

HISTORIC SKETCHES

— OF —

WALLA WALLA, WHITMAN, COLUMBIA AND
GARFIELD COUNTIES,
WASHINGTON TERRITORY,

— AND —

UMATILLA COUNTY, OREGON.

BY FRANK T. GILBERT,

PORTLAND, OREGON,

1882.

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METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WAITSBURG.

Rev. George M. Berry, who was sent to Walla Walla in the fall of 1859, by the Willamette District Conference, held the first services of this denomination in Waitsburg early the following year, and a church organization was soon after effected with John W. McGhee and A. T. Hard as stewards. The church flourished and became strong, having at one time a membership of seventy-two. At that time it included all the settlements for ten miles around; but from it have since been formed organizations at Dayton, and at Columbia, Copei and Washington school houses, reducing its number to eight persons. A Sunday-school of some forty scholars is maintained under the superintendence of Mr. Nelson.

The church edifice was erected in 1871, at an expense of \$2,500, and the property is now valued at \$3,000. The officers are D. Roberts, class leader, and J. W. Brock, steward. The pastors who have successively been in charge are Revs. Berry, Flinn, Deardorff, Reeser, Hoxie, Gift, Reeser, Goddard, Hoxie, Adams, Elliott, Koontz, Hoagland, Warren, Anderson, Towner, and LaCornu.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WAITSBURG.

This denomination has an organization in Waitsburg under charge of Rev. T. M. Boyd, but no church edifice has been erected. Mr. Boyd came here as a missionary in 1877.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH, WAITSBURG.

The doctrines of this denomination were first preached in this vicinity by Elder Hamilton, who organized a church in Spring Valley, four miles from Waitsburg, in 1876. Services were held in the school-house by Elders Hamilton, Richison, and Buchannan. The first regular pastor was Rev. Neal Cheatham, who has present charge of the church. They are erecting on Main street, in Waitsburg, a substantial frame house of worship, at an expense of \$3,000, the money being subscribed by citizens. They now have a membership of sixty and a union Sunday-school of about eighty scholars in the M. E. church with James Nelson for superintendent.

WAITSBURG LODGE NO. 16, A. F. & A. M.

This lodge was organized March 23, 1870, under a dispensation granted in February. A charter was issued September 15, 1870, which perished in the fire of 1880. The first officers were: S. M. Wait, W. M.; James Torrence, S. W.; H. J. Hollingsworth, J. W.; Looney C. Bond, S. D.; Anderson Cox, J. D.; Samuel Ellis, T.; Platt A. Preston, S.; Levy Reynolds, Tyler. The first hall, built in 1870 by the Good Templars, was burned September 13, 1880, and the present one was built the same fall, at a cost of \$1,200. It was erected in connection with C. S. Vincent's store, the second story, only, belonging to the lodge. The present membership is twenty-seven,

CREATION OF UMATILLA COUNTY.

At this time all of Oregon east of the Cascades belonged to Wasco county. A glance at the map will show how ponderous and unwieldy it was, embracing more, than half of Oregon. When formed, the farthest settlement to the east was at the Dalles and it was organized with that place as the county seat, with all the "wilderness" to the east and south added to it. The impossibility of people in the new settlements going so far to transact official business was evident. If they were to enjoy the benefits of a government, it must be one of their own and accessible. The Powder river settlers, where the largest population was, and where the need of a government was the most urgent, sent a petition to the Legislature, asking for the creation of a new county to be called Baker. The petition was presented on the ninth of September, 1862, by O. Humason, Representative from Wasco, and was referred to a special committee of three. These gentlemen thoroughly investigated the question, and became convinced that at least two new counties were necessary; for a seat of justice on Powder river would not benefit the people of Umatilla or John Day rivers, while one west of the mountains would be of no advantage to those on the other side. They therefore reported two bills, one for Baker, to embrace all of the state east of the summit ridge of the Blue mountains, and one for Umatilla, to contain the John Day and Umatilla settlements, the county seat to be with the latter. The bills passed, the one creating this county being as follows:

AN ACT TO ORGANIZE UMATILLA COUNTY.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon.* That all that portion of Wasco county, beginning in the middle of the channel of the Columbia river, opposite the mouth of Willow creek; thence up the middle of the channel of said river to the point where the 46th parallel of latitude crosses said river; thence east along said parallel to the summit of the Blue mountains; thence south west along the summit of said mountains to the divide between the middle and south forks of John Day's river; thence north west along said divide to its intersection with the south fork of John Day's river; thence down the channel of said river to its junction with the north fork of said river; and from thence northerly along the ridge dividing the waters of John Day's and Willow creek to the place of beginning, be and the same is hereby created and organized into a separate county by the name of Umatilla county.

