

# THE OREGON TRAIL

The Address of Hon. O. M. VanDyyn at the dedication of the marker of the Oregon Trail in Canyon Hill Cemetery, Friday April 28, 1916

We have today re-lived in a pageant the days of the Oregon Trail—and clothed with living flesh and blood the history of yesterday.

And now, at the close of the day's events, we have met here to dedicate to the hardy pioneers who trod this Trail, and to the honored Trail, itself, an everlasting memory, carved from granite, that will last forever, handing down from generation to generation the memory and respect that we bear for those who were the advance guard of our Western Civilization. And to the Daughters of the American Revolution who have conceived and executed the purpose of thus marking the Trail, who have adopted as a mark this highly appropriate monument, speaking of rest upon the very spot where trod the weary pioneer, our gratitude is due. Life has no nobler purpose than keeping alive the memories of bravery and fortitude, and watering the seeds of courage and self reliance that they may bloom and flourish forever—a noble guide and consummation to be hoped for—the generations yet to come.

Here on this spot the Pioneer traversed the Oregon Trail. To many, the words "Oregon Trail" mean nothing; to many, little; to others, half forgotten pictures of other days; to some, the Pioneers and their descendants, the words are fraught with significance, filled with memories, thrilled with fancies.

Some call the Trail old, yet it is not old—it is a thing of only yesterday—a chapter of yesterday preceding the chapter of today in the Book of Time. Old, do they say—why, there within sound of our voices the Boise river carved and chiseled an older trail through still older trails of lava, leading back to ancient volcanic peaks that once flamed in an older time, pillars of smoke by day, pillars of fire by night. What a spectacle! This whole valley asmoke and aflame. Rivers and lakes steamed and hissed with the intrusion of the molten lava, and turned aside and burst and carved new channels to the sea. Yet even this was but yesterday, and in the Book of Time, recent history. Back of that still, this spot was covered with glacier ice from the north, and back further yet, before the ice pack came, equatorial palms grew in luxuriant tropical foliage, and still back, the waters of the sea swept deep over where we stand. All this wonderful story is recorded in sea-shells high on the mountains to the east of us, in rocks scarred by the ancient ice packs, in bone and tusk of mastodon, and tropic leaf imprints in ancient clay, only a day's travel to the west of us, and in the lava stones beneath our very feet.

So the Oregon Trail is not old. The dates cut into this granite seat mark the time period of the Trail 1840-1865, the period between President Polk and President Lincoln; the period between the war with Mexico and the Civil War. The period beginning with Clay and Webster and ending with Lincoln, Grant and Seward. At the commencement of that time, not one state lay west of the Missouri. All south of latitude 42, the south boundary of Oregon and Idaho, and west of the Rocky Mountains—belonged to Mexico; and all north of that line was claimed by England and the United States, and was held under a treaty of joint occupation—at the beginning of the Oregon Trail. There was not one town of importance, with the possible exception of Santa Fe in what is now New Mexico, and San Francisco, a humble village. There was no Seattle, no Portland, no settlements, with the exception of about two church missions in Oregon and Spanish missions in California, nothing in the way of civilization, except these missions and temporary trading posts inhabited by fur traders, both American and English, and for the most part of French Canadian extraction. Strange men, these fur trappers. We shall never know their like again. We have but to wave the wand of imagination, but to touch this stone, and this type of man of the early frontier stands before us, bronzed by the heat of western suns, tall, lithe and sinewy. He is dressed in fur cap leather clothing and

moccasins. He speaks for the most part the French Canadian language, broken English and Indian jargon. He is brave to recklessness, rough, uncouth, wild—the white man and the half white man living an Indian life—having no home, nor wanting one. Always on horseback, with his long rifle before him, or paddling down the stream in his canoe—one can almost see him as he came galloping up that hill, bound for old Fort Boise. His saddle is piled high with skins of beaver, perhaps he is leading a pack animal laden also with skins—a strange figure to our wondering eyes. In a moment he is gone in a cloud of dust. We hear only the rattle of his horse's feet as he disappears yonder over Canyon Hill, and he is gone to spend lavishly at the trading post the proceeds of the chase for ribbons and finery for his squaw wife, and strong drink for himself. Knowing the French extraction of the majority of these traders, it is not at all mysterious why the Boise river curving beneath yonder hill, or the Payette river only 20 miles away, and the Port Neuf river near Pocatello. Lake Pend d'Oreille and Lake Coeur d'Alene bear the names they do. They are foot prints in the sands of time, monuments of the old Hudson Bay fur trading, marked forever upon the map of our state. This is indeed a historic ground a land of wild romance, a land once filled with wild adventure. Here within a stone's throw of us, men trapped for beaver the Boise and Payette and Port Neuf reechoed with the songs of the French Voyageur. At the beginning of this period, the Hudson Bay Company held Ft. Hall, near Pocatello, and also Ft. Boise, situated where the Boise river empties into the Snake river, a few miles below Parma. Where now stands the City of Vancouver, Washington, then stood the Hudson Bay post, Ft. Vancouver, their chief post and distributing point, named after Vancouver, an English navigator, and the key to their fur trading operations upon the upper reaches of the Snake and Columbia and the various rivers falling into the watershed of these streams. And in this connection let me say, that this post of Ft. Vancouver was established when the Hudson Bay Company removed it from Ft. George in 1827. Ft. George was located at the place where Astoria now stands, and came into being during the War of 1812, when a British gunboat sailed into the mouth of the Columbia river and ran up the Union Jack. So fell the post established in 1811 by Hunt, the agent of John Jacob Astor. Yes, this country has a history, and what has been related is only a small part of it. The roots of the present are buried deep in the past.

