

## EARLY EFFORTS AT ROAD MAKING

Here is an item that should interest the people of the Puget Sound country. I found it in a copy of Oregon's first newspaper—the *Oregon Spectator* for September 5, 1850. The letter is signed "H. A. G." Those were undoubtedly the initials of Hugh A. Goldsborough. I knew him well in the early days at Olympia. His brother, Admiral Louis M. Goldsborough, was a member of the joint army and navy commission in California and Oregon in 1849. I think the "Dear B." to whom the letter is addressed was John D. Biles, because I know that he arrived at Fort Vancouver in May, 1849, on the United States Steamer *Massachusetts*, and I know that he was a member of the first Legislature of Washington Territory from Clark County, beginning February 27, 1854, the other members from that County being A. J. Bolon, F. A. Chenoweth and Henry R. Crosbie.

GEORGE H. HIMES.  
Puget Sound,  
August 15, 1850.

My dear B—

Your occasional visits to our county, consequent acquaintance with many of our settlers, and the interest you feel in the prosperity of Oregon Territory generally, will I am sure make it agreeable for you to learn that we have at length roused ourselves from our apparent lethargy and supineness, and while fully sensible of the many advantages of our position, are determined to try to render them available to others. We have all for some time felt the want of a more direct route from the Cascade range of mountains to Puget Sound, than the present round about way down the Columbia river, through the Willamette valley, and up the Cowlitz; and at a meeting convened a short time past to take this subject into consideration, it was determined to open a wagon road around the northern base of Mt. Rainier, down the valley of the Yakima toward Fort Walla Walla; for this purpose a subscription paper, headed by Mr. M. T. Simmons, was circulated through the country, to which we had very soon over \$1,500 contributed; and a strong party of active young men properly organized, and provided with the requisite provisions, utensils, wagon, oxen, &c., left this on the 5th inst., to commence their labors:—we have heard from them lately, and their success thus far has

been truly encouraging, so far as to give us hopes that they will succeed, (in their most earnest endeavors) in opening a thoroughfare in time for some portion of the immigrating parties of the present year. This road when finished will be a great desideratum, and will render the ingress of immigrating parties, and the egress of those destined for the gold mines on the Yakima, comparatively easy by the most direct route. When this shall be accomplished, our next most worthy object of attention, will be to change and improve the present line of road way from this to the mouth of the Cowlitz. In this latter undertaking I feel confident that no difficulty of serious moment will be encountered; the general topography of the country and other natural advantages are so favorable, that a plank road or rail road might readily be constructed from Puget Sound so as to communicate with the Columbia, whenever the increasing business of the country shall demand such facilities of intercommunication. Both of these roads are so evidently important in a national and military point of view, that I think we may safely look to the General Government for pecuniary aid in their construction.

We have recently held elections for the different county officers, of which we have been destitute, and having chosen them, we may now, as a county, be said to be organized, and in fair sailing trim. The County Assessor is now on a tour of duty, and his assessment on property taxable by law, in the Nesqually, New Market, and Olympia, and part of Cowlitz precincts, already \$300,000, leaving it probable that the whole amount from the county will not fall far short of half a million of dollars. The extreme disproportionate size of our county, will, for the present render any arrangement for the permanent county seat, &c., somewhat inconvenient, but this must soon be remedied by more appropriately local partitions.

I have been gratified, during a recent extensive jaunt, to see the crops of wheat, oats, peas, potatoes, &c., looking remarkably well, and to find the acknowledged salubrity of our climate was so well sustained, that I could not hear of a single case of sickness among the whites during the past summer.

The town of Olympia, situated on Budd's Inlet, is well located, and offers many inducements for permanent investment; two vessels arrived this morning from San Francisco, with ample supplies for the establishment of Messrs. Simmons & Smith, and a regular trade is carried on between the two places. The navigation

from the ocean to Olympia, the Southern extremity of Puget Sound, is probably unrivaled by any other sheet of water of equal size, whether we regard the facility of access, the depth of water, or the number of excellent harbors. Choice mill seats are plenteous, and good sea coal is confidently believed to be abundant. Under so many favoring circumstances I cannot hesitate to believe that if we follow the advice of Hercules, and put our own shoulders to the wheel, we will ere long make our section of country populous and prosperous in an eminent degree, especially in view of the Bill before Congress—by this time most probably the law of the land—donating half of a section, to unmarried men; a Bill, which with all its provisos and safeguards, I regard as so signally beneficial to our Territory, as to give full satisfaction to all, except such as would growl were they in Paradise.

Yours most cordially,

H. A. G.