THE CAREER OF SAMUEL R. THURSTON IN IOWA AND OREGON

Iowa has contributed largely to the settlement and development of the region extending westward from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. The reason, in part at least, is to be found in the position which Iowa occupied with respect to the great westward movement which with amazing rapidity conquered the wild, unsubdued regions of the West. Located where many channels of travel naturally converged, on the border of the great dry plains beyond, the movement was here halted for a time and Iowa became a way-station where thousands of people recuperated their strength and fortunes and gained valuable frontier experience before pressing on further to the West.

It is interesting, therefore, to note that a large number of the men who were active and influential in laying foundations for the Commonwealth of Iowa were afterward, to an even greater extent and in a more conspicuous way, influential in building up the States of the Pacific Coast. Augustus Caesar Dodge, then Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Iowa, said in Congress during the debate on the resolution to terminate the treaty of joint occupancy and extend the laws of the United States over Oregon, that "a very large proportion of the population of Oregon has gone thither from Iowa, and I have, from sympathy and association, a feeling of strong attachment for them, and for the pioneer in whatever part of the country his lot may be cast."[1]

Many of these men did not tarry long in Iowa, but some

[1] *Appendix to the Congressional Globe,* 1st Session, 29th Congress, p. 345.

of them will be readily recognized by anyone acquainted with the history of this Commonwealth. For instance, there was Morton M. McCarver who, with his brother-in-law, first settled on the land now occupied by the city of Burlington, Iowa. Having lived here about ten years, he went to Oregon, where he became Speaker of the House of Representatives in the provisional government, as well as one of the early promoters of the settlement and development of both Oregon and California. He was the owner of the townsite of Tacoma, and was the first adult buried in its cemetery.

Another was William H. Wallace, familiarly called "Hank". He was the Speaker of the House in the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa and thus played an important part in legislation of that session, constituting what is known as *The Old Blue Book,* which was adopted by the provisional government of Oregon in 1843 and was for many years the law of all the country west of the Rocky Mountains between the forty-second and forty-ninth parallels of latitude.[2] For sixteen years he lived in Henry County where he took a prominent part in politics. Then he emigrated to Washington Territory, where he first served in the legislature and afterward became Governor and Delegate to Congress. Still later he moved to Idaho, the people of which Territory also elected him, successively, as Governor and as Delegate to Congress.

Again, there was W. W. Chapman, the first Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Iowa. After moving to Oregon he became one-third owner of the townsite of the city of Portland, one-half owner of the first steamship sent out from the Columbia River, and the original prospector of the railroad that later came to be known as the Oregon Short Line. Other men whose names appear prominently in the annals of both Iowa and Oregon are Berryman Jennings,

[2] See THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. IX, pp. 510–512.

who was the first school teacher in the Iowa country; Samuel R. Thurston, whose short career in Iowa and Oregon was remarkably efficient; George H. Williams, judge of the first judicial district of Iowa and presidential elector in 1852, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Oregon, United States Senator, United States Attorney General, and member of the Joint High Commission with Great Britain to settle the Civil War Claims; and Delazon Smith, called Delusion Smith or the "Last Tyler Man", an active Democrat in Iowa, and a member of the constitutional convention and the legislature of Oregon. Robert Kinney, Levi Scott, J. C. Holgate, and many other one-time citizens of Iowa, although not prominent in history, played useful parts in settling and developing the great Northwest.

Because he is not so well known and because he typifies the movement of population which spread with great rapidity from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, it is the purpose of this paper to present the main features of the career of Samuel R. Thurston.

Samuel Royal Thurston was born in Monmouth, Kennebec County, Maine, in the year 1816. While he was still young his parents moved to the western part of the State, and his boyhood was passed in the narrow valley of the Androscoggin, where that river breaks out of the White Mountains near the little village of Peru. It is a region characteristic of the wilder parts of New England. The rough, rugged ridges of the mountains, sparsely covered with birch and pine, crowd in close to the stream, leaving but little land from which the hardy farmer may dig out the bare necessities of life.[3]

In common with all New England youth, the desire for

[3] Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, p. 114, note; *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV, p. 153.

education grew strong in the bosom of young Thurston; and as with many others, in proportion to the desire were the difficulties in the way of its gratification. His father was poor and it was only by hard labor and close economy that he was able to provide for those at home. Without means, without influential friends, Thurston started out alone to work his way, resolute in his pursuit of knowledge. He first went to the Wesleyan Seminary at Readfield, which was not far from his home. There is reason to think that he afterward attended two or three other institutions of learning, for in his diary, written many years later, he speaks of meeting an old Dartmouth College chum. The records of Bowdoin College, however, show that he graduated from that institution in 1843. Bowdoin College was in the forefront of American colleges at that time. Its requirements were high, its curriculum comprehensive, and its faculty composed of strong, able instructors. A galaxy of men famous in our history pointed with pride to the Bowdoin of that day as their alma mater, and the lustre of the names of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Franklin Pierce rested upon it. Thurston is said to have gained distinction in debate while in college.

