

ORGANIZERS OF THE FIRST GOVERNMENT IN OREGON

[George H. Himes, Assistant Secretary and Curator of the Oregon Historical Society, has for many years worked earnestly on the task of preparing the statistics of those who participated in the famous meeting at Champoege on May 2, 1843, when the Provisional Government of Oregon was organized. At that time Oregon embraced all of Washington, Idaho, parts of Montana, Wyoming and British Columbia, as well as the area that has retained the old name. The Champoege meeting is, therefore, important to the history of the entire Northwest. Mr. Himes has compiled a beautiful souvenir of the seventy-second anniversary of the meeting and its fifteenth annual celebration at Old Champoege, thirty-three miles south of Portland, on Saturday, May 1, 1915. From Mr. Himes's souvenir the following is reproduced that readers of this Quarterly may possess the valuable record.—Editor.]

Champoege was the site of the first Hudson's Bay Company's warehouse on the Willamette River, south of Oregon City, and the shipping point of the first wheat in that valley, beginning about 1830. The ease with which it could be reached by land or water by the settlers was the cause of its being chosen as the place of meeting on May 2, 1843.

Following is the official record of the meeting held at what they called Champooick, May 2, 1843:

At a public meeting of the inhabitants of the Willamette settlements, held in accordance with the call of the committee chosen at a former meeting, for the purpose of taking steps to organize themselves into a civil community, and provide themselves with the protection secured by the enforcement of law and order, Dr. I. L. Babock was chosen chairman, and Messrs. Gray, Le Breton and Willson, secretaries. The committee made their report, which was read, and a motion was made that it be accepted, which was lost.

Considerable confusion existing in consequence, it was moved by Mr. Le Breton, and seconded by Mr. Gray, that the meeting divide, preparatory to being counted, those in favor of the objects of this meeting taking the right, and those of a contrary mind taking the left, which being carried by acclamation, and a great majority being found in favor of organization, the greater part of the dissenters withdrew.

It was then moved and carried that the report of the committee be taken up, and disposed of article by article. A motion was made and carried that a supreme judge, with probate powers, be chosen to officiate in

this community. Moved and carried that a clerk of the court, or recorder, be chosen. Moved and carried that a sheriff be chosen. Moved and carried that three magistrates be chosen. Moved and carried that three constables be chosen. Moved and carried that a committee of nine persons be chosen for the purpose of drafting a code of laws for the government of this community, to be presented to a public meeting to be hereafter called by them, on the fifth day of July next, for their acceptance.

A motion was made and carried that a treasurer be chosen. Moved and carried that a major and three captains be chosen. Moved and carried that we now proceed to choose the persons to fill the various offices by ballot. A. E. Wilson was chosen to act as supreme judge, with probate powers. G. W. Le Breton was chosen to act as clerk of court, or recorder, J. L. Meek was chosen to fill the office of sheriff. W. H. Willson was chosen treasurer. Moved and carried that the remainder of the officers be chosen by hand ballot, and nomination from the floor.

Messrs. Hill, Shortess, Newell, Beers, Hubbard, Gray, O'Neil, Moore and Doughty were chosen to act as the legislative committee.

Messrs. Burns, Judson and A. T. Smith were chosen to act as magistrates. Messrs. Ebberts, Bridges and Lewis were chosen to act as constables. Mr. John Howard was chosen major. Messrs. Wm. McCarty, C. McKay and S. Smith were chosen captains. Moved and carried that the legislative committee make their report on the 5th day of July next at Champooick.

Moved and carried that the services of the legislative committee be paid for at \$1.25 per day, and that the money be raised by subscription.

Moved and carried that the major and captains be instructed to enlist men to form companies of mounted riflemen. Moved and carried that an additional magistrate and constable be chosen. Mr. Campo was chosen as an additional magistrate. Mr. Matthieu was chosen as an additional constable. Moved and carried that the legislative committee shall not sit over six days. The meeting was then adjourned. The question having arisen with regard to what time the newly-appointed officers shall commence their duties, the meeting was again called to order, when it was moved and carried that the old officers remain in office till the laws are made and accepted, or until the next public meeting.

Attest:

G. W. LE BRETON.

Another record of the meeting is as follows from the Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association, pages 61-2, 1875:

"When the vote was about to be taken, George W. Le Breton, believing there was a fair chance for the adoption of the report of the committee, said: 'We can risk it—let us divide and count.' As quick as tongue could utter the words, William H. Gray emphasized the proposition

by saying with great animation, 'I second the motion.' Jo. Meek thundered out with an earnestness not less than that he would manifest in an attack upon a grizzly bear—'Who's for a divide?' and as he stepped quickly and nervously in front of the settlers, he added in a voice that rang clear out as though it was the death knell to anarchy, 'All for the report of the committee and organization, will follow me.' This move was sudden and quite unexpected at that stage of the proceedings, and it was electrical in its effect. Americans followed the patriotic and large-hearted trapper and his Rocky Mountain companions and their allies and they counted fifty-two, while their adversaries numbered but fifty. Then in the 'three cheers for our side,' proposed by Meek, there went up such a shout as Champoege never heard before and never will again."

