

Alonzo Marion Poe

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The items below are from my blog '*Persons of Interest...*' <
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Tuesday, 24 October 2017

The when and where of Alonzo Marion Poe

The following is a chronology of the life and times of Alonzo Marion Poe who I've written about before.



*The energetic Poe in Olympia
about 1855.*

Poe moved around 'Oregon Country' where he spent most of his adult life and trying to confirm his location at different times is difficult.

In some cases, it seems he was operating in two places at once. He certainly had assistance from his brother Americus who probably 'managed' his land in Bellingham, preceded him to Napa and managed his affairs after his death.

It is possible that his youngest brother Alexander was in Thurston County in 1853 as he bought a small block on the edge of the city. If so he would have also worked for his energetic brother.

One activity that does not show up in the chronology is his apparently successful export of fruit trees to Canada. When it began and how long this 'side-line' lasted is not clear. His interest in real estate (perhaps learned from his father) continued through his adult life. His interests in 'news' and printing were strong but he was also a politician, 'lawman' and 'civil engineer'.

'Oregon Country' was a disputed region of the Pacific Northwest of North America, occupied by British and French-Canadian fur traders from before 1810, and American settlers from the mid-1830s. Its coastal areas north of the Columbia River were frequented by ships from all nations engaged in the maritime fur trade. The region was divided between the UK and US in 1846.



Key events in Alonzo's life

April 1826 – Born in Clay County (now part of Clinton County formed 2 January 1833), Missouri. He was the second child and first of three sons for William Romulus and Margaret Ann Po(w)e.

April 1845 – Poe leaves Missouri on the Oregon Trail employed with the Lemmon-Walden group which was aiming for the Willamette Valley.

September 1845 – The group arrives in the Oregon Country.

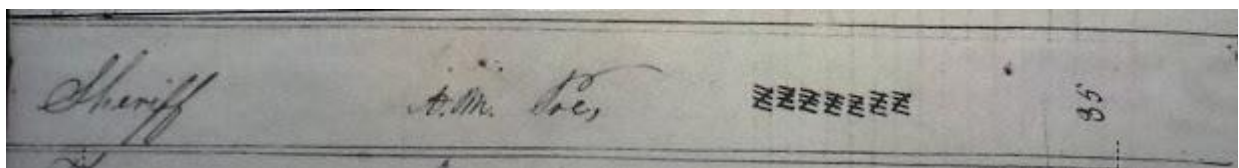
19 December 1845 – Lewis County created as Vancouver County changing to Lewis in 1849.

1846 – Settles in Tumwater, Lewis County (now part of Thurston County).

15 June 1846 - The Oregon Treaty establishes the British-American boundary at the 49th parallel (with the exception Vancouver Island which becomes British territory).

12 November 1846 – Poe submits a provisional land claim for property in Lewis County which he 'intends to hold by personal occupancy'.

13 June 1847 - Elected sheriff of Lewis County.



The scorecard for the sheriff's vote.

31 December 1846 - Submits a provisional land claim for property in Linn County.

18 April – 5 July 1848 – Enlists as a private in Captain Burnett's Company N 1st Regiment of the Oregon Volunteers during the Cayuse War, in Thurston County.

14 August 1848 - Territory of Oregon incorporated into the United States. It includes the current states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and parts of Wyoming and Montana.

25 June 1850 – Listed in Lewis County census as a farmer.

1851 – Part of volunteer militia to Victoria to rescue sailors captured by the Haida Indians in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

1851 – Listed in Lewis County census of Olympia township as a single person.

June 1851 – Appointed County Clerk of Lewis County.

4 July 1851 – Olympia settler John B Chapman calls for settlers to split from Oregon Territory. Poe elected secretary of a preliminary meeting to form Washington Territory from Oregon.

29 August 1851 - One of twenty-six delegates at a meeting at Cowlitz Landing, Lewis County, to 'take into careful consideration the present particular position of the northern portion of the territory, its wants, the best method of supplying those wants, and the propriety of an early appeal to Congress for a division of the territory'.



Memorial in Monticello celebrating participants of both the Cowlitz and Monticello conventions. The first is what lead to the creation of the new territory the second garnered popular support.

