

The Washington Historical Quarterly

THE BAGLEY COLLECTION OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST HISTORY

The University of Washington has purchased the Clarence B. Bagley collection of newspapers, books and other materials relating to the history of the Pacific Northwest. Local workers are already familiar with this collection as Mr. Bagley has made it available to all serious students. Now that the material has become the property of the State University, a new interest attaches to it, and it is fitting that some account should be given of this remarkable collection and of the man whose far sightedness, zeal and perseverance has made it what it is.

Clarence B. Bagley was born in Illinois in 1843, a year made memorable by the first large immigration to Oregon. In 1852, his parents moved to Salem, Oregon, where he attended school in the Willamette Institute until 1860 when the family came to Seattle. In 1866, Mr. Bagley moved to Olympia. Two years later he entered the printing office of Randall H. Hewitt where he learned the printer's trade, being employed on the *Territorial Republican* and the *Echo*. In 1869, he worked on the staff of the *Commercial Age*. In 1872, he became business manager and city editor of the *Puget Sound Courier*. In the following year he purchased this paper and the printing office connected with it.

In the Fall of 1873, he was appointed Territorial Printer. Mr. Bagley printed the laws and journals for six legislative sessions ending with 1883. During this time he continued to edit and publish the *Courier*. It was within this period also that he laid the foundation of his newspaper collection. He returned to Seattle in 1885 and was connected with the *Post-Intelligencer* and the *Seattle Daily Press* from 1886 to 1888. From 1894 to 1900, he was Deputy Comptroller and since 1900 has been Secretary of the Board of Public Works of Seattle, which position he now fills.

The growth of the Bagley collection began with the saving of copies of Seattle's first newspaper, *The Gazette*,¹ which began pub-

¹This paper was printed on the old Ramage printing press now preserved as a relic in the University of Washington Museum. For account of the *Seattle Gazette* and this historic press, see Bagley, C. B., Pioneer papers of Puget Sound. *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4:365-85, December, 1903.

lication in 1863. Of this newspaper and its successors until it became the *Post-Intelligencer*, no other complete set is today known to be in existence. On Mr. Bagley's going to Olympia in 1866, Mr. Elwood Evans sought his aid toward completing a file of the *Gazette*. To Mr. Evans more than anyone else, Mr. Bagley attributes his early zeal in the collecting of newspapers and other publications of historical value. He later acquired the entire Evans collection of newspapers. The State of Washington cannot overlook its indebtedness to its first historian, Elwood Evans.² He came to Olympia in 1851, when that small settlement was still a part of Lewis County, Oregon. In 1852, he joined with other people north of the Columbia River in urging the creation of a new territory to the north of the Columbia to embrace all of the territory within the present states of Washington and Idaho and that part of Montana west of the Rocky Mountains. It was in connection with this campaign that the first newspaper north of the Columbia was started, in Olympia in 1852, and it was called *The Columbian*. This newspaper forms the starting point of the Evans collection embracing the important papers of Western Washington up to 1875 when Mr. Bagley acquired them. With rare historic insight, Mr. Bagley has persevered in saving and preserving newspaper files from that time until now. His collection contains an almost continuous newspaper record of the history of the Territory and State of Washington.

Prior to 1900, newspapers, laws and journals, manuscripts and certain of the more important pamphlets of historical nature made up the extent of the collection. At about this date, Mr. Bagley began an earnest attempt to secure books relating to the Oregon country. He acknowledges the stimulus in this direction of the shipments of books obtained from England by Professor Meany for Seattle auction. He obtained many valuable items at about this time from Mr. Clarence L. Andrews, who devoted his attention thence forward exclusively to the history of Alaska.

About 1905, a large addition was made by the purchase of the collections of William I. Marshall of Chicago. Mr. Marshall will be remembered as the man who spent over twenty-five years in a campaign of education on the Whitman question. His material includes a large number of letters from and about the pioneer missionaries, also much Oregon material transcribed from out-of-the-way sources. It includes much material that has not appeared in his "Acquisition of Oregon" or other publications. Mr. Bagley was fortunate in secur-

²See excellent account of the life and public service of Elwood Evans by James Wickersham in *Washington Historian* 1:52-63, January, 1900.

ing many items by exchanges with Mr. George H. Himes of the Oregon Historical Society, Mr. Scholefield of the British Columbia Legislative Library, and Mr. Thomas W. Prosch of Seattle. On the death of the latter in 1915, Mr. Bagley purchased some extremely important material not already in the collection.

