

EMIGRATION FROM IOWA TO OREGON IN 1843

In spite of the great distance which separates the two regions there are many points of contact in the history of Iowa and the history of the Oregon country — the area now included in the States of Washington and Oregon. Especially interesting is the fact that a number of the men and women who helped to found the earliest communities within the present State of Iowa at an early day joined emigrant bands and toiled over the long trail to Oregon, thus becoming pioneers of two Commonwealths. Scarcely had the eastern border of Iowa been settled before many of the settlers who had so lately crossed the Mississippi began to look to the far West, to the much-discussed Oregon country.

There had been tides of emigration to Oregon from the Mississippi Valley and from the eastern States in 1841 and 1842, but the movement seems to have attracted special interest in Iowa in the spring of 1843. Emigrant associations were formed, plans were made, routes were investigated, and finally a number of settlers from different parts of the Territory of Iowa departed for the Oregon country. In some cases it may have been pure love of adventure or the desire of the typical American frontiersman to escape the restraints of advancing civilization which induced these men to brave the dangers and hardships of the long overland journey. The hope of bettering their financial condition and of gaining better homes may have attracted others to the new Northwest. But aside from these personal motives there seems to have been a patriotic desire on the part of many to aid in the movement to settle the Oregon country and thus establish forever the claim of the United States to that rich and resourceful region.

Below are printed accounts of the organization of two of the so-called Oregon Emigrant Associations, together with instructions to prospective emigrants, copied verbatim from newspapers of the period. These accounts illustrate the earnestness of the emigrants and the thoroughness with which they made preparations for the overland journey.

OREGON MEETING

[The following account of a meeting in Johnson County is reprinted literally from the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* (Iowa City), Vol. II, No. 14, March 11, 1843. — EDITOR.]

At a meeting held on the 3d of March, 1843, of the citizens of Clear Creek precinct, Johnson County, at the house of Mr. A. Gilliland, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of organizing a company to emigrate to Oregon, and devise rules by which said company shall be governed. The meeting was organized by calling John Conn, Esq., to the chair, and choosing Bryan Dennis Secretary. Mr. Gilliland then explained the object of the meeting and presented a series of resolutions for the consideration of the meeting, which underwent several amendments and were adopted as a guide for the formation of a constitution.

Resolved, That the company shall draft and adopt a constitution for their government which shall provide for electing the following officers and defining their duties, viz: one President, two Vice Presidents, four Trustees, one Recording Secretary, and one Corresponding Secretary, who shall be Treasurer ex-officio.

Resolved, That it shall be the duty of the Trustees to inquire into the character of all applicants who wish to join the company, and reject all intemperate and immoral characters. They shall also open books to receive subscriptions of stock, consisting of shares of fifty dollars each to be paid

in cash materials or labor, as will best suit the subscribers for the purpose of building a grist and saw mill for the company, and also a schooner or sloop, if funds sufficient can be raised.

Resolved, That as soon as the company shall number twenty male members between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, they shall hold an election and elect one Captain and five subordinate officers, whose duty it shall be to drill and command the company. After the above officers are elected, the company shall meet once per month for the purpose of drilling said company.

Resolved, That before the company commences their march, they shall elect a council of twelve persons who shall assemble in council with the officers of the company, who shall deliberate on and decide all matters pertaining to the company during their march.

Resolved, That there shall be hunting parties chosen who shall hunt for the company alternately while on their march.

Resolved, That each family and single person shall furnish a sufficient quantity of provisions and means of conveyance for the same and themselves while on their march.

Resolved, That the male members of the company between the ages of eighteen and forty-five shall be disciplined, armed and equipt to act on the defensive if necessary.

Resolved, That a committee of seven be appointed by the meeting to draft a constitution and report at the next meeting.

Resolved, That the following persons shall constitute said committee: A. Gilliland, John Conn, Bryan Dennis, G. N. Headley, G. L. Frost, David Switzer, Asa Caukin [Calkin].

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and published in both of the newspapers of Iowa City.

On motion, the meeting adjourned until the 18th instant, to meet at the house of Ja[r]vis H. Frost at 12 o'clock, M.

JOHN CONN, Ch'n.

BRYAN DENNIS, Sec.

OREGON EMIGRATION MEETING

[The proceedings of the adjourned meeting above provided for are reprinted literally from the *Iowa Standard* (Iowa City), Vol. III, No. 16, March 23, 1843.—EDITOR.]

