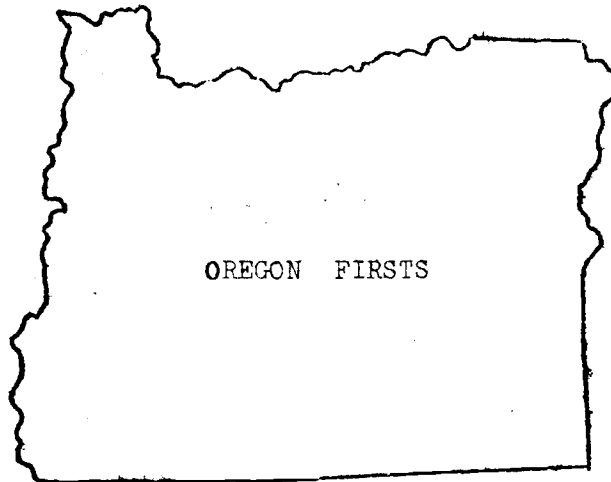


OREGON ODDITIES
AND
ITEMS OF INTEREST



For use by teachers, students, libraries, and publications

Please give credit to
the information service
of
The Federal Writers' and Historical Records Survey Projects
of the
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION OF OREGON
409 Elks Building
Portland, Oregon

The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, town and church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Works Progress Administration Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of Books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation; Delaware: A Guide to the First State; Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State; Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State; South Dakota: A South Dakota Guide; North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State; Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State.

In addition to all the state guides, interesting publications now available include American Stuff; Cape Cod Pilot; Hoosier Tall Stories; The Hopi; Italians of New York; New Orleans City Guide; Whaling Masters; Who's Who in the Zoo; and Wisconsin Indian Lore.

Publications now in preparation by the Oregon Writers' Project include the Oregon Guide, an Oregon Almanac for 1939, Old Towns of Oregon, and Fire Prevention in Portland.

OREGON FIRSTS

Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president of the United States to visit Oregon. The event occurred September 27, 1880, when the President, Mrs. Hayes, General William Tecumseh Sherman and party made a tour of the Pacific Northwest.

Arriving by stage from California, the President and his retinue spent the night at Jacksonville. From there they went to Roseburg, where they were met by a delegation of Oregon notables including Governor Thayer, Judge Deady, William S. Ladd, and Harvey Scott. Later, the presidential party and the welcoming deputation boarded a special train at Roseburg, which carried them to Portland, and after a day in Oregon's leading city the President and his party went on to Astoria, where they boarded a steamer which carried them back to San Francisco.

One amusing incident is told regarding the President's Jacksonville visit. The party had stopped at the town's finest hostelry, the French Hotel, operated by a certain Madame De Rebaum who was much worried about how to entertain her noted guests. In preparation, Madame De Rebaum calomined the president's room-to-be and bought for it a new Brussels carpet and a picture. The stage arrived in the evening, the distinguished guests retired for the night. Early the following morning, immediately before the departure, Madame De Rebaum presented her bill for the night's lodging to the President's secretary. The bill was for \$100. "We don't wish to buy your hotel, Madame," the secretary commented, and gave her twenty-five dollars.

Madame De Rebaum was much upset over this turn of events, for later she wrote to President Hayes an earnest account of her treatment. The President replied that he knew nothing of the matter, but that he was sincerely regretful that any bill for his northwest tour should be under dispute.

FIRST RIVER PILOT

The first pilot licensed for the Columbia River bar was S.C. Reeves, who received his commission under the rules of Oregon's first pilotage law, which was passed by the Legislature of Oregon in 1846, authorizing the Governor to appoint commissioners to examine and license pilots. Reeves was appointed under this act in April, 1847. He had the reputation of being a fine pilot and made several trips to San Francisco to meet vessels on their way

to the Columbia River. During the California gold excitement Reeves sailed a small sloop called the Flora on San Francisco bay. In May, 1849, he lost his life when his boat capsized during a squall.

