

DOCUMENTS

DIARY OF WILKES IN THE NORTHWEST

[Continued from Volume XVI., Page 145]

[May, 1841.]

I was kindly received by the Superintendent Mr. Forrest on my arrival, who quickly made arrangements for our canoes to navigate the Cowlitz & Columbia as far as Fort George. The rest of the party came up much fatigued as well as their horses all did justice to the welcome chow set before us, and some would have gladly waited till morning for our departure but intending to return by this route again, I put off the further examination of the Farm until then. The Company have here a large dairy, and are about erecting a grist & saw mill. The Superintendent's house is a large well hewed log house, makes a respectable show with its many lodges about it. numbers of cattle are seen feeding and seem to thrive altho I was told by Mr. Forrest that it became necessary to send them a distance for food in dry seasons, and at times they cut fodder for them on the opposite side of the River which is brought over by the Indians. this is done to prevent the loss of cattle & the destruction of the young by wolves. The Farm at the Cowlitz has no sort of defense about it showing conclusively as far as the Indians are concerned they are not molested. indeed their numbers here are too small to attempt anything and their dependence on the Company too great for their necessary articles of clothing & food they belong to the Klackatack tribe though their general name is that of the Cowlitz Indians. In a very [Ms. P. 67.] few years they will all have passed away. The number of acres under cultivation is about 600 the yield of wheat the 1st year was 10 bushels but the present one I was told would be double under the same culture (Since the harvest I have been told that this farm produced 7,000 bushels this season)⁵² attached to the Superintendent's home is also a vegetable garden in which all the usual horticultural plants of the U.S. were growing and the climate was thought to be well adapted to them particularly potatoes—There is a Catholic priest belonging to the

⁵² This parenthetical clause is not interlined, which indicates that the diary must have been written later, on ship-board perhaps, from notes accumulated in the field.

Columbia Missionary establish among the small community here which consists of half a dozen Canadians who have married Indians & half breeds. The visit I made to their habitations on my return fully satisfied me that they were well and comfortably off. The Banks of the Cowlitz here are about 150 feet above the river—the soil of a clayey loam and surface rolling—

The weather is not actually cold nor is the winter long, snow seldom lays but a day or two, fires are necessary most months in the year—the housing of cattle is resorted to partially but little or no provision is made for their sustenance the grass being sufficient the year round, except in season of drought which seldom occurs.

Its Geographical Position is Lat. 46.30. Long. W. of Vancr. [blank] At an hour before sunset, we embarked in two canoes under the charge of Simon Plumondon (one of the Cowlitz settlers) and an old voyageur and trapper for the Company who had with him 9 Indians of the Cowlitz tribe all quite young full of merriment & fun laughing the live long day. I felt at last wearied by this incessant gaiety. At sunset [Ms. P. 67a.] we landed and pitched our tents on one of the small Islands covered with driftwood which gave us the means of getting up large fires a great comfort in camp and after travelling chilled through. I was engaged in getting Stars for time & Latitude the result of which gave our position [blank]

Here our supper was prepared and after it another boiling for the Indians who had come along we found perfectly destitute of either eatables or things to cook in choosing rather to depend upon the generosity of the whites. I would recommend all who travel to see that their guides are amply provided with food & that they take proper care of it. All the natives we have yet met with require attention and this remark applies equally as well to the Sandwich Islanders as it does to the Indians on the N. W. coast neither will do your work without something to eat and they are always loathe to carry it if it can be avoided.

The Cowlitz is about 180 yds wide where we embarked. I tried the current and found it 3 miles an hour in some places it was more rapid. The soil along the Cowlitz appears good really of a good quality. The prevalent timber is poplar, soft maple, ash, fir, pine & cedar with some laurel. The soil is clayey loam with vegetable mould over trap & sandstone. These were discoverable in the banks where they had been and in, The river has

many short turns & in the spring overflows its banks in places to a considerable depth. The current there is so strong that the only way a canoe can ascend it is to be pushed [Ms. P. 68.] along by the branches it is however the season which is used for its navigation and the supplies from Vancouver to the dam and sent from there are passed upon it just above the junction of the North fork *lignite* has been found in horizontal beds. I endeavored to get up to it in the month of Sept. but the Cowlitz was not navigable for a canoe. It is in horizontal beds and appears to me quite pure. I brought several specimens of it which are in the expedition

The north branch is rather the smallest of the two streams it takes its course about N. E. by E. to the snowy range of Mt. Rainier where its source lies—it is not navigable its falls and rapids rendering it impassible during any portion of the year before reaching it the current moderated considerable or was through banks in the Cowlitz. This much swelled the fork is 18 miles from the Columbia—this whole river is very crooked until you reach within 5 or 6 miles of Columbia. When the river is high it can be navigated by boats drawing 5 or 6 feet of water, the entrance from the river (Col^a.) is barred and would admit of but a small draft of water for sea going vessel it may be said to be unnavigable 9 months in the year & small steamers might be enabled to do it a month or two longer. I prefer representing it however as unnavigable for anything but canoes & the flat bottom barges of the H. B. Co.'s service.

