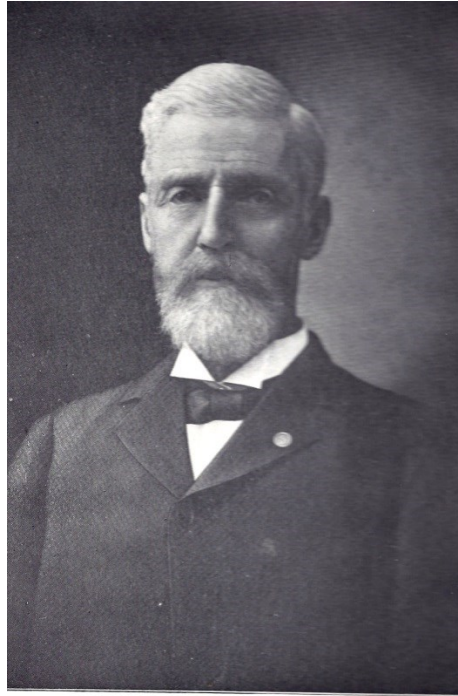


David Preston Thompson

Pioneer of 1853

compiled by Stephenie Flora  
oregonpioneers.com



D. P. THOMPSON

David P. Thompson

b. 08 Nov 1834 Cadiz, Harrison County, Ohio

d. 14 Dec 1901 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

buried River View Cemetery, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

s/o Joseph Thompson and Elizabeth Manley

m. 28 Nov 1861 Clackamas County, Oregon

Mary Relief Meldrum (Pioneer of 1845)

b. 19 Feb 1842 Des Moines, Iowa

d. 1938 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

d/o John and Susanna (Cox) Meldrum

1853: emigrated to Oregon

1860: Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon, June 11, 1860; Samuel Linton, 24, miller, MD; David P. Thompson, 28, surveyor, OH; Allen M. Thompson, 27, OH; William Illidge, 19, machinist apprentice, Australia

1866: manager of the Oregon City Woolen Manufacturing Company

1880: Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, June 7, 1880; David P. Thompson, 45, speculator, OH OH OH; Mary R., 36, wife, IA KY TN; Ralph, 16, son, at home, OR; Bessie, 12, dau, at school, OR; Eliza M??, 69, housekeeper, IN; Lemdock. 23, servant, China; Lena McCowan, 14, niece, OR VA IA

1900: Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, June 7 & 8, 1900; Joseph N. Teal, head, Sep 1859, 40, m-6yrs, OR Ger OH, lawyer; Bessie M., wife, Jul 1867, 32, m-6yrs, 1-1, OR OH OH; Ruth, dau, Dec 1895, 4, OR OR OR; David P. Thompson, father in law, Nov 1833, 66, m-39yrs, OH OH OH; Mary R., mother in law, Feb 1843, 57, m-39yrs, 3-3, IA KY KY; Genevieve, sister in law, Dec 1883, 16, OR OH IA, at academy

## **D. P. THOMPSON DIES**

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**Leading Citizen and Pioneer  
Passes Away.**

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**HAD BEEN SICK MANY WEEKS**

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**End of a Long and Notable Career—  
Blacksmith, Surveyor, Contract-  
or, Banker, Politician, and  
Friend of School Children.**

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D. P. THOMPSON AT 25 YEARS OF AGE. From a daguerrotype.

David P. Thompson, a pioneer of Oregon and one of the state's leading citizens, died in his apartments at the Hobart-Curtis at 12:25 o'clock this morning. He was 87 years of age. The cause of death was pernicious anaemia, due to organic stomach trouble. Mr. Thompson had been in falling health for several months, and during the past four weeks had been confined to his room. Three weeks ago his condition became alarming, and since that time his life has been slowly ebbing away. At intervals he relapsed into a comatose condition, but would rally again and become completely rational.

Yesterday morning Mr. Thompson was conscious. He answered the inquiries of his nurse and the family physician, and spoke pleasantly to the members of his family. Later in the day he began to sink and relapsed into an unconscious condition from which he did not recover. About midnight his breathing became difficult, and half an hour later the end came. He suffered no pain. Around his deathbed were assembled the members of his family, his physician, Dr. A. J. Giesy, and a nurse. Mrs. Thompson and the other members of the family bore up well under the ordeal. While Mr. Thompson's death was not unexpected, the suddenness of the news comes as a shock to his wide circle of friends and acquaintances in Portland and the Northwest. No funeral arrangements have yet been made.