A meeting of the citizens of Clear Creek, favorable to the settlement of Oregon Territory, was held at the house of JARVIS H. FROST, on Saturday, the 18th inst. The meeting was organized by the election of the customary officers, when A. CALKINS, Esq., briefly stated the object of the meeting — it being called for the purpose of hearing and considering the report of a committee appointed at a previous meeting, to draft a Constitution and By-laws, for the formation, regulation, and government of an Oregon Emigration society.

Mr. Calkin from the committee appointed for that purpose, reported the following:—

CONSTITUTION OF THE OREGON EMIGRATION SOCIETY OF IOWA TERRITORY, AT IOWA CITY.

Whereas a number of the citizens of Iowa Territory, have it in contemplation to remove to, and settle in the Territory of Oregon, west of the Rocky Mountains — and whereas it is desirable and necessary, in order to secure union and concert of action, insure tranquility, and promote the general welfare, that there should be some fixed and permanent rules for the government of the Society, during the preparation for said removal, and also during its march. We do therefore ordain and establish the following Constitution, or form of government, and do mutually agree with each other, to abide by and support the same.

ARTICLE I.

1. The Legislative authority of this society shall be vested in four Trustees, and twelve Councilmen, to be elected by the male members of this society, entitled to a vote for civil officers under this Constitution.

2. The Trustees shall be elected on the eighteenth day of March, eighteen hundred and forty-three, at an election to be held for that purpose, at the house of Jarvis H. Frost, (provided there shall be fifteen members present who shall be entitled to a vote,) who shall hold their office until the first Monday of May, A. D. 1843, and until others are chosen in their place.

3. The Trustees and Councilmen shall be elected annually, on the first Monday in May, and shall hold their offices until others are elected in their place. The first election of civil officers shall be held at Iowa City, on the first Monday of May, A. D. 1843. Provided there shall be at that time forty-five members who are entitled to a vote.

4. No person shall be eligible to the office of Trustee or Councilman, who shall not at the time of his election have attained the age of twenty-five years, and be a member of this society.

5. It shall be the duty of the Trustees and Councilmen to make, ordain, and publish all such by-laws, rules, and regulations, for the government of the society, as in their opinion, or the opinion of a majority of the whole number, would be expedient and subserve the best interest of, and promote the general welfare of the society.

6. They shall keep a journal of all their proceedings, and the yeas and nays of the members, on any question, shall at the desire of any two members be entered on the journals. The journals shall at all times be open to the examination of any member of the society.

7. Any member of the Trustees and Council, shall have

the liberty to dissent from and protest against any act or resolution which he may think injurious to the general welfare of the society, or any individual, and have the reasons of such dissent entered on the journal.

8. They shall have power to provide for the incidental expenses of the society, by levying a tax, or establishing an initiation fee — to audit all accounts, and make appropriation for the same; and no payment shall be made by the treasurer, except upon the appropriation of the Trustees and Council, and order of the President.

9. They shall also, when on the march, meet in council, and consult with the military officers of the company, and a majority of the whole shall determine the course to be pursued in any case of emergency.

10. They shall have power to appoint hunting parties from time to time, while on the march, (whose duty it shall be to hunt and procure game, and provisions for the general use of the society,) and to determine their duties and term of service.

11. They shall also have power to impeach, try, and for good cause to remove from office the President, or any other civil officer who is elected by the society.

12. They shall also have a general supervision over, and regulation of the military, and have appellate jurisdiction of any decision of the military officers of the company.

13. They shall also have power to hear, try, and determine all complaints against any member of the society, for dishonesty, immoral or improper conduct, and to dismiss any member from the society who shall wilfully disobey or violate any of the provisions of this constitution or the by-laws of this society, or be guilty of any immoral, dishonest or improper conduct, or for other good cause.

14. They shall use their influence to encourage the emigration with this society, of ministers of the gospel, teachers, artizans, and physicians.

15. It shall be the duty of the Trustees especially to examine all applicants for admission into the society, and shall make report of the result of such examination at each regular meeting of the society, and no person shall be finally admitted or rejected except by the vote of the society, and no person of intemperate habits, dishonest, or immoral character shall be entitled to admission into this society.

16. The said Trustees shall also open books for the subscription of stock, as provided in the second resolution adopted at a meeting of the citizens, held on the 3d day of March 1843, at the house of Archibald Gilleland, and until otherwise provided by law, they shall be governed in their duties by said resolution.

