

EARLY WASHINGTON POST OFFICES

While the writer was compiling information recently about early Oregon post offices, he took the opportunity of copying the government records of the earliest post offices in Washington. These data with a few explanatory and historical notes are printed below.

The records of the earliest post offices in Washington are included in the Oregon records, and the counties are simply listed under the heading Oregon Territory. The data below covers the period beginning January, 1850, and ending September, 1853, or nearly four years. The writer hopes to be able to continue the study to later dates.

The government records are not as full as they might be, but they are sufficient to show that the first two post offices in what is now Washington, were established on January 8, 1850, one with the name Nesqually, now Olympia, and the other at Vancouver. In each case the dates in the tables follow the names of the postmasters they pertain to. The vertical lines indicate the ruling of the original record book. The notations in the first column were obviously written in subsequent to the original entries. The exact style of spelling and punctuation has been followed.

Lewis Co Oregon Ter'y.¹

chgd	Nesqually	Michael T Simmons ²	8 Jan: '50.	to Olympia	28 Aug '50
late	"Nesqually" now	Olympia	Michael T. Simmons.	28 Aug 50	Now in Washg Territory
now	Monticello	David Stone	28 Nov '50	in Thurston Co	Washg Tery
now	Pacific City	James D Holman ³	26 Dec '50	in "Pacific" Co	
now	Oak Point	Alexr S Abernethy ⁴	18 Feb '51	in Thurston Co	Washg Tery
now	Catalamet ⁵	Jas. Birnie	8 Aug '51	in Lewis Co	Washg Tery
Now	Steilacoom	James Hale	6 July '52	in Thurston Co	22 Mch '53

Vancouver Co Oregon Ter'y.⁸

Now Vancouver || Moses H. Kellogg⁷ | 8 Jan: 50 || in "Clark" Co. |

Clark Co. Oregon.

chgd | Vancouver || Moses K. Kellogg, | 8 Jan '50 || Richd. H. Lansdale | 5 Aug. '50 || to Columbia City | 12 Dec. '50 ||

Late Vancouver now | Columbia City in Clarke Co. Washington Tery || Richd. H. Lansdale | 12 Dec. '50 || James R. Shepherd | 28 Jan '51 || I. B. Lynde | 30 June '51 || Wm. Vogdersandt | 4 Mar. 52 || Elisha Camp | 7 Jan. '53 ||

chgd | Mounth of Willamette⁸ || Ellis Walker | 30 June '51 || to "Sauvie's Island" | 5 Mar. '52 ||

chd | Cascades || F. A. Chenoweth⁹ | 5 Nov '51 || Danl. F. Bradford | 6 Sep '52 || to Wash'g Territory |

late "Mounth of Willamette" Now | Sauvie's Island || Ellis Walker | 5 Mar. '52 || Benjamin Howell | 19 May '53 || into Washington. |

Now | Washougal || Joseph S. Watkins | 6 Aug. '52 || in "Clark" Co Washington | Territory ||

Late in Clarke Co Wash'g Tery | Cascades || Isaac H. Bush | 3 Sept '53 ||

Pacific County¹⁰

Late in "Lewis" Co now | Pacific City || James D. Holman | 26 Dec '50 || in Same Co Washington | Territory ||

Now | Chenook || Washington Hall. | 19 Oct. '52 || in Same Co Washg | Tery ||

Thurston Co.¹¹ Oregon Territory.

now | Port Townsend || Frans. W. Pettygrove¹² | 28 Sep. '52 || in Jefferson Co | Washg Tery ||

Now | Seattle¹³ || Arthur A Denny | 12 Oct. 52 || in King Co Washington | Tery. ||

late in Lewis Co now | Steilacoom || James Hale | 1 Oct. '52 || Thos. M. Chambers | 19 May 53 || in Pierce Co | Washington || Territory.