12 January 1852 – Thurston County created out of Lewis County.

7 February 1852 - A public hearing in Olympia, composed of the citizens of Thurston County and the passengers and crew of the sloop *Georgianna*, recently returned from Queen Charlotte's Island, elects Colonel M T Simmons as Chair, with D R Bigelow and M Poe secretaries.

June 1852 – Elected Clerk of Thurston County.

1852 – Appointed Deputy US Marshall.

8 July 1852 - Petition by citizens meeting in Olympia demands the establishment of a newspaper to be called the *Columbian* and 'neutral in politics and religion, and devoted to the interests of Northern Oregon'. Poe appointed to receive funds.

11 September 1852 – First edition of the *Columbian* published by T F McElroy and J W Wiley in Olympia aims to create an independent territory and advocates Whig policies. The press was constructed by Adam Ramage and itself has an interesting history.

24 September 1852 – Land claim by Andrew Moses refers to an adjacent claim by Poe near Budd's Inlet Thurston County apparently not referred to elsewhere.

25 November 1852 - Monticello Convention also produced a memorial to Congress calling for the creation of a new territory north of the Columbia, though it was received after the decision had been made.

22 December 1852 - Island County and Pierce County created out of Thurston County.

2 March 1853 - Washington Territory created with Isaac Stevens as governor.

17 September 1853 - Date of Poe's successful donation claim for 303.25 acres in Bellingham, Island County.

14 November 1853 - Resigns as clerk of Thurston County.

1853 - Admitted to the Bar as a lawyer [Record to be located].

1853 - May have acquired land in Thurston County.

28 November 1853 - Isaac Stevens selects Olympia as capital of Washington Territory.

February 1854 - State Legislature's first meeting.

9 March 1854 - Whatcom County created out of Island County. Poe appointed public notary in Thurston County.

September 1854 - Elected to the Territorial Legislature representing Whatcom County as a Whig candidate.

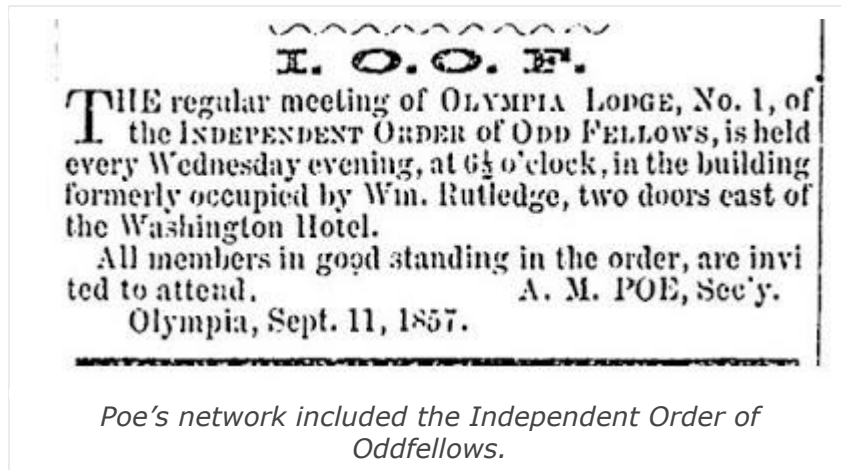
1854 - Appointed Auditor for Whatcom County.

20 October 1855 to 21 January 1856 - Lieutenant in Captain Charles H. Eaton's Puget Sound Rangers during the Indian Wars raised in Thurston County.

October 1855 - When Lt. McAllister reports that Leschi, chief of the Nisquallies, had decided to fight for his land a small group of men, including Poe and McAllister, to bring Leschi in. McAllister is shot. Leschi is tried and hanged for 'murdering' A B Moses. Leschi was exonerated in 2004, by a special historical court.

1855 - Script Warrant Act of 1855.

11 August 1857 - Poe's friend Captain Isaac Ebey killed and scalped at Coupeville, Whidbey Island, in Island County, as part of an Indian 'payback attack'.



12 July 1858 – Elected surveyor at Whatcom County. He plats Whatcom town and quitclaims most of his land in Bellingham to his younger brother Americus.

1858 - Discontinuation of the land warrant program.