The route by the Cowlitz will always be the general one by which the communication with the Northern Section of the country will be kept up at any rate until the country becomes settled—by it all the mountain ranges are avoided & the highways provided by nature (the rivers) point [Ms. P. 68a.] out the best course—to avoid & pass them. On our route down the Cowlitz we met several canoes going up well filled with salmon & trout obtained at the Willamette Falls as they told us and were going to trade with those of Cowlitz for the Kamass root.

It seems somewhat singular that no salmon should be found in the Cowlitz until Oct or the 2nd run of them and quite a diff. species from those of the Col^a. in the month of June.

The beaches towards the Col^a. become low and form extensive prairies skirted with wood on their borders—at its junction with the Col^a. it forms 3 small Islands and its breadth is about 200

yards—there is only one channel by which it can be entered if the water is not high, much drift-wood is brought down it in the Spring of the year; when the Col^a is high the water in the Cowlitz is then backed several miles, and its beaches are in like manner overflowed therefore it may be set down without doubt, that the low lands in the river are unfit for cultivation but well adapted for pasturage.

22nd. [May.]

We took our canoes before 5 o'clock in hopes of being able to reach Fort George at an early hour. The Cowlitz is uninteresting the banks grow really low, the only exception is a moderately hilly part near its forks about forty miles in extent— The length of the river from the Company's farm to the Columbia is 24 miles although one is generally told it over 40. it is sometimes passed in 2½ hours, We made it in 5 hours.

The entering arm to the Columbia in striking this broad rapid stream carrying its course through the [Ms. P. 69.] barrier of trap rocks covered with the majestic forest fit barrier for such a river causes much excitement as well as pleasure. its waters are pure and clear little or no deposits being borne by its floods. This is perhaps owing to its passing through the long line of volcanic rocks in the upper territory, unlike our great River of the Eastern side it bears no fertilizing earth for the planters, but acts by its flood, upon his exertion to prevent his crops coming to maturity, this renders the cultivation—always will of the prairies on the Cola. very precarious altho the river dont actually overflow its banks yet the prairies are for the most part covered, supposed to be owing to the waters rising through quicksand in some places half a mile from the bank, if only a few inches it is enough to destroy the coming crop the Icy water chilling and preventing the grain from ripening but as grazing grounds few places can be equal to this affording the cattle abundance of fresh pasturage all the year round.

We descended the river at a rapid rate—admiring its scenery and the novelty of the sun—many fine views break upon one the high volcanic banks on either side & the distant conical snowy peak (Mt. St. Helens) form fine objects for the landscape. On the lower prairies & Island the timber consist of oak, ash, poplar &C. On the high-lands of the fir pine & cedar. The most part of the high lands on the river are too broken and precipitous for cultivation. They afford abundance of fine material for building, and which is

easily detached in large masses or blocks requiring but little use of the stone bars to dress off the trap rock is very abundant & some [Ms. P. 69a.] descriptions of sandstone.

In St. Helens' reach⁵³ we met the Brig Wave that had brought our stores from Oaho having landed them at Fort George (Astoria) and was proceeding up the river to Vancouver in order to take a cargo of lumber from the Comp. to Oaho. I was greatly disappointed in learning from Capt. Moore that the Peacock had not yet arrived or been heard from and we proceeded after a few minutes detention on our route—by sunset we had reached Termination Island the lowest in the river and had the Pillar rock in sight, the distance to Tongue Pt. also in sight appeared so small that we determined but a short time would be necessary to reach it with the strong ebb and current, but a constant paddling only brought us near Fort George by midnight.