He was twenty-seven years of age when he received his degree. Occasional glimpses reveal what his education must have cost him: the long hours of work before and after school, the hard labor during vacations, the necessity of leaving school for a year to work, and the close economy which he must always practice. Indeed, the habit of economy became so deeply ingrained in him that throughout his life he never could indulge in any needless expense and he always kept an account of all expenditures. The securing of an education was a long, hard task for Thurston.[4] Like

[4] Bancroft's *History of Oregon,* Vol. II, p. 114; *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society,* Vol. XV, pp. 153, 193; Cleaveland's *History of Bowdoin College,* p. 590.

growing a crop in that thin New England soil, an education came only by persistent efforts and hard knocks.

After his graduation Thurston began the study of law in the city of Brunswick, Maine, and was admitted to the bar in 1845. Thereupon he at once repaired to his native county and was married to Miss Elizabeth F. McClench; and the young couple set out to seek a home in Iowa, which was then the far West. It indicates the course of the westward movement and the fact that the sun of opportunity shone bright over Iowa at this time that a young man of Thurston's genius and equipment, coming fresh from the halls of learning and the eastern verge of our land, should have chosen Iowa as his arena for action.

Thurston at once sought out modest quarters at Burlington and put up his shingle as an attorney at law. Soon afterward he was appointed solicitor for Des Moines County. On November 29, 1845, however, only three or four months after his arrival in Burlington, he purchased of the firm of Clarke and Tizzard an interest in the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser,* and became its editor in the place of James Clarke whose share he had purchased. This paper was the organ of the Democratic party, and was perhaps the most influential newspaper in the Territory at that time. It had been launched at Belmont in December, 1836, by James Clarke, who had been foreman of the *Democratic State Journal* of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and had had newspaper experience in St. Louis. When the seat of government of Wisconsin Teritory was temporarily located at Burlington in 1837 Clarke moved his paper thither and for several years enjoyed the profits of the public printing.[5]

[5] *The History of Des Moines County* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1879), pp. 413, 414; Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa,* Vol. I, pp. 315, 316. James Clarke was appointed Governor of the Territory of Iowa in 1845.

In 1845 a number of the most prominent men in the Territory of Iowa lived at Burlington, which still retained something of the distinction of having been the Territorial capital for several years. It was an influential position, therefore, that Thurston took when he assumed the editorship of the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*.

The period of Thurston's editorship was an exciting one in Iowa, and many important matters received his editorial comment. The affairs of the great Mormon Church, then located not far below Burlington on the Mississippi River, were coming to a crisis. The hostility of the citizens of Illinois had been aroused to such an extent that open warfare had broken out. Governor Ford had secured an armistice upon the promise of the leaders of the Church that they would leave the State. Consequently the year 1846 witnessed the making of the Mormon Trail across the Territory of Iowa and the hegira of that great body of people to their Winter Quarters across the river from the present site of Council Bluffs.[6] This, likewise, was the period of the Mexican War and the victories of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma were chronicled. Besides, the people of Iowa were at this time much agitated over the question of statehood.

The files of the paper were not available to the writer, but from other sources it is possible to construct an outline of Thurston's policies. He was a staunch Democrat, being a firm believer in the principles of that party as laid down by Andrew Jackson; and he was a strong supporter of James K. Polk. He would have joined in an agreement to consolidate the party by a campaign of conquest in Mexico and by a demand for the whole of Oregon under the slogan of

[6] See Van der Zee's *The Mormon Trails in Iowa* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, pp. 3–16.

"Fifty-four forty or fight". He was not, however, a pro-slavery Democrat. He was not in favor of extending slavery into free territory, or of protecting the rights of masters to go into free territory and claim slaves. He claimed that the Southerners did not desire the extension of slavery, but were interested merely in defending it where it already existed, against the menace of the northern abolitionists. He ably opposed the Whigs on the tariff question, and no doubt played his part in convincing the people of Iowa at that time, contrary to what has been their pronounced belief subsequently, that a tariff for revenue only was for their interests. He was opposed to national banks; and he warmly supported the principles embodied in the State Constitution drawn up in 1844 and twice rejected by the people because of the boundaries imposed by Congress. He contended with vigor for the retention of both rivers, the Missouri and the St. Peters, as the natural boundaries for the proposed State of Iowa.[7]

But the matter which occupied most space in Thurston's editorial columns and which for him had a strong and growing interest, was the claim of the United States, against Great Britain, to the whole of the Pacific Northwest. Since 1843 the newspapers of Iowa had been publishing all the information they could get about that subject. Before he came to Iowa Thurston had read many of Hall J. Kelley's papers and circulars, and as a result his arguments upon that question were complete, strong, and conclusive in favor of the abrogation of the agreement of joint occupancy.