ARTICLE II.

1. The executive power shall be vested in one President and two Vice Presidents, who shall be chosen annually on the first Monday in May, by the male members of this society, entitled to vote for civil officers under this Constitution, and shall hold their offices for one year, and until others are chosen in their places.

2. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all public meetings of the society, and at all meetings of the Trustees and Council, and also, when on the march, at all meetings of the Trustees and Council, with the military officers of the company. He shall not however, be entitled to a vote upon any question before the meeting, except in case of a tie, when he shall give the casting vote.

3. The President shall have power to nominate, and by and with the consent of the Trustees and Council, to appoint one Recording Secretary, who shall be ex-officio clerk of the board of Trustees and Council, and one Corresponding Secretary, who shall be Treasurer ex-officio.

4. It shall be the duty of the first Vice President to pre-

side in the absence of the President, and in case of a vacancy of the office of President, he shall fill the office and perform all the duties of the President, until the vacancy shall be filled.

5. It shall be the duty of the second Vice President, to preside in the absence of both the President and first Vice President.

6. No person shall be eligible to the office of President, or Vice President, who shall not have attained the age of thirty years, and be a member of this society at the time of his election.

ARTICLE III.

1. The military authority of this society shall be vested in one Captain, two Lieutenants, and three Sergeants, who shall be elected by the male members of this society, between the ages of forty-five and seventeen years, whose duties it shall be to drill and exercise the company in military tactics, and who shall be elected in the manner provided by law.

2. Every able bodied male member of this society, between the ages of forty-five and seventeen years, shall be disciplined, and shall arm and equip themselves, and be liable to do military duty, under the rules and regulations provided by law, except the civil officers while on the march.

ARTICLE IV.

1. Every male member of this society over the age of seventeen years, shall be entitled to vote for the election of the said civil officers of this society.

2. In case of a vacancy from any cause whatever, in any of the civil offices, there shall be an election held to fill the vacancy, at such time and place, as shall be designated by the President, who shall give twenty days previous public notice of the time and place of holding such election, and of the office to be filled, by publication in one or more of the public newspapers printed in Iowa City.

3. In case of vacancy in the office of, or in the absence of the President, the first Vice President shall give the requisite notices for such election; and in case of the absence of both the President and first Vice President, then the said notices shall be given by the second Vice President.

ARTICLE V.

1. No person shall be entitled to become a member of this society who shall not have attained the age of twenty-one years, unless he shall at the time of making his application present to the Trustees the written consent of his parents or guardian.

2. No person of *intemperate or immoral* habits or principles, shall under any circumstances whatever, be admitted as members of this society.

3. No Black or Mulatto person shall, in any case or any circumstances whatever, be admitted into this society, or permitted to emigrate with it.

ARTICLE VI.

The President, Vice Presidents, Trustees, Councilmen, and other civil officers, shall be exempt from performing actual military service on the march. They shall however, fully arm and equip themselves, and when on the march, in any case of emergency shall remain with and protect the families and baggage.

ARTICLE VII.

This Constitution may be altered or amended at any time, twenty days previous notice being given by the President, by publication in one or more of the public newspapers printed in Iowa City, of the time and place of meeting of the members of this society, for that purpose: *Provided*, That two thirds of all the members present, shall concur therein.

The above title, preamble, constitution, and by-laws, were

unanimously adopted, and a large number of the citizens present subscribed their names to the same.

On motion: Resolved, That the Society now proceed to the election of four Trustees.

Whereupon, A. Calkin, David Switzer, Israel L. Clark and J. L. Frost, were unanimously elected.

Resolved, That A. Calkin, Esq., be requested to deliver a public address before the society, at its next meeting.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting, be published in the newspapers in Iowa City.

Resolved, That the meeting adjourn to meet in Iowa City, on the first Monday in May next.

OREGON MEETING AT BLOOMINGTON

[The following account of a meeting at Bloomington (now Muscatine) is reprinted literally from the *Iowa Standard* (Iowa City), Vol. III, No. 17, March 30, 1843.—EDITOR.]