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#### **SKETCH OF D. P. THOMPSON.**

##### **A Pioneer of 1853, He Was Long Prominent in Oregon Affairs.**

*At the age of 10 years the spirit of the Western movement took hold of David P. Thompson, and he left the little Ohio town in which he was born on November 8, 1834.*

*The trip to far-off Oregon across the plains in those days, 1853, was quite an undertaking. Young Thompson made his crossing on the lowest round of the ladder. He walked every step of the long journey, making expenses by driving sheep. This was certainly no pleasure trip, considering the dust that a band of sheep stir up, and the position their driver has to occupy in the midst of it all. The trip abounded in danger from hostile Indians, and the crossing of the then bridgeless streams.*

But Mr. Thompson surmounted all difficulties, and reached Oregon City late in the Fall. He was a stranger in a strange land, but was ready to continue a worker, as he always had been from his earliest youth. The first opening for work was the cutting of cordwood for Colonel John McCracken, who was then engaged in business at Oregon City.

All Winter Mr. Thompson swung his ax early and late, piling up an immense quantity of wood. The high water the next Spring washed away all of his employer's property, and it was a long while before he realized any cash from his Winter's work. But his employer was an honest man, and paid as soon as he could.

Industry was Young Thompson's motto, and hard work was his portion, while making a start in the West. When good fortune finally began to lean his way his progress was fairly fast. He engaged in several enterprises at Oregon City, all of which were successful. He had learned the blacksmith's trade, and his knowledge of ironworking was soon of great benefit to him in this new country. He was the leading figure in building the first railroad in Oregon, around the falls of the Willamette. In 1850 he was manager of the Oregon City Woolen Mills.

When the Civil War broke out the soldiers of the regular Army were withdrawn from the Pacific Coast and sent South, and their places in holding in subjection the hostile tribes were taken by volunteers. Mr. Thompson joined the First Oregon Cavalry, and served all through the war as Lieutenant and Captain of Company E.

Mr. Thompson may properly be called the father of United States surveys in the Northwest. Upon being appointed Deputy Surveyor for Oregon, Washington and Idaho, he took the field in person and executed contracts all over the Northwest. For many months and over

many miles he repeated the well-known surveying words of "Stick—stuck!" and many a tree in the mountain region was marked by his ax. The sturdy frame he had inherited from his Scotch-Irish ancestry stood him in hand during his long siege of surveying in all kinds of weather, and many a night he made his lonely camp in a wild region where now are valuable, well-cultivated farms.

These surveying contracts yielded profits which were the basis of the large fortune accumulated by Mr. Thompson. As president of the Oregon Construction Company, he was active in building the line of the O. R. & N. Co. in Eastern Oregon.

Mr. Thompson was engaged in several other large business enterprises, and went very extensively into banking. At one time he was president and director of 17 National banks.

[Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Saturday, December 14, 1901 p.1]

Children of David Thompson and Mary Meldrum:

1. Ralph Thompson

b. 1862

d. 06 Feb 1945 Fisher's Landing, Clark County, Washington

[Washington death records give age as 81 years]

THOMPSON--Feb. 8, Ralph, of route 1, box 226, Vancouver, Wash.; son of the late Mr. and Mrs. David P. Thompson, brother of the late Mrs. J. N. Teal, Mrs. Norman M. Smith, Portland. Services Monday 2:30, Finley's Rose Chapel, SW Montgomery at 4th. Friends invited. Private commitment. Please omit flowers.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Sunday, February 11, 1945 p.2]

2. Bessie Meldrum Thompson

b. 28 Jun 1867 Oregon City, Clackamas County, Oregon

d. 27 May 1943 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

buried River View Cemetery, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

m. Joseph N. Teal

**MRS. BESSIE M. TEAL**

Mrs. Bessie M. Teal, widow of the late Joseph N. Teal, died Thursday at her home, 741 S. W. St. Clair avenue. Mrs. Teal was born in Oregon City and had lived in Portland since 1876.

Surviving are a daughter, Mrs. Thomas P. Durell, New York city; a sister, Mrs. Norman M. Smith, Camp Parks, Cal.; a brother, Ralph Thompson, Vancouver, Wash., and a granddaughter.