The name of the paper was changed late in 1846 to the *Iowa State Gazette*. Upon all the questions involved in the

[7] This statement of Thurston's editorial policies was made up from extracts from the Burlington paper printed in the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* (Iowa City) during this period; and from the political views expressed in Thurston's diary, written two years later, which is published in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV, pp. 153–205.

Constitution adopted in 1846, under which Iowa was admitted into the Union as a State on December 28th of that year, the influence of Samuel R. Thurston was doubtless pronounced. It is also safe to say that he contributed in no small way to the Democratic successes of the period, although the measure of such influence can never be made.

Thurston's mind had been turning more and more to Oregon, where he saw visions of great opportunities for men of his type. In him the difficulties and dangers of the long, toilsome, overland journey aroused no dread: the obstacles to be overcome only made the goal the more attractive. He sold his interest in the *Gazette* early in the spring of the year 1847 and made preparations to join a party which was about to set out for Oregon.

It is not difficult to picture that caravan as it assembled at the appointed place. W. W. Chapman, the first Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Iowa, and his brother, and others who had spent several years in Iowa were there. Each one, with such mementoes or keepsakes as he could not cast away, and with the outfit and provisions necessary for the long journey, came to the rendezvous. There were heavy wagons with high boxes made tight so that they might be used as boats in crossing streams, and with tops of white canvass upheld by bows of shaved saplings — wagons which were drawn by from two to six yoke of oxen. There were also a number of horses and perhaps a herd of cattle. Such were the emigrant trains which in those days crossed the wide plains, went through the South Pass, down the rough and rocky gorges of the western side, over the Blue Mountains, to the valley of the Columbia. The journey usually required seven months. The Mormons had just made their road along the north side of the Platte River, and the Iowa party probably followed that route.[8]

[8] See the writer's article on *The Mormon Road* in *The Washington Historical Quarterly,* Vol. VI, No. 4.

It is said that in the fall of the year 1847 S. Thurston lived in one of the four houses which constituted Robert Moore's new town called Linn City, located on the western bank of the Willamette opposite Oregon City.[9] There, with his wife and child, Samuel R. Thurston began his life in the Pacific Northwest. He came at a critical moment. Friction and disturbance had arisen out of the difficulties which had been aggravated by the postponing of the settlement of the joint occupancy question. The massacre of Marcus Whitman and the destruction of his mission occurred only a few weeks after Thurston's arrival, filling the minds of the people with dread and apprehension. Thurston was young, brilliant, handsome, splendidly educated, with an indomitable will, and almost insanely ambitious. He became the fitting instrument at the opportune moment to accomplish a terrible wrong.

In order to show the full effect of the action of Thurston just referred to it is necessary to explain the conditions existing in Oregon previous to his arrival. After the sale of John Jacob Astor's trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River the Hudson's Bay Company of Great Britain remained the undisputed master of the whole Pacific Northwest. It was a great, rich corporation, with headquarters in London and a score of forts and trading-posts scattered all over the Northwest. Its ships sailing into the Columbia and its regular caravans, going overland by way of the Red River, kept up a profitable commerce with the outside world. The headquarters of this Company on the Pacific Coast was at Vancouver, on the north side of the Columbia, less than thirty miles from Oregon City.

At the head of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Northwest, and possessing almost absolute power over all its in-

[9] Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, p. 3.

terests in that region, was Dr. John McLoughlin. He was a Canadian, a man of commanding presence, as well as a man of culture and of broad, liberal ideas. He was a just man, kindly, humane, and generous. By the force of his character the whole army of employees of that great Company had been held in perfect control; and by the same means, without oppression or bloodshed, he had controlled the various tribes of Indians with whom the Company carried on trade, so that each looked up with respect and fear to the great White Eagle at Vancouver and was willing to obey his commands. For many years he had conducted the different branches of the Company's business in such a manner that it had become immensely profitable.[10]

In 1829, before any white man had come from the States, Dr. McLoughlin had permitted some of the employees of the Company to retire from its service, and settle upon the rich plains of the middle Willamette River. He had visited that region in the same year, and noting the wild magnificence of the falls, probably with the thought that some day, if people ever came there, the falls might be valuable as water power, he located a claim, and began the digging of a mill race and the erection of a mill. By the time of the coming of the first Methodist missionary, in 1834, Dr. McLoughlin had made numerous improvements. He had erected three buildings, one of them a warehouse, and had blasted out a race-way for a saw-mill, and by the time of the coming of the "Lausanne" with the great mission reënforcement in 1840, the site was everywhere known as Dr. McLoughlin's claim.[11]

During the years 1832 and 1833 the Macedonian cry of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest echoed through the Chris-

[10] This estimate of Dr. McLoughlin's character and abilities is based on statements of American contemporaries who had no reason to be unduly prejudiced in his favor. See Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 190–196; 272–286.

[11] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 102, 103.

tian churches of the East, and great enthusiasm was aroused. The first to respond to this appeal was the Methodist Church, which organized a vanguard to accompany Wyeth across the plains on his second expedition to the Columbia Valley in 1834. The leader of this vanguard, and until 1843 the head of the Methodist missions in Oregon, was Jason Lee, a shrewd man, devoted to his church.

