

Mary E. Maag memb9  
Matter # 98 Wood, Tallmodge  
Document ID: (43 WOOD 1)

Emigrant's last name: Wood Surveyed by: memb9  
first & middle names: Tallmodge B. Date surveyed: 6/13/93  
Title: Letter of Tallmodge B. Wood

Year of journey: 1843 Year written (if different): 1844 Page nos. surveyed: 394-396

Type of document: \_\_\_\_\_ (D - diary; J - journal; R - reminiscence; L - letter; N - newspaper article; G - guide; A - autobiography; O - other)

Items in document: I K \_\_\_\_\_ (use all applicable codes)

- M - daily mileages    D - emigrant drawings    P - emigrant maps    Q - maps by editor    K - biographical sketch
- I - Introduction    B - bibliography    N - index    X - photos    F - footnotes/commentaries

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Mary E. Maag, memo 9

Wood, Tallmadge

Document ID: ( 4300001 )

Emigrant's occupation: Miller Origin: Ballston Spa, NY  
Age: 26 M/F: M With family? (Y/N) N No. in family: \_\_\_\_\_

Departed from (code): J1 Arrived at (code): 04  
Date of departure: 04/25/43 Date of arrival: 11/03/43 (use form mm/dd/yy)

Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode of travel: W (one code only: W - wagons; P - packing; L - passenger lines; H - handcart; X - other)

Number of wagons at departure: 320

Number of people at departure: 1000 total 300 men X women X children

Draft animals at departure: X oxen X mules X horses \_\_\_\_\_ other (use X or a number)

Other animals: C (H - horses; C - cattle; S - sheep; P - pigs; F - fowl; D - dogs; X - other)

Guidebook used by emigrant (enter either a title, or an author and title, if given):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Routes: 1B 1D 1I 2L 2N 2O \_\_\_\_\_ (use codes from the trail maps)

Notes on back? \_\_\_\_\_







commodious harbor. Were a trade carried on between this point and the East Indies, the perilous navigation of dangerous seas, to which our commerce with that quarter is unavoidably exposed, would be obviated. With a little energy and an inconsiderable expense, compared with the magnitude of the design, we can have the luxuries and richest products of the Oriental climes brought up the Oregon River, over the snowy heights of the Rocky Mountains, and poured out into the lap of the prosperous West.

Your petitioners feeling a lively interest in speedily securing so many important advantages for their country, therefore pray, that your honorable body will, by law, afford the necessary facilities as soon as practicable, to settle the Oregon Territory in the manner suggested in this petition.

H. Hough, Fielding Friend, Samuel Haycraft, J. R. Boyce, C. S. Craig, James W. Hays, F. W. Foreman, S. D. Winterbower, R. G. Hays, John H. Thomas, J. W. Miller, E. S. Brown, Nathaniel McLane, James W. Smith, E. H. Haycraft, P. S. Wood, Samuel J. Stuart, Wm. D. Vertrus, P. W. D. Stone, W. S. Morris, Thomas Morris, John Arnold, W. S. English, W. E. English, Stephen Eliot, Arthur Park, Wm. C. Van Mater.

ELIZABETHTOWN, Kentucky, January 13, 1840.

TALLMADGE B. WOOD LETTER.

The following letter, written by Tallmadge B. Wood, was secured through Miss Florence E. Baker, of the Wisconsin State Historical Society. Tallmadge B. Wood was without doubt the Benjamin Wood of whose murder by Indians in the California mines in 1848 Mrs. Fannie Clayton gives a circumstantial account in the *JUNE QUARTERLY*, 1901, pages 180-181. As the letter and other evidence indicate, he was prominent in the direction of the emigration of 1843.

Miss Baker supplies the note below, descriptive of the letter; also the following facts: "Mr. Wood was born July 5, 1817, and was the son of Jesse and Rebecca (Bryan) Wood, and grandson of Benjamin Wood. They lived in the township of Milton, and their post office was Ballston Spa, Saratoga County, New York. His sister was Mrs. (Wood) Stinner, [?] who founded a seminary for young

ladies at Mount Carroll, Illinois. He came from a fine family of educated Christian people.

Copy of a letter written by Tallmadge B. Wood, about April, 1844, from Willamette Falls, Oregon, to his friends at Milton, Saratoga County, New York. The letter is written on large foolscap paper, tinted blue, and the lines on which the writing is placed are a shade of darker blue. This letter was nicely written; the letters were at a slant of about forty-five degrees.—*Florence E. Baker.*

One year has elapsed since I had an opportunity of communicating with you; at which time you doubtless recollect receiving a letter from me, which was mailed at Missouri; & in which I informed you of my intention to take a trip to Oregon, which I accordingly did, & after seven months tedious traveling, arrived at Willamet Fall, on a branch of the Columbia River. My road lay through a *Savage country*, a distance of Twenty-three hundred miles, which you are aware makes it necessary to travel in caravans. As I presume you have a curiosity to know how we journeyed, & the country &c, I will attempt to give you as much of a description as the limited space of a *letter* will allow; I set out (from Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, which is the general place of rendezvous for emigrants to this country;) April 25th, 1843; in a company of One thousand; three hundred of which were able men; the remainder were women & children.

