

[CHAPTER TEN]

WAILLATPU
1836-1837

The real history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board began with the arrival of Whitman, Spalding, and Gray at Fort Walla Walla on October 2, 1836. The preceding nine chapters of this book constitute the prelude of a new section which begins with this chapter.

Fort Walla Walla was located at one of the most important crossroads of Old Oregon. Before it rolled the mighty Columbia River, the largest in America, not in size of the area drained but rather in volume of water carried, as it flows several times faster than does the Mississippi. The Columbia provided the main artery of travel connecting Fort Vancouver with the Company's forts in what is now the State of Washington and with its activities east of the Canadian Rockies.

Each spring an express, which usually consisted of several bateaux or canoes manned by Indians of various tribes, French Canadians, or half-breeds, would leave Fort Vancouver and proceed up the Columbia stopping at the forts along the way—Walla Walla, Okanogan, and Colville. After reaching the waters of the upper Columbia, the men would cross the Continental Divide through Athabasca Pass which had an elevation of only 5,736 feet, being about 1,800 feet lower than the South Pass used by the Americans. The express would then continue eastward by the streams and lakes of Canada to Montreal. Although

called an “express,” it usually took the men six months to make the transcontinental journey. Another express would leave Montreal for Fort Vancouver about the same time. Occasionally a second express would be sent each way during the same year.

Fort Walla Walla was the main terminus of the overland section of the Oregon Trail, a trail stretching eastward over the Blue Mountains, through Grande Ronde Valley, and on to the Rendezvous and South Pass. A network of Indian trails branched out of Fort Walla Walla. One led into the Nez Perce country in the Clearwater Valley, another to the north into the Spokane country. Still other trails connected the Fort with the tribes of what is now central Washington and to The Dalles. Writing in the spring of 1840, Narcissa said: “We are emphatically [i.e., definitely] situated on the highway between the States and the Columbia River” [Letter 76]. By that date, Narcissa had realized that all who entered Old Oregon by the overland route would be passing their home-mountain men, Hudson’s Bay Company’s officials, explorers, adventurers, and immigrants. Within the next seven years the number arriving annually over the Oregon Trail would be numbered in the thousands.

When Whitman and Spalding agreed at Fort Vancouver for the former to settle among the Cayuses near Fort Walla Walla and the latter to go to the Nez Percés in the Clearwater Valley, neither could have appreciated the strategic importance of the proposed site for the Whitman station. The decision for the two couples to settle among tribes speaking the same language was of prime importance. The original language of the Cayuses had been very different from that of the Nez Percés, but at the time the Whitmans settled among them, the Cayuses were adopting the Nez Perce tongue.¹ Likewise, many of the Walla Walla and Umatilla Indians, neighbors to the Cayuses, knew the Nez Perce language because of intermarriage and trade relations. According to the best available estimates, the Cayuse tribe then numbered between three and four hundred; the Nez Percés between three and four thousand.²

WAILATPU SELECTED

On Tuesday, October 4, Whitman, Spalding, Gray, and Pambrun set out to explore the Walla Walla³ River Valley in search of a suitable site for the Whitman station. This river, which rises in the Blue Mountains, near what is now the Oregon-Washington border, is only

about forty miles long. The four men followed its north bank, and on the 5th came to a place, about twenty-five miles east of Fort Walla Walla and about seven miles west of present-day Walla Walla, which Whitman felt was suitable for his station.

The site included about three hundred acres which lay in a triangular area between the Walla Walla River and its tributary, now known as Mill Creek. Their confluence marked the apex of a triangle with the base about eighty rods long stretching from the top of a sharp bend in Walla Walla River to Mill Creek. The streams were lined with cottonwood and birch trees; the soil appeared excellent. If Whitman then had in mind the possibility of future irrigation, he would have noted the favorable availability of water when he selected the site.

There is no contemporary evidence to indicate that Samuel Parker had recommended that particular location. Whitman reported that he found the Cayuses of the vicinity “very favorable” [Letter 32]. The site was near the favorite camping ground of Chief Umtippe. The acreage was covered with a coarse rye grass that grew in bunches sometimes higher than a man’s head. The Indians called the general area Wy-eé-lat-poo,⁴ “the place of the rye grass.” The tall grass is still growing there on what is now the Whitman Mission National Historic Site.

On October 6 the men returned to Fort Walla Walla and on the 8th, Whitman wrote to Parker and told of the selection of a mission site among the Cayuses. “You are aware,” he wrote, “of the importance of this place and its influence on the future civilization of the Indians; it is undoubtedly before the Willamette Valley or any point on the Columbia.” Whitman was not then thinking about any incoming American population. His concern was with the Indians. In the light of later developments, his appraisal of the strategic importance of establishing a mission among the Cayuses was correct.

THE SPALDING MISSION LOCATED

Having selected the Waiilatpu site, Whitman and Spalding were ready to choose a location among the Nez Percés. Gray was given the responsibility of taking supplies out to Waiilatpu, while Whitman and Spalding visited the Clearwater⁵ Valley in search of a suitable place for the Spalding mission. The Black, John Hinds, who had traveled with the mission party from the Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla in order to

receive medical care from Dr. Whitman, and who had remained at the fort while the missionaries went to Fort Vancouver, may have given some help to Gray.