Lee passed by all the tribes of eastern Washington and Oregon and of Idaho, and went down to the Willamette and the coast. Upon his coming he was most hospitably received and entertained by Dr. McLoughlin, by whom every courtesy was extended. When the "May Dacre" arrived with the rest of the party and their goods, Dr. McLoughlin sent men and boats to convey them all to the place they had selected for their Mission, which was on French Prairie ten miles above the site of the present city of Salem. He also gave them provisions and tools and loaned them cattle. And when in 1838 Jason Lee had started East for reënforcements, Dr. McLoughlin dispatched messengers to notify him of the sudden death of his wife shortly after his departure. These messengers did not overtake Mr. Lee until he reached the Pawnee Mission in eastern Kansas. "From its beginning, and for several years after, the successful maintenance of the Methodist Mission in Oregon was due to the friendly attitude and assistance of Dr. McLoughlin".[12] Indeed, Dr. McLoughlin, who was a religious man, did not decide to join the Roman Catholic Church until 1842.

The Methodist Mission, as a mission to the Indians, was never successful. From causes, not yet fully explained, the Indians of the Willamette and lower Columbia Valleys, which up to that time had been numerous, about the time of

[12] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon*, pp. 54–59. See also pp. 180–185 where are printed excerpts from Jason Lee's journal bearing testimony to the kindness shown the Americans by Dr. McLoughlin.

the planting of the Mission began to sicken and die until, about the year 1840, they had almost wholly disappeared. As a result the Mission became chiefly a colonizing and commercial enterprise, and in 1843 the church authorities in New York sent out Dr. George Geary with discretionary powers, but with authorization to close up its work. This he did, and sold out all the property of the Mission to its members, except the station at the Dalles. Nevertheless, large additional reënforcements, both lay and clerical, were sent out. Previous to the first immigration to Oregon, in 1842, which came under the leadership of Elijah White, who was sent out by the government as sub-agent for the Indians, the members of the Methodist Mission in Oregon exceeded all the other white people in that country, outside of the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company.[13] Its stations at the mouth of the Columbia, at the Dalles, and along the Willamette, occupied strategic positions, and became centers of population. Naturally its members became leading and influential men. Elijah White, the first and for many years the only representative of the United States government, George Abernethy, Judge Waite, J. L. Parrish, J. Q. Thornton, and many other influential men, were members of the Mission. Indeed, Oregon was fortunate in having educated men to lay the foundations of the Commonwealth.

The immigration of 1842 was small, but that of 1843[14] and the four subsequent years brought thousands of people into the country. Most of these immigrants were hostile to the British. Their fathers had fought in the Revolutionary War, and they, while assisting in the upbuilding of the States of the Middle West, had had many experiences which

[13] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 60–63.

[14] Many people emigrated from Iowa to Oregon in 1843. See THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, pp. 415–430.

deepened their own feelings of hostility. Many had come, therefore, with the purpose of helping to wrest Oregon from the claws of the British lion. The policy of our government of prolonging the term of joint occupation and of delaying any action upon the matter, however wise as a policy, was unfortunate in its effect upon those who had gone in to settle the country. The Hudson's Bay Company was there and was carrying on a vast business; and as a matter of fact, had as much right to be there as had the settlers.

There is no doubt that the behaviour of Dr. McLoughlin was uniformly kind and hospitable toward all these immigrants. He was a loyal British subject, and the responsible head of a great business corporation closely connected with the British crown; but he received the American settlers into the Company's quarters, sent boats and men to aid them, gave them supplies and clothing, and extended credit for supplies, tools, and stock, until the newcomers could make a start upon their land. Many of these people had lost all that they had on the long, overland journey and reached Oregon half naked and destitute. All of them had lost much and were without the necessary provisions and tools. Comparatively few had money with which to pay for what they needed. When, after the long, weary journey of months, they reached the "Deaths' Door" of the Cascades — the Dalles — they had to be rescued and helped down through the foaming cataract, where many lives were lost.

There is no record that John McLoughlin ever failed to meet a call of distress, or to extend help. The extent of his services and of Oregon's debt to him can never be estimated. The pages of voluntary testimony that came to him after he was stricken with misfortune were the sole consolation of his declining days.[15]

[15] For testimony concerning Dr. McLoughlin's attitude toward the American settlers in Oregon, see the "Illustrative Documents" printed in Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon*, pp. 175–286; and Clarke's *Pioneer Days of Oregon Territory*, pp. 226, 227.