Notes

1. Lewis County. This county, originally in Oregon Territory, was established on December 21, 1845. Earlier in the same year an effort had been made to establish two districts, or counties, north of the Columbia River, to be named Lewis and Clark, but the bill as finally passed by the provisional legislature, provided for one district named Vancouver. This was the district that was divided into Vancouver County and Lewis County on December 21, 1845. At the same time a bill was passed substituting the word county for the word district. For further details see Smith's *The Naming of Counties in the State of Washington*. Washington Territory was established in March, 1853, and as a result of this act, counties previously listed under the heading Oregon became automatically part of the new Washington Territory.

2. Michael T. Simmons, 1814-1867, was a pioneer of 1844 and settled near the present site of Olympia in 1845. For his biography, see Scott's *History of the Oregon Country*, II:232; for early history of Olympia, see Meany's *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, 197.

3. James Duval Holman, 1814-1882, was a pioneer of 1846, and was for many years a prominent business man of southwestern Washington and of Portland. His promotion of Pacific City was not successful. He later established Ilwaco near the site of Pacific City. He was the father of Frederick V. Holman of the Portland bar, late president of the Oregon Historical Society. The Oregon Territorial legislature established Pacific County on February 4, 1851.

4. Alexander S. Abernethy was a brother of George Abernethy, first governor of Oregon under the provisional government. He operated a sawmill at Oak Point, and a nearby stream bears his name. The Winship settlement at Oak Point, in the fur trading period, was on the Oregon side of the Columbia.

5. Now Cathlamet. The original Indian village *Caltharmar* was on the south shore of the Columbia River. See McArthur's *Oregon Geographic Names*, 64.

6. Vancouver District, Oregon, was established by a bill by the provisional legislature approved on August 20, 1845. The bill provided "That all that portion of the Territory of Oregon lying north of the middle of the main channel of the Columbia river, shall be and the same is hereby declared a separate district under the name and style of Vancouver District." At the next session of

the legislature an effort was made to change the name to Clark District. A petition was presented urging that the name of Vancouver District be changed to Clark and that the district be divided. As a result of this petition, the district was divided and the names of the subdivisions were changed from district to county, and one of the parts of Vancouver County was named Lewis, but the bill to change the name of Vancouver District was indefinitely postponed. It was not changed until an act of September 3, 1849, when the name Clark was officially adopted. It is apparent that authorities in Washington, D.C., were not aware of the change in name of the county when Vancouver post office was established.

7. Observe the discrepancy in Kellogg's middle initial here and below. The name of Vancouver post office was changed to Columbia City because of anti-British sentiment on the part of Samuel R. Thurston, Oregon's Congressional delegate. This is explained fully in *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, 324, and also in Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, II:118. Bancroft's reference to the *Oregon Statesman* is not correct; it should be March 28, 1851, not May 28. Richard Hyatt Lansdale, not Lonsdale, was a prominent pioneer resident of Washington.

8. Obviously carried under the wrong county heading. The post office Mouth of Willamette, later Sauvie's Island, was always in Oregon and never in Washington, according to tradition on the Island. For information about the island and the office, see McArthur's *Oregon Geographic Names*, 311 and 312.

9. Francis A. Chenoweth, 1819-1899, was speaker of the first Washington Territorial legislature. For his biography, see Scott's *History of the Oregon Country*, II:271.

10. Pacific County was created February 4, 1851, by cutting off the southwest corner of Lewis County.

11. Thurston County was created on January 12, 1852, while Washington was still part of Oregon, and was named for Samuel R. Thurston, Oregon's first delegate to Congress. Elwood Evans is authority for the statement that it was first planned to name the county Simmons, after Michael T. Simmons, mentioned above.

12. Francis W. Pettygrove, 1812-1887, was a native of Maine and came to Oregon by sea in 1843, and in 1845 tossed a copper coin with A. L. Lovejoy to decide who should name the present city of Portland. Pettygrove won. See *Oregon Geographic Names*, 284. Pettygrove was a founder of Portland and also of Port Townsend. See Scott's *History of the Oregon Country*, II:319, etc. For

history of the name Port Townsend, see *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, 228.

13. For detailed history of the founding of Seattle, see *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, 261.

LEWIS A. McARTHUR