



GEORGE WOOD EBBERT  
1810-1890  
Oregon Pioneer of 1839

MORRIS WERNER COLLECTION

Going to  
wash D. C.  
to ask for  
help for  
Cayuse  
Indian  
war

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Oregon City to  
St. Joe  
1848

\*GEORGE WOOD EBBERT

I was born in Bracken County, Kentucky, June 23, 1810, where I resided until early in the year of 1829, when I started for the Rocky Mountains in the employ of William Sublette to engage in the fur trade for the American Fur Company, in whose employ I remained six years. I then joined the Hudson's Bay Company and trapped for that company three years. In the fall of 1838 I came to the Mission kept by the Rev. Mr. Spalding at Lapwai; remained there through that winter, working at blacksmithing, a trade that I had learned in Kentucky. In the spring of 1839 I started for the Willamette Valley, arriving there on the 20th of May the same year, and settled at Champoeg for one year. I then moved to the Tualatin Plains, twelve miles west of Portland, where I now reside, in the fall of 1841.

In January, 1848, in company with the late Jos. L. Meek, Nathaniel Bowman, David Young, John Owens, James Stead, Samuel Miller, Jacob Leabo, Dennis Burriss, and a Mr. Jones, started for the States with dispatches for help from the parent Government. Had an escort of volunteers under Captain Lawrence Hall, sent out by General Cornelius Gilliam's orders to accompany us to the foot of the Blue Mountains, as the Indians were very bad, we being then in the midst of the Cayuse war. Nothing of interest occurred on the trip except one fight with the Indians, in which the volunteers were victorious after a fight of eight hours. At this place some of the soldiers went out on a foraging expedition and captured some

\*On December 16, 1847, James W. Nesmith, a member of the legislature of the Provisional Government of Oregon, introduced a bill appropriating one thousand dollars to defray the expenses of J. L. Meek, as special messenger to Washington City. This was read the first and second times and referred to the committee of the whole. The bill was amended by striking out "one thousand" and inserting "five hundred," and then passed. Meek then resigned his seat in the legislature, and began making arrangements for the trip, starting early in January, 1848, as stated by Mr. Ebbert. Of the number named only three went to Washington, viz., Meek, Leabo and Ebbert. This sketch of that trip, secured directly from Mr. Ebbert, in January, 1877, is now printed for the first time. His home was a few miles north of Hillsboro, where he died Oct. 1, 1890, and was buried in the rural cemetery adjacent to the West Union Baptist Church.—George H. Himes, Curator and Assistant Secretary.

cattle belonging to the Indians, which were slaughtered and the meat jerked and prepared for our food on the trip. We camped here at the foot of the Blue Mountains one night, and started next morning on our perilous journey. The soldiers accompanied us up into the snows and then parted with us, wishing us a safe journey. Then, turning our faces eastward, we branched out—ten of us—the snow being from five to eight feet deep, going eight or ten miles, and camped at the summit the first night. We had a hard trip breaking the trail. One man would go ahead and break trail until he gave out and then one of the others would take his place. The first night we camped without fire and no feed for our horses—had to tie them to pine trees. The next night we made the bald hill and found feed for our horses; also found here eight head of horses. Some of the company were for taking the horses and some were opposed. Finally we concluded to leave them. The supposition was that the horses belonged to the Indians that murdered Dr. Whitman and family.

The third night out we camped on the Powder River. The snow was mostly gone except in the ravines. From that on for four or five days nothing of interest occurred until we came to Snake River. We here found the Indians with the measles. A great many of them were dying from their mode of doctoring, which was to jump into the water when they were broken out with the disease. One of our company caught the measles, John Owens by name, and we had to pack him on a mule by fixing a bed for him. Provisions were getting short and we could not stop. As good fortune favored us, he soon got well. Nothing more of interest occurred until we arrived at Fort Hall, Captain Grant in command. He was a Hudson's Bay trader. Colonel Meek had letters from Dr. John McLoughlin to get supplies and animals if needed. Grant was absent and we could get nothing. We went on from there and the fourth day one of our horses gave out and we killed him. Colonel Meek and myself cut out some of the choice pieces to live on as we were then without anything to eat, and God only knew when we would get any more. The rest of the