At a public meeting held at the School house in Bloomington, on Saturday, 19th inst. for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of organizing a company to emigrate to Oregon Territory, the Rev. Geo. M. Hinkle, of Louisa county, was called to the Chair, and Wm. F. Smith appointed Secretary. The chairman having explained the object of the meeting, Mr. Jno. C. Irwin, chairman of the committee appointed for that purpose at a previous meeting, made the following Report:

Your committee who were appointed to draft a report to be made to this meeting, beg leave to submit the following, to wit: that from the information they have obtained from various sources, they believe the Oregon Territory to be far superior in many respects, to any other portion of the United States — they believe it to be superior in climate, in health, in water privileges, in timber, in convenience to market and in many other respects; they believe it to be

well adapted to agriculture and stock raising, also holding out great inducements to mechanics of the various branches; They would therefore recommend to every person possessing the enterprise and patriotic spirit of the true American citizen to emigrate to Oregon Territory at as early a day as possible, and thereby secure to themselves, a permanent and happy home, and to their country, one of the fairest portions of her domain. In order to bring this subject more fairly before this meeting, your committee beg leave to submit the following resolutions for consideration and adoption.

Resolved, That the company here forming, start from this place (Bloomington,) on the 10th day of May next, on their journey to Oregon.

Resolved, That the route taken by the company shall be from here to Iowa City, from thence to Council Bluffs, and from thence to the most suitable point on the road from Independence to Oregon, from thence by way of the Independence road to Oregon.

Resolved, That the company leave or pass through Iowa City on the 12th day of May next, and invite other companies to join, &c.

Resolved, That each and every individual as an outfit, provide himself with 100 lbs. flour, 30 lbs. bacon, 1 peck salt, 3 lbs. powder in horns or canteens, 12 lbs. lead or shot, and one good tent cloth to every six persons. Every man well armed and equipped with gun, tomahawk, knife, &c.

Resolved, That all persons taking teams be advised to take oxen or mules, also that [every] single man provide himself with a mule or poney.

Resolved, That we now appoint a corresponding secretary, whose name shall be made public, whose duty it shall be to correspond with individuals in this county and with companies at a distance, receive and communicate all the information that he may deem expedient.

Resolved, That the members of the Association meet on the last Saturday in April next, for the purpose of a more complete organization.

On motion of Mr. Purcell,

Resolved, That the resolutions just offered be taken up and read separately, which was agreed to, from the first to the seventh article were voted for unanimously, with the request that those who wished to join the company, would particularly look to the 4th and 5th resolutions.

On motion of Mr. Irwin, adjourned till 2 o'clock.

TWO O'CLOCK, P. M.

Pursuant to adjournment, the meeting met, and being called to order, proceeded to the regular business of the day, Rev. Mr. Fisher, Gen. Clark, Rev. G. M. Hinkle, Judge Williams, Stephen Whicher, Esq. and J. B. Barker, Esq. addressed the meeting with very eloquent and appropriate addresses in behalf of those persons who wish to emigrate to Oregon.

On motion of Mr. Irwin, Gen. Clark was requested to act as corresponding secretary for the company until its final organization and departure for Oregon. Also, that committee of three be appointed to act in conjunction with the corresponding secretary in the transaction of any business for the advancement of the interests of the company. Jno. W. Humphreys, Barton Lee, and Tho's Gartland, were appointed said committee.

On motion, Resolved, That the ladies, and all others friendly to the settlement of Oregon, be respectfully invited to attend and that the Rev. Mr. Hinkle and others be invited to address the assembly.

On motion, Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and published in the Bloomington Herald.

On motion of the Rev. Mr. Fisher, the meeting adjourned till Friday 31st inst.

G. M. HINKLE, Pre't.

W. F. SMITH, Sec'y.

ADVICE TO PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS TO OREGON

[The following communication is reprinted literally from the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* (Iowa City), Vol. II, No. 16, March 25, 1843.—EDITOR.]

There seems to be at this time a strong inclination on the part of many of our citizens to emigrate to the Territory of Oregon. It therefore seems to me that a plan of operations should be laid out by some person, and I have been anxiously waiting for full a twelve-month, in the expectation that some individual would perform the task, but having been disappointed in that expectation, I feel it my interest and duty to lay before the public my imperfect plan in hopes that some one will thereby be induced to offer amendments until the plan of operations shall be perfected.

I have made every inquiry of those who have visited that region of country, and have read all perhaps, that has been written, of the character of the country, and have come to the conclusion that the distance from Burlington to the Council Bluffs is 350 miles — from the Bluffs west, on the north side of Big Platt river, by way of the Pawnee villages, to the foot of the Rocky Mountains at the old pass, where Captain Bonneville passed with his loaded wagons, is 500 miles, and no stream to cross except the Loupe fork of Platt. The pass to which I allude is in about latitude 41 deg. 30 min. north, from thence take a west course, or nearly so, to the Wallamet river; the distance is about 500 miles, making in all about 1300 or 1400 miles travel. By an inspection of the maps you will discover that the whole route will vary but little from a direct line.