Our arrival at the Fort as it very much resembles all such incidents in the country—We continued (as I remarked above, paddling weary and fatigued with sitting in a canoe that those only who have tried it can fully appreciate), groping our way along the shores in the darkness, until we judged ourselves near the fort, where we made frequent discharge of our guns to notify of our approach but like all persons similarly situated our wishes, and anticipations, had outrun our speed. No wished for answer took place had I am ever inclined to believe scarcely changed our situation—but we were passing the spot unobserved A musket was fired & a yelping of some dogs then told us the fort was near, delighted were we to make our escape (particularly Mr. W.) from our canoe and the cold dampness of the River.⁵⁴ Mr. Birnie [Ms. P. 70] who has charge of the fort was soon at the Landing with lanterns and gave us a most hearty welcome altho he as well as ourselves were much incommoded with the incessant yelping scarcely allowing one to speak or be heard. We soon found ourselves by a merry fire and the whole home put in motion to afford us comfortable quarters and all done in such a kind and willing way or to express it more forcibly with that well known countryman's of his hospitality that it made it much more delight-

⁵³ In the published *Narrative*, Volume IV., page 319, the record reads: "In this part of the river, which I named St. Helen's Reach."

⁵⁴ This greatly scratched and confused entry in the Diary is thus smoothed out in the *Narrative*, Volume IV., page 320: "kept skirting the shore for so long a time that I began to have misgivings that we should pass Astoria, and began firing muskets, the usual signal of an arrival. They were immediately answered by others just behind us, and the loud clamour of about forty yelping dogs."

ful to partake of. Mr. Birnie came early to the N.W. and has been here ever since. He was born in Aberdeen and left at 16 years of age. He is married and has a family now of nine children some of whom are grown up and are married. His hearth and board soon made us comfortable and we soon forget our long day's journey in a cramped up canoe in this log cabin on sloping ground with the aid of tables chairs & blankets our rest made amends for all.

Classic Astoria is everything but what I would wish to describe it, the few buildings (log houses) appear to be going rapidly to decay the Company appearing to pay little regard to them, they do not appear to have done anything since the establishment was removed to Vancouver, the opportunity of farming being very limited, and the clearing expensive now has endeavored to be established and perhaps as it is avowedly on the American side of the River it is thought unnecessary to continue operations that could not be permanent.

The beauty of its location is worthy of the Pen⁵⁵ that has named it classic ground. I will here give the mode of preparing the buckskin which may be termed the cloth of this country. 1st. Immediately after the deer is killed the skin is taken & stretched tightly over a frame after having all the hair scraped off, it is left until it becomes [Ms. P. 70a.] as dry as Parchment, it is then rubbed over with the brains of the animal which imparts the oil to it then it is steeped in warm water, after which it is dried over a fire two women stretching it all the time it is drying and smoking, it is then again wet and stretched by winding tightly round a tree, from which it again drawn & dried over the fire by women pulling it as before, when dry or nearly so, it is rubbed with the hands as in washing, until it is soft and pliable and is then ready for use.

Mr. Forrest stated to me that he had put a suit on twenty four hours after the animal had been running in the forest. I am well satisfied no kind of apparel can be so suitable for the life an Indian or trapper leads as this and particularly adapted to the wants of all those who have to travel in this wild country.

23rd. [May.]

Being Sunday we had a day of repose, and lounged about on

⁵⁵ Evidently a reference to Washington Irving, whose two volume edition of *Astoria* had appeared in Philadelphia in 1836 while the Exploring Expedition was in process of preparation.

the white clover sward which was as luxuriant as any I have ever seen, it has been brought here and is not indigenous to the soil. The day was one of those balmy days so frequent with us in May.

Astoria is situated on a Point of Land projecting into the River (an extensive arm or beach passes to the South and forms the Youngs Bay on the shores of which Lewis & Clarke wintered. The locality of their hut is pointed out but it has long since gone to decay) from it one has a beautiful view the high promontory of Cape Disappointment and the Ocean bounding [Ms. P. 71.] it on the west, that of the Chinook Hills, Ellice Point and its rugged face topped with the virgin forest on the North & the knob of Tongue Pt. and distant Kalamet range of hills on the South through which this broad expanse of water has wound its way now passing at our feet in a broad magnificent sheet 4 miles in width winding its course silently to the ocean where is seen and heard the lashing and roars of their tides at meeting seeming as it were to bid defiance to and eternal war with each other producing at times an impassable barrier to the fearless and undaunted sailor—beset as he here is by every danger he nevertheless proves adequate to overcome them.

Plumondon,⁵⁶ my Guide and Interpreter who is an old experienced voyageur and trapper is well acquainted with the country informs me that that portion lying to the north of the Columbia River is generally rough and rugged, much good soil in places, and is well timbered, the bottom lands along the rivers are good. These are those that bound the small streams falling into the Cola. and are made rich by the wash from the tides.

