

Oregon City June 28<sup>th</sup> 1845  
to Ronalds

Dad. white is  
the intencion of returning to  
family & a band of Cattle -  
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the door is opened for our or both  
you - But you might not start  
if you can <sup>manage in wanting</sup> ~~manage~~  
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the bridle off my horse and

A Letter  
From  
Medorem  
Crawford  
-1845

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## *Foreword*

In Oregon City in 1845 Medorem Crawford was a 26-year-old man who had come to Oregon three years before with Elijah White's party "for the adventure and advantages offered by a new country." In succession, and without notable success, he had tried teaching, farming, and in partnership with James O'Neil, operating a ferry. He was now running a portage service, with ox and cart, past the falls of the Willamette. He would later own and operate a saw mill, a flour mill, return to farming, serve as captain in the Emigrant Escort Service, and obtain political appointments in the internal revenue and customs bureaus. He found adventure common, advantages few. By 1850 he was ready to return home to New York, but lacked the means.

But in 1845 Crawford was still optimistic about the future of Oregon and his share in it; enough so, that he urged two of his younger brothers, John and Ronald, to join him. Together, he was sure, they would make their fortunes. The time seemed especially propitious, for Elijah White was returning to the States, and would come back to Oregon. Crawford hoped his brothers would come with him.

His letter of encouragement and advice to John and Ronald, here published, is among the Medorem Crawford Papers in the University of Oregon Library. It tells us more about early Oregon, about getting there, and about the attitudes of the pioneers than do the usual recollections written long after the events.

Medorem Crawford was born in Orange County, New York, June 24, 1819. He died December 26, 1891, in his farm home near Dayton, Oregon. His overland journal of 1842 was published by the University of Oregon in 1897.

*Martin Schmitt*  
Curator, Special Collections  
University of Oregon Library

Oregon City, June 28, 1845

Dear Brothers John & Ronald

Doct. White is going home with the intention of returning to this country with his family & a band of cattle. Now if he should not alter his mind and should indeed come back the door is opened for one or both of you to come to Oregon. But you must not start with less than \$75. apiece, which, if you are prudent in traveling, will afford you about \$25 or 30. on hand when you arrive at Independence.

If you arrive at Independence before the party are ready to start, apply your selves to some kind of buisness among the farmers to get cattle. Do not fail to secure a few head of heifers from 1½ to 2 years old, or perhaps what would be better would be a young cow with a heifer calf some 2 months old, the last mentioned being the best description of stock to start with. You should if possible get each a good young mule well broke to ride, and a Spanish saddle, bridle, & spurs. Mules are generally better adapted to the trip than horses, altho' a good one of either with proper care will cary a man the whole journey. But in order to do this they must on no occasion be ridden out of a slow trot, and must have a chance to feed on every possible occasion. I used when riding frequently to take the bridle off my horse and let him feed as he went along. I speak more particularly on this subject because I recollect several of the boys in our party were afoot before we were out 2 months just for want of care to their animals. You should furnish yourself with a good blanket to put under your saddle and take the most especial care of your horses back as on that all depends. I used to wash my horses back every night as soon as I took off my saddle with cold water which allways prevented a fever.

I have no doubt but many cattle will be brought through and among some of the owners you can get employment and perhaps wages. If you could only get your provisions furnished and your clothes carried and your riding horses found for your services and the privilege of having a few head of your own at the same time think you are doing well and devote

your attention strictly to your buisness. But if you should furnish your own horses &c and have pay for your services, let it be paid in stock either there or when you arrive at a fixed price, and above all let whatever contract you do make be made in writing. Do not promise to do too much for the sake of great wages, for the fatigue attendant upon the journey is very great, and have it understood that with the exception of taking care of & hearing the cattle & your own horses your time is your own whenever you are in camp. Lay in 2 good blankets besides your saddle blanket, and if possible 1 Doz. check shirts. I had more service from a twilled red flanel shirt than all the rest I had. When it got dirty I would at noon go swimming and take my shirt in with me and give it a good wasing, ring it out & put it on, when it would soon get dry & be clean. But whatever you wear your selves, check shirts are necessary to exchange for articles at the forts with the Inds. Lay in a few good butcher knives for your own use and a few common ones for trade. Don't forget a stock of common tobaco, plenty of ammuniton and as many small beades, strips of red cloth, flints, fishhooks, thread, coarse needles, awls &c &c, which you will need to buy ropes, moccasins, buffalo robes, salmon &c of the Inds.

Of all places in the world, traviling in the mountains is the most apt to breed contentions & quarrells. The only way to keep out of it is to say but little and mind your own buisness exclusively.

I have lost much since I have been in this country by having no one on whom I could depend to assist me, and I make no doubt but if you both were here we could in five years all be wealthy farmers. There is no money in this country at present, and it is folly for any man to come here expecting to raise money to go back to the states to spend. Our wealth consists in herds of cattle, horses, hogs &c which we can exchange for all the necessaries of life, and I have no doubt but in a few years we shall be able to exchange them for Specie.

The laws of this country secure to each man one square mile of land, and a bill is before the Legislature now in session to secure such claim

to any person long enough without being in actual possession to go to the U.S. & back, provided the owner of such claim shall put on a small improvement and pay the Government a small tax. This will enable mechanics to hold their claims and work at their trades in town at the same time. I do not think it necessary for me to enter into particulars as you will undoubtedly see Dr. White and he can inform you minutely how I am situated. I have two boys, Medorem and Frederick which are healthy & growing fast. I hope you both will come to Oregon and leave LeRoy to take care of Father as I could not consent that all his boys should leave him in his old age. I have hope yet that I shall be able to go home & see my friends some day & particularly if you should come I think there would be nothing to prevent. Tell LeRoy to improve his mind and stay with his Father and if there is anything left for the children he shall be more than welcome to all my share. My circumstances are at present considerably straitened or I would put some funds in Dr. Whites hands for to assist you here. Mind that you do not come without a few head of cattle.

I have not time to write to Elizabeth now but will give her and Uncle John Crawford each a long letter this fall by ship. I hope in the mean time they will not neglect to write to me nor expect I can write at every opportunity to all my friends.

If you start to this country be sure to supply yourselves with pants & shoes of Deer skin before you leave the settlements, as you will find them much more comfortable for riding.

Tell Father if he fits you out for Oregon I will try to make him a visit in two years after you arrive here and unless something unaccountable takes place I shall certainly do so if you come. Give my respects to Uncle John and family, Brother & Sister Stevens & all my friends who enquire.

I am as ever your affectionate Brother  
M Crawford

John Crawford  
Ronald Crawford

*First in a series of  
historical vignettes*

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Friends of the Library  
University of Oregon  
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Dear Brothers John

going home with the  
this Country with his

Now If he should  
instead come back the  
of you to come to Oregon  
with less than \$75. a piece  
\$25. or 30. on hand when you

If you arrive at Indiana  
ready to start apply yourself  
among the farmers to  
a few head of heifers for  
would be better would  
calf some 2 months old  
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