Of course this conduct on the part of its Chief Factor was displeasing to the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company. They and all the members of the Company could only look with alarm at the coming of the Americans. Men were sent out to investigate. Dr. McLoughlin was reprimanded and his presence in London was at once required. The result was that in 1845 he handed in his resignation from a position that paid him $12,000 a year; and moved into the house which he had already built at Oregon City. He always maintained a dignified silence about all that related to the Company, but it has come to be well known that in the face of the Company he boldly asserted the rights of the Americans, and the necessity of extending aid to them. The decision of the Company was that he should assume all the credits he had given to the settlers — a large sum in the aggregate, and a good part of which was never paid.[16]

It is necessary also to mention another circumstance in order to explain the situation. In 1840, after the coming of the "Great Reënforcement" of the Mission, Jason Lee detailed Rev. A. F. Waller to open a station at the Falls of the Willamette, on Dr. McLoughlin's claim. The Chief Factor gave to the church a liberal piece of his land, and a house and storehouse was built. In 1841, it began to be whispered about that Dr. McLoughlin had no right to that claim; and in 1842, John Ricord, a perambulating lawyer, was employed by Mr. Waller to secure the land for him. There were no land laws. No one had any legal rights, for it was still the period of joint occupancy. But in 1844, in order to settle the matter, Dr. McLoughlin gave deeds to the Methodist Church to three blocks and eight lots and paid to the Rev. A. F. Waller the sum of five hundred dollars and secured from him a quit-claim deed of all his right and in-

[16] For an account of McLoughlin's resignation from the Hudson's Bay Company, see Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 90–97.

terest.[17] Furthermore in 1841, Felix Hathaway, a lay member of the Mission, squatted upon the island comprising about four acres of rocks which divides the falls into two parts. The island subsequently passed into the possession of Governor George Abernethy, and received the name of Abernethy's Island. This island, however, was a very important part of Dr. McLoughlin's claim.[18]

In the year 1846 Dr. McLoughlin moved into his residence in Oregon City (as the town which grew upon his claim was now called), and continued to reside there until his death. He put in nearly all his fortune in improving and developing the town. In 1850, the buildings which he had erected were estimated as worth upwards of $90,000. He had improved the water-power, had built a grist-mill which was pronounced as good as any in the States, and two saw-mills, besides stores and other buildings. He had been very liberal in donating lots to educational institutions and churches, and in selling land at low prices and on long time to settlers. Oregon City was then the metropolis of the Territory — its capital and principal business point. Dr. McLoughlin had taken the oath of allegiance to the provisional government, in which he had shared; when the Territorial government was established in 1849, he at once, openly and in the presence of witnesses, made declaration of his intention to become a citizen; and he voted in the first Territorial election for Delegate to Congress. He did not vote for Thurston and told him he would not do so.[19]

As has already been noted, about six weeks after Thurston reached Oregon City, in October, 1847, came the news on

[17] The text of the agreement between Dr. McLoughlin and Rev. A. F. Waller is to be found in Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 225, 226.

[18] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 107, 114–116.

[19] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 102–106, 120–122.

December 10th, of the massacre and destruction at Whitman's station. The wildest rumors prevailed. The Governor called the Council, and a volunteer company under Captain Lee was raised at once, and sent to save the missionaries at the Dalles and Mr. H. H. Spaulding at Lapwai. Arrangements were also made for a larger force under Major Gilliam to proceed against the Indians, to punish them and to rescue captives said to be in their hands. There was difficulty in obtaining the required outfits, and there was some talk of making a forcible levy upon the stores of the Hudson's Bay Company. Throughout the summer of 1848 there were reports of a general Indian uprising, vague stories of the Roman Catholic priests having incited the Indians to the massacre, tales of the Hudson's Bay people using their great influence to drive out the whites and supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition. The excitement continued throughout the fall and winter of 1848–1849, being fed by the statements of witnesses, who were officially examined and whose testimony seemed to corroborate these charges.[20]

It was amid these circumstances that Samuel R. Thurston began his short career in Oregon. He had always been a loyal member of the Methodist church and a man of decidedly religious habits. He would, therefore, naturally find his associates among the members of that church who, as has been seen, were leaders in the affairs of the Territory. One year after his arrival Thurston was chosen a member of the last Council of the provisional government of Oregon, from Tualitin (now Marion) County. The Council should

20 Accounts of the Whitman massacre and of the consequent excitement and preparations for defense among the settlers in Oregon may be found in Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. I, Chs. XXIII, XXIV; Gray's *History of Oregon*, Ch. LXI, and other works dealing with the history of the Pacific Northwest.

have met in November, but owing to the absence of many of its members in California, a quorum could not be obtained. A special election was held and the session began on February 5, 1849. At that session Thurston came speedily to the front, and displayed the readiness of speech and aggressiveness of manner that gained for him such rapid advancement. Although it was late and it was known that the new Governor would soon arrive, some measures of importance were passed, among them being the act for the coinage of money, under which $50,000 of the famous Beaver Money was issued; and a resolution asking for the presence of United States troops to defend the colony.[21] The Council adjourned on February 16, 1849, and on March 3rd the Territorial government was inaugurated.