Mr. Birnie took us to see Ross Cox's tree⁵⁷ (*Pinus Lambertiana*) and altho a disbeliever in its dimensions, I can vouch for its existence as still near by is the canoe in which the great chief Kumkumly⁵⁸ was buried being a *flathead* his remains have not been suffered to rest, it is generally believed here that by the hands of Dr. Gardner it was removed to the institution in Glasgow or

⁵⁶ Descendants of Simon Plumondon still live in the State of Washington. He was a real character among the oldest pioneers. Wilkes says of him in the *Narrative*, Volume IV., pages 316-317: "He proved to have been the cockswain of General Cass's canoe, when on his trip to the lakes in the Northwest Territory; and a more useful person I have seldom met with, or one that could be so well depended upon. He had been for several years in this territory, having left the Company's service, married an Indian wife, and was now living on a farm of about fifty acres, at the Cowlitz, independent and contented. I have seldom seen so pretty a woman as his wife, or a more cheerful and good housewife; before her marriage she was the belle of the country, and celebrated for her feats of horsemanship."

⁵⁷ One of the Astorians whose books on the Columbia are among the classics in Northwest Americana.

⁵⁸ The famous one-eyed Chief of the Chinooks.

Edingh. the rest of his remains are all missing said to be removed by the natives to prevent farther depredations on them. [Ms. P. 71a]

24th. [May]

Mr. Birnie proposed a trip to Clatsop & Pt. Adams the Southern cape of the Columbia I was desirous of reconnoitering the Bay's Bar as far as I could and also to see the Missionaries who are established at Ft. Clatsop. We there found Mr. Frost & his wife. Our jaunt was a pleasant one in a large canoe we crossed Young's Bay and thence walked about 1½ miles. Mr. Frost received us kindly at his new residence built as I understood him with his own hands, his wife was engaged in washing appeared cheerful and happy altho' deprived of all society and little if any field for their labours here among the natives. The location of their residence seems to me unfortunate on the Sandy beach unsusceptible of any improvement. I am told he has in company with Mr. Koen also attached to the Mission a large tract of land about 4 miles from his residence where he is to be engaged raising a crop and superintending cattle.

Mr. Frost was a shoemaker by trade & his wife is what his class in life require an active smart body but I find there is little desire in either to bring about the conversion of the natives or in other words that they possess little of the missionary spirit.⁵⁹

Mr. Frost Mr. Birnie & myself visited the Clatsop village at Point Adams. Here we looked out anxiously for the Peacock as we understood that guns had been heard last evng & this morning, but we saw nothing.

We returned to dinner at Mrs. Frost which she had prepared herself, there was an attempt at showing off that made all her endeavors [Ms. P. 72] failures and only proved how she had been brought up which she was desirous of proving had been that of a lady but with ill success. Mr. Birnie and myself were greatly amused on the fright Mr. Frost was thrown into by embarking in a crazy canoe in order to avoid the long walk and which was half filled with water before we reached our destination and we all were well drenched the kind gentleman in particular who declared

⁵⁹ It is a pleasure to note that this slighting remark and others like it which follow in the Diary when referring to Mr. and Mrs. Frost were not carried over into the published *Narrative*. Captain Wilkes evidently felt that he had listened to idle gossip. In the *Washington Historical Quarterly* for October, 1907, may be found an article entitled "Last Survivor of the Oregon Mission of 1840," in which the present editor records an interview with Mrs. Frost (then Mrs. Beggs). Though more than ninety years of age, she remembered much of her experiences at the Fort Clatsop Mission.

we had been in imminent danger of our lives this served only to whet our laughing which continued in hearty strains throughout the day.⁶⁰

There are 2 other American settlers here Tibbits & Smith both decent men, mechanics I believe.

The Clatsop Village consists of a few rough indian lodges which are protected by a pallsade made of the Plank some fifteen feet in height placed on their ends in the ground sufficient protection against their enemies from other tribes who formerly made war upon each on the most trivial occasion. These are fast passing away & all their warlike habits is now generally shown in individual revenge. The H. B. Coy. have and do exert upon all occasions a most salutary influence on them preserving peace at all hazards and in case of the murder of a white in any section of the country they immediately fit out a war party and obtain the murderer, the peace & security in which a white man may now traverse those parts of this country I believe to be owing to the energy and perseverance with which the offenders are hunted up. About a year ago an Indian was executed at Fort George for the murder of a white man while asleep & taking his property he was tried found guilty & executed in the presence of most all of the settlers [Ms. P. 72a] in the Territory and I make no doubt it has had a very salutary effect.

On my way to Mr. Frosts I obtained a Planaria species of Helix saw great numbers of snakes & great quantities of dead fish a kind of [blank] on the beach. Mr. Birnie said they were thrown up in great abundance during the Autumn they are supposed to be killed by a kind of worm generated in the stomach. to this I suppose the naturalist will have paid attention. Mr. Frost has the credit of being a close & stingy man and idle withal.

