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- MARCUS WHITMAN

AND

THE EARLY DAYS OF OREGON

BY

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a people preparatory to settlers, for if we tell them what is very much needed to induce them to proper care and industry it will be perverted and result in nothing good for them.

The wants of an emigration must be supplied at this point. It was my desire to aid the Indians to cultivate largely for that purpose, but as they are unwilling to pay for lands to be broken for them it cannot be facilitated. The result in my opinion will be to hasten a settlement somewhere in this vicinity for that object.

I have exceeded the limits first proposed, as a later opportunity to send and overtake the first express has offered.

With much esteem, I am yours truly,
(Signed) MARCUS WHITMAN.

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DR. WHITMAN'S LETTER TO THE HON. JAMES M.
PORTER, SECRETARY OF WAR, WITH A BILL TO
BE LAID BEFORE CONGRESS, FOR THE ORGANIZA-
TION OF OREGON

The Rev. Myron Eells obtained from the original files in the office of the Secretary of War two valuable papers. They bear this indorsement:

"Marcus Whitman, inclosing synopsis of a bill, with his views in reference to importance of the Oregon Territory, War. 382—rec. June 22, 1844."

To the Hon. JAMES M. PORTER,
Secretary of War.

SIR: In compliance with the request you did me the honor to make last winter, while in Washington, I herewith transmit to you the synopsis of a bill which, if it could be adopted, would, according to my experience and observation, prove highly conducive to the best interests of the United States generally, to Oregon, where I have resided for more than seven years as a missionary, and to the Indian tribes that inhabit the immediate country. The Government will now doubtless for the first time be apprised

through you, or by means of this communication, of the immense immigration of families to Oregon which has taken place this year. I have, since our interview, been instrumental in piloting across the route described in the accompanying bill, and which is the only eligible wagon road, no less than three hundred families, consisting of one thousand persons of both sexes, with their wagons, amounting to one hundred and twenty, six hundred and ninety-four oxen, and seven hundred and seventy-three loose cattle.

The emigrants are from different States, but principally from Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois and New York. The majority of them are farmers, lured by the prospect of bounty in lands, by the reported fertility of the soil, and by the desire to be first among those who are planting our institutions on the Pacific Coast. Among them are artisans of every trade, comprising, with farmers, the very best material for a new colony. As pioneers, these people have undergone incredible hardships, and having now safely passed the Blue Mountain Range with their wagons and effects, have established a durable road from Missouri to Oregon, which will serve to mark permanently the route for larger numbers, each succeeding year, while they have practically demonstrated that wagons drawn by horses or oxen can cross the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River, contrary to all the sinister assertions of all those who pretended it to be impossible.

In their slow progress, these persons have encountered, as in all former instances, and as all succeeding emigrants must, if this or some similar bill be not passed by Congress, the continual fear of Indian aggression, the actual loss through them of horses, cattle and other property, and the great labor of transporting an adequate amount of provision for so long a journey. The bill herewith proposed would, in a great measure, lessen these inconveniences by the establishment of posts, which, while having the possessed power to keep the Indians in check, thus doing away with the necessity of military vigilance on the part of the traveler by day and night, would be able to furnish them in transit with fresh supplies of provisions, diminishing the original burdens of the emigrants, and finding thus a ready and profitable market for their produce—a market that would, in my opinion, more than suffice to defray all the current expenses of such posts. The present party is supposed to

have expended no less than \$2000 at Laramie's and Bridger's Forts, and as much more at Fort Hall and Fort Boisé, two of the Hudson Bay Company's stations. These are at present the only stopping-places in a journey of 2200 miles, and the only place where additional supplies can be obtained, even at the enormous rate of charge called mountain prices, i. e., \$50 the hundred for flour, and \$50 the hundred for coffee; the same for sugar, powder, etc.

Many cases of sickness and some deaths took place among those who accomplished the journey this season, owing in a great measure to the uninterrupted use of meat, salt and fresh, with flour, which constituted the chief articles of food they are able to convey on their wagons, and this could be obviated by the vegetable productions which the posts in contemplation could very profitably afford them. Those who rely on hunting as an auxiliary support, are at present unable to have their arms repaired when out of order; horses and oxen become tender-footed and require to be shod on this long journey, sometimes repeatedly, and the wagons repaired in a variety of ways. I mention these as valuable incidents to the proposed measure, as it will also be found to tend in many other incidental ways to benefit the migratory population of the United States choosing to take this direction, and on these accounts, as well as for the immediate use of the posts themselves, they ought to be provided with the necessary shops and mechanics, which would at the same time exhibit the several branches of civilized art to the Indians.

The outlay in the first instance would be but trifling. Forts like those of the Hudson Bay Company's surrounded by walls enclosing all the buildings, and constructed almost entirely of adobe, or sun-dried bricks, with stone foundations only, can be easily and cheaply erected.