company would not take any, all saying they would rather starve than eat poor horse meat. Four days from this place we came to snow from three to seven feet deep, and very cold, making only from five to seven miles per day, with our mules living on willows. We were in this snow seven days when we arrived on one of the tributaries of Bear River, where we found grass for our horses. Here we recruited our animals a few hours, and ate the last of our horse meat. The rest of the company by this time thought horse meat a great luxury. Here wild geese were seen and some of the boys went out to try and capture some, but returned empty-handed. We held a consultation about what to do, as starvation was now staring us in the face, and something must be done and right soon; and we wanted all of our animals for future use. No man was willing to kill his and take the chances of being left afoot. However, as the mountain man's last resort after all other plans fail, we decided to separate and some of us go on in advance afoot and the rest to bring up the animals. I being one in advance, after a few miles came upon some tracks, and then we knew that Indians were near. I ascended a hill and saw in the distance some lodges. Then I signalled the remainder of the company to come on and then we went into the camp, not knowing whether it was to death or life; and to our great joy we found it to be the camp of old "Peg Leg" Smith and a couple of Frenchmen, old companions of years gone by, and they had a lot of cattle and with the proverbial hospitality of all mountain men, he made us a large kettle of coffee and killed the fatted cow. Some of it was jerked and prepared for us on our journey. After a stay of a couple days we bade our hospitable friends adieu and again turned our faces eastward.

Four days from here we arrived at a stream called Little Muddy. Here Meek had the misfortune to ride in and get his papers all wet, the river being swimming, and in consequence had to lay over one day to dry himself and documents. Three days from this we arrived at Bridger's fort and laid by two days. Here we saw the first white woman since leaving the

Willamette Valley—a Mrs. Vasques. This place was kept by old mountain men, and of course we were well treated. We exchanged our jaded animals for fresh ones, and got our larder well supplied. We left here and after eight days' travel our provisions gave out, but we were fortunate enough to kill a buffalo. That night we made a drive to get out of the country, as it was very unhealthy. We had seen fresh Indian signs. We traveled two days and came to Independence Rock. There we saw more Indian signs; then made another all night drive. The next day we laid by in the brush. Again at night we sallied forth and traveled that night and the next day. About nine o'clock we saw a band of buffalo, which to us mountain men was a sure sign that there were no Indians in the neighborhood. The second day from here we discovered wagon tracks. In two days more we arrived at the Fort,—Old Fort Laramie, in charge of an old Frenchman by name of Pappillian. The people of the fort told us there was danger ahead. We left, after two days' rest, and traveled three nights, laying by in the daytime. We reached Ash Hollow—Robidoux Fort—a trading post was here kept by a Frenchman named Le Beau. We here traded for sugar, coffee and buffalo meat. Rested one day and started on, reaching Little Platte the next day; thence down the Platte for eight or nine days, finding plenty of buffalo and killing what we needed. Meeting some Indians of the Pawnee tribe they tried to rob us by trying to intimidate us into giving up our guns. This we declined to do. Thence on to the Big Blue and down this stream three or four days' travel, with nothing to eat but one buffalo tongue and one duck which was killed by the party. Thence on to one fork of the Blue. Here we heard the familiar sound of the turkey, and most of the company were off like a shot to capture some of them; but when night came on so did the hunters, but no turkey came. Next morning, without breakfast or anything to eat, we cooked our old parfleches, which were greasy, and had a very good meal. We started on, expecting every hour to meet the immigration, as the spring was now advancing, and we had now come to the conclusion

to kill one of my mules to eat that night; but fortune favored us that afternoon, as we met the immigration, and camped and fared sumptuously, having ham and eggs. Traveled on and met another large train of immigrants and camped with them. Started on next morning and at noon met another train. Sol. Emerick, now of this county, was along. Nooned with them. Three days from this we met Mr. Joseph Watt's train, having a band of sheep for Oregon. Five days later we came to the Kaw Agency,\* and tried to get provisions, but failed. Traveled on and in a few miles met a man who gave us some bread and a bottle of whiskey. The next morning we started early and arrived at Saint Joe, Missouri, the 4th day of May, 1848.

\* GREAT NEMAHIA SUBAGENCY  
(IOWA, SAC & FOX)