SEC. 2. That all within the said boundaries shall compose a county for all civil or military purposes, and shall be subject to the same laws, rules, regulations, and restrictions as all other counties, and entitled to elect the same officers as other counties of this state.

SEC. 3. The county seat of Umatilla county shall be temporarily located at or near the Umatilla river, opposite the mouth of the Houtamia, or McKay creek, at what is known as Marshall's Station, until the same shall be removed by the citizens of said county as provided by law.

SEC. 4. Until the next general election, the following named officers are hereby appointed to discharge the duties of their respective offices as prescribed by law, viz: County Judge, Richard Combs; County Clerk H. H. Hill; County Commissioners, Thomas McCoy and John R. Courtney; Sheriff, Alfred Marshall.

SEC. 5. The county court is hereby authorized to appoint all county and precinct officers not herein before provided for, and to fill all vacancies until the next general election.

JOEL PALMER,

Speaker House Representatives.

WILSON BOWLBY,

President of the Senate.

Approved September 27, 1862.

ADDISON C. GIBBS.

There was then no regular town within its limits except the mining camps on John Day river. For this reason the county seat was located in the center of that portion which promised to contain the largest population, and on the great route of travel from Dalles to Walla Walla, and from the Columbia to Powder river. At this time an effort was being made to start a town on the Columbia, where goods for Powder river could be landed and forwarded to their destination, thus saving time and distance over the Walla Walla route. It was expected to become a rival of Walla Walla; to be, in fact, the "Sacramento of Oregon," and door to the mines. A point eight miles below the mouth of Umatilla river was selected and a town called Grand Ronde Landing was laid out. This was followed early the next spring by a new town just above the mouth of the Umatilla, which was laid off and christened Columbia, though the name was soon changed to Umatilla Landing or Umatilla City.

Thus before the county was fairly organized, two new candidates for the seat of justice had sprung up. In the struggle between the rivals on the river, Umatilla Landing prevailed, and Grand Ronde resigned in its favor. The discovery of the Boise mines that winter and the great trade that at once sprang up with southern Idaho, gave an impetus to Umatilla as soon as it started that caused a busy, thriving city to appear in a few months where had been but a wide waste of sand. Umatilla City, as the only real town, wanted to be the county seat, but there was no election till 1864, and no way could be found to secure the prize. The county court met at Marshall's Station and fully organized the county by the appointment of all necessary officers. The name of the place was changed to Middleton, and an unsuccessful effort was made to build up a town. J. W. Johnson was appointed county judge to succeed Richard Coombs, and S. Hamilton took John R. Courtney's place as commissioner. The government was not in good working order until May, 1863, when a special meeting of the court was held and the first record of its proceedings kept. The officers, after appointments made at that session, were:

UMATILLA COUNTY OFFICERS IN 1863.

County Judge—J. W. Johnson.

County Commissioners—*Thomas K. McCoy and S. Hamilton.

County Clerk—D. A. Richards.

Sheriff—Alfred Marshall.

Treasurer—Welcome Mitchell.

Assessor—Marshall R. Burk.

Surveyor—Charles W. Shively.

Coroner—Dr. John Peel.

Supt. of Schools—John McCaïne.

The court also ordered the construction of a log jail, 12x20 feet, with one cell and a jailor's room; but took no steps towards building a court house. The assessment roll was made out that summer, and showed a total of \$353,702, upon which a tax of \$1.70 per \$100 was levied. The number of people lying in the new county at the time it was set off from Wasco was small, and probably more than half of them lived

*Resigned in February, 1864. E. A. Graham appointed.

on John Day river and Granite creek, now in Grant county. At the June election in 1864, there were cast in the county 748 votes, and allowing four people to each voter, which was a liberal proportion as the population consisted largely of men without families, it would give a total of 2,992*. From this must be taken about 1,000 for Umatilla City, which sprang up after the county was created and drew its population chiefly from without its limits, and about 1,500 more for the miners on John Day and Granite creek, leaving within the present limits of Umatilla probably not more than 400 people. A majority of these were settlers on Umatilla river and the Walla Walla and its tributaries. The increase of population during 1863 was chiefly in Umatilla City, which became a commercial rival to Walla Walla. Quite a number of new settlements were made for farming and stock purposes, and at the end of the year there were but few choice spots along the river bottoms that had not been taken.