14 February 1859 - The State of Oregon admitted to the Union. The eastern portions of the Oregon Territory, including southern Idaho, portions of Wyoming west of the continental divide, and a small portion of present-day Ravalli County, Montana were annexed to the Washington Territory.

5 April 1860 - Returns Ebey's scalp to his brother Winfred, after receiving it from Captain Charles Dodd who had purchased it from Indians.

4 June 1860 – Census shows Poe living in Thurston County as 'Artist' land ownership indicated.

5 November 1860 – Lincoln elected US President.

12 April 1861 – Civil War breaks out.

29 July 1861 – Founding editor of *Overland Press* published in Olympia, Thurston County, and its proprietor until 11 August 1862.

6 January 1862 – Elected Public Printer for Washington Territory by the Legislative Assembly. *The British Colonist* based in Vancouver wrote that 'Mr Poe received 21 out of 35 votes cast on the fifth ballot. The office is worth about \$7,000, and could not have fallen into better hands.'

About 1862 – Dr A G Henry, editor of rival paper *The Standard* assaults Poe with his cane and threatens him with a Bowie knife following a disagreement over an article. Henry shortly after joined his old friend Abraham Lincoln to become his doctor and political adviser.



*Dr Henry after his spat with Poe.
Note that Lincolnesque beard!*

11 August 1862 - Overland Press becomes a weekly and Poe assigns his interests to B F Kendall, who being less urbane and fleet-of-foot than Poe was murdered in the Press office the following January.

Saturday 23 August 1862 - Leaves for California to 'recover his health'.

About 1863 - In Stockton, San Francisco as 'topographical engineer'.

19 January 1863 - Marries Emma M Hartshorn (1829-1872) daughter of Rev Chancellor Hartshorn in Napa, California. Many assume incorrectly that Emma is the daughter of Poe's associate Judge Chancellor Hartson.

21 November 1863 - Appointed enrolling officer for the Union in Napa County California under the Conscription Act.

January 1864 - Daughter Emma Agnes is born.

9 March 1864 - Elected corporal in a Cavalry Company in Napa City.

July 1864 - Tax return shows him operating a news ('intelligence') office and a real estate office in San Francisco.

