

FINDING A PHOTOGRAPH OF MARCUS WHITMAN

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America maintains the Presbyterian Historical Society with headquarters at 518-32 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. That Society issues a magazine called *Journal of the Department of History*. In the number for December, 1932, (Vol. XV., No. 4) there is inset the reproduction of a photograph from an original ambrotype of Marcus Whitman.

A brief but definite article about the picture is supplied by Rev. William Parker Finney, Secretary of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

The discovery is of such deep interest in the Pacific Northwest that permission was sought to reprint the article in the *Washington Historical Quarterly*. That permission was graciously granted. No arrangements have ever been made for the reproduction of pictures in the *Washington Historical Quarterly*. Those who may have obtained a copy of that December issue of the *Journal of the Department of History* from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Pa., will have a print from the only actual photograph of Marcus Whitman known to be in existence. It will be worth saving for the history values.

The article accompanying that photograph follows:

"Photograph of Marcus Whitman"

"There came recently to the Department of History a letter inquiring if it is true, as the writer had heard, that there is a statue of Marcus Whitman on the exterior of the Witherspoon Building, Presbyterian headquarters in Philadelphia. It was further intimated that if such were the case, the inquirer would be pleased to know from what source the artist had received impression of the figure and face of the famous missionary, since it is stated in the volume entitled 'How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon,' that 'no picture of Dr. Whitman is in existence,' and in lieu of that a photograph is shown in the book' of a namesake who was said by the family very closely to resemble Dr. Whitman.'

"The writer then made the surprising statement that she herself had upon her bureau a photograph of Dr. Whitman, copied from an original ambrotype which had come down from her grandmother, who was a first cousin of Marcus Whitman. She

further stated that her grandparents lived on a farm near Lockport, New York, which was also the native state of Dr. Whitman, and that she herself in her youth, with others of the family, had often heard her grandmother speak of Dr. Whitman, and tell of his wonderful experiences, and of his tragic death.

“With such information as this, the Department was not slow in replying to Mrs. L., and in assuring her that there was a noble statue of Marcus Whitman on the Walnut Street front of the Witherspoon Building, easily distinguished from the other similar figures of Presbyterian worthies which adorn the structure by the fact that his hand rests on a large, heavy wheel, symbolic reminder of his having driven the first wagon that ever crossed the continental plains and climbed over the Rocky Mountains into Oregon. Then followed eager inquiry for further confirmation and particulars of her story, which were freely given, and request for the loan of the ambrotype that copies might be made from it. It is, therefore, a rare privilege which we have in presenting to our constituency on the honor page of our *Journal*, the likeness of this splendid man, and pay tribute to his supreme devotion to his divine Lord, to his intrepid missionary spirit, to his exalted patriotism, and to his faithfulness even to a martyr’s death.”

A Vain Search

In my *History of the State of Washington*, published by The Macmillan Company in 1909, I tried to portray the heroic and effective career of Marcus Whitman to which I had given years of study. The search for a photograph was told in the following footnote beginning on page 127:

“Fifteen years ago the writer began an earnest search for a portrait of Marcus Whitman, hoping to persuade the people of the State of Washington to place his statue in Statuary Hall, Washington City. Others were found who had pursued a similar search for years in vain. No portrait could be bound. When Doctor Oliver W. Nixon’s book, ‘How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon,’ appeared in 1895, the author was at once appealed to for the source of his portrait of Whitman. He replied: ‘Now as to the portraits. They gave me more trouble than anything else. There are no portraits taken from life of either Dr. Whitman or his wife. They are all pictures composite in character and made from a variety of sources. One of my room-mates and most in-

timate friends, 45 years ago, and still living (Samuel Campbell) was an inmate of the Whitman home the year before the massacre. He was an educated man and something of an artist and capable of giving a wise judgment. Then I had another very intelligent man—a Mr. Seeley—near this city, who drove the Doctor for a week in his sleigh when starting on the journey. Again, the late Professor Marcus Whitman Montgomery, of the Chicago Theological Seminary, was declared to bear so close a resemblance to Whitman that they could scarcely be told from each other. We had the best artists, and they were untiring in their work, and the pictures went back and forth and were criticised and altered until all were satisfied they were as correct as could be made. After the pictures were complete they were sent to an old gentleman, Captain Paulding (I believe) of Baraboo, Wisconsin. He was janitor of the church where Dr. and Mrs. Whitman worshiped in New York. He at once, in looking over the pictures, remarked: "That is truly my old friend Mark Whitman just as he looked the day he married'."

After the publication of the book, I learned that a sculptor had made a rugged statue of the man for the Witherspoon Building as mentioned above in Mr. Finney's article. Since then a picture of that statue has been displayed each year before the class in History of the Northwest.

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