We returned at 6 P. M. and found Mr. Drayton had been successful in getting some fossil shells in a clay bank about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile above Fort George they will prove extremely interesting as they are none of them now to be found alive.

25th [May.]

Wrote home by the Ship Cowlitz going to the Sd. Ids.⁶¹ a

⁶⁰ Captain Wilkes also changed this record of laughter at the expense of Mr. Frost. In the *Narrative*, Volume IV., page 323, the entry reads: "As the tide had risen so much as to render it difficult to walk along the beach, we returned to Mr. Frost's in a crazy canoe, and were very near being upset. Had this accident happened, it must have proved fatal to some of us in the strong tide that was running; we therefore felt much relieved to get again to the beach. After partaking of Mrs. Frost's good cheer, we returned to Astoria, much pleased with our day's jaunt."

⁶¹ Sandwich Islands.

short letter to the Secretary, to Dr. Judd & Mr. Bruis Meade. At noon with a strong N. W. Wind & the flood we took our Departure Mr. Drayton and self for Vancouver Mr. Waldron being left for a few days to await the Peacock. Mr. Birnie with true Scotch attention & politeness accompanied us to the Columbia Barque there in sight, but getting out into the midstr. we found more swell than we anticipated and we were obliged to make for the shore at Tongue Pt. here we landed and encamped for the night. We ascended to the top of Tongue Pt. 400 feet to a small hut erected by Mr. Birnie & which was for a year or two inhabited by a Sandwich Islander & his wife being employed there to raise potatoes. The soil is good based on trap rock it is covered with high trees on its banks [Ms. P. 73] This had been supposed I understand one of the best points to fortify on the River, but I see little use in making it such, as far as its being an isolated hill it might be made impregnable.—it could command the channel on that side of the River but the river here is three miles wide and the channel equally good to pass up it and therefore it would be useless—(For the defenses necessary to secure the mouth of the river & to protect the [illegible] see my remarks at Cape Disappointment in the sequel of this Journal).⁶²

Late in the afternoon we got rid⁶³ of Mr. Birnie by signaling for one of the Company's vessels that was passing and Mr. Drayton & myself betook ourselves to our tent where we passed a comfortable night notwithstanding it rained.

26th [May.]

The morning proved fine and we made an early start for Fort Vancouver and by sunset we had reached about 4 miles above Oak Pt. where we again encamped. In the afternoon we stopped at one of the villages at Oak Pt. for the purpose of obtaining salmon. Here we found the Medicine Man employed and we heard his incantation.

One of our Indians a young chief landed for the purpose of making inquiries relative to the purchase of salmon but he was

⁶² The "sequel" is not located as yet. In the *Narrative*, Volume IV., page 324, he speaks of defense and hints that the British were probably looking toward an insurance of title by occupancy. He says: "Tongue Point is a high bluff of trap rock, covered with trees of large dimensions: the top has been cleared and taken possession of by Mr. Birnie, who has erected a log hut and planted a patch of potatoes. The hut was inhabited for a year, by a Sandwich Islander and his wife. It is rather a rough spot for cultivation, but the end of occupancy was answered by it." In the monograph on *Hydrography*, pages 330-336, the Captain gives great details about the mouth of the Columbia and the safest channels. In 1849, for the California gold seekers, he published his *Western America*, in which, pages 72-76 are the same or similar details for entering the Columbia. In neither of these sources does he discuss proposed fortifications.

⁶³ An unfortunate reference to one who had been so constant in his helpfulness.

met in great wrath & with direful looks from all the men who seemed to desire to wreak vengeance upon him for his intrusion his retreat was accordingly precipitate—the consequence to the Indians is generally for this interruption the last of life the medicine man taking the advantage by imputing his failure of a cure to the intrusion during the ceremony and this invariably is followed by [Ms. P. 73a] the death of the Intruder by the relations of the deceased. *Plumondon* on my inquiring as to the cause of the young chiefs apparent fright & quick retreat told me he was afraid. That he had been placed in similar circumstances a short time before that his father died and the Medicine man had imputed it to a chief of the Klakatacks—whom this young chief shortly afterward shot dead—this has often created wars among the tribes and the only way in which it is overcome is by paying a fair valuation for the deceased—from 5 to 20 blankets according to the estimation in which the deceased was held.