It is said that Thurston had made arrangements to go to California with the current that was running toward the gold mines there. But when the proclamation was issued for the election of a Delegate to Congress he decided to remain and enter the canvass. Oregon at that time was strongly Democratic. There were at least three candidates: Columbia Lancaster, J. W. Nesmith, and Samuel R. Thurston. Lancaster took no part in the canvass, but Nesmith and Thurston made an active campaign. At some places joint debates were held, and it is narrated that the settlers were surprised and pleased to see a young man from the East meet and overcome that old campaigner with his own tactics. The chief subjects discussed were the rights of the settlers as against the great monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company and the various measures Congress should enact for their benefit. Thurston received 470 votes against 473 for all the other candidates, and was declared elected.[22] He immediately made preparations for the jour-

[21] Bancroft's *History of Oregon,* Vol. II, pp. 58–63.

[22] Bancroft's *History of Oregon,* Vol. II, pp. 113–116.

ney to Washington, D. C., planning first to visit his old home in Maine.[23]

The diary kept by Thurston from November, 1849, to August, 1850, recently published, is a remarkable record of difficult, untiring labor. It begins as he was leaving his old home, and tells how on his way he went to Portsmouth, Boston, Springfield, New York, and Philadelphia, and at each place called upon the editors of newspapers and other prominent men with a view to presenting the claims of Oregon and securing their support for measures in Congress. Assistance was promised by all except Horace Greeley, from whom, he said, "Oregon has nothing to expect." He reached Washington on November 30th, and stopped at Gadsby's hotel. "I felt that much responsibility was upon me" is the record in his diary on that day, "and when I recollected that the interests of all that country west of the Rocky mountains, and between the Latitudes 42 and 49 north were intrusted to my care, I resolved stronger than ever, that no effort of mine should remain unmade which might be beneficial to our noble and beloved Oregon."[24] And then for eight months follows an account of incessant labors.

The administration was Whig and Thurston was a Democrat. Oregon was almost unknown. Judge Thornton and Joe Meek, a relative of Mrs. Polk, and all the combined efforts of the friends of Oregon had scarcely obtained the establishment of Oregon as a Territory. Thurston at once paid his respects to all the dignitaries of the national capital and was well received. He constituted himself an infor-

23 "Thurston was in ill-health when he left Oregon. He travelled in a small boat to Astoria, taking six days for the trip; by sailing vessel to San Francisco, and to Panama by the steamer *Carolina*, being ill at the last place, yet having to ride across the Isthmus, losing his baggage because he was not able to look after the thieving carriers. His determination and ambition were remarkable." — Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, p. 116.

24 *Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston* in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV, pp. 155, 156, 159.

mation bureau to make known the resources of Oregon, undertaking to supply letters and editorials to different papers throughout the East. As a result he was deluged with letters and inquiring visitors, to whom he replied fully, in beautiful language, concerning the attractions and advantages of the Oregon country. He likewise became the business agency and news channel for all the people of Oregon. Not only of all public documents, of which they had very few, did he see that a liberal supply was sent, but he purchased and forwarded newspapers, pamphlets, and books; and he used every effort to secure a Congressional appropriation for libraries for Oregon. He wrote letters, not only for publication in Oregon, but also private letters to keep his constituents informed upon the progress of matters at Washington.

But all this activity was only contributory to the main purpose, of which he never lost sight. In cultivating the favor of those in authority, in forming relationships and securing the aid of voting members of Congress, he was most assiduous and successful. To a most extraordinary degree did Thurston make a favorable impression, by his engaging manner, by his intelligence, and by his persistence that would not be put aside. Not only at the time for Territorial business, but repeatedly even when out of order, he gained permission to offer resolutions or to make amendments. On one occasion after waiting all day, he rose to offer an amendment and was declared out of order. He appealed from the decision and his appeal was sustained, whereupon he altered the amendment and it was carried with only two opposing votes.[25] He spoke several times in the House and received respectful attention. "Looking, as Mr. Thurston

[25] A full idea of the activities of Thurston as Delegate to Congress may be gained from a perusal of his diary, which is printed in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV.

does, like a fair speciment of the frontier man, little was expected of him in an oratorical way", was the comment in a New York newspaper. "But he has proved to be one of the most effective speakers in the hall, which has created no little surprise." Another paper stated that "Mr. Thurston is a young man, an eloquent and effective debater, and a bold and active man". His speech on the bill making appropriations for Indian affairs was "so interesting and instructive that his amendments were unanimously agreed to. A great many members shook him heartily by the hand after he had closed; and he was assured that if he had asked $50,000 after such a speech he would have received it."[26]

Thurston's lengthy speech upon the admission of California, however, was perhaps his greatest effort. In his diary several days before its delivery is the simple record, "worked on my speech for California". He wrote the speech out in full and then made notes for use in its presentation. He was firmly opposed to the introduction of slavery into California, and his attitude toward the preservation of the Union was expressed in unmistakable terms.[27]

About this time Thurston had a remarkable dream. He saw persons at work on the capitol building, knocking out the underpinning and foundations of one-half of it. That part of the building began to crack from the ground to the dome and to crumble as though it would fall; while the other half remained standing. The workmen continued their work and the cracking and crumbling became still more pronounced until he could see the sky through the crevice at the top. People were running from one side to the other; and as he sprang from the falling side to that which remained firm his grief was so great that he awoke. "And as soon as I

[26] Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, p. 137, note.

