

OLD WASCO COUNTY PIONEERS FORM UNIQUE ORGANIZATION

Association to Promote Old-time Friendship and Seek Preservation of
Historic Spots in Eastern Oregon.



New Auditorium at The Dalles



Old Fort Dalles Historical Museum

BY RUTH ELIZABETH SHELDON.

THE DALLES, Or., May 6.—(Special.)—The 78th anniversary of Founders' day, May 2, witnessed the birth of a unique organization at The Dalles to be known as the Old Wasco County Pioneers' association. The call was issued by Mrs. Lulu D. Crandall at the request of the Old Fort Dalles Historical society to those residents of Wasco county from January 11, 1854 to 1882, when the ties of the first railroad across the continent were laid to Portland.

Old Fort Dalles, then a primitive postoffice called "Wascopam," an Indian name meaning "basin containing a spring," was the end of the "Oregon Trail" and the county seat of what was undoubtedly the largest county ever known in history.

Wasco county then embraced all of eastern Oregon territory south of the 46th parallel from the summit of the Cascade range to the summit of the Rocky mountains, or nearly twice the amount of territory that now comprises Oregon, its area being 120,000 square miles. It contained most of Idaho and a section of Wyoming larger than the present state of Connecticut. One of the first recorded transactions of the board of county commissioners was "to grant a license to C. C. Irwin to keep a ferry on Green River, 80 miles above the Utah line." That point was about 500 miles from the county seat and 20 miles east of the present boundary between Idaho and Wyoming.

The region covered more ground than an empire of Europe—more than that of the British Isles, Italy or Austria, so that its appellation of "inland empire" is singularly appropriate. It was at one time claimed by five different nations: Spain, England, Rus-

sia, France and our own United States.

Our gratitude is due those martyr missionaries, Jason Lee and Dr. Marcus Whitman, and those pioneer men and women, who still survive and are banding together as the Old Wasco County Pioneers' association, for the privilege of erecting the stars and stripes over this rich and beautiful section today. From this nucleus of settlement a vast and magnificent empire, feeding a large portion of the world with its wheat, fruit, poultry, sheep and cattle, has sprung from barren hill and arid plain.

It has been stated that the epic of the west, the march of these pioneers into the wilderness to cleave out homes for themselves and their children, could be written into as stirring a recital as that of the "Iliad" of the "Odyssey." It might prove a worthy second to Moses' exodus into the promised land.

They have seen picturesque stern-wheel steamboats take the place of bobbing bateaus of returning fur traders, which in turn have given precedence to great trans-continental trunk lines along the Columbia, while the intersecting canyons of the tablelands echo no more to tinkling bells of many-horse teaming outfits, but resound to the "awank, awanking" of private motor cars.

They are still hale and hearty, these grand old people and their meeting was conducted with interest and enthusiasm. A "peppy" speech was made by R. D. Hood, their oldest member, a youth of 93, whose birthday, September 19, next, will be the occasion of a monster cake baking on the part of the society.

Another "live wire" was Judge M. C. George of Portland, whose statement that when he arrived at The Dalles in 1851 he was "principally in the dairy business," brought a hearty laugh.

Judge Fred Wilson, son of a supreme judge of Oregon's earliest days and whose mother was postmistress at The Dalles, recalled the fact that the fine new auditorium in which they held their meeting stood over historic ground that had seen the arrival and departure of pony express riders and old-time state coaches.

Clear and true came the notes of "America," "Old Lang Syne," and "Out Where the West Begins," while the pledge to the flag was thrilling in its beautiful solemnity and significance.

The initial enrollment consisted of 225 members and May 2 was chosen as the date for their yearly meeting. By unanimous consent the following prominent Dalles people were elected officers: Judge Fred Wilson, president; Mrs. Benton Mays, vice-president; R. E. Williams, secretary-treasurer, and Mrs. Lulu D. Crandall, historian.

The purpose of the association will be to restore as much as possible the friendship and hospitality of bygone days, and to lend its influence and inspiration toward a preservation in such form of historic spots in eastern Oregon that the present and future generations, journeying peacefully along the highways of the west, may pause a moment in recognition of the fact that they are historic, and that they became so through the courage, the sacrifice, the very heart's blood of their ancestors, for them.

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