27th [May]

We were awakened this morning at sunrise by the songs of the birds that added no little enchantment to the beauty of the scene around us; the day was beautiful and we advanced with alacrity—the Indians as merry as the birds at night we had reached the Warriors Pt. one of the Points of the Willamette River and we found a place with some difficulty to encamp on the opposite (or North side of the Cola.) in an inlet called the Caliputa. The Columbia has considerably changed in width being not over a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide. The Willamette with lower mouth was about 500 yds. Today we passed the Mount Coffin just below the Cowlitz and also the Coffin Rock so named from these being the principal burying places the canoes in which they are buried are in great numbers they are generally secured between 2 trees about 6 feet above the ground or on stakes & being covered with a great variety of ornaments, gifts brought [Ms. P. 74] by their relatives and friends to hang thereon. I was told that this is frequently done for several months after burial they are as fast going to decay as the living.⁶⁴

The Columbia was thought to be some 15 feet above its lowest mark, it gives one a good idea of its magnitude when it is thus swelled (but subsequent observations at its lowest state in Sept.) proved to me that to give one a *true* idea of it, it must be seen both high & low.

⁶⁴ In the *Narrative* he says the sepulchers were going to decay.

Our Indians cunningly kept close to the shore & thus took advantage of all the eddies. On our way today we met a canoe that gave us the Intelligence that one of our Indians had lost his child, on our first stopping place (shortly after) he began to scarify himself on the leg in several places until he bled profusely which being done he lighted his pipe and seemed to smoke for consolation, this was all done apart from the rest, who still continued to make merry. As far as the countenance could be an indication of grief he felt it, but the next day he was as merry as the rest, they are lively and gay at their work all have a pleasing expression of countenance, feminine in their looks and lives which they very much partake of in their manners.

Mr. Drayton shot a golden crested pigeon which gave us a supper & after toasting our [illegible] over a large fire we pitched our tent & passed a comfortable night.

28th [May.]

Entered the Calipooya a chain of inland lakes which when the waters of the Columbia are high are connected and afford a passage near the river on the left bank of slack water and thus the strong current of the river is avoided 'Thro' these we continued our route within a mile of Vancouver passing the dairy and some fine meadow land with herds of fine cattle grazing [Ms. P. 74a] flocks of sheep of the best English & Spanish breed that yield some extraordinary fleeces.

As it was necessary to make a small portage with the canoe Mr. D. & myself determined to walk to the Fort by the dairy road—this was shortly reached through a fine wood of large pines entering the village of Vancouver in its rear. The woods were filled with various flowers the Honeysuckle, lupine, &c. The village consists of some 50 comfortable log houses placed in some order or rows and inhabited by the Company's servants, swarming with fine looking children half breeds and pure Indians. The Fort consists of several good buildings including dwelling homes & magazines surrounded by a high palisade. Dr. McLoughlin was not within we were politely invited in and after remaining a few minutes he came galloping up and gave us a most warm reception ordered dinner for us & made us welcome. He is a fine looking person of robust frame, with a frank open countenance about 50 years of florid complexion his hair white is a Canadian by birth of Scotch parentage enthusiastic in disposition and I should think of

great energy of character and well suited for the situation he occupies which requires no small talent and industry to fill.

The fort is situated upon an extensive prairie which is now under crops of wheat potatoes peas &c. It is the intention I understood to convert it into meadow for grass as the wheat crop is uncertain on account of the overflow by the river & to plant wheat on the upland prairie which is a light soil but I think capable of raising good crops with attention to them. [Ms. P. 75] There are generally three steps or prairie levels bordering the river of this country, the first about 10 feet above the river at low water, 2nd 200 & 3rd or high prairie 300 the general level of the country where it is not hilly or mountainous—the lower and 2nd is the best soil. The upper for the most part shingly.

It is of about 3000 acres including all that is claimed or thereabouts and is as far as I am able to judge admirably adapted for agriculture grazing &c.

The harvest this year it was understood to yield about 8000 bushels of wheat. The numbers of workmen that are employed here is great many of different mechanical trades and all the materials employed seem of the very best that can be procured. The company's economy seems to be to have things of the very best kind. Their present stock consists of [blank] horses milch cows [blank] cattle [blank] sheep [blank] hogs. The land does not appear to me to be at all superior to that one meets elsewhere. it is extremely well situated and the money & labour expended upon it very considerable. it is probably now beginning to yield some returns. It is a new company called the Puget Sound Company⁶⁵ that owns and carries on the farming or agricultural operation. The stockholders are the gentlemen belonging to the H. B. Co's establishment. They have the contract to supply the Russian Co.⁶⁶ with their provisions which gives them a good market for all their produce above what is consumed at the diff^t. forts in supplying the H. B. Co. proper although it is not supposed that the low price of contract can yield them any profit yet it is obtained in the Furs obtained by the H. B. Co. on the Territory leased by the Russians and hereafter their flocks & herds will increase [Ms. P. 75a] so much as to make it a very profitable business. The sundry hides & tallow borne by the annual vessels which now go to England with it is thus a valuable cargo but $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the ships empty—I feel well

⁶⁵ The Puget Sound Agricultural Company.