There was three [one] hundred & twenty wagons, drawn by oxen or mules (chiefly oxen) of about three yoke to each wagon; they performed the journey admirably, I was myself equipped with two yoke of cattle, to haul *my* provisions; two Horses & one Mule, to ride by turn, & though my horses & mule were of the *best* quality, they were not sufficient to carry me the whole distance. We also had about two thousand head of cows, young cattle, & horses. We traveled in some confusion, 'till we arrived at Con [Kaw or Kausas] River, a distance of about ninety miles from Missouri line; We there found it necessary to have some order in traveling, for which purpose we elected Officers, & came under a sort of military discipline, & thus marched very pleasantly through a fertile country, until we arrived at Blue River, a branch of the Con. [ \* \* ] Here we found our stock was too large to get sufficient sustenance from one campground, therefore we concluded to sepperate & form two divisions, & march a few miles apart. I had the honor of being second in command, of the division in which I traveled. We struck Big Platte River about 300 miles from the Missouri line. We

\* Compare with statistics given in Burnett's letters following.

traveled up the river a few days & crossed South Platte, passed through Black hills, crossed the North Platte & steered our course towards Sweet Water which we struck at the entrance of the pass through the Rocky Mountains which place is called Independence-Rock, So named from the circumstance of the Mountaineers meeting here to celebrate the Fourth. The pass through the Mountains is about Ninety miles but so gradual, that the traveler would scarcely perceive he was ascending, were it not for the great change in the atmosphere. We were on the *Divide* in July, & saw *ice* every morning. At no great distance on the right & left, are very high, snow peaks, We found great abundance of game from South Platte, until we left Sweet Water. I amused myself very well in killing Buffaloes though it was *old* sport to me. After crossing the Mountains, we *passed* Green River (or Colorado of the west;) Struck Bear River & followed it up to the Soda Springs. These Springs (which are numerous at this place) are among the great curiosities of the west; The waters of these springs are similar in flavour to those of Ballston & Saratoga, though *some* of them are very cold and *much* stronger, while there are others *very hot*. We arrived at Fort Hall the last of September. *Here*, (though two thirds the distance was passed);<sup>10</sup> the difficulties of the journey just commenced, though not so difficult as had been represented, yet the roads from this place were *very rough* & grass in many places *very scarce*. We followed down Snake River, passed the Blue Mountains & arrived at the very foot of the Cascades; Here many left their wagons & descended the Columbia River in boats, while others crossed the Cascades (a distance of Ninety miles). But the emigrants all arrived in the Valley between the Cascades & Pacific Ocean, about the last of November. The whole distance, from the Platte River, to the east base of the Blue Mountains, is entirely unfit for the residence of civilized man, and is inhabited only by wandering tribes of hostile Indians. They however did not trouble the Emigration, as the *Sight* of so large a body of whites, was sufficient to quell all hostility. The country from the eastern base of the Blue Mountains, to the Cascades, is peculiarly adapted to grazing purposes. The Indians in this vicinity, are not hostile, & are quite enterprising. They are anxious to own cattle & some are getting considerable herds they are also very fond of horses & some individual Indians own several thousand head of the handsomest I ever saw. The country between the Cascades & the Sea coast is some parts very heavy timbered lands, with a deep, rich soil though rather broken to please a western man. The size of the timber is enormous, there being abundance of trees measuring three hundred feet in height, & some as large as twenty feet in diameter. *Big trees!* but it is a fact. The timber of

this country is of a different kind from that of the states though generally of the Pine & Cedar species, with the exception of Oak & Soft Maple. The Prairies of this country are beautiful, full equal to any in Missouri or Illinois. They are generally found on the head of water courses. The land produces most all the productions of the States, in great perfection, except *corn*. Wheat is raised here in large quantities which is exported (by the Hudson Bay Co.) to the Islands & northern Russia. Wheat is worth one Dollar per bushel, Beef \$6 per hundred. Pork \$10 per hundred. These prices will probably hold good, & may increase as soon as we can produce a surplus sufficient to supply the *Whaling* Vessels, which will induce them to make more frequent calls on us. The first settlers *here*, were men who were discharged from the service of the Hudson Bay Co. & as they draw all their wages in *Supplies*; & all the cash brought here by emigrants goes immediately into the hands of merchants and is taken out of the country; hence we are left entirely destitute of a cash currency. Yet we have a currency which is not liable to fluctuations; any responsible man's order is good with the merchants for their amount in goods; & these orders are finally redeemed in Wheat, Pork or Beef. The Indians on the Columbia are a cowardly, thievish, indolent race of beings, subsisting almost entirely on Fish. The Indians on the coast are in small bands & disunited, on which circumstance the safety of the settlers of Oregon much depends; We however, had a small affray with them a few days ago, in which one white man was killed & one Indian. The Territory is well supplied with navigable streams & mill privileges. As to the climate I can speak only of the past winter, during which we have had no snow, & the grass has been in growing condition the whole winter, in short it has been the most pleasant (so far) I ever experienced in *any* country. It is exceedingly healthy, there is no sickness in the country at present, & although the emigrants were so much exposed during the journey, there has been but *two* deaths since our arrival.— The whole white population is probably about Fifteen Hundred. We, the citizens of Oregon, are very anxious that the United States should extend her jurisdiction over *this territory* & render us some means of protection, as we should be incapable of protecting ourselves in case of general hostilities with the Indians.

