket, was killed. Her attacker was Tamsucky, who is believed to have been the one who had tried about five years before to force his way into Narcissa’s bedroom shortly after Marcus had left for the East. Regarding Lorinda’s experiences, Catherine Sager wrote: “One evening an Indian came to the house and seemed to be looking for someone. We learned that it was Miss Bewley. She was sick with the ague, and was lying in bed. He went to the bed and began to fondle over her. She sprang up and sat down behind the stove. He sat down by her and tried to prevail upon her to be his wife. She told him that he had a wife, and that she would not have him. Finding that persuasion nor threats availed, he seized her and dragged her out of the house, and tried to place her upon his horse; he failed in this... He tried to stop her screams by placing his hand over her mouth. The contest lasted for some time, when, becoming enraged, he threw her with violence upon the ground. After perpetrating his hellish designs upon her, he ordered her to go to the house. The poor, heart-broken girl came in shaking with agitation.”
All this took place in the presence of witnesses and near the room where Lorinda’s brother, Crocket, lay on his sick bed. “While the brute was thus maltreating his sister,” wrote Catherine, “Mr. Bewley, unable to stand the screams, got up to go to her rescue. At our earnest request, we sent him back to bed.” According to a deposition made by Lorinda in 1848: “The Indian abused me before his [i.e., her brother’s] eyes, but he dared not raise his hand even if he had had the strength.” 21 This incident took place the day before the two young men were killed. Just as the brother had heard the screams of his sister, had seen her being raped by Tamsucky, and was helpless to prevent the outrage, so the sister had to experience the agonizing ordeal of hearing the screams of her brother and Sales, unable to prevent their deaths. Catherine remembered that Lorinda “hid under a bed and gave vent to her grief.”

Chief Five Crows, whose lodge was on the Umatilla River near that of his half-brother Young Chief, now enters the picture. As has been mentioned, Five Crows had been baptized by Spalding and received into the membership of the Mission church on June 16, 1843. He was the only Cayuse among the twenty-one natives received into the church during the mission period. Spalding had bestowed upon him the Biblical name, Hezekiah, which was spelled by Brouillet as Achekiak (Achekiah, Ackekaiah). Although Five Crows had no part in the Whitman massacre, he may have known what Tiloukaikt and his band were planning to do. If so, we have no evidence to indicate that he tried to prevent the killings. On the day after the deaths of Bewley and Sales, he sent a servant to Waiilatpu with horses to get Lorinda. Eliza Spalding noticed that one of the horses had belonged to her father and therefore came to the erroneous conclusion that he had been killed. When Lorinda learned of the intention of Five Crows to make her his wife, she went to Tiloukaikt and pled with him to allow her to stay at Waiilatpu with the other women, but he refused. “You will be safer at the camp of the chief,” he said. “All the Indians will be glad to protect the squaw of Five Crows, but here you will become the property of all and I cannot help you. You will do well to marry the great chief who wants a yellow haired wife.” 22 At that time Five Crows had no wife. He is reported to have owned more than a thousand horses. Five Crows knew that many of the mountain men as well as the officers and employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company had taken Indian wives. If white men could take Indian
women for their wives, why should not an Indian take a white woman? In this instance, however, the importance difference lay in the fact that Lorinda Bewley did not want to be the wife of an Indian even if he were a rich and powerful chief.23

The Indian whom Five Crows had sent to get Lorinda insisted on starting back to the Umatilla on that same day, December 9, even though she was then sick with a fever. “There was no escape,” wrote Catherine. “The poor girl had to go. We offered her all the comfort we could but what is comfort under such circumstances? We saw the weeping girl ride away.”

Shortly after the two had left Waiilatpu, Tamsucky arrived with Joe Lewis and a team and wagon. Not having been able to abduct Lorinda earlier in that day by taking her away on horseback, he had come with a wagon. His plan was to bind her with a rope and put her in the wagon. “They ransacked the house well,” wrote Catherine, “not believing our statement that she was gone.” 24 The incident proved the correctness of Tiloukaikt’s statement that if Lorinda had remained at Waiilatpu, she would have become “the common property of all.”

Lorinda’s experiences with Five Crows, although preferable to what she would have suffered at the hands of Tamsucky, were, nevertheless, deeply traumatic. Since she and the Indian servant left Waiilatpu too late in the afternoon to reach the Umatilla that day, they had to spend the night in the open. It was a cold, stormy night, with snow falling. They arrived at Five Crows’ lodge before noon on the 10th. At first, Five Crows was kind. He carried her into his lodge and laid her upon a bed of robes and blankets. He built a fire and gave her food. Seeing her great unhappiness, he said that she could go to the “house of the white men... and at night he would come for her.” 25

In a second sworn statement, dated December 12, 1848, Lorinda said: “I obtained the privilege of going to the bishop’s house before violation on the Umatilla, and begged and cried to the bishop for protection either at his house, or to be sent to Wallawalla. I told him I would do any work by night and day for him if he would protect me. He said he would do all he could.” 26 Lorinda stated that in the house at that time were Bishop Blanchet, Father Brouillet, two other priests, and three Frenchmen. When night came, Five Crows returned to the Bishop’s house to get Lorinda. “I refused to go,” Lorinda stated, “and he went away.
apparently mad, and the bishop told me I had better go, as he might do us all an injury.” On the Bishop’s insistence, she was taken to the chief’s lodge. When Five Crows saw the extent of her distress, he sent her back to the Bishop where she remained for that night and the following three days and nights. On Tuesday evening, December 14, Five Crows returned and demanded that she go with him. Lorinda stated: “The bishop finally ordered me to go; my answer was, I had rather die. After this, he still insisted on my going as the best thing I could do.” 27 Father Brouillet said: “You must go, or he will come back and do us all an injury.”

In Catherine’s account of the incident, the details of which she had no doubt received from Lorinda, we may read: “She refused to go with him and he resorted to force. She held onto the table until her hands were skinned but what is the strength of a frail woman in the hands of a savage lustful man? She was taken to his lodge, and in the morning after family prayers; he sent her back to the Priest’s house.” Five Crows’ attitude towards Lorinda alternated between gentleness and harshness. Likewise his conception of Christianity was filled with contradictions. While keeping up the ritual of family devotions, as taught by the missionaries, he, at the same time, indulged his lustful desires.

For two weeks, from December 14 until she was sent to Fort Walla Walla on the 28th, Lorinda spent the nights with Five Crows and the days in the house of the Bishop. Of this she said: “I would return early in the morning to the bishop’s house, and be violently taken away at night. The bishop provided kindly for me while at his house.”

Spalding, while glossing over the conduct of his only convert among the Cayuses, Five Crows, severely criticized the Catholic clergy for not protecting Lorinda. 28 It should be remembered, however, that the Bishop and his associates had to compromise their actions because of the threat of violence to themselves. In this respect, their situation paralleled that of McBean at Fort Walla Walla who hesitated to receive Osborn and his family.

Since Five Crows was a Protestant, the Bishop could make no appeal for mercy which was based on ecclesiastical authority. Moreover, Father Ricard at Fort Walla Walla had sent a messenger with an urgent warning to Bishop Blanchet: “that the lives of the priests were in danger... because the Vicar General [Father Brouillet] helped Mr. Spalding to escape.”

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Father Ricard also reported that the Cayuses had become so threatening, even towards the French Canadians in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, that McBean had taken emergency measures at the fort to ward off a possible attack. The receipt of this warning at 4:30 on the morning of Monday, the 12th, no doubt accounted for the reluctance of the Bishop and his fellow clerics to do anything that might arouse the anger of Five Crows. Here is the explanation for those bitter words spoken by Father Brouillet to Lorinda: “You must go, or he will come back and do us all an injury.”

**Two Girls Taken as Wives**

Emboldened by the apparent success of Tamsucky and Five Crows in their dealings with Lorinda Bewley, several of the young men from Tiloukaikt’s camp cast lustful eyes on two teen-age girls, Mary Smith, age fifteen, and Susan Kimball, sixteen. Why sixteen-year-old Ellen Canfield was not involved is not known. She may have been ill at the time.

Mary Smith had so captured the attention of Edward, son of Tiloukaikt, that he had wanted her for his wife several weeks before the massacre took place. Mrs. Saunders wrote: “Edward had tried to buy Mary Smith when he had seen her at Umatilla when the [Smith] family was on their way to the Mission. She was a beautiful brunette and the young chief had offered five horses for her.”

According to Catherine, one of the chiefs [the implication is that he was Tamsucky] called a meeting of some of the young Indian men and the girl captives for the evening after Lorinda had been abducted. Through interpreters, including Nicholas Finley and Joe Stanfield, the chief pointed out the helpless condition of the young women; “that there were a lot of vagabond Indians who would be happy to introduce into their tepees a young woman;” that it was therefore best for each of the girls to select one of the young men for her husband and thus be protected. When the chief asked if they were willing, all answered with a firm “No.”

Then followed another long harangue when the chief became increasingly threatening. Fresh in the minds of the girls was the memory of what had happened to Lorinda Bewley. When the chief threatened taking them by violence, Mary Smith and Susan Kimball consented.
Catherine’s account follows: “The chief told them they were wise now, and called on the young men that wanted white wives to come forward. Two did so; one named Clark; the other Frank [Escaloom]; both influential and rich, and both able to speak some English. The girls were told to choose between these young men, when Mary Smith took Clark; and Susan Kimball, Frank… Miss Kimball wept all the time…” 30

For some reason Clark, a son of Tiloukaikt, changed his mind. Then his brother, Edward, stepped forward and claimed Mary for his wife. Frank, who was to take Susan, was one who assisted in the killing of her father, a fact she must have known. Catherine wrote that Tiloukaikt was opposed to any of the Indians taking white wives, but by this time he had lost control over his son Edward, who was in various ways usurping his authority.

Among those present at the meeting were Mrs. Saunders and her daughter Helen. When Edward pointed to Helen and asked how old she was, Mrs. Saunders replied: “Eleven snows.” Actually she was then fourteen years old. “Eleven snows, too young,” said Edward and they let her go.

According to Mrs. Saunders, Susan Kimball, previous to the meeting with the Indians, had said that she would rather die than marry an Indian. “Of course,” wrote Mrs. Saunders, “we all realized the enormity of the sacrifice, but we also knew that if the Indians once began to kill, they would spare no one. Mrs. Kimball said she would not insist upon life considering the terrible sacrifice her daughter would be called upon to make, but would leave the decision to the girl herself.” 31

Catherine wrote: “Mary was a brave girl. She took the young brave and when in his presence was cheerful, but in secret wept. Never was a young bridegroom prouder of his wife than Edward of this young girl. He strutted about with that consequential air so common with Indians. He would inquire, ‘Where is my wife?’ so as to cause everyone who heard him great amusement.” 32

According to Cannon, Edward wanted a marriage service. Mary’s father was hesitant to give his consent but, after talking with Finley and Stanfield, was so cowed by what they said that he dared not object. Daniel Young, in his deposition of January 30, 1849, stated: “I told Mr. Smith, were I a father, I would never suffer that, so long as I had power to use an arm. His reply was, ‘You don’t know what you would do; I would not
dare to say a word if they should take my own wife.”

Cannon, in his *Waiilatpu*, published in 1915, without stating his source wrote that Mary gave herself freely to Edward because she loved him and that some form of a marriage ceremony was performed. He stated: “Sitting behind the stove, their arms encircling each other’s waist, the Smith girl reading the Bible and Edward commenting on the same, was the manner in which these young lovers spent their evenings.” After the service, the couple retired to an upper room in the emigrant house. And again from Cannon: “At the time of the ransom, when it came to the final parting, Edward was free to admit that the prospect of the girl’s being happy with him after her people should have left the country was very remote and he willingly gave her up, both parting with an aching heart.”

This incredible story has been repeated in recent years by two writers. Thus the myths connected with the Whitman story continue to proliferate. Catherine tells a quite different story. According to her, after the captives had been taken to Fort Walla Walla, Edward came and asked McBean to let him see Mary. McBean then told the girl that Edward wanted to see her but she refused to see him. “Three times did Edward send for her,” wrote Catherine, “requesting to see her, if but for a moment; but she would not comply. After they had left the Fort, Mr. McBean came in and laughingly told her that he thought her very hard hearted to treat that poor fellow so, remarking that he seemed heart broken, having wept freely. Mary told him that she did not care for his tears.”

When Catherine wrote her reminiscences, she knew of the report being circulated that Mary was in love with Edward. She wrote in rebuttal: “I was a witness to the above, and would here refute a story that is going the rounds. It is as follows: Mary Smith was in love with the Indian as much as he was with her; that she did not want to leave him, and when we were embarking [at Fort Walla Walla], she stood on the bank with her lover, unable to make up her mind whether to go or stay. Mr. Ogden gave her five minutes to make up her mind; if she did not decide in that time, he would leave her. Mary stood still till just as the boat shoved off, when she kissed the Indian and jumped aboard… I know not what object the author of this tale has in view… I know the above story to be false and without the least foundation. At the time of our leaving the Fort, there
was not a Cayuse Indian on the place… Being her constant companion,
I had opportunities of knowing her feelings on the subject. When not
in the presence of the Indians, she wept over her disgrace, and would
curse the author of it. It seems to me as though these poor girls suffered
enough, without the foul language of calumny following them.” 34

With but one exception, the married women and widows were
not molested during the month’s captivity. Even before the massacre
started, Joe Stanfield had cast lecherous eyes on the widow, Mrs. Hays.
On the day after the Whitmans were killed, Joe told her that unless she
was willing to be known as his wife, the women and children would be
killed. “She consented to this in order to save the lives of the rest,”
wrote Catherine. “He then tried to persuade her to elope with him some
night. This she steadly refused to do, asking him what would become of
the others if she deserted them. He replied, ‘Let them all go to hell.’” 35

One night when Joe insisted on going to bed with her, Mrs. Hays,
with the wisdom of Solomon, placed her four-year-old boy in between
them. 36 According to Catherine, when Stanfield was finally convinced
that she would not be his wife, he finally exclaimed that she could also
go to hell.

Judging by the guarded comments of both Catherine and Mrs.
Saunders, much that happened went unreported. Of this Catherine
wrote: “In conclusion, I would like to say that I have endeavored to
present things in their true light. What has been related in the fore-
going pages, is for the most part what fell under my own observation.
In giving a history, I have had to touch upon a delicate subject, —one
that I have always avoided in conversation, namely, the treatment of the
young women by the Indians. I have endeavored to present them in such
a manner as to spare the feelings of those concerned. For this reason I
have not related many things that would be interesting.” 37

**Release of the Captives**

On December 10, 1847, three days after being restored to his fam-
ily, Spalding wrote to Bishop Blanchet, addressing him as “Reverend and Dear Friend.” He begged for the Bishop’s intercession with
the Cayuse chiefs in behalf of the safety of the captives held at Waiilatpu.
Naturally, Spalding was concerned for the welfare of his daughter Eliza.
He wrote: “My object in writing principally is to give information
through you, to the Cayuses, that it is our wish to have peace, that we do not wish the Americans to come from below to avenge the wrong; we hope the Cayuse and the Americans will be on friendly terms, that Americans will no more come in their country, unless they wish it... I know that you will do all in your power for the relief of the captives, women and children at Waiilatpu, that you will spare no pains to appease and quiet the Indians... Please send this, or copy, to Governor Abernethy. The Nez Perces held a meeting yesterday; they pledged themselves to protect us from the Cayuse if we would prevent the Americans from coming up to avenge the murders. This we have pledged to do, and for this we beg for the sake of our lives at this place and at Mr. Walker's [Tshimakain]. By all means keep quiet; send no war reports; nothing but proposals for peace.”

Spalding wrote as a frightened man, as indeed he had reason to be. When the Cayuses learned of the contents of this letter, they said that it was easy to see why he had written as he did because “he was in a hole.”

After his rescue by Ogden, Spalding’s attitude towards both the Bishop and the Cayuses made a complete about-face. The Bishop, whom he had called his “Dear Friend,” became the object of bitter criticism along with members of his clergy.

Notwithstanding the assurances he had given the Nez Perces that he would do what he could to prevent the Americans from making war on the Cayuses, Spalding urged the Oregon Volunteers, whom he met at The Dalles on his way down the Columbia, to hasten and kill all the Cayuses except a few whom he named as worthy of being spared. “Let them be pursued with unrelenting hatred and hostility,” he wrote, “until the life-blood has atoned for their infamous deeds.” Spalding may not be blamed for dissembling to the Indians when he, the members of his family, and those at Waiilatpu were in danger, yet the vehemence with which he advocated retaliation suggests the emotional reaction which came after being safely rescued.

The Indians Present Their Case

The enormity of the crimes committed by Tiloukaikt and members of his band at Waiilatpu was soon realized by the Cayuse chiefs who lived along the Umatilla River, and they became afraid. Even though they had not taken part in the massacre, they realized that in all probability the
whole Cayuse nation would be subjected to a fearful retaliation at the hands of the Americans. On December 18, Chief Camaspelo, who was also known as Big Belly, called on Bishop Blanchet. According to Brouillet, Camaspelo told the Bishop: “…that he had disapproved of what had happened at Wailatpu; that the young men had stolen his word.” Camaspelo was fearful and discouraged. He even spoke of killing all his horses and “of leaving the country, as all the Indians expected to die.”

Camaspelo’s visit followed by two days the receipt of Spalding’s letter with its frantic appeal for the Bishop’s intercession in behalf of peace. The Bishop felt that the time was opportune for a council to be held of all the Cayuse chiefs to see what steps should be taken. With Camaspelo’s approval, messengers were sent to the different chiefs bidding them to assemble at St. Anne’s Mission on Monday, December 20. At 10:00 a.m. on the appointed day, according to Brouillet’s account of the meeting, all the great chiefs of the Cayuses, together with many sub-chiefs, crowded into Bishop Blanchet’s house. Among those present were Tiloukaikt, Young Chief, Five Crows, and Camaspelo. With the Bishop were three of his clergy, including Father Brouillet, and their interpreter.

Blanchet, acting as chairman, opened the discussion by stating that the purpose of the gathering was to take counsel to see what could be done to prevent war. He passed on the substance of Spalding’s letter, together with some proposals given verbally to him by two Nez Perces who had delivered the letter. These proposals were: “1. That Americans should not come to make war; 2. That they should send up two or three great men to make a treaty of peace; 3. That when these great men should arrive, all captives should be released; 4. That they would offer no offense to Americans before knowing the news from below [i.e., the Willamette Valley].” After presenting these proposals, the Bishop invited the chiefs to speak.

The meeting lasted for a full day and, according to Brouillet’s account, the chiefs brought up all of their old grievances against the Americans. Here is the most reliable account of the reasons for the Whitman massacre from the Indians’ point of view. After a brief speech by Camaspelo, who spoke in approval of the propositions, Tiloukaikt arose. He began by saying that “he was not a great speaker, and that his talk would not be long.” He then launched into a detailed review of the history of the
Cayuse nation “since the arrival of the whites in the country down to the present time.” Brouillet noted that he spoke for two hours.

Since Brouillet did not know the Nez Perce language, he was unable to give a detailed report of all the grievances mentioned by Tiloukaik’t, but enough was made clear to him through his interpreter to give him a fair appreciation of what was being said. According to Brouillet, Tiloukaik’t referred to the death of the Nez Perce chief, called The Hat, who was with W. H. Gray when they were attacked by Sioux Indians in what is now western Nebraska on August 7, 1837, and to the death of Elijah Hedding, the son of a Walla Walla chief, Yellow Serpent, at Sutter’s Fort in California in the fall of 1844. Neither of these Indians was a Cayuse, yet Tiloukaik’t referred to their deaths as a reason for complaint. In both cases, Tiloukaik’t held the Americans to blame, as Gray was an American and Elijah Hedding was killed by an American. No doubt, Tiloukaik’t also mentioned the death of Cayuse Halket, a nephew of Young Chief, at the Red River Mission in January 1837.

Some have advanced the “blood-feud” theory to explain the Indian code of conduct which demanded a life for a life. This was a matter of tribal honor. Such a theory would account for the killing of the eight immigrant men at Waiilatpu against whom the Cayuses held no personal grudges. Unfortunately for these victims, they were Americans and they happened to be at the scene of tragedy when the killings began. Although the members of Tiloukaik’t’s band harbored grudges against both Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, and possibly also against the two Sager boys and Andrew Rodgers, the existence of a racial feud may also have contributed to the decision of the Indians to kill these five. The fact that Tiloukaik’t spoke of the deaths of The Hat and Elijah Hedding lends support to the theory of a blood-feud as one of the causes of the Whitman massacre.

Since Tiloukaik’t spoke for about two hours, he must have mentioned many other complaints not recorded by Father Brouillet. No doubt he reviewed the issues discussed with Whitman in the fall of 1841 when he had demanded payment from Whitman for the use of the land. This Whitman had refused to give. Undoubtedly, Whitman was accused of being too sympathetic to the immigrants who were crossing the Cayuse country each fall in ever increasing numbers. Tiloukaik’t could have repeated the reports that such half-breeds as Joe Gray, Tom Hill, and
Joe Lewis had given regarding the way the Americans had mistreated the Indians in the States, and the probability of the Americans moving in to occupy Cayuse land and to take their horses. All of the fears and suspicions the Indians felt in regard to Americans came to a focus in their anger against the Whitmans.

Following Tiloukaikt, Five Crows and Young Chief spoke, and then Edward Tiloukaikt took the floor. He emphasized the terrible loss of life the Cayuses had suffered because of the introduction of the white man’s diseases. Brouillet wrote: “He ... gave a touching picture of the afflicted families, in seeing borne to the grave a father, a mother, a brother, or a sister; spoke of a single member of a family who had been left to weep alone over all the rest who had disappeared.” He repeated the accusation, first made by Joe Lewis, that Whitman and Spalding had plotted to poison the Indians in order to get their lands and their horses, and also the calumny that Rodgers, before he died, had admitted that this report was true.

After hours of discussion, the chiefs decided to ask Bishop Blanchet to draw up a “manifesto” to be sent to Governor Abernethy. This was to contain the four proposals suggested by the Nez Perces, which were supported in part by Spalding’s letter. To these four, two more proposals were added. One stated that the Americans should “forget the lately committed murders, as the Cayuses will forget the murder of the son of the great chief of Walla Walla committed in California.” The second new proposal, suggested perhaps by an ambiguous statement in Spalding’s letter to the Bishop, stated: “They ask that Americans may not travel any more through their country, as their young men might do them harm.” This called for the cessation of the annual Oregon emigration from the States which, of course, was an impossibility.

The Bishop wrote an introduction for the six-point manifesto in which he referred to the conviction held by the Indians that Whitman had actually been poisoning them. He mentioned the fact that six Cayuses had been buried on Sunday, November 28, and three more on the morning of the day the massacre began. In his concluding statement, the Bishop wrote: “They were led to believe that the whites had undertaken to kill them all, and that these were the motives which led them to kill the Americans.” The document was signed by Tiloukaikt, Camaspelo, Young Chief, and Five Crows. 44
Late in the afternoon or early that evening, a messenger arrived from Fort Walla Walla with the surprising news that Peter Skene Ogden had arrived at Fort Walla Walla and wanted to meet with the Cayuse chiefs and the Catholic clergy without delay.\(^{45}\) This was a most surprising development for the Cayuse, as they had assumed that all negotiations for the release of the captives would be carried on with the Americans. Suddenly they were confronted with the fact that the Hudson’s Bay Company had entered the picture. The manifesto so laboriously drawn up that day was now nullified. Some good results, however, came from the Monday meeting. The chiefs had come to an understanding that they should negotiate with the whites as a tribe and not as individuals. There was but one discordant note in their discussions. Five Crows had refused to give up Lorinda Bewley, even though all had entreated him to do so, including Bishop Blanchet.

None of the Catholic clergy had ventured to leave St. Anne Mission after Father Brouillet’s return from Wailatpu on December 1 because of fear of attack by members of Tiloukaikt’s band. They had been warned that Brouillet’s life was in danger because he had helped Spalding to escape. Having now been summoned to Fort Walla Walla, they ventured to make the trip and did so without incident.

**Ogden Secures Release of the Captives**

Fortunately for the captives, the responsibility of negotiating their release fell to the lot of white-haired Peter Skene Ogden. In all of Old Oregon there was no other person so well qualified, so highly regarded by the natives, and so strategically situated as he to induce the Cayuse to give up their hostages. He had the advantage of being able to speak to the Indians from a position of power, as they were dependent upon the Hudson’s Bay Company for many of their supplies, especially guns and ammunition needed for their hunting expeditions. In exchange, the Company received their pelts or horses. Ogden was able to stop all such trading, a fact of which the Cayuse chiefs were fully aware. Here was an advantage which no American official enjoyed. Moreover, Ogden had a native wife and this constituted a bond of sympathy with the Cayuses. Ogden did not go to Fort Walla Walla to punish the Cayuses but to persuade them to release their captives. He did not take a single soldier with him, only sixteen boatmen. Realizing that the safety of nearly fifty men, women,
and children at Waiilatpu was involved, and in addition those at Lapwai and Tshimakain, Ogden moved as rapidly as circumstances permitted to arrange for their deliverance.

The Cayuse chiefs, with the single exception of Five Crows, together with many of the younger men of the tribe, Bishop Blanchet and his clergy, and their interpreter assembled at Fort Walla Walla at 9:30 Thursday morning, December 23. Five Crows absented himself because he did not want to be persuaded to give up Lorinda. Ogden opened the council by saying: “We have been among you for thirty years without the shedding of blood; we are traders, and of a different nation from the Americans; but recollect, we supply you with ammunition, not to kill Americans, who are of the same color, speak the same language, and worship the same God as ourselves, and whose cruel fate causes our hearts to bleed. Why do we make you chiefs, if you cannot control your young men?”

Ogden pointed out that Dr. Whitman was not guilty of poisoning their people, as Indians all over Oregon were dying of measles and other diseases. Ogden asked: “How could he be responsible for the deaths of so many in such widely scattered places?” Ogden made it clear that he had not come to Walla Walla as a representative of the Americans in the Willamette Valley but rather as an official of the Hudson’s Bay Company. He explained that he had left Fort Vancouver before the Americans in the Valley had been notified of the killings. “The company have nothing to do with your quarrel,” he emphasized. “If you wish it, on my return I will see what can be done for you, but I do not promise to prevent war. Deliver me the prisoners to return to their friends, and I will pay you a ransom, that is all.”

In the report of the negotiations sent to Sir George Simpson under date of March 12, 1848, Ogden stated that although the Cayuses had not altered “their usual friendly deportment towards the establishment, and expressed in very earnest language their desire to remain on friendly terms with the Company, [they] were not so tractable on the subject of restoring the American prisoners, whom they wished to retain as hostages for their own security.” Since Ogden was unable to offer any assurances that the Americans would not seek revenge, it required “all his tact and great personal influence with them to procure the liberation of these unhappy captives, who would have been mercilessly butchered on the first commencement of hostilities.”

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The discussion over the release of the captives and the amount of ransom to be paid continued late into the evening. The Cayuses kept demanding that Ogden give some assurance that the Americans would not make war against them, but this he said he could not give. Regarding this, Brouillet wrote: “He promised them only that he would speak in their favor.”

Finally Ogden agreed to give a ransom consisting of “fifty blankets, fifty shirts, ten guns, ten fathoms of tobacco, ten handkerchiefs, and one hundred balls and powder,” provided all the captives were brought to Fort Walla Walla within six days, i.e., by December 29. Ogden felt that he needed the interval of six days in order to get word to Spalding and to give time for those at Lapwai to arrive at the Fort.

No one could speak for Five Crows, but the chiefs who lived on the Umatilla promised to use their influence to obtain the release of Lorinda. Ogden was concerned about her rescue and emphasized that he would give no ransom until all the captives had been brought to the fort. Tiloukaikt promised to turn over twelve oxen and sixteen bags of coarse flour to provide food for the released captives on their way down the river to Fort Vancouver. Of course, such supplies would come from the property formerly owned by Dr. Whitman.

Some Nez Perces were also present at the December 23 meeting and, although they had not been involved in the Waiilatpu tragedy, they asked that a ransom be given to them for the safe delivery of the Spalding family, Mary Johnson, Horace Hart, W. D. Canfield, and Mr. Jackson. Ogden promised them “twelve blankets, twelve shirts, two guns, twelve handkerchiefs, five fathoms of tobacco, two hundred balls and powder, and some knives.”

The items paid to the Cayuses and Nez Perces in ransom may have been limited to the stores on hand at Fort Walla Walla and possibly some supplies that Ogden had the foresight to take with him up the river. Ogden sent a special dispatch to Spalding on the evening of the 23rd reporting on the agreement reached with the natives and urging him to lose “no time in joining me.” He warned Spalding against making any promises whatever to the natives. Ogden repeated his injunction for haste, and intimated that he might have to start for Fort Vancouver with the released captives from Waiilatpu before those from Lapwai could arrive. “Use all diligence possible to overtake us,” he urged.
Spalding replied in a note dated December 25, which is evidence that Ogden’s messenger had made the journey of about 140 miles to Lapwai in two days. Spalding wrote: “This people are unwilling that I should leave their country and I have promised to return and live with them provided the melancholy affair at Wailatpu can be settled and the Nez Perces continue friendly to the whites.” Just before sending his letter to Ogden, Spalding added a postscript: “I have just learned from the two [Nez Perces] who returned from [Walla Walla], that the Cayuses have resolved should they learn that the Americans purpose to come up to avenge the death of those who have been massacred, that they will immediately fall upon myself and family and all Americans in the country and kill all.” In view of this alarming information, Spalding begged Ogden not to leave Walla Walla until those from Lapwai had arrived. Ogden sent word to Walker and Eells, who with their families had taken refuge in Fort Colville, to remain there until they could be rescued at some later date.

**No Time to Lose**

News of the arrival of Ogden at Fort Walla Walla had reached the Indians at Wailatpu on Monday, December 20, the day that the meeting of the chiefs was being held at St. Anne’s Mission. Although Mrs. Saunders was unaware of the cause, she remembered that the Indians became very excited and “were running about on horseback in every direction.” The captives were not told of the December 23 meeting at Fort Walla Walla and did not know that they were to be released until a friendly Cayuse told Mrs. Saunders that “the big white chief” had come and that he was sure “we were not to be killed.” Catherine has given us the following: “Christmas dawned upon us at last. Oh, how unlike any that had ever dawned before! Mrs. Saunders prepared a little treat for the children in her room, but we ate in secret when no Indians were about... We entertained little hope of ever leaving our prison house. We knew that as soon as the news reached the [Willamette] settlement, an army would be sent to our rescue. We also knew that this would be the signal for our death. Our captors had given us to understand that they expected the Americans would send an army to punish them, and their intention to kill us in such a case. It was, therefore, with alarm mingled with joy that we heard of the arrival of three boats at Walla Walla.”

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Tiloukaikt probably returned from Fort Walla Walla, following his meeting with Ogden, on December 24. When some of the members of his band learned of the agreement reached with Ogden regarding the release of the captives, they strenuously objected. We may assume that they included Tamsucky, Tomahas, Frank Escaloom, and the chief’s son, Edward. It is possible that some of these persons were at the Walla Walla meeting.