On October 7, Chief Tackensuatis (whom Whitman usually referred to by his nickname, Rotten Belly) arrived at Walla Walla with a party of from twenty to thirty Nez Percés to escort the missionaries to his country. When the Nez Percés learned that Whitman had decided to settle among the Cayuses, they immediately protested. Whitman wrote: “The Nez Percés do not like my stopping with the Cayous; and say that the Nez Percés do not have difficulties with the white man as Cayous do and that we will see the difference”⁶ [Letter 32]. No doubt it was Tackensuatis who gave this ominous warning. Prophetic words! Would that Whitman had heeded them.

Whitman and Spalding with their escort left Fort Walla Walla on Saturday, October 8, for the Nez Perce country. The company remained in camp over Sunday. The missionaries felt frustrated in not being able, for want of a good interpreter, to communicate with the Indians about Christianity. They were gratified, however, to note that the Nez Percés observed daily devotions and were quite willing to refrain from traveling on Sunday.

On Tuesday, the 11th, the party arrived at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, where Lewiston, Idaho, is now located. The next day they rode about ten miles up the Clearwater to the mouth of Lapwai⁷ Creek which flows into the river from the south. Here was a fairly level plain large enough for cultivation and also having possibilities for irrigation. Spalding, however, was attracted by another site about two miles up Lapwai Creek at the foot of Thunder Mountain⁸ where three springs were flowing. Finding the land suitable for cultivation, Spalding decided to locate there.

The geographical locations of Waiilatpu and Lapwai inevitably affected the subsequent outlook and activities of both Whitman and Spalding. Whitman deliberately chose to settle among a tribe numbering three hundred or more in order to capitalize on the “future importance of this place.” His station was destined to become the first outpost on the Oregon Trail west of the Blue Mountains, so that in coming years much of his time and resources would be devoted to the immigrants. At the time Whitman selected Waiilatpu to be the site of his mission, neither

he nor the Cayuse Indians ever dreamed that this would happen. For the present, the Indians were pleased with having won a degree of status by having one of the two missionary couples decide to live with them.

Spalding, on the other hand, elected to settle in the midst of a larger tribe far removed from the comings and goings of the white men on the Columbia River or on the Oregon Trail. Of all the Protestant missionaries who went to Old Oregon, no one had greater success in evangelizing and civilizing the natives than Henry Harmon Spalding, and no one of the missionary women was more loved by the Indians than his wife, Eliza. An important factor in Spalding's success was the enthusiasm with which he was welcomed by the Nez Perces. This was in sharp contrast to the merely "very favorable" attitude of the Cayuses mentioned by Whitman [Letter 32]. No chief was more eager to have the missionaries settle among his people than Tackensuatis. "This is all my country," he said to Spalding as they rode into the Lapwai Valley. "Where you settle, I will settle. Only let me know what you want done, and it will be done."⁹

Whitman never enjoyed such wholehearted cooperation from the natives at Waiilatpu as Spalding received at Lapwai. It is true that within two years, Tackensuatis lost his enthusiasm for the white man's religion,¹⁰ but at first Spalding benefited greatly from his assistance. Other Nez Perce chiefs, such as Timothy and Joseph, as will be indicated, came to Spalding's aid.

Having selected a site for the Spalding mission, the two missionaries began their 120 mile ride back to Waiilatpu, now without an Indian escort. Each of the two men was to ride that long trail which connected their two stations many times during the following eleven years. They arrived at Waiilatpu on October 14th, where they found Gray at work preparing logs for a house.¹¹ He was assisted by Charles Compo and the two Hawaiians who had been hired through the cooperation of Pambrun at Fort Walla Walla. Since both Whitman and Spalding realized the necessity of having a house erected at each station before winter came, they decided that it was best for Whitman to remain at Waiilatpu and work with Gray and for Spalding to go to Fort Vancouver to get the women. Upon their return, Gray could then go and help Spalding build his cabin.

THE WOMEN RETURN TO WALLA WALLA

Spalding was back at Fort Walla Walla in time to engage passage with the annual Hudson's Bay express from Montreal which arrived on Saturday, October 15. The express left on Sunday at 4:00 a.m. and made the voyage down the river in a record time of less than three days. Sails were hoisted on the boats to catch a favorable wind which accelerated their progress. The express arrived at Fort Vancouver on Thursday, the 18th, at 2:00 p.m.

Dr. McLoughlin was surprised to see Spalding back so soon. He had made the round trip in less than a month and was able to report that mission sites had been selected at Waiilatpu and at Lapwai. Spalding noted in a letter to Greene that he had traveled 1,200 miles after his arrival at Fort Walla Walla on September 8, and altogether 5,800 since February 1. "There is yet 425 miles to travel," he wrote, "before myself & wife reach our location."¹²

Dr. McLoughlin was disappointed to learn that the women desired to return with Spalding to Fort Walla Walla as soon as necessary arrangements could be made. "The Dr.," wrote Narcissa in her diary, "urges me to stay all winter. He is a very sympathetic man." Dr. McLoughlin was aware that Narcissa was then in the fifth month of her pregnancy and felt that the care she would have at Fort Vancouver would be much better for her than the privations and hardships attendant upon the establishment of a pioneer home during the late fall or winter. In spite of his repeated urgings, however, the women decided to return with Spalding.