Joseph L. Meek was born in Washington county, Virginia, in 1810. He was the son of a planter, and his mother was of a good Virginia family—one of the Walker's—and aunt to the wife of President James K. Polk. Unfortunately, Mrs. Meek died early, and the lad was left to his own devices, with nothing to do, and little to learn, except such outdoor sports as boys delight in. His companions for the most part were the children of his father's slaves. His father married a second time, but the boy did not take kindly to the stepmother, so when about 16 he went to Kentucky, where his father had relatives. Conditions there did not attract him, hence pushed on to St. Louis, arriving in the fall of 1828. In March, 1829, he joined Sublette's hunting party, went out on the plains and led the life of a hunter and trapper until 1840, when he selected a claim on the Tualatin Plains, a few miles west of Portland, where he spent the remainder of his life, his death occurring on June 20, 1875. In addition to being sheriff under the Provisional Government, Meek was the first United States Marshal of Oregon Territory, appointed by President Polk, and his commission was signed in August, 1848. On June 3, 1850, he officiated at the hanging of the Indians at Oregon City who had been convicted of being the murderers of Dr. Whitman, his wife and twelve others, at Wai-il-at-pu, six miles west of the present city of Walla Walla, Nov. 29-30, 1847.

**NAMES OF PERSONS WHO VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE ORGANIZATION
OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AT CHAMPOEG,**

MAY 2, 1843

Name	Place of Birth	Born	Church Preference	Arrived in Oregon
Armstrong, Pleasant M.	New York	1815	Presbyterian	1840
Babcock, Dr. I. L.	New York	.....	Methodist	1840
Bailey, Dr. W. J.	Ireland	1805	Catholic	1835
Beers, Alanson	Connecticut	1800	Methodist	1837
Bridges, J. C.	.....	.....	Unknown	.....
Burns, Hugh	.....	.....	Presbyterian	1842

Name	Place of Birth	Born	Church Preference	Arrived in Oregon
Campo, Charles			Unknown	1812
Cannon, William	Pennsylvania	1755	Unknown	1812
Clark, Rev. Harvey	Vermont	1807	Congregationalist	1840
Crawford, Medorem	New York	1819	No choice	1842
Cook, Amos	Maine	1818	Methodist	1840
Davie, Allen J.	Alabama	1816	Baptist	1842
Doughty, William M.	North Carolina	1812	No choice	1841
Ebberts, George W.	Kentucky	1810	Baptist	1833
Fletcher, Francis	England	1815	Episcopalian	1840
Gay, George	England	1810	Episcopalian	1835
Gale, Joseph	Dist. of Columbia	1800	Episcopalian	1834
Gray, William H.	New York	1810	Presbyterian	1836
Griffin, Rev. John S.	Vermont	1807	Congregationalist	1839
Hauxhurst, Webley	New York	1809	Methodist	1834
Hill, David	Connecticut	1809	Congregationalist	1842
Howard, John			Presbyterian	1840
Holman, Joseph	England	1815	Methodist	1840
Hines, Rev. Gustavus	New York	1809	Methodist	1840
Hubbard, T. J.	Massachusetts	1806	Unknown	1834
Johnson, William	England	1784	Episcopalian	1835
Judson, Rev. L. H.	Connecticut	1802	Methodist	1840
Le Breton, Geo. W.	Massachusetts	1810	Catholic	1840
Leslie, Rev. David	New Hampshire	1797	Methodist	1837
Lewis, Reuben	New York	1814	Presbyterian	1842
Lucier, Etienne	Canada	1783	Catholic	1812
Matthieu, Francois X.	Canada	1818	Catholic	1842
MEEK, Joseph L.	Virginia	1810	Methodist	1829
McCarty, William			Catholic	1834
McKay, Charles	At sea (Scotch)	1808	Presbyterian	1841
Moore, Robert	Pennsylvania	1781	Presbyterian	1840
Morrison, John L.	Scotland	1793	Presbyterian	1842
Newell, Dr. Robert	Ohio	1804	Episcopalian	1840
O'Neil, James A.	New York		Methodist	1834
Parrish, Rev. J. L.	New York	1806	Methodist	1840
Pickernell, J: Edmunds	England		Episcopalian	1842
Robb, James R.	Pennsylvania	1816	Methodist	1842
Russell, Osborne	Maine	1814	Baptist	1842
Shortess, Robert	Pennsylvania	1804	Methodist	1840
Smith, Alvin T.	Connecticut	1802	Congregationalist	1840
Smith, Sidney	New York	1809	Unknown	1839
Smith, Solomon H.	New Hampshire	1809	Congregationalist	1832
Tibbetts, Calvin	Massachusetts		Congregationalist	1832
Weston, David	Indiana	1820	Unknown	1842
Wilkins, Caleb	Ohio	1810	Baptist	1835
Wilson, A. E.	Massachusetts		Unknown	1842
Willson, Dr. W. H.	New Hampshire	1805	Methodist	1837