Sometime on Christmas day, Tiloukaikt told Mrs. Saunders that all could leave for the fort on Wednesday, the 29th. When she asked whether they could take their personal belongings, he replied: “Yes. Take all and heaps of food for a long journey.” She interpreted this to mean that the released captives would be going down the Columbia River. In the few days interval before the 29th, when they could be leaving Waiilatpu, the five men among the captives had opportunity to butcher the seven oxen and to grind the sixteen bags of flour. Catherine searched through the debris on the floor of the main mission house where she found Dr. Whitman’s original commission from the American Board dated February 17, 1835. This she took with some other items which later she presented to the museum at Whitman College.

Mrs. Saunders tells of their departure from Waiilatpu: “So on December twenty-ninth, just one month after the massacre, we started on our way. We had finished loading before daylight and were traveling just as the sun rose.” Five wagons were needed to carry their baggage, including their food supplies, and the women and children. The wagons pulled by horses soon took the lead, while those with the slow plodding oxen fell behind. Catherine wrote: “We had gone but a short distance when a squaw came out of her lodge nearby and told us to hurry, that the natives were going to kill us.”

The wagon in which Mrs. Saunders and the Sager girls were riding, which was evidently at the rear of the caravan, reached the mouth of the Touchet River where it emptied into the Walla Walla River, at noon. They were then a little more than halfway to the fort. The day was cold and rainy. While fording the Touchet, those in the wagon got thoroughly drenched by the high water which washed over the sides of the wagon bed. After crossing the river, they stopped for refreshments. While still at the crossing, Tiloukaikt and Beardy rode up and warned them to keep moving. “Hurry, hurry,” they said. “No camp, get to the
fort.” Now it was the experience of these two chiefs to become afraid of the rebellious young men of their own tribe. Beardy remained with the party and was especially helpful in urging the oxen on. “It rained all the afternoon,” wrote Mrs. Saunders, “and the downpour still continued when we got to the Fort.”

Ogden met the Saunders party at the gate; it was then dark. “Thank God, Mrs. Saunders,” he fervently exclaimed, “that you are all safe. I thought that you had been killed.” They were quickly ushered into a large room where a fire was burning in a fireplace.

The Sager girls remembered Ogden as being a large, jovial man, whom they called “Uncle Pete.” Also present was John Mix Stanley whose solicitude for the comfort of the Sager girls at the fort and while going down the river was never to be forgotten. Shortly after arriving at the fort, someone asked Catherine how long they had been held captives by the Indians. “I innocently replied,” she wrote, “three or four months and was surprised to find that it had only been one month.”

The released captives had a joyful reunion at the fort with the Osborne family and to their surprise found that Lorinda Bewley had arrived that afternoon. In a deposition dated December 12, 1848, Lorinda told her story: “On the 28th of December, in the morning, while I was at the Five Crows’ lodge, an Indian rode up leading a large horse and handed me a note from Mr. Ogden, stating the joyful news that he had finally succeeded in redeeming all the unfortunate captives; that he had redeemed me. I had nothing to fear and nothing to do but to accompany the Indian as fast as I could, comfortably, to Walla Walla.” From contemporary sources we learn that the Indian who came to escort her to the fort was Camaspelo. Lorinda’s deposition continues: “I could hardly believe my eyes. I bowed upon my knees with a grateful heart, and thanked my Saviour for his great mercy to me. The Five Crows prepared tea and a good breakfast for me, and put a new blanket and buffalo robe upon the saddle to make it comfortable for me to ride and for sleeping at night, and a thick shawl around me, and assisted me on my horse, and bade me goodbye kindly and with much feeling, and gave me food for the journey.” Evidently the note from Ogden, added to what Camaspelo had to say, convinced Five Crows that he had no choice but to let Lorinda go. This he did with surprising good grace.

Since a long ride of about fifty-five miles separated the lodge of Five
Crows from Fort Walla Walla, Camaspelo and Lorinda had to spend one night in the open. Lorinda stated that they camped on the Walla Walla River, a few miles below Waiilatpu. The night was cold and foggy and it began to rain in the morning. Camaspelo built a fire which he replenished during the night for her benefit. No one could have been kinder to her than he. After breakfast, the Indian spent a few minutes in his morning devotions, in which Lorinda joined, even though they spoke different languages in their prayers.

As they approached the gate of the fort, Ogden rushed out to meet them. Regarding this, Lorinda stated: “Mr. Ogden took me gently from the horse, as a father, and said, ‘Thank God, I have got you safe at last... I feared they would never give you up.’” With all of the captives once held at Waiilatpu safely within the fort, Ogden paid the promised ransom to the Cayuses on Thursday, December 30. Mrs. Saunders wrote that the Indians “celebrated with a dance inside the fort yard.” As Ogden was fearful as to what they might do to their former captives, he insisted on the women and children remaining in locked rooms with guards at the doors. “After the dance,” wrote Mrs. Saunders, “the only Indians allowed in the fort were the old ones and those known to be friendly, and even these had to leave at sundown. A large band of Cayuses were camped just outside the fort, and this was the cause of no small anxiety to both Ogden and McBean.

The first detachment of Oregon Volunteers, recruited in the Willamette Valley and consisting of only ten men under the command of Major H. A. G. Lee, arrived at The Dalles on December 21.55 Alanson Hinman returned to Waskopum with this party. Although Major Lee and his men were the first of the Volunteers to advance that far up the Columbia, their primary purpose was not punitive but rather to protect American mission property at The Dalles and to establish a base for future military operations against the Cayuses.

Exaggerated reports of the number of American soldiers at The Dalles were carried by Indians to Fort Walla Walla. This greatly excited the Cayuses. Fortunately for the safety of the captives at Waiilatpu, these reports arrived after they were safe within the palisades of Fort Walla Walla. Ogden would have been glad to leave for Fort Vancouver the day after the released captives had arrived at Walla Walla, but he felt constrained to wait for the Spalding party of nine who were to come from Lapwai.
Brouillet reported: “Divers rumors were in circulation among the Indians. It was said that an army had arrived at The Dalles, and they had come to avenge the murders. It was feared that these rumors might change the minds of the Indians, and cause them to retain the captives.” Although Ogden, his men, and the former captives were within the walls of the fort, actually they were in a vulnerable situation, as the Indians could easily set fire to the palisades and burn down the fort.

Again and again the Cayuses asked Ogden if it were true that American soldiers were at The Dalles. Of this, Brouillet wrote: “Mr. Ogden told them he knew nothing about it, but that he did not believe it.” Ogden was correct in assuming that the Americans would not send a punitive expedition into the Cayuse country before the captives were safely delivered into the Willamette Valley. Brouillet wrote that had the Americans attacked the Cayuses before the captives were in a safe place, such a step would have become “the signal for the general massacre of all those unfortunate beings.” No one appreciated the delicacy of the situation more fully than Ogden, who became increasingly anxious for the safe arrival of the Spalding party. He realized that there was no time to lose.

THE LAPWAI MISSION ABANDONED

After receiving Ogden’s letter of December 23 late in the evening of the 25th, Spalding made immediate preparations to leave for Fort Walla Walla. Even though he and his wife had the help of Mary Johnson and the three men, Hart, Canfield, and Jackson—it took them two days to get ready to go. Food supplies for the journey of nearly 150 miles had to be packed. Personal belongings had to be selected and there were countless decisions that had to be made regarding which items were to be taken on pack animals to the fort and which were to be abandoned. The Spaldings had to face the difficulties involved in taking their three small children with them on horseback for such a long ride through wintry weather. Since it was raining during those days at Fort Walla Walla, it could well have been snowing at Lapwai. The children were a boy, eight years old, and two girls, aged three and one. No one can measure the depth of the emotions which stirred the hearts of both Henry and Eliza as they hastily prepared to abandon their home and leave their work among the Nez Perces where they had lived for eleven years and to go whither they knew not.
The inventory which Spalding later compiled of the property he was obliged to abandon at Lapwai gives eloquent evidence of the success of his work. A cluster of nine buildings were on the grounds: their story-and-a-half log cabin home which measured 30 x 20 feet; a schoolhouse, 20 x 16; a meeting house, 50 x 30; a printing shop, 28 x 16; and five other buildings used largely for storage purposes. There was a millrace one-third of a mile long with an enclosed gristmill. More than twenty acres were under cultivation and the fruit orchard contained more than two hundred trees, some of which were bearing. The livestock included 101 head of cattle, thirty-nine horses, and thirty-one hogs. Also listed were over six hundred bushels of wheat, corn, peas, and potatoes, and four hundred copies of the *Gospel of Matthew in Nez Perce*, five hundred copies of primers, and three hundred copies of a native hymn book. Spalding estimated the monetary value of the property abandoned to be more than $10,000. This is a remarkable showing when it is remembered that Spalding received no salary from the Board [Appendix 2].

The evidence of the material prosperity of the Lapwai station reflects only indirectly the beneficial results which the Spaldings had achieved in their educational and religious activities for the natives. These achievements could never be catalogued or evaluated in financial terms. No Protestant missionaries in all of Old Oregon were as successful in their work of Christianizing and civilizing the natives as were Henry and Eliza Spalding. Then came the sad day, December 28, 1847, when all their work with the Nez Perces came to an abrupt end. They had to flee for fear of what might happen to them and to their children should the Oregon Volunteers bring war to the Cayuses.

When the Spalding party, consisting of six adults and three children, mounted their horses and guided their pack animals down the trail that led to Fort Walla Walla, they were joined by a company of forty armed Nez Perces who decided to escort them to make sure of their welfare and safety. No doubt Henry and Eliza remembered how, during the last week of November 1836, they had been escorted to the Lapwai Valley by a similar number of Nez Perces who were in that manner expressing their joy in having the missionary couple settle in their midst. Perhaps some of the Nez Perces who had been in the welcoming party were now guarding their departure. Perhaps also Spalding remembered that some of the Nez Perces had told him eleven years before: “The Nez
Perces do not have difficulties with the white men as the Cayuses do.” As Spalding rode away, he resolved, God willing, to return.58 William Craig, who had a Nez Perce wife and was living with the Indians, decided that he would for the time being remain in the Lapwai Valley.

When Ogden wrote to Spalding on December 23, he anticipated that Spalding would be able to arrive at the fort much sooner than proved to be the case. As each day passed and the Indians around the fort became more and more restless as they mulled over fresh rumors about the presence of American soldiers at The Dalles, Ogden became uneasy. Mrs. Saunders wrote that finally Ogden declared: “If the people from the Nez Perce Mission did not arrive by Saturday [January 1, 1848], he would not take the chances of staying any longer, but would start without them.” On Saturday noon, an Indian, riding in advance of the Spalding caravan, reached the fort with the welcome news that the Lapwai party was approaching. “Great was the rejoicing,” wrote Mrs. Saunders, when the Spaldings arrived. Canfield was reunited with his family and the Spaldings with their daughter Eliza. Catherine noted: “Mrs. Spalding found her daughter much changed from the healthy girl who had left her a month before. She was thin as a skeleton.”

Catherine wrote of a different kind of welcome which Spalding might have received: “Early in the day Tamsucky came to the fort with his gun in his hand, evidently going to kill Mr. Spalding. Taking his stand by the side of the gate, he seemed to be waiting for Mr. Spalding to pass on. Mr. S. came right in to see his daughter, who stayed in the house. He kept his eyes on Tamsucky as he passed by. Seeing so many Nez Perces there armed, he [Tamsucky] became alarmed and left by the opposite gate.” 59

The ransom promised to the Nez Perces for the safe deliverance of the Spalding party was duly paid. Spalding listed the items in his inventory of the Lapwai property and valued them at $130.31. Writing to Simpson on March 12, 1848, Ogden reported the actions he had taken in paying the ransom to the Indians and directed that, should the Company not approve of this expenditure, “to avoid any remarks being made, let it at once be placed to my private account.” 60 Spalding in a letter written to the American Board in 1851 stated: “I am not aware that the H.B. Co. have ever been indemnified by the Government of this Territory or the Home Government.” 61 There is no evidence that
the Hudson’s Bay Company ever submitted any claim to any American authority for a reimbursement nor held Ogden liable for the modest cost of the goods given in ransom.

**The Final Deliverance**

As rumors of the presence of American soldiers at The Dalles continued to spread, the anger of the malcontents among the Cayuses increased. Looking back on those days, Ogden said that it was his firm conviction that “had not the women and children been given up, they undoubtedly would all have been murdered.” 62 With the safe arrival of the Lapwai party, Ogden made immediate preparations to leave for Fort Vancouver the next morning. The urgency of the occasion was such that even the Spaldings seemingly made no objection to Sunday travel. In addition to the forty-seven, including Stanfield, arriving from Waiilatpu and the nine from Lapwai, there were eleven at the Fort who wanted to go down the river. This included the Osborn family of five, the artist Stanley, the two Manson boys, Bishop Blanchet, and two of his priests. The other members of the Catholic clergy decided to remain at Walla Walla with the hope of being able to return to one or both of their newly established missions. The combined parties seeking transportation to Fort Vancouver numbered sixty-seven, including fourteen men, eleven women, and forty-two children. With Ogden and his sixteen boatmen, this meant a grand total of eighty-four who had to be divided into three groups, one for each of the three boats. Much of the baggage which had been brought to Walla Walla from Waiilatpu and Lapwai had to be stored temporarily at the fort as the bateaux were not large enough to carry all this in addition to the passengers, necessary food supplies, bedding and camping equipment, and personal baggage.

A distressing decision had to be made regarding eight or nine-year-old David Malin Cortez, who had been under the Whitman’s care ever since March 1842, when he was left as a forlorn and mistreated waif on their doorstep. No one of the refugee families wanted the responsibility of caring for him. According to Catherine, the priests recommended that the lad be left with McBean at Fort Walla Walla, since his father had been in the employ of the Company and his mother had been a native. Years later, when writing her reminiscences, Matilda recalled how, as the heavily laden bateaux shoved off for their voyage down
the river, the lonely lad stood on the bank “crying as though his heart were breaking as his friends floated away from him.” No further reference has been found regarding what happened to him.

A few hours after the three boats had left, a party of about fifty armed Cayuses arrived at the fort with the demand that “Mr. Spalding be given up to be killed, as they had reliable news of American soldiers en route to their country.” By this time the Cayuses were convinced that Ogden had double-crossed them.

To offset the ill repute given the whole Cayuse tribe by the misdeeds of a few, the good deeds of such men as Stickus, Beardy, and Camaspelo should be remembered who, often at great personal risk, did what they could to ameliorate the lot of the white people. Many of the Cayuses, both men and women, whose names were unknown to the captives but who were anonymously referred to as “an Indian,” rendered innumerable acts of kindness to the captives.

Many a flotilla of bateaux and canoes belonging to the Hudson’s Bay Company had passed up and down the Columbia River, but never before had one carried such a precious cargo as that commanded by Chief Factor Ogden in January 1848. Catherine remembered how “the amiable man with an inexhaustible sense of fun… cheered the monotony of our journey with the reminiscences of his voyages up and down the river. He laughed a great deal about his large family, as he styled us.”

The voyage lasted from Sunday morning, January 2, to noon on the following Saturday, the 8th. Chief Factor James Douglas gave the party a warm welcome at Fort Vancouver. Catherine remembered that most of the refugees were given quarters near the river, while the Spaldings, the four Sager girls, and Lorinda Bewley were entertained in the Douglas home. Elizabeth Sager made such a favorable impression on Mrs. Douglas that she asked to keep her, but Ogden declared that it was his intention to deliver all the Americans into the hands of Governor Abernethy.

After spending the week-end at Fort Vancouver, the Americans were taken by boat to Portland. Since the captives had arrived in the lower Columbia country, the Oregon Volunteers, under the command of Colonel Cornelius Gilliam, were ordered to move up the river and into the Cayuse country to apprehend, if possible, the murderers. The first company of fifty men under Colonel Gilliam’s personal command were on the wharf at Portland ready to leave for The Dalles at the time
the boats arrived from Fort Vancouver. Also present to welcome the former captives were Governor Abernethy and Captain William Shaw; the latter being the one who had delivered the seven Sager orphans to the Whitman home in October 1844. Since Colonel Gilliam had also been a member of the 1844 Oregon emigration and had known the parents of the Sager children, he shared with Shaw a special interest in the twice-orphaned girls.

Elizabeth has given us the following description of their welcome to Portland: “As we pulled in toward the wharf at Portland, a lot of men on the wharf fired a salute. We children were terrified. We crawled under some canvass and tried to hide in the bottom of the boat. We thought they were trying to kill us.” Seeing the terror of the children, Gilliam and Shaw hastened to comfort them. “They told us,” wrote Elizabeth, “that they were firing the guns in our honor.”

The company of former captives began to separate at Portland as relatives and friends took them to their homes. The Spalding family the Sager girls, and Stanley first went with Governor Abernethy to Oregon City. There Stanley was received by Dr. McLoughlin, who was living in retirement and had become an American citizen. The others were entertained for several days in the Abernethy home. The Spaldings then moved to Tualatin Plains to be near their friends, the former independent missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Smith. After a year or so on the Plains, the Spaldings moved to Calapooya, near Brownsville, Oregon, where Mrs. Spalding died on January 7, 1851. Separate homes were found for each of the Sager girls. Their subsequent history is well told in Erwin N. Thompson’s book, *Shallow Grave at Waiilatpu*.

Two of the children died after their arrival in the Willamette Valley, perhaps both as a result of lack of medical care during the captivity and the exposure suffered during their voyage down the Columbia River. Mention has already been made of the death of the four-year-old son of the Osborns. The second to die was the eleven-year-old girl, Mary Aim Bridger, who passed away sometime in the following March. Where she had lived after her arrival in the Valley is not known. Her father, Jim Bridger, was then at Fort Bridger in the Rockies. The death of five children, three at Waiilatpu after the massacre began and two in the Valley, could well be counted as casualties of the massacre, thus bringing the total loss of life to nineteen.
The first to be arrested by authorities of the Provisional Government and charged with complicity in the massacre was Joe Stanfield, who had thrown in his lot with the Americans and had gone down to the Willamette Valley with them. Of him Catherine wrote: “On our arrival at Oregon City, Joe Stanfield was arrested on suspicion of taking part in the massacre, and brought to trial. On being taken by the sheriff, he attempted to conceal a watch which had belonged to Mr. Kimball and some money which had belonged to Mr. Hoffman. 69 Two of the widows testified that Joe had told them he knew of the plans of the Indians before he went after the beef [which was butchered on the morning the massacre began]. He was convicted and sentenced to be taken to General [sic] Gilliam in the Cayuse country to be dealt with as the General saw fit. Gilliam having died before he could reach him, Joe escaped punishment. Reports say that he died in the California gold mines in ’49 or ’50.” 70

Mrs. Saunders characterized Stanfield as “a French Canadian of a very common type.” There is no doubt that he rendered much needed services to the captives during their month’s detention. Since he was able to move among the Indians with impunity, he was able to get food, wood, and water for the captives. He helped Canfield escape. Possibly it was he who suggested that Mrs. Saunders write a letter to McBean which Finley carried to Fort Walla Walla. It was he who dug the graves and buried the dead. And finally he drove one of the ox teams which, yoked to a wagon, carried some of the captives with their belongings to Fort Walla Walla on the day of their deliverance. He was, as Mrs. Saunders described him, “a necessary evil.”

**Spalding’s Letter of Appreciation**

The Archives of the Hudson’s Bay Company contain a letter of appreciation written by Spalding from Tualatin Plains on January 13, 1849, and addressed to Peter Skene Ogden whom he called “My Most Worthy Benefactor.” Spalding wrote: “The date of this letter will call to your mind scenes of the liveliest interest, and does to mine, the occasion of the warmest gratitude to yourself, the honored agent in the hands of kind Heaven, in delivering myself & family & our fellow companions in suffering from the blood stained hands of ruthless, lawless savages, & placed us all in the arms of safety, the bosom of Christian society.”
“I could not allow the anniversary day of our safe arrival at Oregon City to pass without doing myself the pleasure of repeating to you my warmest thanks for your prompt & philanthropic efforts in flying so speedily to our relief & for your judicious & successful efforts in rescuing us all from the perilous situation in the Indian country.”

This is only a short quotation from Spalding’s long and effusive letter of appreciation.

**Discovery of Two Stanley Cayuse Portraits**

The artist, John Mix Stanley, took a special interest in the four Sager girls during their voyage down the Columbia River. Catherine remembered: “When we camped at night, he gave me his guns to carry and taking my little sister would carry her to the camp and wrap us in his serape and kindle a fire for us. He also carried my sister for me when we made the portages.” After their arrival at Fort Vancouver, Stanley bought some calico dress materials for each of the girls. “His care for us,” wrote Catherine, “was a subject of much joking by Mr. Ogden.” Matilda wrote of the visit that she and her sisters made on Dr. McLoughlin when they were in Oregon City: “Mr. Stanley had a room there and was painting portraits and he came to take us down to see his pictures. He wanted to paint my picture, but I was entirely too timid and would not let him.” Before leaving Oregon, Stanley painted pictures of Dr. McLoughlin, Dr. Forbes Barclay, and A. L. Lovejoy.

As has been stated, Stanley painted the portraits of at least four Cayuses when he was at Waiilatpu during the first part of October 1847: Tiloukaikt; Tamsucky; Edward, son of Tiloukaikt; and Waie-cat, son of Tamsucky. We also knew from listings in one of his exhibition catalogues that he had two pictures entitled: “Massacre of Dr. Whitman’s family at Waiilatpu Mission,” and “Abduction of Miss Bewley from Dr. Whitman’s Mission.”

It is possible that Stanley began work on these pictures during the weeks he was at Fort Walla Walla, getting details from McBean, Osborn, and others, and also drawing on his own recollections of his visit to Waiilatpu. Possibly, when Stanley took the Sager girls to see his pictures, he obtained further information from them as to some details he wished to include in his paintings.

After returning to the States, Stanley exhibited his Indian paintings in several cities including Washington, D.C., and Cincinnati, Ohio.
Catalogues describing his exhibit are extant for each of these places. The annotations for the Cayuse portraits displayed in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington reflect information that Stanley had secured from the released captives. The legend for No. 120, listed below, contains some inaccuracies which may be excused when one remembers that he wrote the account several years after the massacre when both his notes and his memory were faulty. The annotations from the catalogue of the Smithsonian exhibit follow:

119. Te-lo-kikt, or Craw-fish walking forward. Principal Chief of the Cayuses, and one of the principal actors in the Whitman butchery at Wailetpu.

120. Shu-ma-hic-cie or Painted Shirt. [Edward] Son of Te-lo-kikt and one of the active murderers of the Mission family. After the massacre, this man was one who took a wife from the captive females, a young and beautiful girl of fourteen [Mary Smith, age 15]. In order to gain her quiet submission to his wishes, he threatened to take the life of her mother and younger sisters. Thus, in the power of Savages, in a new and wild country, remote from civilization and all hope of restraint, she yielded herself to one whose hands were yet wet with the blood of an elder brother. [An obvious reference to Crocket Bewley, who was not Mary’s brother.]

121. Tum-suc-kee. The great ringleader and first instigator of the Whitman Massacre.

122. Waie-Cat. One that Flies. Cayuse Brave and son of Tum-suc-kee. This man, though young, was an active participant in the murder of Dr. Whitman and committed many atrocities upon the defenceless captives. He escaped the ignominious death which awaited those not more guilty than himself.

A disastrous fire on the night of January 24, 1865, destroyed a part of the Smithsonian Institution including the room where the Stanley pictures were being displayed or stored. With the exception of five of his paintings, which happened to be in another part of the building, the whole Stanley collection then at the Smithsonian was lost including the portraits of Tiloukaikt, Tamsucky, and the pictures of the massacre and
the abduction of Miss Bewley. This was an irreparable loss.

Now comes the story of an amazing discovery. The Stanley paintings of Shu-ma-hic-cie and Waie-cat have been found.\textsuperscript{77} For years it had been assumed that all four of Stanley’s portraits of Cayuse Indians had been lost in the Smithsonian fire. Now, however, it appears that Stanley had removed the portraits of the two young men sometime before the fire and that they, with perhaps some other of his works, remained in his possession until his death in 1872. Several efforts were made by Stanley, and later by his heirs, to interest the government in purchasing his paintings, but without success. We can surmise that these two Cayuse portraits passed from generation to generation, and perhaps from living room to attic, and then finally from attic to an antique store.

In the spring of 1968, a collector of antiques noticed two oil paintings of Indians, each measuring about 9 x 6½ inches, in an antique shop in upstate New York. Although not especially interested in Indian lore, he was sufficiently attracted by the paintings to buy them. Later he had opportunity to show them to a qualified authority on American Indians, who declared them to be original Stanley paintings. Although neither of the paintings was signed, positive identification was made on the basis of Stanley’s handwritten inscriptions on each portrait and by a comparison of the legends on the pictures with the descriptions in the two known catalogues of Stanley exhibitions. The fortunate discoverer and owner of the two paintings wishes to remain anonymous at the time of this writing, but has graciously permitted colored reproductions to be used in this work.

**In Pursuit of the Murderers**

The Legislature of the Provisional Government of Oregon was in session in Oregon City, Wednesday, December 8, 1847, when the letter from Chief Factor Douglas, dated the 7\textsuperscript{th}, arrived with the shocking news of the Whitman massacre. The legislators reacted immediately. Action was taken which called upon the governor to raise and equip an initial company of fifty riflemen to proceed as quickly as possible to The Dalles to protect American property and to establish a military base for future operations. On the 9\textsuperscript{th}, the Legislature authorized the raising of a regiment “not to exceed 500 men” for the purpose of marching into the Cayuse country to apprehend, if possible, the murderers. Cornelius
Gilliam was appointed Colonel-Commandant; James Waters, Lieutenant-Colonel; and H. A. G. Lee, Major. Steps were taken to borrow money to pay for the expedition. The term of service for the Volunteers was ten months. These acts by the Legislature were tantamount to a declaration of war against the Cayuse nation. In reality, this marked the beginning of a series of Indian wars which troubled the Pacific Northwest for the following eleven years.

On December 14, the Legislature appointed Joel Palmer, Robert (also called “Doc”) Newell, and Major H. A. G. Lee to serve as peace commissioners. On that date Ogden and his men were laboriously working their way up the Columbia to Fort Walla Walla and no one in the Willamette Valley knew the fate of the captives. The peace commissioners were directed to proceed “immediately to Walla Walla, and hold a council with the chiefs and principal men of the various tribes on the Columbia, to prevent, if possible, the coalition with the Cayuse tribe in the present difficulties.”

Newell had first met Whitman at the 1835 Rendezvous; had accompanied him on his return trip to the Missouri frontier; and in 1840 had named a son after him.

**JOE MEEK APPOINTED SPECIAL ENVOY**

Jesse Applegate, who had traveled to Oregon with Whitman in 1843, suggested that a messenger be sent to Washington, and the Legislature gave this idea its immediate endorsement. First, however, an official “Memorial to Congress” had to be drawn up and adopted. For more than ten years, or ever since Lieut. Slacum had carried the first petition from Willamette Valley residents to Washington in 1837, repeated memorials had been sent to Washington praying for the extension of United States jurisdiction over Oregon. The time had come for another and a more urgent appeal.

The text of the memorial included the following: “Having called upon the government of the United States so often in vain, we have almost despaired of receiving its protection, yet we trust that our present situation, when fully laid before you, will at once satisfy your honorable body of the great necessity of extending the strong arm of guardianship and protection over this remote, but beautiful portion of the United States domain.”

Reference was then made to the fact that eleven American citizens had been murdered by the Cayuse Indians, including “Dr.
Marcus Whitman and his amiable wife.” The memorial continues: “Called upon to resent this outrage, we feel sensibly our weakness and inability to enter into a war with powerful Indian tribes. Such outrages can not, however, be suffered to pass unpunished... To repel the attacks of so formidable a foe, and protect our families from violence and rapine, will require more strength than we possess. We are deficient in many of the grand essentials of war, such as men, arms, and treasure; for them, our sole reliance is on the government of the United States; we have the right to expect your aid, and you are in justice bound to extend it.”

The Legislature selected one of its members, Joseph Meek, to be its special envoy to carry the memorial overland to Washington. This colorful ex-mountain man was an excellent choice. He had met the Whitmans for the first time at the 1836 Rendezvous. He had left his half-breed daughter, Helen Mar, with them in the fall of 1840 to be reared and educated. Of course he had no way of knowing at the time of his appointment that she had died of the measles. After moving to the Willamette Valley in 1840, Meek had become active in public affairs and held the office of sheriff in the Provisional Government. Moreover, Meek was a cousin by marriage of James Polk, then President of the United States. As will be seen, this served much to Meek’s advantage after he arrived in Washington.

Colonel Gilliam set out for The Dalles with a company of Oregon Volunteers on January 8, 1848, the very day the released captives arrived in Portland. Traveling with Gilliam were Meek and his overland party of eight or nine men. On that same day, also, an incident occurred at The Dalles between some Indians and the small detachment of Volunteers under Major Lee’s command. A band of Cayuses, together with some local Indians, succeeded in driving off about three hundred head of cattle which had been left at The Dalles by the immigrants of the preceding year. In the skirmish which resulted, the Americans succeeded in capturing about sixty head of horses from the Indians, a poor exchange for the cattle they lost. Three Indians were killed, and one wounded. The first shots in the Cayuse War had been fired. On January 28, Colonel Gilliam arrived with his company of Volunteers. A few weeks later the remainder of the Volunteers reinforced the little company at The Dalles.
THE WHITMAN MISSION BURNED

Following Gilliam’s arrival, a detachment of the Volunteers pursued the Indian raiders in an effort to recover the stolen cattle. Several skirmishes took place between The Dalles and the Deschutes River early in February 1848 whereby some of the stolen animals were recovered. In retaliation for the theft, the soldiers burned some Indian lodges on the Deschutes River. As a direct result of this wanton act of destruction, the Cayuse Indians burned the mission buildings at Waiilatpu and also St. Anne’s Mission on the Umatilla.

Included in Colonel Gilliam’s regiment were seventeen-year-old Perrin Whitman; W. D. Canfield, one of the released captives; and half-breed Tom McKay who with John L. McLeod had escorted the Whitman-Spalding party from the Rendezvous of 1836 to Fort Walla Walla. McKay was serving in the Volunteers as a Captain, and a brother, Charles, had the rank of Lieutenant. With them was a company of French Canadians and half-breeds from the Willamette Valley. Their presence, and especially that of Tom McKay, was most disconcerting to the Cayuses, who never dreamed the half-breeds would take up arms against them.

Among the best first-hand accounts of the march of the Volunteers into the Cayuse country is Robert Newell’s Memoranda. He tells of a skirmish which began on February 24 when the Volunteers were challenged by a band of about four hundred warriors which included Indians from several of the tribes from the upper Columbia River country. Newell made note of the fact that the Cayuses were divided, some not being in favor of making war. In his style, inimitable in both grammar and orthography, Newell wrote: “The murderers were verry eager for battle those not guilty kept off, except the Indians on the Columbia.”

We may assume that among the friendly Cayuses were Stickus, Beardy, and Camaspelo, while Tamsucky, Tomahas, Five Crows, and the younger men were among the hostiles.