3 May 1865 - 'Baby' Poe dies in Napa California.

9 May 1865 - Proclamation of the end of the Civil War.

1 August 1865 - Death of daughter Emma Agnes in San Francisco.

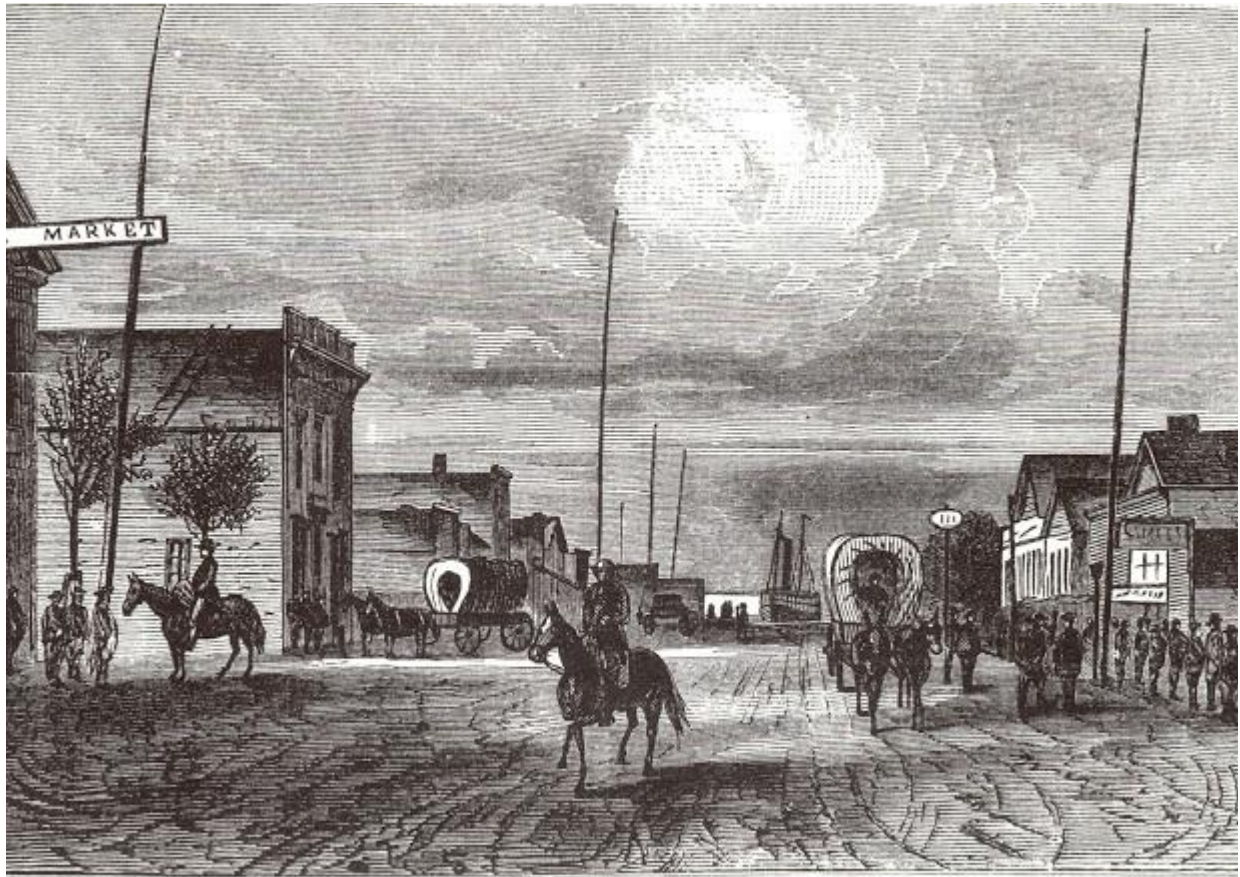
18 October 1865 - Elected one of two justices for Napa township.

29 January 1866 - Poe dies in Napa, California of 'inflammation of the lungs'.

April 1866 - Emma returns to her father's home in Michigan where she remains until her death without marrying again.

May 1866 - Brother Americus commences work of settling his affairs.

11 November 1889 – Washington Territory admitted to the Union as the State of Washington.



STREET IN OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON TERRITORY.

An impression of Olympia as Poe would have known it in about 1853.

Wednesday, 16 August 2017

Alonzo Marion Poe: a recurring family name

When I began researching the Poe family one recurring name was Alonzo Marion. My grandfather's middle name was 'Marion' and his father was 'Alonzo Marion' and he, in turn, was named after his uncle 'Alonzo Marion'. As far as I can tell this is the 'original' Alonzo Marion.

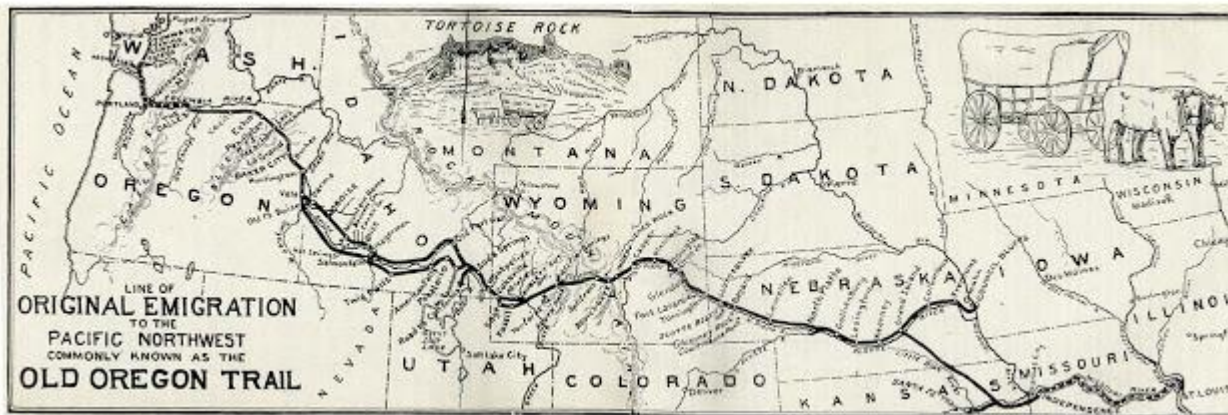
So, who was he and why did he make such an impression?