Such was the stage upon which the makers of the Oregon Trail were to play their parts. A state set in a strange land, among strange peoples, amidst burning deserts, carpeted by miles of rolling plains, guarded by mighty snow clad mountains cleft by deep gorges, through which ran mighty rivers down to a smiling sea. St. Louis, that old town redolent with memories of old French and Spanish settlements of America, marked the beginning of the trail. Now let us trace its course. The trail makers of this trail, like those of all others of every time and place, followed the lines of least resistance up rivers to their sources, over divides and down rivers to their mouths. Starting at St. Louis, the trail leads up the Missouri to the Platte, a broad shallow stream which takes its source in our adjoining state of Wyoming. Mile upon mile, this river runs through rolling prairies. This, at the time of the Oregon Trail, was the great buffalo country—now it is the abode of a rich and prosperous people. The source of the Platte lies high upon the slopes of the Rocky Mountain divide. Here at the Rocky Mountain divide, take note of Ft. Laramie, situated upon the Laramie river, that runs into the Platte. Note, also, Ft. Bridger, but a short distance further west. Both were posts of American fur traders, and both are situated upon the Oregon Trail. Remember that Ft. Hall, Ft. Boise, and Ft. Vancouver lay just across on this side of the divide. Now, a glance at the map of Wyoming, Utah and Idaho: Not far from the head-waters of the Platte arises Bear river; observe its course and you will see that it runs from Wyoming into Idaho near Montpelier and close to our own great Bear Lake, swings off near Ogden, where you may see it from the Oregon Short Line railroad, foaming through a deep and beautiful canyon, later emptying into the Great Salt Lake. Here ran one branch of the Trail, the end of the Trail for the Mormons—for Brigham Young traveled the Oregon Trail in 1847. Across a little divide from Bear river, not far from Montpelier, Idaho, a little stream flows south. It is the Port Neuf. The people who went to Oregon followed this stream down through Soda Springs; on down near Pocatello; to Snake river; the Trail the line of least resistance; American ran on down Snake river to American Falls, thence on down by Hagerman, Glen's Ferry, and Mountain Home; thence it swings across to the Boise river, down the Boise river to Boise, down the left side of the Boise river to about the point where the railroad from Nampa to Emmett crosses the river. Here some pioneers claim part of the Oregon immigrants crossed, while it is claimed that others of them continued on, crossed Canyon Hill, near where we now stand, making the ancient wheel tracks that you see yonder. How the trail descended the hill I have no information, but there is a break in the table rock of lava about half way between the Interstate bridge and Canyon station, that could have given a passage to the trail. Near where the county wagon bridge now stands the trail is supposed to have crossed the river and thence meeting the branch that crossed near Middleton to continue down the Boise river to the right hand side to its mouth at old Fort Boise, thence down the Snake river through Huntington, then leaving the river, it swings over the divide



O. M. VAN DYYN.

down Powder river to Baker on through La Grande, up the Grande Ronde river, over the Blue Mountains, down the Blue Mountains by the Umatilla river to Pendleton, thence a short distance to the Columbia river, down the Columbia to the present site of The Dalles, thence by raft and boat down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver, or from The Dalles through what is known as the Barlow Route, to the Willamette Valley—thence on to the broad, fertile valley of the Rogue and Umpqua rivers, and there ended. But, beautiful and stately, weird and adventurous as was the Trail, itself, still more interesting were the people who traveled the Trail. What was the lure that took them from home and friends into homeless lands? Did they calculate the dangers? Did they know the price they must pay? Did they foresee the thirst of the desert, attacks of Indians? Did they know of the lonely graves by the lonely road? For numberless years trails on the lonely sea and trails on the lonely land have called to the restless heart of the pioneer and thus have they always come, as Kipling says:

"Their neighbors' smoke shall vex their eyes,  
Their voices break his rest."

Added to the lure of unrest in the case of the makers of the Oregon Trail, there were three additional factors: To the Californians, after 1848, the settlement of the newly acquired country of California. It will be remembered that California was taken from Mexico in the early days of the Trail, after 1848. Many came overland to California over the Oregon Trail. As to the Mormons, they were impelled by religious motives to go by this Trail to what is now Utah, that they might practice there, unmolested, their new religion. As to the Oregonians, the dispute over the ownership of Idaho, Oregon and Washington of England and the United States, at the beginning of the Polk administration had become intense—and war was threatened between England and the United States. The United States had no western sea coast and wanted the coasts of Oregon and California. England, through the Hudson Bay Company, was enjoying a lucrative fur traffic upon the Columbia and the Snake and their tributaries, and wanted to retain it. So the United States, in order to reinforce their claim of discovery of this vast territory, by occupation, induced American settlers to come west. Nor was much inducement needed, for the prize once known was sufficient attraction to a brave and adventurous people.