A second skirmish took place on the 25th on the banks of the Umatilla River. During this engagement, two Cayuse chiefs, Gray Eagle and Five Crows, boastful of their prowess, rode within both shooting and shouting distance of the Americans and taunted them. Gray Eagle was a medicine man, well known to McKay, who had often boasted that he was immune to American bullets. He claimed that if he were shot by an American, “he would puke up the bullet.” This boast was known to
Tom McKay. When Gray Eagle saw McKay among the Volunteers, he exclaimed: “There’s Tom McKay: I will kill him.” Before he could carry out his threat, McKay, who was a crack shot, fired at Gray Eagle, sending a ball through his head. As the medicine man tumbled from his horse, McKay said: “There, I’ve shot him above his pukin’ spot.” About the time that Tom fired, his brother Charles McKay shot at Five Crows, hitting him in one of the arms, badly shattering a bone.

Perhaps the ease with which the Cayuses had killed ten American men (two beaten to death with clubs) and two boys at Waiilatpu had given them a false sense of their invincibility. They became boastful and some claimed that they could “beat the Americans to death with clubs.” Then came the skirmishes on February 24 and 25 which resulted in the death of eight and the wounding of five of their number. This shocked the Cayuses into a realization that the Americans could and would fight. Many of the temporary allies of the Cayuses fled. Being now divided and demoralized, the Cayuses ceased all forceful resistance to the advancing Volunteers.

After leaving the Umatilla, Colonel Gilliam first marched to Fort Walla Walla to get supplies, and then he and his men proceeded to Waiilatpu. On March 2, the little army camped within about two miles of the mission, perhaps near or at the place where Tiloukaikt had lived.

Eager to inspect the mission site, Gilliam with Newell and perhaps Perrin Whitman and Meek, together with two companies of soldiers, rode ahead that evening to Waiilatpu. They were shocked at the evidences of destruction and desolation which were spread before them.

Newell wrote: “The remains looked horrible. Papers letters pieces of Books Iron and many other things lay around the premises waggon wheels and other property was put in the house before it was set on fire I got Some letters and many lay about in the water.” Perrin remembered that even some of the rail fences had been burned. Perhaps the rails had been piled inside the buildings to add to the intensity of the flames.

Archaeological evidence shows that some of the roofs were of dirt. When the rafters were burnt, the roofs collapsed, thus completing the ruin. Only the gaunt walls remained standing. Even the fruit trees in the orchard had been cut down. Only the unenclosed gristmill had escaped destruction. Here was a gift from the white man which the red man had come to appreciate.
Far more distressing than the scenes of material destruction was the discovery of the bones and other bodily remains of the massacre victims strewn about the premises. As has been stated, a day or so after the first ten victims had been buried, wolves dug up several of the bodies including those of the Whitmans. Joe Stanfield had then reburied the exhumed remains, but after the captives had left for Fort Walla Walla, the wolves again dug out the dead bodies. This was the gruesome sight which Gilliam and his party saw when they arrived at Waiilatpu.

After the full contingent of Volunteers arrived at Waiilatpu on the following day, a thorough search was made of the area, and the remains of the victims were collected. Catherine, who evidently secured her information from one or more of the Volunteers, wrote: “When the first of the volunteers reached there... they found the bones badly scattered. Some of Mrs. Whitman’s hair was picked up... a mile from the grave.”

Only five skulls of the ten bodies, once buried in the wide shallow grave, and a few bones were found. Among the skulls were those of both of the Whitmans. Perrin Whitman was able to identify his uncle’s skull by the gold filling which was placed in one of his teeth while passing through St. Louis in May 1848. Since the skull of a woman has certain distinguishing characteristics not found on that of a man, it was easy to identify Narcissa’s skull.

After Meek had arrived in Washington, D.C., Jonas Galusha Prentiss, one of Narcissa’s brothers, wrote to him asking for information about the massacre. Meek, replying on July 8, 1843, commented as follows about the reburial: “I myself conducted the melancholy rites and a solemn one it was. The head of Mrs. W. was severed from her body and other portions of manes [possibly remains or her hair] scattered in various directions. The body of Dr. W., however was whole.”

Evidently the graves that Stanfield had dug after the first ten victims had been buried, including that of Helen Mar Meek, had not been molested by the wolves. The Volunteers dug a deeper grave and, after depositing such remains as they could find in it, covered them with an overturned wagon-box on which a mound of dirt was shoveled. Here the bones lay until the semicentennial of the massacre was observed in 1897, when the grave was reopened, the bones placed in a new sepulchre and covered with a marble slab.
The arrival of the Oregon Volunteers at Waiilatpu suddenly transformed what had once been a thriving mission station into a military outpost. According to Newell, Colonel Gilliam at once set his men to work tearing down the adobe walls of the burned-out mission buildings and using the bricks to erect “a wall 4 or 5 feet high around the Camp.” This makeshift fortification was named Fort Waters after Lieutenant-Colonel James Waters who had been wounded in the skirmish on the Umatilla.

Even before the Volunteers had established Fort Waters, several contacts had been made with the natives by the peace commissioners for the surrender of the suspected culprits, but without results. Writing in his journal on March 9, Newell referred to another such meeting: “…we met Stickes one Nez perse and two Kiyuses with a flag. made us a proposition for a Council. After much talk the Col ordered the regiment to return to the fort. which order was obeyed, but with much dissatisfaction. Col Gillam offered to take Jo Lewis for five of the Murderers, but the Indians would not give up Tosucka [Tamsucky] or Towita [Tauitau or Young Chief]… We hear of many of the Keyuses separating from the Murderers.”

By this time, a serious difference of opinion had developed between Gilliam, representing the military, and Palmer, one of the peace commissioners, over the best policy to be pursued in apprehending the guilty Cayuses. Gilliam was willing to be content with the seizure of such ringleaders as Joe Lewis and let those less guilty go free. Palmer would not be satisfied until all of the guilty were captured.

Since the Americans had fragmentary and sometimes conflicting testimony as to just who the murderers were, it was difficult to determine who were to be apprehended.

On March 28, Gilliam left with some men for The Dalles to get supplies. That night he was accidentally killed while drawing a gun from a wagon. Waters succeeded him in command of the Volunteers. Joel Palmer, who was Superintendent of Indian Affairs as well as a peace commissioner, resigned his offices and left for the Willamette Valley. He was succeeded as Superintendent of Indian Affairs by Major H. A. G. Lee.

Several expeditions were sent out from Fort Waters in pursuit of the hostile Indians in the hope of capturing one or more of the murderers.
but always without success. Those being sought found refuge by fleeing to other tribes or hiding in the mountains. Pressure was laid upon the friendly Cayuses to aid in apprehending the murderers, and even generous rewards were offered for delivering the guilty over to the Americans, but such methods were also fruitless. Once Stickus held Joe Lewis in his camp as a prisoner, but Lewis was rescued by some of his friends. This act of Stickus is evidence that some of the Cayuses may have begun to realize that the half-breed was a primary cause for their misfortunes.

Possibly hearing of the reward that the military authorities had offered for his capture, and being aware of the growing hostility towards him shown by some members of the Cayuse tribe, Joe Lewis decided that it was best for him to flee the country. He concocted a fanciful story about being able to persuade the Mormons, who had planted a colony in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, to send sufficient troops to drive the Volunteers out of the country. Lewis succeeded in persuading three Cayuses, including Edward and Clark, sons of Tiloukaikt, to go with him on this errand. While in the vicinity of Fort Hall, he “cut their throats in the night,” and then ran away with their horses and property.

According to Perrin Whitman: “Angus McDonald, a Hudson’s Bay Company clerk at Fort Hall, while en route to Wallula on his annual trip for supplies, came upon these Indians and recognized them.” He carried the story of their fate to the Cayuse tribe. “It soon dawned upon them,” Perrin stated, “that this was more of Joe Lewis’s dastardly work.”

Lewis is reported to have settled in the Jocko Valley in the Flathead country, in what is now Montana, about forty-five miles due north of present-day Missoula. There he was joined by Nicholas Finley, in whose lodge at Wailatpu the conspirators had met to plan the killing of the Whitmans. Nicholas had a Flathead mother; this may have been the reason why he returned to that part of the country. The valley may have been named after Jocko Finley, once in charge of Spokane House, the father of Nicholas. Lewis is reported to have been killed in an attempted stagecoach robbery in 1862, nearly fifteen years after the Whitman massacre.

Another factor which militated against the success of the military authorities in capturing the suspected murderers was the anger aroused against the Volunteers among even the friendly Cayuses because of the unrestrained way the soldiers stole the horses and cattle of the Indians.
They committed other atrocities also against the natives. After Anson Dart visited the Cayuse country in 1851, he reported: “While the Oregon troops were stationed at Waiilatpu, they were in constant practice of taking all the horses and cattle they could find belonging to the Cayuses; and using and disposing of them in various ways. The Chiefs of the Cayuses informed me that more than five hundred head of horses were taken from them during this war, for which they never have received the least compensation.” 93 The friendly Cayuses, who had taken no part in the massacre or in the burning of the mission buildings, felt that it was most unjust to be treated as though they were as guilty as the murderers themselves. Even Perrin Whitman claimed that several of his horses, which had been left at Waiilatpu, had been taken by the soldiers for which he had been unable to receive any compensation. 94

**The End of the Oregon Mission of the American Board**

As has been stated, Stanley’s Spokane Indian guide, Solomon, had arrived at Tshimakain on December 9 with Stanley’s letter of the 2nd in which he told of his narrow escape and of the massacre. 95 The Walkers and the Eellses were shocked and grief-stricken. Naturally, their first concern was for their own safety. The Spokane Indians, living in the vicinity of Tshimakain, urged the missionaries to remain where they were and pledged their protection. Mary Walker wrote in her diary for December 17: “The Indians say that [i.e., the Cayuses] must kill them first before they can us.” 96 When Chief Factor John Lee Lewes, then in charge of Fort Colville, heard of the massacre, he invited the missionaries to seek refuge in the fort.

The situation which the two families faced was complicated by the fact that Mary was expecting the birth of her sixth child at any time during the latter part of December. On the 9th of that month, she had written in her diary: “We were hoping to have Dr. Whitman to supper with us tonight.” Instead that was the day that Solomon arrived with the news of the massacre. In view of the tense situation which had developed at Wailatpu shortly before the tragedy, it is doubtful if Dr. Whitman would have felt free to go to Tshimakain at that time.

A son was born to the Walkers while they were still at Tshimakain on December 31. The presence of six Walker children, all under nine
years of age, and the two Eells boys, six and four years old, made any lengthy travel on horseback in winter extremely difficult. Living with the Walkers at that time was a Mrs. Marquis who had gone out to Oregon with the 1847 emigration and who had accepted employment with the Walkers in October. The two families decided to stay where they were as long as their Indians remained friendly and there was no threat of danger from other tribes.

A potentially dangerous situation developed for the missionaries on or about March 8, when Nicholas Finley arrived from Fort Walla Walla to be with his two brothers who lived on the trail that connected Tshimakain with Fort Colville. Finley told the Spokane Indians that the Americans were planning “to make a grand sweep of the natives of the whole land,” and that they intended to fight the Hudson’s Bay Company as well. Nicholas had been with the Indians in the skirmishes which had taken place on the Umatilla on February 24 and 25. Elkanah Walker noted in his diary that Nicholas Finley “had come up to get his friends to go down & join the Cayuses.” 97 If Walker had known the extent to which Nicholas had been involved in the Whitman massacre, he would have indicated more alarm than he did.

Reports of Nicholas’ subversive agitations came to the attention of Lewes at Fort Colville, who felt it necessary to post guards day and night. Being concerned about the safety of the missionaries at Tshimakain, he again invited them to seek sanctuary in the fort. “We are most perplexed to know what to do,” wrote Mary in her diary on February 12. “We fear to go, we fear to stay.” A few days later the missionaries learned to their great relief that the Spokanes had refused to follow the advice of Nicholas Finley.

After trying for more than two months to carry on their normal activities, alternating between fear and hope, the missionaries decided that the uncertainties of their situation were such that it was prudent for them to move to Fort Colville. After leading ten or twelve pack animals with their personal belongings, the five adults and eight children started for the fort on March 15. Mary wrote that day in her diary: “We left home about noon. Perhaps to return no more.” Had they remained until the 20th, the two couples would have rounded out nine full years of residence at Tshimakain. Although the men returned to the station several times during the following two months to do some spring planting,
the departure for Fort Colville on the 15th marked the end of their missionary work among the Spokanes.

Because of the failure of the Volunteers to apprehend any of the suspected murderers and the fact that the enlistment period of the soldiers was coming to an end, Colonel Waters decided to evacuate all Americans living in the upper Columbia River country and then abandon Fort Waters. Since Tiloukaikt and some of his band were known to be in the Nez Perce country, Waters sent a detachment of soldiers to escort Craig to Fort Walla Walla. It may be assumed that Craig left his wife and their children with her people. Since the Nez Perces were friendly, he soon returned to his home.

Major Joseph Magone with a company of fifty-five soldiers was ordered to go to Tshimakain to escort the Walker–Eells party to safety. The soldiers arrived at the mission station on May 29 where they found Walker and Eells waiting for them. While the soldiers waited at Tshimakain, the two men hurried back to Fort Colville to get their families.

On June 1, the five adults and eight children left the fort for their long journey of over two hundred miles to Fort Waters and from there on down into the Willamette Valley. Undoubtedly Lewes accompanied them to Tshimakain, as Walker and Eells had made arrangements for him to get some of their belongings and when convenient ship them down the Columbia River. The mission party arrived at Tshimakain about 11:00 a.m., Saturday, June 3.

Hearing that their missionaries were about to leave them, all of the natives in the vicinity of Tshimakain gathered to express their sorrow on seeing them leave and to say good-by. Major Magone said that some of the Indians wept. Possessions which the missionaries were unable to take with them or have sent down the Columbia, were given to the natives. These included agricultural implements, tools, and some household goods.

No inventory was compiled for items left behind at Tshimakain, such as Spalding prepared for things destroyed, pillaged, or abandoned at Lapwai and Waiilatpu. Since the Walker and Eells families were not forced to abandon their station by the immediate threat of harm from hostile natives, there was no basis for a claim for compensatory payment from the government. With the closing of the stations at Lapwai and Tshimakain, it was not practicable to try to keep the work going among the Spokanes.
After completing the distribution of their belongings, the Walkers and the Eellses said farewell to Tshimakain, “the place of Springs” and rode that afternoon with their military escort seven miles south to the Spokane River. Their departure from Tshimakain marked the end of the Oregon Mission of the American Board.

Out of deference to the scruples of the missionaries regarding Sunday travel, Major Magone kept his men in camp over the week-end. Since many Indians had followed their missionaries to the river, Walker and Eells conducted a worship service for them on Sunday. This was the last of innumerable services they had held for the natives.

No criteria are available to measure the results of the devoted services rendered by these two missionary couples to the Spokane Indians over nine years. Under their direction and encouragement, many of the natives had begun to cultivate the soil. The missionaries had promoted the raising of cattle. A school had been conducted, but without the degree of success which Spalding had achieved at Lapwai or Whitman at Wailatpu. Walker had reduced the Spokane language to writing and had, with Spalding’s help, printed a sixteen-page Spokane primer on the mission press at Lapwai in 1840. Moreover, Walker had translated the first four chapters of the Gospel of Matthew into Spokane (Flathead), but it was never published during the Mission period. Although the two couples had lived among the Spokanes for nine years without the satisfaction of seeing a single convert received as a member of the Mission church, the Christian seed had been sown; in due time, as will be told, the results became apparent.

Major Magone with his soldiers and the mission party began their long march to Fort Waters on Monday morning, June 5, and arrived at their destination the following Saturday afternoon. The Walkers and the Eellses found their visit to Waiilatpu a sad and trying experience. The ruined buildings, deserted fields, and the great grave at the foot of the bill stood out in sharp contrast to what had been there.

Joseph Elkanah Walker, then only four years old, never forgot seeing his mother pick up some strands of Narcissa’s golden hair and show them to Mrs. Eells. Writing of their visit to Waiilatpu, Walker in a letter to Greene dated July 8, 1848, said that their visit was so painful that: “The shortest time was sufficient.” Whereas the soldiers made camp at the military base established there, the missionary party could not bear
the thought of spending a night in that ravaged spot; they moved down the Walla Walla River several miles before making camp. After being escorted to The Dalles by soldiers, the two families continued their way down the river by boat to the Willamette Valley, where they had to begin life anew.\textsuperscript{101} 

Realizing the futility of remaining any longer at Fort Waters in the hope of capturing the elusive murderers, Colonel Waters, disbanded the Volunteers on July 5 with the exception of fifty-five men who agreed to stay until September 15 in order to provide protection for the Oregon immigrants of that year. The hostile element within the Cayuse tribe had been so dispersed, and the others too eager to avoid any conflict with the Americans, that the immigrants experienced no difficulties while passing through the Cayuse country.

With the departure of the last soldiers from Fort Waters the desolation of the formerly prosperous mission station was complete. The adobe walls which had surrounded the military camp were gradually washed down by winter rains; the rye grass crept back into the now uncultivated fields; and even the Indian camps which once had been in the vicinity were deserted. Only a small grove of locust trees, heaps of rubbish where buildings once stood, the outlines of the millpond and the irrigation ditches, perhaps some remnants of rail fences, and the graves in the cemetery remained as visible evidence of the fact that for eleven years Marcus and Narcissa Whitman had lived there.

**MEEK CARRIES NEWS OF THE MASSACRE TO WASHINGTON**

On March 4, 1848, the day after the Volunteers established their camp at Wailatpu, Joe Meek with nine companions began his long journey overland to Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{102} He was not only the special envoy of the Provisional Government of Oregon commissioned to carry its memorial to Congress, he was also to be the first person to reach the eastern states with the news of the Whitman massacre. Meek carried with him two letters from Spalding to Secretary Greene, dated January 8 and 24, giving details of the tragedy.\textsuperscript{103} Undoubtedly he also carried letters from survivors of the massacre directed to their relatives telling what had happened to them at Wailatpu. There was no person in Oregon so well qualified to report on the circumstances of the massacre.
as Meek. Having spent several years in the mountains, he was well acquainted with the Indians. The Whitmans had been his friends to whom he had entrusted the rearing of a daughter. From interviews with the survivors and his visit to Waiilatpu at the time of the reburial of the remains of the victims, he had become well informed regarding the details of the tragedy.

A detachment of one hundred Volunteers escorted Meek and his party through the Cayuse country to the Blue Mountains. Since the season was early, Meek found travel exceedingly difficult at the higher elevations because of the deep snow. At times he and his men had to dismount and lead their horses. After arriving at St. Louis on May 17, Meek told a newspaper reporter: “We arrived at Fort Hall on the 25th of March, where we encountered a tremendous snow storm. At this place we crossed the Bear River—the snow very deep—our previsions all gone—and we were forced to eat our mules and horses.” The privations suffered are reminiscent of those of Whitman and Lovejoy in their journey over the Rockies in the late fall of 1848 and the following winter.

Meek, on his journey through the Rockies, met several of his old friends who had been with him in his fur trapping days. The Meek party stopped at Fort Bridger, where they met its proprietor, Jim Bridger. No doubt Meek told Bridger of the safe arrival in the Willamette Valley of his eleven-year-old daughter, Mary Ann. About the time these two former mountain men were together, Mary Ann died, but of course this was unknown to them.

When the Meek party was about 150 miles west of St. Joseph, Missouri, they met the first contingent of the Oregon emigration of that year, consisting of about 245 wagons. Here is evidence that the news of the Whitman massacre did not reach the States early enough in 1848 to affect that year’s emigration. Meek gave the emigrants the news of what had happened, and also assured them that it was safe for them to continue, as the hostile Cayuses had been scattered and the Volunteers were at Waiilatpu to insure safe-conduct through the country.

Meek and his companions arrived at St. Joseph on May 11, having traveled about 1,900 miles in sixty-six days, an average of about thirty miles a day. This was a remarkable record for that time of the year.

On May 18, the day after Meek arrived in St. Louis, the St. Louis
Republican devoted nearly a page to Meek’s account of the Whitman massacre, the actions taken by the Provisional Government of Oregon, the rescue of the captives by the Hudson’s Bay Company, and a brief summary of his travel experiences. This was the first newspaper account printed in the States of the massacre and of Meek’s mission to Washington, D.C.

The news was quickly copied by other papers, and it seems evident that word of the massacre had reached eastern cities before Meek arrived in Washington on May 28. Secretary Greene in Boston read about the death of the Whitmans on the 27th and immediately addressed a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington requesting confirmation or denial of the report. Greene received Spalding’s letters carried east by Meek on June 5. That dated January 8 was published in the July issue of the Missionary Herald.

THE WHITMAN RELATIVES GET THE NEWS

The reminiscences of the Rev. Joel Wakeman, to which references have been made in earlier chapters, contain an account of the reception of the news of the massacre by Narcissa’s parents. In 1848 Wakeman was pastor of the Presbyterian Church at West Almond, New York, where one of Narcissa’s brothers, Jonas Galusha Prentiss, owned a store. Judge and Mrs. Prentiss had moved there in the latter part of 1847 or the early part of 1848 and were living with their son. Wakeman wrote that when he read about the massacre in a newspaper, he hastened to the store to break the sad news to Jonas and his parents. Wakeman found Jonas and his father in the store and was about to tell them what he had read, when Mrs. Prentiss entered with her paper and said: “Marcus and Narcissa have been murdered by the Indians.”

On April 8, 1848, Spalding wrote a long letter to Narcissa’s parents in which he gave a detailed account of the massacre. He enclosed a lock of Narcissa’s hair which had been found by one of the Volunteers at Wailatpu.

Dr. Whitman’s niece, Mary Alice Wisewell Caulkins, has given the following account of the reaction of members of her family: “His Mother received the news of the massacre with stony grief without tears, and sat alone for days without speaking, and his sister, Mrs. Wiswell, was made sick by the news... went out into the orchard and cried, until she could
cry no more.” On the page in the Whitman family Bible which contains the record of births, marriages, and deaths, we find the following, possibly written by the grief-stricken mother:

Marcus Whitman was Killed by the Indians of Oregon together with his wife and several others.
November 29th, 1847

Oregon Made a Territory

There is a direct connection between the deaths of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the final approval by Congress of the bill which made Old Oregon a territory of the United States. Ever since the boundary question had been settled with Great Britain in 1846, fixing the dividing line at the 49° parallel, the extension of United States jurisdiction over Oregon was inevitable. A number of troublesome political issues, such as those arising out of the Mexican War and the slavery problem, had postponed the final decision. It took a Whitman massacre to bring action.

When Meek arrived in Washington on May 28, he found that a fellow Oregonian, J. Quinn Thornton, who was a personal representative of Governor Abernethy, had preceded him by about two weeks. Thornton had sailed from Oregon for San Francisco on October 19, 1847. From there he had taken ship to Panama and, after crossing the Isthmus, caught another vessel for Boston, where he arrived on May 5. A week later he was in Washington.

Having left Oregon more than a month before the Whitman massacre, Thornton did not have the first-hand information of that event which Meek possessed. Moreover, Thornton had not been commissioned by the Legislature of the Provisional Government of Oregon to present its memorial, as had Meek. After Thornton arrived in Washington, he wrote out a petition which in effect begged the Government to extend its jurisdiction over Oregon. This he gave to Senator Thomas R. Benton of Missouri, who presented it to the Senate, but no action was taken.

Then came Joe Meek, who, because of his being a cousin of the wife of President Polk, had immediate access to the White House. Moreover, he had important information about an Indian uprising. American
citizens had been murdered. There was immediate need of government protection. On May 29, the day after Meek arrived in Washington, the President transmitted the memorial Meek had carried, together with other documents, to the two houses of Congress, with the recommendation that immediate favorable action be taken.

On June 29, Jonas G. Prentiss wrote to Meek while the latter was in Washington to ask for information about the massacre. Jonas asked: “Why did it happen?” Meek replied on July 8: “…the causes which led to the horrid perpetration, so far as I could glean information upon the subject, are briefly these: The Indian population for some time past had been suffering from various ills, and the measles finally breaking out among them, their discontent (swayed by superstitious motives), sought to fasten the cause upon something on which they could wreak their vengeance, while at the same time the sacrifice would offer the virtue of a remedy to put an end to their contagion. A Canadian [i.e., half-breed Joe Lewis] dwelling among them induced them to believe Dr. Whitman was the eyesore—that he, by his drugs and medicines, had created the pestilence in order to secure patients; and that, if himself and family were removed, the evil would be removed. Acting upon this advice—prompted by the worst species of vindictiveness and malice—a band of the tribe rode to the doctor’s residence, and shot him as related…”

As often as the Whitman story will be told, the question will be asked: Why did the massacre take place? The causes are many and complex and stretch back through the years to the fall of 1836 when the Whitmans first settled at Waiilatpu.

No person was better acquainted than Joe Meek with the many interlocking causes such as those which inevitably arise out of a conflict of cultures; the fears of the natives when they saw the repeated migrations of seemingly endless numbers of white men passing through their country; and the reports passed on by half-breeds about the way the Indians of the East had been treated by the white men. Yet, in this letter to Jonas G. Prentiss, Meek touched on none of these issues, but declared that the precipitating causes were the following: (a) the measles epidemic, (b) the superstitions of the natives, (c) and the false accusations of Joe Lewis who claimed that Whitman was poisoning the Indians.
The bill making Oregon a territory of the United States passed the House of Representatives on August 2, and the Senate gave its approval on the 13th. President Polk signed the bill the next day. Thus the hopes and aspirations of the American residents of Oregon were finally fulfilled.

Ever since Lieutenant Slacum had carried the first petition to Washington in 1837, the Americans in the Willamette Valley had worked for the extension of the jurisdiction of the United States over that land. Meek’s visit to Washington brought the whole issue to a successful climax. Only five years earlier, Whitman had called on high government officials in behalf of Oregon but without success. The bill which he submitted to Congress in the fall of 1843 carried many provisions which were embodied in the Oregon Bill of 1848. To a remarkable degree, the prophetic words Whitman had spoken, when he and Spalding were riding through the rainy night of November 27 on their way to the Umatilla, had been fulfilled: “I believe my death will do as much for Oregon as my life can.”

One of the best tributes ever paid to the memory of Marcus Whitman was that given by Peter H. Burnett, a member of the 1843 Oregon immigration and who served as the first Governor of the State of California, 1849-54. He wrote: “In my judgment he made greater sacrifices, endured more hardships, and encountered more perils for Oregon, than any other one man; and his services were more practically efficient than those of any other, except perhaps those of Senator Linn of Missouri. I say perhaps, because I am in doubt as to which of these two men did more in effect for Oregon.”
And now to return to the first paragraph of the first chapter of this book:

_No seer could possibly have foretold a connection between a missionary meeting held in a small one-room country church at Wheeler, New York, on a raw November evening in 1834 and the action taken by Congress in August 1848 when Old Oregon became a territory of the United States. The fact that these two events were related is clearly evident from contemporary historical documents. The one who tied them together during that span of fourteen years was Dr. Marcus Whitman and this is the story of what happened._
CHAPTER 23 FOOTNOTES

1 Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 129.

2 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 40, quoting from a sworn statement made by Hinman April 9, 1849.

3 Hinman, in his sworn statement, stated that Douglas edited McBean's letter when he made a copy for Abernethy. The revised letter together with accompanying correspondence was published in the Oregon Spectator, Dec. 10, 1847.

4 Italics are the author's.

5 HBC Arch., B/5/21.


7 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 38.


9 See ante, fn. 6.

10 Chapter Twenty-One, “The Methodist give Waskopum to the American Board. Since Dr. Whitman had not completed payment for the property, the Methodists retained title. See article by Mrs. R. S. Shackelford, “The Methodist Mission Claim to the Dalles Town Site,” O.H.Q., XVI (1915): 24 ff. Dr. Whitman had promised to give Perrin the western half of the Waskopum site.

11 See fn. 8

12 Marshall, Acquisition of Oregon, II: 233 ff., gives the text of McBean’s letter to the Walla Walla Statesman, March 12, 1866, in which McBean claimed that Bushman arrived at Waiilatpu on Tuesday, November 30, when he was able to prevent the massacre of the women and children. None of the survivors’ accounts support this claim.

13 Pringle scrapbook, Coll. W.

14 Pringle ms., p. 40.

15 Ibid., p. 41.

16 Ibid., p. 45.


19 Spalding, Senate Document, pp. 26 & 34.

20 Clarke, Pioneer Days, II: 540, quoting Catherine Sager. Also, Pringle ms., p. 41.

21 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 35.

22 Portland, Oregonian, May 23, 1948.

23 The conduct of the Indians towards the women of the Oregon Mission was exemplary compared to that of white men toward Indian women.

24 Pringle ms., p. 42.
Spalding, *Senate Document*, p. 35. Other references to Lorinda’s experiences with Five Crows are taken from this source, with the exceptions noted.

Gray, *Oregon*, p. 497. This deposition, although given on the same day as that found in Spalding’s Senate Document, differs in several particulars. Italics are in the original.


In like manner, Brouillet in his House Document glosses over the account of Lorinda’s experiences at the St. Anne Mission, condensing it to four lines.

Saunders ms., p. 16.

Pringle ms., pp. 42–3.

Saunders ms., pp. 15–8.

Pringle ms., p. 43.


Pringle ms., p. 48.

Ibid., p. 39.

Cannon, *Waiilatpu*, p. 139, gives the incredible story that it was Stanfield who suggested placing the little boy between him and Mrs. Hays when they were in bed together.

Pringle ms., p. 51.


Ibid. Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:701 gives the Oregon Spectator for January 20, 1848, as the source of this quotation but an examination of this issue failed to find it.

Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 43. Other references to Brouillet in this section have been taken from this work.

See index of this volume for references to The Hat and Elijah Hedding.

See sections dealing with confrontations with Tiloukaikt in Chapter Sixteen, and “Grounds for Uneasiness among the Indians,” Chapter Twenty. No reference to any promise of payment for land allegedly made by Samuel Parker has been found in any of the writings of the Whitmans or Brouillet. Tiloukaikt in the fall of 1841 demanded pay for the use of the land, not for its occupancy by the mission.

Published in the Oregon Spectator, January 20, 1848. If one or more of the chiefs had been unable to write their names, they could have signed by using the X sign beside their names which were inscribed by someone else.

Circumstantial evidence in Brouillet’s account of the meeting held on that December 20 indicates that the messenger arrived at St. Anne’s Mission after the meeting with the chiefs had closed. However, Bishop Blanchet’s journal states that the messenger arrived at 4:30 that morning. The entry for that day in the Bishop’s journal appears to have been written some time later.

Walker ms., “Esther Among the Cayuses,” Coll. O., states: “Five Crows refused to come, and said that Esther [i.e., Lorinda] wished to remain with him; but one of the priests... told Mr. Ogden that she did nothing but cry day and night.”
47 A copy of Ogden’s speech to the Cayuses appeared in the Oregon Spectator, January 20, 1848, together with the correspondence that Ogden had with Spalding.


49 Brouillet, House Document, p. 47. Brouillet’s list of ransom items differs somewhat from that given in Oregon Spectator, January 20, 1848. Twisted strands of tobacco were measured, thus the reference to “fathoms of tobacco.”

