

county that will necessarily accumulate before the disorganization of the county.

"June 22, 1863: Met and all business transacted that could be finished.

"June 24, 1863: Ordered that the clerk of this Board be and hereby is authorized to sell the county property in his possession that is likely to become unavailable after the disorganization of Umpqua County, and that said property be sold at private or public sale.

"There being no further business the court adjourned without day, forever."

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1836

Liberty (Apr 7) - Cross No River
(May 3) to Ft. Leavenworth
Green River (July 16)

(31)

OREGON HIST. Q.
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A Letter By Henry H. Spalding From the Rocky Mountains

ONE OF THE minor rewards of the historical investigator is that of coming now and again upon an interesting document that has no bearing on the subject he has in hand. Such was my experience a few years ago when I was examining some files of old religious newspapers belonging to the New York Public Library. In an issue of one of these newspapers, that of the *New-York Evangelist* for October 22, 1836 (VII: 171), I observed a heading that at once arrested my attention. That heading was LETTER FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS. Under it I found a long letter which the Rev. Henry H. Spalding had written at the "Rendezvous" between July 11 and July 16, 1836. It was addressed to the Rev. Joshua Leavitt, editor of the *Evangelist*, and it was written, as Spalding tells us, with the expectation that it would be published in Leavitt's "valuable paper." That letter appears hereunder. I think that it never before has been reprinted.

Mr. Spalding's letter to Mr. Leavitt adds little if anything to our knowledge of the journey of the first Oregon missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to their place of labor. Nevertheless, it is interesting for two reasons. In the first place, it is another letter to add to the Spalding collection, and, secondly, it helped to advertise in the East the second Protestant mission to Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Spalding had a pretty good nose for news. Because other sources describing the historic journey of the first missionaries sent by the American Board to the Oregon Country (mainly the letters in journal form by Mrs. Marcus Whitman) were carefully edited by the late T. C. Elliott and were printed in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (1936-37), it has seemed unnecessary to annotate Mr. Spalding's letter. Mr. Elliott's footnotes are fairly adequate.

It might be well, however, to pass in quick review the names of the persons specifically mentioned in Spalding's letter. The Rev. and Mrs. Henry H. Spalding, Doctor and Mrs. Marcus

Whitman, and William H. Gray were in the service of the American Board and had been appointed to labor among Indians in the far Northwest. "Captains Forsyth, Juden and Littleton, of the steam boats Arabian, Junius and Chariton," were persons of whom I have no knowledge. "Rev. Mr. Merrill" was the Rev. Moses Merrill, a Baptist missionary to the Otoes and Omahas, who was laboring in the service of the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. He and Mrs. Merrill had arrived at Bellevue on December 18, 1833. On September 18, 1835, they removed their mission to a new site, "six or eight miles distant from Bellevue, on the north side of the river Platte, six miles above its junction with the Missouri." Here they were living when the Spaldings and the Whitmans visited them. Their mission in the spring of 1836 consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Merrill and Miss Cynthia Brown, a schoolteacher. "Mr. Case," mentioned by Spalding, was not an acknowledged member of this mission. (American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, *Twentieth Annual Report, April, 1836* [n. p., n. d.], 9.) "Captain Steward" was Captain William Drummond Stewart, of whom Bernard De Voto has written at some length in his *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston, 1947). "Mr. Seilem, a German," remains an obscure person. De Voto calls him "Mr. Sillem, a German gentleman." (*op. cit.*, 244.) The "Lees" were, of course, Jason Lee and Daniel Lee, Methodist missionaries who had gone overland to the Columbia Valley with Nathaniel J. Wyeth in 1834. Mr. Parker was the Rev. Samuel Parker, who in 1835 had accompanied Dr. Marcus Whitman to the Rocky Mountains. Whitman returned from the Rocky Mountains to the East in that year, but Parker went on to the Columbia River. He later returned home by ship. See his *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains*. . . 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York, 1840). "Messrs McLeod and McCoy" were Chief Trader John McLeod and Thomas McKay, the latter a step-son of Dr. John McLoughlin. Both McLeod and McKay were, of course, in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. A biographical sketch of McKay appears in E. E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, First Series, 1825-38* (The Hudson's Bay Record Society, Publications, IV (1941), 347-349).
J. Orin Oliphant.

Rendezvous, head quarters [*sic*] of Colorado,
 Rocky Mountains, July 11, 1836.)