There are very eligible places for as many of these as the Government will find necessary, at suitable distances, not further than one or two hundred miles apart, at the main crossing of the principal streams that now form impediments to the journey, and consequently well supplied with water, having alluvial bottom-lands of a rich quality, and generally well wooded. If I might be allowed to suggest the best sites for said posts, my personal knowledge and observation enable me to recommend first, the main crossing of the Kansas River, where a ferry would be very con-

venient to the traveler, and profitable to the station having it in charge; next, and about eighty miles distant, the crossing of Blue River, where in times of unusual freshet, a ferry would be in like manner useful; next, and distant from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles from the last mentioned, the Little Blue, or Republican Fork of the Kansas; next, and from sixty to one hundred miles distant from the last mentioned, the point of intersection of the Platte River; next, and from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles distant from the last mentioned, crossing the South Fork of the Platte River; next, and about one hundred and eighty or two hundred miles distant from the last mentioned, Horseshoe Creek, which is about forty miles west of Laramie's Fork in the Black Hills. Here is a fine Creek for mills and irrigation, good land for cultivation, fine pasturage, timber and stone for building. Other locations may be had along the Platte and Sweetwater, on the Green River, or Black Forks of the Bear River, near the great Soda Springs, near Fort Hall, and at suitable places down the Columbia. These localities are all of the best description, so situated as to hold a ready intercourse with the Indians in their passages to and from the ordinary buffalo hunting grounds, and in themselves so well situated in all other respects as to be desirable to private enterprise if the usual advantage of trade existed. Any of the farms above indicated would be deemed extremely valuable in the States.

The Government cannot long overlook the importance of superintending the savages that endanger this line of travel, and that are not yet in treaty with it. Some of these are already well known to be led by desperate white men and mongrels, who form bandits in the most difficult passes, and are at all times ready to cut off some lagging emigrant in the rear of the party, or some adventurous one who may proceed a few miles in advance, or at night to make a descent upon the sleeping camp and carry away or kill horses and cattle. This is the case even now in the commencement of our western immigration, and when it comes to be more generally known that large quantities of valuable property and considerable sums of money are yearly carried over this desolate region, it is feared that an organized banditti will be instituted. The posts in contemplation would effectually counteract this. For the purpose they

need not, or ought not, to be military establishments. The trading posts in this country have never been of such a character, and yet with very few men in them, have for years kept the surrounding Indians in the most pacific disposition, so that the traveler feels secure from molestation upon approaching Fort Laramie, Bridger's Fort, Fort Hall, etc., etc. The same can be obtained without any considerable expenditure by the Government, while by investing the officers in charge with competent authority, all evil-disposed white men, refugees from justice, or discharged vagabonds from trading posts might be easily removed from among the Indians and sent to the appropriate States for trial. The Hudson's Bay Company's system of rewards among the savages would soon enable the posts to root out these desperadoes. A direct and friendly intercourse with all the tribes, even to the Pacific, might be thus maintained; the Government would become more intimately acquainted with them, and they with the Government, and instead of sending to the State courts a manifestly guilty Indian to be arraigned before a distant tribunal and acquitted for the want of testimony, by the technicalities of lawyers and of the law unknown to them, and sent back into the wilderness loaded with presents, as an inducement to further crime, the post should be enabled to execute summary justice, as if the criminal had been already condemned by his tribe, because the tribe will be sure to deliver up none but the party whom they know to be guilty. They will in that way receive the trial of their peers, and secure within themselves to all intents and purposes, if not technically the trial by jury, yet the spirit of that trial. There are many powers which ought to reside in some person on this extended route for the convenience and even necessity of the public.

In this the emigrant and the people of Oregon are no more interested than the resident inhabitant of the States. At present no person is authorized to administer an oath, or legally attest a fact, from the western line of Missouri to the Pacific. The immigrant cannot dispose of his property at home, although an opportunity ever so advantageous to him should occur after he passes the western border of Missouri. No one can here make a legal demand and protest of a promissory note or bill of exchange. No one can secure the valuable testimony of a mountaineer, or an immigrating witness after he has entered this, at present, law-

less country. Causes do exist and will continually arise, in which the private rights of citizens are, and will be, seriously prejudiced by such an utter absence of legal authority. A contraband trade from Mexico, the introduction from that country of liquors to be sold among the Indians west of the Kansas River, is already carried on with the mountain trappers, and very soon the teas, silks, nankeen, spices, camphor, and opium of the East Indies will find their way, duty free, through Oregon, across the mountains and into the States, unless Custom House officers along this line find an interest in intercepting them.

