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OREGON TERRITORY.

MEMORIAL

OF

COLUMBIA LANCASTER AND W. T. MATLOCK,

PRESIDING OFFICERS OF

*The Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Oregon.*

FEBRUARY 19, 1852.

Laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:*

The memorial of the undersigned, late president and speaker *pro tem.* of the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Oregon, in behalf of the inhabitants of said Territory, respectfully shows to your honorable bodies: that the vast extent of the Territory, the number, yet sparseness, of the settlements west of the Cascade range of mountains, and the formation of contemplated settlements in various places east of said range of mountains, present so many varied interests for legislation, that the number of nine members of the council is entirely inadequate to a proper representation in that body of all parts of the country, and to a just discharge of the duties which belong to that branch of the Legislative Assembly. Your memorialists, after mature deliberation upon the subject, have a firm conviction that the interests of the Territory require that that body should be composed of at least fifteen members: we therefore pray your honorable body to provide for the desired increase.

And we would further represent, that there is no spot within the government domain presenting so many barriers and obstructions in the way of approach and intercommunication between its different parts as Oregon. The surf of the Pacific is lashed in one unbroken line against the base of the coast range of mountains, while they shut in the Eden of Oregon, and present one dark outline of unbroken and impassable barrier on the west—creating a solitude which is felt, but which cannot be expressed. It is true that the Columbia river, like the principles of civil and religious equality, with wild and unconquerable fury, has burst asunder the Cascade and coast ranges of mountains, and shattered into fragments the basaltic formations, thereby opening a communication into the interior of about two hundred miles; and that a few other places have been found south, along the coast, which, in time, will be reached at great labor and expense. Yet the present wants and necessities of the inhabitants of the whole Territory require aid, protection, and security. They, with propriety, regard themselves as insecure; for they know that three small armed vessels could

blockade every avenue and shut out their whole foreign commerce; and the hour is unknown when they may be called upon to defend their hearths against foreign assault. They therefore, with one united voice, appeal to their fatherland to place within their reach arms and munitions of war, and that a communication be opened by a military road commencing at Puget's sound; from thence to the Columbia river; thence up the Willamette valley to the Umpqua; thence to the southern line of the Territory, upon the nearest and best route—hoping and believing that, at no distant day, it will be continued into the heart of California; and that an appropriation in money be made, and means devised for its speedy accomplishment through this Territory.

And we further represent, that the inhabitants of this Territory have been, are now, and for years to come will be, from the very circumstances which do and must surround them, consumers of foreign fabrics, and, as such, pay large sums into the revenue chest; that a trade with China and the islands of the Pacific is begun, and is assuming character and importance; that in aid of the agriculturists, some means should be devised whereby their surplus produce can, with less expense, find a market abroad; that, although their grievances are full to overflowing, and their grounds capable of supplying the consumption of the whole coast of the Pacific, yet Chili has driven, and, as things are, can drive Oregon flour from the California market. The great wheat-growing region of Oregon lies upon the Willamette, and the only means of transportation is upon its waters. This stream is obstructed by rapids below and above the falls at Oregon city; and although steamboats are now plying upon that river far into the centre and heart of its productive soils, yet, owing to the delays and dangers of its navigation, the farmer pays nearly the entire value of his products in transportation before they leave the Territory. We therefore pray that a sufficient sum be appropriated for the improvement of this river.

And we would further represent, that, whilst a nation's gratitude has been publicly and repeatedly bestowed upon the various volunteers and soldiers who have fought as well in defence of her honor as in the protection of her soil, and that she has manifested a sense of the obligations conferred, not only by public thanks, but by substantial rewards, the soldiers of Oregon have not been requited by the government with the same generous tokens bestowed upon others. We can perceive no difference between the spirit and valor displayed upon the plains of Mexico and that which animated the bosoms and nerved the arms of her sons in the wild recesses of Oregon. The means of our soldiers were more limited, their hardships and privations unexceeded, and their foe more relentless and bloody. Shall the Oregon army—they who without even an officer of their government to muster them into service—who, at the cry of danger, when an honest and well-grounded conviction had seized the minds of the inhabitants of this settlement that a union of all the tribes of savages east of the Cascade mountains had been formed for the purpose of making a descent upon this valley and butcher the people in cold blood—when the lives of those who had nobly encountered every danger and endured every privation for ameliorating their condition, and dispensing amongst them the blessed truths of religion, had been ruthlessly taken—shall the army, without means, without previous discipline, without sufficient clothing,

crossed the mountains with its snows and frosts, rushed to the thickest of the danger, and there, in the fastnesses of his own forests, encountered, vanquished, and dispersed the savages, and thus saved the domestic hearth from inhuman desecration, and the young settlements from being crushed in their infancy, be by their mother country forgotten? We cannot believe it. We therefore respectfully pray your honorable body to bestow upon each volunteer of that army a bounty of one hundred and sixty acres of land; and to settle a pension upon those who were wounded and disabled, and upon the widows and heirs of those who fell in that campaign.

And we further represent, that we deeply regret the necessity which caused the withdrawal of the United States troops from this Territory. The immigrations by sea and land now pouring in upon us, who are invited by inducements growing out of the soil, and the proud commercial position which this Territory will soon occupy, if fostered by the liberality of the federal government, make it necessary that the resources of the Territory should, at an early day, be developed, and that settlements may be extended in safety along the borders of Puget's sound, upon the coast of the Pacific, in the south and southwestern portions, as well as upon the Columbia and its tributaries east of the Cascade mountains. We therefore pray that a competent organized military force be ordered on, and stationed upon, these outposts of our rapidly extending settlements.

