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MARCUS WHITMAN

AND

THE EARLY DAYS OF OREGON

BY

WILLIAM A. MOWRY, PH.D.

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MEMBER OF THE
NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC-GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, AND OF
THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

ILLUSTRATED



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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

plenty with one or two exceptions. It passes also that the immigrants will avoid the Indians mostly who have given so much trouble along the shore of the Columbia. As I came up with my wagons I visited the Indians along the shore of the Columbia and took back property as I could find it that had been stolen. In fact in most cases they were in advance of me, as they knew I was coming, and would be waiting on the south side with the stolen goods ready to return them. Their lodges were on the north side at the time. I then thought no further acts of the sort you will see recorded in my communication to Congress, which I have sent in your care, would have been reported. I am assuring the Indians that, unless they either bestir themselves and take back the horses, cattle, and property stolen, and also take other horses from the thieves to pay for loss and insult, that the Americans will visit them next year before the immigrants come, not to make war upon them, but to obtain pay and satisfaction for their losses, and that most likely when they come, they will take horses to pay themselves for the trouble of coming to get their pay. And that in case they do come the innocent can only escape by pointing out the guilty. I will not report what Mr. Rodgers has written about the Papists further than that all are Jesuits who are to labor among the Indians.

A bishop is set over this part of the work, whose seat as the name indicates will be at Walla Walla. He, I understand, is styled Bishop of Walla Walla. It will be well for you to know that from what we can learn, their object will be to colonize around them. I cannot blame myself that the plan I laid down when I was in Boston was not carried out. If we could have had good families, say two and three together, to have placed in select spots among the Indians, the present crisis which I feared would not have come. Two things, and it is true those which were the most important, were accomplished by my return to the states. By means of the establishment of the wagon road, which is due to that effort alone, the immigration was secured and saved from disaster in the fall of forty-three. Upon that event the present acquired rights of the U. States by her citizens hung. And not less certain is it that upon the result of immigration to this country the present existence of this mission and of Protestantism in general hung also.

It is a matter of surprise to me that so few pious men are ready to associate together and come to this country when they could be so useful in setting up and maintaining religious society and establishing the means of education. It is indeed so that some of the good people of the East can come to Oregon for the double purpose of availing themselves of the Government bounty of land and of doing good to the country. Or do I lose my object in writing to you so often upon the subject? Is it a matter of regret to you and to the Pastors of morality to lose a few of the best ministers of society and church and business men that they may benefit both themselves and the cause of religion, education, and their country? It is not too late yet I hope. But I am sure if anything is done as it should be, that the people should come next year. The interior of Oregon is unrivaled by any country for grazing of stock, of which sheep are the best. This interior will now be sought after and I fear we are to have the half-breed and French population from the Willamette, as they show a disposition to sell out there and come here. It cannot be that we let them have the ascendancy here. If we do you may well see what will be the consequence. My plan is for you to confer with the pastors and individuals in some way and lay the matter open before them. Let them be either a selection of men for the work or volunteers. Let them be of the best of pastors and church members, for it is a work that needs good men. Why will not the best men do good and benefit themselves as readily as worldly-minded men? Why will pastors regret to select their best and wealthiest men to do good by their persons and their property and influence? Can a mind be found so narrow as not to be willing to part with a pastor, or a pastor not to part with a church member, simply because they are good men and useful where they are? I fear this is the feeling. And I remember a conversation I had with you which clearly showed that you knew that spirit prevailed to a considerable extent. I do believe ministers can be found who will lead out either good men for general distribution in the colony, as the wants of the colony shall be seen by them, or who will come out with those who will locate so as to make a religious society. One or more ought to be with the intent to found a College. I know of no place so eligible as at the Dalles close by our station. There a salubrious climate and near proximity to

market and the main settlement will be secured. A good school there would not want for support even now. And this might be the embryo for the intended College. Men and means might at once be found either united or separate, as the case shall demand. If this subject be laid before the several societies who meet next May in the several cities of the East, I do not believe that either the men or the means will be wanting at once. Persons might be found there, I have no doubt, who would either come themselves or who would go home and interest themselves that others should come. Those who intend to come should start so early next fall that they may be in time for putting in a crop if possible in the spring—'49. Should a part prefer to come by land they may start with pack horses as late as July or even August, when there will be far less annoyance on the road than earlier. They will avoid all mud, rains and high water. Most of the heat will be passed and by not being confined to the wagon road they will escape the dust. Pack horses also can find grass aside from when the wagons can feed. It is never too late to pass down the Columbia to the lower country. Besides there can be no want of provisions at the Dalles as long as there are any in the Willamette. So that they can winter there if they like. I prefer to call on you for the presentation of these matters to the Christian public in any way you prefer. If you do not do it in your own name please look out the man who will act and whose name will appear before the public, not forgetting the calls upon the Home Mission Society, Tract Society, etc. Mr. Glenday will be a good man to write to for any information about packing across the mountains. I hope the want of a man for Dalles station will not escape your notice.

With esteem,

Yours truly,

(Signed) MARCUS WHITMAN.

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MEMORIAL FROM DR. WHITMAN TO THE SECRETARY
OF WAR, PREPARED SIX WEEKS BEFORE HIS DEATH

To the Honorable the Secretary of War.

To the Committees on Indian Affairs and Oregon in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States the following suggestions are respectfully submitted: