[CHAPTER TWENTY]

A CHANGING OREGON 1843–1846

The success of the large 1843 emigration, followed by ever larger immigrations in each succeeding year, precipitated a cultural conflict for the Indians of the upper Columbia River country. Although none of the immigrants, during the years 1843–47 inclusive, settled on land in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, social and economic changes were introduced among the natives which threatened their mode of life. These were years of transition for both the Indians and the whites in Old Oregon.

Mission activities at Waiilatpu were no longer the same as they had been before Whitman left for Boston. Although Whitman tried to carry on his religious, educational, and agricultural activities as before, things were different. The increasing attention that the Whitmans had to give to the immigrants, especially to those who found it necessary to winter at Waiilatpu, aroused the suspicion and finally the resentment of the Cayuses. Whitman's ride East in 1842–43 was a watershed in the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board. The first six years were characterized by dissension among the members of the Oregon Mission and by the friendliness of the natives. After Whitman's return, the situation was reversed. The four couples remaining in the Mission worked together in full harmony, but there was growing hostility to the missionaries on the part of the Indians, especially the Cayuses.

When Whitman returned to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843, he learned that a Provisional Government had been formed at a meeting of Willamette Valley settlers held at Champoeg on May 2, 1843. The restless Americans living in the Valley, tired of waiting for their Government to fill a legal void, decided to take matters into their own hands. A few French Canadians, defying the instructions of their priest and the wishes of the Hudson's Bay Company, voted with the Americans. Until the arrival of the 1843 immigrants, most of the French Canadians and the officials of the Company refrained from giving the Provisional Government their support. After the arrival of the 1843 immigration, some changes were made in the charter of the Provisional Government which made it more acceptable to the French Canadians and, as a result, they voted in the 1844 elections. Dr. McLoughlin also changed his attitude and decided that the Hudson's Bay Company should support the new government in order to secure some degree of protection for the Company's interests. Upon his return to Waiilatpu, Whitman learned that not only had the white settlers in the Willamette Valley adopted a code of laws, but so also had the Cayuses. Whitman soon discovered, however, that the laws which Dr. White had induced the Indians to accept were highly unpopular. In a letter to Greene dated April 8, 1844, Whitman wrote: "It is in vain to urge that the Indians adopted the laws of themselves. The principal chief [i.e., Five Crows] said that they would have preferred their own, if left to their own choice. They have become a mere form as there are none to execute them. They wish mostly to use them to establish complaints against white men rather than punish offenders of their own people."

Whitman was critical of the manner in which Dr. White had forced the Cayuses to accept the laws, yet he realized that the extension of United States jurisdiction over the Indians was both necessary and inevitable. "I have no confidence in two codes of laws for one country," he wrote. "If the Indians are not wise enough to either give laws to their own country, both for themselves and others, or to partake with the whites in the formation of them; they must submit to laws of the immigration that comes among them, as others do. For it is evident that there should be but one code of laws for both the natives and the settlers in the same country." It may be that Dr. White's accusations that Whitman charged exorbitant prices for his produce arose out of White's awareness of Whitman's

criticisms of the laws. There is no record that Dr. Whitman ever tried to get any of the Cayuse chiefs to enforce any provisions of the code.

Another new factor which greatly affected missionary life at Waiilatpu after 1843 was the necessity thrust upon the Whitmans to meet the material needs of the annual immigrations. In addition to selling provisions and helping all who were able to travel to continue their journey to the Willamette, special attention had to be given to those who, for various reasons, were unable to go further. Always in the wake of the passing wagon trains was this flotsam of unfortunate people the sick, the weary, the old, the destitute, the widows, and the orphans—who found Waiilatpu a haven of refuge. Out of human kindness and Christian charity, the Whitmans had no choice but to receive these people and to care for them during the winter months or until they were able to continue their travels. The time, attention, and resources they had to give to the immigrants meant a corresponding diminution of activities in behalf of the natives. For instance, the large room called "the Indian room," which had been built in the main mission house for the purpose of being used as a schoolroom or an assembly room for the natives, was turned into an apartment for the immigrants during those months when the Cayuses were most available for instruction.

1843–1844

When Dr. Whitman left the 1843 emigration while in the Grande Ronde Valley in order to go to Lapwai, he entrusted the care of his nephew, Perrin, to someone who promised to take him to Waiilatpu. Perrin arrived at the mission station on September 27,[1] one day before his uncle and Geiger returned from Lapwai. While at Lapwai, Whitman again met the Littlejohns, who, for nearly a year, had been living with the Spaldings. Since Mrs. Littlejohn was expecting to be confined about the first of November, plans were made for the couple to go to Waiilatpu where she would be under the doctor's care.

As has been told, Whitman had gone to Tshimakain the day after his return to Waiilatpu in order to attend Mrs. Eells in her confinement. Upon his return to Waiilatpu on October 10,[2] he found some of the immigrants still streaming by his home, many of whom were in need of provisions. Geiger, eager to return to the Willamette Valley, asked to be relieved of his duties at Waiilatpu. Whitman settled accounts with

him by paying him $30.00 for each month he had been at the station. Whitman was well pleased with Geiger's services. "Few could have done better," he wrote [Letter 142]. Littlejohn, who with his wife had by that time arrived at Waiilatpu, was asked to take over Geiger's duties.

Eager to get his wife whom he knew to be at The Dalles, Whitman left for that place about the middle of October. Reference has already been made to the "joyful and happy meeting" of the two after a separation of more than a year. Jason Lee, who had escorted Narcissa to The Dalles, had waited in order to see Whitman. "It was pleasing," wrote Narcissa, "to see the pioneers of the two Missions meet and hold council together" [Letter 149]. While in New York in the spring of 1843, Whitman had called at the offices of the Methodist Missionary Society where he was told that Lee had been dismissed and that a successor, the Rev. George Gary, was already on his way to Oregon to close out the Methodist Mission. Whitman was the first to pass on this distressing news to Lee.[3] "When we parted with Mr. Lee," wrote Narcissa to her father, "we little thought that our first news from him would be that he had set his face toward his native land. But it was, indeed so."

On December 25 of that year, Lee boarded a ship bound for Honolulu on his return voyage to the States. After his arrival in the East, he appeared before the Methodist Society and, after answering the accusations which had been made against him by some dissatisfied associates, including Dr. Elijah White, he was completely exonerated. Lee died on March 12, 1845. According to Spalding, Whitman felt that Lee had been dismissed because of "his stern patriotism and his efforts to Americanize this country."[4] Here is a possible reference to the role that Lee played in inducing the Methodist Society to send out the large reenforcement on the *Lausanne* in the fall of 1839.

Narcissa, Sick and Discouraged

The boat trip up the river from The Dalles to Fort Walla Walla was a disagreeable experience for both Marcus and Narcissa. It was rainy and cold. Narcissa was sick, and the exposure increased her suffering. They reached Fort Walla Walla late on Saturday afternoon, October 28 [Letter 141a]. Since Narcissa was too weak to attempt to make the twenty-five mile trip to Waiilatpu on horseback, it was agreed that Marcus would go out to Waiilatpu and return with a wagon. Moreover, Mrs.

Littlejohn's time was near, and the doctor felt that he must be there. After writing a letter to Greene dated, November 1, Whitman left for his station. The Littlejohn baby, a girl, was born on the 3rd.[5]

As mentioned in a previous chapter,[6] Narcissa dreaded going back to Waiilatpu. Her feelings were reflected in several letters she wrote at this time, the first of which was to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Abernethy of Oregon City, with whom she had spent several weeks during the summer of 1843. After thanking them for their gracious hospitality, she wrote: "Never shall I forget the precious seasons of social and religious enjoyment I have been blessed with in your society. Withdrawing my mind from these pleasing reminiscences, what sounds fall upon my ear and what savage sights do I behold every day around me. Never was I more keenly sensible to the self denials of a missionary life. Even now while I am writing, the drum and the savage yell are sounding in my ears, every sound of which is as far as the east is from the west from vibrating in unison with my feelings. What a contrast with the heavenly music of the Camp Meeting. Dear friends will you not sometime think of me almost alone in the midst of savage darkness" [Letter 141a]. Evidently a band of Indians was holding a war or ritualistic dance of some kind at the Fort near Narcissa's room and within range of her hearing.

Narcissa's ill health contributed to her feeling of despondency. While in the Willamette Valley, she had consulted with three doctors: Dr. Elijah White, Dr. Ira L. Babcock of the Methodist Mission, and Dr. Forbes Barclay at Fort Vancouver, but, because of the lack of medical knowledge of that day, there was little they could do to relieve her sufferings. Whitman, in his letter of November 1 to Greene, reported: "Mrs. Whitman's health has been poor for the last year, having had an enlargement of the Ovarid [ovary?]." In his letter of January 29, 1844, to H. B. Brewer, a member of the Methodist Mission stationed at The Dalles, Whitman was more specific: "Mrs. W's health does not promise to be any better. She is now about [the] house & takes considerable care but she has a throbing tumor near the navel (umbilicus) which I fear is an aneurism of the main artery. Consequently I have little expectation of her ever enjoying health again."

The ballooning of a large artery, referred to as an aneurism, can now be corrected by surgery but such a technique was unknown to that generation. Narcissa described her affliction in a letter to a sister dated

January 30, 1844: "I have not suffered from the disease I took medicine for last summer, but a new and more precarious one has discovered itself, since my return, yet of long standing. It consists of an organic affection of the main artery below the heart, a beating tumor which is liable to burst and extinguish my life at any moment. There is no remedy for it, so I never expect to enjoy better health than I do at present; never do I expect to continue long on the earth."

Several months later, on April 12, Narcissa gave further details about her poor health in a letter to her father: "While I was at Vancouver, I placed myself under Doctor Barclay's care... He discovered that I had an enlargement of the right ovary and gave me iodine to remove it. I was very much improved by his kind attentions for that complaint, and had it not been for the other difficulty of the aorta which was not at that time discovered by Doctor Barclay, although it existed, I might have recovered my health. But the medicine I took for the cure of one tumor was an injury to the other, and for three months after my husband's return, my situation was a source of deepest anxiety to him and he greatly feared that he was about to be bereaved."

Narcissa's despondency appears in both of these letters. In the letter to her sister of January 1844, she wrote: "I felt such a dread to return to this place of moral darkness, after enjoying so much of civilized life and Christian privileges." And in the letter to her father, she repeated the same sentiment: "I turned my face with my husband toward this dark spot, and dark, indeed, it seemed to be to me when compared with the scenes, social and religious, which I had so recently been enjoying with so much zest."

Back to Waiilatpu

Among the families whom Whitman met and encouraged to go to Oregon when he passed through St. Louis in the early spring of 1843 was that of John Hobson. Somewhere along the trail, it appears Mrs. Hobson had died, leaving her husband with three girls—one in her mid-teens; Ann, who was thirteen; and Emma, seven. Even as Whitman had felt a responsibility for the wife of Miles Eyres and her children, so in the Hobson case, he promised the distracted father that the three girls could be left at his mission station [Letter 145]. When Narcissa arrived at Fort Walla Walla, she met the Hobson family. By that time the

older girl had plans to go to the Willamette Valley with another party. The two younger girls had been hesitant about being left at Waiilatpu, but they quickly changed their minds after meeting Narcissa and begged to be taken into the Whitman home. Narcissa was hesitant. She already had Mary Ann Bridger and Helen Mar Meek. Also at Waiilatpu were David Malin and Perrin Whitman. To her sister, Narcissa wrote: "The girls were so urgent to stop that I could not well refuse them." And so it was arranged that the Whitman household should be increased by two more girls, making six children in all under their care.

On Saturday, November 4, Whitman loaded his family into the wagon, which he had brought in from the mission, and they started the long ride to Waiilatpu. Narcissa, commenting on the difficulties of the ride, wrote: "I was not well when I left W.W., yet I thought I could endure to ride here in one day in a wagon, but it proved too much for me. We were in the evening late before we could reach home, as they [i.e., the animals] had to go slow on my account, and I took cold. For six weeks after, I scarcely left my room and most of the time was confined to my bed [Letter 145]." During December, a combination of complications brought her "very near the gates of death." After passing the crisis, her health slowly but gradually improved, although by the following May, she wrote that she was still weak. Because of her ill health and also because of her enlarged family responsibilities, Narcissa was able to carry on few if any activities for the natives. As far as the Indians were concerned, her main missionary duties were over.

Narcissa's ill health should be remembered when we read H. K. W. Perkins' appraisal of her [Appendix 6]. He never saw her during the first six years of her life at Waiilatpu when she was well and enthusiastic about her work with the natives. Perkins remembered her as being ill, dreading to go back to Waiilatpu. He was correct when he wrote that "her stay with us including the visit to the Willamette, [was] the pleasantest portion of her Oregon life." In view of her physical condition, we can understand why Perkins wrote: "The natives esteemed her as proud, haughty, as *far above them.* No doubt she really seemed so. It was her *misfortune*, not her *fault*. She was adapted to a different destiny." As will be told later, Narcissa's health greatly improved within a few months after her return to Waiilatpu and she became able to carry on her household duties without the handicap of ill health.

"The Foreign Inhabitants of Waiilatpu"

When Narcissa, exhausted from the long, slow wagon trip from Fort Walla Walla, arrived with her husband and the four little girls at Waiilatpu, she found the main mission house and the dwelling that Gray had erected, crowded with emigrants. The Littlejohns with their newborn baby were in the Whitmans' bedroom and for the time being could not be moved. Every room in the two dwellings was occupied except the dining room. There the Whitmans and the two Hobson girls slept for about five weeks. Five emigrant families and four single men were crowded into the other rooms. Jesse Looney, his wife, and six children occupied the Indian room together with a young man by the name of Smith. Mr. and Mrs. John W. East and their four children had the schoolroom east of the kitchen. A French Canadian, whom Narcissa called Alex, a mountain man, and who, she claimed "stops with us without invitation," made his bed in the kitchen, the most used room in the mission house. David Malin and Perrin had their beds in the attic room over the living room, and Helen Mar and Mary Ann slept in the same room with the Littlejohns. This meant that a total of twenty-seven were living in the main mission house of whom fifteen were immigrants and one, a mountain man.

When the Gray house was erected in 1841–42, it was so pretentious, as compared with the dwellings occupied by the other members of the Mission, that it was called at first the "mansion house." This building had six rooms on the first floor and an unknown number on the upper half-story.[7] Possibly the interior of the Gray house was not finished by the fall of 1843, as only twelve emigrants and two "hired men" were living there when the Whitmans returned to Waiilatpu on November 4. Thirty emigrants were being housed in this building at the time of the Whitman massacre. Narcissa does not list the names of all who were living in the Gray house but did mention in her letters a widow with three children, no doubt Mrs. Eyres whose husband had been drowned in the Snake River; a family with four children, and "an aged couple" [Letters 146 & 149]. Writing to her sister Clarissa on May 20, 1844, Narcissa expressed the hope that her parents might migrate to Oregon and live with them at Waiilatpu. She cited the example of the old couple who had gone out to Oregon to be with their children and commented: "They were considerably older than father and mother."

Thus, the total number of white people, whom Narcissa referred to as "the foreign inhabitants of Waiilatpu," living there in the late fall of 1843, was forty-one, of whom thirty were emigrants or mountain men. The immigrants of 1843 set a pattern for the annual migrations which followed, for each year the number of immigrants enjoying the hospitality of the Whitmans varied from thirty to nearly sixty.

Those who had been given shelter in the fall of 1843 also needed food. The occupants of the emigrant house and the Looney family in the Indian room managed to do their own cooking. The others, eighteen in all not counting the Littlejohn baby, ate at the Whitmans' table. In her letter of January 31, 1844, Narcissa described their fare as being scanty, consisting of "potatoes, corn meal, with a little milk occasionally, and cakes from the burnt wheat." She found the diet a great change from "the well furnished tables of Waskopum and Willamette." Writing to Brewer on January 29, Whitman said: "Our entire living has to come from Mr. Spalding's. We live almost entirely without bread, having little flour and prospect of less until harvest. We have nearly consumed three of the largest & fatest oxen already which we got from Mr. Spalding & now have to look to the Indians for more." Sometimes Narcissa felt resentful when she remembered that the best of their produce had been sold to the passing immigrants.

November and December of 1843 were months of great trial for Narcissa. Even though she was a semi-invalid during most of this time, most of the responsibility of running her household fell on her shoulders. Narcissa missed the privacy of her own bedroom during the first weeks after their return, or until December 10 when the Littlejohn family was able to move into new quarters. With twenty-three children on the grounds, there were many annoyances especially on cold or rainy days when the children could not play outside. Of those trying days, Narcissa wrote: "During all this period and for some time after, I was too sick to make any effort at arranging my house or to have the care of my family, and the confusion and noise distressed me exceedingly." She said that the children, including those under her care, "were as wild and uncontrollable as so many wild animals" [Letter 146].

Realizing the imperative need for more living space, Whitman, with the help of some of the emigrant men, added a room to the east end of the main mission house. This later became the schoolroom for white

children. The Littlejohns were able to move into it when it was ready. The Looney family of eight moved in December to "the Prince's house up the river" [Letter 146]. Narcissa may here have been referring to the house built by Pambrun for Young Chief in the fall of 1840 on the Umatilla River. The East family with one of the Eyres girls went to live with the Spaldings. This reduced the number of residents at Waiilatpu to twenty-six and made space available for a school to be opened for white children. This was taught by Mrs. Littlejohn who had an enrollment of fifteen. "Now our children are quite tame," wrote Narcissa, "and manageable and we feel that they are all enjoying a great privilege." This marked the beginning of the Waiilatpu school for white children which was continued in following years up to the time of the massacre.

Whitman hired Littlejohn to take care of cultivation on the condition of giving him one-third of the produce which he would be free to sell to the emigrants of 1844. We have no evidence that Whitman asked for or received any compensation from any of the emigrants for the hospitality they enjoyed at Waiilatpu. No doubt the women helped Narcissa in household duties and regarding the men, Whitman wrote: "I intend to give employment by the job in cutting & splitting rails; making fence & breaking new land.

When Narcissa wrote to the Abernethys from Fort Walla Walla on October 31, she stated: "Fremont, the scientific explorer's party have just arrived to-day with ten carts." On his way to the Fort, Frémont had stopped at Waiilatpu, where he had hoped to get some flour but was disappointed to find that none was available. He wrote in his *Narrative* that he had to be satisfied with some "excellent potatoes." Judging by an order drawn on the government dated from "Wascopum, Oregon Territory" on November 24, 1843, payable to Dr. Whitman for $183.31, Frémont got more than potatoes, possibly a beef or some hogs.[8] Narcissa also made reference to a big mule, which Frémont left at Waiilatpu, which the Whitmans called Uncle Sam [Letter 220]. Frémont also left at the mission some extra cannon balls for his howitzer, which fact was remembered by the Indians at the time of the massacre.[9]

The Continuing Activities at Waiilatpu

After reviewing the several references to Narcissa's ill health, it comes as a surprise to learn that Marcus himself was suffering from a disability during the same time which made it difficult for him to carry on his work. Writing to his mother on May 20, 1844, he said: "My whole journey to and from the States seems a dream." He regretted that he had had so little time to spend with his mother and with other relatives and friends. He mentioned the pleasure of seeing "the little growing sprigs under the relation of Nephews; Nieces or Cousins." His mother had been concerned about the dangers and hardships of his return journey. When with her, he laughed off her fears, but, after returning to Waiilatpu, he was ready to admit that the long journey home was "one of fatigue and some danger." Then he added: "But you know Mother, I have long discarded both those as not to be counselled either in matters of duty or pleasure or convenience. I had a lame foot on the road which left me with a tumor on my instep which has given me much solicitude & may give me still much more inconvenience."

Shortly after Marcus and Narcissa arrived at Waiilatpu during the first week of November, an urgent call came from the Walkers at Tshimakain for the doctor to visit them, because Elkanah had come down with scarlet fever. Mary in her diary tells of sending their dependable Indian servant, Solomon, to Waiilatpu on November 13. Solomon returned on the 21st without the doctor but with a note which he had written on the 17th. Whitman explained that his wife's illness and his own affliction made it impossible to respond to the call. He gave some advice: "I think it was favourable that you were bled," he wrote to Elkanah. This is one of the few references in Whitman's correspondence to his approval of the practice, common in that day, of bleeding a patient as a remedy for all manner of diseases, even for scarlet fever. In time Elkanah made a good recovery.

Whitman's foot became so sore in the spring of 1844 that he had to use a crutch. As late as July 22 of that year, he informed Greene that, although his foot was then better, he was still lame and unable "to walk with activity." Summarizing his missionary activities with the natives, Whitman, in his letter to Greene of April 4, 1844, stated: "For the winter we have had few Indians and no school, but were able to hold meetings every Sabbath with a small congregation." Again in the same

letter, he reported: "A congregation of from two to three hundred have been in attendance on the Sab.—since some time in Feb.—besides many more who come & go & have more or less opportunity of instruction." The increasing proselytizing activities of the Catholic missionaries in the vicinity of Waiilatpu gave Whitman continued concern. The Indians were quick to take advantage of the rival claims of the Protestants and the Catholics by playing one against the other to see which would give them the largest material benefits. Regarding this Whitman informed Greene that there was an "apparent desire on the part of some to try and make use of the difference between us to enable them to secure some selfish purpose." Whitman believed that the best defense against the Catholics was education. He told Greene that the "gradual increase in knowledge" on the part of the natives would promote a lessened regard for "Papal forms." His difficulty, however, was to find some one able to conduct a school for the Indians as he was far too busy to undertake this responsibility himself. In earlier years, Narcissa had helped in the school but now, because of her ill health and increased household duties, she was unavailable. Whitman tried to hire one of the emigrants to take over the Indian school, but this experiment proved fruitless. So, for the time being, the Indian school was abandoned.

Whitman's work at Waiilatpu was repeatedly interrupted by calls for his professional services by his associates in the Oregon Mission and also by members of the Hudson's Bay Company's residents at Fort Walla Walla. Sometimes these calls entailed days of travel on horseback. During the first week of February 1844, Walker notified him of his wife's expected confinement on or about February 25. A son, their fourth child, came on February 10, earlier than expected and ten days before the doctor arrived. Writing in her diary on February 22, perhaps with some glee, Mary noted: "Dr. W. arrived in the evening. I met him at the door with my babe in my arms."[10] Another confinement case came under Dr. Whitman's care in May 1844 when Mrs. McKinlay, wife of the Hudson's Bay Company's official in charge of Fort Walla Walla, moved to Waiilatpu where she could be under the doctor's care for the birth of her second child. Narcissa explained that "there are no females at the Fort" [Letter 155]. A son was born on May 20.

Profiting by his experience in the fall of 1843 when the immigrants drained him of all provisions except potatoes, a few hogs, and some

scorched wheat left in the ruins of the burnt mill, Whitman made every possible effort to be ready for those he expected to arrive in the fall of 1844. In his letter of October 25, 1844, to Greene, he stated that he had from fifteen to seventeen "beeves" which he was selling for six cents a pound. He also planted as many potatoes and garden vegetables as time and cultivated land permitted.

Whitman realized the necessity of getting a suitable gristmill in operation as soon as possible to replace the one which had been destroyed, in order to meet the needs of the residents at Waiilatpu and to be ready for the immigration of 1844. By October 1844, Whitman was able to report to Greene: "Since harvest I have made with the aid of Mr. East a run of fine granite Mill Stones, forty inches across the face & I have got them in good operation so that I shall be able to supply flour & meal which I do at five dollars for unbolted & six for bolted flour per hundred & four for unsifted & five for sifted meal." The mill was placed at the same site as the one that had been burned and another undershot water wheel was made. There is no evidence that the mill at this time was enclosed.

Gradually during the spring and summer of 1844, the immigrants who had wintered at Waiilatpu left for the Willamette Valley. John Hobson sent for his daughter Ann but placed Emma with the Walker family at Tshimakain, where she stayed until May 1845. Most of the immigrants who wintered at Waiilatpu during the years 1843–47 inclusive, moved on the Whitman stage for a few short months and then disappeared into the obscurity of unrecorded history. Not all who made the difficult overland journey were young or middle-aged people. Bancroft in his *Oregon* refers to the death of Jesse Looney on March 25, 1869, at the age of eighty-eight.[11] This means that Looney was sixty-two when he ventured to take his large family over the Oregon Trail to the Pacific Coast.

The Littlejohns left for the Willamette Valley early in the fall of 1844 [Letter 164]. This meant that on the eve of the arrival of the vanguard of the immigration of that year, Waiilatpu was emptied of all its "foreign inhabitants" except the Whitmans, the four children under their care, and perhaps one or two hired men. Writing to his mother on May 20, 1844, Whitman said: "Perrin is a good boy and I think is not homesick." Perrin quickly picked up the Indian language and in this his uncle gave him every encouragement. In his letter to his mother, Whitman wrote that the boy's "articulation will be purely native. No sound is inaccessible

to him." Whitman foresaw the day when Perrin would be of great service to the government as an interpreter, as indeed proved to be the case.

More Natives Received into the Mission Church

No missionary who ever served in Old Oregon under either the American Board or the Methodist Society was as successful in his evangelistic and civilizing work with the natives as Henry H. Spalding at Lapwai. Spalding was favored in being located in a larger and more friendly tribe than any other Protestant missionary, and also he was the only Protestant missionary in Oregon who ever returned to his former field after the Whitman massacre. Much of Spalding's success during the years he served under the American Board was due to his strategy in concentrating on winning the chiefs.

As has been noted, Spalding's first converts were Timothy and Old Joseph. During the winter of 1841–42, he conducted a school at Lapwai which enrolled "two hundred and thirty pupils, including most of the chiefs and principal men." [12] In addition to trying to teach a large assemblage of people of all ages, Spalding selected a small group of the most influential men and gave them special attention. On February 14, 1842, Eliza Spalding wrote to her friend, Mrs. A. T. Smith, then in the Willamette Valley, and called the roll of this class: "Joseph, Timothy, Luke, Lawyer, Stephen, Jason, Five Crows (Joseph's brother)..." [13] Of this number, only Five Crows was from the Cayuse tribe. He and Joseph had the same Cayuse mother, but Joseph had a Nez Perce father.

Sometime during the summer of 1841, when on his overland journey around the world, George Simpson met with some of the Cayuses at Fort Walla Walla. "Their chief," wrote Simpson, "who rejoiced in the name of Five Crows, was said to be the richest man in the country, possessing upwards of a thousand horses, a few cattle, many slaves, and various other sources of wealth. Having in addition to all this, the recommendttion of being young, tall, and handsome..." According to Simpson, Five Crows became enamored of the daughter of a Hudson's Bay official, perhaps Maria Pambrun, and after "dismissing his five wives," presented himself at Fort Walla Walla to claim his lady love. "To his dismay," wrote Simpson, "and perhaps also to his astonishment, his suit was rejected." [14]

Polygamy was practiced to a limited extent by the Nez Perces and Cayuses, but it was the firm policy of the missionaries to discourage the custom. Several years after the incident Simpson told about Five Crows, the charge was made in an eastern publication that members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board had received polygamists into the Mission church. When news of this accusation was made known to Spalding, he wrote a vigorous denial to the Board which was published in the *Missionary Herald*. "There is no person now in the church," he declared, "and never has been who has had two wives." [15] Spalding did admit that some of the church members had been polygamists but insisted that they had abandoned the practice on being baptized. The name of Five Crows does not seem to have been mentioned in the published criticism, but the reference may have been to him.

Polygamy posed moral problems for the missionaries and sometimes economic issues for the natives, as can be seen in the following story which has come down through the years. One day a Nez Perce, who had a domineering second wife, approached Spalding and asked if it would be necessary to put away his second wife should he wish to be baptized. "Absolutely," replied Spalding. "Polygamy is a sin. You will have to send your second wife away." The Indian was quiet for a time and then said: "You tell her."

Whitman was called to Lapwai in June 1844 to assist Spalding in examining the Christian faith and experience of several natives who wished to join the Mission Church. Here is evidence that the two men were working together in harmony. Whitman no longer objected, as he had done in December 1841, to the reception of natives into the membership of the church, and Spalding had shown a much more cooperative spirit after Whitman's return from his eastern journey, no doubt being grateful for Whitman's intercession in his behalf. Spalding, as the minister, and Whitman, the elder, constituted the session of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon which, under Presbyterian polity, was authorized to receive and dismiss members. After due examination, ten were received as members including a French Canadian. Several others who had applied were advised to wait and receive more instruction. "It was an occasion of much interest," Whitman wrote to Greene, "& Joseph, one of the two oldest members, distinguished himself for his discretion & Christian zeal" [Letter 160].

The ten converts were baptized on Sunday, June 23, and publicly welcomed into the membership of the Mission Church. The nine Nez Perces received that day brought the total native membership of the church to twenty-one of whom only Five Crows was a Cayuse. No more natives were received during the remaining three and a half years of the history of the Oregon Mission. If the success of the evangelistic endeavors of the members of the Oregon Mission during its eleven-year history be measured solely by the number of natives who joined the church, then it might be claimed that the Mission was a failure. However, the spiritual results of preaching and teaching the Christian message defy tabulation. The seed had been sown and years later, when Spalding returned to the Nez Perces in his old age, the harvest was reaped when about a thousand Cayuses, Nez Perces, and Spokanes were baptized and received into the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon.

Whitman Comments on Various Issues

Since the Indians had no historian to record their reactions to a number of contemporary events affecting their lives during the 1840s, and since no council was held during that decade with Government officials at which stenographers took down the words of the Indian speakers, we must rely on the correspondence of the missionaries for information about how the natives reacted to the rapidly changing events. How did the Cayuses respond to the thousands of immigrants who each fall crossed their lands? How did they feel about Dr. White's efforts to impose a white man's code of laws upon them? What was the attitude of the land-hungry immigrants towards both the natives and the missionaries? These and many tangent subjects occupied Whitman's attention when he wrote letters during the year under review.

One of the first reactions of the Cayuses to the incoming whites was to profit as much as possible by selling them farm produce or by exchanging fresh horses and cattle for worn-out animals. Whitman, in his letter to Greene of April 8, 1844, said that he thought the Indians had gained much more in these transactions than did the Waiilatpu mission. On May 18, he wrote: "The Indians want settlers among them in hopes to get property from them." Eager to monopolize the market with the immigrants, some of the Cayuses even forbade Whitman "to break a new field as I desired lest I should make money out of their lands by supplying Emigrants" [Letter 148].

Although most of the natives seemed to be eager to make as much money as possible through the sale of provisions to the immigrants, Whitman noted that a few took a long-range view and were "solicitous about so many coming into the Country" [Letter 156]. Even though all of the immigrants of 1844 moved on to the Willamette Valley, Whitman realized that the time was coming when some would want to settle in the Walla Walla Valley. "It will not be long," he wrote, "before there will be settlers among us, when we may look for trouble as the Indians will not like either to respect the interests of the Whites as they ought, nor the Whites to forbear with the Indians."

One of the most penetrating analyses of the developing situation is found in the following taken from Whitman's letter to his mother dated May 16, 1844: "Although the Indians have made and are making rapid advance in religious knowledge and civilization, yet it cannot be hoped that time will be allowed to mature either the work of Christianization or civilization before the white settlers will demand the soil and seek the removal of both the Indians and the Mission. What Americans desire of this kind they always effect, and it is equally useless to oppose or desire it otherwise. To guide, as far as can be done, and direct these tendencies for the best, is evidently the part of wisdom. Indeed, I am fully convinced that when a people refuse or neglect to fill the designs of Providence, they ought not to complain at the results... The Indians have in no case obeyed the command to multiply and replenish the earth, and they cannot stand in the way of others in doing so. A place will be left for them to do this as fully as their ability to obey will permit, and the more we can do for them, the more fully will this be realized. No exclusiveness can be asked for any portion of the human family... The Indians are anxious about the consequences of settlers among them, but I hope there will be no acts of violence on either hand."

In a similar vein Whitman wrote to Greene on May 18, 1844: "Although the Indians are doing much by obtaining stock & cultivating as well as advancing in knowledge, still it cannot be hoped that a settlement [of white people] will be so delayed as to give time for the advance to be made so that they can stand before a white settlement. *For when has it been known that an ignorant, indolent man has stood against money, intelligence & enterprise.*" [16] Whitman was a realist. He saw that the day was inevitably approaching when the Walla Walla Valley would be dotted with the homes and towns

of white men. He knew that the natives could never compete with the superior knowledge and the numerical superiority of the incoming Americans. These were critical years of transition for the Indians, and there were none so concerned about helping them as were the missionaries. With the increase of the white population, Whitman also realized that there would be an inevitable shift of emphasis in his missionary work.

In his letter of May 16, 1844, to Narcissa's parents, he wrote: "I have no doubt our greatest work is to be to aid the white settlement of this country and help found its religious institutions." And he added this significant statement: "As I hold the settlement of this country by Americans rather than by an English colony most important, I am happy to have been the means of landing so large an emigration on to the shores of the Columbia, with their wagons, families and stock, all in safety."

Whitman's realistic appraisal of the superiority of the white man's civilization over the primitive culture of the natives, especially in matters referring to future survival, undoubtedly affected his work after his return to Waiilatpu in the fall of 1843. This opinion is reflected in a letter that H. K. W. Perkins wrote on October 19, 1849, when he tried to give reasons why the Cayuses should have killed the Whitmans: "He looked upon them [i.e., the Indians] as an inferior race & doomed at no distant day to give place to a settlement of enterprising Americans. With an eye on this he laid his plans & acted. His American feelings even while engaged in his missionary toils, were unfortunately suffered to predominate. Indeed it might almost be doubted whether he felt half the interest in the natives that he did in the prospective white population. He wanted to see the country settled" [Appendix 6]. This rather harsh criticism of Whitman should be kept in mind as we review his activities with the Indians during the years after his return.

Whitman wanted the Americans to settle in Old Oregon, yet when faced with the possibility of land-hungry immigrants crowding into the Walla Walla Valley, he began to fear the inevitable complications. He expressed this concern in a letter to his brother Augustus dated May 21, 1844. After repeating his conviction that the Indians could never compete with the white men, he turned to what he thought might happen to the Waiilatpu mission: "As soon as we cease to be needed as it were for the benefit of white settlers, for *all other sources have not done so much for the settlement of Oregon as the Missions,* & we become in the way of the interests of the

settlers, either by occupying lands they desire or enabling the Indians to hold more firmly to their land by teaching & aiding them to cultivate, *we are sure to become the objects of hatred & efforts will be made to get rid of us…* We must do our duty & be ready to retire at the shortest warning." [17]

Ten days after writing to his brother, or on May 31, Whitman addressed a letter to A. B. Smith, who was then serving under the American Board at a mission station near Honolulu. Whitman, in referring to his journey to Boston, wrote: "I am happy to know that I was enabled if nothing more to reverse the action of the Board in relation to—this Mission." Smith, who was partly responsible for the Board's drastic order of February 1842, could hardly have been pleased with that information. Whitman made mention of the encouragements the government was giving to emigrants, especially in the way of offering free land to all who would settle in Oregon. He then touched on the problem he faced: Was his primary mission to be for the Indian or for the white man? This was the issue he raised when he wrote to Smith: "I do not know how much longer we shall be called to operate for the benefit of the Indians. But be it longer or shorter, it will not diminish the importance of our situation. For if the Indians are to pass away, we want to do what can be done in order to give them the offer of life & then be ready to aid [the immigrants] as indeed we have done & are doing, to found & sustain institutions [of] learning & religion in the Country."

Looking into the future of Oregon, Whitman added: "Could I have staid at home longer, I should have tried to have raised the means of establishing some Academies & Colleges, but I trust to influence others to do so." Here is the first time Whitman mentioned in his letters his dream of founding a college in Oregon. On the following October 25, in a letter to Greene, Whitman returned to this subject by writing: "This is a place most advantageous for the commencement of what may soon be an Academy & College, both on account of its fine & healthy climate & of its eligible situation." Whitman made several references in his later correspondence to this dream of seeing a college established in the Walla Walla Valley; a dream which Cushing Eells was to bring into reality in 1859. This story, however, belongs to a later chapter.

Grounds for Uneasiness among the Indians

Whitman's correspondence for the year following his return in the fall of 1843 reveals his awareness of growing discontent, even hostility in some places, on the part of the Indians to the white men in general and to the Protestant missionaries in particular. A study of Whitman's writings shows that he attributed most of this restlessness to three sources—(1) the agitation of Eastern Indians and half-breeds; (2) the proselytizing efforts of the Roman Catholic missionaries; and (3) the critical attitude of a mountain man, William Craig, who, with his Nez Perce wife, had settled in Lapwai Valley in November 1840, within a few miles of Spalding's mission on the Clearwater.

By the spring of 1844, Whitman had a twofold fear of future developments if the number of Oregon immigrants increased each year, as he fully expected would be the case. The first was from the immigrants themselves. This concern he expressed in a letter to the Methodist missionary, H. B. Brewer located at The Dalles, in a letter dated May 25, 1844: "Immigrants will have this country & Indians & Missionaries must give place as soon as they cease to continue to be necessary stepping stones." However, Whitman felt that the missionaries had more to fear from the Indians than from the white men for he also said in this letter to Brewer: "I have no doubt but the situation of missionaries among Indians will become more & more trying in this country as our work advances & they become more familiar with the whites in general and especially as all the variety of influences operate upon them… To all this may be added the influence of the Shawnees, Delawares & Iroquois & half breeds have in explaining to them the Indian wars on the borders of the States & all resulting in the Indians getting large amounts of money from Americans or whites in general."

The agitation caused by eastern Indians in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company had become a serious problem for both Whitman and Spalding by the spring of 1844. Whitman explained in a letter to Greene of April 8: "Some most arch grievances were brought against our course which were based on the authority of Tom Hill, a Delaware Indian, who is now in the mountains with the Nez Perces and Flat Head Indians." Hill had settled among the Nez Perces about 1837 and by 1844 had secured for himself a dominant position in the tribe. He was an agnostic and a bitter critic of the way the white men had treated

the Indians in the East. Spalding called him a "blasphemous and debased infidel." [18]

Spalding felt the efforts of Tom Hill's anti-missionary agitation more directly than did Whitman, yet the latter was involved, as the Cayuses were receptive to many of the ideas that Hill was spreading abroad. According to Whitman, Hill was friendly with the Catholic priests, thus encouraging distrust of the Protestants. Hill touched sensitive nerves among the natives when he dealt with economic issues. "The Indians say," wrote Whitman to Greene, "they are told that we ought to expend more liberally on them and that it is peculiarly our duty to do so. That we do not give… large prices for all we get of them and break their lands for nothing. These are among their greatest grievances. They complain that they have been obliged to teach us their language and we have not taught them ours in return. They have always caused themselves to be paid for teaching us language and even then a teacher has been hard to obtain and keep." Tom Hill will enter our story again.

Whitman's letters during this year carry frequent references to the negative influences of the Roman Catholic priests on the Protestant work. "The Indians say that they have been told by the Papists not to be afraid we should leave them by their pressing us," Whitman told Greene, "but if we should be vexed to remove, to be calm and see us go off… One of them told me that Mr. Blanchet told him that if they would send me away, he would send a mission among them. I tell them all plainly that I do not refuse to go away if they prefer the Papists to us—and urged them to decide if they wished me to do so, but that I should not go except at the full expression of the people, desiring me so to do."

In addition to the difficulties mentioned above, Whitman and Spalding were both affected by the unfriendly acts and agitation of an ex-mountain man, William Craig, who had settled near Spalding's station. He was the first white settler in what is now the State of Idaho. His wife, a Nez Perce, was the daughter of Old James, the chief whose band lived in that Valley. In order to understand the point of Whitman's comments about Craig, it must be pointed out that Spalding had encouraged such converts as Timothy to cultivate land in the vicinity of the Clearwater station. Old James considered this an intrusion on his rights to the Valley.

Whitman wrote in his letter to Greene of April 8, 1844: "William Craig, a white man from the mountains, whose wife is a native, & a

connection of Old James, the reputed owner of the valley in which Mr. Spalding's station is located, is living near the station and has been for several years. He is said both by the Indians & others to be the mover of the measure of the Indians to send Timothy off his land. He is busy in trying to excite the people against the laws as recommended by Doct White and also says much in favour of the Papists, a prediliction of no long standing. The family with whom he is connected say they are determined to obtain a Papal Priest to come among them."

In Summary, 1843–1844

Beginning with Whitman's letter of November 1, 1843, we find that his every letter to the Board carried some reference to the political future of Oregon and to his responsibilities to the incoming white people. He was keenly interested in the importance of the Board encouraging the right kind of people to migrate to Oregon. He never gave up the hope of having "pious laymen" settle in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. His letters during these last years of his life reflect a blending of his missionary ideals with what he considered to be the larger objective of promoting the development of American institutions in Oregon. Whitman referred to the Oregon immigrations as "a part of the onward movement of the world and therefore more to be moulded than to be turned aside" [Letter 157]. The very numerical superiority of the immigrants over the Indian population of Oregon made changes inevitable. There were more people in the 1843 immigration than were in the combined membership if the Cayuse and Walla Walla tribes.

Looking back on the history of the Oregon Mission through the perspective of more than 125 years, we see that most of the factors which precipitated the final tragedy of November 1847 were already present by the fall of 1844 when the Whitmans began their ninth year of residence at Waiilatpu. Indeed, in view of the explosive nature of some of the points of friction, it is surprising that the massacre did not occur at an earlier date.

1844–1845

Profiting by his experience in the fall of 1843, when the immigrants drained him of all provisions excepting potatoes, Whitman made every effort to be ready for those who would arrive in 1844. With the help of one or more hired men and possibly some of the Indians, the harvest

was gathered in, the flour mill was put into operation, and cattle and hogs were at hand ready for sale. Narcissa looked forward to the coming of the immigrants with a heavy heart. To her friend, Mrs. Brewer at The Dalles, she wrote on August 5: "We are all of us, I suppose, on the eve of another such scene as last fall—the passing of the emigrants and as it falls the heavier upon my friends at the Dalles, I hope that they have laid in a good stock of strength, patience and every needed grace for the siege."

The Dalles marked the end of the land route of the Oregon Trail for most of the immigrants, as only the most venturesome tried to take their wagons over the Cascade Mountains. The majority preferred completing their journey by going down the river in boats or on rafts. The animals were driven over the mountains. Although the Methodist missionaries at The Dalles were called upon to provide food, we have no evidence that any of the immigrants asked to spend the winter there. Being so close to their destination, they managed somehow to get to the Willamette Valley.

The Indians likewise profited by the previous year's experience. In their eagerness to get American cattle, they rode forth to meet the immigrants and some went as far as Fort Hall, where they traded fresh horses for the travel-worn cattle. Those who were cultivating small acreages eagerly sold or bartered their produce to the incoming whites. This trading the Whitmans welcomed, as they knew that the demand was greater than their ability to supply. The natives would thus be encouraged to do more farming.

The vanguard of the 1844 emigration arrived at Waiilatpu on Tuesday, October 1, having been delayed by a late spring on the Missouri frontier. Among the first to stop at Waiilatpu was a group of young men, and, to the surprise of Dr. Whitman, he found Newton Gilbert of Rushville among them. Years before, Gilbert had been one of his students in both a day school and the Sunday school in Rushville [Letter 178]. Because of the delay in leaving the frontier, many of the immigrants were caught in the snows of the Blue Mountains. Narcissa explained the situation in a postscript dated October 25 to her letter begun on the 9th of that month: "It is now the last of October and they have just begun to arrive with their wagons. The Blue Mountains are covered with snow, and many families, if not half of the party, are back in or beyond the mountains, and what is

still worse, destitute of provisions and some of them of clothing. Many are sick, several with children born on the way. One family arrived here night before last, and the next morn a baby was born; another is expected in the same condition… Here we are, one family alone, a way mark, as it were, or center post, about which multitudes will or must gather this winter. And these we must feed and warm to the extent of our powers. Blessed be God that He has given us so abundantly of the fruit of the earth that we may impart to those who are thus famishing."

The 1844 emigration numbered about 1,500.[19] In his letter to Greene of October 25, Whitman said: "The immigrants are passing and must be for some weeks yet, as the season is now so far advanced, and many desire to winter with us. I have given no one any encouragement for staying…" Even though Whitman urged all who could do so to continue their journey, they could not out of Christian charity refuse hospitality to the needy. By October 25, when both Narcissa and Whitman took time to write letters, Waiilatpu was already crowded with immigrant families who wanted to remain through the coming winter, and there were still more to come. In her letter to her parents, Narcissa wrote: "I cannot write any more, I am so thronged and employed that I feel sometimes like being crazy, and my poor husband, if he had a hundred strings tied to him pulling in every direction could not be worse off."

Among the early arrivals who asked to stay at Waiilatpu over the winter was a blacksmith, a hatter, and two Methodist ministers [Letter 164]. A cross section of American life was on the move westward. Among those who paused at Waiilatpu was a young man from New York State, Alanson Hinman, who was induced by Whitman to stay and teach the school for white children. Hinman proved to be a most helpful assistant and played a minor role in the Whitman story during the next three years. He not only taught school; he also helped Narcissa in many household duties, especially in the care of the children. A year later Narcissa wrote: "I feel that I never can be too thankful for the mercies of the Lord in placing such a good young man in our family to do this work for us when my health was so inadequate" [Letter 176]. In her letter of October 9, 1844, to her parents, Narcissa made the following comment: "My health has been improving remarkably through the summer, and one great means has been daily bathing in the river. I was very miserable one year ago now, and was brought very low and poor; now I am better

than I have been for some time, and quite fleshy for me. I weigh one hundred and sixty-seven pounds; much higher than ever before in my life. This will make the girls [i.e., her sisters] laugh, I know."

By October 25, the Whitmans learned that "there are more than five hundred souls back in the snow and mountains. Among the number is an orphan family of seven children, the youngest an infant born on the way, whose parents have both died since they left the States." Some concerned persons in the emigration had sent word ahead to the Whitmans asking them to be prepared to receive the children, as they had no relatives or friends to whom they could turn in Oregon. "What we shall do, I cannot say," Narcissa told her parents. "We cannot see them suffer. If the Lord casts them upon us, He will give us His grace and strength to do our duty to them."

The Seven Sager Orphans

When the "Oregon fever" broke out in the western states in 1842 and 1843, Henry Sager was one who caught the contagion. Oregon became for him the promised land. Sager was a restless soul, always dreaming of greener pastures over the western horizon. From the year of his marriage in 1830 to Naomi Carney, to 1839, he and his family lived on a farm in Ohio. He then moved his family to Indiana, then to eastern Missouri, and finally to western Missouri. By the spring of 1844, just before leaving for Oregon, the Sagers had six children—John, age 13; Francisco, better known as Francis, 11; Catherine, 9; Elizabeth Marie, 7; Matilda Jane, 5; and Hannah Louise, 3. Naomi was then expecting her seventh child sometime during the latter part of May.

Sometime in the fall of 1843 Henry sold his farm and blacksmith shop and moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, which was the departure point for many who were planning to leave for Oregon in the spring of 1844. Naomi, remembering her condition, looked upon the journey with deep forebodings. With prophetic insight she declared that she would never live to see Oregon, but Henry remained optimistic and insistent.

The Sager family, with their goods loaded in a large wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, joined a company of emigrants which met at a point west of St. Joseph, on May 20, to organize. Sager had at least three other oxen and two cows. Following the precedent set by the 1843 emigration, an organization was perfected along military lines for defensive

purposes in case of an Indian attack, with Cornelius Gilliam in over-all command. As will be told later, Gilliam figures in the events following the Whitman massacre. Since the emigration was so large, consisting of about 1,500 people, it was broken up into four companies. The one to which the Sager family was assigned was led by William Shaw.

On the evening of May 30, when the Sager family was camped on the Nemaha River in what is now southeastern Nebraska, Naomi gave birth to a daughter who was named Henrietta Naomi.[20] The baby arrived in the midst of a downpour of rain with the mother lying in a damp canvas tent. The birth was difficult, and Naomi was too weak to be moved the next day. The wagon train remained in camp for three days, the resumed the westward trek on Monday, June 2. Naomi and her baby rested on a bed in the springless, jolting wagon. She never fully recovered her strength after her confinement. A series of misfortunes dogged the progress of the Sagers across the country. On July 30, a few days before the wagon train arrived at Fort Laramie, Catherine had the misfortune to fall under the wagon while it was in motion, and one of the back wheels ran over her left leg, breaking it severely. As has been noted, this was a common accident on the Oregon Trail. Although there was a German doctor, known as Dr. Degen,[21] in the emigration, he was not in Captain Shaw's company with which the Sager family was traveling. A messenger was sent to get him. In the meantime, the father set the broken bones to the best of his ability and applied a splint. When the doctor arrived, he declared that the leg had been set as well as he could have done. Catherine was placed in the wagon on a bed near her mother and baby sister. Then the wagon moved on with Dr. Degen now riding alongside.

Captain Shaw's company moved through South Pass on August 23. About this time Henry Sager came down with what was vaguely described as "camp fever." He too was put to bed in the wagon and a young man was hired to drive the oxen. Henry died on August 26, just before the wagon train crossed Green River. Shortly before he died, Henry called Captain Shaw to his side and begged him to see that the family was taken to the Whitman mission. In the meantime, Naomi's health continued to decline. Even though she found lying on her bed in the jolting wagon when the dust stirred up by the many wagon wheels was at times almost stifling, there was no alternative to continuous travel. The

Shaw company arrived at Fort Hall on September 1, about a month later than the schedule followed by the mission party of 1836. Five hundred miles of desert and mountains stretched before them before they could reach Waiilatpu.

Catherine, looking back in later years on those trying days, wrote:[22] "Soon after leaving Fort Hall, she [i.e., Naomi] became seriously ill and delirious. She suffered intensely and even was unable to make her wants known. We were traveling over a road so dusty that a cloud of dust covered the train all day, and to screen Mother as much as possible from this, a sheet was hung across the front of the wagon, making the air within close and suffocating. In her delirium she talked continually of her husband, at times addressing him as though present, and beseeching him in pitiful tones to relieve her suffering." On September 11, only sixteen days after her husband had died, Naomi Sager followed him in death.[23] The Shaw company was then camped on the south bank of the Snake River near present-day Twin Falls, Idaho. Shortly before she died, Naomi expressed her wish that her children could be kept together. Her last words were: "Oh, Henry! If you only knew how we have suffered."

Sager Orphans Taken to Waiilatpu

Following the death of Naomi Sager, sympathetic members of the wagon train came forward and took care of the seven orphans. A woman, possibly one who was nursing her own baby, assumed the responsibility of caring for the Sager infant. Catherine wrote: "The rest of us [were] kindly cared for by everybody in the train; in fact, we were literally adopted and everyone... was ready to do us a favor."[24] Dr. Degen continued to drive the oxen and serve as temporary foster father for the seven children. Somewhere along the line of march, the wagon was reduced to a two-wheeled cart. This was all that was needed to carry the meager possessions of the children. Since Dr. Degen succeeded in taking through to Waiilatpu six oxen and one cow that Henry Sager had owned, it may be assumed that the two Sager boys were given the responsibility of driving the animals not needed to pull the cart. Added to the miseries of cold weather and snow in the Blue Mountains was the lack of food. Their flour supply was exhausted and, during the last days of travel, Dr. Degen and the children had nothing more to eat than dried meat.

Arrival at Waiilatpu

The exact date of the arrival of the Sager children is not fixed; we know that it was sometime after October 25 and before the end of the month [Letters 187 & 191]. Catherine never forgot her thrill when, as a nine-year-old girl, she first saw Waiilatpu and met Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. She wrote in her reminiscences: "We arrived at the station between ten and eleven o'clock. For weeks this place had been our talk by day and formed our dreams at night. We expected to see log houses occupied by Indians and such folk as we had seen about the forts [i.e., Forts Laramie, Hall, and Boise]. Instead we saw a large white house surrounded by a palisade." [25] After commenting briefly on the buildings, the gardens, and the irrigation ditches, Catherine wrote: "We drove up and halted near a large ditch. Captain Shaw was in the house conversing with Mrs. Whitman. Glancing through the window he saw us and turned to her and said, 'Your children have come. Will you go out and see them?' He then came out and told the boys to help the girls out and get their bonnets. Alas! It was easier to talk about bonnets than to find them. After much searching one or two were found. By this time Mrs. Whitman had come out.

"Here was a perfect scene," wrote Catherine, "for the pen of an artist. Foremost stood the little cart with the tired oxen lying down. Sitting in the front end of the cart was John, bitterly weeping. On the opposite side stood Francis, with his arms resting upon the wheel and his head in his arms, sobbing aloud. On the near side the little girls stood huddled together, bareheaded and barefooted, looking first at the boys and then at the house, dreading we knew not what! Nearby stood the Doctor and the Captain watching the scene with suppressed emotion. It was thus that Mrs. Whitman found us."

Catherine described Narcissa as being "a large, well-formed woman with beautiful auburn hair, a rather large nose, and a large pair of grey eyes. She wore a dark calico dress and a gingham sunbonnet, and we thought, as we shyly looked at her, that she was the prettiest woman we had ever seen. As she came towards us, she spoke kindly to us; but like freightened rabbits, we ran behind the cart and peeped shyly at her. She then addressed the boys, adding, 'Poor boys, no wonder you weep.'" Seven-year-old Helen Mar Meek, wearing a "green dress, white apron and neat sunbonnet," then joined the group. The personal belongings

of the children were carried into the house. "As we neared the steps," remembered Catherine, "Captain Shaw asked if she had any children of her own. Pointing to a grave at the foot of a nearby hill, she said, 'The only child I ever had sleeps there.' She remarked that it was a great pleasure [i.e., comfort] to be able to see the grave from the house." Since the Oregon Trail passed on the north side of the mission house, there was no obstruction cutting off the view of the hill and the little cemetery. Inside the house, the Sager children met Mary Ann Bridger "about nine years old washing the dishes."

Although Captain Shaw and Dr. Degen had fulfilled their promise to the dying Henry Sager that his family would be taken to the Whitman mission, the first reaction of both Marcus and Narcissa was that the responsibility of rearing the seven children was far heavier than they should accept. Several days were spent in debating the problem. Dr. Whitman even suggested sending the boys to Tshimakain to be under the care of the Walkers and the Eellses [Letter 164a]. Captain Shaw, however, reminded the Whitmans of the deceased father's wish that the children be kept together. Whitman raised the question of what the reaction of the American Board might be. He had been sent to Oregon to minister to the Indians and therefore the Board might not wish to allow any money to be spent for the support of white children. "To this," wrote Catherine, "the Captain argued that as the Doctor had been sent out as a missionary that whatever came under that head was his duty, whether natives or whites, and we certainly were objects for missionary charity."

Three days after the older six Sagers had arrived at Waiilatpu, the Sager baby came. Of this Narcissa wrote: "She arrived here in the hands of an old filthy woman, sick, emaciated and but just alive… She was five months old when she was brought here—had suffered for the want of proper nourishment until she was nearly starved. Husband thought we could get along with all but the baby—he did not see how we could take that; but I felt that if I must take any, I wanted her as a charm to bind the rest to me. So we took her, a poor, distressed little object, not larger than a babe three weeks old. Had she been taken past at this season, death would have been her portion, and that in a few days" [Letter 192].

On November 6, 1844, Captain Shaw and Dr. Whitman signed a paper which stated that the seven children were placed in the charge of the latter together with the property of the deceased Henry Sager consisting

of "three yoke of oxen, one wagon, one cow and one old steer and several articles of clothing..." [26] The document also stated that if Walker and Eells did not wish to take the boys and if the Whitmans did not want the responsibility of keeping all seven, then Whitman could take all of the children to Oregon City where Captain Shaw would care for them. A few days after Captain Shaw had left, Marcus and Narcissa decided that they would keep all seven. According to Catherine's reminiscences, Dr. Whitman mounted his horse and rode after Shaw, catching up with him just before he reached The Dalles. Whitman gave Shaw the assurance that he and his wife would keep the children and that the Captain should feel no further concern about them.

In the spring of 1845, Whitman visited the Willamette Valley and while there appeared before Judge J. W. Nesmith of the Probate Court and on June 3 was made the legal guardian of the Sager children.[27] The estate of the late Henry Sager was valued at $262.50, which Whitman held in trust for the family. The Whitmans considered adopting the children, thus having them take the name of Whitman, but Captain Shaw advised against it.

The Sager Myth

Among the myths and legends, which have developed around the name of Marcus Whitman, is the completely unhistorical story spun from the imagination of Mrs. Honoré Willsie Morrow. According to this imaginative tale, the thirteen-year-old John took charge of his younger brother and sisters after the death of their mother and escorted them alone over the Oregon Trail nearly five hundred miles to the Whitman mission. They had only one horse and a cow. According to the novelist, there had to be a cow to supply milk for the baby. Perhaps the horse was needed to carry their baggage. Mrs. Morrow gave no explanation as to how the children got food and shelter during the days when they would have been traveling through the snow of the Blue Mountains. She described in vivid imagery how John staggered into the Whitman mission carrying the five-month-old baby and leading the emaciated cow on whose back "were perched a sister aged eight, with a broken leg, and a sister of five who helped support the leg... A sister of three and one of seven walked, besides his eleven-year-old brother, Francis." This incredible story first appeared in the January 1926 issue of *Cosmopolitan*; was reprinted in the

December 1940 *Reader's Digest*; again in the August 1960 issue of the *Digest* under the caption, "Child Pioneer," and with an introduction by Mark O. Hatfield, then Governor of Oregon! Descendants of the Sager children have found great offense in the myth. Protests from historians to the editors of *Reader's Digest* brought no retraction, only the assurance that it would not be published again.

The true story of the Sager orphans is obtainable from the reminiscences of the three Sager girls, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda; from the writings of the Whitmans; and also from the published recollections of members of the 1844 emigration. The documented story of the Sager children is so dramatic, it needs no embellishment by writers of fiction.

Winter of 1844–1845 at Waiilatpu

By November 11, 1844, Whitman was able to tell Walker that all of the immigration had passed Waiilatpu with the exception of seven wagons still to come [Letter 164a]. Writing to Greene on April 4, 1845, Whitman stated that: "After supplying all that came with provisions and urging all to go on that could, twelve families wintered with us." A school for white children was conducted through the winter months with Alanson Hinman as the teacher. Twenty-six were enrolled including sixteen from the immigrant families and ten from the Whitman household. Living with the Whitmans was seven-year-old Eliza Spalding who, according to Catherine Sager, had made the 120-mile trip from Lapwai "accompanied only by an Indian woman" in order to attend the school. Although Whitman did not indicate in his letter to Greene the exact number of immigrants who had wintered at Waiilatpu, the total must have been over fifty-five. This would have included the adults in the twelve families, possibly some single or older people, the sixteen school children and an unknown number of pre-school children. The Whitman household, including Hinman and the Sager children, numbered at least fourteen. Thus the total white population, including the three half-breed children, at Waiilatpu would have been about seventy. Again the mission buildings must have been crowded and, perhaps, even the blacksmith shop was used as a dwelling.

Whitman was responsible for supplying food for this large company for a period of four or five months, or until the immigrants found it possible to continue their journey to the Willamette Valley. In his letter

to Walker of November 11, 1844, Whitman reported that after providing supplies to the immigrants who had already passed, he still had "a hundred bushels of wheat, two or more [hundred] of corn left yet & more than a thousand bushels of potatoes & plenty of beef & hogs." Whitman, however, underestimated the amount of food that seventy people could eat over a period of four or five months. In his letter to Greene written during the following April, he reported that he was then drawing on Spalding for additional food supplies and added: "I had to do the same last year."

Catherine Sager remembered that from twenty to twenty-five people ate at the Whitman table during the first winter she lived there. Other kitchens on the grounds served the other people. Alanson Hinman in his published reminiscences stated, with perhaps some exaggeration, that the Whitman family "had nothing in the way of meats for their own use but the necks of the beef which were made eatable by boiling, while the better parts were distributed among the immigrants. Mrs. Whitman was not always so long-suffering as her husband, and would sometimes protest that it was not fair that the immigrants should get all of the best parts, while only the leavings were available for the family. To these protests Dr. Whitman would reply in a jesting tone, that he could stand the scoldings of his wife far better than the complaints of the immigrants, and so it went on through the winter." [28]

No documentary evidence remains to indicate how much Whitman was able to collect from the immigrants for the accommodations provided, but it is evident that some were able to pay something. In Whitman's report to Greene of April 8, 1845, he stated that he had been able to pay in cash for all supplies received from the Hudson's Bay Company besides satisfying a claim for £50/4/4 made by Dr. White and wages due Littlejohn amounting to $128.36. Dr. White's claim may have covered expenses of the meeting held with the Cayuses in the spring of 1843. In addition Whitman reported that he had accepted over $500.00 in notes from the immigrants who had been unable to pay in cash and also "some ten or twelve oxen." He stressed the fact that he did not want to make money out of the sale of provisions to the immigrants, but did want to meet expenses. "It is impossible for us to refuse those who are hungry," he wrote, "even although they cannot pay us and in some cases cannot ever secure payment. Situated as we are, necessity compels us to become supplyers to immigrants and we may as well make the best of it we can."

Greene was not pleased with these developments. Writing to Whitman on April 6, 1846, in reply to Whitman's letters of the fall of 1844 and spring of 1845, Greene said: "We are glad to hear of your prosperity in secular matters, and that you may be able, by means of your grain and your stock, to defray a large part of your expenses. All this is well. Still we are not quite sure that you ought to devote so much time and thought to feeding the emigrants, and thus make your station a great *restaurant* for the weary pilgrims on their way to their promised land. Such a work is very humane & good work; but the work of guiding men to Christ is a better one and coincides better with the vocation of a missionary laborer… We fear the effect of this on your own mind & heart—that you will become too exclusively a man of business: —and upon the Indians, that they will have their thoughts engrossed about improving their outward condition, while they will be led to think their spiritual interests are of little consequence… There is danger also that your mission, like that of the Methodists, will get the name and character of a trading or money making establishment, and thus bring discredit not only on your own station, or mission; but on the missionary work generally…" [29]

Secretary Greene's letters to the Board's Oregon missionaries reflect the wise advice of a man of great experience, yet in this instance, he failed to appreciate Whitman's position. What other course could Whitman have followed as long as he remained at Waiilatpu? If he had not fed the hungry, ministered to the sick, and sheltered the needy, he would have been severely criticized. Whitman brought out this point when on April 1, 1847, he replied to Greene's letter of April 1846 by writing: "If we are not legally, religiously nor morally bound to relieve the passing immigrants, we are necessarily; for the sick and hungry cannot be sent away however pennyless."

The total cost to the American Board of its Oregon Mission for the fiscal year ending March 29, 1845, amounted to $1,822.62. This covered all expenses of the four families, or on the average of a little more than $450.00 for each. As has been stated, none of the missionaries received a salary [Appendix 2]. Through the efforts of Whitman and Spalding, the Mission was becoming increasingly self-supporting. The total expense for the fiscal year ending in March 1847 was only $584.39.

Erection of a Sawmill

On April 8, 1845, in another letter to Greene, Whitman told of the fulfillment of another dream that he had had for his mission. A sawmill had been erected. He wrote: "Partly in order to give employment to those who wintered with us, but more from the necessity of having boards and timber for the use of the Station and [to] supply the Indians—last but not least to prepare fencing for ourselves & the Indians, I have been building a saw mill—which is now in a state of forwardness & which I hope to start soon after planting is over. I have mostly paid for the work as I went along in provisions. The Mill is about twenty miles off in the Blue Mountains where we have an abundance of timber—and a fine seat [i.e., location] with a good road to reach it. We had most of the irons on hand."

The mill was located on a creek, later called Mill Creek, almost directly east of Waiilatpu. As has been stated, Whitman had chosen the confluence of Mill Creek and the Walla Walla River as his mission site. The present city of Walla Walla is about six miles upstream on Mill Creek; the mill site is further upstream. Whitman obtained his sawmill machinery from the dismantled mill which Spalding had erected at Lapwai in the winter of 1889–40. Spalding claimed that he had gotten the irons from Fort Vancouver.[30] In his letter to Greene, Whitman indicated his need for lumber to build a shelter over his gristmill, to place new roofs on his buildings, and to provide the natives with boards. A power driven saw was a great advance over the laborious method of whipsawing which had been his only means to get boards. Looking into the future, Whitman wrote: "In this way the mill will be ready for future use—for ourselves, the Indians, and perhaps a settlement. I do not think it will detract from my ability to meet my expenses as most of [those] whom I employ would owe me and not be able to pay" [Letter 168]. Whitman also managed to have a log cabin erected at the mill where, in later years, some of the immigrants, who were wintering at the mission, were able to stay.

Whitman took advantage of the presence of a millwright among the 1844 immigrants to rebuild his gristmill. Large millstones were shaped and placed, and by April 8, 1845, Whitman was able to write: "I have since had a new set of cogs put in, and the mill does well."[31] This was the third gristmill that Whitman had erected at Waiilatpu.

Activities with and for the Indians

The presence of so many immigrants at Waiilatpu during the winter of 1844–45, the building of the sawmill and the rebuilding of the gristmill, together with other responsibilities, left Whitman little time to devote to the natives. On April 8, 1845, he reported: "We have had no native school—nor is it likely we can have [one] before next winter." In the earlier years at Waiilatpu, Narcissa had sometimes helped in the school, but this she was unable to do in the fall of 1843 and the following winter. Her failing health and many household duties prevented her sharing in what she had once enjoyed doing. Moreover, the enthusiasm that the Cayuses had at first manifested in the school had waned. The novelty of having missionaries living in their midst had worn off. It also appears that fewer Cayuses were living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu after Whitman's return than had been the case in previous years. This made it difficult to carry on religious instruction for them.

The Gospel of Matthew in Nez Perce

One of the greatest accomplishments of the missionaries working with the Nez Perce and Cayuse Indians during the eleven-year history of the Oregon Mission was the printing at Lapwai in 1845 of the *Gospel of Matthew in Nez Perce*. After Smith and Rogers had left the Mission, the main responsibility of preparing items in the Nez Perce language, such as primers, fell on Spalding. According to a notation in his diary, he began on December 20, 1841, to translate the Gospel of Matthew into the Nez Perce tongue. He sent some of his work to Waiilatpu for Whitman and Gray to review early in 1842, but, the manuscript was returned in April without any corrections having been made. Gray was too poor in the language to make any constructive criticism, and by this time Spalding was so far ahead of Whitman that the latter did not feel qualified to make changes.

Writing to Walker on January 27, 1845, Whitman said: "We have hired a printer who has been printing a book of Nez Perces & English and now is going to print Matthew's gospel. I am going up to see to its preparation but shall not stay long as I have to go again in March." On March 5, he wrote again to Walker: "I suppose the Gospel of Matthew is now printed & we look every day for an arrival from Mr. Spalding when the Printer will come to go to Willamette." Whitman was then expecting

to go to Lapwai during the latter part of that month to be present when Mrs. Spalding expected to be confined for the third time. A daughter, Martha, was born on March 20.

The printer to whom Whitman referred was a young French Canadian, Medare G. Foisy, who had accompanied Father Joseph Joset into the Flathead country and who was hired by Spalding and Whitman in the fall of 1844 to assist in operating the Mission press at Lapwai.

Although no exact figure is found in the contemporary writings of Whitman and Spalding as to the number of the Gospels printed, we can estimate the total to be not more than 450. Evidently only a few copies were actually distributed among the Nez Perces and Cayuses, as only a few were sufficiently advanced in learning to be able to read much of the book. After the Whitman massacre, Spalding listed in the inventory of the property lost or destroyed at Lapwai "400 copies of Gospel of Matthew not bound." [32] Today this volume is exceedingly rare, fewer than six copies are known to be extant.[33] Educated Nez Perces, who know their native language, say that Spalding's translation is inaccurate. Even so, to reduce a language to writing, to make a translation, and then to print it was a major achievement. Whitman's part in the project was small. The major credit goes to Spalding.

Continuing Agricultural Activities

Whitman never ceased to encourage the Cayuses to cultivate the soil. In his letter to Greene of April 8, 1845, he wrote: "Some of the Indians are hiring land broken for them by those [i.e., the immigrants] who are here still, which is done at the rate of from three to five acres for an inferior horse. Ploughs are in great demand. I have sold even my last cast plough from the States—as they are the ones preferred by the Indians." Whitman asked Greene to send out fifty more plows, explaining: "A horse is given for a plough and the horses are sold for from ten to fifteen dollars to meet expenses."

The success that the Cayuses had of selling produce to the immigrants in the fall of 1845 gave them further encouragement to do more in the way of farming. Writing to Greene on May 15, 1846, Whitman asked for another shipment of twenty plows, and in a letter to Walker dated July 20, he wrote: "An improved spirit of agriculture is manifested among the Indians this year which bids well for the future. For

the first time this year, they have fenced so that I do not have to guard my cattle." The Indians had held Whitman responsible if any of his livestock strayed into their fields and ate their crops. Now this problem was solved by the erection of fences, possibly made from boards brought from the sawmill.

The Sager Children in the Whitman Home

The unpublished and published reminiscences of the three Sager girls—Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda—open many windows through which we can look into the Whitman home.[34] Elizabeth Sager recalled how, shortly before their arrival at the Whitman mission, her older sister, Catherine, then only nine and a half years old, had washed their clothes so that all would look respectable— "but when I saw little Helen Meek with such pretty clothes, I thought our clothes didn't amount to much." Regarding Mrs. Whitman, Elizabeth wrote: "People who didn't like her, said she was stuck up, said she had red hair; but she was not stuck up, and she didn't have red hair. She was rather reserved, and her hair was a copper gold." [35]

Catherine recalled how hungry she, her brothers, and sisters were when they arrived at Waiilatpu. "It required all the attention of the Doctor and his wife to keep us from overeating and endangering our health," she wrote. Extra attention had to be given to the baby who was dangerously undernourished when she arrived. Matilda wrote that after being fed: "The first thing Mrs. Whitman did was to cut our hair, wash and scrub us." [36] The problem of discipline became an immediate issue. "The Whitmans were New England people," Matilda explained, "and we were taken into their home and they began the routine of teaching and disciplining us in the old Puritan way of raising and training children—very different from the way of the plains." Of this Catherine also wrote: "We had been so long without restraint as to become very unruly and hard to manage. The Doctor and his wife were strict disciplinarians and held the reins of household government with steady hands, and while any deviation of the laid down rules met with instant and severe punishment, every effort made to win their approval was rewarded with their smiles." In her letter of August 9, 1845, to Mrs. Brewer, Narcissa confessed that the children "were said to be very bad when they were left; but there was a reason for that. Left without restraint in such a journey,

it could not be expected otherwise." She added, however, that they were not difficult children to manage and that she did not have to use the "rod" very often.

According to Elizabeth, Mrs. Whitman did most of the disciplining: "Dr. Whitman was a very jolly, kindly man. He loved to romp with us children. We didn't feel at all in awe of him as we did of Mrs. Whitman. She enforced all the discipline in the family. Elizabeth gave the following revealing touch in regard to Whitman when she wrote: "He never strolled or walked slowly—he always walked as if he was going somewhere and was on his way." [37] Matilda gave further details about her foster mother: "Mrs. Whitman had the New England idea of discipline. There was no danger of any of us becoming spoiled. She would point to one of us, then point to the dishes or the broom, and we would instantly get busy with our assigned tasks. She didn't scold much, but we dreaded that accusing finger pointed at us. The way we jumped when it was levelled at us, you would have thought her forefinger was a gun and was likely to go off." [38]

The five older Sager children were enrolled in the school taught by Alanson Hinman. Although Marcus reported that Hinman kept an "excellent school" and Narcissa wrote praising him as "a good and faithful disciplinarian" [Letters 168 & 176], the older Sager girls never forgot his harshness in meting out punishment. Catherine wrote: "He was a small-souled tyrant of a man [who] took delight in torturing helpless children... He certainly bestowed on my brothers some of the most cruel whippings it was ever the lot of boys to endure." Catherine remembered that she and others "were too timid and bashful to complain" but that some of the immigrant families "took the matter up and at one time there was indication of trouble." The one who resented such treatment the most was Francis Sager. He became a rebel.

Oregon Mission Meeting, May 1845

No meeting of the Oregon Mission was held after Whitman's return in the fall of 1843 until that held at Waiilatpu beginning May 8, 1845. The Walkers with their four children, ranging in ages from one to seven years, and the Eellses with their two sons, one and four years old, made the 140-mile trip on horseback from Tshimakain. Mrs. Spalding was the only adult member of the Mission not present. She remained at Lapwai with her little boy and two-months old baby girl. The meeting

continued until May 14. Reporting on events in his letter of May 20 to Greene, Whitman wrote: "The meeting was eminently one of the utmost harmony of views, interest, and feeling. This state… has been apparent ever since my return from the States." A business meeting of the Mission church was held on Sunday, the 11th. Among the actions taken was the following: "Dr. Whitman was appointed a comt. to inquire after Compo now on the Wallamette." Since Whitman had been commissioned by the Mission to visit the Willamette Valley to take care of some other matters, this request to inquire about Compo was logical.[39]

Disturbing reports had been received about James Conner who had been baptized and received into the church on November 17, 1839, along with Joseph and Timothy. Conner had moved to the Willamette Valley, where he was accused of operating a distillery. In January 1844 his case was brought to the attention of Indian Agent White who ordered the confiscated equipment to be destroyed. Conner then challenged White to a duel. Conner was taken before the circuit court of the Provisional Government, fined $500, and disenfranchised for life.[40] After becoming informed of these developments, the members of the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon voted to excommunicate Conner for such "crimes" as "Sabbath breaking, fighting, neglect of worship, to which he has added polygamy & intent to fight a duel, & liquor vending."[41]

Sunday was always an important day during the Annual Meetings of the Oregon Mission, for then the missionaries could meet together in worship and observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Walker was the preacher for Sunday, May 11. Before the Lord's Supper was served, Spalding baptized Alanson Hinman, the five Sager girls, and Mary Ann Bridger.[42] Hinman was then received into the membership of the church. The two Sager boys were not baptized. The explanation given by Catherine in her reminiscences is that her brothers did not wish to be baptized except by immersion, because their mother had been a Baptist. They had no objection, however, to their sisters being baptized. Narcissa wrote: "We felt it our duty to have them baptized, as many as were willing to be, and according we did so, the girls only consenting" [Letter 176]. Possibly the fact that Hinman was baptized and made a member of the church reacted unfavorably on both of the Sager boys, who may have felt that he was hypocritical in claiming to be a Christian when he had been so harsh in disciplining them. Mary Walker noted in

her diary for the following day: "Mr. Hinman had fits in the evening, occasioned probably by excitement on the sabbath." It is possible that he was afflicted with epilepsy.

Francis Sager Runs Away

As soon as the Mission meeting closed, Dr. Whitman made preparations for his trip to the Willamette Valley. Emma Hobson, who had been returned to Waiilatpu by the Walkers when they came to Waiilatpu, was to accompany Dr. Whitman as was also Alanson Hinman. The three left Waiilatpu on Monday, May 26. One of the last, if not the last of the immigrant families to leave for the Willamette Valley was the Perkins family, who evidently left one week after Whitman's departure. It appears that Perkins[43] sympathized with the Sager boys in their resentment against Hinman and urged them to go with him to the lower valley. John refused, but Francis eagerly accepted the invitation.

According to Catherine, Francis told her late on the Sunday evening after Dr. Whitman left that he was planning to leave the next day. "I did not put much faith in his assertions," she wrote, "as I did not think he would go away and leave us. His reason for going was that he thought the discipline was too strict." Evidently John, who learned of his brother's intentions, told Mrs. Whitman, who wept on hearing the news. Catherine's account continues: "Monday morning when I came down to breakfast, I read in the tearful faces of Mrs. Whitman and John the truth of his assertions. Dr. Whitman was not at home, having gone below earlier… When breakfast was ready, Mrs. Whitman sent one of the children to call Francis to breakfast. He refused to come and she then went after him herself and he returned with her, sat down at the table and ate in silence. No one mentioned the subject that filled the minds of all.

Francis arose from the table, took his hat and started for the door. Mrs. Whitman arose from her seat and said in a loud but firm voice, 'Francis, you must not go. You must stay with me.' He replied: 'I must go, I cannot stay.' She motioned to John to bolt the door but before he could do so Francis ran out, mounted a horse and left." He rode away from the mission and later joined the Perkins family and went with them to the Willamette Valley.

While passing through The Dalles, the Perkins family and Francis called on the Brewers at the Methodist Mission. In a letter to Narcissa,

Mrs. Brewer passed on some of the criticisms made by Perkins of the situation in the Whitman home. Replying on August 9, Narcissa wrote: "I read your letter to John; he seemed quite hurt about Mr. P's charges and said that he [Mr. P.] asked him several times if he did not wish to go to the Willamette… I endeavour in all things to act towards the children as if they were my own." Narcissa was deeply hurt over the incident. Catherine wrote: "[She] mourned long over this affair and said it seemed as though someone in the family had died."

Narcissa was left alone at Waiilatpu with the ten children after the departure of the Perkins family. The two fourteen-year-old boys, Perrin and John, had the responsibility of looking after the livestock and milking the cows. Narcissa felt that if only her husband had been home, Francis would not have gone. She wrote to Marcus and told him what had happened, no doubt with the hope that he would find Francis and bring him back. On June 29, while at Fort Vancouver, Marcus in a letter to his sister Alice wrote: "Narcissa has written me since I left home and says she will not allow me to leave home again without she goes with me. She is not in strong health and her spirits flag when I am from home and so much care comes upon her."

It was on this trip to the Willamette Valley that Whitman had his confrontation with White.[44] He also appeared in the Probate Court at Oregon City on June 3 and was appointed the legal guardian of the Sager children. Whitman was able to meet Francis. Of this Catherine wrote: "[He] did not urge him to return as he wanted him thoroughly satisfied with his visit below." After Whitman had returned to Waiilatpu, about July 1, in time for the wheat harvest, he talked with John. Whitman assured John that he would be willing to give some cattle and horses to each of the boys so as to put them "in the way of acquiring property." John wrote of this arrangement to Francis and urged him to return. According to Catherine, "a horse was dispatched for him and soon after harvest, we had the pleasure of welcoming Francis home." Possibly the fact that the court had made Dr. Whitman the legal guardian of the Sager children had some influence on the boy. Certain adjustments in personal relationships were evidently made in the Whitman home, as we hear of no further difficulties. The time came when the older Sager children, along with the younger, were calling Marcus and Narcissa father and mother.

"A Cause of Much Anxiety"

Whitman's letters to Greene of April 8 and May 20, 1845, refer to four potentials for future trouble. The first of these involved the Indians' superstitions regarding their "tewats" [medicine men]. Whitman explained this situation in his letter of April 8: *"A cause of much anxiety*[45] has arisen in connection with... the death of a young man of apoplexy. It is the custom of the Canadians—who are as superstitious as the Indians themselves—to awe them through their superstition of sorcery—by telling them that such and such white men are [more] largely endowed with supernatural power than even their own Tewats." Such reports planted in the minds of the natives gave the idea that Dr. Whitman was a tewat with superior magical powers. As a result, wrote Whitman, "they have been saying I caused the death of the young man who died of apoplexy." Whitman saw the danger to himself if such rumors continued to circulate. He wrote: "An impression of this kind among them if strengthened by such circumstances and by the countenance of such men as the Canadians—and perhaps by the Priests—would make my stay among them useless & dangerous—and might induce me to leave at once." Whereas the illiterate and superstitious Canadians might have ascribed such powers to Whitman, it is inconceivable that any of the Catholic priests would have been guilty of such gross accusations.

Whitman gave Greene a second example of this superstition. During the terminal illness of a local chief: "His son came to me as he was dying and in a passion told me 'I had killed his Father and that it would not be a difficult matter for me to be killed.' You are aware already of their habit to kill their own Medicine Men... when an excuse offers by the death of some of their friends." Whitman knew of the danger which threatened him if one of his Indian patients should die.

The second issue which caused "much anxiety" to Whitman was the possibility of the Roman Catholics opening a mission in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. Whitman informed Greene that Father De Smet had made an appointment to meet the Indians at Fort Walla Walla sometime during the month of April 1844. On March 5, Whitman informed Walker: "The Indians are all notified to meet De Smet at Walla Walla when the grass is about five or six inches long." The height of the grass was a primitive method of indicating time.

After Father De Smet had come and gone, Whitman on May 20 wrote to Greene: "He was seeking an invitation to locate a station among these Indians but I do not know as any one gave him any. I have little doubt, however, but he will manage to obtain his wishes in this respect." Whitman explained that some of the Cayuses thought that having Catholic missionaries settle among them would "create competition" in making available "such supplies as the Mission is wont to furnish them."

There is no evidence that the Roman Catholic missionaries ever made any promises to the natives to give them material rewards for favors received, but the property-conscious natives were hopeful. After explaining this problem to Greene, Whitman wrote: "I do not think I could be induced to come to such a people were it to be done again with the present experience—but it is quite different when the question is of continuance or abandonment. I look upon our situation here as having done enough for the cause of Christianity & Civilization to more than compensate for all the labours & expense incurred…"

In similar words, Whitman wrote to Walker: "I should not feel to stay among the Indians in itself considered, but as we are here now, I do not see how we can leave without exposing the cause of religion to reproach" [Letter 167a].

The third source of trouble which Whitman faced was the anti-American and anti-missionary agitation of the Delaware half-breed, Tom Hill, who had a Nez Perce wife and was living with her people. Whitman wrote that he was a person of "considerable talent," who was exerting "a strong influence against all whites—but most especially against us as missionaries"[46] [Letters 173 & 180a].

The fourth "cause of much anxiety" involved the murder of a Walla Walla Indian, Elijah Hedding, son of Chief Peu-peu-mox-mox [Yellow Serpent] at Sutter's Fort in California by an American in the late fall of 1844. Elijah had spent several years in the Methodist Mission school on the Willamette and had been named after a prominent Methodist bishop. All of the Indians of the upper Columbia River Valley were eager to get cattle by 1844. Knowing about the successful cattle drive sponsored by some of the white settlers of the Willamette Valley in 1837 when about 630 head were driven into Oregon from California, a number of Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Spokane Indians decided to go to California and

exchange some of their furs and horses for Spanish cattle. In the party was Elijah Hedding.

At first all went well when the Indians arrived at Sutter's Fort. They were given a cordial welcome and arrangements were made for trading. A serious difficulty arose when the Oregon Indians in a skirmish with local Indians captured twenty-two horses and mules from them. These animals were driven to Sutter's Fort where some of the Americans claimed them as their property saying that they had been stolen. In the argument which ensued, an American, Grover Cook, known for his anti-Indian attitude, killed Elijah Hedding in cold blood while within the Fort. Whitman in his letter of May 20, 1845, to Greene, stated: "It was indeed a barbarous act if we may credit the report of the Indians—which alone we have—for even if they had done any wrong—they were in the fort & might easily have been humbled without resort to capital punishment."

Following the murder, the Oregon Indians hastily left for their homes. They were angry and burning with the desire for revenge. Upon their return, Ellis, as Head Chief of the Nez Perces, was asked to call on Indian Agent White to see what he could do about the outrage. No doubt Ellis referred to the provision in the Tenth Article of the code of laws which White had persuaded the Nez Perces and Cayuses to accept, which contained the provision that if a white man raised a gun against an Indian, "it shall be reported to Dr. White and he shall redress it." The incident must have been most embarrassing to White, as it had occurred in Mexican territory over which the United States had no jurisdiction. All that he could do was to promise to write to the Mexican authorities asking them to redress the wrong. He also sought to appease the Indians by promising them many benefits, including the establishment of a boarding school for Indian youth in the upper Columbia country. Dr. White returned to the States in the fall of 1845, leaving no one to redeem the promises he had made. The whole incident reveals how unrealistic was the White code of laws.

In Whitman's letter of May 20, 1845, to Greene, he stated: "While most of the Indians have been for peace in these parts, some have urged that, as Elijah [Hedding] was educated and was a leader in religious worship and learning... so in revenge one of the same grade must be killed of the Americans." Whitman then reported that both he and Spald-

ing were "proposed as suitable victims." The uncertainty as to what the aroused Indians would do gave Whitman deep concern.

The troubled situation which threatened the peace and effectiveness of the Oregon Mission was discussed by the missionaries at their Annual Meeting held at Waiilatpu in May 1845. Looking back on that gathering, Mary Walker noted in her diary that both Mr. and Mrs. Spalding were "discouraged," and that "Dr. Whitman [was] entertaining fears that his people intend taking his life." [47] Whitman informed Greene that some Indians at Lapwai had ordered Spalding to leave "as soon as he was done planting." After reviewing the darkening situation, Whitman concluded: "Notwithstanding all these discouragements, we do not think we are in danger so as to warrant us to leave our post at present" [Letter 173].

When Whitman was at Fort Vancouver in the latter part of June 1845, he discussed with Dr. McLoughlin the threats that had been made against his life. Dr. McLoughlin had heard about one Indian, supposedly in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had threatened to kill Whitman. "Do you know about it?" asked Dr. McLoughlin. "Yes," replied Whitman, "I have known it for two years." "You have known it for two years and you told me nothing!" exclaimed Dr. McLoughlin, 'Tray tell me his name." Whitman replied: "His name is Thomas Hill." After thinking for a few moments, Dr. McLoughlin said: "We have no man by that name in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company." [48]

Another reference to a warning given Whitman by Dr. McLoughlin is found in the reminiscences of Judge Nesmith: "I know that Dr. Whitman had cause to dread the vengeance of the Indians long before it overtook him. I heard him, in the spring of 1845, express his apprehension on that subject to Dr. McLoughlin, at Oregon City, and the latter agreed with him upon the danger of his situation, and advised him to come to the Willamette Valley." [49]

1845-1846

Since it took about a year for reports to reach the States of the success of the 1843 emigrants in taking wagons over the Blue Mountains, this achievement had little direct effect on the size of the emigration which started for Oregon in the spring of 1844. Since no news of any disaster had filtered back to the States, the assumption was that the 1843

emigration had been successful. As has been indicated, about 1,500 migrated to Oregon in 1844. By the spring of 1845, however, it was well known throughout the States that the wagon road to the Columbia River had been opened. As a result about three thousand joined the Oregon emigration of that year, three times the number who had gone west in 1843. The arrival of the 1845 immigration in the Willamette Valley doubled the previous American population of Oregon.

The success of these emigrations greatly strengthened the position of the United States Government in its negotiations with Great Britain over the location of the boundary. If there had ever been a serious question in informed British circles about the ability of large numbers of Americans to cross the Rockies and the Blue Mountains with their families, their wagons, and their herds of livestock, such must have been answered when they learned of the success of the 1843 and 1844 emigrations. After 1843 there are no further known references in the writings of Hudson's Bay Company officials or British diplomats to making the Columbia River the boundary; still there was a reluctance on the part of the British Government to accept the 49° parallel.

Frederick Merk has characterized the Oregon section of President Polk's message to Congress of December 2, 1845, as being "tough." [50] Although Polk had shown sympathy to the popular demand to have the boundary fixed at 54°40', he expressed a willingness to draw the dividing line at the 49th parallel. According to Merk, Polk reported that "the British had rejected it out of hand." Polk then withdrew the offer and Congress was asked "to serve notice on England of intention to terminate the 1827 agreement of joint occupation." [51] Congress was also asked to pass laws to authorize the granting of land in Oregon to settlers and emigrants regardless of what England might say or do.

The great public interest in Oregon emigration, especially manifest on the western frontier, provided the background for the letter that Greene wrote to Whitman on February 25, 1846, which contains what one writer calls a delightful bit of "exceedingly typical Atlantic anti-expansion sarcasm." [52] Greene wrote: "Relative to Oregon affairs, there is no great change, in fact, though an increasing interest, especially in our western states, in obtaining immediate possession of it. The population of the Mississippi Valley—that little strip of bottom land!—are all in a panic lest they should be pressed to death, if some outlet cannot be

found for the surplus beyond the Rocky Mountains... The probability now is that measures will be adopted before Congress rises, to terminate the joint occupancy [treaty], preparatory for our taking possession of all as high as the 49th parallel."

The Emigration of 1845

The emigration of 1845, having enjoyed favorable weather conditions, arrived in Oregon about a month earlier than that of the previous year. Consequently fewer immigrants arrived at Waiilatpu in a destitute condition. Writing to Walker on September 29, 1845, Whitman reported: "Few of the immigrants call on us. Four hundred and fifty wagons passed Fort Hall but from seventy to one hundred went to California."

Somewhere along the Snake River, Dr. Elijah White and his small party, eastward bound, met the westward emigration. Some asked White if they could obtain supplies at the Whitman station. Although assuring them that they could,[53] White recommended they by-pass both Waiilatpu and Fort Walla Walla by following, after crossing the Blue Mountains, the Umatilla instead of the Walla Walla River to the Columbia. This recommendation reflects White's antipathy to Whitman which was evident at the confrontation the two men had at Oregon City the previous May. To Walker, Whitman explained: "Doc. White told them how plenty & cheap provisions would be at the Dalles."

White was not the only one who gave advice to members of the 1845 immigration. When the immigrants arrived at Malheur River, some two hundred families were induced by Stephen H. L. Meek, an elder brother of Joseph L. Meek, to take a new cut-off which would shorten the distance into the Willamette Valley. Under Meek's guidance, this party followed a trail that led around the southern end of the Blue Mountains and then headed across barren desert land to the Deschutes River. Both grass and water were extremely scarce. The feet of the oxen became so sore because of the rocky soil that some animals refused to travel. At least twenty immigrants are reported to have died during this ordeal, and still others died later from exposure.[54] Meek's life was threatened. He was saved by a friendly immigrant who concealed him in a wagon. It may be that White's enthusiasm for such a cut-off was largely responsible for the venture, but Meek got all the blame. After reaching

the Deschutes River, this party followed it to the Columbia, where they rejoined the Oregon Trail.

Whitman Saves Some Immigrants from an Indian Attack

According to an account given by Sarah J. Cummins, who was the seventeen-year-old wife of one of the 1845 immigrants, Whitman was instrumental in saving a party of immigrants from an Indian attack while they were in the Blue Mountains.[55] Being told by some friendly Indians that a party of Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians intended to attack the immigrants while they were in the mountains, Whitman hastened to ride forth to meet them. He met the immigrants in the Powder River Valley during the first week of September. The confrontation with the hostile Indians came in the Grande Ronde Valley. The war party was surprised to discover that the immigrants had been forewarned and that Whitman and some friendly Nez Perces were with them. Sarah Cummins has given us the following account: "Ere the twilight faded, and as it was apparent that great numbers of the Indians were gathering within range, Dr. Whitman began to talk to the chief of the Walla Walla's. The chief of the Cayuses now spoke vehemently in the style of true Indian eloquence. The Doctor spoke again and again, and the chief replied, still defying us to go on. Then Doctor Whitman rose to almost super-human height and, in a stern voice, told them in emphatic terms that the Great Father of the 'Bostons' [56] would send men to defend these travelers, and that ship loads of soldiers and guns would arrive to kill all the Indians who molested his people on their way to the distant valley."

Fearful of an attack during the night Whitman succeeded in keeping the Cayuse chief in the immigrant camp as a hostage. Once when the chief tried to escape, Whitman sternly told him: "Move and my man shoot you like a dog." Sarah Cummins remembered that this warning had its desired effect, but she added: "It was a night of terror to all, not a breath of sleep except the younger children." The next day a party of friendly Nez Perces arrived, having been sent by Spalding, and this greatly-relieved the strain of the situation. The immigrants then continued their march without further threats.

Although Sarah did not name any of the chiefs, in all probability the Walla Walla chief was Peu-peu-mox-mox, father of the slain Elijah Hedding. Several Cayuse chiefs could have been involved including

Tiloukaikt, Tomahas, and Tamsucky. Possibly the Nez Perce chief was Timothy. In this incident we see the evidence of growing hostility of the Indians living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu.

Loss of Sales at Waiilatpu

Most of the 1845 immigrants, after crossing the Blue Mountains, followed White's advice and went down the Umatilla River past present-day Pendleton, Oregon, to the Columbia River. This route shortened the distance to the Columbia and was, therefore, a logical road to follow. White was mistaken, however, in telling the immigrants that they could get all the supplies they needed at less cost at The Dalles than they could at Waiilatpu.

Learning that most of the immigrants would be taking the Umatilla route, Whitman loaded his wagon with flour and other supplies and rode to the Umatilla to meet them. John Ewing Howell, one of the immigrants of that year, wrote in his diary on September 17, 1845: "...camped on the Umatallow river... Dr. Whitman and lady visited our camp this morning and travelled with us and camped with us. He had a wagon-load of flour alone, not bolted, $8 pr. 100 lbs." [57]

Whitman was greatly disappointed in the small amount of sales he was able to make to the immigrants. "I had much less call from them than last year," he wrote to Greene on October 26. "The money I took from them was less than one hundred and fifty dollars and about fifteen dollars trust—three cows and two small steers." Although Whitman sold flour at $5.00 per hundredweight at his station, he charged an extra $3.00 if he had to carry it the twenty-five or more miles to the Umatilla.

In Whitman's letter of April 13, 1846, to Greene, he again blamed White for his loss of sales. "I wrote you in the fall about my dealings with the immigrants," he said, "& told you I had not much call from them. This was owing to Doct. White's telling them they could get a full supply of flour at the Dalls [sic]. The result was that they would not buy of me at five dollars a hundred, but they had to give eight and ten at the Dalls & what was worse it was not there to supply them, & in consequence there was much suffering." Whitman felt that the lack of supplies at The Dalles added "to the deaths that were induced by a wild attempt at a southern route from Boise to the Dalls."

Whitman warned Greene: "I would desire you to keep a lookout for Doct. White's course in the States and especially that he does not take up a self constituted Agency to collect funds to establish a manual labor school among the Nez Perces, which I have no doubt was a favorite plan of his. He went so far as to promise it to the Indians in such a way as to commit this Mission for its fulfilment or to involve us in its failure" [Letter 179]. Here is evidence of one of White's proposals to appease the Indians of the upper Columbia River country following the murder of Elijah Hedding. Nothing further is heard of this project, and Dr. White no longer figures in the Whitman story.

Immigrants at Waiilatpu, Winter 1845–1846

Life was easier for the Whitmans during the winter of 1845–1846 than it had been the previous year because there were fewer immigrants wintering at their station and also because there was a surplus of food supplies. Moreover, Narcissa was enjoying better health.

In his letter of April 13, 1846, to Greene, Whitman wrote: "A few families wintered with us. Three were Mechanics which I hired, one as a mill wright, another a chair maker and wheel maker, and the other as a Black Smith." Whitman commented on the difficulties involved in obtaining much benefit from strangers whose skills were unknown to him and who usually wanted to leave for the Willamette as soon as possible in the spring. The shortness of the days and the inclement weather during the winter also militated against the immigrants doing much useful work.

Among those who spent the winter at Waiilatpu was a gunsmith. Whitman, when writing to Walker on October 29, 1845, made it clear that he would have nothing to do with the "armory business." Whitman was a pacifist by conviction and consistently refused to use force when meeting with angry natives in some tense confrontation. As has been stated, once when slapped by Tiloukaikt, he literally turned the other cheek.

The only known recorded incident in which Whitman is reported to have threatened to use force is the story given to us by Sarah Cummins quoted above. Mrs. Cummins' account was published in 1914, nearly seventy years after the reported incident is supposed to have occurred. She might have been mistaken in her recollections of the event. The

frightened immigrant holding the gun could have been the one who threatened to shoot the Cayuse chief if he tried to flee.

Shortly after the A. B. Smiths were forced to leave Kamiah, the natives of that place began to ask Whitman and Spalding to send another missionary to them. On April 8, 1844, Whitman referred to this in his letter to Greene: "The Indian with whom Mr. Smith had the difficulty at Kamiah... has showed both here and at Lapwai how much he regrets his leaving... and that ever since his heart has wept." Among the early arrivals of the 1845 immigrant at Waiilatpu was a young man, Jacob Rynearson, whom Whitman hired to go to Kamiah to open a school for the purpose of teaching the English language to any who might be interested. At first Rynearson met with success as Whitman reported that "about twenty-five [were enrolled] among which were two Delawares & Ellis, the principal Chief" [Letter 191].

Rynearson, however, found the project too difficult and returned to Waiilatpu after spending only a month at Kamiah. He then left for the Willamette Valley [Letter 182]. Thus ended all efforts of the Oregon Mission to carry on educational work for the natives at Kamiah.

One of the most welcomed immigrants to spend the winter of 1845–46 at Waiilatpu was the millwright, Josiah Osborn [or Osborne].[58] He had with him his wife and three children—Nancy, five and a half years old; John, two; and a baby boy who might have been born after the family arrived at Waiilatpu. Osborn repaired the gristmill at Waiilatpu and put it in good running condition. By the end of February 1846, the dam at the sawmill in the mountains was completed and the mill ready for operation [Letter 183b]. Osborn succeeded in attaching a lathe to the water wheel and, as a result, Whitman was able to tell Walker: "Mr. Osborne is at work at chairs & spinning wheels with his lathe... A dozen chairs for each of your families besides an arm chair and an arm rocking chair for sick people are under way." In their primitive situation, even a rocking chair was considered a luxury.

In his letter to Greene of April 13, Whitman wrote: "I could not think to live without the Mill as my house wants a new roof, never having had any but dirt roofs, & besides my Flour Mill has no house over it & I am in want of all the means to thresh & secure our grain, having no barn threshing floor or granary. I hope to do much with the Mill for the Indians also." Whitman used the slabs left over from the logs for fences.

The archives of Whitman College contain an account book of Josiah Osborn which throws light upon the prices Whitman was receiving for supplies. The records began on August 21, 1845, and continued to the following March 7. Whitman was then paying Osborn $1.50 per day, which was given in produce. The following entries are typical:

25 lbs flour at 5 cts per pound	$1.25
1 bushel beets	40
1 bushel potatoes	40
69 lbs. beef	3.79½
8 squashes	1.00
20 lbs. pork	1.40
1 lb. sugar	20
51 lbs. meal	2.04
6 ft. tobacco	60

The tobacco, which came in twisted strands and was sold by the foot, was used in trading with the Indians. The prices here listed give a refutation, if such be needed, to the accusations that Whitman was charging exorbitant prices for his supplies. The Osborn family moved to the Willamette Valley in the spring of 1846, but returned, on Whitman's urging, in the fall of 1847.

Introducing Andrew Rodgers

Traveling with the Osborn family was a sandy-haired, gentle-spirited young man by the name of Andrew Rodgers, who also decided to spend the winter at Waiilatpu. Whitman was delighted to learn that Rodgers was willing to teach the school for white children. He was hired forthwith, and thus another problem that Whitman faced was solved. "We have the best prospects for a good school for the children," Whitman wrote to Walker on October 29. "The teacher is mild but I have no doubt of his faithfulness and integrity. He was well recommended." The Walkers sent their eldest son, Cyrus, to the school, and the Spaldings sent their daughter, Eliza. Three of the children of the immigrants were also enrolled, which brought the total in the school to fourteen.

Also traveling with the Osborns was their cousin, Joseph Finley, who had ventured to make the long journey to Oregon for health reasons. Narcissa wrote: "His disease was consumption, and deep-seated when he left the States" [Letter 186]. Catherine Sager remembered how the friendship between Rodgers and Finley "was like unto that of Jonathan and David." The two men took up quarters in the emigrant house.

In her recollections of Rodgers, Catherine wrote: "He was a well educated man of deep piety... his modest and gentlemanly manner completely won Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. Mrs. Whitman was especially attracted to him by his beautiful voice and his knowledge of singing."

Rodgers had carried his violin with him on his long trek to Oregon. To Narcissa's great enjoyment, he joined her in singing familiar church hymns. Rodgers had been a member of the small Associate Presbyterian Church, one of the branches of the Scottish Covenanter movement that traced its roots back to the early years of the eighteenth century. A principal characteristic of this denomination was its refusal to sing "man-made" hymns but, instead, only paraphrases of the Psalms. Rodgers had been excommunicated by his church "for using Watts Psalms & Hymns." [59]

As has been mentioned, Marcus could not sing. Narcissa had tried to teach him certain tunes on their honeymoon journey across the country without much success. Now there came into her life at Waiilatpu, which must have been very dull at times, a talented and friendly person who could sing and also play the violin. Narcissa was delighted. Rodgers became a welcome member of the Whitman household. Catherine remembered his keen sense of humor.

Despite his hopes regarding the possible beneficial effects of a change of climate and the fervent prayers of those who ministered at his bedside, Finley found that his health was steadily declining. About the middle of January 1846, the Whitmans moved the sick man into their own bedroom and made arrangements to sleep elsewhere. Narcissa wrote about how the sick man, when he realized that death was near, began to ask questions on religious subjects. "He was without a well-grounded hope when he came here," she wrote on April 2, 1846, "and the Lord was pleased to bless our efforts for his salvation." Finley expressed a desire to be baptized and be received into the Mission church. Spalding was sent for. According to the minute book of the church, both Finley

and Rodgers were examined as to their faith on February 27, 1846, and after Finley was baptized, both were received into the membership of the church. These were the last persons to join the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon during the mission period.

"Being in my family," wrote Narcissa to Jane, "I was very much with him and read and prayed with him almost daily towards the close of his life. He grew in grace steadily and felt that he was over-privileged to die in such a quiet place, where he could have the society of those who cared for his soul" [Letter 187]. Finley died on March 28, 1846, in his thirty-second year, and was buried in the little cemetery at the base of the hill near the Whitman home. Spalding again rode to Waiilatpu in order to conduct the funeral. Catherine Sager noted that Finley was "the first white man buried there;" the other two adults were a Black and an Hawaiian.

Rodgers Studies for the Ministry

After joining the Mission church, Rodgers decided to study for the ministry. The Mission appointed Elkanah Walker to supervise his studies, and on May 15, 1846, Whitman wrote to Greene and ordered eleven text books. Six of this number were for Hebrew and Greek studies. On November 2, 1846, Narcissa wrote to Mrs. Spalding saying: "Mr. Rodgers acts as our minister and maintains the station with considerable ministerial dignity. He bids fair to be a useful man." Thus to Andrew Rodgers belongs the distinction of being the first candidate for the Protestant ministry on the Pacific Slope of what is now the United States.

Rodgers received at least part if not all of the books ordered. Among them was "Robinsons Greek Lex[icon] of N.T." [60] When those who were held captive at Waiilatpu following the Whitman massacre were evacuated, they were able to take with them most of their personal belongings. Someone took some of the items that Rodgers had owned. After the arrival of the former captives in the Willamette Valley, a question arose as to who should receive the possessions of Rodgers. Since he had no relatives, it was decided that the items should be given to the Rev. Wilson Blain, a pioneer Associate-Reformed Presbyterian minister, who was then living in the Valley. This was a logical decision since Rodgers had once been a member of the Associate Church.

About 1940, I learned that Blain's grandson was living in San Leandro, California. I then knew nothing of any connection Blain had had with the property of Andrew Rodgers. I did know that Blain had served as editor of Oregon's first newspaper, the *Oregon Spectator.* Hoping to find some copies of that pioneer publication, I called on the grandson. Although he had no copies of the *Spectator,* he did give me a box of old books from his late grandfather's library. I found among them Robinson's Greek Lexicon with the signature of Andrew Rodgers on a flyleaf page. This volume is now in the museum of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

Activities at Waiilatpu, 1845-1846

Among the 1845 immigrants who visited Waiilatpu that fall was Joel Palmer, who returned to the States the following spring to get his family. Palmer in his published *Journal* tells of the call that Dr. and Mrs. Whitman had paid on the party of immigrants with whom he was traveling while they were encamped in the Grande Ronde Valley on September 17: "They came in a two horse wagon, bringing with them a plentiful supply of flour, meal, and potatoes."

Palmer spent a few days at Waiilatpu and had high praise for what the Whitmans had accomplished. "Their privations and trials have been great," he wrote. "The fruits of their devotion are now manifest and if any class of people deserve well of their country, or are entitled to the thanks of a Christian community, it is the missionaries." [61] Whitman told Palmer that he had found it necessary to butcher thirty-two horses for his table before he was able to turn to his stock of cattle and hogs for meat. Palmer later played an important role in the political life of Oregon, serving as a general in the Cayuse War of 1848.

Whitman's activities with and in behalf of the natives, during the months under review, continued according to established patterns. The excitement which stirred the Indians when they learned of the death of Elijah Hedding at Sutter's Fort died down when they heard that there had been an uprising in California against the Mexican Government and that Captain Sutter had been captured and imprisoned. This was an incident of the Mexican War of 1846. The Cayuse and Walla Walla Indians looked upon the imprisonment of Sutter, which proved to

have been only temporary, as a kind of retribution for their own personal grievances. As a result, Whitman was able to write to Greene on October 26, 1845: "They have taken a course most favourable to a good understanding with the whites." But, as will be told, the Cayuses had not forgotten; the murder of Elijah Hedding continued to be a cause of dissatisfaction.

Whitman and Spalding never equated civilization with Christianity, although they were convinced that the two could not be separated. Shortly after their arrival on their mission fields, their letters show that they foresaw an inevitable clash between the Indian culture and that of the white man. Spalding especially stressed his conviction that if the Indians were to survive, they would have to abandon their manner of life and settle down and become farmers and herdsmen. Whitman shared this opinion. As far as the Indians were concerned, there was no alternative. Moreover, the missionaries realized that they could not educate or evangelize a people who were, as Spalding said, "always on the wing." Therefore, both men did all that they could to encourage the natives to farm and to raise cattle, sheep, and hogs. Whitman and Spalding were following the pattern set by government agents working with Indian tribes in the States.

In order to improve his breed of sheep, Whitman ordered "one Merino & one Leiscester buck" from the Hudson's Bay Company in April 1846 [Letter 191]. In his letter of April 13 to Greene, Whitman reported that he then had one hundred ewes in his flock which he expected would drop "200 or more lambs in the course of the coming year as they give two sets a year." In his letter of May 15 to Greene, he asked for six sheep shears. The sheep that Whitman and Spalding together owned produced far more wool than could have been used on the few spinning wheels at the two stations and on Spalding's loom. What was done with the excess is not known. Possibly it was sold or traded with the Hudson's Bay Company.

As a boy Whitman had tended a carding machine which processed wool for spinning and weaving [Letter 191]. Because of this experience, Whitman asked Greene to send a complete set of irons for a carding machine and also requested that some person skilled in the manufacture of woolens be sent to Oregon to run the proposed project. Whitman's dream of establishing a woolen industry in Oregon did not receive

Greene's approval. On November 13, 1846, Greene answered four of Whitman's letters including his letter of April 13, 1846, in which he had asked for carding irons. Greene's reply may have been received by Whitman before his death; if so it was the last letter from the Board that Whitman read. In it Greene wrote: "We do not send the mechanist or the manufacturers which you mention as desirable, partly because we do not know where to find them,... and partly, because as a missionary society, we do not think it advisable for us to have much to do with such matters." [62] Thus ended Whitman's attempt to initiate the manufacture of woolens in Oregon.

The old debatable question as to the advisability of teaching English to the natives faced Whitman again in 1846. Writing to Brewer on February 6 of that year, Whitman said: "I do not know when we can hit upon a plan to educate the Indian children. Their own language does not satisfy them and they have not perseverance enough to learn English." Whitman agreed with Dr. White's idea that the only solution to the problem would be to take the children from their parents and put them in a boarding school. Such a project, however, would be expensive and the Mission had neither the funds nor the personnel for such an undertaking.

In his letter of April 13 to Greene, Whitman wrote: "Situated as I am alone, I am not able to give the regular attendance upon school teaching that is requisite for success. No one can teach English to any effect but one that has the medium of both languages for communication." Whitman's experience in sending a man to Kamiah in the fall of 1845, who did not know the Nez Perce language, and expecting him to teach the natives English, proved his point. Whitman added in his letter to Greene that Perrin, then sixteen years old, had made such progress in mastering the Indian language that he would "soon be able to teach." Perrin later became an interpreter for the government.

In addition to the multitude of duties which fell on his shoulders, Whitman found that practically all religious instruction given to the Cayuses devolved upon him. He was as conscientious as circumstances permitted in conducting Sunday devotions for the natives. In his letter of July 20, 1846, to Walker, he commented: "A general good attention is given by the Indians to religions instruction. Gambling, however, is the besetting sin of many especially of the young." Other members of

the Oregon Mission made references in their letters to this tendency of the natives to gamble.

Regarding the possibility of a Roman Catholic mission being established near Waiilatpu, Whitman told Walker: "We are to pass at least another year without a Roman Catholick [sic] Station among us. The influence of Ellis is against it & the Indians in general also. Still the Jesuits could obtain what would be to them an invitation to locate among them." Both Whitman and Spalding were inclined to refer to all of the Roman Catholic missionaries as belonging to the Jesuit order when in fact the only one in the area that did belong was Father De Smet.

In the midst of his many cares and responsibilities, Whitman had the misfortune during the first part of December 1845 to suffer a severely bruised left knee as the result of his horse falling on him. For over two months, he had to use a crutch. During the latter part of the following January, Whitman received a call from the Walkers asking him to attend Mrs. Walker when she expected to be confined about the middle of February. Whitman replied on February 3 and explained that he was unable to make the horseback ride because of his injured knee. "Mrs. Walker has the best reason to hope and trust for a safe delivary from her former experience," he wrote. "Let nature have its unobstructive course... Remember that delivery is a natural process" [Letter 183b]. A son, named Jeremiah, their fifth child, was born on March 7.

From Narcissa's Letters

Narcissa's letters written during the spring of 1846 give us some of her thoughts and feelings on a variety of subjects. To her father she wrote on April 10: "I have received no letters from father, mother or any of the sisters or brothers in Allegheny county since husband returned. I wonder why, sometimes, and feel a little like complaining." Again, it is hard to explain either the failure of her relatives to write or the possible loss of letters in transit. On November 3 of that year, Narcissa in a letter to her mother wrote: "Mothers dated Mar. 26, 1846, was sent from Boston to Westport and reached me in about five months after it was mailed. This brings me very near home. Indeed it is the first I have received since those sent by Husband." In other words, this was the first letter from her "home" that she had received for three years!

Narcissa repeatedly urged members of her family, especially Jane and Edward, to migrate to Oregon. In her letter of April 10, 1846, to her father, she even suggested that he had her mother make the overland journey. "If my dear father and mother were here," she wrote, "I think they would be very well contented, for we could give them a comfortable home and enough to eat and do, and if the distance were not so great, I should hope they would come and finish their days with us." Narcissa, however, confessed: "But it is a dreadful journey to perform to get here, and I ought not to ask such a sacrifice of them for my comfort merely… It is not so difficult to get here now as when I came, for families come in wagons all the way. The fatigue is great, however, and the dust from Fort Hall here is very afflicting; aside from that, with food enough and teams enough, no loading except necessary clothing, it would not be difficult."

After mentioning the physical hardships of the overland journey, Narcissa turned to the spiritual effects. "The greatest affliction," she wrote, "would be to the pious soul—it is continually vexed with the ungodly conversation and profanity of the wicked, and is so often brought into straitened circumstances with regard to his own duty in obeying the commands of God, such as keeping the Sabbath, etc., that he often is wounded to that degree that it requires many months, if not years, before he is restored to his wonted health again… I do not say that the journey cannot be performed and the Christian enjoy his peace of mind and continued communion with God all the way. But this I know, that the experience of all proves it to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. *It is often said that every Christian gets so that he can swear before the journey is completed*." [63]

In her letter of April 2, 1846, to Edward, Narcissa again pleaded for him and Jane to write. "I cannot see how it should be difficult for you or the girls to write me, and should you think you might write me five or six times a year instead of once in two or more years." And then Narcissa gave the following description of what was taking place around her as she was writing: "Think of me now while I am attempting to write—half a dozen children making a noise around me, and to put on the climax, the doctor must come in, and taking a paper sit down and read aloud or talk to Mr. Rodgers who is sitting in the room; then in comes an Indian woman or two to sell some dry berries, and I must stop to attend to them, until I am quite lost and scarcely know what I am thinking about,

especially when I have nearly twenty letters to write, and but little time to accomplish it in."

Narcissa thanked her brother for sending a box of incidental articles. "I was in hopes," she wrote, "of finding one little article more, that is needed more than most any other because it cannot be obtained here; namely a pi-la-ain, as the Indians call it (louse trap). You will understand me, I suppose—the finest fine combs cannot be obtained here, for that reason I was in hopes of finding one in the box." The lodges of the Indians were always infested with various kinds of vermin which often made life miserable for the white people who came in close contact with the natives.

Reminiscences of the Sager Girls

The reminiscences of the three Sager girls—Catherine, Elizabeth, and Matilda—give us many intimate glimpses into the Whitman home during those years 1844–47. Through their reminiscences, we learn, not only many details of life at Waiilatpu, but also much about the Whitmans themselves. Here we see Marcus and Narcissa in their lighter moments when they laughed, played, and sang with the children.

Catherine, as the eldest of the three girls, has given us the longest and the most reliable account of life in the Whitman home. Here is one of her recollections:

> Some... may be curious to know how this washing was done for so large a family. About four o'clock in the morning, all hands were called into the kitchen by Mrs. Whitman. Tubs and all necessary paraphernalia were produced. The men and boys with long aprons tied around them brought water and plied the pounders, while the women did the rubbing. With much joking, all went off in good humor and by school time, which was nine o'clock, the clothes were on the line.[64]

Regarding their religious training, Catherine wrote: "On Sabbath morning each child was reminded that it was the Sabbath and each one was admonished to keep quiet." Those who could read were encouraged to do so. Sunday school was held at eleven o'clock. A worship service for the white residents of Waiilatpu was held at three o'clock. Dr. Whitman or Andrew Rodgers usually "read the sermon." The religious instruction

of the children continued through the week, with emphasis on memorizing Bible verses. Catherine remembered that: "Prayer meeting was held on Thursday evening during the winter for adults."

Elizabeth recalled many memories of her life at Waiilatpu in her old age when she granted an interview with a newspaper reporter. Among the immigrants of 1846 was a young woman in her late teens, Mary Johnson, who was hired by Dr. Whitman to assist his wife in the house. According to Elizabeth, one day Mary put on Narcissa's "wrapper" while working in the kitchen. While standing at the stove with her back to the door, Dr. Whitman entered and saw her. Pretending that he mistook her for his wife, the doctor tiptoed up to her and suddenly threw his arms around her and gave her a big hug. "She was greatly embarrassed and scandalized," said Elizabeth, while "the Doctor was as solemn as an owl and protested he thought she was his wife." Elizabeth added: "I could tell by the way his eyes twinkled, he was playing a joke on her." [65]

Each of the three Sager girls remembered Narcissa's love for flowers and how she encouraged each to cultivate a small garden each spring. They also recalled how she would take them on walks or horseback rides, especially on Saturday afternoons. Both Catherine and Elizabeth remembered a picnic held in the fall of 1847 when Mrs. Whitman led the children to a site about a mile and a half from their home. Francis pulled a small hand wagon which contained the food and dishes. The most exciting event of the excursion happened when Elizabeth and Helen threw clods of dirt at a wasps' nest which resulted in both Helen and Mrs. Whitman being stung. For punishment the two girls were sent to bed that evening without their supper.

Narcissa took delight in teaching the children to sing. Catherine wrote: "It was the custom for Mrs. Whitman, when she had company, to show off what she called her 'family stairway'... All the children were called and placed in a line standing according to height. After being formally introduced, we entertained the company by singing, accomanied by Rodger's violin. During these exercises the Doctor and his wife looked on, their eyes sparkling with pleasure."

Writing to her sister Harriet on April 13, 1846, Narcissa said: "Every one of my girls goes to the river all summer long for bathing every day before dinner, and they love it so well that they would as soon do without dinner as without that." Since their main meal was served at noon,

the bathing took place late in the morning. A secluded spot was used where the girls could bathe in the nude, always with Narcissa or some other woman watching. When the annual Mission meeting was held at Waiilatpu in May 1845, Mrs. Eells took the girls to the river. At that time eight-year-old Emma Hobson nearly drowned. Seeing the little girl struggling in the water, Mrs. Eells frantically screamed for help. Elizabeth wrote of the incident: "An Indian got Emma out and, as she had no clothes on, he took off his blanket, wrapped her up in it, brought her back and handed her gravely to Mrs. Eells." After that a safer place for the girls to bathe was selected.[66]

The children went barefooted in the summer and wore moccasins in the winter. Mrs. Whitman made dresses for the girls out of "hickory shirting" purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company. The Whitman family often slept out-of-doors during the summer months. Catherine commented on the food: "The Doctor ignored fine flour and used unbolted flour or corn meal. As a matter of economy, tea or coffee came to the table only on rare occasions, such delicacies being very hard to procure in Oregon at that time. The country abounded in wild fruits of all kinds which were purchased from the natives. Our good garden supplied the vegetables. Cakes and pastry were served only on holidays. Add to the list, plenty of milk, butter and cheese and you have our diet." Matilda remembered that their most common dish for supper was "corn meal mush and milk." Matilda also recalled how the children would cut watermelons in half and string them together and put them in the river as little boats, playing with them by the hour.

Mrs. Whitman was opposed to the girls associating with the Indian children; thus the Sager girls did not learn the native language. Eliza Spalding at Lapwai had more freedom in this regard and, as a result, she could speak Nez Perce; this proved of great importance to the captives at the time of the Whitman massacre. On the whole, the three Sager girls looked back with appreciation on their three years at Waiilatpu and were generous in praising their foster parents.

On April 10, 1846, in a letter to her father, Narcissa wrote: "I am sometimes about ready to sink under the weight of responsibility resting upon me, and would, were it not that an Almighty hand sustains me. Bringing up a family of children in a heathen land, where every influence tends to degrade rather than elevate, requires no small

measure of faith and patience, as well as great care and prayerfulness watchfulness." The refusal of Mrs. Whitman to permit the girls to play with Indian children may have been one reason why the Indians considered her to be "haughty." [67]

Whitman Considers Leaving Waiilatpu

Several alarming confrontations with the natives which occurred in the fall of 1845 caused Whitman seriously to consider the advisability of moving his family to the Willamette Valley. Catherine Sager has given us the following account of the first incident: "It was the Doctor's custom to grind grain for the natives at his mill, those coming first having their grain ground first. One day Tomahas came to the mill and wanted his corn ground.[68] Not getting it done as soon as he thought he would, and being a fractious fellow, he became enraged. While eating dinner, we heard the mill making a strange sound. The miller, followed by the Doctor, ran to the mill where he was knocked down by Tomahas. He then struck at the Doctor but was seized around the waist by Tiloukaikt. Tomahas roared and foamed like an enraged lion but Tiloukaikt held him fast. He finally promised to leave if released. Then he mounted his horse and rode away and was not seen about for a long time." [69] Catherine explained that Tomahas, impatient because he had not been given prompt service, had put sticks into the hopper of the mill which caused the strange sounds which in turn alerted Whitman and the miller.

Catherine told of another incident which involved Tomahas. She wrote:

> One day while the Doctor was engaged in his field, Tomahas... rode up to the fence in a very preemptory manner and ordered Dr. Whitman to go and grind some corn for him. The Doctor replied that he was not in the habit of doing things for people unless they asked in a proper manner. He [i.e., Tomahas] started off around the field but as he had to go around, the Doctor was able to reach the mill first by cutting across the field, and soon fixed the mill so that it could not be operated.
>
> The Doctor then took an iron bar in his hand, retired a short distance and awaited the coming of Tomahas. He soon ar-

rived and after trying in vain to start the mill, he rushed at Dr. Whitman with his club but seeing that he was armed, he stopped and ordered the Doctor to put down his weapon. To this the Doctor calmly replied that he would put his down when the Indian put his own down.

Tomahas dropped his club but as soon as the Doctor put down his bar of iron, the Indian rushed at him with his club. The Doctor picked up his iron bar and was able to ward off the blow. Tomahas told him to leave the country, that he did not want him there. To this the Doctor replied that if all the Indians wanted him to leave, he would gladly do so, but he could not leave, just because one Indian wanted him to go. He also told him that if he would behave himself, he would do his grinding for him. To this he agreed and they parted in a friendly spirit.

The Doctor, exhausted in body and spirit, came into the house and threw himself on a couch, relating the whole affair, saying that if the Indians would say so, he would gladly leave as he was tried almost beyond endurance.[70]

Confrontation with Young Chief

A situation, more ominous than the threats of physical violence by the excitable Tomahas, faced Whitman on November 24, 1845, when he experienced a frightening confrontation with Young Chief. Tomahas was only a subchief in Tiloukaikt's band; Young Chief, on the other hand, was one of the most influential of the Cayuse chiefs and when he rehearsed all the complaints that the Indians had against the white men in general, and the missionaries in particular, Whitman was deeply disturbed.

The next day Whitman in a long letter to Walker summarized what had happened. He began his letter by saying: "I have given the Indians from now to next spring to consider whether I shall leave them or not. My reasons for doing so arise out of a talk I had yesterday with the Young Chief." Whitman had approached Young Chief regarding the possibility of opening a school for the Indian children. Even before this project could be discussed, Whitman was confronted with "a long list of counts" which Young Chief brought up. Although some of the criticisms made by Young Chief were of an incidental nature, three were in his mind very

important. Each of these became a factor in the growing unrest among the Cayuses which came to a tragic climax two years later. In this letter to Walker, Whitman's report of what Young Chief said gives the Indians' side of their conflict with the white men.

Young Chief began by referring to the death of his nephew, Cayuse Halket, at the Red River Mission school. The school's records show that the young man was buried on February 1, 1837. Young Chief maintained that his nephew "was killed at Red River," and said that the white men were responsible for his death. The notation about his death and burial in the school's records gives no hint that Cayuse Halket met a violent death. Young Chief then referred to the killing of Elijah Hedding by Americans at Sutter's Fort in California. Since both of these young men had been educated in a white man's school and had been killed, Young Chief said that he could not be expected to send any more of the Cayuse children to a mission school.

Young Chief then turned to a more serious problem the Indians were facing. Whitman wrote: "He spoke of the Americans as having a design to obtain their country & property." Three great immigrations, totaling about five thousand people, had already passed through the Cayuse country on their way to the Willamette Valley and the Indians had a reason to be afraid of this great influx of white people.

Young Chief had been told by Eastern Indians who had drifted into the Oregon country, such as Tom Hill, what had happened to the Indian lands of eastern United States. Tom Hill had warned the Nez Perces and the Cayuses of their coming fate if white men continued to arrive in Oregon.

It is not known to what extent Young Chief was aware of Whitman's activity in promoting Oregon emigration. For him it was enough to know that Whitman was a "Boston man"; that he had helped guide the immigration of 1843 west of Fort Hall; and that he had given shelter and assistance to scores of immigrants who had passed by his station or who had spent the winter there.

A third complaint had more sinister overtones. Whitman wrote: "He also alluded to the death of a friend of his last year who died of Dysentery with two of his children as the result of diseases which Americans placed among them." Here was a fact that Whitman could not deny. The white man had introduced new diseases among the native tribes of

Oregon. "As he advanced in his remarks," wrote Whitman, *"he made me responsible for or conniving at these things or as having all these agents at my disposal."* [71]

Here Young Chief touched on what was perhaps the most important single reason for the Whitman massacre. The whole point of Young Chief's accusation was that the white men were prepared "with poison and infection" to kill off the Indians in order to gain possession of their lands and horses. Young Chief even accused Whitman of having poison "to kill the people with." He even expressed his fear of eating with white people for fear of being poisoned with the food. Whitman vehemently denied being responsible for the spread of disease and that he was not "accountable for such base things as they might have been told." Young Chief cynically replied: "It is not expected that you would confess it even were it true." Whitman was deeply troubled because of what Young Chief said, for he saw the connection between the Indians' fears and superstitions and his own practice of medicine among them.

Whitman warned Young Chief that such inflammatory language might "remove all restraint from the reckless and that I would have no assurance but that I might be killed on the most slight or sudden occasion." Whitman threatened to leave the field. Young Chief replied that he did not want him to go just then but that if they did decide to go, it must be on their own initiative. "That is," explained Whitman to Walker, "he insists not to let the Indians have the responsibility of sending me off but only agitate enough to get us to go as it were of ourselves."

Although Whitman did not write to Walker until the next day, the recollection of what Young Chief had said was so alarming that he wrote with a quivering pen. Whitman confessed: "I am so nervous that I cannot govern my hand." The original letter, now in the Coe Collection in Yale University library, gives evidence of Whitman's shaky handwriting. Whitman entrusted the letter to Mungo, the half-Hawaiian and half-Indian servant, and told him to carry it to Tshimakain. The Walkers received the letter on Tuesday evening, December 2. Mary noted in her diary that it was of "a disheartening character," and that Dr. Whitman "fears he must leave his people."

When Whitman had the confrontation with Tiloukaikt and Tomahas four years earlier, in September 1841, he reported the incident to McKinlay at Fort Walla Walla, who then issued a stern warning to the two chiefs. This quieted the Cayuses for the time being. There is no

indication that Whitman informed McKinlay of these later developments. Although faced with these ominous threats of violence, Whitman felt that there was nothing to do at that time but to stay on and continue with his work. He knew that he had the support of many of the Cayuses including Stickus and Five Crows. Whitman also felt a responsibility to the immigrant families who were wintering at Waiilatpu. The season was too far advanced for all to make the journey to the Willamette Valley.

The only extant letter of Narcissa's written during the fall of 1845 or the following winter is one dated November 28 and addressed to Mrs. Brewer at Waskopum. After referring to the fact that the last of the immigrants not planning to spend the winter at Waiilatpu, had left for the Willamette Valley, she wrote: "I feel greatly worn out both physically and mentally... For the poor Indians' sake and the relief of future travelers to this country, I could wish to stay here longer if we could do it in peace. We fear, sometimes, as if our quietness was past for this country, at least for a season. It may be that you are suffering under the same commotions that affect us, and perhaps more so."

Writing at the same time to Mr. Brewer, Whitman said: "I have lately told the Indians we should leave them in the spring unless they treat us better and hold forth a very different sort of language to us." By the following February 6, Whitman was able to write to Brewer: "I have not brought the question of our leaving before any meeting of the Indians but what is as good or better is that a full & free expression from the most important men has been given me showing a desire for us to stay. I am not preparing to go but am going on the same as before." Thus another crisis was passed.

The Visits of Tom Hill to Waiilatpu

It so happened that both Ellis and Tom Hill from the Nez Perce country called on Whitman on the evening of the day that he had the unpleasant talk with Young Chief. Ellis was friendly and said that, although he knew that some at Lapwai and at Waiilatpu were in favor of the Whitmans leaving, such was not his recommendation.

Hill, the agnostic, was always critical of missionaries trying to convert the natives to Christianity. He argued that "religion was too sacred a thing for fallible beings to practice and, in as much as they could not

keep its holy requirements as not to come short and sin, it was better to have nothing to do with it." Hill was much more impressed by Whitman than he had been by Spalding. After conversing with the natives at Waiilatpu and observing at first-hand what Whitman had been able to accomplish, Hill frankly told Whitman that he had been deceived by false reports. He now had a better opinion of Whitman [Letter 181b].

Hill returned to Waiilatpu about the middle of February 1846 when Whitman invited him and some of his Nez Perce friends to a feast. Catherine Sager had vivid memories of that event. Here is her description:

> Tom Hill... was a finely formed man, being, I should judge, nearly six feet tall and spoke English and the Cayuse [i.e., the Nez Perce] language well... [The feast] was held in the Indian room... A fire was kindled in the yard and a large kettle holding nearly twenty gallons of water was suspended over it. This was to prepare the mush, an indispensible article for an Indian's table... The mush cooked, the kettle was carried in and placed on the floor near the upper end of the room and a small stand covered with a white cloth was placed near it.
>
> A tea tray filled with food was placed on this stand. The Doctor's chair was placed near it, and on one side of the room was a bench for his family. The hour having arrived for the feast, the Doctor having distributed plates and spoons among them, he took his place as master of ceremonies. The chiefs sat around the kettle and the others filed in according to their rank or standing. While the Doctor and the chiefs dipped their food out of the kettle, the others were served out of vessels which they held in their hand. Meat, bread, and other food were handed to them by those serving as waiters. In honor of the occasion, Mrs. Whitman served them tea sweetened with sugar. This she poured into bowls and cups in the dining room and the waiters distributed it from there. We laughed heartily to see how lavish the Indians were to the use of sugar, wanting their tea as sweet as sugar itself and watching them scoop up bits of mush from the floor and eating it.
>
> The feast was held after night, and the room was well lighted with candles and was densely crowded, and when the Indians became overheated, they would go into the open air to cool off.

> They all ate quietly in the fashion of Indians with the silence broken only by the supping noises of eating or a remark made by Dr. Whitman… Tom Hill was the orator of the evening. He spoke for two or three hours. Dr. Whitman, his wife, and Mr. Rodgers all spoke very highly of this speech but unfortunately I could not understand him.
>
> Tom was richly and gorgeously dressed on this occasion in full Indian costume. His hunting shirt was of deerskin dyed red and cut full of holes and fringed. This was worn over a striped shirt. His pants were of the same material as his hunting shirt and fringed down the side. On his feet he wore moccasins decorated with porcupine quills, and his long hair hung about his shoulders. During the feast our risibilities had often gotten beyond control, and Mrs. Whitman had to send us outside to indulge our mirth, and here I would like to say that during all the time we lived with her, she never permitted us to show any disrespect or in any way to be discourteous to the Indians… Mrs. Whitman set us the example by always treating them politely and thanking them for any favor that they did.[72]

The gala event did much to create a better feeling between Whitman and the natives and, perhaps, influenced Hill to modify some of his apprehensions. According to a report given by Father Brouillet, when Tom Hill returned to the Lapwai Valley after his visit with Dr. Whitman, William Craig asked him "how he and the Doctor got along." Hill replied: "He was a heap better man that Spalding; he had asked him into his house sometimes." Craig added, however: "After that the Doctor told me that Tom had done some mischief with the Indians in that place." [73]

After the reception of some natives into the membership of the Mission church in June 1844, no further converts were won during the remaining three and a half years of the Mission's history. Surely part of this failure can be traced to Hill's negative influence. Marshall, in his *Acquisition of Oregon* (II:257), stated that Hill "could get much closer to the heart of the Indians than any white missionary ever could do, and influence them vastly more to discard all the white man's words and works and cling to their ancient ways and superstitions." Marshall makes the pointed judgment: "It is doubtful if any other one influence

was as potent as Tom Hill in promoting the decadence of the Spalding-Whitman-Eells Mission, and so bringing on the Whitman massacre."

After the feast Whitman gave Hill and his friends, we find no further mention of Hill in the Whitman correspondence. Writing on February 27, undoubtedly after the feast had been held, Whitman stated: "I have & am receiving more assurances of kindness, confidence, good will & affection from the Indians than at any former time. Individual expression has been full & free for me not to leave them. No sympathy has been shown for the remarks of Tautai [Young Chief] which he made last fall." [74] And Narcissa, writing to her friend Mrs. Brewer on July 17, 1846, echoed her husband's judgment: "The Indians are very quiet now and never more friendly."

The International Boundary Settled

The negotiations which the diplomats of the United States and Great Britain had carried on for years, regarding the location of the international boundary in Old Oregon, came to an end on June 15, 1846, when a treaty was signed which fixed the dividing line at the 49° parallel. The United States thus gained the Puget Sound area which Lieutenant Slacum in 1837 had recognized as being of such great strategic importance for the country's naval and commercial interests. Great Britain secured title to all of Vancouver Island, including that part which lay south of the 49° parallel.

The United States Senate ratified the treaty on June 17, too late for the news to be carried overland to Oregon by the emigration of that year. The news was sent across Mexico to Hawaii and from there to the Willamette Valley, where it was received sometime in November.[75] Although the boundary question was settled, the Provisional Government in Oregon carried on for more than two years before Congress authorized a Territorial Government.

The first indication that Whitman knew of the boundary settlement is found in his letter to Greene of April 1, 1847. After referring to his hazardous journey across the country during the winter of 1842–43, he wrote: "I often reflect upon the fact that you were sorry that I came. I did not at that time nor has it since changed my views... American interests acquired in the Country, which the *success of the Immigration of '43 alone have &*

could have secured, have become the foundation and cause of the late treaty with England & the U. States in regard to Oregon." [76] This statement together with others previously given, reveals the great significance Whitman saw in the role he had played in opening a wagon road to the Columbia River in 1843.

Following the retirement of Dr. McLoughlin early in 1846, the administration of the Columbia Department of the Hudson's Bay Company devolved upon Chief Factors Peter Skene Ogden, 1794-1854, and James Douglas, 1803–1877. Following the establishment by the Company of Fort Camosun, later called Victoria, on Vancouver Island in 1843, the fur trade was gradually transferred to that post. Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River became little more than a mercantile establishment for the benefit of American immigrants until a detachment of the United States Army occupied the site in 1849.

Chapter 20 footnotes

[1] Perrin Whitman to his father, Sept. 27, 1868: "It is just 25 years to-day since I arrived at Uncle's place." Original in private hands; copy in Coll. W.

[2] Whitman, in his letter 142, stated that he arrived on "Tuesday, the ninth." That particular Tuesday in October 1843 was the 10th. Without the convenience of modern printed calendars, the missionaries often erred in identifying the days of the week.

[3] Brosnan, *Jason Lee*, p. 213, quoting from Lee's letter to his Missionary Society of October 27, 1843.

[4] Warren, *Memoirs of the West*, p. 118.

[5] *O.H.Q.*, XXXIX (1938), p. 19, article by Drury, "The Columbia Maternal Association."

[6] Chapter Seventeen, section, "Adapted to a Different Destiny."

[7] Chapter Sixteen, section, "Activities of W. H. Gray."

[8] John C. Fremont, *Narrative of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the year 1842*. Syracuse, 1848, p. 219. The original Fremont order is in Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

[9] Eells ms., Coll. W., bearing date of October 1865. H. B. Brewer, in a letter dated Nov. 7, 1843, to L. L. Giddings, stated: "Lieu. Fremont of the U.S. Army arrived here [i.e., The Dalles] three days ago... He left the States with 40 men armed & well equiped besides 1 cannon & two Howitzers, a part of his men have not yet arrived. One Howitzer & his carriage is with this part of his company—but what surprises us most is he shall take his carriage no further but leaves it for our use." Original in Coll. W.S.H.S.

[10] Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:265. This boy, named Joseph Elkanah, went as a missionary to China under the American Board in 1872, where he served for about fifty years.

[11] *Op. cit.*, I:421.

[12] Drury, *Spalding*, p. 272.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[14] Simpson, *An Overland Journey*, p. 101. [See Chapter Sixteen, fn. 20.] Simpson's reference to Five Crows owning slaves recalls a reference in the record book of the Mission church which states that on May 14, 1843, "a middle aged man, Joseph's companion of Snake origin, having been taken a slave when young" was among those received into the membership of the church. He was named Lyman. Italics are the author's.

[15] *Op. cit.*, 1848, p. 104.

[16] Italics are the author's.

[17] Italics are the author's.

[18] Spalding to Greene, Jan. 24, 1846. Coll. A. See also Chapter Sixteen, section, "Agitation by Half-Breeds."

[19] Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:338, estimated the number of immigrants for that year at 1,475.

[20] Pringle ms., p. 3. (For reference to Pringle ms., see "Manuscript Sources" under Bibliography). Catherine Sager states that the baby was born on May 22, but contemporary accounts, as found in the journals of other members of the 1844 emigration, give May 30. See Thompson, *Shallow Grave*, p. 13.

[21] Dr. Degen's name is also spelled as Dagon or Dagen. On Nov. 9, 1844, he signed his name on a receipt as "Theophilos Degen, Md [sic], Doctor." Original in Oregon State Archives, Salem, Oregon.

[22] Pringle ms., p. 6.

[23] Capt. Shaw, in his manuscript, "Mississippi & Columbia River Pioneer Life Compared," Coll. B., p. 13, stated that Naomi Sager died "about 16 days after" her husband.

[24] Pringle ms., p. 6.

[25] A board fence consisting of slabs of wood set upright was called a "palisade" by Catherine.

[26] Thompson, *Shallow Grave*, pp. 41-2, quoting from the original document in the Oregon State Archives. A postscript dated June 22, 1845, added: "One old cow, blind in one eye, recovered from the Indians at five and a half dollars expense."

[27] Pringle ms., p. 9; and *O.H.Q.*, XI (1910):312 ff.

[28] *O.H.Q.*, II (1901):268 ff. B. F. Nichols in *W.C.Q.*, I (1897):3:20 gives a fine description of Mrs. Whitman's appearance. He also wrote: "I have heard her pray, and she could offer up the finest petition to the Throne of Grace of any person I have ever heard in my life. She was always gentle and kind to the Indians, as she was to every one else." This view contradicts the opinion of H. K. W. Perkins [see Appendix 6].

[29] Hulbert, *O.P.*, VIII:165. A few of Greene's letters to members of the Oregon Mission are included in this series.

[30] *W.C.Q.*, II (1898):2:34 gives account of interview with Perrin Whitman, April 27, 1898, who then claimed that the sawmill machinery was carried to Oregon in a wagon in 1843. No contemporary account verifies this claim. Spalding, in the inventory he compiled for his station following the Whitman massacre, stated that he got the sawmill irons from Fort Vancouver and that they were later "taken to Waiilatpu." Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 361.

[31] According to a letter from Larry J. Waldron, Chief Park Interpreter, Whitman Mission National Historic Site, to the author on March 28, 1972, the museum there has a millstone 18 inches in diameter and that another millstone, 40 inches in diameter is buried near the site of the original mill. This later may be the millstone mentioned in Drury, *Whitman*, p. 352, fn. 6, as then being in the garden of a resident of Yamhill, Oregon. Waldron claims that this larger stone was obtained in January 1961 from Mrs. F. L. Trullinger of Portland, Ore. These large granite stones may have been secured from the same quarry near Lapwai where Spalding got his.

[32] Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 365.

[33] Copies are in Colls. O. & Y. In 1934 I received a copy, bound in elk hide, from John Frank, a Nez Perce Indian who lived at Kamiah, Idaho. This is now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. The American Bible Society reprinted the 1845 edition in 1871.

[34] Since Catherine was the eldest of the three, she had the clearest recollections of life with the Whitmans and of the massacre.

[35] Lockley, *Oregon Trail Blazers*, p. 328.

[36] Delaney, *A Survivor's Recollections*, p. 8.

[37] Lockley, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

[38] Ibid., p. 345.

[39] See my article on Charles Compo in Hafen, *Mountain Men*, VIII:87 ff. Following the publication of this book, I learned that Compo returned to the Catholic Church and had his children baptized by a priest, one on June 28, 1848, and others on later dates. See St. Louis Register of Baptisms, St. Louis, Ore. Information received through kindness of Mrs. Harriet D. Munnick, West Linn, Ore.

[40] Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:281.

[41] Minutes of the *Synod of Washington*, 1936, p. 292.

[42] Presumably Perrin Whitman had already been baptized. Why Helen Mar Meek and David Malin were not baptized with the other children is not known.

[43] Possibly Joel Perkins, a founder of the city of Milwaukie, Oregon.

[44] See Chapter Nineteen, section "Whitman Accused of Charging Exorbitant Prices."

[45] Italics are the author's.

[46] According to a statement made by Dr. McLoughlin in *T.O.P.A.*, 1880, p. 36, Tom Hill "had been educated at Dartmouth College." In reply to an inquiry, the librarian of Dartmouth in a letter to me stated that the college had no record of any Indian by that name having studied there.

[47] Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:282.

[48] *T.O.P.A.*, 1880, p. 36.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[50] Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansion*, 1843-1849, p. 23.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[52] Hulbert, *O.P.*, VIII:161.

[53] Lockley, *Oregon Trail Blazers*, p. 352.

[54] Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:511 ff.; Keith Clark and Lowell Fuller, *Terrible Trail*, Carton, 1966.

[55] Sarah J. Cummins, Autobiography and Reminiscences, La Grande, Ore. (1914?), Chapter VIII.

[56] The Indians of Old Oregon called the Americans "Boston men," since the first Americans they met were sailors who came from Boston. Englishmen were referred to as "King George's men."

[57] *W.H.Q.*, I (1907):151.

[58] See Appendix 5 for list of writings of Josiah Osborn and of his daughter Nancy Osborn Jacobs.

[59] Minutes of the *Synod of Washington*, 1936, p. 292.

[60] A full list of the textbooks ordered by Whitman is in Hulbert, *O.P.*, VIII:181.

[61] Joel Palmer, *Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains*, Cincinnati, 1847, p. 57. Bancroft, *Oregon*, I:522, called this work "one of the best of its kind."

[62] Hulbert, *O.P.*, VIII:206.

[63] Italics are the author's.

[64] Pringle ms., p. 12.

[65] From undated clipping, now in Eastern Washington State Historical Society, from Portland *Journal* containing an article by Fred Lockley about Elizabeth.

[66] Delaney, *A Survivor's Recollections*, p. 9.

[67] See Appendix 6.

[68] See Chapter Sixteen, fn. 27.

[69] Pringle ms., p. 15.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[71] Italics are the author's.

[72] Pringle ms., pp. 16–7.

[73] Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 25.

[74] Whitman Letter 184, with postscript dated Feb. 27.

[75] The news was published in the Nov. 12, 1846, issue of the Oregon *Spectator*, under the heading "HIGHLY IMPORTANT NEWS."

[76] Italics are the author's.