The first Alonzo shows up on the 1840 census of Missouri as one of the children of William Romulus Poe (WRP) and his wife Margaret.

I've mentioned before that WRP decided to name his children with names starting with the letter 'A'. The significance of Alonzo might therefore only be that it begins with the letter A, but the second name Marion is most likely a reference to the 'Swamp Fox' General Francis Marion a hero of the American Revolutionary War. WRP's next son was named Americus (pen name of American federalist Alexander Hamilton) Napoleon and his third son Alexander Hamilton, so there is a patriotic pattern.

As an aside, the juxtaposing of Americus with Napoleon seems odd at first. Perhaps it is to 'remind' the world that Hamilton writing as 'Americus' in early 1797 had predicted that Napoleon's France would become 'the terror and the scourge of nations'.

Alonzo Marion Poe disappeared from the family home in Missouri quite early. In April 1845 at the age of 18, he got himself a job with John Lemmon who was leading a party of pioneers aiming to head west on the 'Oregon Trail' aiming for Willamette Valley in the Washington Territory. He was employed to look after the cattle, look for food, negotiate with the Indians along the way and basically provide some 'muscle' when needed.



Oregon Trail from *The Ox Team or the Old Oregon Trail 1852-1906* by Ezra Meeker. Courtesy University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin via Wikipedia.

Poe seemed comfortable though naive in engaging with Indians. In one incident, he set out to find a missing cow and engaged 'unconcernedly' with some Sioux. However, it soon

became apparent to Poe and the rest of the party looking on from a safe distance, that the Indians intended to take clothing and firearms from Poe.

As he talked, one of the Indians took hold of Poe's horse bridle while two others took hold of the stirrups and quickly slipped them off his feet, and, while they unbuckled the straps his feet were left hanging uselessly down.

Poe became obviously afraid, but the more mature Lemmon saw the situation and rode to his assistance with a blacksnake whip in his hand. The Indians prepared to pull Poe off his horse, but Lemmon gave a fierce crack with his whip across their hands and they let go of the bridle. He then gave the horse a stroke with the whip, at the same time telling Poe to hold onto his saddle for his life.

The horse rushed off and Lemmon kept up his whip cracking so that the Indians had no time to draw their bows and soon the two men and horses were out of danger. Meanwhile, the troublesome cow and calf had wandered back toward the camp so that all parties returned in safety to bring her into the herd.

Lemmon's daughter recorded that 'Poe was cured of his desire to converse with the quick-witted marauding Sioux. Although the laugh at his expense was the theme of many a joke among his comrades around the camp fires.'

After the group had safely arrived in the Washington Territory his contract was completed and he set out on his own, settling at Tumwater then in Lewis County. In June 1846, he was elected lieutenant-colonel of the Oregon Rangers and after turning 21 was elected sheriff of Lewis County in 1847.

Poe served as a private in the Oregon Volunteers during the Cayuse War (1847-1855) and was later granted 160 acres of land in Thurston County in recognition. The war was caused in part by the influx of disease and settlers to the region, but the spark for fighting occurred in 1847 when Cayuse Indians killed fourteen people in and around the Whitman Mission near present day Walla Walla.

In 1853, Poe moved to Bellingham Bay. As he had arrived in the Territory before 1850, he was entitled to claim 320 acres despite being unmarried and he had settled on his claim 17 September 1853. He then became instrumental in the formation of Whatcom County in 1854 serving as the county's first auditor and as a civil engineer, drawing up plans for the original town of Whatcom in 1858.

But, it turned out to be a lonely existence and he wrote to his friend Isaac Ebey who had also come from Missouri urging him to become his neighbour to relieve his loneliness. This didn't happen but his unmarried brother Americus did join him within a few years. Remember that communication was not swift – no emails or phone – letters would have taken a few months.

Poe, Isaac Ebey and William Winlock Miller were fast friends who were employed by Simpson P Moses, the Collector of Customs at the Port of Olympia. They also worked together to advance their common interests, which were focussed on the development of a vibrant progressive Territory and State.