So they came. Came with great lumbering, white topped prairie schooners, drawn by oxen. Crowded in these wagons were the families and the little household goods that could be carried. So they patiently, wearily dragged their way, winding up the Platte to the Great Divide that separates the waters of the East from the waters of the West, and down the western streams to their new homes—yet unbuilt.

We who come after them can only imagine the hardships they underwent—the burning heat, choking dust; the cold of the mountains; the Indian ambuscade; sickness, death; and a dear one left alone in a silent, lonely land by the lonely, lonely Oregon Trail. Each morning the rising sun called them on; each day they followed it to their goal in the west, till they came at last to the promised land.

The Trail is cold and its tracks are green with the grass of years, but its memories live—and dreaming day dreams here in this seat of rest, we shall look to the East and we shall look to the West, and the Veil of the Past will fall; and the Trail shall live, as it lived of old, and the camp fires gleam as they gleamed of old by the fading tracks of the Oregon Trail.

The bureau of standards of the Department of Commerce is making an investigation of failures of railway material. But when railways themselves were failing because of Democratic depression an investigation was overlooked.

As we understand them, the Democratic spellbinders make two assertions: First, that President Wilson has not broken his platform pledges; second, that if he did break any of them, they ought to have been broken. Which is about as consistent as the verdict of the jury which read: "Not guilty, but don't do it again."

## POPULAR PASSENGER AGENT QUILTS OREGON SHORT LINE

D. E. Burley Will Devote Future to Personal and Private Affairs.

D. E. Burley, one of the most popular and widely known passenger traffic officials west of the Missouri river, will retire Monday from active service as general passenger agent of the Oregon Short Line. Daniel S. Spencer, assistant general passenger agent, equally as popular and almost as widely known was elevated to the position made vacant by the retirement of Mr. Burley. Mr. Spencer will be succeeded as assistant general passenger agent by J. B. Durham, now chief clerk in the passenger department of the company. Mr. Durham's successor will probably be named within a day or two. All changes were made to take effect May 1st.

For several months past there has been a rumor to the effect that Mr. Burley expected to retire from active service this summer, but the official announcement of his retirement came as a surprise when made Saturday by E. E. Calvin, vice president and general manager of the company. In fact, Mr. Calvin expressed almost as much surprise as any one, inasmuch as Mr. Burley's request that his retirement become effective May 1 was made during the past few days.

Mr. Burley is a native of Ohio. He came west when a young man and incidental to other occupations served four years as deputy sheriff of Douglas county, Nebraska. He began his railroad career when he took service with the Union Pacific in 1879 as traveling passenger agent with headquarters in Baltimore. Ten years later he was transferred to Philadelphia in the same capacity. When the Union Pacific acquired the Utah Central and allied lines, in 1891, Mr. Burley was sent to Salt Lake as general agent for the Mountain division, which included all the territory west of Cheyenne. Under the re-organization, when the Union Pacific and the Oregon Short Line were segregated, in 1897, Mr. Burley was appointed general pas-

senger agent for the latter company, the position he gave up May 1.

Mr. Burley's retirement does not mean his resignation. Under the pension rules of the company he is entitled to voluntary retirement from active service, but will retain connection in an advisory capacity. He said Saturday that he had made no plans for the future other than to rest and make his home in Salt Lake, the city he has recognized as home for more than a quarter of a century.

## East Indies First.

The British East Indies got a sample of what American free trade meant to the sweat of their brows during the eight months ended February, 1915, when they sent \$52,000,000 worth of goods into our markets. That tickled them so that they spat on both hands and went at us right. During the eight months ended February, 1916, they shipped us goods to the value of \$94,000,000, an increase of 80 per cent. We are all worked up just now tending to the butcher business in Europe. That will be over before very long and then we will take a slant at our own market. One thing about the European war, a man dies quickly, but if the dawn of peace finds us with a Democratic tariff law on our hands some of us will be in for a little slow starvation. Rations were getting pretty skimpy before the European cockpit required attention, but we can't de-

pend on a world war to come along every time a Democratic Congress hands our business to the foreigner.

## Meat from Argentina.

Since January 1st, 118,000 quarters of beef, 102,000 carcasses of mutton, and 147,000 carcasses of lamb have been sent into the United States by Argentina. This meat paid no revenue to the government nor did it cause any decrease in the cost of living. If we did not have such a good market abroad just at this time, the effects of Argentine competition would be felt very keenly. Again, if there were a duty on meats, and it became advisable to do so, we might use that duty as a lever for a little friendly bargaining with Argentina which would give us a better opportunity in her markets. As it is, she gets the benefit of a free market for her greatest product and charges us for the privilege of entering her market.

Military photographs of the enemy's position are now made by means of a camera carried aloft on a huge sky-rocket.

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