Oregon City, the only town to hold a charter under the Oregon Provisional government, was the first incorporated town on the Pacific Coast. The event took place December 24, 1844.

Gold was discovered for the first time in Oregon near Gold Hill on January 19, 1849.

Lacking a suitable building, the first court of Yamhill county convened at Lafayette in 1846 under a large oak tree, afterwards called "council oak." According to the Oregon Historical Quarterly, December, 1932, the Oregon supreme court now uses a gavel made from a part of the same historic oak tree.

FIRST SCHOOL

The first school day west of the Rocky Mountains was held November 17, 1832, when John Ball organized a school on that day at Fort Vancouver. Twelve boys made up the total enrollment. "All were half-breeds," according to John Ball's Journal, "as there was not a white woman in OregonI found the boys docile and attentive, and they made good progress. The doctor (McLoughlin) often came into the school, and was well satisfied and pleased. One day he said: 'Ball, anyway you will have the reputation of teaching the first school in Oregon.' So I passed the winter of 1832 and 1833."

During the following summer John Ball left school-teaching to venture into farming. He is said to have raised the first wheat in Oregon.

Astoria, already a settlement 85 years old, levied its first regular municipal taxes on January 15, 1875.

The Colonel Wright, the first steamboat on the upper Columbia River was launched October 24, 1858, at the mouth of the Deschutes River. Like most pioneers on a steamboat route, she made a fortune for her owners before other

boats came to interfere with her trade. The Colonel Wright carried freight for Port Walla Walla from Celilo at the rate of \$80 a ton, making each week three round trips with a full load each time.

The story of the growth of orchestral music in Oregon centers around Portland, where the first recorded concert was given in 1868 under the direction of H. Gurdo Grob. Details of the program are missing, but there is authority for the fact that the orchestra played the march from Wagner's Tannhauser. According to the same report the music was scored by Mr. Grob himself, because printed parts were difficult to obtain in those days.

English walnut trees were first planted in Oregon in 1847, on the John Blacker donation land claim near Wilsonville. Planted in 1857 by Reverend E. R. Geary, the oldest black walnut tree is at Brownsville.

A hydrant, the first in Portland, was installed on March 28, 1864, at the corner of Washington and First Streets. The Oregonian in commenting upon the event says: ".....as they (the hydrants) are of the metropolitan order, we expect their adoption generally on most of the principle street corners. Where water is plentiful they are used for fire plugs and filling street sprinklers."

Solomon Smith was the first white settler on Clatsop plains. His wife, Celiast, was the daughter of a chief of the Clatsop tribe.

In 1854 Solomon Smith took a census of Clatsop county. According to his count there were 593 inhabitants, of whom 394 were males and 199 females. The Indians, however, were not counted.

An earlier census of Clatsop plains was taken in 1846. At that time there were 95 families belonging to 38 different families living in the territory.

Many expeditions were made in search of the mythical "Straits of Anian", which were supposed to connect the Atlantic with the Pacific ocean, somewhere in the north-western part of North America. The first of these exploring expeditions was sent out in 1542 by Don Antonio Mendoza, who presided over America, or Now Spain. Two

small vessels, the San Salvadore and the Victoria, were fitted out for the expedition, which proceeded as far as the 44th parallel without making any important discoveries.

FIRST STATE FAIR

Oregon's first state fair was held from October 1st to 4th, 1861, near the Clackamas River, one and one half miles north of Oregon City. Prizes amounting to \$758 were awarded by the Oregon State Agricultural Society, sponsors of the fair, for the best specimens of livestock, farm products, cockery, and needlework.

A horse known as Black Hawk captured first trotting honors and the fifty dollar purse. Unfortunately for Oregon racing history, no record was kept of Black Hawk's time, nor of the running races which were also featured during the last two days of the fair.

Following the close of the Fair, the Oregon State Agricultural Society called for bids for a permanent fair grounds. Lane, Linn, Yamhill and Marion counties responded. At a meeting of the Society, when a vote was cast to decide on a permanent location of the fair, Salem received 65 votes, Oregon City three, Corvallis two, and Eugene City one vote.

Until 1885 the State Fair was managed by the Oregon State Agricultural Society. In February of that year the Oregon State Legislature passed a bill creating the State Board of Agriculture, giving it control of the State Fair and a yearly \$5,000 appropriation for expenses.

The Oregon State Fair has been held yearly since 1861. The only exception was the year 1905, when because of the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition the Board decided not to hold the State Fair, but to use the yearly appropriation instead for improvements on the fairgrounds.

September 27, 1851, marked the laying of the first plank on the Portland and Tualatin Valley plank road. After a procession of Portlanders met at the spot where the plank was laid, and following speeches appropriate to the occasion, a hearty luncheon which included a "well roasted ox" was spread upon the new planks. Dinner completed, a trial trip was made over the new road.

Oregon had been a state for a month

before the first news of the admission to statehood reached those living here. The message was brought to Portland, March 18, 1859, when the Brother Jonathan docked from San Francisco.

FIRST BILL IN CONGRESS

Early in the closing session of the 16th Congress held December 19, 1820, the House of Representatives heard a motion from Dr. John Floyd of Virginia that a committee be appointed to inquire into the situation of the settlements on the Pacific Coast and the expediency of occupying the Columbia River. The motion was accepted, and the representatives Floyd, Metcalf, and Swearinger were appointed to the committee. This was the first Oregon bill introduced in Congress.

The committee reported on January 25, 1851, giving six reasons why the United States should assert its right to the Oregon country. The committee pointed out that colonization and expansion were desirable because of the profits to be derived from the fur trade, from whaling, from business with the Indians, and from the valuable timber and stock resources of the region. It was important, the committee noted, for the United States to hold the Columbia River as an outlet for the fur trade and for other inland commerce flowing into the Pacific. That the nation should take steps to check further settlement and expansion by the Russians was also recommended.

However, it was not until 1848 that Congress actually passed a bill dealing with the settlement of the Oregon country.

FIRST TAXES

Oregon's first taxes were collected in 1844 by Joseph L. Meek, sheriff of the Provisional Government. The sum came to \$383.81. In addition to a poll tax of fifty cents for each adult male, a levy of 1/8 of one percent was collected on a total property valuation of \$218,004.00. The property all lay south of the Columbia River and mostly in the Willamette valley. This was the beginning of American taxes on the Pacific coast.

The total valuation, by classifications, in the tax roll of 1844 were as follows:

Town lots	\$ 26,370.
Pleasure carriages	485.
Mills	18,170.

Clocks	\$ 520.
Watches	3,671.
Horses	47,562.
Mules	1,975.
Cattle	101,280.
Hogs	9,279.
Merchandise	5,200.
Total in Clatsop County	3,492.

The first telegraph line in Oregon was installed between Portland and Corvallis in September, 1856; between Portland and Salem on April 21, 1863; and from Portland to San Francisco on March 5, 1864.

The first United States post office west of the Rocky Mountains was established at Astoria on March 9, 1847.

The Weekly Astorian, July 7, 1877, reporting improvements made at Oregon's oldest postal station, mentions that the office was enlarged and provided with "an increase of lock boxes, with a separate delivery window for the ladies."

FIRST RIVERBOAT

The pioneer steamboat on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers made her appearance in 1850. Earlier, the only passage available between all river points was either over the wandering Indian trails or else by passage engaged in canoes.

Built in Astoria, the Columbia was a little packet of the side-wheel type. On July 3, 1850, the boat left from Astoria on her initial trip. After a stop at Portland to enable the townspeople to inspect the craft, she proceeded up the Willamette and arrived at Oregon City on the evening of the Fourth, where she was given an ovation by the jubilant citizens.