50 Pringle ms., p. 46.


52 Saunders ms., p. 18.

53 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 36.

54 Lorinda called the Indian “Big Belly.” Walker ms., “Esther Among the Cayuses” identifies him as Camaspelo. Contemporary references to him indicate that he was friendly to the white people.

55 Gray, Oregon, p. 549, quoting Lee’s letter of December 26, 1847. This corrects the statement in Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, p. 264, that Lee had “an advance group of some fifty volunteers” with him when he arrived at The Dalles.


57 See Drury, Spalding and Smith. pp. 539 ff., for list of inventory items which Spalding compiled under date of October 2, 1849. Although Spalding mentioned two spinning wheels, sheep shears, and a loom, he neglected to mention sheep. This was either an oversight or possibly the sheep were driven later to The Dalles and turned over to Perrin Whitman.

58 For an account of Spalding’s later life with the Nez Perces, see Drury, Spalding, and his A Tepee in His Front Yard.

59 Pringle ms., p. 48.

60 HBC Arch., D/21. Also P.N.Q., XXXIII (1942):60.

61 Spalding ms., Coll. W. Published in part in the Missionary Herald, 1851, p. 248.

62 Oregon Spectator, January 20, 1848; Bancroft, Oregon, I:696.


64 Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 120; Bancroft, Oregon, I:696.

65 Pringle ms., p. 49.

66 Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, p. 342.

67 According to a letter written by Mrs. Cushing Eells, March 28, 1851. now in Coll. W., Spalding was convinced that his wife’s death was caused by the strain and exposure suffered during the days following the Whitman massacre. In 1853 Spalding married Rachel Smith, a sister of Mrs. J. S. Griffin. The Griffins were one of the independent missionary couples who went out to Oregon in 1839.

68 Spalding, in the inventory he prepared of property lost or abandoned at Waiilatpu, included the following: “Expenses for Board & Physician for Mary Ann till her death. $33.00.” Richardson, The Whitman Mission, p. 155.

69 Nathan Kimball’s “Recollections” verify the story of the theft of his father’s watch and that it was found in the culprit’s possession at Oregon City, and then returned to Mrs. Kimball. T.O.P.A., 1903, p. 193. J. Q. A. Young says the watch belonged to

70 Pringle ms., p. 50.
71 HBC Arch., B/223/c.
73 The present location of Dr. McLoughlin’s portrait, if still extant, is unknown. The Barclay portrait is in the Barclay House, Oregon City, and the Lovejoy picture is in the Provincial Library, Victoria, B.C.
74 Portraits of North American Indians Deposited with the Smithsonian Institution, 1852, Washington, D.C. A copy is in Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
75 Catalogue of Pictures in Stanley & Dickerman’s North American Indian Portrait Gallery, Cincinnati, 1846 [sic]. The date is an evident anachronism. A copy of this catalogue is in the New York City Public Library.
76 Waie-cat may have been the only one of the fourteen Cayuse conspirators who escaped being apprehended or being killed during the Cayuse War. Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, The Cayuse Indians (University of Oklahoma Press, 1972, p. 208), mention Waie-cat as one of the Cayuse Chiefs who took part in the Yakima War of 1855.
77 There is some variation in the spelling of the names of Shu-ma-hic-cie and Waie-cat on the Stanley portraits and in the catalogues mentioned in fn. 74 & 75.
78 Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 152.
79 Oregon Spectator, December 27, 1847.
80 Bancroft, Oregon, I:703 ff.
82 Victor, op. cit., p. 175, and J. E. Walker ms., “Esther Among the Cayuses,” Coll. O. A variation in the account of this incident is found in an article by Judge C. E. Wolverton in T.O.P.A., 1898, p. 68: “The mad chieftain derisively taunted the American leader: ‘I can swallow all your bullets.’ Whereupon McKay replied: ‘I will give you one too high to swallow,’ and straightway shot Grey Eagle in the forehead.”
83 Victor, op. cit., p. 175.
84 Newell, op. cit., p. 110.
85 Pringle scrapbook, Coll. W. Several museums in the Pacific Northwest have locks of Narcissa’s hair, including Coll. O.
86 Original Meek letter is at the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
87 Newell, op. cit., p. 112.
88 Victor, op. cit., pp. 212 ff. Generous rewards were offered for the capture of Tiloukaikt, Tamsucky, Tomahas, Joe Lewis, and Edward. Lesser rewards were offered for the capture of others.
89 Portland, Catholic Sentinel, July-August, 1872, p. 7.
90 From interview with Perrin Whitman, Portland Oregonian, December 1, 1897.
91 Frontier, XI (November 1903), fn. p. 16, from article by Paul C. Phillips and W. S. Lewis, “The Oregon Mission as shown in the Walker Letters, 1839-1851.”

93 Report of Anson Dart, 1851, Records of Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


95 See section, “Artist Stanley’s Narrow Escape,” Chapter Twenty-Two.


97 Ibid., II:335, fn. 19.

98 The mission site at Tshimakain is now in private hands. A copious spring still flows back of the farmhouse where the Walker home once stood. A very old lilac bush and some rail fences (the latter across the road from the present farmhouse), which may date back to the mission period, are on the premises.


101 Drury, *Walker*, pp. 222 ff., gives a brief review of the experiences of the Walker and Eells families in the Willamette Valley. Mary Walker died on Dec. 5, 1897, being in her eighty-seventh year. She was the last person to die of the six couples who once belonged to the Oregon Mission.

102 Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:717, and Victor, *Early Indian Wars*, pp. 180 ff., give the names of those in Meek’s party. Several who started dropped out along the way while others joined the group.

103 Spalding’s letters to Greene, in Coll. A., bear the postmark of St. Joseph, Mo., but without a date. Both letters were published in Mowry, *Marcus Whitman*, pp. 300 ff.

104 St. Louis *Republican*, May 18, 1848.

105 Ibid.

106 The full-page article about Meek, which first appeared in the St. Louis *Republican*, was reprinted in the Boston *Cultivator* (exact date unknown as the clipping in Coll. W. is undated, probably the first part of June). The Weston, Missouri, *Herald*, May 19, 1848, also carried the story, as did the Columbia, Missouri, *Statesman*, of the same date.

107 Original Greene letter in files of the Old Indian Bureau, National Archives.


109 Original in Coll. W. Published in *T.O.P.A.*, 1893, p. 93 ff.

110 Caulkins ms., Coll. Wn.

111 The original Whitman family Bible is in Coll. W. A picture of the page with the reference to the death of Marcus is in Drury, *Whitman*, p. 412.

112 The Sunday, Oct. 30, 1966, issue of the *Los Angeles Times* carried an article by Dan Thrapp about my researches and writings. This came to the attention of Warren Prentiss, a great-nephew of Narcissa Whitman, who resides at Palos Verdes Peninsula, Calif. Among family items he had was this original letter of Joe Meek to his grandfather, Jonas C. Prentiss. See ante, fn. 86.

Following the signing of the Oregon Bill on August 14, 1848, General Joseph Lane, who had distinguished himself in the Mexican War, was appointed governor of the new territory. Joe Meek was made United States Marshal. Lane accompanied Meek on his return trip to Oregon. The two took the southern route through Santa Fe on their way to San Francisco and thence went by sea to Portland. They arrived at Oregon City on March 2, 1849. The next day Governor Lane in an official proclamation declared that the Territorial Government of Oregon was then established and that “the laws of the United States extended over and were declared to be in force in said territory.”

**The Apprehension of Five of the Alleged Murderers**

The defeat of the Indians in the skirmish with the Volunteers, which took place on the Umatilla on February 24 and 25, 1848, convinced such chiefs as Stickus, Camaspelo, and even Young Chief, that it was folly to fight the Americans. Thereafter they refused to join with Tiloukaikt and other hostile-minded Cayuses in any armed clash with the Americans except, perhaps, when trying to protect their herds of...
cattle and horses. Following the safe passage of the 1848 Oregon immigration through the Cayuse country, the last of the Volunteers at Fort Waters left for their homes in the Willamette Valley. For more than a year after their departure, nothing was done by American authorities to apprehend the alleged murderers. The mission site lay abandoned until about 1853, when three stockmen made it their headquarters. They left in the fall of 1855, shortly before the second Cayuse war began.\(^2\)

Although Governor Lane realized that one of his first official obligations was to capture those guilty of the Whitman massacre, he knew that he would have to wait until a contingent of United States troops had arrived in Oregon. The first military unit to go to Oregon over the Oregon Trail was a regiment of Mounted Riflemen.\(^3\) This regiment, which had taken part in the Mexican War, left Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on May 10, 1849. It consisted of about six hundred men, thirty-one officers, and a few women and children. The long caravan, including seven hundred horses, twelve hundred mules, and 175 wagons, made its way westward slowly. Two military posts were established en route—one at Fort Laramie and the other near old Fort Hall. Thus was fulfilled one of the recommendations that Whitman had made in his proposed Oregon bill of 1843.

With the arrival of the government troops at Oregon City in October, Governor Lane was prepared to use force to secure the cooperation of the friendly elements in the Cayuse and neighboring tribes in apprehending the alleged murderers. No doubt the passage of the Mounted Riflemen through their country in the fall of 1849 gave the Cayuses impressive evidence of the military might which could be used against them. Another factor which weakened any spirit of resistance to the Americans that may have existed among certain elements with the Cayuse tribe, was the tragic loss of life during the measles epidemic which continued into the spring of 1848. According to Archbishop F. N. Blanchet of Oregon City: “197 of them had succumbed to the epidemic.”\(^4\) When Indian Agent Anson Dart visited the Walla Walla country in June 1851, he learned that the Cayuses, including women and children, then numbered only 126.\(^5\)

During the two years following the Whitman massacre, the once proud Cayuse nation lost the prestige it once enjoyed among the tribes of the upper Columbia River country. Not only were they reduced in
numbers, they also suffered a loss of much of their wealth. Hundreds of their horses and cattle had been taken by the Volunteers. Many including especially Tiloukaikt and his band, had been obliged to leave their farms. Having been persuaded by Dr. Whitman to turn to agriculture, they had by the fall of 1847 become dependent on their farms for much of their food. Thus when obliged to flee to avoid capture during the first part of the Cayuse War, they were ill prepared to find sustenance elsewhere. Their ill fortune was further aggravated by the reluctance of the Hudson’s Bay Company, under pressure from American authorities, to sell guns and ammunition to the Cayuses, especially to the hostiles. This was a serious blow, for arms were needed for hunting as well as for defense.

After being convinced that it was to their best interest to cooperate with American authorities in apprehending the alleged murderers, Young Chief with sixty Cayuses, Timothy with twenty Nez Perces, and a Walla Walla chief with five of his men, joined forces in December 1849 to capture Tiloukaikt and others whom the American authorities wanted. When Tiloukaikt and his men heard of what was being contemplated, they fled with their families, and such livestock as they had, into the Blue Mountains.

Two letters from McBean to Lane, dated January 6 and February 7, 1850, give a summary of what took place. When Tiloukaikt and his band realized that the attacking party was approaching, they barricaded themselves the best they could in the deep snow which then covered the higher elevations of the Blue Mountains. The cold was intense and the attackers and the attacked alike were poorly clad and ill provisioned for the confrontation.

At the beginning of the skirmish, Young Chief and his party succeeded in capturing all of the livestock belonging to Tiloukaikt and his band. McBean, in the first of his letters stated that: “two principal Murderers, Tomsucky & Shumkain were shot” in the first day of the fighting. Only one of the assailants was wounded, which may indicate that Tiloukaikt and his men lacked both guns and ammunition. Four of the alleged murderers were taken prisoners: Waie-cat, Kia-ma-sum-kin, Clokamas, and Frank Escaloom. After besieging Tiloukaikt and his band for two days, the attackers withdrew taking with them, at Tiloukaikt’s request, the women and children. Young Chief took the prisoners
to his camp but, for lack of a proper place to keep them in confinement, they soon escaped and rejoined Tiloukaikt.

For a few more weeks, Tiloukaikt and his band remained free but their situation became increasingly desperate with the passing of time. They found it necessary to come down from the mountains. McBean, in his letter of February 7th, wrote: “The Murderers, whom we supposed to be far [away], are near the Cayuse Camp—starvation prevented them making their escape & forced some of them to surrender themselves to the Young Chief. I had a visit from him recently & he told me that he fully expects to decoy the whole of them into his camp for the purpose of giving them up to be punished.” McBean strongly recommended to Lane that “no time should be lost” in sending soldiers into the Cayuse country to apprehend the murderers before they should try to flee again. Lane replied by saying that if the Cayuse tribe did not give up the guilty parties by June, he would “make war on them.” Faced with this ultimatum, Young Chief agreed to deliver the accused to Lane at The Dalles during the first part of May.

The grim hand of necessity had been laid on Tiloukaikt. Faced with the threat of war on the whole Cayuse tribe by an overwhelming superior military force, which would have resulted in the suffering of many innocent people; after two years of wandering and having already lost ten of his band including his two sons and Tamsucky; robbed of most if not all of his cattle and horses; driven from his fields and faced with starvation; being short on guns and ammunition; and finally learning that Young Chief was in favor of delivering him and some of his associates over to the Americans, Tiloukaikt had no alternative but to surrender.

Young Chief demanded that the following four go with Tiloukaikt: Tomahas, Clokamas, Ish-ish-kais-kais (Frank Escaloom), and Kia-ma-sump-kin. It is not known why some others, such as Waie-cat who had been listed by McBean as having taken part in the massacre, were not included. The very fact that Young Chief surrendered these five was used at the time of their trial as evidence of their guilt.

The five were given some vague promise of immunity from punishment by Young Chief who told them that they were being asked to go to the Willamette Valley to tell what they knew about the massacre. This may have been open deception on the part of Young Chief or possibly
a ruse on the part of the Americans. Tiloukaikt said: “When I left my people, the Young Chief told me to come down and talk with the big white chief, and tell him who it was that did kill Dr. Whitman and others.” Kia-ma-sum-kin explained his presence: “Our chief told me to come down and tell all about it... I was sent by my chief to declare who the guilty persons were, the white chief would then shake hands with me; the Young Chief would come after me, we would have a good heart.” Clokamas said: “Our chief told us to come down and tell who the murderers were.” And Tomahas echoed the same sentiment: “Our chief told us to come and see the White chief and tell him all about it. The white chief would then tell us all what was right and what was wrong, and learn us [how] to live when we returned home.”

This vague promise of immunity, the fear of American reprisals, and the realities of their starving condition provide sufficient explanation for the voluntary surrender of the five accused Cayuses to the American authorities. When Tiloukaikt as later asked why he allowed himself to be taken prisoner, he is reported to have replied: “Did not your missionaries tell us that Christ died to save his people? So die we, to save our people.”

The five prisoners were escorted to The Dalles by Young Chief and many warriors of the Cayuse tribe. There Governor Lane met them during the first week of May and then took the five men to Oregon city and turned them over to the care of Joe Meek who, as United States marshal, was responsible for their incarceration. Since a number of Cayuses also went to Oregon City, the authorities were apprehensive of an attempt being made to rescue the prisoners. The five were shackled and put in a building on Rock Island, also known as Abernethy Island, in the Willamette River just above the falls, and guarded by twenty soldiers from the regiment of Mounted Riflemen.

THE TRIAL OF THE FIVE CAYUSES

The dispatch with which the United States District Court, seated at Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon Territory, conducted the trial of the five accused Cayuses stands out in sharp contrast to the slower pace of present-day procedures. Only fifteen days elapsed between May 9, when the grand jury met, and the 24th, when the death sentence by hanging was pronounced.
The presiding judge was O. C. Pratt and the district attorney, Amory Holbrook.\textsuperscript{14} Evidently the court made every effort to conduct a fair and impartial trial. Three able men were appointed to serve as defence counsels: Territorial Secretary K. Pritchett, Major Robert B. Reynolds, and Captain Thomas Claiburne. Contemporary records do not indicate whether any of the three had any legal training. The Cayuse tribe offered to give fifty horses as a retainer fee to the defense counsels, but whether they were actually given is not known. Lane in a letter dated November 29, 1879, stated that Pritchett was paid $500 by the United States Government for his services.\textsuperscript{15}

The grand jury met on May 9 and heard testimony from several of the survivors of the massacre, who were unanimous in identifying all five of the accused as being at Waiilatpu at the time of the tragedy. On May 15, the grand jury summoned eight Cayuses to appear before them including Stickus, Young Chief, and Camaspelo. On May 21, an indictment for murder was issued against each of the five prisoners. The trial began on Wednesday morning, May 22. Twenty-two prospective jurors were challenged and excused in an effort on the part of the defense to exclude all older Oregon citizens and any who might have felt embittered against the Indians. From two to three hundred spectators crowded into the courtroom each day to listen to the proceedings.

Witnesses for the prosecution included the three girls—Eliza Spalding, Catherine and Elizabeth Sager—and several adults such as Mrs. Eliza Hall, Mrs. Lorinda Bewley Chapman, Josiah Osborn, and W. D. Canfield. More than sixty years later, Eliza Spalding (then Mrs. A. J. Warren), looking back on her experiences as a witness at the trial, said: “It was trying on the nerves, and I think I was nearly as frightened in the courtroom as I was while held prisoner. The lawyers asked such questions about the massacre and the Indians looked so threatening that altogether it was a most unpleasant experience.”\textsuperscript{16}

The defense counsels argued that at the time of the massacre, the laws of the United States had not been extended over the area occupied by the Cayuse tribe. In reply, the court ruled that by an Act of Congress of 1844, all the territory west of the Mississippi River was “embraced within and declared to be Indian Territory; and as such, subject to the laws regulating intercourse with the Indians.” The defense then asked for a change of venue because the five accused felt that the attitude of
the residents of Oregon City was so hostile they could not receive a fair and impartial trial in that city. In the petition drawn up for this purpose, each of the five, being illiterate, made an “X” mark opposite his name written at the end of the document. The petition was denied by the court.

Finally, the defense sought to lessen the degree of guilt by showing that Whitman had been warned repeatedly of the danger he faced by remaining at Waiilatpu because of the practice of the Cayuses to kill their own medicine men when one of their patients died. Both Dr. McLough-lin and Spalding were summoned to testify that such warnings had been given. Stickus also testified that he had told Dr. Whitman “to be careful for the bad Indians would kill him.” The court refused to admit the relevance of such testimony.

Since the records of the trial, now on file in the Oregon State Ar-chives at Salem, do not give a verbatim report of the testimony of the individual witnesses for the prosecution, we are unable to determine the specific crime with which each of the accused was charged. After only two days of hearings, the case went to the jury.

The judge, in his charge to the jury, stated that the Cayuse na-tion, which had voluntarily surrendered the five prisoners, knew best “who were the perpetrators of the massacre.” After deliberating for only one hour and fifteen minutes on Friday afternoon, May 24, the jury returned a verdict of guilty against each of the five. The judge then sentenced the five to be hanged at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, June 8, 1850. Although Judge Pratt did not quote from the code of laws which Indian Agent Elijah White induced the Nez Perces and Cayuses to accept in 1842, the sentence he pronounced reflects Article 1 of that code: “Whoever wilfully takes life shall be hung.” Eliza Spalding remembered that the five prisoners, when informed of the sentence, “grew very much excited… and said that they wouldn’t mind being shot, but to die by the rope was to die as a dog and not as a man.”

GUilty Or I ncocENT

As soon as the trial was over, a division of opinion arose among the residents of Oregon City regarding the guilt or innocence of each of the condemned Indians. Evidently the majority approved the sentence. Their opinion was strengthened by a news item which appeared
in the May 30 issue of the Oregon Spectator under the heading “Cayuses Have Confessed.” The reporter wrote: “We are informed that Telokite now admits that he did strike Dr. Whitman with his hatchet, as testified by Mrs. Hall,—Tomahas, or The Murderer, admits that he shot Dr. Whitman. Isiasheluckas [Ish-ish-kais-kais or Frank Escaloom] confesses to have shot Mrs. Whitman,—and Clokamas, the smallest one of the five, admits that he assisted in dispatching young [Francis] Sager. But Kiamasumkin says he was present but did not participate in the massacre.”

Prior to this newspaper report which contained the alleged confessions of four of the five prisoners, several in the Oregon City community were convinced that all five were innocent and that the real culprits were among the ten Cayuses who had already been killed. Among these ten were Tamsucky and the two sons of Tiloukaikt, Edward and Clark. Among those who held these views was Territorial Secretary K. Pritchett, who had been one of the three defense counsels.

Following the trial, Governor Lane was called to southern Oregon and northern California to settle some difficulties with the Rogue River Indians. During his absence from Oregon City, Pritchett as Territorial Secretary, became Acting Governor. Taking advantage of this situation, some people, who believed in the innocence of the five condemned men, circulated a petition which called upon the Acting Governor to grant a reprieve and free them. Although Pritchett was eager to do this, he was fearful of possible legal complications, especially if Lane were still in Oregon at the time set for the execution. So nothing was done.18

Among those who believed in the innocence of the five condemned Indians were Sergeant Henry R. Crawford and Corporal Robert D. Mahon of the Mounted Riflemen Regiment who were a part of the detachment of soldiers set to guard the prisoners. From their close associations with the five Cayuses during their confinement on the island, the two soldiers found themselves in full agreement with the petition that had been presented to Acting Governor Pritchett. It also seems evident that Crawford and Mahon, who may have been Roman Catholics, wanted to correct some calumnious statements that Spalding had published in the Oregon American and Evangelical Unionist, which claimed that the massacre “had been committed at the instigation of the priests.”19

The two soldiers interviewed the five Cayuses on Sunday, June 2,
and again at 11:80 a.m. on Monday shortly before they were taken to the gallows. From the notes taken at these interviews, a paper was written entitled “Important declaration made June 2d and 3d, 1850” which the two men signed. The manuscript copy contains about 1,200 words on two legal-size pages, with five paragraphs, one for each of the condemned men. Each claimed that he was innocent of murder. Tiloukaikt placed the blame for the deaths of the Whitmans and others at Waiilatpu on the ten members of his band who were already dead, implicating Tamsucky especially. Tiloukaikt said: “I am innocent of the crime of which I am charged; those who committed it are dead, some killed, some died. There were ten, two were my sons... Tamsucky, before the massacre, came to my lodge. He told me they were going to hold a council to kill Dr. Whitman. I told them not to do so, that it was bad... I had told Tamsucky over and over, to let them alone. My talk was nothing. I shut my mouth... The Priest tells me I must die tomorrow. I know not for what. They tell me that I have made a confession to the Marshall that I struck Dr. Whitman. It is false. I never did such a thing. He was my friend, how could I kill my friend: You ask me if the priest did not encourage the people to kill Dr. Whitman? I answer, no, no.” During the interview with Crawford and Mahon late Monday morning, Tiloukaikt said: “I am innocent but my heart is weak since I have been in chains, but since I must die, I forgive them all.”

Kia-ma-sump-kin stated: “I was up the river at the time of the massacre, and did not arrive until the next day... I was not present at the murder nor was I any way concerned with it. I am innocent—it hurts me to talk about dying for nothing... I never made any declaration to any one that I was guilty.” Kia-ma-sump-kin admitted that he was at Waiilatpu after the first day of the massacre, but added: “There were plenty of Indians all about.” He argued that if his guilt were based solely on being at Waiilatpu at the time of the killings, then all who were there were equally guilty.

Clokamas said: “I was there at the time. I lived there, but I had no hand in the murder. I saw them when they were killed, but did not touch or strike any one. I looked on. There were plenty of Indians... There were ten... they are killed. They say I am guilty, but it is not so. I am innocent... I must die by being hung by the neck... I have no reason to die for nothing... I never confessed to the Marshall that I was guilty, or..."
to any other person. I am innocent. The priest did not tell us to do what
the Indians have done.”

The shortest statement came from Ish-ish-kais-kais who said: “I say
the same as the others. The murderers are killed, some by the whites,
some by the Cayuses… They were ten in number… The priest did not
tell us to do this.” Tomahas said: “I did not know that I came here to
die… My heart cries my brother [i.e., Tamsucky] was guilty, but he is
dead. I am innocent. I know I am going to die for things I am not guilty
of, but I forgive them. I love all men now. My hope, the Priest tells me,
is in Christ.”

The most telling argument in support of Kia-ma-summer-kin’s claim
of innocence is the fact that not one of the nineteen extant eyewitness
accounts of the massacre and the subsequent captivity mentioned him as
having taken part in the killing of any one of the victims. Nor was he so
accused at the Oregon City trial according to the extant records. He was
not listed as one of the culprits in McBean’s letter to the Hudson’s Bay
Company of November 30, 1847. However, when the Americans adver-
tised rewards for the apprehension of thirteen of the alleged murderers,
“Quia-ma-shou-skin” was included in the list.22 Also, McBean in his
letter to Lane of January 6, 1850, claimed that Kia-ma-summer-kin was
the one who “shot Dr. Whitman’s lady.” Such reports, evidently received
from Indian sources, may have been the reason why Governor Lane
insisted that Kia-ma-summer-kin be one of the five to be surrendered
at The Dalles in May 1850. In the opinion of the author of this book,
Kia-ma-summer-kin was innocent.

The evidence against the other four who were found guilty is much
more convincing. The first to accuse Tiloukaikt and Tomahas of be-
ing ringleaders in the massacre was William McBean, who listed them
with others in his letter of November 30, 1847. With but few exceptions,
this initial list of suspected culprits proved to be accurate. In the list of
thirteen Cayuses for whom the Oregon Volunteers offered rewards, in
addition to that of Kia-ma-summer-kin, occur the names of Tiloukaikt
Tomahas, and Frank Escaloom. Clokamas does not appear in this list
except, possibly, under a different Indian name.

Two years after the massacre, McBean was able to compile a more
detailed list of the alleged murderers which he gave in his letter of Janu-
ary 6, 1850, to Governor Lane. During this interval, McBean had been
able to secure further information regarding the culprits from such Cayuse chiefs as Stickus, Camaspelo, and Young Chief.

In this letter to Lane, McBean claimed that Tiloukaikt had killed Judge Saunders; Tomahas had murdered Dr. Whitman; Clokamas “had given his assistance in killing the sick” [i.e., Bewley and Sales]; and Ish-ish-kais-kais had killed “some of Doctor’s household.” Confirmation of each of these accusations has been found in the eyewitness accounts of the massacre, references to which have been given. The evidence presented during the Oregon City trial was such as to make inevitable the verdict rendered against these four. In the opinion of the author, these four were guilty as charged. Their protestations of innocence were the cries of desperation when faced with the imminence of death by hanging. Catherine Sager, in her reminiscences, stated: “Old Teloukite was a man who intended to do right, as far as he knew... The other four were as bad men as ever lived. I knew them well for three years. If ever men deserved to hang, they did.”

Baptism and Execution

According to the Catholic Sentinel of April 20, 1872: “The sentence condemning the prisoners to lose their lives was no sooner pronounced against them, than they immediately thought of saving their souls by looking to a minister to prepare them for death.” Archbishop Francis Norbert Blanchet, a brother of Bishop A. M. A. Blanchet, who founded St. Anne Mission on the Umatilla River, responded. Of this he wrote: “The archbishop went to see them without delay, and continued to go twice a day to teach them and prepare them for baptism and death.” Spalding also called on the condemned men, who refused to see him.

“On the eve of their death,” wrote Blanchet, “the old chief Kilo Kite and his four companions made a declaration of innocence.” After the execution, duplicate copies were made of the document and a copy given to the Archbishop. Although the latter, in his account of administering the sacraments of baptism and confirmation to the five, made no comment as to whether he believed their protestations of innocence, it seems evident that he considered them spiritually prepared for the sacraments.

At nine o’clock on Monday morning, June, the day of the execution,
Archbishop Blanchet and Father F. Veyret conducted low mass for the Indians in their private quarters. After the mass, the archbishop baptized each of the five, giving to each a Bible name. Tiloukaikt was named Andrew; Tomahas, Peter; Ish-ish-kais-kais, John; Clokamas, Paul; and Kia-ma-sump-kin, James. After the baptism, the five were confirmed and thus became members of the Roman Catholic Church.

The gallows had been constructed on the east bank of the Willamette River near the island where the five had been held prisoners and two or three blocks to the southwest of Dr. McLoughlin's house, which then stood on Main Street. The two priests accompanied the doomed men to the scaffold where Joe Meek, as United States marshal, was waiting. The priests ascended to the scaffold platform with their converts.

According to an article in the Catholic Sentinel signed “An Observer” [possibly Father Veyret]: “Words of consolation and encouragement were addressed to them by the Archbishop, who recited the prayer for the dying. When their hands were about to be bound, the old chief, Tilolokite, refused to submit with great energy; but at the sight of the image of our crucified Saviour, he instantly submitted to the humiliation and kept profoundly silent.”

Hundreds of curious people thronged Oregon City that day to witness the gruesome event. The Cayuses, however, who had attended the trial, had fled the city upon learning the fate pronounced on the five, “struck with consternation and fear, and with hearts full of grief.” Possibly Young Chief and the others who had cooperated with him in apprehending and surrendering the five to the Americans never anticipated such a humiliating and terrible end.

Promptly at 2:00 p.m., Meek cut a rope with his tomahawk. Five trapdoors dropped open; five bodies jerked from the ends of taut ropes; and the souls of Andrew, Peter, John, Paul, and James entered the next world. About a half hour later, after being pronounced dead, the five bodies were cut down and taken to the edge of modern-day Kelly Field, about one mile distant on the north edge of Oregon City. The place where the bodies were buried is believed to have been on what is now market road No. 20, about one-half mile east of Abernethy Bridge on Oregon State highway, No. 160. No marker was placed to indicate the location of the grave.
The *Oregon Spectator* for June 27, 1850, carried the following news-story under the caption: “Execution of the Cayuse Indians.”

The five Indians, whose trial and condemnation we recorded in our last paper, were hung on the 3rd inst., according to the sentence of the court. The execution was witnessed by a large concourse of people. The chief (Telokite) pled earnestly to be shot, as hanging, in his view, was not only an ignominious fate, but not in exact accordance with the true principle of retributive justice. Hanging, however, was the requirement of the law, and hang they did. Some of them died almost without a struggle, others seemed to suffer more, and one showed signs of life after hanging fourteen minutes. They were attended on the scaffold by the Arch Bishop of the Catholic Church, who administered to them the rites and consolations of that church appropriate to such occasions. This closes another act in the sad and horrible tragedy.

**A Financial Review**

No biography of the Whitmans would be complete without a review of the financial problems involved in the founding and the support of the Oregon Mission of the American Board. Many of the personality difficulties which arose within the Mission stemmed from the straitened condition of the Board’s treasury.

A good example is seen in Parker’s refusal to hire a man to help with the packing when he and Whitman made their exploring trip to the Rockies in the summer of 1835. The sharpest letter Whitman ever wrote to the Board was that of May 10, 1839, when he answered the charges that Parker had made regarding what Parker thought were the excessive costs of the Oregon Mission.

Another example is found in Gray’s determination to save money for the Board by buying only two 8 x 10 tents for the four newly-wedded couples to use on their westward trek in 1838 rather than four smaller tents. Smith reminded Secretary Greene that he had been assured before leaving his home that he and his bride would have their own tent.

