

OREGON PIONEER HISTORY.  
SKETCHES OF EARLY DAYS.  
MEN AND TIMES IN THE FORTIES

By S. A. CLARKE.

Reminiscences of William Martin, Sheriff of Umatilla County.

Dr. McLoughlin's liberality--

When the immigrants reached Walla Walla they left their cattle there, making a trade with the Hudson Bay company in charge of the fort to take their worn-out stock and exchange them for good Spanish cattle in place of it. The American cattle were, of course, much more valuable. The next year the Applegates and others were going up the Columbia after their cattle. When Dr. McLoughlin learned of the exchange he refused to sanction it. "Tut, tut, tut," said he. "You can't do anything with my cattle; they are as wild as deer. Take your own cattle." This is an example of his great liberality and of his unaffected way of showing it. So the Applegates, Burnett, Ford and others took their choice American stock down to the Willamette. The good doctor was not willing to take from them the stock they had brought so far, though the exchange was greatly to his own advantage.

Martin tells amusing stories of the effect of overeating on the half-starved emigrants when they came to get better food. The first instance was on reaching the American falls, where the Indians traded them dried salmon. They gave two shirts for a sack of pemican. This was a pleasant change and they ate so much of it that it swelled and made some of them quite ill. At The Dalles, Waldo traded with A. F. Waller, in charge of the Methodist mission there, giving three poor cattle for two fat ones. They jerked the meat for future use, and Joe Black, who crossed with Waldo, became ill from partaking too freely of the fresh meat. He ate no more the balance of the journey. At Vancouver they got salt salmon and potatoes and all got sick from overeating. After a long journey where food had been scarce and they had lived for months on jerked meat and bacon, any change was a luxury and the temptation to overeat irresistible.

When they came down the Columbia and tried to ford it near Hood river, some animals were lost. They finally got Indians and canoes, and while the Indian paddled across, one man held ropes that buoyed up four cattle or horses and in this manner all crossed safely.

Fun For The Emigrants--

Wm. Hill, who now lives in Washington county, had a pair of elk skin pants, the leather of which was not smoked or tanned. After a rainy day and considerable work in water on the trip down the

Columbia, Hill went to sleep with his wet pants on, and they dried on him as any rawhide naturally does. When he awoke he was in a tight place, sure enough. So far as his lower limbs were concerned he couldn't move. They finally slid him into the river and let him stay there long enough to soften his lower garment. Then they drew him out and took off his trousers. Afterwards the boys rigged them astride of a mule. All those things made fun, and good humored jokes kept the train alive and in a pleasant temper. The value of a joke depends greatly on the attendant circumstances.

This reminds the author of another story of those times where a young man and his sister were making the journey, and were camped in the mountains near the river. He had spread his blankets under a great fir, and the drippings of rain had fallen on his bed and frozen the blankets together and he in them. Ice makes a warm covering when properly applied, and he slept soundly to awaken imprisoned. He could neither stir hand or foot, and calling to his mind the stories told of Oregon back in Missouri he called out: "Jane, Jane, come here and help me up. Here I am, in this land of eternal summer, perpetual flowers and sunshine, frozen down stiff and solid." Jane came with an ax and cut him loose, and the young man was himself again.

#### Various Matters--

After Waldo got settled and his house built, he went to Vancouver for winter supplies and had transported them to the falls and was loading a boat above the falls to make the trip in the upper Willamette, when the boat got loose and went over the falls with all his loading. He was obliged to return for a second outfit. When they were at last settled in the hills, the Waldos cooked up all sorts of supplies. Someone said that roasted acorns made a good substitute for coffee, but the acorn season was over. They found many nests of wood rats, built among hazel thickets, so they hunted there and robbed the rats of their store of acorns; but acorns don't make any substitute for coffee, and they went back to parched grain or beans again. Genuine coffee was above pioneer means in those days.

When the Cayuse war came, Martin was in English's company as orderly sergeant. After Col. Gilliam's accidental death, it was necessary to send to The Dalles for supplies. Captain English wished to go down, but Major Maxar insisted on his right as the senior officer. Tins incensed English, who returned home, having disbanded his company. About half went and the rest remained, and a new company was organized, Wm. Martin being elected captain. They remained nine months in the field, until all emigrants of that year were safely in.

