

## EFFORT TO SAVE THE HISTORIC McLOUGHLIN HOUSE.\*

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The idea of restoring to its original condition as near as possible, and preserving the old home, where the founder of our city, Doctor John McLoughlin passed the last years of his life, has often been suggested by many prominent citizens both in the state at large and our own town, as the proper thing to do. When we stop to consider what Doctor McLoughlin's life in the Pacific Northwest and especially in our own town meant for the welfare of the present generation we cannot for an instant question the propriety or advisability of any reasonable action looking towards honoring the name and memory of our founder and benefactor. Recent researches of writers into the early history of Oregon and the Northwest only tend to increase the evidence of the noble and philanthropic character of Dr. John McLoughlin.

The interesting works of our local historical writer, Mrs. Eva Emery Dye, have helped in a great measure to make better known the many noble traits in his character.

This is what was said of him by three of our ablest pioneers, all of more than state fame. The Hon. M. P. Deady in an address at the Pioneers' meeting in 1875 said of him:

"Had he but turned his back upon the early missionaries and settlers and left them to shift for themselves the occupation of the country by the Americans would have been seriously retarded and attended with much greater hardships and suffering than it was. He was a great man upon whom God had stamped a grandeur of character which few men possess and a nobility which the patent of no earthly sovereign can confer."

The Hon. P. H. Burnett, the intellectual leader of very many who came to Oregon between 1843-48 says in his book of recollections:

"Dr. John McLoughlin was one of the greatest and most noble philanthropists I ever knew."

Hon. J. W. Nesmith, Senator from Oregon, who came in 1843, said, speaking of his own personal knowledge:

"Dr. John McLoughlin then at the head of the Hudson Bay Company, from his own private resources rendered to the new

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settlers much valuable aid, by furnishing the destitute with food and clothing and seed, waiting for his pay until they had a surplus to dispose of. Dr. John McLoughlin was a public benefactor and the time will come when the people of Oregon will do themselves credit by erecting a statue to his memory. Of foreign birth and lineage he gave the strongest proof of devotion to Republican institutions by becoming an American citizen, while all his personal interests were identified with the British government."

These are only a few of the many testimonials to the grandeur of his character that could be given by quoting the words of our early pioneers. His name was revered by all whether Red man or white, Catholic or Protestant. It's a matter of history that on account of his broad generous manner towards the American settlers he was treated in such a way by the British that through self-respect he was compelled to resign his position with the Hudson Bay Company, and sacrifice an annual salary of \$12,000.

It is now the opinion of many that Doctor McLoughlin's action in encouraging Americans to settle in the Willamette Valley, together with his kindness and generosity in supplying them when in need with the necessities of life, cattle and seed, was a strong if not the deciding one in saving to this country all of Oregon. It will be remembered that at Champoeg, when the provisional government was formed, there was only a majority of two for the Americans. It is not necessary for me at this time to enlarge on the many deeds of kindness and generosity to the pioneers of Oregon, all this is now a matter of well known history.

The many gifts of property in Oregon City for public purposes should be some incentive to do something for his memory. Both public schools are built on blocks donated by Doctor McLoughlin, any of our park blocks are worth more money than it will cost to purchase this property. A block of property dedicated for court house purposes was sold by the county some years ago for more than it will cost to redeem the old home. This city and the state at large can never repay the debt of gratitude due to his memory. To my mind the least we can do is to purchase the property and restore it as near as possible to its original condition making it a repository for the collection of all articles or relics of any description in any way connected with the good doctor's life or history. By doing this we will make a practical, creditable and lasting memorial for him.

Oregon City's place as one of the earliest towns on the Pacific Coast, makes it almost imperative that some action be taken towards the collection and preservation of all articles and relics

of historical interest. The work should have been begun sooner and should not now be neglected until too late. Dr. John McLoughlin's place in the history of this Northwest country is well fixed. The people of Oregon City cannot afford to let any opportunity pass to impress on the world the fact that he was closely connected with the early history of our town. It is not only our duty but we will do ourselves honor and be better and more favorably known by the world for our action.

At this time the building could be placed in its original condition without great trouble or expense, also while there are yet living people who were familiar with the old home and its arrangement, it is possible to do what cannot be done a few years hence.