Your familiarity with the Government policy, duties and interest render it unnecessary for me to more than hint at the several objects intended by the enclosed bill, and any enlargement upon the topics here suggested as inducements to its adoption would be quite superfluous, if not impertinent. The very existence of such a system as the one above recommended suggests the utility of post-offices and mail arrangements, which it is the wish of all who now live in Oregon to have granted them; and I need only add that contracts for this purpose will be readily taken at reasonable rates for transporting the mail across from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia in forty days, with fresh horses at each of the contemplated posts. The ruling policy proposed regards the Indians as the police of the country, who are to be relied upon to keep the peace, not only for themselves, but to repel lawless white men and prevent banditti, under the solitary guidance of the superintendents of the several posts, aided by a well directed system to induce the punishment of crime. It will only be after the failure of these means to procure the delivery or punishment of violent, lawless and savage acts of aggression, that a band or tribe should be regarded as conspirators against the peace, or punished accordingly by force of arms.

Hoping that these suggestions may meet your approbation, and conduce to the future interest of our growing country, I have the honor to be, Honorable Sir,

Your obedient servant,

MARCUS WHITMAN.

COPY OF PROPOSED BILL PREPARED BY DR. MARCUS
WHITMAN IN 1843 AND SENT TO THE SECRE-
TARY OF WAR

A bill to promote safe intercourse with the Territory of Oregon, to suppress violent acts of aggression on the part of certain Indian tribes west of the Indian Territory, Necho, better protect the revenue, for the transportation of the mail and for other purposes.

Synopsis of the Act

SECTION 1. To be enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, that from and after the passage of this act, there shall be established at suitable distances, and in convenient and proper places, to be selected by the President, a chain of agricultural posts or farming stations, extending at intervals from the present and most usual crossing of the Kansas River, west of the western boundary of the state of Missouri, thence ascending the Platte River on the southern border, thence through the valley of the Sweet-water to Fort Hall, and thence to settlements of the Willamette in the Territory of Oregon. Which said posts will have for their object to set examples of civilized industry to the several Indian tribes, to keep them in proper subjection to the laws of the United States, to suppress violent and lawless acts along the said line of the frontier, to facilitate the passage of troops and munitions of war into and out of the said Territory of Oregon, and the transportation of the mail as hereinafter provided.

SECTION 2. And be it further enacted, that there shall reside at each of said posts, one superintendent having charge thereof, with full power to carry into effect the provisions of this act, subject always to such instructions as the President may impose; one deputy superintendent to act in like manner in case of death, removal or absence of the superintendent, and such artificers and laborers, not exceeding twenty in number, as the said superintendent may deem necessary for the conduct and safety of said posts, all of whom shall be subject to disappointment and liable to removal.

SECTION 3. And be it further enacted, that it shall be the duty of the President to cause to be erected, at each of the said posts, buildings suitable for the purpose herein contemplated: to wit, one main dwelling house, one storehouse, one blacksmith's and one gunsmith's shop, one carpenter shop, with such and so many other buildings for storing the products and supplies of said posts as he from time to time may deem expedient. To supply the same with all necessary mechanical and agricultural implements, to perform the labor incident thereto, and with all other articles he may judge requisite and proper for the safety, comfort and defense thereof.

To cause said posts in his discretion to be visited by detachments of the troops stationed on the western frontier, to suppress through said posts the sale of munitions of war to the Indian tribes in case of hostilities, and annually to lay before Congress, at its general session, full returns, verified by the oaths of the several superintendents, of the several acts by them performed and of the condition of said posts, with the income and expenditures growing out of the same respectively.

SECTION 4. And be it further enacted, that the said superintendents shall be appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate for the term of four years, with a salary of two hundred dollars payable out of any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated; that they shall respectively take an oath before the District Judge of the United States for the Western District of Missouri, faithfully to discharge the duties imposed on them in and by the provisions of this act, and give a bond to the President of the United States and to his successors in office and assigns, and with sufficient security to be approved by the said judge in at least the penalty of twenty-five thousand dollars, to indemnify the President or his successors or assigns for any unlawful acts by them performed, or injuries committed by virtue of their offices, which said bonds may at any time be assigned for prosecution against the said respective superintendents and their sureties upon an application to the said judge at the instance of the United States District Attorney or of any private party aggrieved.

SECTION 5. And be it further enacted, that it shall be the duty of said superintendents to cause the soil adjacent to

said posts, in extent not exceeding 640 acres, to be cultivated in a farmer-like manner and to produce such articles of culture as in their judgment shall be deemed the most profitable and available for the maintenance of said posts, for the supply of troops and other Government agents which may from time to time resort thereto, and to render the products aforesaid adequate to defraying all the expenses of labor in and about said posts, and the salary of the said deputy superintendent, without resort to the Treasury of the United States, remitting to the Secretary of the Treasury yearly a sworn statement of the same, with the surplus moneys, if any, there shall be.