Narcissa and Eliza had spent four happy weeks at Vancouver. Besides making three copies of her diary while at the fort, Narcissa wrote a number of letters, six of which are extant in either the original or printed form [Letters 33-38]. Some interesting sidelights on Oregon life as she saw it are found in these letters. Writing to her former pastor, the Rev. Leverett Hull, on October 25, she referred to a Cayuse boy who was then attending the Red River Mission school. "A young chief of the tribe and of considerable influence has been to school at a mission station on Red River, east of the mountains, [with] Mr. Cockran, missionary, and Mr. Jones, chaplain of the Hudson Bay Company... The Cayuse chief is still there. We expect his return next fall. In his former visits home he has exerted a good influence in favor of religion and we feel encouraged to think he will be of essential service to the mission."

No doubt Narcissa had received information about this youth, Cayuse Halket, from a letter that Spalding had brought from her husband. Cayuse Halket had been only eleven years old when sent to the mission school in 1830. He was a nephew of an important Cayuse chief called Tautau (Tawatoe or Young Chief) [Letter 181b]. According to an historian of the Anglican Church in Canada: "Cayuse Halket is said to have been a pleasing, thoughtful lad who also came from beyond the Rocky Mountains; he returned there in 1834 but could not adjust to the life, and so came back and lived with Mr. Cochran."¹³ He died at Red River on February 1, 1837, as will be noted. In October 1836, however, both Marcus and Narcissa were hoping that the young man would return to his people after being educated at the mission school and thus be able to assist them in missionary activities at Waiilatpu.

In the frank letter to her former pastor, Narcissa felt free to comment on her impressions of the Anglican services conducted at Fort Vancouver by the Rev. Herbert Beaver. She reported that he preached twice each Sunday and although she enjoyed the services, yet "to contrast it with the preaching at home, I find a great want of plainness and heart. He is a great way behind the times. The standard of piety is low with him and other professed Christians here. He seldom draws the line of distinction between the righteous and the wicked, and when he does it is so faintly that it is scarcely perceptible." She was critical even of the gentlemen of the Company who were Presbyterians. "Do not see much evidence of real piety among them," she wrote. "No family worship, no social prayer meetings; yet at the same time all think themselves Christians, safe enough; at least they appear so." She reported that a Roman Catholic priest was expected, as most of the servants of the Company were of that faith.

During her month's residence at the Fort, Narcissa was able to secure enough feathers from wild fowl to make a feather bed. Perhaps Eliza was able to do the same. Occasionally the women took horseback rides. One day Mrs. McLoughlin sought to persuade them to give up their sidesaddles and ride astride as did the native women. "We have never seen the necessity of changing our fashion," noted Narcissa in her diary. For her and Eliza, riding astride was immodest. We have no evidence to indicate that any of the six women connected with the Oregon Mission ever gave up her side-saddle during the eleven-year history of the Mission.¹⁴

Narcissa took advantage of the interlude of two weeks or more between Spalding's arrival on October 18 and her departure for the journey up the river to write letters which were to be carried to the States on a ship scheduled to leave soon from Fort Vancouver. At the end of the diary mailed to her parents, she wrote: "Husband is so filled with business that I must write for him, until he is less hurried in his business. (He is far away now, poor husband, three hundred miles. If I had wings I would fly. Adieu.)" Those words —"so filled with business"— aptly described Marcus Whitman. He was always an activist, giving himself unstintingly to many responsibilities.

Spalding took two weeks to assemble his supplies and load them into the two boats which Dr. McLoughlin so kindly provided. Eight of the oarsmen were Iroquois Indians. There is no evidence that any charge was made by the Hudson's Bay Company for this service. John McLeod, who was at Vancouver, decided to accompany the Spalding party to Fort Walla Walla. On Thursday noon, November 3, the two heavily loaded boats shoved off on their tedious journey up the Columbia against the swift current. McLeod and Mrs. Whitman were in one boat; the Spaldings were in the other.

An incident took place at the time of the departure of the boats from Vancouver which aroused the ire of Chaplain Beaver. In a letter dated November 15 and directed to Benjamin Harrison in London, Beaver told what happened: "When the missionaries went from the Fort the other day, I was shocked not at being present, but at hearing that the scholars, by command, had been paraded on the River beach, and sung there an hymn. Sacred music should only be used on solemn occasions, but it is made here a common entertainment of an evening, without the slightest religious feeling or purpose."¹⁵ Completely ignoring how his chaplain might feel, Dr. McLoughlin had arranged for the school children to bid the missionaries Godspeed by singing some of the songs Narcissa had taught them.

The rainy season began before the Spalding party left Fort Vancouver. On their way up the Columbia, it rained steadily for three days, November 4-6. The women succeeded in keeping dry by staying under oilcloth. Narcissa has given the following description: "At night, when a great fire was made, our tents pitched and the cloth spread for tea, all was pleasant and comfortable. I rolled my bed and blankets in

my India-rubber cloak, which preserved them quite well from the rain, so that nights I slept warm and comfortably as ever. My featherbed was of essential service to me in keeping my health this rainy voyage" [Letter 39].

They arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Sunday, November 13, after a disagreeable trip of ten days with rain falling nearly every day. Narcissa was disappointed not to see her husband at Walla Walla, but understood the reason for his absence when told that he and Gray were busy at Waiilatpu building a house. Whitman and Gray returned to Fort Walla Walla on Friday, the 18th, and all five were together for a religious service the following Sunday. This was the last time the five were together until after the arrival of the reenforcement in the early fall of 1838.

In the meantime a party of 125 Nez Perces, no doubt under the leadership of Tackensuatis, arrived at Fort Walla Walla to escort the Spaldings to Lapwai. Whereas Whitman had resolved to erect a suitable dwelling for his wife before taking her to Waiilatpu, the Spaldings were willing to live in an Indian tepee until a log cabin could be built. The Nez Perces were eager to do everything possible for their missionaries. Of this Spalding wrote to Greene: "They took entire direction of everything, pitched and struck our tent, saddled our horses, and gladly would have put victuals to our mouths, had we wished it. So eager were they to do all they could to make us comfortable. I was astonished at the ease with which they handled and packed our heavy bags and cases, the latter sixteen inches square, thirty inches long, and weighing usually 125 pounds each. Our effects loaded twenty horses."

If we estimate the average load for each horse to have been 250 pounds, the Spaldings must have taken with them about 5,000 pounds of goods and provisions. This included everything: clothing, farm utensils, furniture, books, building materials including glass, and some food supplies. Whitman must have transported a like quantity of goods to his station. A division of the cattle was made; Spalding took five cows, the bull, and two calves. Since we do not know whether the calves were born after the missionaries reported having thirteen head, we cannot tell whether Whitman received five or seven cows.

The Spaldings and Gray, with their Nez Perce escort, left Walla Walla on Tuesday, November 22, and arrived at Lapwai on the 29th. Narcissa and Eliza, each isolated in her own lonely home in the wilderness, were not to see each other for about a year. Whitman returned to

Waiilatpu to complete work on the house he was building while his wife remained at the Fort. At this time Whitman had no assistants except for the two Hawaiians.

John Hinds, the black man, died sometime during the last week of November. Of this Narcissa wrote on December 5: "Already death has entered our home, and laid one low." According to a commonly accepted theory, Whitman buried the body at the foot of the hill to the northeast of the mission house. Thus the little cemetery at Waiilatpu had its beginning even before actual missionary work for the Indians could begin.

Just as Dr. McLoughlin had asked Narcissa to teach English to his daughter, Maria, at Walla Walla Pambrun made a similar request for his wife and daughter, the latter of whom was also called Maria. This Narcissa was glad to do. "We consider it a very kind providence," she wrote, "to be situated near one family so interesting, and a native female that promises to be so much society for me. She is learning to speak the English language quite fast" [Letter 39].

THE FIRST HOUSE AT WAILLATPU

When Whitman arrived at Waiilatpu on October 14, after making the trip to Lapwai with Spalding, he was able to give his full time to the imperative task of building a suitable house before winter came.

Perhaps with the advice of both Gray and Spalding, a site was selected about one hundred feet north of the top of the horseshoe bend in the Walla Walla River. The location of the first mission house at that particular site proved to have been unfortunate; the land was too low and was flooded by the rising waters of the river late in the winter of 1837–38.

We do not have full details of the type of construction which Whitman intended to follow but it appears that he planned a hybrid combination of small logs and adobe bricks. According to Narcissa, her husband planned to erect a story-and-a-half house which would measure 30 x 36 feet [Letter 39]. A limited supply of logs suitable to be whipsawed into boards was available by cutting down some cottonwood trees which grew along the streams in the vicinity. Whipsawing was a slow and laborious process. A log would be propped up at an angle over a pit. A thin tapering whipsaw, about six feet long with handles on either

end, would be used by two men, one in the pit and the other standing on top of the log. The resulting green cottonwood boards proved to be unsatisfactory as they warped when drying out. Later Whitman sent men into the foothills of the Blue Mountains where pine trees were available.

On their westward journey, the missionaries had observed the use of adobe bricks at such places as Fort Laramie, Fort Hall, and Fort Boise. These were made by mixing soil with grass or straw and, after shaping the material in a frame, letting them dry in the sun. Evidently Whitman planned to erect a wooden frame for his house and then fill in the wall spaces with either trimmed logs or adobe bricks.

Since Whitman came from New York State where a house was rarely built in those days without a cellar or basement, he naturally assumed that his house should have one. This would not only provide a convenient and safe place for storage but, also, the dirt excavated could be used to make adobe bricks.

A shallow basement, about four and one-half feet deep, was dug under the proposed building and the walls were lined with adobes which measured 5 x 7 x 10 inches. The bricks were laid according to the "header-stretcher method," two deep which gave a wall fourteen inches wide.¹⁶ Just how high the basement walls were raised above the ground level is not known.

Because of the lateness of the season, the scarcity of building materials, and the lack of efficient assistants, Whitman found it necessary to abandon his plan to erect the house as originally planned and concentrate on a lean-to on the west side of the house, the frame of which had been erected. This lean-to measured twelve feet wide and ran the length of the thirty-six foot west wall of the house. A large adobe fireplace was placed in the center of the west wall of the lean-to with a window space on each side. The roof was made out of poles covered first with the long tough rye grass, over which five or six inches of dirt or sod were placed. As can well be imagined, this type of roof was not efficient in times of heavy rains; the moisture seeped through and great globules of mud would drop into the room below. Spalding, who was obliged to use the same type of roof for his home, once wrote: "Our mud roofs show us that the earth was made to drink the rain, not to shed it."

On Friday, December 9, 1836, Whitman returned to Fort Walla Walla for his wife. Late the next day Narcissa's "unheard of journey for females" came to an end when she alighted from her horse in front of the rudely constructed lean-to. Their wedding journey of nine months and about 2,500 miles, including the trip to Fort Vancouver, was over.

Narcissa began a letter to her mother on December 5, shortly before she left Fort Walla Walla, and from time to time added to it. On the 26th she described her arrival at Waiilatpu: "Where are we now?" she asked. "And who are we that we should be thus blessed of the Lord? I can scarcely realize that we are thus comfortably fixed & keeping house so soon after our marriage when considering what was then before us. We arrived here on the tenth, distance twenty-five miles from W.W.; found a house reared & the lean-to enclosed, a good chimney & fire-place & the floor laid. No windows or door except blankets. My heart truly leaped for joy as I alighted from my horse, entered and seated myself before a pleasant fire (for it was now night). It occurred to me that my dear Parents had made a similar beginning & perhaps more difficult one than ours." In her description of the lean-to, she stated: "The siding is made of split logs fitted into grooved posts, & the spaces filled with mud [i.e., adobe bricks]."

THE WHITMANS BEGIN HOUSEKEEPING

Although the Whitmans had ridden by Waiilatpu on their way to Fort Walla Walla on August 31, they then had no reason to be interested in the site. But now it was different. This was to be their home. The day after her arrival, Narcissa had an opportunity to survey her surroundings. About three hundred yards to the northeast of the lean-to was a cone-shaped hill a little more than one hundred feet high.¹⁷ From the top of that elevation, Narcissa had an excellent view of the adjoining territory. She could trace the course of the Walla Walla River as it curled in a half loop around the south and west sides of the site her husband had selected. She could also see, about one-half mile to the west, the confluence of Mill Creek with the Walla Walla River. Fifteen or more miles to the south and east were the lower tree-covered slopes of the Blue Mountains, the upper levels of which were already covered with snow [Letter 39]. "It is indeed a lovely situation," she wrote to her mother.

On December 16, eighteen inches of snow fell, and remained on

the ground for about six weeks [Letters 39 & 42]. Whitman's livestock had to paw through the snow to find forage. On that day Pambrun sent a table and some window sashes to the Whitmans. "I have taken the liberty to prime them," commented Narcissa, "and set some of the lights [i.e., window panes], & engaged in it thought a great deal about Father, how handily he used to do such work." The "lights" had been purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company; they measured about 7 x 8 inches and were only about one millimeter thick. Many fragments of such thin glass have been found in the archaeological diggings at Waiilatpu. The windows, each with twelve panes, were not ready to be placed until Saturday, December 24.

By December 26, enough additional boards had been sawed to make it possible for Whitman to erect two partitions in the lean-to, thus making a small room at either end. "My room is in the south end," Narcissa told her mother, "a small bedroom & pantry on the north end, and a very pleasant kitchen in the middle." The heating stove which the Whitmans got from Pambrun was placed in their bedroom. The central room was heated by the fireplace where Narcissa did her cooking.

In the various postscripts which Narcissa added to the letter begun on December 5, she commented on many incidental items of interest. Regarding the weather, she wrote on January 2, 1837: "I am spending my winter as comfortably as heart could wish, & have suffered less from excessive cold than in many winters previous in New York. Winters are not very severe here."

On February 18, the first anniversary of her marriage, Narcissa found her thoughts spanning the continent to her Angelica home. "One year since I have heard a lisp even of my beloved friends in Angelica," she wrote, "and who can tell how many are sleeping in their graves by this time. Ah! it would be like cold water to a thirsty soul indeed, to know how you all do." She seemed to have forgotten about receiving a letter from her brother-in-law, the Rev. Lyman Judson, at Liberty, Missouri. Perhaps because of the uncertainty as to how a letter should be addressed, Narcissa's family did not write until they heard from her. She had to wait until July 1838 before a letter from her home arrived at Waiilatpu.

In this February 18 postscript, she boasted of her comforts: "We have now 3 chairs & a bedstead & all our doors are made & hanging."

Regarding the chairs, she wrote: "These are exceedingly comfortable although not of the finest order. My chairs, two of them are of my Husband's making; with deer skin bottoms woven as the fancy chairs of the States are & very durable. Our bedstead is made of rough boards & nailed to the wall, according to the fashion of the country." On this Narcissa was able to place her prized feather bed.

Narcissa listed other acquisitions: "You will scarcely think it possible that I should have such a convenience as a barrel to pound my clothes in for washing so soon, in this part of the world, & probably mine with Mrs. Pambrun are the only two this side of the Rocky Mountains." She even had a dog and a cat. "My dog," she explained, "was a present from Mr. McLeod." The many references to McLeod in her diary and letters indicate that he took a special interest in her and delighted to show such favors as he could. "These may appear small subjects to fill a letter with," she wrote, "but my object is to show you that people can live here, & as comfortably too as in many places east of the mountains."

FOOD SUPPLIES

U ntil the first harvest was reaped, both the Whitmans and the Spaldings were dependent upon the Hudson's Bay Company and the Indians for food supplies. No reference in the writings of Whitman and Spalding has been found telling about either going out to hunt wild game. Whitman's letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, reports: "We feel we have passed a comfortable winter indeed; but still at my place we have eaten nine wild horses bought of the Indians at a cost of about \$6. each in goods. We have had a tolerable supply of flour, corn, butter & a little pork & venison & a few potatoes. We are now getting fish in small quantity but soon expect to get plenty of salmon of which I hope to salt a good supply."

Narcissa in a letter to her family dated May 3, wrote: "The Indians have furnished us a little venison—barely enough for our own eating—but to supply our men and visitors, we have killed and eaten ten wild horses bought of the Indians. This will make you pity me, but you had better save your pity for more worthy subjects. I do not prefer it to other meat, but can eat it very well when we have nothing else." Two years later, Whitman informed Greene that up to that date—May 10,

1839—they had butchered and eaten “twenty-three or four horses since we have been here” [Letter 62]. Two of Whitman’s cows calved the first part of February 1837; thus plenty of milk was then available.

Since there was so much that needed to be done, Whitman hired such transient labor as he could. He found the Hawaiians very satisfactory. One of them, Jack or John, stayed with the Whitmans for several years and will be mentioned later in this story. Regarding the possibility of using natives as laborers, Narcissa wrote that they did not “love to work well enough for us to place any dependence upon them.” Occasionally Whitman was able to hire a mountain man who happened to pass that way [Letter 41]. Of course when such men were hired, extra food had to be provided, with Narcissa doing the cooking over an open fire in the fireplace.

W. H. GRAY RETURNS TO THE STATES

Although W. H. Gray had joined the mission as a mechanic [i.e., a craftsman] with the expectation that he would relieve both Whitman and Spalding of some of their secular duties such as building and farming, yet he was a great disappointment to both. Gray remained at Lapwai helping Spalding for only a month until December 28, 1836, when he left for Fort Walla Walla. On January 4 he rode out to Waiilatpu where he stayed for only four or five days helping Whitman hang some doors.¹⁸ He then returned to the fort where he met Francis Ermatinger, one of the traders in the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who was on his way to Vancouver. Gray decided to go with him. While at Fort Vancouver the previous fall, Gray had written to Greene suggesting that he make an exploring trip for the Board.¹⁹ Without waiting for official approval of such a plan, Gray made arrangements to go with Ermatinger through the Flathead country in the spring of 1837.

Gray returned to Walla Walla on March 14, and after another short visit with the Whitmans, left for Spokane Falls. If Gray consulted with Whitman about his intentions to visit the Flathead country, there is no evidence that Whitman approved. The failure of Gray to stay at Waiilatpu and help with the work of building and preparing the soil for spring planting must have been a keen disappointment to Whitman. It so happened that Spalding was at Spokane Falls on March 31 where he met Gray and then learned to his surprise that Gray was planning to return

to the States to ask the American Board to send out a reenforcement for its Oregon Mission.

Gray was engaged to be married; this may have been another reason for his desire to return. Also, his restless nature and his inclination “to do good on his own hook,”²⁰ accounts for his independent action. Gray aspired to have a station of his own, such as both Whitman and Spalding had. He was unhappy to work in any subordinate capacity. In furtherance of his dream, he conceived a plan of driving a herd of horses to the Missouri frontier where they would be sold and the money used to buy cattle which would then be driven to Oregon in 1838. The Nez Perces, who had come to appreciate the value of American cattle, were attracted by Gray’s proposal and promised to cooperate. Gray seems to have won a reluctant approval from Spalding for the plan. Gray then succeeded in persuading four Nez Perces to go with him, including Ellis, one of the young men who had studied at the Red River school. Also among the Nez Perces was one called The Hat. The Nez Perces offered to send some of their horses with Gray, hoping to get cattle in return.

Gray and his Indian companions with a band of horses left Spokane Falls with Ermatinger on April 5 for the Rendezvous. After reaching that place, Ellis and two of the Nez Perces, for some unknown reason, decided not to continue with Gray. They turned back taking their horses with them. Only The Hat stayed with Gray who, at the Rendezvous, persuaded a prominent Iroquois, Big Ignace, and four Flathead Indians to join his party.

BEGINNINGS OF AGRICULTURE AT WAILATPU

While in Cincinnati in the early spring of 1836, Whitman and Spalding had purchased \$7.00 worth of seeds to be taken with them. No doubt these were vegetable seeds. While at Fort Vancouver, Narcissa carefully saved all the seeds of the fruit that she ate. “This is a rule of Vancouver,” she noted in her diary, and added: “I have got collected before me an assortment of garden seeds, which I take up with me, also, I intend taking some young sprouts of apple, peach & grapes, & some strawberry vines, etc., from the nursery here.”

While still at Fort Vancouver, Whitman wrote to friends in the States asking for seeds of the locust, chestnut, and walnut trees. Narcissa added that she wanted seeds of the butternut tree as well [Letter 34]. To

this day locust trees, which were not native to the Pacific Northwest, are growing on the mission sites at Waiilatpu and Lapwai.

With a practical eye on the duties of a housekeeper, Narcissa requested her relatives to send her some broom corn seed, which she called "another very important article for us housewives."²¹ She explained that although they did take some seeds of this plant with them, they were afraid that the seeds would not do well and wanted a fresh supply. "They have nothing of the kind here," Narcissa wrote, "but use hemlock boughs for broom. Hemlock, I say, there is no such tree known here. It is balsam" [Letter 34].

Only seven Whitman letters written in 1837 have been located, and one of these is in a publication [See Appendix I]. Only one of Whitman's letters to the Board is extant. This, containing some two thousand words, is dated May 5. Surely both Marcus and Narcissa wrote other letters which, for some reason, have been lost or destroyed. Because of the paucity of source material for 1837, we are unable to trace out in detail the story of what happened at Waiilatpu during that year.

Regarding his farm activities, Whitman wrote on May 5: "I began to plow the first week in March but was unable to do much on account of Mrs. Whitman's health." As will be told later, a baby girl was born on March 14. This important event naturally had caused some interruptions in Whitman's farming activities. His account to Greene continues: "My farm [work animals] consists of one yoke oxen belonging to one of the Cayuse Chiefs²² & a yoke of bulls, one belonging to the Co & one to the mission both of which I have broken, two horses & four mules. With this team I am able to break the ground very well.²³ I have two acres of peas sowed, 9 acres of corn planted & intend to plant 3 more and have planted & intend to plant 2 acres of potatoes, in all 16 acres. If associates come, I think they will have little to fear for want of provision. I hope to obtain wheat for fall sowing."

From a letter written by Narcissa on April 11, 1838, we learn that her husband harvested about two hundred fifty bushels of potatoes and two hundred bushels of corn, besides an abundance of garden vegetables in the fall of 1837. Because of an expected demand by the Indians for pea and potato seed in the spring of 1838, Narcissa wrote that they refrained from eating peas and used potatoes only sparingly. By the summer and fall of 1838, the gardens and fields at both Waiilatpu and Lapwai were

producing so abundantly that the food problem, except for beef, had been solved.

FIRST EFFORTS AT EVANGELIZATION

The experience of the American Board in Indian evangelism was so limited by 1836 that it could give but little guidance to the Whitmans and the Spaldings as to the best methods to be pursued in their endeavors to Christianize the Indians of Old Oregon. The American Board had established its first Indian mission in 1816 with the Cherokees. Work was begun on a limited basis with four other tribes before Dunbar and Allis were sent to the Pawnees in 1834.²⁴ Thus the Whitmans and the Spaldings were pioneers in Indian evangelism.

Such questions as to whether they could teach the Indians English and work through that language or learn the native language and use it for instructional purposes were unanswered. Were they to try to settle the natives on small farms or in villages before establishing schools and possibly churches, or should they follow the Indians in their migrations to find food and preach the Gospel as opportunities afforded? Which should have precedence—civilization or evangelization? The missionaries had to find answers to such perplexing questions through experience.

First came the immediate problem of acquiring the native language. The missionaries soon discovered that the Nez Perce tongue was extremely complex. A. B. Smith, a member of the 1838 reenforcement and the best linguist in the Oregon Mission, said that the tendency of the language to compound words was “beyond description.”²⁵ He who had specialized in the study of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin found that the Nez Perce language had no resemblance whatever to these, and called it “unclassical and outlandish.”²⁶

In all probability Whitman had made a beginning in acquiring the language when he took the two Indian boys, Richard and John, east with him in 1835. No doubt members of the mission party picked up some words from these youths as they traveled westward in 1836. The high expectations entertained by Whitman in using the two boys as interpreters were never realized. John rejoined his family who lived near Lapwai. Writing on October 3, 1838, to Mrs. Parker, Narcissa said: “John is the same unassuming, humble, obedient lad that he was while at Ithaca... But he is not long for this world, if he is still alive.

Nearly one year ago he was taken with the most afflicting disease I ever saw—the swelling of the joints.” Nothing more is known about John. According to Spalding, Richard ran away from Waiilatpu after taking “considerable property... He is a profane, gambling youth.”²⁷

Since the Nez Perce language had never been reduced to writing, the missionaries at first had no system of representing the sounds of the language, such as an alphabet, to aid them in learning the tongue. In Whitman’s May 5, 1837, letter, he wrote: “A few Indians only wintered with us & did not afford us a very favorable opportunity for acquiring the language.” Several years had to pass before the Whitmans had mastered the language sufficiently well for them to teach the doctrines of Christianity effectively, but by that time the natives had lost much of their enthusiasm for the white man’s religion. It should be remembered that Whitman was a doctor and not trained as a minister or as an evangelist. His professional and secular duties were demanding, increasingly so as time passed, which left him little time for study or teaching.