⁶⁶ A brisk trade was enjoyed with the Russian American Fur Company in what is now known as Alaska.

satisfied that this country is better adapted to the raising of cattle than even California and not so subject to drought, the cattle in consequence of the climate are better able to bear the weather, are larger & stronger. Beef can be packed and butter made. There are few finer Dairy farms than those attached to the Fort at Vancouver and the cattle are in remarkable fine condition. The Company deserves much credit for the introduction of the best breeds from England.

The Establishment at the Fort is on an extensive scale. They have a table for the Chief Factor and clerks one for their wives--another for the American Missionaries the sick & the Catholic Priest are again furnished separate meals. All is done in order & I should think with some economy. In the establishment is an extensive bakery, coopers Blacksmith trade office for Indian purchases, shops for retail where any articles may be purchased at as low a price if not cheaper than in the U.S. a profit of 80 per cent on the London wholesale price is all to cover expenses. This is increased to 100 per cent at any of the other posts to defray the necessary charges of extra carriage, the articles are all good and principally those suitable to the wants of the settlers. In the office also all the accounts of the Columbia Department including that of New Caledonia are here made up and the furs received & accounts settled which [Ms. P. 76] occasions a large mass of business to pass through the Establishment. Mr. Douglass the associate of Dr. McLaughlin assists in this Department & takes charge of the whole during his absence.

I was introduced here to several of the Missionaries who for the most part make this their home & are extremely kindly and well entertained by the Company at no expense whatever there are usually some $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen staying with their wives and there have been as many as a dozen. At present there are Mr. & Mrs. Smith of the Board of Missions Mr. & Mrs. Griffith, Mr. & Mrs. Clarke of the Self-Supporting Mission, Mr. Waller of the Col^a Mission and two others--Mr. and Mrs. Smith have been in the country some 2 years are disgusted with their prospects and will leave for the Sandwich Islands the first opportunity. he declared to me there was no duty for a missionary few Indians and what there are nomadic in their natures and he felt it was but a waste of time to stay in this country his avowed object in leaving however is the health of his wife. All the above with the exception of Mr. Waller came across the mountains they represent the passes through

the mountains as by no means difficult and no apprehension of hostile attacks, a deplorable account is given of the dissipation and morals of the fur companies. Mr. Griffith & Clarke are entirely disappointed in their hopes of self support and are now moneyless and were it not for the kindness of the Company would be houseless. I should think them illy adapted for anything—The description of the Tollity valley⁶⁷ was so favorable that I advised these missionaries to take farms there and exert themselves. It lies next to the Willamette Valley West of it & is separated by the Yam Hills from it subsequently to this at my last visit Mr. Griffith informed me he had taken my advise [Ms. P. 76a] and was much pleased with his prospects. I shall have occasion to speak more fully about the Missionaries when I come to the Willamette Valley settlement.

The view from this Fort is extensive and beautiful a large farm under fine cultivation meets the eye with its extensive granaries and buildings—this fine view winding its way among the untouched forest backed by the distant blue hills and the striking snowy peak of Mt. Hood an object which one seldom tires in viewing. All give one the impression that at no distant day it must become thriving with a busy population.⁶⁸

Dr. McLaughlin showed us the rooms appropriated for us, and told us the bell was the summons to tea or meals.

At tea I was introduced to the gentlemen, some 6 or 7. attached to the establishment—a profusion of good fare served in an ample hall⁶⁹ Dr. McL. at the head of the table myself on his right & Mr. Douglass on his left and the others according to their rank I mention this as every one assumes the place to which he is entitled to or given him with almost military etiquette.

All their wants here are now supplied with the exception of groceries. Canadian French is spoken here entirely the servants of the Company being generally of that class & those who come out from England use it.

The house I am quartered in is a log building scaled of one story with French windows & exceedingly comfortable except the bunks instead of bed—that is made of pine boards. This—however one gets used to in a short time—

The routine of a day it is perhaps well to [Ms. P. 77] describe—At early dawn the bell is rung for the working parties and

⁶⁷ Tualatin Plains, sometimes spelled Twallity.

⁶⁸ Present day citizens and tourists can appreciate his prophetic vision.