Dear brother Leavitt—The readers of your valuable paper would doubtless be gratified to learn something of the expedition fitted out last spring for the Rocky Mountains. I will endeavor to give a brief history of our journey to this place, and the prospects before us:

Myself and wife left our friends in Oneida co., N. Y., the first day of Feb. last, traveled by land to Pittsburgh, 500 miles, which we reached first of March. We were joined at Cincinnati by Doct. Whitman and wife, from Ontario co., N. Y., and reached Liberty, Mo., the most western town on the Missouri river, 7th of April, where we were joined in a few days by brother Gray, of Utica, N. Y. From Pittsburgh to this place, 1500 miles, we came by water; had a pleasant journey; received many favors from kind friends—were especially favored by Captains Forsyth, Juden and Littleton, of the steam boats Arabian, Junius and Chariton, who treated us with great kindness and gave us nearly half our passage. From Liberty some of us started 27th of April, and the rest 1st of May, with two wagons, 17 head of cattle, and 19 horses and mules. At Cantonment Leavenworth, 30 miles from Liberty, we entered upon the great prairie, which ends only with the Pacific ocean, west, and extends north and south thousands of miles, and commenced our camps—since which time the ground has been our table, our chairs, and, with a few blankets, our bed. By the blessing of God, however, we have been comfortably sheltered from the cold and wet. We reached the Otoe village, mouth of the Platte river, 300 miles from Fort Leavenworth, 19th of May. Here Rev. Mr. Merrill, a Baptist missionary, and Mr. Case, are located, in whose family we were very kindly treated while we were crossing our effects. The Platte, as its name indicates, is very broad and shallow, about a mile in width. We crossed in skin canoes. When we left this place, the American Fur Company, under whose protection we expected to cross the mountains, were five days ahead of us. Their animals were fresh, as they started from Council Bluff, near this place; ours had already traveled 300 miles, by forced marches. But their being ahead was to our advantage. They made bridges and prepared roads; and by the blessing of God we overtook the company in four and a half days. We passed up the north side of the Platte to Fort William, foot of Black

Hills, 600 miles from the mouth of the Platte, which we reached 13th of June. At Fort William we remained eight days. Started the 21st, traveled up the south side of the Platte 140 miles, crossed to the north again, and passed up its waters till we struck the water of the Colorado, 2d of July.

The waters of the Platte, Colorado, Columbia and Yellow Stone rise within a few miles of each other; those of the two former interlock, some 20 or 30 miles. When we left the waters of the Atlantic we struck those of the Pacific in six or seven miles, without passing any mountain. Our route from Fort William at the foot of the mountains, has been rough, of course, but nothing to what might be expected in crossing the *Rocky Mountains*. We frequently crossed hills in cutting off bends of rivers, or in passing from one river to another, but we seemed to descend as much as we ascended, till, 1st and 2d of July, we came to spots of snow, which convinced us we were very high. Since the 11th of June we have not been out of sight of snow, on the tops of the mountains around. We have succeeded in getting a wagon thus far, and hope we shall be able to get it through.

To Fort William our rout[e] lay through a dead level prairie, and plenty of grass. Since we left the Fort we have found but little grass—our animals have suffered much, and are now very poor. From this on we expect to find fuel and grass sufficient. Several days before we reached the Fort we saw nothing in the shape of timber; our fuel consisted of buffalo manure, which, when dry, makes a hot fire. Our bread, meat, and potatoes, since the 1st of June, have been nothing but buffalo flesh, and most of the time very poor.

We have all, however, by the blessing of God, enjoyed good health and endured the fare very well, except Mrs. Spaulding [*sic*], whose health, which was better than usual when we came to Buffalo, has suffered some, either from the living or the toils of the journey. Our journey on will be still more difficult, on account of food. In a few days from this place, buffalo cease entirely, and no game is to be found in the country. To remedy the evil we have to dry and pack meat here for the journey. The waters on this side of the mountains are much better than those on the east, the sweetest and purest I ever drank.

The company with which we journeyed consisted of about 90 men, and 260 animals, mostly mules, heavy loaded. At this

camp we found about 300 men, and three times the number of animals, employed by the Fur Company in taking furs, and about 2000 Indians, Snakes, Bonnaks, Flatheads, and Nez Perces. Captain Steward, an English gentleman of great fortune, and Mr. Seileim, a German, traveled with us for discovery and pleasure,—The order of the camp was as follows: rise at half past 3, A. M. and turn out animals, march at 6, stop at 11, catch up and start at 1, P. M., camp at 6, catch up and picket animals at 8; a constant guard night and day. The intervals were completely taken up in taking care of animals, getting meals and seeing to our effects, so that we had no time for rest from the time we left one post till we reached another. When we reached this place, not only our animals but ourselves were nearly exhausted. Our females endured the fatigues of the march remarkably well. Your ladies who ride on horseback 10 or 12 miles over your smooth roads, and rest the remainder of the day and week, know nothing of the fatigues of riding on horseback from morning till night day after day for 15 or 20 days, at the rate of 25 and 30 miles a day, and at night have nothing to lie on but the hard ground. Truly we have reason to bless our God that our females are alive and enjoying comparatively good health. The Fur Company showed us the greatest kindness throughout the whole journey. We have wanted nothing which was in their power to furnish us.