After showing our good faith by taking the initiative and purchasing the property we could no doubt secure from the legislature a reasonable appropriation towards the completion of the plans for repair of building and beautifying the grounds. Oregon's debt to Dr. McLoughlin is too great to refuse so reasonable a request. The preservation of old historical places is not a new idea as people who have lived in or visited the East can testify. It is especially true of the earliest settled portions of the United States where all towns that have been fortunate enough to have been the scene of some historical event or the birth of some noted character carefully and almost sacredly preserve the building or property connected therewith.

Faneuil Hall, the Old South Church, the Old State House in Boston, all filled with articles and relics that bring to mind our early history, Independence Hall at Philadelphia, Washington's headquarters at Valley Forge, St. John's Church at Richmond, where Patrick Henry made his famous speech, Longfellow's home at Cambridge, Gen. Jackson's headquarters at Chalmette, La. The old Church that John Brown attended at Harper's Ferry, the old school house at New London, Conn., where Nathan Hale taught, the building in Philadelphia where Betsy Ross made the first American flag, the homes of the Adams' in Quincy, Mass., the old home of Roger Williams at Providence, R. I., are only a few of the notable instances illustrating the veneration in which such matters are held in other states.

Societies such as the Colonial Dames and the Daughters of the Revolution have been formed with the sole object in view of caring for and preserving all points of historical interest. In our sister state of California, many of the Mission buildings connected with the early history of the state are carefully cared for, and used as an attraction to lure the tourist. The old McLoughlin home restored to its original condition and filled with relics of bygone days, will become a Mecca for all tourists and visitors

to Oregon. Anyone visiting Oregon would no more think of leaving without seeing the home and burial place of Doctor John McLoughlin, than the visitor to Philadelphia would be satisfied to leave without seeing Independence Hall and the grave of Ben Franklin.

From a practical standpoint, without regard to the sentiment involved, the property is held at a very reasonable figure and as an investment the city could not lose anything. The city has reached the point where additional room is needed for city purposes.

The city recorder should have an office where all the city books and records should be kept in fire-proof vault or safes and where he could hold court. The cases now tried before the recorder are either held in the small corridor or the city jail or in a law office without any conveniences for such purpose. If the city acquired this property one of the large rooms on the lower floor could be fitted up for a council chamber and the present one used for the Recorder's office.

To my mind there could not be a more appropriate place for the city fathers to hold forth than in the old home of the founder of the city. If by any chance the old building should be destroyed by fire, or if perchance the spirit of veneration and respect for the memory of Doctor McLoughlin should grow less, and there should not appear to be any use for the property as a memorial, I must confess, however, that I cannot conceive the latter to be possible, the property will never grow less in value. On the contrary as the city grows it will become more valuable and could be sold or used for other public purposes. I understand that the owners of the property asked \$4,500 for the property, but when told that a movement was on foot to secure the property for a memorial, stated that if it was bought for that purpose would donate \$500 towards the cause. In my opinion this is a reasonable price for the property.

Figuring on the present assessed valuation of property in the city and a reasonable increase in values during the next three years a levy of about 3 mills would raise that amount of money. My recommendation to your honorable body, and I most earnestly pray that you will acquiesce in the same, is that you submit to the voters at the election to be held in December the question as to whether a fund to be known as the "McLoughlin Memorial Fund," be established, and would advise that an annual levy of one mill for three years be made. Looking at the question from a civic pride point of view, I think it would be a good investment. That part of our city, the first seen by passengers on the many trains passing through our town daily, I think all will concede is anything but attractive or creditable to

the city. The improvement that should be made if this property is purchased by the city would certainly give a better impression to strangers than the property does in its present shape.

E. G. CAUFIELD.

In reporting the meeting at which Mayor Caufield's message was delivered, the Oregon City Daily Star of November 8, had the following to say:

"The voters of Oregon City will decide on December 3 whether the old home of Dr. John McLoughlin, opposite the woolen mill, shall be preserved, and our city show its gratitude and respect for the memory of the man who saved the Pacific Northwest to the American Union.

"At a largely attended meeting of the council Wednesday night, Mayor Caufield read a message stating that the old home was being altered and remodeled, and showing the necessity for immediate action if the building and credit of our community are to be saved. A number of representative citizens made remarks in the same tenor and a resolution referring the matter of a tax levy to buy the building and site, was unanimously adopted by the council.