STATE OR COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Alabama	1	Kentucky	1	Ohio	2
Canada	2	Maine	2	Pennsylvania	4
Connecticut	4	Massachusetts	4	Vermont	2
District of Columbia	1	New Hampshire	3	Virginia	1
England	5	New York	10	Scotland	1
Indiana	1	North Carolina	1	Unspecified	6
Ireland	1				—
				Total	52

Church preference: Baptist, 4; Catholics, 5; Congregationalists, 6; Episcopalians, 6; Methodists, 13; Presbyterians, 8; unknown, 10; total, 52.

**FRENCH SETTLERS* WHO VOTED AGAINST THE ORGANIZATION OF
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AT CHAMPOEG,
MAY 2, 1843**

Aubichon, Alexis.	Despart, Joseph.	Lambert, Augustin.
Aubichon, Jen B.	Donpierre, David.	La Prate, Alexis.
Ausant, Louis.	Dubois, Andre.	Longtain, Andre.
Arquoit, Amable.	Ducharme, Jean B.	Lore, Moyse.
Bargeau, Cyfois.	Felice, Antoine.	Matte, Joseph.
Beleque, Pierre.	Forcier, Louis.	Maloin, Fabien.
Biscornais, Pascal.	Gagnon, Luc.	Mongrain, David.
Boivers, Louis.	Gauthier, Pierre.	Papin, Pierre.
Bonenfant, Antoine.	Gervais, Joseph.	Pariseau, Pierre.
Brischois, Alexis.	Gingras, Jean.	Remon, Augustin.
Brischois, Oliver.	Gregoire, Etienne.	Roi, Thomas.
Brunelle, Joseph.	La Chapelle, Andre.	Rondeau, Charles.
Chalifoux, Andre.	La Bonte, Louis.	Sanders, Andre.
Chamberlain, Adolph.	Laderout, Xavier.	Senecalle, Gideon.
Cornoyer, Joseph.	Laferty, Michel.	Servant, Jaques.
Delard, Joseph.	La Framboise, Michel.	Van Dalle, Louis B.
Depot, Pierre.	Lalcoure, Jean B.	

*All Catholics. After permanent organization, the majority of these men acted the part of good citizens by supporting the Provisional Government, and all became naturalized as soon as possible after the United States extended its jurisdiction over the "Oregon Country," March 3, 1849.

[One of those who favored the organization of government at that meeting lingered on long after the others had died. Mr. Himes compiled a brief biography of him to publish with the programme of the Oregon Pioneer Association as follows:]

Francis Xavier Matthieu was born in Montreal, Canada, April 2, 1818. His ancestors came from France and settled in Canada in an early day. All the schooling he had was acquired before the age of 12, his struggles for life beginning then. He took part in the Canadian rebellion against England in 1837-8, and as a result left that country, going to Albany, N. Y., where he worked as a carpenter for a time. He was at Chicago in 1839, and then at St. Louis, where he became a clerk of the American Fur Company, and spent three years on the Platte and its tributaries. He came to Marion County, Oregon, in 1842, and was married to Miss Rose Osent on April 15, 1844, by whom he became the father of fifteen children, as follows: Mrs. Philomene Geer, Charles, Mrs. Clarissa Ouimette, Mrs. Rose L. Bergevin, Priscilla, Mrs. Arsino Burton, Edward F., Henry C., Stephen A., John J., Ernest, Lester F., Robert W., Mrs. Mary L. Howard, and Mrs. Violet Randall. Those surviving their father at this date (June 18, 1914) are as follows: Mrs. Geer, Mrs. Burton, John, Lester, Stephen and Ernest. Mrs. Matthieu was a native of British Columbia, born in 1828, and died on February 12, 1901. In 1846 Mr. Matthieu settled on the farm where he died on February 4, 1914. He founded Butteville in 1851 and kept store there

for more than twenty years. He was a member of the State Legislature in 1874 and 1878. In 1873 he was elected the first President of the Oregon Pioneer Association, and he never missed a meeting. He was made a Mason in 1855 and an Elk in 1912.

GEORGE H. HIMES.