We reached this place 6th of July, 16 days from Fort Green. We expect to start in four or five days, and by the blessing of our kind heavenly Father, reach Fort Wallawalla on the Columbia, 1st Sept. We shall either accompany the Nez Perces alone, or fall into Capt. McLeod's camp, a British fur trader, whom it would seem the Lord has sent up from Vancouver, on purpose to convey us down. From information received both from Indians and whites, we shall probably locate about 2 days east of Wallawalla, the nearest Nez Perces village. At Wallawalla, we learn from good authority that we can procure all the necessaries of life on reasonable terms.—Many cattle and some grain are raised at this place. At Vancouver, five days from Wallawalla, for boats down the river, and ten up, is a large establishment—a mill and several mechanical shops. They have 6 or 700 head of cattle and raise thousands of bushels of grain every year. Near this place the Lees, our Methodist brethren, are located and are doing well. We have now accomplished

3200 miles of our journey, and have about 700 yet to make. No hand but that which has so wonderfully sustained and led us on thus far, can lead us through. Oh, may not our wicked hearts cause Him, who rules all things, to withdraw that hand. Two days before we reached this camp, 12 or 15 Nez Perces met us and received us gladly. At night we had a talk with them, told them we had left our friends and home, and come many hundred miles to live with them, to teach them how good white men live, to teach them about God and to do them good. We spoke through four languages, English, Iroquois, Flat Head, and Nez Perces. They replied that they were happy that we had come. They knew now that Dr. Whitman spoke straight, as he had come according to promise. One brought a letter and some paper from Mr. Parker, and said that he accompanied Mr. Parker from this place last year to Wallawalla, from thence to Vancouver, where they wintered, that they returned in the spring to Wallawalla, tried to get an escort of Indians to this place to meet us, but failed, that Mr. Parker got down from his horse, wrote the letter, told him to fetch it to Dr. Whitman and conduct him to that place, about a day from Wallawalla, and that Mr. Parker was going home by sea. An old chief replied, that he did not hear Mr. Parker and Dr. Whitman last year, but was glad to hear our voices now, that he was old and had but few days to live, but was glad that we had come to instruct his children. As we approached the camp the Nez Perces met us in great numbers. When we arrived, we learned from all sources that when the Nez Perces camp heard that we were actually coming with the Fur Company, it was filled with rejoicing. As we came into camp they flocked around us by the hundreds. Our females found it quite difficult to get along for the multitudes that pressed around to shake them by the hand, both men and women. Some of their women would not be satisfied till they had saluted our's [*sic*] with a kiss, but they were very orderly. — Our females, of course, being the first that ever penetrated these wild regions, excited great curiosity. Our cattle, also, are much admired by the Indians.

Soon after we arrived we had another talk with the Indians. They replied, they had come for no other reason than to conduct us to their country, and they thanked God they saw our faces. The other day an old chief came to our camp and said, he was not in the habit of crowding people's houses, but stood

off and looked on. He rejoiced we were coming to live in in [*sic*] his country, and said he would give us a horse as a present. At night he brought a fine horse. The Indians say, the place selected by Mr. Parker is not good for us, no timber, but about two days east from Wallawalla there is plenty of good timber and grass, but little snow, horses winter well. The Indians take great pains to teach us their language; many of them can speak English quite plain. They are truly a very interesting, pleasant race of Indians.

It is said they observe prayers night and morning, and keep the Sabbath, will not move camp on the Sabbath unless they are with white men, and are obliged to. They are styled by the northern men, Christian Indians. I hope we shall find these reports true, but we must not flatter ourselves, we must not forget that they are Indians. — I have just returned from a scene that convinces me that we shall have savages to deal with. However, one thing looks favorable, their anxiety for instruction, which commenced when they, in connection with the Flatheads, sent to St. Louis to get some information about our religion, still continues, though they have met with one or two disappointments that must necessarily operate against us for a time. The field indeed appears to be a promising one, but we must recollect that the heart of man in all ages, and among all people is desperately wicked, fully set against God and his government, that nothing but the grace of God can subdue, that our only hope of success is by faith, prayer, patience, and constant persevering labor. We may see such days as the missionaries of the South Sea Islands—but we hope our Christian brethren in our beloved land will remember us in their daily prayers, though we are separated by thousands of miles.

Yours in the gospel of Christ,

H. H. SPALDING.

July 16th—We are now comfortably situated in the camp of Messrs. McLeod & McCoy—find them very friendly, interesting gentlemen, disposed to favor us as far as in their power; will alter their route several days that we may pass with our wagon; will furnish us with all kinds of grain, fruit, farming utensils, clothing, &c. at Wallawalla or Vancouver, on very reasonable terms. Our friend[s] may rest assured that we shall want for nothing if God spares our lives to get through.