During the first year of The Columbia's run she proved very profitable to her owners. Rates are said to have been \$25 a trip for passengers and \$25 a ton for freight. Later, when better and faster boats came from San Francisco to travel along the same routes, the little Columbia lost prestige.

Portland installed the first telegraph fire alarm on February 17, 1875. This was eight years before the Fire Department bought horses to be used in pulling the fire fighting apparatus.

Electric lights were displayed in Oregon for the first time on the evening of May 28, 1879, when a very high-toned passenger

steamer, The State of California, docked at Portland with six arc lights on board, four in the cabin and two in the engine room. A public exhibition given that evening is said to have been attended by more than five hundred Portlanders. With the turning of a switch a brilliant white light burst forth surpassing anything of the kind ever seen in Portland before.

The first marriage ritoes for white people in Oregon were celebrated when on July 6, 1837, the Reverend Daniel Lee used the double ceremony for Jason Lee and Miss Anna M. Pittman, and for Cyrus Shepherd and Miss Susan Downing.

The first mail to arrive in Oregon in United States postal sacks was brought to Portland in 1849 by the brig Sequin.

Captain Minnie Hill was the first woman steamboat captain west of the Mississippi River. Captain Minnie first began steamboating with her husband, who ran the steamer Governor Newell on the Columbia River. Soon mastering the details, she was granted her pilot's license in 1886, and for several years after piloted the Governor Newell up and down the Columbia. Her husband went along as engineer.

The first known theatrical performance given in Oregon was presented in 1846 by the crew of the British sloop Modeste, anchored off Fort Vancouver. Oddly enough, the play enacted was a pseudo-sophisticated piece called Three Weeks of Marriage. Settlers for many miles up and down the Willamette Valley made the journey to see the performance.

What is believed to be the first naturalization book for the Oregon country was found in the Clatsop county court house by a research worker on the Oregon Historical Records Survey. The volume is entitled "Declaration of Intention, Vol. 1." The first person mentioned in the book was Hugh Byrne of Great Britain, whose naturalization was recorded on November 4, 1850.

Several entries in the book state that the "....foregoing persons came before the recorder and declared their intentions to be loyal to the U.S. and forsake allegiance to any other country."

FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1836 the first Roman Catholic Church in Oregon was built by the Catholic settlers at St. Paul. From 1839 to 1845 the first pastor of the church was the Reverend Francis Norbert Blanchet, who became in 1845 Bishop of the Archdiocese of Oregon City. During the time when Father Blanchet was pastor of the church, Oregon City was headquarters of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest. A grapevine planted by the Jesuit Fathers over a century ago still clings to the trees surrounding the beautiful Gothic style church begun by the settlers in 1846 and completed in 1898. Bricks used in this building were made by Father Blanchet's party from clay taken from a pit still visible in the rear of the church. In the Catholic cemetery on the outskirts of the town were buried the remains of Archbishop Blanchet, of Dr. William J. Bailey, one of Oregon's first physicians, and of Ettienne Lucier, the first settler on French Prairie.

FIRST GARDEN

So far as is known, the first garden in Oregon was planted in January, 1796. The record is contained in the log of the ship Ruby, which was anchored in the lower Columbia at that time: "Wednesday, I took a party of our people and cleared a small island which we called Tree Island Possession, and made a Garden, planting Indian corn and sowing Reddishes, Mustard, cresses, salery and Turnip seed..... in October we found the Potatoes abundant large and good, the Reddishes had gone to seed....there were several beens, but no appearence of pease, mustard, cresses or salery, the latter we ascribe to the troop of birds which inhabited the Islet, and the former to the pease having been kilndried, as the soil everywhere is rich and good."

Reed College held its first commencement on June 6, 1915, when forty-four degrees were granted.

The Oregon Spectator, the state's first newspaper, published at Oregon City, began its irregular existence under various owners and editors on February 5, 1846, and was permanently suspended in March, 1855. Wm. T'Vault was editor of the first issue, and John Fleming, printer.