

THE COLUMBIA RIVER

[In May people of the three States—Idaho, Oregon and Washington—participated in an Open River celebration. Governor Ernest Lister of the State of Washington gave himself unreservedly to the entire series of ceremonies. Officers of the other States were also enthusiastic at one city after another along the river. The obstruction in the Columbia at Celilo had been overcome and the desired open river had been brought that much nearer to realization. Many notable addresses were delivered. One of them has been sent to this Quarterly in the Walla Walla publication called "Up-to-the-Times Magazine." It was by Miles C. Moore, last Territorial Governor of Washington. Governor Moore spoke at the banquet in Pasco, his toast being "The Columbia River, Rich in History, in Romance, and Legend." The address is reproduced in the Quarterly as a compliment to the genial speaker and also as a pleasing memorial of the historic event there celebrated.—Editor.]

It gives me great pleasure to be here this evening, and I wish to make grateful acknowledgment to the good people of Pasco for the invitation that permits me to be present on this delightful occasion. It is an occasion for retrospect and reminiscence, tonight and for a few days we will live in history. We are celebrating the fulfillment of a dream of the long ago. The early settlers, realizing the importance of an open river, began very early to petition Congress to build canals at the Cascades and at Celilo, and to remove obstructions from this great artery of internal commerce. Our beneficent government moves slowly, and they waited through the weary years for the consummation so devoutly wished. Just when the first petitions were sent to Washington, I am unable to say, but presumably it was when wheat shipments began to assume proportion in the late sixties.

In this connection, I recall that General Sherman, in 1877, visited Walla Walla after long, tiresome horse back ride up the Yellow Stone and through the mountains, visiting and establishing army posts. He was tired and wanted to rest a day or two before proceedings on his journey. I enjoyed the distinction of being mayor at that time and the duty of entertaining this distinguished warrior fell to me. He asked to be driven out to the orchards and vineyards, which he seemed to very much enjoy.

I told him our citizens wanted to show him some attention and ex-

plained that the band would serenade him in the evening and would expect a speech.

He asked me what he should talk about, and I replied—the opening of the Columbia River, “that is what our people are most interested in.”

He spoke from the balcony of the old Stine house, and told the assembled audience if they wanted the river opened they must raise grain and create tonnage—and told the young men and women they should get married and raise families and populate the country. That was thirty-eight years ago, and the wheat has been grown, the country populated and the open river dream is at last an accomplished fact.

My toast, I am reminded, is the Columbia river: “Rich in history, in romance and legend.”

The rivers of America are interwoven with American history: The history of the Columbia and its tributaries is the history of Oregon. The beginnings of settlement; the first coming of the white man was along its shores. Thrilling scenes of romance, tragedies were enacted, and unspeakable privations were endured. Many of these are celebrated in song and story. Poets have caught the glamour of romance that hangs around Old Oregon and have woven it into imperishable poetry. One of these, Joaquin Miller, in the early sixties rode pony express from Dalles to Canyon City, and from Walla Walla to Florence and Orofino during the gold excitement in 1861. He became known as the poet of the Sierras, but he caught his first inspiration from the mountains of Oregon and wrote verses in that early day.

Sam Simpson was also an Oregonian. His poem, *The Willamette*, has been pronounced by many persons of literary taste and discrimination to be one of the most beautiful, passionate strains of American song. I quote the first and last verses:

From the Cascade's frozen gorges
Leaping like a child at play,
Widening, winding through the valley,
Bright Willamette glides away.

Onward ever
Lovely river
Softly calling to the sea.
Time that mars us
Maims and scars us
Leave no track
Or trench on thee.

On the roaring wastes of ocean
Soon thy scattered waves shall toss,
Mid the surges' rhythmic thunder
Shall thy silver tongue be lost.
Oh, thy glimmering rush of gladness
Mocks this turbid life of mine,
Racing to the wild forever
Down the sloping paths of time.

He also wrote "The Old Ship's Requiem," referring to the steamer *Beaver*, which was launched in England in 1833—and was the first steamer to plow the waters of the Pacific Ocean. The following stanzas are taken from it:

"How the world has changed
Since she kissed the tide
Of the storied Thames in the Georgian reign,
And was pledged with wine as the bonny bride
Of the west isles' gemmed barbaric main,
 With dauntless form
 That could breast the storm
As she wove the magic commercial chain.

"And the world to which as a pioneer
She first came trailing her plume of smoke,
Is beyond the dreams of the clearest seer
That ever in lofty symbols spoke
 In the arts of peace
 In all life's increase
And in all that the gold browed stross invoke."

Looking backward through the mist of years to that far time when the poet Bryant wrote "Thanatopsis" in trying to locate the most lonely inaccessible region on the globe. He wrote as follows:

"Take the wings of morning
And the Barcan desert pierce,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon,
And hears no sound save its own dashing."