The American Board was always facing financial problems throughout the eleven-year period, 1836–47, of its Oregon Mission.
For one thing, foreign missions, which then included work with the American Indians since they spoke non-English languages, was still comparatively new in American Protestantism. Although the American Board was founded in 1810, its promotional techniques within its chief supporting denominations, the Congregational and the Presbyterian, were still weak by the time its Oregon Mission was established. Giving was largely on an individual basis; however, by the 1830s, many churches were contributing to the Board, and the women’s missionary societies within local churches, such as “Female Cent Society,” “Female Benevolence Society,” and “Female Missionary Association,” were increasing in number. To promote its missionary projects, the Board relied heavily on its field agents, some of whom served voluntarily or on a part-time salaried basis, and in its official publication, the Missionary Herald.

An examination of the list of givers, which was published monthly in the Herald, shows that during the years 1834–48, most of the donations were for sums under $100.00; many were less than $10.00; and even gifts of fifty cents were acknowledged. The Board had no endowment and was the recipient of only a few bequests.

During 1811, the first full year after its founding, the Board reported receipts of less than $1,000.00. During the twenty-year period, ending in 1831, more than $101,000.00 had been received. In 1836, when the Whitman-Spalding party went to Oregon, receipts had risen to $176,232.15, but expenditures were $210,407.54. The accumulated deficit then amounted to more than $38,000.00. During 1837, the deficit increased by another $2,500.00 even though the receipts rose to over $252,000.00. By that time the Board had 360 missionaries under appointment in what is now continental United States and in foreign lands. Its most flourishing mission was that in the Hawaiian Islands. A financial depression, felt throughout the nation in 1837, alarmed the Board. Notices were sent to all its missionaries warning them that the Board would have to reduce its allocations. The whole Oregon Mission was limited to an annual expenditure of only $1,000.00. This suggested limitation, however, was never actually enforced.

The total cost of the Oregon Mission to the American Board from the time Samuel Parker went to St. Louis in 1834 to the payment of the last drafts drawn on the Board by the surviving members of the Mission in 1851 was $38,833.39 [Appendix 2]. This sum can be divided into three
parts. First came the cost of the exploring tours, the travel expenses of the two mission parties sent out in 1836 and 1838, and the initial cost of establishing the three stations at Waiilatpu, Lapwai, and Tshimakain.

The total expenditures for the founding years, 1834–38 inclusive, came to $10,686.27, or nearly one-fourth of the total for the eleven-year period. The missionaries were supposed to be self-supporting as far as possible; hence the initial costs included the purchase of farm and home equipment, and livestock. The cost of goods delivered in Oregon, after making the long voyage around South America, was about double the original price. This was true of items shipped by the Board and also of goods purchased directly from the Hudson’s Bay Company’s store at Vancouver.

The second category of expenses covered the period 1839–48 inclusive, when the Board spent $22,099.38 to support no fewer than eight adults, and sometimes thirteen, in three, and for a short time in four, different stations. This means an average annual cost of about $2,200.00. During the ten years, 1837–47, inclusive, seventeen children were born to Mission families. Although the Board made no provision for hired help to relieve the missionaries of some menial tasks, occasionally they incurred such expenses and charged them to the Board.

The third category of expenses covered the years 1849–51 inclusive, when the Board was closing its Oregon Mission and resettling the surviving families in the Willamette Valley. The expenditure for these years amounted to $6,047.64.

The financial reports of the Board did not always include the value of gifts sent direct to Oregon by churches or individual donors. The missionaries often mentioned in their letters the receipt of missionary barrels which would contain clothing, books, and incidental items. We know that some of Whitman’s relatives and the church at Rushville sent plows to the Oregon Mission, and there is evidence that Whitman spent some of his personal funds for such items. Such gifts as molasses, sugar, and money came from the Hawaiian converts of the American Board’s Mission in Hawaii.

If the financial reports of the Board suggest that it was parsimonious in its support of its Oregon Mission, the fault was in its policy of trying to do too much with too little. The zeal of the Board to evangelize the world led it to undertake more projects than it could adequately support.
Among the Board’s contributors were many who gave sacrificially even though their gifts were small. But those who gave the most were the missionaries themselves who, through these years under review, not only served without a salary but also without the promise of furloughs, educational benefits for their children, or retirement allowances.

The basic weakness of the Board’s policy to encourage its missionaries in Oregon to make their work as self-supporting as possible was that too much time and energy had to be spent on secular activities. Whitman and his three ordained associates were so occupied with their fanning responsibilities that they were unable to make the best use of their specialized training for their main objective of Christianizing the natives. Under such circumstances, we marvel that the Whitmans and the Spaldings were able to do as much as they did for the material, educational, and spiritual benefit of the Indians.

THE WAIILATPU INVENTORY

The inventory which Spalding compiled in 1849 of property lost, stolen, or destroyed at Waiilatpu because of the massacre is of more historical significance than merely being a catalog of such items. The facts revealed in this document pay tribute to Whitman’s business ability. He was not only the doctor for the Mission and a lay preacher for the Indians, he was also a good administrator and a hard worker. H. K. W. Perkins, in his letter to Jane Prentiss of October 19, 1849, stressed this point by writing: “He was always at work” [Appendix 6]. Beginning in the spring of 1837 with limited equipment, and at first with untrained assistants, Whitman had succeeded by the fall of 1847 in bringing thirty acres under cultivation, all fenced and part of it ditched for irrigation. Spalding, in his Waiilatpu inventory, valued this at $413.90 which represented the cost of labor in splitting rails for fences and in digging ditches. Clearing the land of the head-high, tough ryegrass, which gave the station its name, “Waiilatpu,” must have been a laborious task. Spalding also listed an orchard with “75 apple trees, a few bearing,” and a nursery of “apple & peach trees tame currents, hops, locusts (trees),” all valued at $280.00.

The inventory tells much about Whitman’s agricultural activities. His equipment included: “1 Harrow, 1 Cultivator, 1 Threshing Machine, 1 Corn Sheller, 1 Fanning Mill, and 2 large Prairie Plows,” with a total value of $205.00. The threshing machine, corn sheller,
and fanning mill were the supplies that Whitman got at The Dalles in September 1847. Until he got these machines, all of his wheat had to be flailed and then winnowed by hand. Spalding also listed twenty-three cast plows value at $24.00 each and forty-two plows without the wooden parts at $18.00 each. These plows were on hand to be traded or sold to the Indians. Included in the inventory were four wagons, one priced at $100.00; twelve ox yokes; 1 set of harness; and a variety of farm tools such as axes, hand sickles, hoes, spades, saws, and saddles. The blacksmith shop equipment included 1,000 pounds of iron and 300 pounds of nails. Spalding listed a “coal house” in connection with the blacksmith shop. The question arises: where did Whitman get coal? It may be that this came from a place near Lapwai where Spalding had discovered an outcropping of low grade lignite.32 Or it may be that the reference was to charcoal which might have been locally made.

The list of Whitman’s livestock with their values follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 Milch Cows</td>
<td>$16 each</td>
<td>$1600.00</td>
<td>2 Broke Horses</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 young cattle</td>
<td>$5 each</td>
<td>400.00</td>
<td>6 Unbroke</td>
<td>$12</td>
<td>72.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Yoke of oxen</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>550.00</td>
<td>30 mares &amp; Colts</td>
<td>$12</td>
<td>360.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 Calves at $4 each</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>320.00</td>
<td>80 Sheep at $3</td>
<td></td>
<td>240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 beef cattle at $20</td>
<td></td>
<td>160.00</td>
<td>12 Bucks Southdown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 broke Horses</td>
<td></td>
<td>160.00</td>
<td>imported</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total of 290 head of cattle (a yoke of oxen representing two head), valued at $3,030.00, represents a remarkable increase over the small beginning of five or seven cows which Whitman had kept out of the small herd which he and Spalding had driven across the country in 1836. In addition to the natural increase of his herd during eleven years, Whitman had received some cattle by trading horses and supplies with the Oregon immigrants while they were passing through the Cayuse country. The Waiilatpu inventory listed forty-six head of horses, at least ten of which were broken to harness, valued at $652.00, and ninety-two sheep at $300.00.

According to Anson Dart’s report to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1851, Perrin Whitman returned to Waiilatpu sometime following the compilation of the Waiilatpu inventory and was able to recover some of the sheep that Whitman and Spalding
had owned. These he drove to the Willamette Valley. None of the Indians seemed to appreciate the value of sheep. Although some Whitman letters contain references to hogs and poultry at Waiilatpu, none were listed in this inventory. This was undoubtedly an oversight on Spalding’s part. When the Oregon Volunteers were at Waiilatpu in March 1848, Newell noted in his journal that they killed “a fat swine.”

Spalding also listed the following: “300 Bush[els] wheat [$]300.00; 60 Bush corn... 75.00; 250 Bush potatoes 125.00; 20 Bush Onions... 60.00.” He made no mention of peas, but Whitman had some because the Volunteers found a supply at the mission site when they arrived in March. Spalding also neglected to mention other vegetables such as squash, turnips, beans, etc., which were no doubt a part of Whitman’s annual harvest. Included in the inventory were the following items, some of which had been imported from the Hawaiian Islands: “8 bush salt... 24.00; 4 sacks sugar (120) lbs 20 cts... 24.00; 1 Keg molasses... 12.00.” The mention of a “Cheese Press” in the inventory, valued at $48.00, indicates that the Whitmans were able to add cheese to their tables. The animals which could have been butchered and these stores of grain and vegetables would have provided sufficient food for all seventy-five people who were expecting to spend the winter of 1847–48 at Waiilatpu.

In the list of buildings, Spalding mentioned the sawmill in the Blue Mountains as being “well made, quick stroke, heavy dam across a furious stream, Bull [i.e., large] Wheel... $4,000.00” and the adjacent log cabin valued at $100.00. In the list of buildings at Waiilatpu, he mentioned: “1 Flour Mill (without mill house), Stones good size and quality... heavy dam & large pond with race... 2,000.00.”

The main T-shaped house was described in considerable detail, room by room, with references to number of doors, windows, chimneys, cupboards, and type of wall and roof construction. This detailed inventory will be of inestimable value should it ever be possible to build a replica of the house at some future time. Spalding estimated the total cost at $1,834.91, which would have included such items as hardware, paint, window shashes, etc. and perhaps labor.

Other buildings listed in the inventory include a blacksmith shop, a “Corn & wheat house,” an “Out kitchen with Store room above 20 x 24,” and a “Wood house, 20 x 12, not finished.” Strange to say, Spalding made
no mention of the emigrant house which was large enough to accommodate thirty people at the time of the massacre.

Anson Dart, in his report of October 1851 to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., stated that many of the values that Spalding gave in his Waiilatpu inventory were “very much too high.” Dart claimed that the gristmill was “a very small affair... and would not have cost in the States three hundred Dollars.” He also felt that the value placed on the sawmill was “equally too high.” It is possible that Dart, who was a relative newcomer to Oregon when he wrote his report, did not give sufficient consideration to Oregon’s inflated prices. On the other hand, Spalding’s failure to list some property such as the emigrant house, offsets to some extent Dart’s accusation of inflated prices.

Glimpses into the Whitman Home

The Waiilatpu inventory not only bears tribute to Whitman’s ability as a good business man, it also throws much light on the nature of the home life of the Whitman family. Although the inventory that Spalding prepared for the Waiilatpu station is less detailed than that for Lapwai, enough information is given to indicate that the Whitman home was furnished with only the barest necessities. Under the heading of “Furniture” are the following items with values indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 settees $18, 2 settees $8</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 settees $12, with 2 cushions</td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rocking Chairs</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Common chairs</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed steads with cords</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 bed steads</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 feather beds</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 straw ticks</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Table, 6 legs</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Table 4 legs</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Table end with drawers</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Stands with drawers</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 stands wash</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Clothes Press</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Clocks</td>
<td>17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Looking Glass</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the furniture was homemade. A rocking chair was a special luxury as is suggested by the following entry in Elkanah Walker’s diary for April 8, 1841: “We now have one chair, the first that we ever had. It is a rocking chair & it is really good to get into it.” The beds had no mattresses or springs, hence a feather bed was doubly appreciated.
Narcissa had been able to get enough feathers, probably from wildfowl, while at Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1836, to make her first feather bed. The fact that Spalding valued these at $20.00 each indicates their scarcity. The straw ticks, which were poor substitutes for feather beds, were sometimes filled with corn husks instead of wheat straw. Possibly the two cushions were also filled with feathers.

Under the heading: “Bedding for at least 20 persons,” Spalding itemized: “30 quilts, blankets & comfortables… 150.00; 12 sheets Wool & Linen… 36.00; 40 sheets Cotton… 42.00; 16 Pillows… 16.00.” Since the Whitman household, after 1843, usually numbered fourteen or more, the supply was barely sufficient for their needs, especially in cold winter weather. All washing of clothes was by hand in tubs. Spalding listed two washtubs at $2.00 each. Although he included soap and “2 sad irons” [i.e., solid flat-irons] in his Lapwai inventory, Spalding failed to list such items at Waiilatpu.

A prized possession of the Whitmans was a cookstove worth $45.00. They also had two “Box Stoves” or heating stoves, $68.00; two spinning wheels and attachments, $20.00; 200 pounds of wool, $100.00; a grindstone, $12.00; and an assortment of “Table Furniture including Tin, hardware [sic] & Crockery” at $18.00. Spalding listed a loom at Lapwai, but none at Waiilatpu. The schoolroom contained a blackboard, and also writing desks and benches which must have been crude because they were listed at only $6.00. Also in the schoolroom were “Mitchels Map of the U.S.A… 15.00; Tracy’s Map of the World… 3.00.” As has been stated, Catherine Sager remembered that one of the Cayuse Indians used one of the maps as a saddle blanket. The inventory also included mention of several large kettles, two pairs of andirons, one bellows, several trunks or chests, and a library worth $100.00.

Whitman’s medical library, listed separately from the family collection, was valued at $80.00. His medicines were valued at $189.00. A “Full & Complete” case of surgical instruments was listed at $100.00, with an imperfect set, $15.00, and a “Pocket case with medical bags,” $20.00. Spalding also mentioned a museum cabinet which contained geological specimens, shells, and Indian curiosities, valued at $50.00; and a shipment of goods which had but recently arrived from Boston and had not been distributed, $1,500.00.
Dr. Whitman’s clothing included a “superfine” coat worth $45.00, and a “silk velvet vest... 8.00.” Whitman may have brought these items with him from the East when he returned in 1843. All other articles of clothing belonging to him were valued at $325.00. Mrs. Whitman’s clothing was listed at $200.00 and that of the Sager children and Perrin, $280.00. The fact that Spalding included in the Waiilatpu inventory two brass locks priced at $4.00 each and six cheaper locks at $1.00 each, as well as the mention that certain doors were equipped with bolts, shows that the Whitmans had found it prudent to keep some of their storerooms and private quarters locked.

Spalding included in his Lapwai inventory a number of items not given in that for Waiilatpu such as candles, soap, a churn, cowbells, and even a lamp and a lantern. Where Spalding was able to get oil for the last two items is not known. It is reasonable to believe that Whitman also had such articles. Neither of the two inventories mentioned guns, although Spalding listed one-half keg of powder at Lapwai. The Waiilatpu inventory did not include mention of the personal belongings of any of the immigrants. No doubt many of their possessions had to be abandoned. What happened, we wonder, to the violin that Andrew Rodgers played to Narcissa’s great enjoyment? Were there no pictures for the walls, curtains for the windows, or rugs for the floors?

According to Spalding’s figures, the Waiilatpu inventory, including the value of $7,000.00 placed on the two mills and the “40,000 feet of sawed lumber,” totaled $22,221.26. The details given in this inventory regarding the plain furnishings of their home, their modest wardrobes, and their simple fare illuminate the primitive conditions under which the Whitmans lived. The claims that the American Board made to the United States Government for property lost or destroyed at Waiilatpu and Lapwai, based on Spalding’s inventories, were never honored. The Methodists were more fortunate in their claim for compensation for their mission site at The Dalles which the government had taken for a military post. Since the American Board had never completed payment for the site, the Methodist title remained valid. In June 1860 Congress authorized the payment of $20,000.00 to the Methodists for the property, which included title to 353 acres.
MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS, AND ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCES

The fame of the Whitmans has grown with the passing of the years. It can now be stated without fear of contradiction that no Protestant missionaries in the history of the United States have been honored by so many monuments and memorials as Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.

WHITMAN COLLEGE

The best known of all monuments erected to perpetuate the Whitman memory is Whitman College at Walla Walla, Washington. After his return from his eastern journey in the fall of 1843, Whitman dreamed of seeing a college established in the vicinity of Waiilatpu which he believed would be the center of a thriving American settlement. In his letter of May 31, 1844, addressed to the Rev. A. B. Smith then serving in the Hawaiian Islands under the American Board, Whitman wrote: “Could I have staid home longer, I should have tried to have raised the means of establishing some Academies & Colleges, but I trust to influence others to do so.” In his letter of October 25 of that year to Secretary Greene, Whitman wrote: “This is a place most advantageous for the commencement of what may soon be an Academy & College, both on account of its fine & healthy climate & of its eligible situation.”

In Whitman’s last letter to the Board, dated October 18, 1847, he begged it to do what it could to promote the emigration of a colony of Christian laymen and ministers who would settle in the interior of Oregon. Whitman was hoping that such a colony would make its homes in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. Regarding the possible migration of ministers to Oregon, he wrote: “One or more ought to be with the intent to found a College.” The proximity of two Catholic missions to Waiilatpu caused Whitman to reconsider the location of his proposed college. Having begun negotiations for acquiring the former Methodist property at The Dalles, Whitman in his last letter to Greene favored that as a possible location. He wrote: “I know of no place so eligible as at the Dalls close by our station. Here a salubrious climate & near proximity to market & the main settlement will be secured.”

When the Cayuse chiefs met with Bishop Blanchet at St. Anne’s Mission on December 20, 1847, to discuss peace proposals which could
be submitted to the American authorities, they asked for the cessation of immigrant travel through their country. However, the Whitman massacre, instead of discouraging the coming of the Americans, actually promoted the opening of the upper Columbia River country for settlement. This must have been to the Indians a disturbing reversal of their expectations.

Following the Cayuse War and the hanging of the five condemned Indians at Oregon City in June 1850, settlers began drifting into the Walla Walla Valley to take up land. Settlement of the interior of Old Oregon was temporarily slowed during the early 1850s by continued Indian unrest. Old Fort Walla Walla was abandoned in 1855 and the name transferred to a new site about six miles east of Waiilatpu where Colonel George Wright established a military post. Here the present city of Walla Walla arose. Washington Territory was created in 1853; Oregon became a State in 1859 with the present boundaries.

Although Whitman seems to have been the first to dream of establishing an academy or college in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, Cushing Eells was the one who made the dream come true. Hearing of the influx of settlers in the Walla Walla Valley, Eells decided in 1859 to lay claim to 640 acres of land which included the Whitman mission site in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of others. Dreaming of the possibility of establishing an academy [or seminary, which was the term commonly used in that generation for such an institution] at Waiilatpu to be named after his martyred friend, Marcus Whitman, Eells applied to the Legislature of Washington Territory for a charter. This was granted on December 20, 1859, when Whitman Seminary became a legal reality even though it had no buildings or students at that time.

At first Eells planned to build his seminary on the mission site at Waiilatpu. In order to secure title to the land as a homestead, he had to make some material improvements and fulfill certain residential requirements. A log cabin was erected in the summer of 1860 at Waiilatpu and Eells moved his family there two years later.

With nearby Walla Walla growing rapidly, Eells saw the wisdom of establishing his seminary in that place. After much effort and personal sacrifice, he succeeded in raising enough money to erect a building on a site in Walla Walla which is now a part of the campus of Whitman College. The Seminary, which began as a private elementary school, opened its doors to the public in 1873.
classes in 1866. Later a secondary course of study was made available and, after a few years, the school was known as Whitman Academy.

After sixteen difficult years, being always faced with the problem of finances, the Academy came under the sponsorship of the Congregational Education Society in 1882. The name was then changed to Whitman College with the former academy being continued until 1912 as a part of the college. The first classes in Whitman College began on September 4, 1882, which would have been Whitman's eightieth birthday, had he lived that long. A women's dormitory erected in 1925 was called Narcissa Prentiss Hall. Today Whitman College ranks as one of the best private colleges in the United States. Its library and archives contain a prime collection of source materials—letters, diaries, and other memorabilia—dealing with the Whitmans and the whole Oregon Mission of the American Board.

THE WHITMAN MONUMENT AT WAIALATPU

A second monument erected to honor the Whitmans is a granite shaft which crowns the hill at Waialatpu. This is eighteen feet high, two feet square at its base, and tapers to the top. The shaft stands on a pedestal about nine feet high with the name Whitman carved on one side. The idea for the erection of such a monument at Waialatpu originated with W. H. Gray. During the last years of his life, while living in Portland, Oregon, Gray zealously solicited funds for this project and succeeded in raising about $800.00 before he died on February 16, 1893. For several years nothing was done to complete the project. Then the Whitman Monument Association was formed in March 1897, largely by residents of Walla Walla, to fulfill Gray's dream. The approach of the semicentennial of the massacre in November of that year injected a feeling of urgency into the project. The Monument Association soon secured title to eight acres which included the original mission cemetery, with the great grave containing the remains of the victims of the massacre, and the hill, over one hundred feet high, which rises near it. Plans were made not only for the erection of the granite shaft but also for the placing of a memorial slab of Vermont marble over the great grave. The total cost of land and memorial stones came to about $2,500.00.

Under the joint sponsorship of the Monument Association and Whitman College, elaborate plans were made for the semicentennial
observance of the massacre on Monday and Tuesday, November 29 and 30, 1897. The monument and the memorial slab for the grave were to have been dedicated, but unfortunately the stones did not arrive in time. Nevertheless, the ceremonies were held as planned. The opening event was a public meeting in the Opera House of Walla Walla on Monday evening; it was “packed with the greatest crowd ever gathered under one roof in that City.”

Only eight of the seventeen survivors who were then alive were able to attend. They were the three older Sager sisters—Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda; the three Kimball sisters—Susan, Sarah, and Mina; and Nancy Osborn, all of whom were married; and Byron S. Kimball. Perrin Whitman, who was ill at the time in his home in Lewiston, Idaho, sent greetings by his grandson, Marcus Whitman Barnett. Only one of the original band of thirteen missionaries of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was still alive, Mrs. Elkanah Walker. She passed away at her home in Forest Grove, Oregon, on December 4, 1897, just a few days after the semicentennial was observed.

A large crowd made a pilgrimage to Waiilatpu on Tuesday morning by train. Among those who took part in the ceremonies either at the Opera House or at the grave were the Rev. Samuel Greene of Seattle, a son of Secretary David Greene, and the Rev. L. H. Hallock, D.D., undoubtedly a descendant of the Rev. Moses Hallock under whom Whitman had studied as a boy in the school at Plainfield, Massachusetts. Catherine Sager Pringle also spoke at the services held at Waiilatpu. According to one report, her “short speech… moved many to tears.”

After the granite and marble stones arrived, the remains of the victims were placed in a large metal casket and reburied on January 29, 1898, in the same place where they had been laid by the Oregon Volunteers in March 1848. Over this was placed the polished marble slab, which measured 11’ x 5½’ x 4”, and on which were inscribed the names of the fourteen who had lost their lives during the massacre. Several years later, the bodies of William and Mary Gray, which had been buried at Astoria, Oregon, were exhumed and brought to Waiilatpu where they were reburied near the great grave. Appropriate memorial services were held there on November 1, 1916. A tall monument was erected over the Gray grave and the site enclosed with an iron fence.
The Mystery of the Skulls

When the remains of the massacre victims were exhumed on October 22, 1897, only five skulls and a few bones were found under the overturned wagon box which had been placed there by the Oregon Volunteers in March 1848. The skull of Dr. Whitman was easily identified by the gold filling in a “posterior molar tooth on the left side.” Since there was only one woman’s skull among the five, this was identified as being that of Narcissa. The amazing fact was then discovered that both skulls had been sawed in two, probably by one of Dr. Whitman’s surgical saws. A contemporary newspaper account stated: “The skull [of Dr. Whitman] had been mutilated by being cut in two, the cut commencing at the nasal bones and extending back to the seat of the back wound. Marks of the saw are well defined on each side of the saw incision, where the instrument evidently slipped in the hands of the operator. The skull had not been separated by this cut, which seems to have been made for some other definite purpose than of opening the skull. The sawing was done unskillfully, probably when the body was lying on the ground face upward.”

Among those who examined the severed skulls was Matilda Sager Delaney who wrote: “A man’s skull showed two tomahawk cuts. I asked Dr. Penrose to hold the skull, which was in two parts, together... Both his and Mrs. Whitman’s had been cut in two.” Matilda thought that perhaps the mutilation had been done by the Indians, but Catherine, in a letter to Dr. Penrose dated December 14, 1898, wrote: “I wish to inform you that I have found out about the sawing of Dr. Whitman’s and his wife’s skulls. It was done Monday night, Nov. 29, by Joe Lewis.” Of the various theories advanced to explain the mystery of the severed skulls, this seems to be the most reasonable. We know that the half-breed Joe Lewis harbored deep grudges against both Marcus and Narcissa and that he played a leading role in plotting their deaths. Perhaps he found some sadistic satisfaction in using one of the doctor’s own saws in this act of mutilation.

The Whitman–Spalding Centennial, 1936

The approach of the centennial of the arrival in Old Oregon of the members of the Whitman–Spalding mission party stimulated a tremendous amount of interest in both church and secular circles. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., was especially active in promoting centennial
observances. The General Assembly of this denomination held a commemorative service at its annual meeting in Syracuse, New York, in May 1936. Following the Assembly, special exercises were held at Rushville and Prattsburg, New York, on June 4. Hundreds of churches throughout the country also remembered the occasion.48

Such communities as Lewiston, Idaho, and Walla Walla, Washington, staged elaborate celebrations which continued in each community over several days. The celebration at Lewiston, emphasizing the Spalding story, was held May 8–10, while that at Walla Walla took place on August 13–16, honoring the Whitmans. The United States Post Office Department issued a special Oregon commemorative stamp although the names of Whitman and Spalding did not appear on it.49 The State of Idaho created the Spalding State Park in 1936, which included the old mission site at the first Lapwai. This in 1965 became a part of the Nez Perce National Historical Park.

**Whitman Literature**

Following the death of the Rev. Myron Eells in 1907, the old theory of Whitman riding to Washington to save Oregon for the United States was kept alive largely in ecclesiastical circles by unhistorically-minded authors of Sunday school literature and mission study books. Ministers, more interested in good illustration than in being accurate, repeated the legend. These authors and ministers accepted Nixon’s *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon* as their final authority. It took years before the basic conclusions of such scholars as Edward G. Bourne and William I. Marshall were able to penetrate into ecclesiastical circles [Appendix 4]. Whitman lost none of the honor due him by being deprived of these legends. Rather, a new appraisal of his life and work, based upon documented facts, serves to increase his fame.

The observance of the Whitman–Spalding centennial in 1936 inspired an outburst of literary activity on the subject of the Whitmans. Following the publication of the author’s *Henry Harmon Spalding* in 1936 and his *Marcus Whitman, M.D.* in 1937, at least eight “historical novels” or “fictionalized biographies” of the Whitmans appeared. In some instances the authors of these books were so adroit in romanticizing history that the reader is often unable to discern where fact ends and fancy begins. Often historical events are distorted and individuals grossly misrepresented for the sake of a plot. By such means
erroneous impressions are again spread abroad.\textsuperscript{50} Some fictionalized biographies, however, can be recommended. Jeanette Eaton’s book for girls, \textit{Narcissa Whitman, Pioneer of Oregon} (1941), and Nard Jones’ \textit{The Great Command} (1959), have rendered a real service in visualizing Marcus and Narcissa Whitman as living human beings.

Among the tributes paid to the Whitmans are several of a musical nature. A four-act opera, \textit{The Cost of Empire}, sometimes called \textit{Narcissa}, by Mary Carr Moore and her mother Sarah Pratt Carr,\textsuperscript{51} was first presented in Spokane, Washington, in 1911, and then in such other cities as Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago. More than thirty years later, the opera was revived and presented March 16 and 17, 1945, in the Philharmonic Auditorium of Los Angeles, and in several of the larger churches of California. The \textit{Hymnal} of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in its 1933 edition and its many subsequent reprintings, contains a hymn, “Braving the Wilds all Unexplored,” which emphasized the pioneer theme. The words were by the late Dr. Robert Freeman, then pastor of the Pasadena Presbyterian Church, and the music by the late Dr. William F. Merrill, then pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City. The tune was called “Marcus Whitman.”

In addition to such books and musical items mentioned above, the observance of the Whitman–Spalding centennial in 1936 inspired the writing of many pamphlets, magazine articles, songs, and dramatizations,\textsuperscript{52} all adding to the fame of the Whitmans.

**Other Memorials**

During the observance of the centennial, attention was directed to the old Prentiss house in Prattsburg where Narcissa spent her girlhood. The house was in a dilapidated condition and in danger of being razed. Financed by contributions from interested individuals and church groups, the house was purchased and restored to its original condition.\textsuperscript{53} It is now a retirement home for a Presbyterian minister and his wife. A room in the United Presbyterian Church in Prattsburg has been named the Narcissa Prentiss Hall.

Among the many features of the National Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C., is a series of commemorative plaques placed to honor American leaders of the Calvinistic tradition. Among these is one dedicated to Marcus Whitman.
In 1928 two bronze plaques were placed on the grounds of the Prattsburg school, once the Franklin Academy, in memory of Henry Harmon Spalding and Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, both of whom had studied there. New York State Highway No. 53, connecting Kanona with Prattsburg, has been designated by the Highway Department of the State as the Whitman-Spalding Highway with appropriate markers at either end. The road connecting Prattsburg with Naples is called the Narcissa Prentiss Highway, and that between Penn Yan and Rushville, the Marcus Whitman Highway. A change of routing of a road going through Wheeler, New York, where Samuel Parker first interested Whitman in Oregon, requiring the razing of the original building in which Whitman had his medical office in 1832–35. Members of the Geneva Presbytery dismantled the building in May 1959 and moved the salvageable materials to the Presbytery’s camp for young people, called Camp Whitman, near Dresden, New York. Lack of funds has delayed the reerection of the building.

A bronze plaque honoring Dr. Whitman is on a boulder near the side of the office building in Wheeler, and another is on a fifteen-ton boulder located in front of the Congregational Church at Rushville. A monument honoring Whitman and Parker, dedicated May 12, 1935, stands before the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, New York.

The Marcus Whitman Central School was erected at Rushville in 1971 on a site bordering the cemetery which contains the graves of Whitman’s parents. There is a Marcus Whitman Junior High School in Seattle. No doubt there are other schools, especially in the Pacific Northwest, which bear the Whitman name or those of other members of the Oregon Mission. A Marcus Whitman D.A.R. chapter is in Everett, Washington, a Narcissa Whitman chapter in Yakima, and an Alice (Clarissa) Whitman chapter in Lewiston, Idaho. A Marcus Whitman Historical Society Museum is in Gorham, New York.

