

SECRET AID FOR OREGON MISSIONS

Dr. Minnie F. Howard, President of Southern Idaho Historical Society, has called attention to the fact that the latest, or eleventh, edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume XX., page, 248, in the article on "Oregon," says: "In this year [1838] Jason Lee returned to the Eastern States and carried back to Oregon with him by sea over fifty people, missionaries and their families. It is significant, if true, that part of the money for chartering his vessel was supplied from the Secret Service fund of the United States Government."

Doctor Howard then asked if there was any basis for this new edition statement.

An appeal to search the records at the National Capital was sent to Prof. J. F. Jameson, Director of the Department of Historical Research, Carnegie Institution. In his reply he said: "I am informed by the Treasury Department that their accounts of expenditures from the Secret Service fund begin only in 1865, and their impression is that the fund, as such, did not exist before that time."

Although the most likely source of such information proved unavailing, Professor Jameson added: "It is barely possible that some expenditures, having that nature, may somewhere be recorded in the archives of the Department of State, but the person to whom I am referred as the one who would know about this is now absent upon his vacation." He added that, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* probably derived its information directly or indirectly from the statement in Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, (San Francisco, 1886,) Volume I., pages 176-177, it would be well to check against the manuscript source used by that author.

Prof. Herbert I. Priestley, Librarian of the Bancroft Library, University of California, was kind enough to make the search and to send the following extracts from the manuscript "Anecdotes of Oregon" by Rev. Josiah L. Parrish:

"We were the third reinforcement after the establishment of the mission that was sent out by the missionary board in which I came.

"There is a fact connected with that, the government had a little hand in. I was told, but I knew nothing of it then and I do

not know positively about it now, but the company brought us out, the adults I think for \$200 each, and the children were graded down. The company I suppose could not bring us for that. I understood after I had been to Oregon for seven years that the government paid Fry Farnham & Co. 50 dollars a head from the secret Treasury. Mr. Lee on his return got missionaries proper and mechanics of all kinds to establish his work permanently in the country and make it if possible self supporting instead of drawing on the missionary fund constantly. The government discovered that the missionary family, as it was called in New York, was almost sufficient to establish a permanent colony, that is a small one. The government had an eye to the settlement of the boundary question; and I understood afterwards by a member of the missionary board that the government paid Fry Farnham & Co. 50 dollars on each one of our heads. I have no doubt that the reinforcements was the settlement of the question really."

That is the source referred to by Historian Bancroft. In sending the extract Professor Priestley says: "As you will see, the gentleman is not quite sure, but thinks so. Doubtless the *Britannica* used some such authority. In all probability he was right."

Historian Bancroft was quite frank in his avowal of the fact and its probable purpose. His statement, as cited above, is as follows: "A proof of the favor with which his [Jason Lee's] designs were regarded by the cabinet is furnished by the appropriation of considerable money from the secret-service fund, for the charter of the *Lausanne*, as related by one of her passengers. Lee kept the secret, and so did those who gave him the money, until the boundary question was settled between the United States and Great Britain."

In making that statement, Mr. Bancroft in a footnote cites the manuscript by Mr. Parrish, the full extract from which we have reproduced above. As Mr. Parrish says, he was one of the passengers and that the company was the third reenforcement of the Methodist Mission in Oregon. All the children in the party have never been enumerated but there were more than fifty souls in the reenforcement. Some of them became prominent leaders in Oregon. It would be well to repeat here a list of them. This can best be done by quoting from Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Volume I., pages 177-178:

"Everything being finally arranged, the mission family, a term by which this emigration was more particularly designated, assembled at New York, whence the *Lausanne* was to sail. Jason Lee

had certainly improved his time in several respects; for the so lately bereaved husband was returning comforted with a new wife. Following are the names of the members of this reenforcement: Mr. and Mrs. Jason Lee; Rev. Joseph H. Frost, wife¹ and one child; Rev. William W. Kone and wife; Rev. Alvan F. Waller, wife and two children; Rev. J. P. Richmond,² M. D., wife and one child; Ira L. Babcock, M. D.,³ wife and one child; Rev. Gustavus Hines, wife and one child; George Abernethy,⁴ mission steward, wife and two children; W. W. Raymond, farmer, and wife; Henry B. Brewer, farmer, and wife; Rev. Lewis H. Judson, cabinet-maker, wife and three children; Rev. Josiah L. Parrish, blacksmith, wife and three children; James Olley, carpenter, wife and children; Hamilton Campbell, wife and children; David Carter, Miss Chloe A. Clark, Miss Elmira Phillips, Miss Maria T. Ware, Miss Almira Phelps, teachers; Miss Orpha Lankton, stewardess; and Thomas Adams, the Chinook whom Mr. Lee had brought with him from Oregon. The other Chinook, Brooks, had died.

"It was on the 10th of October, 1839, that the *Lausanne* sailed. The mission family gathered on the steamer which was to convey them to Sandy Hook, where the ship was anchored. Assembled there were many friends, and some strangers drawn thither by curiosity regarding so unprecedented a missionary exodus. Religious services were held conducted by the reverend doctors Bangs and Anderson, secretaries of the American Board. Stronger to move the heart than sound of brass or stretched strings is the music of the human voice; and as prayer and song fell upon the ears of those excited by hopes and fears, their souls were stirred within them, and sobs, tears, and embraces mingled with the farewell benedictions, as the travellers stepped from the steamer to the ship. No company ever sailed from that port whose departure was watched with more interest by religious and political circles."

The latest edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says it is "significant, if true," that this emigration was assisted on its way to Oregon from the secret service fund of the United States government. It has been shown that Bancroft published the same

1 In 1907, or sixty-seven years after the journey here recorded, the present writer had the good fortune to meet Mrs. Frost, (then Mrs. Beggs) and to record her remarkable story. See *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Volume II., pages 12-23.

2 One of the founders of the branch mission at Nisqually, 1840, first American home north of the Columbia River.

3 First Supreme Judge of the Provisional Government of Oregon, 1841.

4 First and only Governor of the Provisional Government of Oregon, 1845-1849.

fact as early as 1886. Students of Northwestern History have never been sure that such secret aid was actually extended. However, they have not been particularly disturbed as the cause for such an expenditure could hardly have been a better one. Future researches may disclose an account book with a record of as much as \$3000 expended on behalf of the *Lausanne's* passengers from New York to Oregon. Such a record would be definite and authoritative. No one will be able to compute in dollars and cents the good those passengers did in helping to redeem Oregon from a wilderness and to retain it as a part of the United States.

EDMOND S. MEANY.