If he had lived in this progressive age, he would have suggested an aeroplane or a dirigible balloon as a more dependable means of transportation; but what I wish to say is that "continuous woods" can no

longer be found in Oregon; the paddle wheels of the steamboat and the continuous rumble of car wheels on either side of the great river disturb the silence of the primeval solitude of that early day. We live in a strange, new age. The world has grown marvelously. "In the arts of peace and all life's increase." The wild Indian is gone; wheat fields extend over all the wide domain and the bunch grass that grew in wild luxuriance over all the hills and valleys of the Inland Empire is also gone. Barbed wire fences obstruct the old Indian trails, and the wild cavalcades, gay with paint and feathers, are seen no more. The spotted, picturesque cayuse, that once cropped the bunch grass from high basaltic cliffs has faded from the landscape.

The steamboat has supplanted the canoe,
The stage coach the ox wagon;
The railway the stage coach;
The telegraph the pony express;
The auto the horse and buggy.

The building of a nation; the laying of the foundations of a state, are always subjects of deepest interest.

To adequately portray Oregon history in the brief time allotted would require a swiftly moving panorama, or, better still, a moving picture film.

The first inspiring scene would show the ship Columbia sailing into the mouth of the Columbia on that fine May morning in 1792, when that good American, Captain Gray, claimed for his country all that vast region drained by the Columbia and its tributaries. Thirteen years later it would show the Lewis and Clark party floating down the Snake and the Columbia on their way to the coast; a little later the Astors expedition seeking to establish trade relations with the Indians at Astoria. All these were Americans, British fur traders also appearing near the head water of the Columbia, and later we see David Thompson drifting down the great river to its mouth. Other fur traders came and established posts at various points—at Fort Walla Walla, at the mouth of the Walla Walla River, in 1818—and at Vancouver in 1824. Then the missionaries came, Jason Lee to the Willamette Valley and the great-hearted Whitman and his noble wife to establish his mission at Wailatpu, six miles west of the present city of Walla Walla. His eleven years of service and privation, his self-sacrificing devotion to the Indians, his famous midwinter ride to Washington, and the final surrender of his life, "The last full measure of his devotion," constitute the most heroic chapter in Western history.

About this time the film would show the steamer Beaver, the first

to plow the waters of the Pacific, and then the long trains of canvas-covered emigrant wagons creeping in slow procession across the great plains over interminable stretches of sage brush on the way to Oregon—

“This was the first faint wash of the coming wave
That was yet to roll a human sea.”

Then the organization of Oregon as a territory—the Whitman massacre, the discovery of gold in California in 1849, the creation of Washington as a separate territory in 1853; the appearance of Washington's great first Governor, Isaac I. Stevens, at the village of Olympia on a cold November day, 1853, taking up the reins of territorial government, looking for the first time on the blue waters of Budd's Inlet, an arm of the inland sea, on whose shores cities were to arise, and on whose tranquil waters were to float the navies of the world; his treaty with 5,000 Indians at Walla Walla in 1855; the Indian wars that followed; the defeat of Colonel Steptoe; the successful expedition of Colonel Wright opening the country to settlement in 1858; the discovery of gold in Northern Idaho; the discovery of the marvelous fertility of the soil in the east of the mountains country; steamboats appearing on the Columbia above Celilo; construction of Dr. Baker's railroad, the first in Washington, from Walla Walla to the Columbia River; the settlement of the Palouse and Spokane countries; the extension of wheat fields over the hills and valleys, where once the bunch grass grew in wild luxuriance; the discovery of the Coeur d'Alene mines; the growth of Spokane to a great city. All this is the work of fifty years in the valley of the great Columbia and a part of its history.

The population of Washington at the time of its creation as a separate territory in 1853 was 3,965. When admitted to statehood thirty-six years later, in 1889, it had grown to 239,554, in 1910 to 1,141,990, and now is 1,400,000.

No American state has shown such rapid growth. No other state has so many attractions in combination.

“No other clime has skies so fair
Or stream so broad and clear.”

Looking backward through the mist of years and noting the first faint beginnings of settlement, the fact stands prominently forth that the Hudson's Bay Company were quite early in evidence on the upper stretches of the Columbia. In studying early history, however, a distinction should be clearly drawn between American explorers, American missionaries and the Hudson's Bay Company and British fur traders. The former were actuated by altruistic motives; they were paving the way for a future civil-

ization, while the latter were interested solely in the fur trade and the profits to be derived therefrom. They were not in sympathy with Americans, nor American institutions; they discouraged and obstructed settlement, and clung tenaciously to the Columbia River as a boundary line.

During the two hundred and forty years of their dominion, in all that vast region granted to Prince Rupert, they built no cities, dug no canals, developed no water power, built no railroads or telegraph lines, farmed no considerable tracts of land, discouraged everywhere individual effort and initiative. In short, they were conservationists of the strictest sect. Their officers or factors were sometimes men of character and fine type, but, aside from Dr. John McLoughlin, there is no reason for Americans to revere their memory.

In conclusion, let us felicitate ourselves on the fact that "our lines have fallen in pleasant places." It is a privilege to live in this favored land, amid these magnificent surroundings, under the shadows of these mountains, these blessed mountains, "they proclaim the everlasting creed of liberty."

"O sacred forms, how proud you are,
How high you lift your heads unto the sky,
Ye guards of liberty.
I am with you once again;
I hold my hands to you
To show they still are free."

MILES C. MOORE.