

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST AMERICANA

### *The Authorship of "The Prairie Flower"*

A news note in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* for December, 1927, pp. 397-398, calls attention to the claim that *The Prairie Flower*, an early novel of Oregon, was in reality the work of Sidney W. Moss and not that of Emerson Bennett the reputed author. Bancroft in his *History of Oregon*, page 265, sets forth the claim of Mr. Moss to the authorship of this novel. He gives Mr. Bennett allowance for polishing up the manuscript a bit but does not hesitate to give Mr. Moss the credit for the original draft of the work. References to Mr. Moss are to be found in Scott's *History of the Oregon Country*, Volume 1, pages 215, 300, and Volume 3, pages 348-350.

Additional confirmation of the claim for Mr. Moss is furnished by Miss Mirpah G. Blair of the Oregon State Library who supplies a clipping from the editorial page of the *Oregonian* for February 21, 1928 together with a personal letter from Mrs. Eva Emery Dye from which the following is quoted: "I knew Mr. Moss well in his old age, he often told me of the loss of 'The Prairie Flower'. As no publishing opportunities were here he handed the MS to a friend by the name of Johnson, who was returning to the States, to find a publisher. It is some years since I saw a copy but think Bennett in the preface, or opening, mentions a mysterious stranger who gave him the story. . . . Mr. Moss was an eccentric character, often came to my house with his pockets stuffed with poems of former years, some quite creditable. He has a daughter, Mrs. Nora Moss Clark (Mrs. Theodore Clark) still living in Oregon City who may have some further information. Frequent items about this have appeared in Oregon papers. The characters in that story are supposed to be people in that immigration, 1842."

There is confusion as to the identity of the man who carried the manuscript back East. It is stated in Bancroft that it was taken by Overton Johnson who returned in 1843. This is of course an error as Mr. Overton Johnson did not make the return trip until 1845 as set forth in his book *Route Across the Rocky Mountains* (Lafayette, Indiana, 1846). Mrs. Nora Moss Clark states that the manuscript was entrusted to a Mr. William Johnson. Users of the Checklist of *Pacific Northwest Americana*

are requested to turn to item 326 and make note of the fact that this title has been frequently attributed to Sidney Walter Moss, a pioneer of 1842, long a resident of Oregon City. Mr. Moss is thus ranked as the first novelist of Oregon. It is conceded that *Leni Leoti*, a sequel to *The Prairie Flower*, was the work of Mr. Bennett.

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#### *Chinook Jargon Dictionaries*

Mr. E. H. Thomas of Seattle contributed an article to the June number of *American Speech* (Volume 2, pages 377-384) on the Chinook Jargon. The current issue of the same magazine (Volume 3, pages 182-185, February, 1928) contains a supplementary article by Mr. Thomas upon Chinook dictionaries. Both of these articles have been reprinted. Collectors of books relating to Pacific Northwest history will be interested in checking against the titles listed by Mr. Thomas. The work has been prepared however for the general reader rather than for specialists.

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#### *Girardin the Artist?*

When Dr. John Evans, the geologist, went from Washington City during the Summer of 1853 to join the I. I. Stevens Railway Survey, he was accompanied by a young artist by the name of E. de Girardin. Mr. David I. Bushnell, Jr. writes from the Smithsonian Institution to gain particulars in regard to Girardin. He states that he made many sketches and remained in Oregon and Washington at least three years. He is especially desirous of learning who he was and what became of him after 1856. Any reader of this note who may have information to supply will confer a favor by sending it to this *Quarterly* or to Mr. Bushnell, in care of the Smithsonian Institution. A brief reference to Mr. Girardin is made in the Supplement to Volume 1 of the *Stevens Report* (Washington, 1859. Serial Number 922, pages 177-178.)

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