As the election approached, in June, 1864, political circles were agitated by the question of how the new county would cast its first vote. Lines were sharply drawn between the Democratic and Union parties. The question was settled by a choice of the former ticket by a small majority. The county officers chosen were:

COUNTY ELECTION, JUNE 6, 1864.

County Judge—R. B. Morford.

County Commissioners—Nineveh Ford and William Mitchell.

County Clerk—R. H. Baskett.

Sheriff—Frank Maddock.

Treasurer—J. H. Muse.

Surveyor—E. A. Wilson.

Assessor—W. More.

Coroner—¹John Teel.

Supt. of Schools—S. B. Story.

²Vote for Representative in Congress—Democratic, 396; Union, 352.

The county seat question had received considerable attention prior to the election, and though no call was made for an expression of opinion, many votes were cast in favor of removing it to Umatilla City. At the July meeting of the commissioners, J. W. Johnson requested the Board to locate a site for county buildings. They postponed action until next term, on the ground that they had under advisement the question of canvassing the votes for county seat. Mr. Ford opposed the canvass because the question had not been legally before the people, and the votes cast were of no more value than if they were an expression of opinion as to the altitude of Mt. Hood. Such was decided to be the opinion of the board, and the count was not made. Umatilla City was not to be thwarted in its object, and made application to the Legislature. This resulted in the Act of October 14, 1864, calling a special election for the first Monday in March, 1865. This practically settled the matter, for by another act the same day Grant county was created out of Umatilla and Wasco, taking all south of

*McCormick's Almanac for 1864 gives the total population of the county as 1,000, which is much too small, as there were more than that in the mines alone.

¹ Dr. James Beit appointed in July, 1865.

² Vote for President in November: Democratic, 515; Union, 396.

the 45th parallel including the John Day and Granite creek mines, thus leaving the voters of Umatilla City in a majority. Union was created out of Baker, north of Powder river the same day. The election was duly held, a majority of votes were cast for removal, and the commissioners held their first meeting in Umatilla City April 3, 1865. Two months prior to this a house and lot had been purchased in Middleton for county purposes for \$403.50 which were now sold for the same sum. In April, 1865, \$2,100 were paid for a court house at Umatilla, and \$1,440 for a jail which was completed in September, 1866.

COUNTY ELECTION, JUNE 4, 1866.

County Commissioners—William Mitchell and Lewis Benge.

County Clerk—R. H. Baskett.

Sheriff—Frank Maddock.

Treasurer—Thomas Fliteroft.

Assessor—S. P. Whitley.

Coroner—¹Richard Harrison.

²Vote for Governor—Democratic 517; Republican 270.

COUNTY ELECTION JUNE 1, 1868.

County Judge—G. W. Bailey.

County Commissioners—Henry K. Schooling and O. F. Clark.

County Clerk—James M. Moore.

Sheriff—O. F. Thomson.

Treasurer—H. C. Paige.

Assessor—³William M. Carter.

Supt. of Schools—⁴A. W. Sweeney.

Coroner—John Teel.

Surveyor—⁵J. H. Sharon.

⁶Total vote for Representative in Congress;—Democratic, 493; Republican, 231.

COUNTY SEAT REMOVED TO PENDLETON.

In 1868 the fortunes of Umatilla City were on the wane, owing to a decline in her trade with the mines. On the contrary the agricultural section was prosperous, and increased in wealth and population continually. It had been discovered that the hills along the base of the Blue mountains were extremely productive for grain, and thousands of acres of it had been taken up. During the two previous years the number of population in the north and east had increased to such an extent that they largely outnumbered those of Umatilla City. From the vicinity of the present towns

1 Appointed in September, 1866, because the Coroner-elect had failed to qualify.

2 For Representative in Congress: Democratic, 508; Republican, 279.

3 Resigned in April, 1869; J. W. Northrup appointed in July, 1869.

4 Removed from county; Lewis Benge appointed in July, 1869; did not qualify; A. J. Sturtevant appointed in September, 1869.

5 Appointed in January, 1870, to fill vacancy.

6 Vote for President in November: Democratic, 527; Republican 313.