That so large a collection should have been amassed and safely preserved by one individual for so long a term of years is a circumstance worthy of more than passing comment. It should be noted also that the collection has not been without its share of danger. The Olympia fire of 1882 burned away the attic in which many of the most valuable papers were stored. By rare good fortune they were moved to safety in time to prevent injury. Again in the great Seattle fire of 1889, the newspaper office in which the collection was stored was completely destroyed. During the progress of the fire, Mr. Bagley without assistance carried the material to Ballast Island, near the present site of the Columbia and Puget Sound Railway Depot. Here he deposited it in the sand and covered it with old tin cans, broken pieces of sewer tile and such other noncombustible debris as effectually saved it from the intense heat. The narrowness of the escape is shown by the fact that the bridge had in the meantime burned down and Mr. Bagley was obliged to return by boat to another part of the city. What eventually proved to be quite as serious a hazard to certain of the newspapers was the loaning of files of *The Columbian*, *The Pioneer and Democrat*, *The Standard*, *The Courier*, and *The Puget Sound Herald* to Mr. H. H. Bancroft in 1882 for use in the preparation of his volume on the History of Washington, Idaho and Montana. It took fifteen years and the services of a lawyer to effect their return in the year 1897.

Two features distinguish the Bagley Library from other private collections of Northwest History, namely, the wealth of newspaper files and the large number of manuscripts. The following are among the newspapers represented with complete or practically complete sets: *Oregon American and Evangelical Unionist*, 1848; *The Columbian* and its successor the *Pioneer and Democrat*, 1852-61; *Overland Press and Tribune* (Olympia), 1861-68; *Puget Sound Herald* (Steilacoom), 1858-63; *Olympia Transcript*, 1867-1881; *Seattle Gazette* and its lineal successors to the *Post-Intelligencer*, 1863-75; and the *Walla Walla Statesman*, 1862-69. A comparison of the Bagley newspapers with Hitchcock's Newspaper Survey³ shows that the collection covers

³Hitchcock, Jeanette H. A survey of newspapers in Washington libraries. Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of bachelor of library economy. University of Washington, 1918.

the early newspapers of the State better than all public libraries of the State combined.

The manuscripts include more than one thousand documents, letters and papers covering many phases of the history of Washington from the thirties to the seventies. The wealth of this material is illustrated by the documents relating to the history of the Hudson's Bay Company. Here is the original plan of incorporation of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company together with many other documents relating to this subsidiary of the Hudson's Bay Company. Practically every important official of the company is represented with at least one autograph letter relating to the company's business. These names include, George Simpson, Behrens, McLean, Anderson, Tolmie, Bernier, McKinlay, Stuart, Finlayson, Mackenzie, Grahame, Kittson, Sinclair, P. Fraser, Ermatinger and John Work. There are twelve letters each by McTavish, P. S. Ogden and Governor Douglass, and over twenty-five letters by Dr. John McLoughlin.

Of books, there are about one thousand miscellaneous volumes bearing on the history of the Oregon country. The collection is particularly strong in overland voyages and travels. Here are to be found standard editions of Carver, Simpson, Franchere, Irving, Ross, Cox, Kelley, Hastings, George Wilkes, Catlin, Farnham, DeSmet, Mofras and numerous other Oregon classics. Of pamphlets there are many of extreme rarity and value. A pamphlet is a form of literature often overlooked by collectors. It occupies a field half way between a bound volume and a manuscript. Its value for history is not lessened because the publisher has failed to provide a binding. For lack of covers it is much more likely to become scarce than bound volumes, a fact which librarians and bibliographers always bear in mind. Mr. Bagley is particularly to be commended for having rescued many such fugitive items.

Other features of the collection are sets of Oregon and Washington laws and legislative journals; Seattle ordinances, charters and early printed documents; directories of Seattle, 1876 to date with other early Pacific Coast directories; a collection of maps and charts; early University of Washington records; some twenty large scrap books of newspaper clippings, mounted bill heads, receipts, bills of sale, accounts, business and legal papers of pioneer days; and fifteen bound volumes of transcripts and documents.

It is fitting that the Bagley collection should be acquired by the University of Washington as Mr. Bagley is the son of Reverend Daniel Bagley, known as the Father of the University and for whom one of the principal university buildings is named. The University also ac-

quires in the collection its own early financial records covering the years 1861-65, when Daniel Bagley was President of the Board of University Commissioners, together with the first class books of its first President, Asa Mercer.

Mr. Bagley has long recognized the University as a logical place for the deposit of his books and documents, but the capital involved grew to a point where he felt unable to donate the collection. The University has now paid a sum based upon an appraisal of what the material might be expected to bring in the New York market. Its intrinsic value to the State of Washington cannot be reckoned, but it may fairly be placed at many times the amount paid. The University owes to Mr. Bagley a debt that can only be paid in gratitude and recognition of his lasting service to the state.

The Northwest History materials of the University of Washington Library as augmented by the Bagley collection now offer excellent opportunities for graduate study and research in history and allied fields. The document section enriched by the Wallace⁴ and Bagley manuscripts will furnish much material suitable for publication in the *Washington Historical Quarterly*. The acquisition of this collection emphasizes once more the need of a new library building where present and future collections can be safeguarded and where adequate accommodations can be furnished to the students for whom this material is held in trust.

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⁴The Wallace and other manuscripts from the library of the late Thomas Prosch were presented to the University Library by Edith Prosch in 1917. See *Washington Historical Quarterly* 8:159, April, 1917.