⁶⁹ That ample hall has been mentioned by all early writers.

soon after all are at work. The sound of the hammer clink of the anvil and rumbling of cart wheels was a great novelty to us and not an unpleasing one after so long an absence of it and so unlike the notes of the morning in the forests—at 8. the bell is again rung & all go to breakfast at nine they are again at work which continues till one an hour for dinner all dine and again at 6 when the labours of the day close. This is the round of employment and every one is busy indeed. Vancouver is no place for an idle person destitute of amusements except reading.

29th [May]

We found ourselves comfortably located at Vancouver Several of the Missionaries called upon me found them possessed of little information respecting the country having kept no notes or made any observations relative to the soil temperature climate what observations they did make unsatisfactory explanations about the country and certainly not to be relied on, therefore I have put little or no confidence in what I gathered from them to Mr. Drayton I gave the task of obtaining missionary information being much better adapted to such duties than myself (see his report)⁷⁰ The Walla Walla Grand Ronde and Koccoskees⁷¹ now distinct seemed to be more familiar with those gentlemen than other parts They all agree that it is a fine grazing country but that few spots of it are susceptible of farming to advantage; the country is greatly in want of timber. Dr. [Mr.] Douglass & Capt. Varney returned today from the Willamette Mr. Douglass is as I have before said a chief factor he appears a shrewd & intelligent gentleman about 40 years of age tall & good looking with a florid complexion & black hair. I was glad to meet with him, he has had from merit one of the most [Ms. P. 77a] rapid promotions in the company's service that has taken place having been only [blank] years [blank]⁷² He has not long since returned from California where he has been making purchases of wheat & cattle also preparing the way to extend this operation into that country by the introduction of merchandise & securing the furs in this district of Territory. Few can compete with them in the introduction of goods little or no expenses being incurred besides what it would be necessary to go to in furtherance of their present duties.

The water of the Columbia rose 18 inches in 12 hours last

⁷⁰ Captain Wilkes incorporated the substance of Drayton's report in the published *Narrative*.

⁷¹ Indian name for the Clearwater, a branch of Snake River at Lewiston.

⁷² Another case of leaving spaces for facts which he failed to fill in. Sir James Douglas later became Governor of Vancouver's Island.

night and great fears are entertained that the crops on the lower prairies will be destroyed. The usual time for the highest point of the river is in June middle but the heat of the present Summer & Spring is supposed to have brought it to its highest sooner. One can scarcely have an idea of its flow how swollen it is, and to see the huge trunks of thick gigantic forests borne like chips on its bosom astonishes one, they frequently are lodged in some shallow places where they remain for years proving of great detriment to the channel & not unfrequently changing its course entirely and at times of serious inconvenience to its navigation. The Thomas Perkins Brig (Am.) whilst lying near the bank was very much annoyed by them occasionally getting athwart his hawse.

The waters of the Columbia are quite clear & bring no sediment to fertilize the soil and when they come in contact with the crops from their coldness they destroy everything. The temperature of the water whilst the Porpoise was at Van^y. in Sept. was [blank] [Ms. P. 78] Mr. Douglass mentioned as well authenticated facts that the produce of wheat in California was 175. for one & the 2nd years produce without tillage nearly of the same amount (but I shall speak more of this under California).

Company's store is well supplied with all necessary articles which I had an opportunity of seeing in fitting myself out with camp equipage.

Everything is conducted with great system. The Servants of the Company receive their weekly allowance every Saturday afternoon for this purpose work is stopped at 5 o'clock. One hears great complaints about the allowance of food not only as to its quantity but quality without having any disposition to pry into that [illegible] I could not help perceiving that their complaints were well founded. That is if I take account we in the U. S. judge the rations for a laboring man & I am very well satisfied that no one would put up with its quality. I do trust to hear that their causes of complaints & hardships of their servants will meet one of these days with attention for I am very well satisfied that few or none would be found to complain if it was not for their scanty messes of food and its quality in many cases can say them to use a great part of the money (wages) only £17 a year to obtain things to eat. There are undoubtedly situations in which it is unavoidable in carrying on this business for instance on the outposts, but where plenty is surrounding them on all sides it appears strange that it should be denied them. This is an old custom and probably

the council have no desire to change the ration it certainly ought to have been done long since. The Servants of the Company are engaged for 5 years and after that time has expired the Company are under bonds to return them to England or the Canadas in case of cruises. [Ms. P. 78a] They received as I said about 17£ each & are fed when their time expires almost all are in debt consequently they are obliged to serve an extra time on the expiration of which they all as formerly have long since married an Indian or have had children & find themselves unable to leave & whilst they so continue they are as it were still bound to the Company and still under their *surveillance*.