(l to r) Alonzo, Miller and Ebey, early 1850s. Washington State Digital Archives (Image No. [AR-07809001-ph004223](#)).

I have flipped the image which would have been taken from a daguerreotype. Another version is UW 14329 reprinted in William Lang's *Confederacy of Ambition*.

Although relations with the local Indians were often mutually beneficial there were tensions from time to time. After some trouble, local Indians exacted revenge on Ebey. Near midnight on 11 August 1857, the Ebey dog aroused the house with furious barking. Ebey opened the door in his nightshirt to investigate and almost instantly a 'ragged burst of musketry greeted him'. His body fell with a thud and his decapitated head taken as a trophy.

The outrage over the incident lasted for some time and eventually his skull was found though it had been scalped. Some years later his scalp was bought from the Indians and delivered to his friend Poe who passed it to Ebey's family.

There are various indications that Poe's health was not good though no condition is specified, and perhaps he had multiple problems. One newspaper reported his death from injuries received in fighting, but the announcement was premature.

Only two pictures of him are known. The one with his two friends seems to show him holding a cane.

Poe's financial fortunes mirrored his health malaise. He worked hard but frontier life was not easy. He worked in real estate and his interest in public affairs encouraged several people to combine subscriptions for him to start a newspaper. His talents and political contacts enabled him to be appointed official Territory printer.

Soon after this success, his poor health gave him so much trouble that he took the advice to move to the warmer weather of California in 1860. He wanted to hang on to his job a public printer but even with the support of friends, it was a tough case to make as he no longer lived in the Territory.

In San Francisco, California, he established an 'intelligence' office – what we would call a news office – writing articles for other publications. He built a good network there and was close to the family of [Judge Hartson](#). Chancellor Hartson and his family were active in the community and my guess is that Poe was part of this community.

One of Poe's news reports was on the prospects for finding gold in the Washington Territory and beyond its northern border.

Poe's youngest brother Alexander finally made the move west after their mother died in Missouri, but he settled in California where the weather was better and the ground fertile. Alexander had married and started a family, naming his first son Alonzo Marion after his eldest brother and his second Americus Napoleon after his next brother.

On 19 January 1863, Poe was married to Emma Hartshorn, who was living with the Hartson's. Some people assumed she was related to the judge but this is impossible. The confusion probably came about because her surname, Hartshorn, sounded similar and her father's given name was Chancellor the same as the Judge.

The couple became parents one year later and named their daughter Emma after her mother. A son was born about early 1865, though he died in May and no name is recorded. Tragically, their daughter Emma died on 1 August the same year. Poe himself died six months later on 31 January 1866 of tuberculosis which he may have had for many years. During the nineteenth century, tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in the United States, and one of the most feared diseases in the world.

After this trauma, his wife returned to her parents' home in Michigan after a few months where she [died in 1872](#). Poe's brother Americus sold his remaining interests in the Washington Territory and moved to California to work as a farmer. Although he married Sarah Dickenson (*nee* Porter) in 1879, he did not have children of his own.

Poe's early poor health meant that his potential was never fulfilled and his place in the history of the Washington Territory clouded. Much more can be written about his life.

He was a pioneer in the Washington Territory and one of the founders of Olympia. Without the efforts of a number of people, from [Dr Arthur S. Beardsley](#), at the University of Washington in the early 1940s, to various residents of [Bellingham](#) and William Lang more recently, memory of him may easily have been lost.

Poe worked as a civil engineer and assisted others in land surveys, acted as Lewis County's Sheriff, a delegate to Washington Territory convention of 1851, an auditor for Whatcom County, a legislator representing Island County in 1854 a lieutenant with Eaton's Rangers defending the Territory in 1855 and public printer for the Territory from 1862.

His life was cut short by illness, probably caused, and certainly made worse, by the hardships of frontier life.

Alonzo's nephew named after him would marry Minerva Elizabeth Dearing in 1883. They had three daughters and one son (my grandfather) who was named [Alexander Marion Poe](#) and known to his parents as 'Marion'.

Feedback is welcome. There are many details of Alonzo Marion Poe's life to be verified but his story is worth documenting in full.