Funeral arrangements will be made by J. P. Finley & Son mortuary.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Friday, May 28, 1943 p.11]

# Teal Funeral Set Tuesday

## Pallbearers for Rites Selected

Pallbearers were selected Saturday for final rites for Mrs. Joseph N. Teal, philanthropist, patron of the arts and widow of one of Portland's most prominent lawyers, who died Thursday at her residence, 741 S. W. Clair street, where she had been confined with a heart ailment since a fall 12 years ago.

Rev. Lansing E. Kempton of Trinity Episcopal church will officiate at services at 2:30 P. M. Tuesday at Finley's chapel. Commitment will be in a private plot at Riverview cemetery.

Active pallbearers are Prescott Cookingham, Reade Ireland, T. B. Wilcox, Holt W. Birne, Clark Burgard and Herman Hawkinson.



### **Pallbearers Named**

Honorary pallbearers are General Charles H. Martin, C. F. Adams, A. B. Winfree, W. C. McCulloch, Dr. Herbert Nichols, Preston W. Smith, D. A. Shindler, Harry C. Thompson and Rear-Admiral Norman Murray Smith.

Mrs. Bessie M. Teal was born at Oregon City July 26, 1867, the daughter of David P. Thompson and Mary R. Thompson. Her father was president of the Commercial National bank in Portland, had served as governor of Idaho before coming to Oregon in 1876, served three terms as mayor of Portland and was United States ambassador to Turkey from 1892 to 1895.

Mrs. Teal was graduated from Portland high school, studied for a year at Dresden, Germany, and a year at the Marchand school in Paris, then toured Europe for a year with her parents. After studying at the Boston School of Journalism she went abroad for another two years as European correspondent for Outlook magazine.

### Active in Charities

She was married in Portland in 1894 to Joseph N. Teal, a founder of the law firm now known as Teal, Winfree, McCulloch, Shuler & Kelley. A Kaiser-built Liberty ship named after Mr. Teal has made history in world war No. 2, visiting Guadalcanal and other war fronts.

Mrs. Teal participated in and directed many charities. She was a member of the Portland Art association, Arts and Crafts society, Portland Junior Symphony board, Portland Garden club and the Town club.

Relatives include a daughter, Mrs. Thomas P. Durell, New York city; granddaughter, Audrey Teal Betts, New York city; sister, Mrs. Norman Murray Smith, wife of Rear-Admiral Smith, who now commands the construction battallon center at Camp Parks, Cal., and brother, Ralph Thompson, Clark county, Wash.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Sunday, May 30, 1943 p.8]

**Teal Estate Valued—**Appraisers have set \$733,685.51 as the value of the estate of Bessie M. Teal, who died May 27, 1943. More than \$500,000 was in stocks of the D. P. Thompson company, of which she was president. She was the widow of Joseph N. Teal, long a prominent Portland attorney and navigation leader.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, Sunday, December 12, 1943 p.15]

- 3. Genevieve Thompson
- b. 02 Dec 1883 Multnomah County, Oregon
- d. 20 May 1974 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
- buried River View Cemetery, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
- m. Rear Admiral Norman Murray Smith (1883-1968)

## Genevieve Smith

The daughter of David P. Thompson, twice mayor of Portland in the 1880s, Genevieve Thompson Smith, 90, died Monday in a nursing home.

Born in Portland Dec. 2, 1883, she was graduated from Portland Academy, was a member of the class of 1907 of Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and received her LL.B. from the University of Oregon Law School in 1913. She later was admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

During World War I, she worked in the Russian section of Army Intelligence in

Washington, D.C., and for two years operated the organization Fatherless Children in France.

She married Cmdr. (later Rear Admiral) Norman Murray Smith in 1921.

A collector of books and Indian artifacts, she presented the Mary R. Thompson collection of Indian artifacts to the University of Oregon in 1955. She also presented a collection of books, many of them first editions, to the Multnomah County Central Library. She was a charter member of the Town Club, a member of the Oregon Historical Society and a life member of the Portland Art Museum.

Funeral will be at 11:30 a.m. Thursday in Trinity Chapel. Private commitment will be at Riverview Cemetery.

She is survived by a grandniece, Miss Audrey Teal Betts of Greensboro, N.C.