The Whitmans have been memorialized many times in stained glass windows in churches and chapels throughout the nation. The oldest known is in the Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims, Brooklyn, New York, placed there before the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story was discredited. It pictures Whitman standing before President John Tyler and Daniel Webster. An inscription reads: “In grateful recognition of the man who saved Oregon to the nation.”
Whitman memorial windows are to be found in St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral, Spokane, Washington; Pasadena Presbyterian Church, Pasadena, California; Stewart Memorial Chapel, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California; and in United Presbyterian Churches in Springfield, Illinois, and in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Rooms or halls named after one or both of the Whitmans are in Presbyterian churches in Pocatello, Idaho, in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, and in Menlo Park, California. The capitol building of the State of Oregon has a large mural depicting the arrival of the Whitman-Spalding party at Fort Vancouver in September 1836 when they were greeted by Dr. John McLoughlin and others at the fort. Most of these memorials have been erected or placed since the observance of the Whitman-Spalding centennial in 1936.

Two large geographical areas bear the Whitman name: the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in northeastern Oregon, and Whitman County in southeastern Washington. The latter with an area of 2,166 square miles is larger than the State of Delaware and twice as large as Rhode Island. As has been mentioned, there is a Whitman Park at Grand Junction, Colorado, with a monument which draws attention to the fact that Whitman swam the Colorado River at that place in the winter of 1842–43 while on his journey to the East.

Several monuments or road signs are to be found along the route of the old Oregon Trail. Mention has been made of the monument which has been erected at the summit of South Pass in the Rockies to honor Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding, who rode through the Pass on July 4, 1836. A road sign at the site of the 1836 Rendezvous proclaims the fact that these two women were the first white women to cross what is now Wyoming and also the first to go over the Oregon Trail. Typical of the markers along the present-day highway which more or less parallels the Oregon Trail is that at Hagerman, Idaho, which carries the following inscription:

**Commemorating the memory of Marcus Whitman**

**Pioneer missionary who in 1836 brought the first wagon over the trappers path that afterwards became the Oregon trail**
Perhaps the most unusual memorial to honor the Whitmans was the naming of Liberty ships after each of them during World War II—SS Marcus Whitman, which was torpedoed and sunk on November 9, 1942, and the SS Narcissa Whitman, which was sold for scrap July 28, 1961.\textsuperscript{58} Both the Whitmans and the Spaldings are to be memorialized in the Museum of Westward Expansion planned for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri, when the necessary funds are available.

A striking evidence of the great esteem in which Marcus Whitman was held by those of his generation is the fact that six baby boys were named after him during his lifetime. His sister married Henry F. Wisewell and they became the parents of a son born on May 23, 1838, whom they called Marcus Whitman. A cousin of Whitman’s, Abner C. Bates living at Chester, Ohio, named a son after him, born on April 26, 1840. Two boys born in the Old Oregon country were named after Whitman. The first was the half-breed son of Robert Newell, born on April 17, 1840, and the second was the son born to Elkanah and Mary Walker on March 16, 1842. The fifth namesake was Marcus Whitman Saunders born May 8, 1846, at Rushville, and the sixth was a son of one of Narcissa’s brothers, Jonas Galusha Prentiss, born sometime late in 1846. After Whitman’s death, a number of boys were named after him including a son of Perrin Whitman. At least two members of the Whitman family, in collateral branches, bear the name of Marcus Whitman in this generation. A grandson of Henry Harmon Spalding who was a son of Henry Hart Spalding bears the name of Marcus Whitman Spalding, who, at the time of this writing, lives in Olympia, Washington.

**Whitman Mission National Historic Site**

As the Whitman–Spalding centennial of 1936 drew near, many public-spirited citizens of Walla Walla initiated efforts to acquire more land at the mission site and to persuade the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior to make it a National Monument. In 1936 the Whitman Centennial Corporation secured title to 37½ acres, which included the site of the original mission buildings, and which adjoined the eight acres the Whitman Monument Association had secured in 1897. Before the National Park Service could accept the land, certain legal technicalities had to be cleared as the title was clouded;\textsuperscript{59} this took three years. Finally on January 20, 1940, the two
tracts consisting of about forty-five acres were donated to the Government and the Whitman National Monument was officially established. In 1961 the Park Service secured another forty-three acres, bringing the total to ninety-eight acres, and the name was changed to the Whitman Mission National Historical Site.

A Visitor’s Center, containing administration offices, museum space and a lecture hall, was dedicated on June 6, 1964. Trained archaeologists have conducted extensive excavations of the various building sites and many artifacts have been discovered. The foundations of the main buildings have been outlined with bands of cement; an apple orchard has been planted near where the original trees stood; the mill pond and some of the irrigation ditches have been restored; and a self-guiding trail to the principle points of interest has been laid out. Clumps of ryegrass are still growing on the site. The improved facilities have been attracting an ever increasing number of visitors; over 105,000 were expected in 1972.

**The Whitman Statues**

Marcus Whitman has been twice honored by statues erected in his memory. The first, sculptured by Alexander S. Calder, shows Whitman in frontier dress standing by a wheel. It is said that Calder used Perrin Whitman, who resembled his uncle, as a model. The nine-foot terracotta statue, together with twelve others, was set on a ledge of the facade of Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia. This building, dedicated on October 24, 1896, houses the headquarters of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. When the Presbyterian Historical Society moved into its new building at 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, six statues which had adorned the Witherspoon Building, including the Whitman statue, were moved in 1961 to the new site and placed at ground level. The Whitman statue is to the right of the main entrance.

The second Whitman statue is in Statuary Hall of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. By law each state is permitted to place the statues of two of its most distinguished sons or daughters in this Hall. By 1950 all but seven states had at least one statue there; among the states not represented was Washington. The Business and Professional Women’s Clubs of Washington at their annual convention in 1948 adopted the project of placing a statue of Marcus Whitman in our nation’s hall of fame. Since
no composite statue was permitted in the Hall, no plans could be made to include Narcissa in this memorial. Mrs. Goldie Rehberg of Walla Walla was made chairman of the committee commissioned to achieve the goal. The first step necessary was to obtain the approval of the State Legislature in the selection of Marcus Whitman. Senate Bill No. 32 was introduced in the 1948–49 session. It not only designated Whitman to receive this honor but also provided an appropriation to cover all necessary costs. Opposition developed from some unidentified people who remembered the old Whitman-Saved-Oregon legends. A postcard, signed only by the “Good Government League” and sent to all of the 145 legislators, bore the following message:

Senate Bill No. 32 is Bad — Very Bad!

Its authors and sponsors may be well meaning, but uninformed. The Marcus Whitman legend is 90% fictitious. It is one of our historical fables like William Tell, Romulus and Remus, Robin Hood, Washington’s prayer at Valley Forge, and his cherry tree.

Did Whitman’s trip save Oregon? It DID NOT! Should he have a monument? If he should, there are hundreds of other citizens of Washington more entitled to be thus honored. Don’t vote a memorial which will make Washington State the laughing stock of the nation.

As a result of the opposition, the sponsors of the bill decided that it would be wise not to ask for an appropriation to cover the cost of the statue but to raise this by popular subscription. Thus amended, the Bill passed the Legislature by an almost unanimous vote and the Governor signed it on March 10, 1949. Subsequently the Marcus Whitman Foundation was organized and incorporated, with headquarters at Walla Walla. A campaign was launched for the necessary funds and after several years’ efforts, over $27,000.00 was raised, one-third of which came from sources in Whitman County. Thousands of schoolchildren, church groups, civic clubs, and individuals contributed. “During the years I worked on the project,” wrote Mrs. Rehberg to the author, “it seemed like an endless and thankless job, and many times I was on the verge of giving up. Then to my thinking would come thoughts of the courage the Whitmans had, and I would go on with more determination.”
The Foundation selected Dr. Avard Fairbanks, a sculptor of national reputation, then Dean of the School of Fine Arts of the University of Utah, to make a bronze statue of Dr. Whitman. Fairbanks sought to portray Whitman as being an alert, professional-looking man, full of energy and vitality. Whitman is represented as wearing a buckskin suit with a beaver-skin hat, thus stressing the fact that he was a frontiersman. Under his right arm is a large Bible, reminiscent of the story of the four Nez Perces who journeyed to St. Louis in 1831 looking for missionaries and the white man’s Bible. In his left hand, Whitman clutches a pair of saddlebags. These were copied from those which Whitman had used when practising medicine at Wheeler, New York, before leaving with Parker on their exploring tour of 1835. In the back of Whitman’s statue, rising to his waist, is a representation of the ryegrass from which his mission station, Waiilatpu, got its name.

The finished statue, eight feet high, rests upon a block of Washington granite, and then upon a marble pedestal about three feet high and four feet square. On the pedestal is engraved a paraphrased quotation from Whitman’s letter of November 5, 1846, to his brother-in-law, the Rev. Lyman P. Judson: “My plans require time and distance.” The pedestal also carries the following inscription: “Citizens of the State of Washington express their gratitude to this pioneer and medical missionary.” A picture of the statue is included as an illustration in this volume.

The Whitman statue was dedicated on May 22, 1953, while placed temporarily in the rotunda of the Capitol. Mrs. Rehberg and Dr. Fairbanks were present and each spoke briefly. The dedication address was delivered by an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, the Honorable William O. Douglas, an alumnus of Whitman College. The Vice-President of the United States, Richard Nixon, was also present and made a few remarks. A unique item in the dedication program was the singing by a soloist of the hymn, “Yes, my native land, I love thee,” which had been sung at the wedding of Marcus and Narcissa at Angelica, New York, on February 18, 1836. The descendants of a collateral branch of the Whitman family, a father and a son, each with the name of Marcus Whitman, unveiled the statue.

How deeply significant are the three symbols used in these two statues: the wheel, the Bible, and the saddlebags. Each refers to a major aspect of Whitman’s work in Old Oregon. The wheel suggests the services
he rendered in opening the Old Oregon country; the Bible reminds us that Whitman’s primary concern was that of taking Christianity to the Oregon Indians; and the saddlebags symbolize his faithfulness as a doctor in ministering to natives and whites alike. Monuments and memorials such as parks, educational institutions, roadside markers, stained glass windows, rooms or halls in church buildings, murals, and statues are to be found in the following ten states and the District of Columbia: New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, California, Oregon, and one planned for Missouri. No other Protestant missionary in the history of the United States, whether serving in the homeland or abroad, has been so widely remembered in literature, monuments, and memorials, as Dr. Marcus Whitman.

**The Continuing First Presbyterian Church of Oregon**

The First Presbyterian Church of Oregon was not dissolved by the massacre as has been claimed. Even though its elder, Dr. Whitman, was killed, and its pastor, the Rev. H. H. Spalding, was obliged to leave his mission station, the Christian faith was sufficiently viable among the Nez Perce and Cayuses to continue without pastoral oversight until Spalding’s return to the Nez Perces in the fall of 1871.

None of the twenty-one native members of the church took part in the Waiilatpu tragedy. Although Five Crows, the only Cayuse who had joined the church, did not take part in the massacre, he did play, by white man’s standards, a dishonorable role in the abduction of Lorinda Bewley.

By native standards, however, he may well have considered himself to have acted within his rights. Only three members of the church were killed—the two Whitmans and Andrew Rodgers. Judging by the observations of several white men who had contacts with the Cayuses and the Nez Perces during the years 1847–71, many of the members of these two tribes remained faithful in maintaining their daily devotions and in observing Sunday, as they had been taught by their missionaries. Thus the Christian faith was continued.

Spalding returned to the Nez Perces in the fall of 1871 as an appointee of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, he took with him the
original record book of the mission church in which was written the names of his converts. The Nez Perces welcomed their old missionary with enthusiasm. The fact that he could speak their language was like a magnet, drawing great crowds to him. Old age and gray hair, added to the memory of his eleven-year residence at Lapwai, gave Spalding a prestige with the natives never before so enjoyed.

He found a few of the original members of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon still alive, including Timothy and Jude. Ignoring the rules of Presbyterian polity, he arbitrarily appointed these to be his elders. On November 12, 1871, after being back at Lapwai for less than three weeks, Spalding baptized and received into the church twenty-one men and twenty-three women. No longer was he inhibited as formerly by the caution and restraint of colleagues. He made no effort to give his converts a thorough indoctrination into the teachings of John Calvin. Instead he received all who came who professed repentance and claimed that they believed in Christ.

Heading the list of those baptized on November 12 were Lawyer and Tackensuatis, the latter of whom was christened Samuel. These were the two Nez Perces who had ridden out from the Rendezvous in the Summer of 1836 to meet the incoming Whitman–Spalding party. Following his earlier practice, Spalding bestowed Bible names on his converts at the time of their baptism. With the passing of the years, these Christian names became surnames. Running out of Bible names, Spalding gave some of his converts the family names of friends in New York State; these names also continue among the Nez Perces. Once Spalding gave the names Henry and Eliza Spalding to a couple he baptized.

In the fall of 1872, Spalding rode down into the Cayuse country, no doubt stopping to see the old mission site at Waiilatpu. The Eells couple had sold their holdings the previous June and had moved to Snohomish, Washington. A stranger, Charles Moore, then occupied the land. We can only imagine the memories which surged through his mind, if indeed he visited Waiilatpu, as he rode down the trail that he and Whitman had traveled in late November 1847. On September 27, Spalding with the Methodist minister, the Rev. H. H. Hines, met with some Cayuses at “Wild Horse,” a creek which empties into the Umatilla River just above Pendleton. Eight adults and children were baptized there that day. The fact that Wild Horse Creek was near the place where Stickus had his
camp back in 1847 suggests the possibility that these converts were once members or descendants of his band. Evidently by this time, Stickus was dead. After making inquiry as to the fate of Five Crows, Spalding wrote after his name in the record book of the church: “Now dead, 1872.”

On March 27, 1873, Spokane Garry wrote to Spalding and invited him to visit Spokane “to baptize his people and marry them according to laws.”66 Spokane Garry, who had been baptized at the Red River Mission school on June 24, 1827, never gave the missionaries at Tshimakain his sympathetic support in their work.67 This failure was a serious obstacle in the endeavors of Walker and Eells to evangelize the Spokanes. Now, twenty-five years after the work at Tshimakain had been abandoned, Garry had a change of attitude. In response to his invitation, Spalding spent the summer of 1873 among the Spokanes and baptized 253 adults and eighty-one children.68 Walker and Eells had planted the Christian seed; Spalding had gathered in the harvest.

Spalding claimed in the record book of the church that, during the revival which began with his return to the Nez Perces in the fall of 1871, he had baptized over a thousand Nez Perces, Cayuses, and Spokanes. Some of his critics accused him of baptizing some people twice. The fact that Spalding wrote the baptismal names of his converts in the record book of the Mission Church is evidence that he did not consider it to have been dissolved by the massacre. He was still pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon. At a meeting of the Presbytery of Oregon, held at Lapwai on May 10, 1873, the Nez Perce field was divided into two parishes, one at Kamiah and the other at Lapwai. Later four other Presbyterian churches were organized among the Nez Perces, two among the Spokanes, and one on the Umatilla Reservation for the Cayuses and Walla Wallas.69

I BAPTIZE YOU, MARCUS WHITMAN

With Spalding, when he returned to the Nez Perce field in the fall of 1871, was the Rev. Henry T. Cowley who opened a school for the Indians at Kamiah. In the late spring of 1874, Cowley with his family moved to Spokane where he assumed responsibility for the Presbyterian mission work among the Spokane Indians.70 His place at Kamiah was taken by the Rev. Samuel N. D. Martin, also an appointee of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.
Spalding received an injury while cutting wood at his home in Kamiah in November 1873. His health gradually failed during the following months. A few weeks before he was taken to Lapwai in July 1874, where he died on the following August 3, an incident took place about which both Cowley and Martin have given details. A Cayuse chief by the name of Umhawalish and his wife rode some 210 miles from the Umatilla Indian Reservation near present-day Pendleton, Oregon, to Kamiah, arriving there about May 1, in order to be baptized by Spalding. Cowley wrote: “Umhawalish... was one of the early pupils of the Martyr Whitman,” and Martin noted: “He is a friend of Dr. Whitman, whose memory he holds in the highest veneration, & also Father [sic] Spalding, who has known him for nearly 40 years.”

The baptismal service was held in Spalding’s home on Monday, May 11. Spalding was so infirm that he had to be held up in bed so that he could apply the baptismal water to the head of the kneeling Cayuse chief. As he did so, he said: “I baptize you Marcus Whitman, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” This was Spalding’s final tribute to his martyred co-worker.

Those present knew that Spalding intended to give the baptismal name of Narcissa Whitman to the wife of the chief. When she stepped forward to receive the sacrament, Spalding, perhaps overcome with emotion as a flood of memories surged through his mind, found himself unable to proceed with the service. Was he overwhelmed by memories of his love for Narcissa when they attended the same church and school in Prattsburg? And by memories of eleven years of association in the Oregon Mission, some bitter, some sweet, mingled with the remembrance of her tragic death at the time of the massacre?

Being both physically and emotionally exhausted, Spalding directed Cowley and Martin to take the woman into the nearby First Presbyterian Church of Kamiah and for one of them to administer the sacrament. The group withdrew from the sick room. In the church one of the ministers baptized the Cayuse woman with the words: “I baptize you Narcissa Whitman.”

The death-bed baptism of the Cayuse chief by Spalding to whom he gave the name of Marcus Whitman, and his instruction that the chief’s wife be christened Narcissa Whitman was not only the last final tribute
that the veteran missionary paid to the Whitmans, it was also tantamount to throwing out a challenge to the Christian Cayuses to “carry on.”

So it was that another Marcus and another Narcissa Whitman lived among the Cayuses.24
Chapter 24 Footnotes

1 Bancroft, Oregon, I:780.

2 P.N.Q., XL (1949):297. Following the departure of the stockmen, the site lay unoccupied until 1859 when Cushing Eells filed a claim for 640 acres which included the mission site. See following section on “Whitman College.”

3 See Raymond W. Settle (ed.), The March of the Mounted Riflemen, Arthur Clark Co., Glendale, Calif., 1940, for an account of this regiment.

4 Francis Norbert Blanchet, Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon, Portland, 1876, p. 165.

5 Report of Anson Dart, October 20, 1851. Records of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, National Archives.

6 Records of Oregon Superintendency, Letters Received, 1850, National Archives, Copy in Coll. E.W.S.H.S.

7 Shumkain is not mentioned by any of the eyewitnesses of the massacre, but this is not strange as the survivors, for the most part, were unacquainted with the names of the Indians involved.

8 See Chapter Twenty-Two, “The Conspirators Identified.”

9 Letter from Joseph Lane, Nov. 29, 1879, in Portland Oregonian. Undated clipping in Coll. E.W.S.H.S.

10 From “Important Declaration made June 2nd and 3d, 1850,” Coll. O. Published in Portland Catholic Sentinel, April 27, 1872.

11 Ibid.

12 Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 249.

13 Lane letter, see ante, fn. 9.

14 The original records of the trial are in the State Archives, Salem, Oregon. See also Oregon Spectator, May 30, 1850, and Portland Sunday Oregonian, Sept. 24, 1933. All references to the trial in this section, unless otherwise noted, are from these sources.

15 See ante, fn. 9.


17 Catherine Sager later claimed that Mrs. Hall’s testimony was in error. See Chapter Twenty-Two, “The Attack Out-of-doors.” The person who was being attacked by Tiloukaikt, whom Mrs. Hall thought to be Dr. Whitman, was actually Judge Saunders.

18 Portland Catholic Sentinel, April 20, 1872.

19 See Appendix 3 for an account of Spalding’s anti-Catholic charges.

20 See ante, fn. 10.

21 A reference to Joe Meek who, evidently, was responsible for the news item which appeared in the Oregon Spectator of May 30, 1850.

22 Victor, Early Indian Wars, p. 212. The rewards offered for the apprehension of Tiloukaikt, Tomahas, Tamsucky, Joe Lewis, and Edward were twice those offered for the other eight, which included Frank Escaloom and “Quiamashouskin” (or Kia-ma-ump-kin).
Pringle scrapbook Coll. W.


See ante, fn. 10.

Register of the Roman Catholic Church of St. John the Evangelist, Oregon City, p. 11. Information supplied by kindness of Mrs. Harriet D. Munnick of West Linn, Ore.

Portland *Catholic Sentinel*, April 20, 1872. The McLoughlin house was moved in 1909 up Singer Hill to the park that Dr. McLoughlin had given to Oregon City.

Portland Sunday *Oregonian*, September 24, 1933, p. 3.

Information about the probable location of the grave was supplied by Mrs. Munnick.

See circular from American Board to Spalding, Coll. W.


Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 249. The late Carrol E. Brock of Orofino, Idaho, in a letter to me dated May 20, 1970, stated that a lignite outcropping was about two miles east of Old Lapwai near Arrow junction on the north side of the Clearwater River.


Ibid. Newell mentions finding a supply of both potatoes and peas at the mission site when the Volunteers arrived.


See Chapter Twenty, “Rodgers Studies for the Ministry.”

Richardson, *The Whitman Mission*, gives a good account of the various owners of Waiilatpu following the massacre. Eells sold his claim in 1872. Myron Eells stated in his *Marcus Whitman*, p. 296, that the Monument Association paid $30.00 an acre for the site. Other reports state that the eight acres were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Sweagle.


The last of the survivors to die was Mrs. Gertrude Hall Denny, who passed away in Portland, Oregon, on August 5, 1933. She was then about 96 years old. Mrs. Denny was the wife of Judge Owen N. Denny, who served in several diplomatic posts in the Orient. While U.S. Consul General at Shanghai, he became interested in the Chinese ring-necked pheasant and in 1882 and 1884 introduced the bird into Washington and Oregon. From there, it has spread over much of the United States.

The author had the privilege of knowing Sam Walker, the youngest son of Elkanah and Mary Walker, who with his wife lived in the old Walker home at Forest Grove, Oregon. See Drury, *Walker*, p. 253 ff., for an account of a visit paid on Sam Walker in the summer of 1939 when he turned over an apple box full of books, letters, and other source material pertaining to the Oregon Mission. These are now in Coll. Wn.
Another son of David Greene also became a resident of the State of Washington. He was Robert S. Greene who became Chief Justice of Washington Territory in 1879.

Correcting a statement in Drury, *Whitman*, p. 425, that the grave site was changed when the remains were reburied in 1897. Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose, for many years President of Whitman College and who was active in the semicentennial activities, told me that the reburial was in the same place as that selected by the Oregon Volunteers.

From undated clipping in the Pringle scrapbook, Coll. W.


From copy of original letter supplied by Mrs. H. W. Platz of Seattle, Wash, a granddaughter of Catherine Pringle.

Presbyterian churches observing the centennial were asked to take a collection for the restoration of the Presbyterian (Indian) Church at Spalding, Idaho. Some $10,000.00 were received for this purpose.

Drury, *Whitman*, p. 427. Those interested in the issuance of this commemorative stamp requested that the names of Whitman and Spalding be on the stamp, but this request was denied.


Published by the Stuff Printing Concern, Seattle, Wash. (1917). Mary Carr Moore is listed as the author of the libretto for the opera, and her mother, Sarah Pratt Carr, as composer of the music. The words are in a stilted Victorian style. Copy in Coll. W.

*The Balled of Waiilatpu*, with words and music by Borghild Nelson, copyrighted in 1965, is a good example of these songs; and *Waiilatpu* by Wm. Kelley, Adams Publishing Co., Chicago, 1952, is an example of a dramatization.

The late Dr. Arthur H. Limouze, then a secretary of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, was largely responsible for the purchase and restoration of the Prentiss home.

A Junior High School at College Place, about three miles east of Wailatpu, has been called the John Sager School.

Cushing Eells and Elkanah Walker are also memorialized by stained glass windows in this cathedral.

The Whitman window in the chapel of this church portrays him carrying a rifle. Being a pacifist by conviction, Whitman is not known ever to have used a gun except to kill an animal for food.

Separate windows in this chapel are dedicated to each of the Whitmans and to each of the Spaldings. Dedication took place in May 1955.


A good description of the difficulties involved in clearing the title is in Richardson, *The Whitman Mission*, pp. 138 ff.

From letter to the author, August 21, 1953.

Original saddlebags are in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.
Whitman was writing to Judson about the latter’s acceptance of the Seventh-day Adventist belief in the imminent second coming of Christ which nullified any effort to make plans for the future. Whitman actually wrote: “For to my mind all my work & plans involved time & distance & required confidence in the stability of God’s government.”

See Acceptance of the Statue of Marcus Whitman, 83d Congress, 2d Session, Senate Document, No. 167, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for a full account of the program with text of speeches given. Two with whom Whitman had close associations during those history-making years, 1836–47, have also been honored by statues in the nation’s Hall of Fame. They are Jason Lee and John McLoughlin, both selected by the Legislature of the State of Oregon.

For more than thirty years a note was carried in the annual Minutes of the General Assembly (Presbyterian) under the listing of the churches of the Presbytery of Walla Walla that the church had been dissolved by the massacre. The wording has been changed to read: “Following the massacre of November 29, 1847 (the Waiilatpu church) merged into the Nez Perce churches.”

The original volume is now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. An account of Spalding’s activities in the great revival of 1871–73 is in Drury, A Tepee in His Front Yard.

Spokane Garry was a polygamist. This may have been one reason why he did not cooperate with the American Board missionaries. See fn. 45, Chapter One.

Today four Presbyterian churches among the Nez Perces, one among the Spokanes, and one on the Umatilla Reservation remain active. The latter, known as the Tutuilla Church, near present-day Pendleton, Oregon, was organized June 17, 1882, with twenty-six charter members. In 1971 this church reported having forty-two members who represented several tribes on the Umatilla Reservation. Sister M. Florita, for many years associated with the St. Andrews School at Pendleton, in a letter to me dated March 3, 1971, stated that there were then only “17 fullblooded Cayuses, 7… Walla Wallas, and 10… Umatillas” living. The Umatilla Reservation was established in 1855 with the dwindling Cayuse tribe as one of the confederated tribes.

Drury, A Tepee in His Front Yard, tells about Cowley’s missionary activities with the Nez Perces and Spokanes.

The Whitman name was also introduced among the Nez Perces but at a later date. Silas Whitman, a fullblooded Nez Perce, was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry in 1888.

The building still used by the First Presbyterian (Indian) Church of Kamiah was erected by the U.S. Government in 1873 and is the oldest existing Protestant church building in Idaho.

According to information supplied by the Rev. Robert C. Hall, Pendleton, Oregon, the Cayuse Indians, christened Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, were charter members of the Tutuilla Presbyterian Church. See fn. ante, No. 69. Today visitors to the church’s cemetery may see the tombstones of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.
Whitman Mission National Historic Site
Looking southwest from the monument. The Whitman home was located near the three larger trees at upper right. The mill pond and an irrigation ditch paralleling the fence have been restored. In the distance are some of the Blue Mountains. Courtesy, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
The Great Grave at Waiilatpu
The large flat stone covers the remains of the thirteen victims of the massacre. One other, Peter D. Hall, fled unobserved by the Indians, but is supposed to have drowned en route to Fort Vancouver. The shaft marks the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Gray whose bodies were moved here from Astoria in 1916. Courtesy, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
The Great Grave dedication ceremony, occurring on the 50th Anniversary of the Whitman’s deaths was attended by approximately 3,000 people. A speech was given by Catherine Sager Pringle (5th woman from left), one of the surviving Sager children. Courtesy, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
Three of the Sager Sisters

A photo of the three witnesses of the Whitman massacre taken at its fiftieth anniversary at Walla Walla in November 1897. From left: Catherine Sager Pringle, Elizabeth Sager Helm, and Matilda Sager Delaney. Courtesy, Sadie Collins Armin, Catherine’s granddaughter.
Whitman Monument at Waiilatpu
On the knoll northeast of the Whitman homesite, where it was placed in 1897 at the fiftieth observance of the massacre. The view is to the east, toward the Blue Mountains, and in the direction of the Whitman’s sawmill, some twenty-two miles distant. Courtesy, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
**The Marcus Whitman Statue by Avard Fairbanks**
Representing the State of Washington, Capitol Building, Washington, D.C. In frontier costume, with Bible and saddlebags to symbolize the missionary doctor. The saddlebags used by Whitman before going to Oregon are now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. Below the statue is the inscription, from Marcus Whitman’s letter of November 5, 1846: “My plans require time and distance.” Courtesy, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
I think I have now, by God’s help, discharged my obligation in writing this large work. Let those who think I have said too little, or those who think I have said too much, forgive me; and let those who think I have said just enough join me in giving thanks to God. Amen.

Last paragraph of Saint Augustine’s *City of God*. 
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

Index of the Letters of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman

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Appendix I

Index of the Letters of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman

Three hundred and two Whitman letters, written during the years 1827–47 inclusive, have been consulted in the writing of this work. This is an amazing number to survive the vicissitudes of 125 or more years, especially when the majority of the extant letters were kept for decades by individuals rather than by some organization, such as the American Board. Of the total, 176 were written by Marcus and 126 by Narcissa.

The following index of the Whitman letters, first used in my Marcus Whitman, M.D., has been compiled in order to give something of the history of each letter and to provide a quick reference in the text to any letter quoted or consulted. When such a reference is made, the number of the letter will be given in brackets. By checking the number in the following index, one can learn the place where the letter was written; the person or persons to whom it was addressed; the date of writing; the present location of the original if known; and the name of at least one publication in which it appeared if published. The letters of Mrs. Whitman are indicated by underlining the dates of writing.

I had access to 222 Whitman letters when writing my Marcus Whitman, M.D., which appeared in 1937. Since that time, eighty more Whitman letters have been located or made available to me. Sixteen of this number were located in libraries, in private hands, or reprinted in publications. The other sixty-four were held by a dealer in Western Americana in 1935 who was unwilling to let me examine them. He said: “If you use them, the bloom is off the peach.” Later these letters became part of the Coe Collection, now in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, where I have had the privilege of examining them. Most of the letters in this collection were written by Dr. Whitman to Elkanah Walker, and dealt largely with mission business. In addition to the Whitman letters in the Coe Collection, Yale University library previously had ten Whitman letters which were once in the Oregon Historical Society. These had been published in the 1891 and 1893 issues of the Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association.
The 302 letters here listed do not include twelve letters which Dr. Whitman sent to Henry Hill, Treasurer of the American Board or one which Mrs. Whitman sent to Hill. These dealt with financial matters.

Eight libraries hold 245 Whitman letters of the 302 here catalogued. The following abbreviations will be used to indicate the collections of the different libraries which own three or more of these letters. The figures in parenthesis indicate the extent of their holdings. Each of the libraries here listed have kindly granted me permission to use these letters.