[27] *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 1st Session, 31st Congress, pp. 345–354.

awoke, the dream seemed to be a foreshadowing of the dissolution of the Union, and so wrought upon was I that I had no more quiet sleep for the night."[28]

During his term as Delegate to Congress, Thurston accomplished great things for Oregon. Indeed, his was a record that has perhaps never been surpassed by the first Delegate from any Territory. A complete enumeration of his accomplishments can not be made, but the more important may be listed. He secured the establishment of Oregon City and Nisqually as ports of entry, and the appointment of collectors and surveyors for each port. He was successful in securing the adoption of his bill to extinguish a portion of the Indian title to the land west of the Cascades, and an appropriation of $140,000 was made for that purpose. Through his efforts regular vessels were instructed to carry the mails to Astoria, and government vessels were to be stationed in the mouth of the Columbia and in Puget Sound. He secured the establishment of mail routes from Oregon City to Astoria, Nisqually, and the Umpqua River and the Yaquina Bay; and he personally attended the letting of the contracts. Other measures adopted largely on account of his influence were: a bill providing that a detachment of troops be stationed in Oregon with instructions to open military roads; an act making a grant of land for the improvement of the Willamette River; a bill calling for the survey of the public lands and making an appropriation for that purpose; a law establishing a land office in Oregon City; and a bill providing for the making of geological surveys, carrying an appropriation of $25,000. Altogether he secured appropriations amounting to approximately $350,000,

[28] *Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston* in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society,* Vol. XV, pp. 201, 202.

in addition to the regular expenses of the Territorial government.[29]

That which was Thurston's main achievement, however, and for which he was planning and preparing all along, was the land bill. Early in the session he had paved the way by his measures to extinguish the Indian titles. Then he introduced resolutions inquiring into the right of the Hudson's Bay Company to enclose public lands; into its right to pasture stock upon the public domain; and into its right to trade and sail its vessels without charge into the ports of entry. These resolutions were carefully drawn and were referred to appropriate committees.

Thurston began work upon the land bill early in April, but when the time came he was shrewd enough to see the advantage of accepting the bill which had for a long time been before the House, and of securing the incorporation in that bill of certain amendments which he desired. This was substantially the bill drawn up by Lewis F. Linn, which had come so near passing in 1848. "I went up to the Land Office to see that our Land bill was ready by Monday", is the record in Thurston's diary on April 13th. All through the spring and early summer reference to his labors in behalf of the land bill appear with increasing frequency. "I attended committee of Public Lands and labored all day among different senators about my land bill", he wrote on August 13th. "Shields appears to be taking the same course that Bowlin did. I have no doubt myself that the agents of Dr. McLoughlin are operating against it. Received and wrote letter from and to Judge Bryant, urging him to come on to help me get the bill through." On the following day he wrote that "I have labored extremely hard trying to get the

[29] This statement of Thurston's accomplishments as Delegate to Congress was compiled from his diary, published in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV; and the *Congressional Globe*, 1st Session, 31st Congress.

Land Committee to agree as to the amendments of my bill. It is extremely vexing to have the Land Committee now dally along, the tendency of all of which is to prevent the passage of my bill. I will win, not despair, but fight on while a hair remains on my head. Oregon shan't be overreached if vigilance will prevent it. H. B. Company appears to have many friends."[30]

At last, toward the very end of the session, Thurston triumphed. His land bill was passed, signed by the president, and became a law. In the debate on that bill in the House of Representatives, on May 28, 1850, Thurston spoke as follows:

> This company, [the Hudson's Bay Company] has been warring against our Government for these forty years. Dr. McLoughlin has been their chief fugleman, first to cheat our Government out of the whole country, and next to prevent its settlement. . . . In 1845, he sent an express to Fort Hall, eight hundred miles, to warn the American emigrants that if they attempted to come to Willamette they would all be cut off; they went, and none were cut off. How, sir, would you reward Benedict Arnold, were he living? . . . . A bill for his relief would fail, I am sure; yet this bill proposes to reward those who are now, have been, and ever will be, more hostile to our country — more dangerous, because more hidden, more jesuitical.[31]

Furthermore, in a circular letter which Thurston prepared and laid before each member of Congress he made the following statements:

> I will next call your attention to the eleventh section of the bill, reserving the town site of Oregon City, known as the "Oregon City Claim". The capital of our territory is located here (Oregon City) and here is the county seat of Clackamas County. It is unquestionably the finest water power in the known world; and as it now is, so will remain, the great inland business point for the Territory.