[The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, May 22, 1974 p. 10]

**DAVID P. THOMPSON.** The estimate of the individual is based upon his improvement of opportunity, his utilization of natural talents and his fulfillment of his obligations. In every phase of his life measuring up to the highest standards in these particulars, David P. Thompson leaves to the state of Oregon as a priceless heritage the memory of a purposeful, resultant and honorable life that through years to come should serve as a source of example, encouragement and inspiration to the citizens of Oregon. He came to the state in 1853, when a youth of nineteen years.

He was born in Cadiz, Ohio, November 8, 1834, and in the paternal line was of Irish extraction, while in the maternal line he was of Scotch descent. The family home stood directly below the Harrison county infirmary, beyond which to the west he could see the apex of a hill. He frequently said in later years that when he reached the summit of that hill he almost thought he had reached the confines of the world. But to him as to

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all others the horizon broadened as he advanced and he came to know that there was a great universe beyond Cadiz. His father owned and operated a mill, around which he played in his boyhood. He was reared in a Christian home and with his parents attended the Associate Reform church of Cadiz. The lessons which were impressed upon his mind in his youth concerning those things which are honorable and of good repute were never forgotten. His knowledge of blacksmithing was obtained at the forge of Elijah Lizure, under whom he served an apprenticeship. He was afterward engaged for some time in railroad surveying with General Blickensdorffer and in the knowledge and practical experience that he was acquiring he laid the foundation for his success and usefulness in later life. Mr. Thompson came to Oregon in 1853, employed by Colonel R. R. Thompson, who removed to this state in 1849, to drive sheep and thus following the flock, David P. Thompson walked all the way over the arid plains and unsettled prairies and across the mountains to the northwest. He worked at whatever he could find to do. His knowledge of blacksmithing proved of priceless value to him after reaching Oregon. He was prominent in building the first railroad in the state



—a line constructed around the falls of the Willamette. He was studious and ambitious, however, and his ability and willingness to work soon won recognition. He was appointed United States deputy surveyor to survey the public lands of the territories of Oregon and Washington and thus served until 1863. This brought him a knowledge of lands and of opportunities, indicating to him the needs of public improvement, and all he could save was placed in investments, the value of which increased with the growth and settlement of the state until his property holdings made him a wealthy man. During the period of the Civil war he enlisted, becoming first lieutenant and afterward captain in the First Oregon Cavalry, with which he was connected for four years. He offered his services, under the call of President Lincoln to the governors of Ohio and Pennsylvania respectively but his offer was declined on account of the expense of sending troops by way of the Isthmus of Panama. He was a loyal and devoted member of the Grand Army of the Republic and could be seen on every Decoration Day marching in the ranks of the veterans.

One of the notable features in the life of Mr. Thompson was the adaptability with which he took up a new work, recognizing the opportunities and bending his energies toward the accomplishment of the result. In 1866 he became manager of the Oregon City Woolen Manufacturing Company, controlling what was at that time the largest enterprise of the kind in the northwest. In time he became largely interested in the construction of railway and the establishment of navigation lines in Oregon and California and his efforts in promoting transportation facilities constituted a valuable factor in the development and upbuilding of the coast country. He was vice president and a director of the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company and was closely associated with those who, through the building of railway lines, opened up the northwest. In the late '70s Mr. Thompson, being part owner of the Sterling mine in southern Oregon brought in water for its development, a distance of twenty-three miles, over a mountainous and heavily timbered country. This was one of the first pieces of difficult engineering in that section.

and was looked upon as a remarkable feat. He had unusual ability for managing large bodies of men and the loyalty of his employes was ever a pride and pleasure to him. Extending his operations to the field of banking, he at one time was president or director in seventeen national banks in this section of the country but in 1891 retired from the banking business. While his business interests mainly centered in Oregon, he had also large interests in the state of Washington.