Coll. A (65)—A.B.C.F.M., on file in Houghton Library, Harvard University
Coll. B (9)—Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
Coll. H (6)—Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society, Honolulu, Hawaii
Coll. O (56)—Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon
Coll. W (14)—Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington
Coll. Wn (3)—Washington State University, Pullman
Coll. WSHS (17)—Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma
Coll. Y (75)—Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Nineteen original letters are held by other libraries or are privately owned. Thirty-seven letters are known only in copies or in some published form. The following is the key used to designate the person or persons to whom the letters were addressed:

1—Secretaries of the A.B.C.F.M., usually the Rev. David Greene
2—Members of Dr. Whitman’s family
3—Members of Mrs. Whitman’s family
4—Rev. or Mrs. Samuel Parker
5—Rev, or Mrs. Elkanah Walker
5a—“Walker & Eells,” or “Dear Brethren”
6—Rev, or Mrs. H. K. W. Perkins, Methodist missionaries at The Dalles
7—Mr. or Mrs. H. B. Brewer, Methodist missionaries

Names in parenthesis before the numbers “2” or “3” refer to individual members of the families of Dr. or Mrs. Whitman. Example—“Jane,”
mentioned in listing of letter No. 21, was a sister of Narcissa’s. Other names mentioned can be identified by checking the index. The numbering of the 222 letters, listed in Appendix 1 of my Marcus Whitman, M.D., has been retained; the additional eighty letters have been inserted in their proper chronological sequence with letters from the alphabet added to the number immediately preceding. The retention of the old numbering is intended to accommodate those who, in their writings, have referred to a Whitman letter by the number used in my earlier work. All letters not previously listed are easily identified by noticing the numbers which are followed by a letter from the alphabet.

Other abbreviations used in this index include the following: Ft. Van.—Fort Vancouver; Ft. W.W.—Fort Walla Walla; and Waii.—Waiilatpu. See “Acknowledgments, Sources, and Abbreviations” for other abbreviations used.
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APPENDIX I  Index of the Letters of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman 423
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<td>&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>May 17</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>215</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>A; Hulbert, VIII:221</td>
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<td>216</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Spalding</td>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>W; &quot; :225</td>
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<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>(mother) 3</td>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>O; T.O.P.A., 1893, 208</td>
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<tr>
<td>217a</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>217b</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>5a</td>
<td>July 15</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>217c</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>218</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug. 3</td>
<td>A; Hulbert, VIII:226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td>Waskopum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>A; &quot; :231</td>
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<td>220</td>
<td>Waii.</td>
<td>(Jane) 3</td>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>O; T.O.P.A., 1893, 216</td>
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<td>221</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>U.S. Secy. War</td>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>A; Hulbert, VIII:237; with note to</td>
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<td>Secy. Greene</td>
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<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>A; Hulbert, VIII:243</td>
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APPENDIX 2

FINANCIAL REPORTS OF THE AMERICAN BOARD

I. Initial Costs Involved in Explorations and Founding of the Mission

1834 (135) Expenses of Rev. Samuel Parker, Rev. John Dunbar, and Samuel Allis, Jr., on an exploring tour to the Indians west of the State of Missouri......................... $471.01
1835 (121) Expenses of Rev. Samuel Parker and Dr. Marcus Whitman on an exploring tour to the Rockies .................710.63
Services of Rev. S. Parker, including traveling expenses ........510.79
1836 (121) Expenses of Rev. Samuel Parker on an exploring tour to Indian tribes in the Oregon Territory................ 250.00
Expenses Messrs. Whitman, Spalding & Gray....................3,743.04
1837 (132) Expenses of Rev. Samuel Parker and family ..........785.25
1838 (147) Oregon Mission, Drafts, etc. .........................605.87
Expenses in part of Mr. Parker’s family. .........................50.00
Outfit and expenses of Messrs. Gray, Walker, Eells, and Smith, and their wives including funds for their traveling expenses to the Oregon Territory, and various purchases ..........3,559.68
Total $10,686.27

II. Expenses Incurred in Maintaining the Oregon Mission, 1839–48 Inclusive

1839 (159) Drafts, purchases, &c. ................................. 1,392.70
1840 (201) Drafts, purchases, &c. ................................. 4,886.14
1841 (203) Remittances, drafts, &c. ............................... 3,783.07
1842 (215) Drafts, &c. ................................................... 259.18
1843 (193) Drafts, purchases, etc. ................................. 3,043.33
1844 (239) Drafts, purchases, &c. ................................. 3,568.38
1845 (213) Drafts, purchases, &c. ................................. 1,822.62
1846 (233) Drafts, purchases, &c. ................................. 2,285.20
1847 (203) Purchases, &c. ............................................. 584.39
1848 (281) Drafts and purchases. ................................. 474.37
Total $22,099.38
III. Costs Involved in Closing the Oregon Mission

1849 (228) Drafts & purchases .................................. 3,605.17
1850 (203) Drafts & purchases .................................. 2,143.65
1851 (168) Drafts, &c. ................................................ 298.82
Total $6,047.74

Grand Total $38,833.39

The above figures, giving the annual expenditures of the American Board for its Oregon Mission, have been taken from its Annual Reports for the fiscal years ending August 31. Pagination is given in parentheses. A summary of expenses incurred by Dr. Whitman for his station at Waiilatpu is given in Drury, *Marcus Whitman, M.D.*, p. 442. See also section, “A Financial Review,” in Chapter Twenty-Four above. The above classification of the expenses under three categories is the author’s.

Because of delays in the mails, costs listed for one year often include expenses of the previous year. The expenses incurred after the Whitman massacre of November 1847 include costs involved in moving the Spaldings, the Eells, and the Walker families to the Willamette Valley and helping them get settled.
APPENDIX 3

THE EVOLUTION OF
THE WHITMAN-SAVED-OREGON STORY

The author wishes to draw a clear distinction between his interpretation of Whitman’s contribution to the opening of Old Oregon to American settlement and the consequent influence that this had on the settlement of the boundary question with Great Britain, and the rejected Whitman-Saved-Oregon story which was so zealously promulgated by Spalding, Gray, Myron Eells, and others a century ago.

Some of the points of the Spalding version of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story were true. Whitman did visit Washington in the early spring of 1843 where he had interviews with high government officials. He was active in promoting emigration to Old Oregon and was influential in leading the first great covered wagon train with about a thousand people across the Snake River desert and over the Blue Mountains in 1843. Whitman was active in trying to persuade the government to protect all emigrants on their way to Oregon and to extend its jurisdiction over that territory.

Spalding’s theory was essentially false in that he made claims which historically were not true. For instance, he claimed that Whitman arrived in Washington in the spring of 1843 in time to intercede with President Tyler and Secretary of State Daniel Webster and to prevent them from signing a treaty with Great Britain which would have traded off United States rights in Old Oregon for a codfishery off the coasts of Newfoundland.¹ Thus Whitman saved Oregon!

Actually no such proposal was then being considered. It is possible that Spalding heard rumors that such might happen from Dr. White when he returned to Oregon in the fall of 1843 as a sub-Indian Agent. A number of apocryphal stories and legends about Whitman were spread abroad by Spalding, some of which became a part of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story.
THE BACKGROUND OF THE WHITMAN-SAVED-OREGON STORY

The Whitman-Saved-Oregon story evolved slowly. There was no deliberate conspiracy on the part of Spalding and Gray to formulate it, and then join in foisting it upon a gullible public. Each was sincere in what he said or wrote, even though some of their statements were erroneous, biased, or distorted. Spalding was the chief offender.

As explained in Chapter Sixteen of this book, one of the main reasons why Whitman decided so suddenly to go East in the fall of 1842 was to persuade the American Board to rescind its disastrous order of February 1842 which called for the closing of the Waiilatpu and Lapwai stations and the dismissal of Spalding. Naturally Spalding hesitated to speak or write about the dissensions within the Oregon Mission in which he was a central figure and which resulted in his dismissal. Instead, Spalding concentrated on the political interests of Whitman. Gray was inclined to accept Spalding’s statements without questioning their accuracy, sometimes adding his own prejudicial embellishments.

An important factor in the evolution of this theory which must be kept in mind, was Spalding’s bitter anti-Catholic feeling. This can be traced back to his early life in western rural New York State where he had had no direct contacts with Roman Catholics. Anti-Catholic prejudices were common in the communities where all members of the Oregon Mission had been born and reared. The Pope was commonly referred to as “the Man of Sin”; the adoration of the Virgin Mary was idolatry; and the mass, an abomination. When Roman Catholic missionaries entered Oregon and began to seek converts among the tribes where the Protestants were at work, the latter were resentful and alarmed. If Spalding had known that the Hudson’s Bay Company was subsidizing the Catholic missionaries in the Willamette Valley, he would have shouted this news abroad as proof of his suspicions that the Catholics were conspiring with the Company to gain control of Old Oregon.

Even though Father J. B. A. Brouillet had risked his life when he warned Spalding of the massacre when the latter was approaching Waiilatpu on November 30, 1847, thus permitting him to escape, Spalding had no feeling of gratitude, but turned in bitter criticism on Bronillet. When Spalding learned that Brouillet had baptized some of the children of the Cayuses, when they were seriously ill with measles and about to die, he accused Brouillet of being in league with the murderers. To Spalding,
who was evidently uninformed regarding Roman Catholic teachings on the importance of baptism for the salvation of souls, Brouillet’s acts were incomprehensible.

Spalding became obsessed with the idea that the Catholic priests, in their desire to gain possession of the Whitman mission property and to drive the Protestant missionaries out of that part of the country, had incited the Cayuse Indians to perform their horrible deed. When Mrs. Spalding died on January 7, 1851, Spalding included the following in the inscription carved on her tombstone: “She always felt that the Jesuit missionaries were the leading cause of the massacre.” The most charitable explanation of this unreasonable and unchristian attitude of Spalding is that the terrible experiences through which he passed when trying to escape unsettled his mind.

**The Religious Quarrel Breaks into Print**

With Spalding’s consent, the Rev. J. S. Griffin obtained the use of the old mission press, which was at The Dalles at the time of the massacre, and between June 1848 and May 1849 published eight numbers of his *Oregon American and Evangelical Unionist*. Griffin was as fanatical in his anti-Catholic views as was Spalding. The latter wrote seven articles, which Griffin published, in which Spalding made serious accusations against the Catholics; for instance, the following taken from the June 21, 1848, issue: “It is said that the Catholics took part in the murders and in the distribution of the plundered goods… It is said that they actually placed the seal of their bloody approbation upon the bloody deed, by baptizing the children of the murderers.”

The publication of Spalding’s articles seems not to have aroused much public interest in what appeared to be nothing more than a religious quarrel. The one person who was moved to write a rebuttal was Father Brouillet; after reading several of Spalding’s tirades, he wrote a reply in the fall of 1848. Father Brouillet collected a number of testimonials from Oregon residents to disprove many of Spalding’s slanderous allegations.

In the introduction to his defense, Brouillet wrote: “But a certain gentleman, moved on by religious fanaticism, and ashamed of owing his life and that of his family and friends to some priests, began to insinuate false suspicions about the true causes of the disaster, proceeded, by degrees, to make more open accusations, and finally declared publicly
that the bishop of Walla Walla and his clergy were the first cause and
great movers of all the evil. That gentleman is the Rev. H. H. Spalding,
whose life had been saved from the Indians by a priest, at the peril of his
own.”

After writing his defense, Father Brouillet waited five years before
he found an opportunity to have it published. It finally appeared in 1853
in several issues of the New-York Freeman’s Journal, a Catholic publication,
under the title: “Protestantism in Oregon. Account of the Murder of
Dr. Whitman, and the ungrateful calumnies of H. H. Spalding, Prote-
stant Missionary.” On the whole, Father Brouillet wrote in a much more
restrained manner than Spading; yet at times he was as biting in his
criticisms of Spalding as Spalding had been of him. Some of the testi-
monials which Father Brouillet included in his articles are of doubtful
value in resolving the contradictions in the controversy. Brouillet’s ar-
ticles appeared as a pamphlet in June 1853.

The publication of Spalding’s articles in the Oregon American in
1848–49, and of Brouillet’s articles in the New-York Freeman’s Journal in
1853, marked the beginning of an acrimonious debate, which continued
for decades in government publications, books, pamphlets, and innu-
merable articles in religious and secular papers and magazines.

**The Browne Government Document Appears**

Perhaps the controversy would have died with the appearance of
Brouillet’s pamphlet in 1858 had not a fortuitous incident suddenly giv-
en it national recognition. The Commissioner for Indian Affairs in the
Department of the Interior sent J. Ross Browne in 1857 to investigate
the causes of the Indian wars which plagued Washington and Oregon
Territories after the Whitman massacre. Browne, in his report submit-
ted in January 1858, referred to Spalding’s claim that the massacre “was
done with the knowledge and connivance of the Catholic missionaries.”
He attached a copy of Brouillet’s pamphlet to his report, which con-
tained a refutation of Spalding’s charges.

“A perusal of the pamphlet,” wrote Browne, “will abundantly show
the bitterness of feeling existing between the different sects, and its evil
effects upon the Indians. It will readily be seen that, as little dependence
can be placed upon the statements by one side as by the other, and that,
instead of christianizing the Indians, these different sects were engaged
in quarrels among each other, thereby showing a very bad example to the races with whom they chose to reside.” How strange that a theological quarrel, which had originated more than three hundred years earlier in Europe, should have been transplanted to the Indian tribes of Oregon to rend them apart.

Browne’s thirteen-page report might well have become just another forgotten government document had it not been published with Brouillet’s fifty-two page pamphlet as Executive Document, No. 38, House of Representatives, 35th Congress, 1st Session, 1858. As could be expected, neither Spalding nor any of his friends were readers of the Congressional Record; hence he was unaware of the publication of the Brouillet pamphlet for about ten years. The story of what then happened follows.

**Spalding Prepares His Reply**

Following the appearance of his articles dealing with the causes of the Whitman massacre which appeared in the Oregon American in 1848 and 1849, Spalding continued to speak and write against the Catholics as opportunities afforded. The first detailed account of his Whitman-Saved-Oregon story is to be found in a series of eleven “lectures” which he wrote for the San Francisco Pacific beginning with the May 23, 1865, issue. The Pacific was a New-School Presbyterian-Congregational weekly publication which served the churches of those denominations on the Pacific Slope; thus it was the best medium available for the dissemination of his views. A second series of Spalding articles, covering much of the same ground but giving some amplifications to the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story, appeared in the Walla Walla Statesman in February and April 1866, and a third series in the Albany, Oregon, States Rights Democrat between November 17, 1866, and January 18, 1868.

In these articles, Spalding turned history into propaganda. Much that he said was true. In some instances, he was guilty of giving only half-truths. For instance, he never referred to the difficulties within the Mission which resulted in the Board’s disastrous order of February 1842. Through all of his writings ran his bitter anti-Catholic prejudices. He magnified Whitman’s role on the national scene, making claims for him that Whitman never made for himself. These writings are far different from the diary he kept while living at Lapwai, which remains a reliable historical document.
Sometime during the early months of 1868, a copy of Browne’s report of 1858, with Brouillet’s article on “Protestantism in Oregon,” came to Spalding’s attention. His anger was immediately aroused, not only by what he considered to be the false and slanderous accusations of Brouillet against him and his former associates, but also by the fact that the inclusion of Brouillet’s pamphlet in a government document implied an official endorsement of the views therein expressed. Spalding claimed that Browne was a Catholic and this was the reason why he included the Brouillet article. Calling upon the worst epithet in his vocabulary, Spalding stigmatized Browne as a “Jesuit” Actually Browne was a Protestant, although not an active church member. In rebuttal, Browne claimed that the inclusion of the Brouillet pamphlet was not intentional. It had been done without his knowledge or consent.

Following his discovery of the Browne report, Spalding had a consuming desire to obtain a vindication by having his side of the controversy published in some official Congressional document. He began assembling his material. He turned first to his published lectures and took certain passages, especially those which embodied his Whitman-Saved-Oregon theory. He then turned to Brouillet’s article and picked out a number of passages which he felt were false, misleading, or slanderous. These he took to such prominent citizens of the Willamette Valley as A. L. Lovejoy, Dr. Henry Saffarans, Alanson Hinman, H. A. G. Lee, William Geiger, Jr., George Abernethy, Robert Newell, and Joel Palmer (each of whom figures in the Whitman story), and asked for their endorsement of his views. This they gave.

Spalding then turned to several ecclesiastical bodies, representing the Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, and Christian Churches of Oregon, and secured from each resolutions which denounced the Brouillet article and which extolled the work of the missionaries belonging to the Oregon Mission of the American Board, especially that of the martyred Whitmans. Most of the leading Protestant clergymen of the Willamette Valley signed one or more of these resolutions.

Thus armed with a hodge-podge but impressive collection of documents, Spalding sailed from Portland on October 27, 1870, for San Francisco. He then had to go by river steamer to Sacramento before he could take the train over the newly constructed transcontinental route for the East. As his train rolled across the plains of the Missouri River
Valley, no doubt Spalding remembered how he, his wife, Gray, and the Whitmans had made their way westward in 1836. He had lived to see the fulfillment of the prophecy he had made regarding the possibility of building a railroad over the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean. A. B. Smith had scoffed at the idea, calling it “visionary” and stating that: “a man… must be strongly beside himself to make such a remark.”

**THE NEZ PERCE’S “LAMENT”**

While passing through Chicago on his way East, Spalding called on the Rev. S. L. Humphrey, editor of the Chicago Advance, a religious publication. Humphrey in the December 1, 1870, issue of his paper published an account of his interview with Spalding under the caption, “An Evening with an Old Missionary.” In one of Spalding’s articles which appeared in the Walla Walla Statesman on February 16, 1866, he attributed an eloquent speech to one of the surviving Nez Perces, who went to St. Louis in the fall of 1831, given just before he and his companion were to leave in the spring of 1832 to return to their homeland. This speech has often been called “the Indian’s lament.” In this first version of the lament, the chief made reference to “the Book of God.” Spalding claimed that he got the text of the speech from a man who was in an adjoining room when the chief spoke and had written down what he had heard.

Notice, now, the account as given to editor Humphrey: “…the Flatheads and Nez Perces had determined to send four of their number into ‘the Rising Sun’ for ‘that Book of Heaven.’ They had got word of the Bible and a Saviour in some way from the Iroquois. These four dusky wise men, one of them a chief, who has thus dimly ‘seen His star in the east,’ made their way to St. Louis.” There they met General Clark, who, Spalding claimed, was a “Romanist.” Humphrey’s account continues: “How utterly he failed to meet their wants is revealed in the sad words with which they departed: ‘I came to you’—and the survivor repeated the words years afterward to Mr. Spalding—‘with one eye partly opened; I go back with both eyes closed and both arms broken. My people sent me to obtain that Book of Heaven. You took me where your women dance as we do not allow ours to dance, and the Book was not there. You took me where I saw men worship God with candles; and the Book was not there. I am now to return without it, and my people will die in darkness.’”
This apocryphal speech reflected Spalding’s puritanical views regarding dancing, the theater, and the use of candles in Catholic worship. No Oregon Indian could ever have made such a speech.

The final version of the lament appeared in print thirty-nine years after the words were reported to have been spoken! There is no evidence that Spalding ever met either of the two survivors, whose portraits were painted by George Catlin when they were passengers aboard a river steamer that ascended the Missouri River in the spring of 1832.11 There is good evidence to indicate that neither of the survivors ever returned to their homeland but had died long before Spalding had settled at Lapwai.12

Spalding was so pleased with the account of his interview with Humphrey, which was published in the Chicago Advance, that he included it in the collection of documents which he intended to present to some Congressional committee for publication. This account of the visit of the four Nez Perces to St. Louis, with the apocryphal lament, was given wide publicity, especially in Protestant church circles. Spalding was more eloquent than accurate. He did what many do. He fictionalized history for propaganda purposes.

THE SPALDING GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT

After leaving Chicago, Spalding went to Prattsburg where he visited old friends and familiar scenes. He then went to New York City where he solicited the support of the Hon. William E. Dodge, who had once been a Vice President of the American Board, in his project to get his collection of documents published by the government. Dodge, perhaps more than any other person, was largely responsible for Spalding’s success in Washington. After visiting Boston, Spalding went to Washington where he arrived on January 5, 1871. Armed with a letter of introduction from Dodge, Spalding met Senator H. W. Corbett of Oregon. Through the Senator’s influence, Spalding was given a hearing before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on January 25.

Just before he was to appear, Spalding wrote a hasty note to Rachel, his second wife, which reveals his anxiety: “Dearest Wife, may God help your husband. In 5 minutes… appear before the Senate… my case… this infamous outrage is corrected.” The original letter has been mutilated,
possibly by mice, so that the complete text is not available, but enough remains to give the meaning.

On February 9, Spading wrote another note to his wife: “Glory to God. Bless His Holy Name. Victory complete. The Senate has just ordered by a unanimous vote my manifesto printed and committed to Committee on Indian Affairs.”

Spalding’s collection of documents appeared in the Congressional Record and was then reprinted as an eighty-one page pamphlet under the title Executive Document, No. 37, U.S. Senate, 41st Congress, 3d Session. The first edition contained 1,500 copies. Spalding was jubilant. He felt that he had been completely vindicated. Brouillet had been answered. Spalding’s account of Protestantism in Old Oregon, with his Whitman-Saved-Oregon story, had been given the stamp of Congressional approval. A second edition consisting of 2,500 copies appeared in January 1903. Spalding’s Senate Document together with Brouillet’s House Document are prime sources for the history of both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionary work in Old Oregon.
APPENDIX 3 FOOTNOTES

1 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 22. Bourne, Essays in Historical Criticism, p. 82, quotes from a letter of Daniel Webster, August 23, 1842: “The only question of magnitude about which I did not negotiate with Lord Ashburton is the question respecting the fisheries.”

2 Gray claimed that he never heard of the Board’s order of February 1842 which called for his dismissal. See circular 8, reprint from Daily and Weekly Astorian, p. 5, no date, probably sometime during 1883–85. Circular in Coll. W. The same amazing denial was made by Gray in the Portland Oregonian, Feb. 1, 1885. Gray stated: “Of this object (i.e. the Board’s order) I have no personal knowledge of its being talked about at the time.” See also Marshall, Acquisition of Oregon, II:138, and ante, Chap. 16, fn. 8.

3 Drury, Spalding, p. 361.


5 Brouillet, op. cit., p. 3.


7 Spalding, Senate Document, p. 64. On the same page, Spalding erroneously referred to Brouillet as being a Jesuit. Belknap, op. cit., p. 332, fn. 27.

8 Drury, Spalding and Smith, pp. 159 & 235.

9 Marshall, Acquisition of Oregon, II:17, claims that Clark was not a Roman Catholic, and that he was a Mason and was buried by that fraternity.


11 Catlin’s paintings of the two survivors are in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Reproduced as illustrations in Drury, Spalding, p. 83.

12 McBeth, The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark, p. 31, gives the Nez Perce tradition regarding the fate of the two survivors.

13 Original letters are in Coll. O.
APPENDIX 4

THE LITERATURE OF THE WHITMAN CONTROVERSY

An extensive literature has grown out of the Whitman-Saved-Oregon controversy. The October 1908 issue of the Washington Historical Quarterly carried an article, “A Contribution towards a Bibliography of Marcus Whitman” by Charles W. Smith, the late librarian of the University of Washington at Seattle. It took fifty-nine pages to carry the list of titles, with annotations, of books, pamphlets, magazine articles, and manuscripts bearing on the subject.

Following the publication of Spalding’s Senate Document in 1872, Brouillet issued a rebuttal which appeared in the Portland Catholic Sentinel and in the St. Louis Catholic World, both in 1872. Again Brouillet accused Spalding of deliberate falsification.

Controversy was renewed in the 1880s, with a new generation of writers appearing on the scene, The Rev. Myron Eells, a son of Cushing Eells, published his Indian Missions in 1882, in which he endorsed the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. Beginning with the December 1882 issue of the New York Observer, a series of articles by the Rev. William Barrows repeated some of the main points of the Whitman legend as told by Spalding. In his Oregon, The Struggle for Possession, Barrows included much of the material which had appeared in his magazine articles. Barrows also wrote an article on Oregon for the 1884 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, where again he endorsed the Whitman story. By this time the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story was so widely accepted that it was included without question in a number of history textbooks for public schools. Later, Edward Bourne, one of the first critics of the legend, wrote: “Never were confiding scholars and a more confiding public so taken in... The propagation of the legend of Marcus Whitman after the publication of Barrows’ Oregon is simply amazing.”

Among the first to cast doubt upon the authenticity of the Whitman legend was Mrs. Frances Fuller Victor who, together with the Hon. Elwood Evans, collaborated with H. H. Bancroft in the writing of his two-volume History of Oregon, published in San Francisco in 1886. Mrs. Victor had accepted the Whitman legend when she wrote her River of the West, which
appeared in 1870. Soon afterwards she changed her mind. Elwood Evans also at first had believed the story and had contributed a testimonial to Spalding’s Senate Document, but he too came to disbelieve the legend.

Recognizing the growing doubt about the Whitman-Saved-Oregon-Story, Myron Eells in 1883 published a pamphlet, Marcus Whitman, M.D., Proofs of His Work in Saving Oregon to the United States and in Promoting the immigration of 1843. Eells was more moderate than Spalding in his claims, but was able to set forth considerable evidence that Whitman did much to promote the Oregon emigration of that year. The publication of this pamphlet sparked a controversy which was carried on through the columns of the Portland Oregonian during the late fall of 1884 and the following winter. On one side were Mrs. Victor and Elwood Evans, and on the other, Myron Eells, W. H. Gray, and E. C. Ross. The articles of the last three men were reprinted in pamphlet form in Portland in 1885 under the title The Whitman Controversy.

The decade beginning 1890 produced two biographies of Marcus Whitman, both written by ministers who were adherents of the Whitman legend. The first, The Story of Marcus Whitman, by the Rev. J. G. Craighead, appeared in 1895. In June of the same year, the Rev. O. W. Nixon published his How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon. Both works are unscholarly, for both authors accepted without question all the main points of Spalding’s Whitman-Saved-Oregon story.

In a letter dated March 8, 1898, Nixon explained to a friend: “In fact, it was with great difficulty I snatched the Mo. of April, 1895, to write the Book, & was too busy when it was issued to ever read a line of proof, or many errors of the earlier editions would have been corrected.” The book was written to be a campaign document to help raise funds for Whitman College. It ran through five editions and became the most widely distributed and most popular book on Whitman of that generation—and yet it was written in only one month! Since Nixon’s book got into so many public and church school libraries, it is still being quoted as authoritative by uncritical readers.

The publication of the Craighead and Nixon books inspired another flurry of articles in the Oregonian in which Myron Eells, then the foremost defender of the Whitman legend, again figured. The observances of the semicentennial of the Whitman massacre in the fall of 1897 served as another occasion to publicize the legend. A number of articles
on various aspects of the Whitman story, many of which are of real historical value, appeared in the Whitman College Quarterly beginning in January 1897.

The peak of Whitman’s reputation, based on Spalding’s and Gray’s Whitman-Saved-Oregon theory came in 1899 when his name was considered for inclusion in New York University’s Hall of Fame. Edward Gaylord Bourne, Professor of History at Yale University, wrote: “Fifty-two years later [i.e., after the massacre], in the most careful appraisal of human achievement in America that has ever been made... Marcus Whitman received nineteen out of a possible ninety-eight votes to be ranked as one of the fifty greatest Americans.” This score put Whitman ahead of such well-known national figures as John Charles Frémont and George Rogers Clark. Bourne added: “History will be sought in vain for a more extraordinary growth of fame after death.”

**Whitman Legend Discredited**

The decade beginning in 1900 brought a sharp reaction to the Whitman-Saved-Oregon story. Two men, Prof. Bourne and William I. Marshall, Principal of a school in Chicago, independently reached the conclusion at about the same time that the story was based largely upon myth and legend and was without historical foundation.

Bourne and Marshall met at the meeting of the American Historical Association held in Detroit, December 27–29, 1900, when Bourne read his paper, “The Legend of Marcus Whitman.” Although he had not studied the subject as long as Marshall, Bourne anticipated him in the publication of his findings. Bourne’s paper appeared in the January 1901 issue of the *American Historical Review*, and, revised and enlarged, in his *Essays in Historical Criticism* in the same year. Bourne’s paper was also included in a volume, *Essays in Criticism*, used extensively in historical research course in colleges and universities. Marshall, who had assembled a mass of detailed information, was unable to publish his findings for lack of funds before he died on October 30, 1906. His two-volume *Acquisition of Oregon*, appeared posthumously in Seattle in 1911.

Together, Bourne and Marshall demolished the Whitman legend although it took several decades before the conclusions of their researches became known and accepted by the general public. Bourne is more restrained than Marshall, who was, at times, vitriolic in his criticisms.
One result of the writings of these two was that Whitman’s fame plummeted. Unfortunately the real achievements of Dr. Whitman suffered the fate of the legendary Whitman, and for years little new was written about him.

Among the last works to appear before Whitman’s eclipse began were two new biographies. The first was William A. Mowry’s *Marcus Whitman*, which appeared in 1901. Mowry, unaware of the researches done by Bourne and Marshall, accepted the legendary views of Whitman. His book was an improvement over Nixon’s as he gave some important new material. Myron Eells, who had become acquainted with the findings of both Borne and Marshall, modified some of his earlier views and became more objective in his writings. His *Marcus Whitman* was published in 1909, two years after his death.

The celebration of the Whitman-Spalding centennial in 1936 awakened new interest in the Whitman story and inspired the publication of many books, magazine articles, pamphlets, etc. By this time no one arose to defend the old Whitman-Saved-Oregon story although a few echoes of the old controversy were still heard. As has been stated in a preceding chapter, when the effort was made in 1948 to get the Washington State Legislature to appropriate money for the erection of a statue honoring Dr. Whitman in Statuary Hall of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., some opponents of the measure circulated the legislators claiming: “The Marcus Whitman legend is 90% fictitious. It is one of our historical fables…” This was true. Today no reputable scholar claims that the primary reason for Whitman’s famous ride East was to prevent the government trading off Oregon for some fishing rights off the Newfoundland coast. Spalding’s Whitman-Saved-Oregon story is completely discredited and rejected.

On the basis of new documented evidence, not available or known to earlier writers on Whitman, we are now able to reappraise objectively the real contributions made by Whitman towards the extension of United States jurisdiction over the Old Oregon territory.
APPENDIX 4 FOOTNOTES

1 This was one of the American Commonwealth series edited by Horace E. Scudder. Check index of this work for reference to Barrows, who was a boy in the home of Dr. Edward Hale, the dentist in St. Louis, in the spring of 1843 when he saw Dr. Whitman.

2 Bourne, Essays in Historical Criticism, p. 41.

3 A copy of this rare item is in the Library of Congress.

4 Nixon to S. W. Pratt, Coll. Wn.


6 Bourne, op. cit., p. 4.

7 See Chapter Twenty-Four, “Whitman Literature.”
APPENDIX 5

ACCOUNTS OF THE MASSACRE AND THE CAPTIVITY

The following list of eyewitness and contemporary accounts of the massacre and the subsequent captivity of the survivors does not include the testimony of the witnesses given at the trial of the five Cayuses accused of the murder of the Whitmans and others, a brief review of which appeared in the May 30, 1850, issue of the Oregon Spectator. It should be noted that most of the accounts listed below were written many years after the massacre had occurred. The recollections of those who were children at the time no doubt reflect much that was told to them during the years following the events described. The recollections of the two Manson boys did not come to the author’s attention until June 1972. They knew the Indian language but were taken to Fort Walla Walla the day after the massacre began. Thus their knowledge of what happened was limited. Ten-year-old Eliza Spalding was the only one of the captives who understood and spoke Nez Perce.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS BY ADULTS


2. Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Canfield gave an account of their experiences to Dr. E. F. Elinwood, who wrote two articles which appeared in the May and June 1886, issues of the (Presbyterian) Foreign Missionary. These articles were reprinted the same year as a pamphlet under the title: Marcus Whitman and the Settlement of Oregon.