#### Rich Diggings in California--

In the spring of 1849 Martin went to the mines. There were six in company and they had agreed that if three became ill the rest should bring them home. Three became ill and the others came back with them. Martin returned in October, 49, and remained until May, 1850. That winter was severe in northern California and miners there could not reach the lower Sacramento for supplies. Food was \$3 a pound, much stock died and many killed and ate their mules. It cost an average of 10 a day to live. It took an ounce (\$10) to buy a pair of brogans. When the camp got out of meat Martin quit his rocker, that averaged over \$50 a day and many days yielded

5100, and even \$200, to go hunting. He was the best hunter in camp and in sixteen days they sold venison at 75 cents per pound, to the value of \$1112, though others sold for \$1.25 a pound. Only that they made enormous wages for their mining they could not have lived, and as it was living was costly.

"I'll B-B-Buy McLoughlin's mill"--

One of the successful Oregon miners was Samuel Chace of Oregon City, who still lives. Chace had an impediment in his speech, and the more excited he was the worse he stammered. In those days the greatest thing in Oregon was McLoughlin's mill, at Oregon City. Probably if any man's ambition of wealth could have found expression in words it would have risen no higher than to own McLoughlin's mill. Chace had cleaned off his top dirt and was panning the bedrock and its crevices when he found there was more weight gold than dirt. He had \$1000 to the pan, and went as high as \$3000 to a single pan of that crevice dirt. He was washing off his first rich panful, and when he saw the gold grow thick and thicker his emotions at last found utterance in stammering forth: "By gosh, I'll b-b-buy Mc-L-L-Loughlin's m-m-mill; I'll b-b-buy Mc-L-L-Loughlin's m-m-mill". The ambition of an Oregonian could climb no higher than that. Chace afterwards struck a rich silver lode, and it was considered his property, but he would not claim it, and his excuse, or rather explanation, for not locating on it was: "S-s-silver won't pay for t-t-transportation." So, the Chace family are not numbered among the silver kings of America.

In 1850 Dan Waldo and Martin went with Joe Lane to make a treaty with The Rogue River Indians. In 1851 he drove cattle to Yreka and remained there eleven years in business, then came back to Oregon and located on Granite creek, a mining region in Grant. He remained there until 1873, then moved to Umatilla county, and it would be hard to say if there is another man in that county as popular as he is.

Beaver Coinage of the Pioneers--

One of the extensive acts of sovereignty in any nation was the coinage of gold and silver; and history will always recite with interest the fact that the provisional government of Oregon assumed that prerogative. When gold was discovered it found the people who dug it almost destitute of money and unable to do business conveniently. The gold found in one mine differed in value from another, and while much of it was worth \$18 an ounces, traders took advantage of the uncertainty to buy gold dust from \$11 to \$15. The legislature of Oregon passed an act the first winter--1848-9-- after gold was discovered and before the great rush to California actually began, authorizing "The assaying, molting and coining of gold," which was only prevented from being enforced by the establishment of a territorial government by Congress. But private enterprise was awake to the importance as well as the profit in such work, and a company of old timers, pioneers who had proved equal to what ever emergency had arisen, organized to carry out the scheme the legislature had legalized. Those men were Kilburn, Magruder, Taylor, Smith, Abernethy, Wilson, Hector and Campbell. Their respective initials circled around one side, the central figure of which was a beaver; it was therefore called "Beaver Money". On the reverse side was Oregon Exchange Company. 130 grains Native gold, 5d". Ten dollar pieces

corresponded. The dies were made by Hamilton Campbell, who was for some time connected with the Methodist mission and one of the most energetic and enterprising men of that time but since deceased. The press and rolling mill were made by W. H. Hector, who removed to California many years later. The work was remarkably well done, considering the circumstances, and the money circulated freely for some years. As "dust" could be exchanged for the coin and was currently sold at much less than its value, it must have been a profitable venture, but when United States coin was abundant our provisional specie was quickly retired. The "exchange company" honestly made their coin 8 percent, better than par, and "beaver money" went rapidly to the melting pot, when other coin came into use. At the present time such coins command a high value as relics of the old time, and only a few are in existence in private collections. In California \$50 slugs, hexagon in shape, were made and passed current. The writer had a payment of some thousands made in such coin in Oregon as late as 1853."  
[Willamette Farmer, Salem, Oregon, Friday, October 8, 1886 No. 35 p.1]