My plan for outfit, &c. is as follows:— With oxen and mules you will travel with a caravan of say 100 persons, 15

miles per day, which, if you lose no time, you will accomplish the journey in 100 days, but make reasonable allowance for accidents and delay, and say 150 days.

FOR THE OUTFIT AND ORGANIZATION

100 men should be armed and equipped with a good rifle gun of large bore, carrying not less than 60 bullets to the pound — 4 pounds of powder, 12 of lead — (flint locks are to be preferred,) caps and flints in proportion — and good knife and a small tomahawk. Those who go with a view to hunting and trapping ought to have along half a dozen traps suitable for catching beaver and otter. Percussion guns should have with them a spare tube in case of accident of one bursting; also, canteens. As to provisions necessary for the journey, say 150 pounds of side bacon, 1 barrel of flour, a half bushel of beans, 10 pounds of rice, 20 pounds of coffee, 20 pounds of sugar, one year's stock of coarse and durable cloth, 2 blankets, and to every five men a tent the same size and form of the infantry tents in the regular army; they should be made of cotton drilling or dark cloth. To every five men there should be a wagon and team sufficient to transport two thousand pounds, hauled by three or four yoke of oxen; they should be shod and spare shoes and nails taken along, and a water keg to contain at least ten gallons to each wagon; each man should have the necessary implements of husbandry to go right to work, and each mechanic should take his tools with him; also in addition, each man ought to have a good poney or a mule to ride, (if he is able,) & that should be well equipped for packing and riding, a Spanish saddle and a picket line to tie your horse when feeding — saddles should have cruppers for this service. In addition, every man should take as many cows with him as he can get, they are scarce in Oregon, they might be learnt to work in yoke the same as

oxen. With this outfit they ought each to have not less than from \$20 to \$50 in cash — when you go to the country your labor will produce cash — everything there commands cash, and common labor is very high. It will be necessary in such a company, that they should be completely organized like a company of regular soldiers; and I would advise that they agree (after choosing their officers) that they, while on their march thither, shall subject themselves to be governed by the rules and articles of war of the United States, so far as they shall apply to that service. I would recommend that to 100 men, they elect one Captain, who should carry a spy glass, four Sergeants, and four Corporals — and there ought to be a Bugler to give the signals, and if one cannot be had, there should be a drum and fife. Guides and buffalo hunters will be required who will have to be paid a reasonable sum, as it will not do for every one to go hunting and shooting at pleasure.

Prices at this time.— Wheat is nominally worth \$1 per bushel, beef 6 cents per pound, pork 10 cents, cows are worth \$50, oxen by the pair \$60, horses \$35, potatoes 25 cents per bushel, common labor is worth \$35 per month and boarding, &c. found. I should recommend those who wish to emigrate, to be ready at this place by the first to the tenth of May. This route will be found much shorter and easier than any other which has been travelled. There are on this side of the mountains to cross, first Skunk, Des Moines, and then the Missouri, after that you will cross the Loupe Forke of Big Platt, this last stream is quite shallow at a common stage of water, say about from 18 inches to 3 feet — has a quick sand bottom, and ought to be crossed with double teams and they should be hurried on fast.

A party of the above description should take with them 2 good cross-cut saws and 2 whip saws, spikes and oakum that in case they could do no better, they could in two days

build a ferry boat, say 30 feet long and 10 feet wide, but they will hardly be reduced to that necessity, because there is no stream on the whole route, except the Missouri river, but what you can ford in a common stage of water during the summer months — and I believe there is a ferry kept at or near the Council Bluffs. Take all the cattle you can, they will travel as fast as your teams and keep fat. Also, have plenty of seines and fishing tackle, hooks, lines, &c.

I speak of Burlington as a very suitable point to start from, because we have an abundance of the necessary supplies, and an excellent and very commodious steam ferry boat for those who are east of us. Companies ought not to be less than fifty efficient fighting men, but 100 would be better; there are some Indians who are rather hostile, and they might attack a small party for plunder.

ONE WHO INTENDS TO EMIGRATE.

N. B. Newspapers friendly to the enterprise are requested to give the above an insertion.