"Immediately following the Mayor, Councilman W. R. Logus made a truly eloquent talk, saying he long had longings that something of the kind would be done and now that the mayor pointed out the way he was pleased and would help all he could.

"Mayor Caufield then called on one who personally knew the great doctor, and E. D. Kelly came forward and made a heart stirring talk to save the home where Oregon's great benefactor passed the last ten years of his life. Mr. Kelly drew a vivid picture of the venerable doctor with his long, silky white hair, sitting at his desk in his office, the room just to the right as you enter the house. A few pigeon-holes contained the papers of the large business conducted by Dr. McLoughlin, the surroundings would today be considered bare, but the man sitting there ennobled everything, for Dr. McLoughlin was a prince among men, who would command the respect of kings and the high and mighty of earth. Mr. Kelly eloquently told of McLoughlin's generosity, and how this move would be welcomed by all the pioneers of the state. Mr. Kelly, who is a native of New York, twice crossed the plains, coming to Oregon City first in 1853. He is an honored citizen, ex-county treasurer, and is the father-in-law of Chief of Police Burns.

"George Harding, who came to Oregon City the year Dr. McLoughlin died, 1857, said this had been let go too long and should now be done at once. Senator J. E. Hedges, born and raised in Oregon City, cited the Dr. Helmcken incident that recently appeared in the Daily Star, as showing how great an interest people everywhere would take in the preservation of Dr.

McLoughlin's relics. C. H. Dye, president of the board of trade, said all were interested who lived in 'Old Oregon'; that sentiment rules the world. He cited another letter recently received by Mrs. Dye from a New York man, relative to her latest book, 'McDonald', showing the keen interest taken by the world at large in the early history of this country. He stated that McLoughlin had given lots for all the churches that were organized here during his lifetime, and that when he settled with the Hudson Bay company he was charged with \$60,000 for supplies advanced to American settlers in this valley, at least \$25,000 of which was never repaid the big-hearted doctor.

"T. F. Ryan endorsed the idea. J. U. Campbell made an earnest plea to honor the memory of his fellow-Scot. He decried even a touch of commercialism and said the greatest thing McLoughlin gave was his example. W. S. U'Ren said a few words along the same line, referring to the inspiration of a great soul, and that we would only be doing our duty to ourselves and our children to do this thing in remembrance of THE MAN who made Oregon a part of the United States. H. C. Stevens said he was in hearty sympathy with the movement.

"E. P. Rands said a stranger asked him last year where to go to get the best view of the falls. Rands told him to go out on the bridge to see where the falls used to be. Mr. Rands said he wanted to be able to answer an inquiry about Dr. McLoughlin's home without that embarrassment, and he therefore presented the following resolution:

"Whereas, Oregon City owes to its founder, Doctor John McLoughlin, a debt of gratitude it can never repay except in part, we believe it to be the duty of Oregon City to purchase his old home, where he spent the last ten years of his life, and restore the same to its original condition as near as possible, preserving it always as a memorial;

"Therefore, Be it resolved, that the following proposition be submitted to the voters at the regular election to be held December 3, 1906, viz:

"Shall Oregon City purchase the old home of its founder, Doctor John McLoughlin, and establish a fund for that purpose by annual levies of one mill until a sum not to exceed \$4,500 be raised.'

"The resolution was adopted unanimously and on motion of Councilman Knapp, the finance committee was directed to see about securing an option on the property until after the election."

The issue of the Portland Oregonian of December 4, the day after the election ordered above, contained a special telegram from Oregon City, giving the following information:

"By a vote of more than 3 to 1, or 100 for to 360 against, the voters of Oregon City today defeated the proposal to levy a

special tax of one mill annually for three successive years to create a fund for the purchase and preservation of the old Dr. John McLoughlin home as a memorial to the founder of this city.

“Defeat of the plan for the city to acquire the McLoughlin property is not to be understood as voicing the feeling of the people toward the founder of the city. Sentiment very generally indorses some movement by which the memory of Dr. McLoughlin can be perpetuated, but the electors seriously questioned the expediency of purchasing this dilapidated property, which has undergone several changes in the way of repairs, besides alterations in the general arrangements of the interior of the structure.”