And we further urge upon your consideration another painful subject. It is the suffering and dangers incident to the overland journey to Oregon. The crime of piracy upon the seas is the most odious of offences, and is by all civilized nations punished with the severest penalties. Our government maintains a large naval force, and sends its cruisers in all those places where the property and lives of its citizens are exposed to most risk and need most protection. It has, upon principles of justice, as well as humanity, provided protection to the frontier settlements against Indian aggression, from the falls of St. Anthony to the Mexican boundary, and along that line to the Pacific ocean. Forts are erected, troops are quartered and posted; and all things done that may not only protect human life and property, but that will further the interests and comfort of those for whose benefit these provisions were made. But, how is it when any citizen of the States disposes of his homestead, gathers about him his wife and his children, his stock, and the fruits of his hard earnings, and bids a sad adieu to the friends he has known so long and loved so well, and, casting his tearful eyes over the land of his infancy and childhood, gives it one long, lingering look, ere he should pass away from it forever, and, with a stout heart, (though a misgiving may now and then come over him,) sets his face towards Oregon—what protection does he find when he crosses the Missouri and enters the Indian territory? What aid can he now expect? None, save God in Heaven and his own right arm. Although still within her borders, his country ceases to spread over him her protecting shield; but his heart glows as strongly as ever with the love of country, and he feels himself what he is proud to acknowledge—an American citizen. Should another family from the same neighborhood attempt a journey to the same place by water, and the vessel in which it embarks be assailed by a pirate, and this family murdered or robbed, would not the fact startle all Christendom, and instant and effectual measures be taken to arrest the offender? And would not the vessel so fortunate as to cap-

ture the pirate craft be saluted by government ordnance as she hove in view with the pirates dangling at the yard-arms? And why is not an American citizen entitled to as much protection on American soil as he is upon the highway of nations? He who crosses the plains and mountains is in danger every hour; he suffers all that humanity is capable of enduring in body and mind. He is often so beset with hunger and thirst, that the most loathsome food is rendered palatable to his famishing appetite, and the foulest water sweet to his parched lips. All this produces no complaint. But when he encounters troop after troop of savages; when, exhausted by his toilsome journey, he is called upon to defend, at fearful odds, his own life and that which is still dearer to him—the persons of his wife and little ones; when he sees his team slaughtered for Indian food—his horses and property openly taken away from his sight; when he beholds these bands of marauding and plundering savages, led on by outcast whites, more brutal still than the Indians, and who have fled from civilized communities and from the justice that awaited their guilty deeds, and whose selfish and reckless notions exact the lion's share of the immigrants' property, to enable his escape with his life—the toil-worn pilgrim begins to despair. He thinks of his government, and he feels, with mingled sorrow and indignation, its unjust neglect. The cup of his misery runs over when he learns that the authors of losses and sorrows are rewarded by presents from government—doubtless made under the mistaken idea that they will serve to propitiate the savage ferocity of their natures, and dispose them to treat the coming trains of immigrants with kindness. There are many widows and fatherless children in Oregon, who look back along Snake river and other places as spots where their hopes in this life were crushed and lost forever. Should the pathway across the plains be closed, Oregon may write her own epitaph. It is through that channel, across the mountains, that Oregon is to receive her horses, cattle, and sheep; and the supply does not equal the demand made by the immigrations by sea. Oregon requires also the hardy pioneer of the western States; for upon him, and those of like habits of industry and vigor, depends the force necessary to prostrate these mighty forests, and lay bare the hidden treasures of her prolific timbered soils. We therefore pray your honorable body to station troops at proper intervals along the great overland route, so that the lives and property of the immigrants to Oregon may be, in a measure, secured against the dangers to which they have heretofore been, and, unless such provision be made, are again likely to be exposed. The number of the citizens, and the condition and prosperity of the country, in a great measure, depend upon your beneficent action in this matter.

We cannot close this memorial without allusion to the condition of the youth of Oregon. Many of them have been here for years—some of whom have grown to man's estate. It has always been impossible for families to bring school-books across the plains. Libraries, as well as other valuable property, to a vast amount, have been thrown away in the mountains. In the mean time the rising generation are coming forward, and will soon take upon themselves the support of government; and no regret is so general as that uncontrollable circumstances prevented the education of the youth of the land; and, had it not been for the self-denying missionary, a waste of intellect would have resulted too dark and mournful for contemplation. A strong and general desire pervades every

family to use, as best they can, all means within their power to avert this evil—of all others the most to be lamented. In this matter the government of the United States is also directly interested. Situated as this Territory is—so far from home—so far from the multiplied influences which there mantle the infant when thought commences—which surround him on all sides, inviting him forward, until hope and desire find him in the halls of learning, made sacred by the pencil-marks of his ancestors. Within his reach, be he never so poor, stand learned and devout teachers ready to instruct; and let him walk where he will, his eyes behold classical displays of art and refinement, and his mind, mixing with the general mind, is borne aloft enlightened, refined, and purified. These aids and appliances are not sufficiently found here. Would that they were here; that more books and teachers were here; then, with the grandeur and sublimity of Oregon's scenery—its mountains piled up and supported by pillars of columnar basalt, covered far above the clouds with everlasting snows—its mighty rivers and tumultuous water-falls—its magnificent forests, and its clear anthems forever sounding on the coast—the youth of Oregon would soon challenge the world for equals. We would most earnestly and respectfully ask in their behalf, and in behalf of the whole federal government, present aid; for, should we be delayed until wild lands can be brought into legal market and purchasers be found, the evils to which allusions have been made will have become irreparable. We therefore pray that an appropriation of ten thousand dollars be made, and applied in the purchase of a suitable library, to be placed in the University of Oregon; and, as in duty bound, we will ever pray, &c.

COLUMBIA LANCASTER,

*Late President pro tem. of the Council.*

W. T. MATLOCK,

*Late Speaker pro tem. of the House of Representatives.*