For my part, I am much pleased with the prospects of the country. I have a location immediately on the Columbia River, in *sight* of the great Pacific, I can go to & return from the coast, in a small boat with one tide, which ebbs & flows 8 & ten feet. I am engaged in partnership with two other persons, in having erected two saw mills & a grist Mill, we are making good progress, & will soon have one in operation. I believe we have an as advantageous a mill site as any in America. We intend exporting our lumber to the Islands, as *there* is a *very* great demand for it, & as one of the gentlemen with whom I am engaged,

<sup>10</sup> Compare with table of distances in Burnett letters.

finding our oxen, some of them having lain down in the pine thickets. Started about ten o'clock. Traveled about three miles. Crossed a very bad ravine and encamped on the west side of it. Weather since we left Grande Ronde fine, warm and mild. Nights rather cool.

Wednesday, October 4.—Weather stormy; rain and hail. We got under way and traveled twelve miles down the west side of the Blue Mountains, when we struck the Umatilla River. Went three miles down it, and encamped near some Cayuse lodges. Cooper had the fore axletree of his wagon broken off this evening by two Indian bulls charging on the team, and causing them to run around. McDaniel, the driver, shot at one of them with a pistol, wounding him in the mouth.

Thursday, October 5.—Delayed some time in camp this morning in hunting cattle and horses, many of the later having wandered off and the Indian horses being so numerous made it difficult for us to find our own. Started about noon on the trail for Dr. Whitman's. Traveled eight miles and encamped for the night. Sticcas, a very friendly Indian who piloted us across the Blue Mountains, accompanied us to-day and camped with us tonight.

Friday, October 6.—This morning I joined with Otey and Haggard and went on with the carriages to Dr. Whitman's, where we arrived about two o'clock. We purchased one bushel of potatoes and a peck of corn, they having no flour. Traveled on four miles toward Walla Walla. Encamped before night close to the creek, making twenty miles to-day. Weather rainy and misty until evening, when the sun came out.

Saturday, October 7.—Left camp early this morning and followed down the Walla Walla until 3 o'clock, when we encamped for the night. I purchased some roots to-day from an Indian, which they call kamash. It is a small root of oval form and of a dark color, has a very sweet taste. The Indians made bread of it, which is very palatable. A few Cayuse Indians encamped close by us, of whom we purchased

some corn and potatoes, and they in return, stole a tin cup from us. They possess great faculties for business of this sort.

Sunday, October 8.—Left our Cayuse neighbors this morning in good season and started for Fort Walla Walla, where we arrived in three hours. It is situated at the mouth of the Walla Walla River, from which it takes its name. It commands a view of the Columbia River, otherways the prospect is dreary. Above and below are high bluffs, while near to the fort are sand banks not possessing fertility enough to sprout a pea, and in fact this is too much the case with all the far-famed Walla Walla Valley. There are some spots of good soil immediately on the streams, but from Dr. Whitman's to the fort, a distance of twenty-four miles, there is no timber except a little cottonwood, or a species of Balm of Gilead, and at the fort there is not a tree in sight on either side of the Columbia River. If this is a fair specimen of Oregon, it falls far below the conceptions which I formed of the country. At the fort we could procure no eatables. Could only get a little tobacco, and Mr. McKinley, the manager, was loth to part with that, in consequence of its being the Sabbath. The whole country looks poverty stricken. We went two miles below the fort, where we found a little grass and encamped there for the purpose of waiting until Monday to trade.

Monday, October 9.—This morning E. Otey and myself visited the fort. Bought some tobacco and corn and other small articles. Mr. McKinley visited our camp in the afternoon and we traded him the wagon and harness for a horse, concluding to pack from here on. Made some pack rigs to-day, and made arrangements for packing. Two Indians camped with us all night. Weather fine.

Tuesday, October 10.—Took the wagon to the fort this morning and got the horse which we traded for yesterday. Otey and myself made two pack-saddles. Several Indians encamped with us nearly all day, and one young fellow who camped with us last night seems to be inclined to remain, as