[30] *Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston* in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. XV, pp. 195, 203.

[31] *Congressional Globe*, 1st Session, 31st Congress, p. 1079.

This claim has been wrongfully wrested by Dr. McLoughlin from the American citizens. The Methodist Mission first took the claim, with the view of establishing here their mills and Mission. They were forced to leave it under the fear of having the savages of Oregon let loose upon them; and, successively, a number of citizens of our Country have been driven from it, while Dr. McLoughlin was yet at the head of the Hudson's Bay Company, west of the Rocky Mountains. Having at his command the Indians of the country, he has held it by violence and dint of threats up to this time. . . . He is still an Englishman, still connected in interest with the Hudson's Bay Company, and still refuses to file his intentions to become an American citizen. . . . Last summer, he informed the writer of this, that whatever was made out of this claim was to go into the common fund of the Hudson's Bay Company. . . . The children of my Country are looking up to you. . . . They call you "fathers", and ask whether you will put the moral weapons of defence in your children's hands in the shape of education, or whether you will deny it to them, and put means into the hands of him who will turn and rend both you and them.[32]

It is difficult to read these words without a feeling of indignation. The statements were all untrue, and Thurston must have known they were untrue. The bill granted the Oregon City claim, except Abernethy's Island which it confirmed to the heirs of Governor Abernethy, for the establishment and endowment of a Methodist University. Dr. McLoughlin was by the act robbed of all his property and, what was even more unbearable to a man of his character, he was publicly branded in the halls of Congress and covered with ignominy and shame.

Owing to the long distance and partly by design the news did not reach Oregon City until about the middle of September, 1850.[33] On September 12th the *Oregon Spectator* published the first knowledge of the eleventh section of the land

[32] An extract from this letter, which was first printed in full in the *Oregon Spectator* of September 12, 1850, is to be found in Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon*, pp. 124–127.

[33] See Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, pp. 124, 125.

bill. At once a meeting was called, resolutions were passed, and a petition to Congress was drafted and signed by fifty-six of the best men in the Territory, among whom was W. W. Chapman, protesting against the eleventh section of the bill which it was believed would work a "severe, inequitable, unnecessary, and irremedial injustice". But there were "no telegraph lines in Oregon or California in those days. And the bill was a law eight days thereafter."[34]

Efforts were made to secure a reconsideration of the matter in Congress, but Governor Lane who was then the Delegate to Congress from Oregon, discouraged the movement, saying that it would endanger the whole bill. "To the honor of the overwhelming majority of the Oregon pioneers, be it said that they took no part in these actions against Dr. McLoughlin, nor did they endorse or sympathize with Thurston's actions and those of his co-conspirators against Dr. McLoughlin."[35]

At the same time it must be remembered that the land bill was a great boon to Oregon — a law for which the settlers had been hoping and waiting for years. It gave to each of them six hundred and forty acres of the choicest land — their homes. Their highest hopes were realized and Thurston was the hero of the hour. There was rejoicing and festivity throughout all the settlements.

Dr. McLoughlin was not turned out of his home: no one in Oregon would have thought of offering such an indignity to him. He continued to live at Oregon City till his death. Testimonies of affection and gratitude were many, but from that time he began to fail in health and he died on September 3, 1857. In 1862 the legislature of Oregon, with but two dissenting votes restored the Oregon City property to the

[34] Bancroft's *History of Oregon*, Vol. II, pp. 126, 127; Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon*, pp. 137, 138.

[35] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon*, pp. 139, 140.

heirs of Dr. McLoughlin and the McLoughlin Association has purchased and is preserving the residence owned by the old Chief Factor. Moreover, a three-quarter sized portrait of Dr. McLoughlin, painted by William Cogswell and paid for by popular subscription, was later hung in the State capitol building back of the chair of the president of the Senate.[36]

Of Samuel R. Thurston there remains little to be said. At the close of the session of Congress he was worn out and exhausted. Thinking a sea voyage might help him and unable to endure the trip overland, he took ship for his distant Oregon home. But his indomitable will could not sustain him in his fight against ill health, and he expired on ship-board on April 9, 1851, off Acapulco. In 1852 the Oregon legislature passed a bill appropriating $1500 and appointed a committee to bring his remains and inter them in Oregon soil. This was done and on April 12th a formal funeral was held in the Methodist Church at Salem, at which time Delazon Smith, who was well known in Iowa in the early days, delivered the oration. Thurston's remains were buried in the cemetery at Salem and a shaft of Italian marble twelve feet high was erected over his grave.[37] In re-dividing the counties of Washington, which was then a part of Oregon, the legislature of the Territory gave the name of Thurston to the largest and most fertile as a memorial to the first Delegate to Congress.

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[36] Holman's *Dr. John McLoughlin the Father of Oregon,* pp. 160–164.

[37] Bancroft's *History of Oregon,* Vol. II, pp. 136–138; *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society,* Vol. XV, pp. 153, 154.