SECTION 6. And be it further enacted, that the said several superintendents of posts shall, ex officio, be superintendents of Indian affairs west of the Indian Territory, Necho, subordinate to and under the full control of the Commissioner-General of Indian Affairs at Washington. That they shall, by virtue of their offices, be conservators of the peace, with full powers to the extent hereinafter prescribed, in all cases of crimes and misdemeanors, whether committed by citizens of the United States or by Indians within the frontier line aforesaid. That they shall have power to administer oaths, to be valid in the several courts of the United States, to perpetuate testimony to be used in said courts, to take acknowledgments of deeds and other specialties in writing, to take probate wills and testaments executed upon the said frontier, of which the testators shall have died in transit between the State of Missouri and the Territory of Oregon, and to do and certify all notarial acts, and to perform the ceremony of marriage, with as legal effects as if the said several acts above enumerated had been performed by the magistrates of any of the States having power to perform the service. That they shall have power to arrest and remove from the line aforesaid all disorderly white persons, and all persons exciting the Indians to hostilities, and to surrender up all fugitives from justice upon the requisition of the Governor of any of the States; that they shall have power to demand of the several tribes within the said frontier line, the surrender of any Indian or Indians committing acts in contradiction of the laws of the United States, and in case of such surrender, to inflict punishment thereon, according to the tenor and effect of said laws, without further trial, presuming such offending

Indian or Indians to have received the trial and condemnation of the tribe to which he or they may belong; to intercept and seize all articles of contraband trade, whether introduced into their jurisdiction in violation of the acts imposing duties on imports, or of the acts to regulate trade and intercourse with the several Indian tribes, to transmit the same to the marshal of the Western District of Missouri, together with the proofs necessary for the confiscation thereof, and in every such case the superintendent shall be entitled to receive one half the sale value of the said confiscated articles, and the other half be disposed of as in like cases arising under the existing revenue laws.

SECTION 7. And be it further enacted, that the several superintendents shall have and keep at their several posts, seals of office for the legal authentication of their public acts herein enumerated, and that the said seals shall have as a device the spread-eagle, with the words, " U. S. Superintendency of the Frontier," engraved thereon.

SECTION 8. And be it further enacted, that the said Superintendents shall be entitled in addition to the salary hereinbefore granted, to the following perquisites and fees of office, to wit: For the acknowledgment of all deeds and specialties, the sum of one dollar; for the administration of all oaths, twenty-five cents; for the authentication of all copies of written instruments, one dollar; for the perpetuation of all testimony to be used in the United States courts, by the folio, fifty cents; for all other writing done, by the folio, fifty cents; for the solemnizing marriages, two dollars, including the certificate to be given to the parties; for the surrender of fugitives from justice, in addition to the necessary costs and expenses of arrest and detention, which shall be verified to the demanding Governor by the affidavit of the Superintendent, ten dollars.

SECTION 9. And be it further enacted, that the said Superintendents shall by virtue of their offices, be postmasters at the several stations for which they were appointed, and as such, shall be required to facilitate the transportation of mail to and from the Territory of Oregon and the nearest post-offices within the State of Missouri, subject to all regulations of the Post-office Department, and with all the immunities and privileges of the postmasters in the several States, except that no additional compensation shall be allowed for such services; and it is hereby made

the duty of the Postmaster General to cause proposals to be issued for the transportation of the mail along the line of said Posts to and from said Territory within six months after the passage of this Act.

SECTION 10. And be it further enacted, that the sum of ——— thousand dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated out of any moneys in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the purpose of carrying into effect the several provisions of this Act.

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DR. WHITMAN'S LAST LETTER TO SECRETARY
GREENE OF THE AMERICAN BOARD

WAILATPU, October 18, 1847.

Rev. DAVID GREENE,

Secretary of the A. B. C. F. M.

MY DEAR SIR:

As Mr. Thomas Glenday of St. Charles, Missouri, is to leave here this morning for his return to the States, I cannot deny myself the privilege of writing. I have now been at home two Sabbaths only since my return from completing the wagon road from the Utilla to the Dalles. As my two wagons returned from the Dalles with loads I found it necessary to look out a new road to avoid the hills along the shore of the Columbia and the crossing of John Days River. I took my wagons back from the Columbia, crossing John Day's River higher up. By following a small stream and then a dry ravine I was enabled to avoid most of the hills and heavy obstacles to the old wagon road for the lower half of the way. After I came home I went a second time which took me near two weeks and completed the route from the Utilla to the place where I struck the old road before. Now the road does not strike the Columbia at all when it is designed to cross the Cascade Mountains by Bastow's road. This road takes them a much shorter and better route, by which means they avoid many bad hills as well as all the sands of the Columbia and, what is still more desirable, they have grass in abundance at all camps, the whole being a grass country. Wood is also