Business interests, however, never precluded his active participation in public affairs nor his substantial aid in any project which he deemed of value to the city or state. His worth as a citizen and his marked ability led to his selection for many public offices. In 1866 he was chosen to represent the twelfth district in the state senate and occupied a seat in the upper house until 1872. In 1878 he served in the lower house of the Oregon legislature and again in 1882 and 1889, and in 1878 was the republican candidate for speaker. President Grant appointed him governor of the territory of Idaho and he served as its chief executive until 1876, when he removed to Portland. He was twice mayor

of this city and his administration was characterized by needed reforms and improvements and by the substantial upbuilding of municipal interests. In 1884 he was made a presidential elector on the republican ticket and was a delegate to the republican national convention which nominated President Hayes and a member of the committee that officially notified him of the nomination. In 1890 he was made the republican nominee for governor of Oregon but was defeated by a coalition of the democratic, populist and prohibition parties. In 1892 President Harrison appointed him minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to Turkey, which position he resigned in 1893. Throughout the period in which he was recognized as one of the republican leaders of Oregon he stood for high ideals, desiring ever that the republican party should be essentially a party of principle, that it should not exist primarily to make particular individuals presidents or governors or senators but that it should exist to make vital certain principles essential to national salvation. He believed that it should



fulfill the highest definition of a political organization—that is, a large group of men working unselfishly for a great common cause. His position was never an equivocal one and he never hesitated to sacrifice personal interests and ambitions for the public good. He was long an influential and leading director of the Portland schools and in connection with the furtherance of the cause of education in Oregon has been greatly missed since death claimed him. He made generous donations and gave prizes to help the schools, filled the position of regent of the University of Oregon and took a deep interest in its prosperity. His capacity to control and manage successfully a vast number of widely differing enterprises and attend to the details personally was wonderful. One of his chief characteristics was his love for animals. This was not only evidenced by constant

financial aid and moral support of the Oregon Humane Society, of which he was president, but in a gift to this city of a handsome drinking fountain situated between two of the most prominent public squares.

In 1861 Mr. Thompson was united in marriage to Miss Mary R. Meldrum, a daughter of John and Susan D. Meldrum, Oregon pioneers of 1845. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson became the parents of a son, Ralph, now living in the state of Washington, and two daughters: Bessie M., who is the wife of Joseph N. Teal, a distinguished and successful lawyer of Portland; and Genevieve, whose home is with her mother in Portland.

Mr. Thompson was a member of the Masonic fraternity, being the first man initiated into Harrison Lodge, No. 218, F. & A. M., at Cadiz, Ohio. He was then but nineteen years of age. He remained loyal to the beneficent principles and fraternal spirit of the order throughout his entire life and was equally faithful to his membership in the Unitarian church.

In May, 1901, Mr. Thompson left home for a trip around the world, but had proceeded eastward only as far as Iowa when he became ill and was obliged to return home. He never fully recovered and passed away on the 14th of December, 1901. The press of the entire country commented upon his death in terms of commendation and of respect. Said one of the journals of Walla Walla, Washington: "The Walla Walla friends of the late D. P. Thompson of Portland are profoundly grieved to learn of his death. Mr. Thompson was for years during his lifetime connected with the financial institutions of Walla Walla and had always taken a lively interest in the progress of the Garden city. He was a man highly respected by everyone who knew him. He acquired wealth and influence in both public and private life by reason of his close application to work and his constant effort to progress in all walks of life. He came to the Pacific coast a pioneer and by his own indomitable will and courage, in the face of obstacles, made his mark among his fellowmen."

Mr. Thompson was a most generous man. His benevolence fostered many good works and his helpful aid aided many an institution and individual over a critical period. The Oregonian said of him: "Occasionally a man carves out a fortune by dint of toil and the exercise of foresight and then proceeds to make his fellowmen the better for his having lived and grown rich. David P. Thompson was of this class. His life is to be cited as an example of the possibilities of human nature, untarnished by the corrupting influence of gold. His was a career that spurs on young men to strive for the better part. D. P. Thompson stood for higher education. His influence went for the upbuilding of all institutions that make for mind improvement. He was distinctively a friend of the younger generation who aspire to climb the ladder of intellectual achievement. Oregon owes him a debt of gracious memory for what he did for the schools of the state. And in what other sphere does not the same apply?"



He stood for the interests of the common man as against the too often oppression of the more powerful. His political career was illustrative of the truth now too frequently scouted, that a man may engage in the performance of civic duties without tarnishing a good name. No breath of suspicion ever attached to him through a long and eventful life. D. P. Thompson stood for industrial development, and he possessed in a remarkable degree the foresight that enables men to see into the future and plan permanently for what will be the coming needs. He was humane. The humanity of his nature impressed anyone meeting him casually, shining out of benevolent eyes and manifesting itself in acts of charity and evidences of good-will for all."