3. Josiah Osborn wrote a letter on April 7, 1848, to “Dear Brother and Sister” which is the earliest known account of the massacre by a survivor. First published in the Oquawka, Illinois, Spectator, August 23, 1848; republished in Spalding, Senate Document, pp. 31–3; Warren, Memoirs, pp. 126–8; Hulbert, O.P., VIII:257; and Walla Walla Union, August 12, 1936.

5. Daniel Young, deposition, Jan. 20, 1849; Gray, Oregon, pp. 474–9.

**EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS BY THOSE WHO WERE CHILDREN AT THE TIME. AGES INDICATED IN PARENTHESES.**

11. Matilda Sager Delaney (8), pamphlet, A Survivor’s Recollections of the Whitman Massacre, Spokane, Wash. (1920); Lockley, Oregon Trail Blazers, pp. 344–51.
12. Gertrude Hall Denny (10), Oregon Native Son, June 1899; Portland Oregonian, July 21, 1894.

**Some Contemporary Accounts.**


Note: A collection of clippings from periodicals listed above is in Coll. E.W.S.H.S.
APPENDIX 6

LETTER FROM H. K. W. PERKINS TO JANE PRENTISS

While gathering material for my Marcus Whitman, M.D., which appeared in 1937, I found in the archives of Whitman College a copy of an unpublished letter written by the Rev. Henry Kirk White Perkins from Hallowell, Maine, on October 19, 1849, to Miss Jane Prentiss, West Almond, New York. A notation on the copy states: “Copied by M. Eells from Original.” Myron Eells wrote on very thin paper; this makes his writing most difficult to read. Recognizing the importance of this letter, I included it as an appendix in my earlier book, and it is here reprinted. All words italicized were underlined in the copy that Eells had made.

Perkins was one of the most capable and conscientious of all members of the Methodist Mission in Oregon and, therefore, his comments must be taken seriously. A good indication of his character is to be found in the firm stand he took against certain members of his Mission, including A. F. Waller and Jason Lee, in the dispute over title to some valuable property at Oregon City. Perkins maintained that Dr. McLoughlin had prior claim and expressed shame over the actions of some of his brethren in taking the property under dispute. (See Perkins letters, Coll. W.S.H.S.)

Evidently Jane Prentiss had returned to her parental home from Illinois after hearing of the death of her sister and brother-in-law. Knowing that Narcissa had spent the winter of 1842–43 at Waskopuwin, where the Perkins and Brewer families were stationed, and learning that Mr. Perkins was in the East, Jane wrote to him asking for the causes of the massacre. Perkins was handicapped in his ability to make an accurate and balanced appraisal of the causes which moved the Indians to murder, as he had not met the Whitmans during the first several years they were in Oregon. Hence Perkins was unable to judge the importance of the work the Whitmans had done for the natives during these earlier years of their residence at Waiilatpu. Moreover, Perkins had never visited Waiilatpu after he became acquainted with Marcus and Narcissa and was not, therefore, able to base his judgments on first-hand observations.
Perkins first met Narcissa in the fall of 1842 after she was obliged to leave Wailatpu following the departure of her husband for the East, and when she was received at Waskopum as a guest by the Methodist families living there. Narcissa was ill at that time and remained so throughout the following year. In June 1843, she went to Fort Vancouver where she remained for two months under the care of Dr. Forbes Barclay, the Company’s physician. Then, after a brief visit with friends in the Willamette Valley, Narcissa returned to Waskopum to await her husband who arrived in October to take her back to Wailatpu. Still sick and depressed in spirits, Narcissa dreaded returning to the loneliness and isolation of their mission station. [See, “Adapted to a Different Destiny,” Chapter Seventeen; and “Narcissa, Sick and Discouraged,” Chapter Twenty.]

Perkins’ penetrating analysis of Narcissa’s attitude towards the natives was naturally colored by her physical and mental condition during the time he had contact with her. Therefore, allowances should be made for his rather severe judgments. He did not see her at work among the Cayuses during the first six years of her residence at Wailatpu, nor did he meet her after she regained her health following her return to the mission station. It is true that, with an enlarged household, Narcissa was unable to do much, if anything, for the natives in the school or in other activities after her return.

The contacts that Perkins had with Dr. Whitman were also limited. The two first met in October 1838 when Marcus paused briefly at Waskopum on his way down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver for supplies. On several subsequent occasions, Whitman had opportunity to visit Waskopum. We have no evidence that Perkins ever visited Wailatpu where he could have observed Whitman at work. Therefore Perkins was obliged to base his judgments regarding Whitman’s adaptability as a missionary to the Indians on these brief meetings and on the observations of others.

On the whole, Perkins made an excellent appraisal of Whitman’s characteristics. The main weakness of his appraisal is that he failed to indicate the full impact of the measles epidemic as a primary cause for the massacre. He glided over this factor. One can well ask: Would there have been a massacre, admitting all that Perkins had to say about the inadaptability of the Whitmans to their missionary responsibilities, if there had been no measles epidemic? In the author’s opinion, the answer is “No.” Perkins also fails to mention that the malcontents in
the Cayuse tribe were relatively few; it is estimated that only fourteen took part in the massacre. Contemporary evidence shows that a majority within the tribe, including such chiefs as Stickus, Camaspelo, Young Chief, and Five Crows, refused to join with the conspirators. While it is true, as Perkins pointed out, that Whitman believed the Indians were a doomed race and that the white men would inherit the land, Perkins was mistaken in claiming that white settlers were taking land in the Walla Walla Valley before the massacre.

Actually, Whitman was spending more time with the natives than with the immigrants during those last five years at Waiilatpu. The passing of the immigrant wagon trains through the Cayuse country took about two months. The immigrants who found it necessary to winter at Waiilatpu left for the Willamette Valley as soon as possible in the spring. Whitman had no need to minister to any white people during the seed-time and harvest months of the year. He then was able to give all possible help to the natives. Today, because we have access to Whitman’s letters which were not available to Perkins, we know more of what Whitman was doing for the Indians and what he planned to do than did Perkins. The coming of the annual immigrations meant no diminution of Whitman’s efforts to help the natives.

Although the analysis of the characteristics of both of the Whitmans is penetrating and most helpful in an understanding of their situation, yet the main assumption that Perkins makes regarding their failures, as being a primary cause for the massacre, is inadequate. The reasons for the massacre, as has been stated, were many and complex. Perkins mentions some contributory factors but does not emphasize the major cause, which was the devastating effects of the measles epidemic.

A praiseworthy characteristic of the Perkins letter is his endeavor to give the Indians’ side of the story. So far as the author is aware, this is the first time that this was attempted. The letter, minus a few unimportant eliminations, follows.

Dear Sister:

Yours of Aug. 29 was recd. in due time but owing to a press of business & absence in Boston of late, I have not had time to attend to your request concerning your dear sisters letters until today.
You write that Mrs. Whitman was a dear Sister of yours. She was a dear sister of ours also. The acquaintance we formed with her was very intimate. For several months during her husband’s last visit to the U. States, she was a member of our family. The circumstances that induced her to spend so long a season with us, I presume you must be familiar with as she kept up a constant correspondence, I believe, with her friends in the United States. If so you will recollect that even then, her situation among the natives at Waiilatpu was far from being safe. The truth is, Miss Prentiss, your lamented sister was far from happy in the situation she had chosen to occupy.

She no doubt felt a strong desire for the salvation of the Indian race & perhaps it might have been said of her: “She hath done what she could,” but if I may be allowed the liberty of expressing my opinion, I should say, unhesitatingly that both herself & husband were out of their proper sphere. They were not adapted to their work. They could not possibly interest & gain the affections of the natives. I knew for a long time before the tragedy that closed their final career that many of the natives around them looked upon them suspiciously. Though they feared the Doctor, they did not love him. They did not love your sister. They could appreciate neither the one nor the other.

The Doctor, I presume, you knew familiarly. And knowing him as I knew him you would not need to be told that an Oregon Indian & he could never get along well together. It was “the last place,” to use a familiar phrase, that he ought to have occupied. And first, I need hardly tell you, he cared for no man under heaven,—perfectly fearless & independent. Secondly, he could never stop to parley. It was always yes or no. In the 3d place, he had no sense of etiquette or personal dignity—manners, I mean. 4. And in the fourth place, he was always at work.

Now I need not tell you that he & an Indian would ever agree. How could they? What would such a man have in common with an Indian? How could they symbolize with each other? In connection with some other man, perhaps, Sister Whitman would have done better. Perhaps she would have been more familiar—sym-
pathizing—open hearted. That she felt a deep interest in the welfare of the natives, no one who was at all acquainted with her could doubt. But the affection was manifested under false views of Indian character. Her carriage towards them was always considered *haughty*. It was the common remark among them that Mrs. Whitman was “very proud.”

Now I do not really suppose that this was the case or that she ever suspected that she conveyed such an impression. But so the natives always spoke of it. Sister Whitman partook a good deal of her husband’s independent spirit. She doubtless supposed also that it was necessary to maintain considerable *reserve*.

What contributed still more, I presume, to increase the distance between her & the natives was her *ill health* & *increasing nervousness*. Her constitution was a good deal impaired, toward the close of her labors & she could not in reality bear much. Her hopes of success also, were very much weakened and melancholy musings occupied her more than at her first setting out in missionary life.

I wish I could tell you just how it was. And yet I cannot do it, without seeming somewhat severely to reflect upon the Doctor. Again, I am afraid that you will never get at the real truth in the case if I do not tell you. The published accounts of that melancholy catastrophe which cut short so many lives, are all one sided. They fail almost entirely to account for the proceedings of the natives. I will briefly state a few things which ought to be kept in view with the whole affair.

And first, Dr. Whitman in pursuing his missionary labors never so identified himself with the natives as to make their interests *paramount*. He looked upon them as an inferior race & doomed at no distant day to give place to a settlement of enterprising Americans. With an eye to this, he laid his plans & acted. His American feelings even while engaged in his missionary toils, were unfortunately suffered to predominate. Indeed it might almost be doubted whether he felt half the interest in the natives that he did in the *prospective* white population. He wanted to see the country settled. The beautiful valley of the Walla Walla, he wanted to see teeming with a busy, bustling white population. Where
were scattered a few Indian huts, he wanted to see thrifty farm houses. Where stalked abroad a few broken-down Indian horses, cropping the rich grasses of the surrounding plain, he wanted to see grazing the cow, the ox, & the sheep of a happy Yankee community. With his eye bent on this, he was willing meantime to do what he could incidentally, for the poor, weak, feeble doomed Oregonians.

And now, Miss Prentiss, what would be the natural result? Why, what every sensible man must have seen. Jealousy on the part of the natives. And in meeting death in the way that he did, it might be said with more truth that he died a martyr to the progress of American civilization than to the cause of Missions.

Had Dr. Whitman given himself up wholly to the interests of the natives, with all his natural unfitness for the place he occupied, he no doubt would have been safe, safe as anywhere in Christendom.

(2) It has been said that the natives are dying very rapidly & that Dr. Whitman was suspected as the cause of their rapid decrease. No doubt this suspicion might operate to some extent but then why seek their vengeance on the poor unsuspecting white settlers? The fact was the natives identified the Doctor with the whites. While they were rapidly coming in year by year & occupying their rich lands, they looked upon the Doctor as at the head of the concern. They saw him entering no protest—making no remon- stance, but rather aiding & abetting—planning & directing, & all the family of course including Mrs. W. concurring apparently in their displaceance [sic]. What would they do? They would do what they did do—"strike for their altars & their fires." They wanted their lands, their homes, the graves of their fathers, their rich hunting grounds & horse ranges. They did not look upon the man or men who would connive at the usurpation of all these as their real friends. They looked upon the Doctor & wife as not missionaries to them but to the Americans. With these brief statements of facts, I need not add another word explanatory. You see everything at a glance. The result would have hardly been otherwise than it was.

In your letter you remarked that I doubtless have recollections of her (Mrs. W.) which, if expressed, would greatly interest her
acquaintance & friends. Yes, Miss Prentiss, I have recollections of her,—interesting recollections which I shall always cherish. But they are not recollections of her as a missionary but as a woman. Mrs. Whitman was not adapted to savage but civilized life. She would have done honor to her sex in a polished & exalted sphere, but never in the low drudgery of Indian toil. The natives esteemed her as proud, haughty, as far above them. No doubt she really seemed so. It was her misfortune, not her fault. She was adapted to a different destiny. She wanted something exalted—communion with mind. She longed for society, refined society. She was intellectually & by association fitted to do good only in such a sphere. She should have been differently situated. I think her stay with us, including her visit to the Willamette, the pleasantest portion of her Oregon life. She saw considerable company & really seemed to enjoy it. She had leisure also for reading & writing, which she also seemed always to enjoy. She loved company, society, excitement & ought always to have enjoyed it. The self-denial that took her away from it was suicidal. Perhaps, however, more good was accomplished by it than could have been accomplished by pursuing a different course. Certain it is that we needed such minds to keep us in love with civilized life, to remind us occasionally of home. As for myself, I could as easily have become an Indian as not. I completely sympathized with them in all their plans & feelings. I could gladly have made the wigwam my home for life if duty had called. But it was not so with Mrs. W. She had nothing apparently with them in common. She kept in her own original sphere to the last. She was not a missionary but a woman, an American highly gifted, polished American lady. And such she died.

I desire with you her death may be sanctified to the cause of God. I think it more likely to be when the truth in the case is really known. I sympathize with you. I sympathized with her. I would that with her it might have been otherwise. But so it was. May we ever be found in our lot & place that when the Master calls for us, we may be found waiting.

Yours truly,

H. K. Perkins
APPENDIX 7

WHITMAN’S PROPOSED BILL FOR OREGON

The Records of the War Department, File No. 424052, National Archives, Washington, D.C., contain an undated letter of Dr. Whitman’s together with his proposed bill for the protection of Oregon-bound emigrants. Both were evidently written shortly after his return to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843. On the back of the letter is the notation which indicates date of receipt: “Marcus Whitman. Enclosed synopsis of a bill, with his views in reference to importance of the Oregon Territory. June 22 ‘44.”

Both the letter and the bill also contain a notation that each was copied by the Rev. J. G. Craighead on November 27, 1891. The first printing of these two documents appeared in the Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association, 1891 (but published in 1893). Craighead included a copy of the letter in his The Story of Marcus Whitman, 1895. Nixon in his How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon, 1895, included both documents, as did Mowry in his Marcus Whitman, 1905. Each of these printings contain some minor inaccuracies. The following is my transcription. The proposed bill is in Mrs. Whitman’s handwriting.

To the Hon. James M. Porter, Secretary at War

Sir: In compliance with the request you did me the honor to make last winter while at Washington,1 I herewith transmit you the synopsis of a Bill which if it could be adopted, would, according to my experience and observation, prove highly conducive to the best interests of the United States generally; to Oregon where I have resided for more than seven years as a missionary; and to the Indian Tribes that inhabit the intermediate country.

The Government will doubtless [by] now for the first time be apprised, through you and by means of this communication, of the immense immigration of families to Oregon which has taken place this year. I have since our interview been instrumental in piloting across the route described in the accompanying Bill, and
which is the only eligible wagon road, no less than \(--\)\(^2\) families consisting of one thousand persons of both sexes with their wagons, amounting in all to more than one hundred and twenty, 698 oxen and 973 loose cattle.

The emigrants are from different states but principally from Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois and New York. The majority of them are farmers, lured by the prospects of Government bounty in lands, by the reported fertility of the soil, and by the desire to be first among those who are planning our institutions on the Pacific coast. Among them also are artisans of every trade, comprising with farmers the very best material for a new Colony. As pioneers these people have undergone incredible hardships and having now safely passed the Blue Mountain range with their wagons and effects\(^3\) have established a durable road from Missouri to Oregon which will serve to mark permanently the route for larger numbers each succeeding year; while they have practically demonstrated that wagons drawn by horses or oxen can cross the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River contrary to all the sinister assertions of those who pretended it to be impossible.

In their slow progress these persons have encountered, as in all former instances and as all succeeding emigrants must if this or some similar Bill be not passed by Congress, the continual fear of Indian aggression, the actual loss through them of horses, cattle, and other property, and the great labour of transporting an adequate amount of provision for so long a journey. The Bill herewith proposed would in a great measure lessen these inconveniences by the establishment of Posts, which, while they possessed power to keep the Indians in check, thus doing away [with] the constant Military vigilance on the part of the traveler by day and night, would be able to furnish in transit with fresh supplies of provisions, diminishing the original burdens of the emigrants and finding thus a ready and profitable market for their produce—a market that would in my opinion more than suffice to defray all the current expenses of such Posts.

The present party are supposed to have expended no less than two thousand dollars at Laramie and Bridger Forts and as much more
at Fort Hall and Fort Boisie, two of the Hudson Bay Companies Stations. These are at present the only shopping places in a journey of twenty two hundred miles and the only places where additional supplies can be obtained even at the enormous rates of charge called Mountain prices (i.e.) Fifty Dollars the hundred for flour and fifty dollars the hundred for coffee, the same for sugar & powder &c.

Many cases of sickness and some deaths took place among those who accomplished the journey this season owing in a great measure to the uninterrupted use of meat, salt and fresh, with flour which constituted the chief articles of food they are able to convey in their waggons, and this would be obviated by the vegetable productions which the Posts in contemplation could very profitably afford them. Those who rely upon hunting as an auxiliary support are at present unable to have their arms repaired when out of order; horses and oxen become tender footed and require to be shod on this long journey sometimes repeatedly, and the waggons repaired in a variety of ways. I mention these as valuable incidents to the proposed measure, as it will also be found to tend in many other incidental ways to benefit the migrating population of the United States choosing to take this direction and on these accounts as well as for the immediate use of the Posts themselves, they ought to be provided with the necessary shops and mechanicks which would at the same time exhibit the several branches of civilized art to the Indians.

The outlay in the first instance need be but trifling. Forts like those of the Hudson Bay Company, surrounded by walls enclosing all the buildings and constructed almost entirely of adoby or sundried bricks with stone foundations only, can be easily & cheaply erected. There are very eligible places for as many of them as the Government will find necessary at suitable distances, not further than one or two hundred miles apart at the main crossing of the principal streams that now form impediments to the journey and consequently well supplied with water, having alluvial bottomlands of a rich quality and generally well wooded.
If I might be allowed to suggest the best sites for said Posts, my personal knowledge and observation enable me to recommend—
First, the main crossing of the Kansas River where a Ferry would be very convenient to the traveller and profitable to the station having it in charge; next, and about eighty miles distant, the crossing of Blue River where in times of unusual freshet, a Ferry would be in like manner usefull; next, and distant from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles from the last mentioned, the Little Blue or Republican fork of the Kansas; next, and from sixty to one hundred miles distant from the last mentioned, the point of intersection of the Platt river; next, and from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles distant from the last mentioned, the crossing of the South Fork of Platt river; next, and about one hundred and eighty or two hundred miles distant from the last mentioned, Horseshoe Creek which is about forty miles west of Laramie’s Fork in the Black hills. Here is a fine creek for Mills & irrigation, good land for cultivation; fine pasturage, Timber & Stone for building. Other locations may be had along the Platt & Sweetwater, on the Green River or Black’s or Ham’s Fork on the Bear River near the great Soda Springs, near Fort Hall & at suitable places down to the Columbia. These localities are all of the best description, so situated as to hold a ready intercourse with the Indians in their passage to and from the ordinary Buffalo hunting grounds and in themselves so well situated in all other respects as to be desirable to private enterprise if the usual advantage of trade existed. Any of the farms above indicated would be deemed extremly valuable in the States.

The Government cannot long overlook the importance of superintending the Savages that endanger this line of travel and that are not yet in treaty with it. Some of these are already well known to be led by desperate white men and Mongrels who form banditti in the most difficult passes and are at all times ready to cut off some lagging emigrant in the rear of the party or some adventurous one who may proceed a few miles in advance, or at night to make a descent upon the sleeping camp and carry away or kill horses and cattle. This is the case even now in the commencement of our western emigration and when it comes to be
more generally known that large quantities of valuable property and considerable sums of money are yearly carried over this desolate region, it is to be feared that an organized Banditti will be instituted.

The Posts in contemplation would effectually counteract this. For that purpose they need not nor ought not to be military establishments. The Trading posts in this country have never been of such a character and yet with very few men in them have for years kept the surrounding Indians in the most pacifick disposition so that the traveler feels secure from molestation upon approach(ing) Fort Laramie, Bridger’s Fort, Fort Hall, &c &c. The same can be obtained without any considerable expenditure by the Government while by investing the officers in charge with competent authority, all evil disposed white men, refugees from justice or discharged vagabonds from the trading Posts might be easily removed from among the Indians and sent to the appropriate States for Trial.

The Hudson Bay Company’s system of rewards among the savages would soon enable the Posts to root out these desperadoes. A direct and friendly intercourse with all the Tribes even to the Pacific might be thus maintained; the Government would become more intimately acquainted with them and they with the Government, and instead of sending to the State Courts a manifestly guilty Indian to be arraigned before a distant tribunal (and) acquitted for the want of testimony by the technicalities of Lawyers and of Laws unknown to them and sent back into this wilderness loaded with presents as an inducement to further crime, the Posts should be enabled to execute summary justice as if the criminal had been already condemned by his Tribe because the Tribe will be sure to deliver up none but the party whom they know to be guilty. They will in that way receive the trial of their peers and secure within themselves to all intents and purposes if not technically the trial by jury, yet the spirit of that trial. There are many powers which ought to reside in some person on this extended route for the convenience and even necessity of the publick.

In this the emigrants and the people of Oregon are no more interested that the resident inhabitants of the States. At present
no person is authorized to administer an oath or legally attest a fact from the western line of Missouri to the Pacific. The emigrant cannot dispose of his property, although an opportunity ever so advantageous to him should occur after he passes the western border of Missouri. No one can here make legal demand and protest of a promissory note or Bill of Exchange. No one can secure the valuable testimony of a Mountaineer or of an emigrating witness after he has entered this at present lawless country. Causes do exist and will continually arise in which the private rights of citizens are, and will be, seriously prejudiced by such an utter absence of legal authority. A contraband trade from Mexico, the introduction from that country of liquors to be sold among the Indians west of the Kansas river is already carried on with the mountain trappers and very soon the teas, silks, nankins, spices, camphor and opium of the East Indies will find their way duty free through Oregon across the mountains and into the States unless custom house Officers along this line find an interest in intercepting them.

Your familiarity with the Government policy, duties and interest render it unnecessary for me to more than hint at the several objects intended by the enclosed Bill and any enlargement to its adoption would be quite superfluous, if not impertinent. The very existence of such a system as the one above recommended suggest the ability of Post Office and Mail arrangements which it is the wish of all who now live in Oregon to have granted to them; and I need only add that contracts for this purpose will be readily taken at reasonable rates for transporting the mail across from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia in forty days with fresh horses at each of the contemplated Posts. The ruling policy proposed regards the Indians as the police of the country, who are to be relied upon to keep the peace, not only for themselves but to repel lawless white men and prevent Banditti, under the salutary guidance of the Superintendants of the several Posts, aided by a well directed system of bounty to induce the punishment of crime. It will be only after a failure of these means to procure the delivery or punishment of violent, lawless and savage acts of aggression that a band or Tribe should be regarded as conspirators against the peace, or punished accordingly by force of Arms.
Hoping that these suggestions may meet your approbation and conduce to the future interests of our growing Colony, I have the honor to be, Hon. Sir, Your Obt. Servant, Marcus Whitman.

**THE PROPOSED BILL**

Title of the proposed Act

A Bill to promote safe intercourse with the Territory of Oregon; to suppress violent acts of aggression on the part of certain Indian Tribes west of the Indian Territory Necho [as the Indian Country was sometimes called]; better protect the revenue, for the transportation of mail and for other purposes.

Synopsis of the Act.

Section 1  Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled that from and after the passage of this act, there shall be established at suitable distances and in convenient and proper places to be selected by the President a chain of agricultural Posts or Farming Stations extending at intervals from the present most usual crossing of the Kansas river west of the western boundary of the State of Missouri, thence ascending the Platte river on its southern border, thence through the valley of the Sweetwater river to Fort Hall, and thence to the settlements of the Willamette in the Territory of Oregon. Which said Posts shall have for their object to set examples of civilized industry to the several Indian Tribes; to keep them in proper subjection to the laws of the United States; to suppress violent and lawless acts along the said line of frontier; to facilitate the passage of Troops and munitions of war and out of the said Territory of Oregon; and the transportation of the mail as here after provided.

Sec. 2  And be it further enacted that there shall reside at each of the said Posts one Superintendent having charge thereof with full power to carry into effect the provisions of this act, subject always to such instructions as the President may impose. One Deputy Superintendent to act in like manner in case of
the death, removal or absence of the Superintendent and such other artificers and labourers not exceeding twenty in number as the said superintendent may deem necessary for the conduct and safety of the said Post, all of whom shall be subject to his appointment and liable to his removal.

Sec. 3 And be it further enacted that it shall be the duty of the President to cause to be erected at each of the said Posts suitable buildings for the purpose herein contemplated, to wit; One main Dwelling House, one Store House, one Black Smiths and gun smiths Shop and one Carpenters Shop with such and so many other buildings for storing the products and supplies of the said Post as he may from time to time deem expedient. To supply the same with all necessary implements of mechanical art and agricultural labor incident thereto and with all such other articles as he may judge requisite and proper for the safety, defence, and comfort thereof.

To cause the said Post in his discretion to be visited by detachments of the Troops stationed on the western frontier; to suppress through the said Post the sale of munitions of war to the Indian Tribes in case of hostilities and annually to lay before Congress at its general session full returns verified by the oaths of the said several superintendents, of the several acts by them performed and of the condition of the said Posts with the income & expenditures growing out of the same respectively.

Sec. 4 And be it further enacted that the said superintendents shall be appointed by the Presidents by and with the advice and consent of the Senate for the term of four years with a salary of two thousand dollars payable out of any monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, that they shall respectively take an oath before the district judge of the United States for the western district of Missouri, faithfully to discharge the duties imposed on them in and by the provisions of this act and give a bond to the President of the United States and to his successors in office and assigns with sufficient security to be approved by the said judge in at least the penalty of twenty five thousand dollars to indemnify the President, his successor or assigns for any unlawful acts by them performed, or injuries committed by virtue
of theft offices, which said bonds may be at any time assigned for prosecution against the said respective superintendents and theft sureties upon application to the said judge at the instance of the United States District Attorney or of any private party aggrieved.

Sec. 5 And be it further enacted that it shall be the duty of the said Superintendents to cause the soil adjacent to the said posts in extent not exceeding six hundred and forty acres to be cultivated in a farmerlike manner and to produce thereon such articles of culture as in their judgment shall be deemed the most profitable and available for the maintenance of said posts, for the supply of troops and other government agents which may from time to time resort thereto, and to render the products aforesaid adequate to defraying all the expenses of labor in and about the said posts, and the salary of the said deputy superintendent without resort to the treasury of the United States, remitting to the Secretary of the Treasury yearly a sworn statement of the same with the surplus monies if any there shall be.

Sec. 6 And be it further enacted that the said several Superintendents of posts shall, ex officio, be superintendents of Indian affairs west of the Indian Territory Necho, subordinate to and under the full control and supervision of the Commissioner General of Indian affairs at Washington. That they shall by virtue of their offices be conservators of the peace with full powers to the extent hereinafter prescribed in all cases of crimes and misdemeanors, whether committed by citizens of the United States or by Indians within the frontier line aforesaid. That they shall have power to administer oaths to be valid in the several courts of the U. States; to perpetuate testimony to be used in the said courts; to take acknowledgement of deeds and other specialties in writing; to take the probate of wills and Testaments executed upon the said frontier and of which the testators shall have died in transit between the state of Missouri and the Territory of Oregon; to do and certify all notarial acts, and to perform the ceremony of marriage with as legal effect as if the said several acts above enumerated had been performed by the magistrates of any of the States having power to perform the same.
That they shall have power to arrest and remove from the line aforesaid all disorderly white persons and all persons inciting the Indians to hostilities and to surrender up all fugitives from justice upon the requisition of the Governor of any of the states, that they shall have power to demand of the several tribes within the said frontier line the surrender of any Indian or Indians committing acts in contravention of the laws of the United States, and in case of such surrender, to inflict punishment thereon according to the tenor and effect of the said laws without further trial, presuming such offending Indian or Indians to have received the trial and condemnation of the tribe to which he or they may belong; to intercept and cease [seize] all articles of contraband trade whether introduced into their jurisdiction in violation of the acts imposing duties on imports or of the acts to regulate trade and intercourse with the several Indian Tribes; to transmit the same to the Marshal of the western district of Missouri together with the proofs necessary for the confiscation thereof and in every such case the superintendent shall be entitled to and receive one half the sale value of the said confiscated articles and the other half be disposed of as in like cases arising under the existing Revenue laws.

Sec. 7 And be it further enacted that the several superintendents shall have and keep at their respective Posts, seals of office for the legal authentication of the public acts herein enumerated, and that the said seals shall have as a device, the spread Eagle with the words “U.S. Superintendency of the Frontier” engraved thereon.

Sec. 8 And be it further enacted that the said superintendents shall be entitled in addition to the salary herein before granted to the following prerequisites and fees of office, to wit: For the acknowledgement of all deeds and other written specialties, the sum of one dollar; for the administration of all oaths, twenty five cents; for the authentication of all copies of written instruments, one dollar; for the perpetuation of all testimony to be used in the United States courts, by the folio, fifty cents; for the probate of all wills and Testaments by the folio, fifty cents; for all other writing done by the folio, fifty cents; for solemnizing marriages, two dollars, including the certificate to be given to the parties; for the
surrender of fugitives from justice, in addition to the necessary costs and expenses of arrest and detention which shall be verified to the demanding Governor by the affidavit of the Superintendent, ten dollars.

Sec. 9  And be it further enacted, that the said Superintendents shall by virtue of their offices be Post Masters at the several stations for which they are appointed and as such shall be required to facilitate the transportation of the mail in its transit to and from the Territory of Oregon and the nearest Postoffice within the State of Missouri, subject to all the regulations of the Post Office Department and with all the immunities and privileges of the Post masters in the several States except that no additional compensation shall be allowed them for such services and it is hereby made the duty of the Postmaster General to cause proposals to be issued for the transportation of the mail along the line of said Posts to and from the said Territory within six months after the passage of this act.

Sec. 10  And be it further enacted that the sum of (—) thousand dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated out of any monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purposes of carrying into effect the several provisions of this act.

APPENDIX 7 FOOTNOTES

1 Here is clear evidence that Whitman was in Washington, D.C., early in 1843.

2 Two words have been scratched out in the original document. Craighead wrote in “three hundred” which figure was accepted by Nixon and Mowry.

3 This indicates that Whitman was writing some time about the middle of October 1843.

4 Nankeen was a buff-colored Chinese cotton fabric.

5 Mowry in his transcription substituted “hundred” for “thousand” evidently thinking that Whitman could not possibly have meant so large a salary to be allowed the Superintendents.
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