

**Philip Foster's Farm**  
**By Liz Rapp**

Research about Oregon Country pioneer arrivals often include a note with the date for journey's end. One such ancestor is noted in the Oregon Historical Society archives as "arrived Foster's Sept. 5, 1851."\*

How to better understand this brief mention of arrival in Oregon Country? Was arrival based on getting to Oregon City and the "End of the Oregon Trail?" Was arrival based on wherever they were when it became necessary to stop for their first northwest winter? Was arrival based on getting to the Snake or Columbia River? Or was it based on arriving at one end or the other of the Barlow Road Cutoff? And what or who was Foster's? In Linn County one's first thoughts turn to a relationship to Foster Dam and Foster Reservoir near Sweet Home. These structures were not completed until 1968, more than 100 years after many arrivals mention "Foster's" in their arrival documentation. Research leads to a man named Philip Foster who lived about 142 miles north of Linn County in Eagle Creek, Clackamas County, Oregon.

Philip Foster (1805-1884) was born in Maine, an entrepreneur who recognized opportunity more than 3,000 miles across the continent in Oregon Country. He and his family came west the "easy" way by sailing from New York through Cape Horn to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in 1842 and finally arriving in Oregon City in 1843. Foster partnered with his brother-in-law, Francis W. Pettygrove and developed a general store in Oregon City to outfit the new arrivals coming to Oregon Territory. History shows Philip Foster also partnered with Dr. John McLoughlin to establish a flour mill and with Sam Barlow and Joel Palmer to help build the Barlow Road, the last portion of the Oregon Trail ending near Oregon City. Philip Foster served as the second treasurer of the provisional government in Oregon Country from 1844-1845.

By late 1847 Philip Foster had chosen Donation Land Claim OC#4719, 642.81 acres along the Barlow Road Toll Road at Eagle Creek. He moved his wife Mary Charlotte PETTYGROVE (1811-1880) and children to their new home and began developing the land and buildings. He managed the toll road, provided repairs, and employed gate keepers. Over the next few years a home, store, barn, granary, blacksmith shop, and several cabins were built on Philip Foster's Farm. The store offered a place to replenish depleted supplies before the trek to the traveler's final destination; the blacksmith shop supplied sorely needed repairs. Hot meals could be purchased, and cabins were available to rent. The land was planted with orchards and gardens, and ample pastureland was available. After the arduous journey the opportunity existed to socialize with others about possible promising future destinations and inquire about friends and family who might have

been seen along the route from Missouri and further east. Philip Foster's Farm was known as an oasis at the end of a long hard journey, a chance for humans and animals to rest before resuming the final few hundred miles of their 1800 mile journey from towns like Independence, Missouri to The Oregon Trail. Philip Foster, his family and farm was a haven for thousands of people, wagons, and animals, all in need of rest, repair, replenishment.

The land was owned by the Foster family until 1930. After that time philanthropist Ruth Powers funded the purchase of the land including the house and initial repairs. She subsequently turned the property over to Jacknife-Zion-Horseheaven Historical Society to manage and maintain. In 1980 the surviving buildings were added to the National Historic Register. Philip Foster Farm is now a living history museum open for tours 11:00-4:00 Saturdays in May, June, September, and October and 11:00-4:00 Tuesday through Saturday from mid-June through early September. Access to the land and building exteriors is available year round. Interiors of the buildings can be visited during operating hours. Philip Foster Farm is located at 22725 SE Eagle Creek Road, Eagle Creek, OR 97022, 503-637-6324, [www.philipfosterfarm.com](http://www.philipfosterfarm.com)

\*Oregon Historical Society, Oregon Biographical and Other Index File 1700s-1900s, Stephen D Haley

\*\*For those researching Oregon Territory ancestors Philip Foster is known to have kept meticulous records which are available for review by advance request at the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon

**Sources:**

[www.philipfosterfarm.com](http://www.philipfosterfarm.com)

Oregon Historical Society, Oregon Biographical and Other Index File

National Park Service: National Register of Historic Places

Oregon Live, August 20, 2010, "Philip Foster Farm lets visitors walk in Oregon pioneers' footsteps"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip\\_Foster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Foster)