A fitting tribute to his memory was expressed in an editorial of the Oregonian, giving a just estimate of the character of one who had been a resident of Portland and whose life was as an open book that all might read. The editorial said: "David P. Thompson was a faithful type of the men whose rugged virtues and indomitable force of character are indispensable in the molding of wildernesses into states. They take no account of hardships, stop at no obstacles, so that the goal which measureless useful ambition has set before them may be achieved. The dauntless purpose that sends them out into the front line of civilization's advancing wave becomes, in the new environment a transmuted energy into every needed form of expression. The iron will adapts itself to every circumstance and conquers every difficulty. Out of its inexhaustible reservoir of determination it passes at will into versatility in whatever direction need is found. In the tamer days of more settled community life every man must stick to his last. No one thinks of leaving the beaten path of his chosen calling, for thus he would enter upon an unknown sea, dark with vague terrors.

But no such timidity or circumspection hedges in the man of Mr. Thompson's character and times. He threw himself into every opening industry offered or civic duty required. It was not for him to take council of capacity or temperament but to apprehend what needed doing and force his powers to its accomplishment. Thus he became successively, as occasion required, woodchopper, blacksmith, surveyor, railroad builder, volunteer soldier, manufacturer, educator, statesman, banker, philanthropist. Most distinctive and necessary in all this was the work of his earlier years in assisting at the establishment and formation of the Oregon country. Any man can make money and most men can save some of it. Any man of generous impulses and broad views can give money away to worthy objects. So, while Mr. Thompson's contributions to charity and diplomacy were real and creditable, his signal service was in the vigor he lent to the pioneer era, in making this region habitable, in bringing its resources to light and in stamping his intensely practical ideas upon the educational system of the state. Such careers are too near us now for their significance to be

appraised at its true value, but the future will be able to trace the tremendous effect of their labors upon the society and the institutions of their time. The possibilities of high position afforded in the United States to industry and fidelity were never better illustrated than in Mr. Thompson's case. He crossed the plains as a boy of nineteen, working for his living and dependent on his own hands for whatever the world was to bring him of enjoyment or honors. He died possessed not only of great wealth and political honors but of exalted social position, a man enriched by years of foreign residence and travel, by books and art, by constant mingling with men and women of the highest breeding, education and accomplishments. He started with nothing, he ended with almost everything that man covets as of value. And he won it all by his own unaided exertions.



It is well that so successful a life should also have found time for the finer things our self-made men are so prone to overlook—aid in money and personal attention to schools and churches, collection of rare objects of beauty from all over the world, and the artistic adornment of his city and his home. It seemed almost akin to mockery to commiserate those immediately bereaved upon the completion and end of such a career of usefulness and strength. His work was done and rest comes fittingly at close of day. When a man has done all that has been required of him and seventy years of care and toil lies behind him in satisfying memory, a peaceful taking off as he sits patiently on the western piazza waiting for his sun to set is far preferable to the lot of those who linger on in bitterness and gloom to outlive not only their capacity for enjoyment but also their power to add to the happiness of others. Mr. Thompson filled a large place where his manhood years were passed and it, though he is gone, is secure. In the history of his adopted state and in the institutions he helped to form, his true monument stands, more beneficent than all his gifts to charity, more lasting even than the bronze or granite tokens he left in Portland's streets to perpetuate his name."

As was befitting his sturdy character and life a plain granite slab marks his last resting place in Riverview cemetery. His family has erected in his memory in the City Park, on a high hill overlooking the city he served so well, a magnificent group called "The Coming of the White Man" by the American sculptor Herman A. MacNeil. His group typifies, as the title indicates, the approach of the first white men in the Oregon country. Two Indians, of Heroic size, standing on a great unhewn stone, are gazing with intense interest up to the gorge of the Columbia river, down which the pale faced strangers are coming. The younger Indian bears an expression of interest and welcome and in his hand a branch from a tree as a symbol of peace; the older Indian wears a somewhat resentful expression as if his mind were dwelling on the future history of his race and the sculptor has depicted with great skill the

old warrior's doubt and possible dread as to the outcome. It is a masterful work of art and is said to be one of the most artistic and beautiful bronze groups in America.