An entry in Narcissa’s letter of December 5, 1836, which has a postscript dated the following March 6, gives us this description of a meeting of natives held in her kitchen: “Sab. Eve. Today our congregation has increased very considerably in consequence of the arrival of a party of Indians during the past week. A strong desire is manifest in them all to understand the truth & to be taught. Last eve our room was full of men & boys, who came every eve to learn to sing. The whole tribe both men, women & children would like the same privilege if our room was larger & my health would admit so much singing. Indeed I should not attempt to sing with them, were it not for the assistance my Husband renders. You will recollect when he was in Angelica, he could not sing a single tune. Now he is able to sing several tunes & lead the school in them.”²⁸ This saves me a great deal hard singing.” We may assume that the Whitmans were teaching the natives to sing religious songs with English words which, of course, they could not understand. Possibly Richard or Compo, if present, could have served as interpreters.

For an indefinite period before the Whitmans settled at Waiilatpu, the Cayuse were accustomed to hold daily devotions after what they were told to be Christian forms of worship. Writing on January 2, 1837, Narcissa said: “The Cayuses as well as the Nez Perces are very strict in attending to their worship which they have regularly every morning at day

break & eve at twilight and once on the Sab. They sing & repeat a form of prayers very devoutly after which the Chief gives them a talk. The tunes & prayers were taught them by a Roman Catholic trader. Indeed their worship was commenced by him" [Letter 39]. In all probability the Roman Catholic trader was Pierre Pambrun who had been placed in charge of Fort Walla Walla in 1832.²⁹ Whitman gives similar information in his letter of May 5, 1837: "The present worship of the Indians was established by the Traders of the Hudson Bay Co. & it consists of the singing a form of prayer³⁰ after which the Chief gives them a talk."

As has been noted in the first chapter of this book, some knowledge of Christianity was passed on to the various tribes living in the upper Columbia River country by the Oregon Indian boys who had been sent to the Red River Mission school. Two of these lads, Cayuse Halket and Cayuse Pitt, may have been partly responsible for the introduction of certain forms of Christian worship among their people.³¹ When Samuel Parker traveled through the Nez Perce and Cayuse country in 1835 and 1836, he frequently held religious services, and since he had an interpreter, he was able to impart some information about Christianity. According to his journal, he camped along the Walla Walla River on May 18, 1836, "twenty-two miles" from Fort Walla Walla, which would have placed him near Waiilatpu. On the Sunday following, May 22, Parker held a religious service for the natives at Fort Walla Walla.

In Whitman's letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he reviewed the little that they had been able to do in the way of giving religious instruction to the Indians. "We have made but little attempt to teach them," he wrote, "except to sing, with which they are much pleased & adopt in their worship which they have at the Chief's lodge night & morning & Sabbath afternoon. In the afternoon of Sabbath I assemble them for worship & instruction." Without a good interpreter, Whitman's efforts would have been almost useless. There is a pathetic touch in reading about the Indians singing the songs that the Whitmans had taught them without understanding the real meaning of the words.

Added to the language barrier was the fact that the Indians were semi-nomadic. The Cayuses, like their neighbors, the Nez Percés, were frequently on the move. They had to be in order to survive. At one time of the year they would go to the Columbia River or one of its tributaries for the salmon which were taken in great numbers and dried. At another

season, some would migrate to the buffalo country in what is now Montana and Wyoming to hunt these animals for their meat and hides. Still again, they would gather on some upper prairie to dig for the onion-like tuber of the camas plant. This roving existence posed a great problem for the missionaries. How were they to teach and evangelize a people, as Spalding once wrote to Greene, “who were always on the wing?”

THE INDIANS IN A PERIOD OF RAPID CHANGE

The Whitmans and the Spaldings began their work with the natives of Old Oregon at a time of rapid change. Writing to Greene from the Rendezvous on July 8, 1836, Spalding said: “What is done for the poor Indians of this western world must be done soon. The only thing that can save them from annihilation is the introduction of civilization.” He was dismayed to note how the great herds of buffalo on the western plains were being decimated. Here were real grounds for the grievances that the red man held against the white, by killing off the buffalo, the white man was also destroying age-old customs.

Although the Cayuses and the Nez Perces did not sense in 1836 and the years immediately following that their manner of life was destined to be replaced by the white man’s civilization, this both Whitman and Spalding realized. Even if missionaries had never gone to Old Oregon, the natives would have had to face that inevitable period of transition. Both Whitman and Spalding were one in their commitment to do all within their power to civilize the natives. They were convinced that the Indians would be unable to preserve their old manner of life. They would have to adapt themselves to the white man’s ways or perish.

In Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he reported that most of the Cayuses had returned from the mountains by early March “& for a time labored very hard to prepare ground to plant.” By that time Whitman was at work breaking the virgin soil for his fields. Since he had but one plow, he was unable then to use it for the natives, but he was setting an example of how the earth could best be cultivated. “I had no means of assisting them,” he wrote, “but by loaning hoes of which [I] had but fifteen but still they had succeeded in making a good beginning.” After working a few weeks planting corn and potatoes, the Indians were off again, this time to the camas prairies. “They will return to hoe their corn in about four weeks,” Whitman wrote. “I think there

can be no doubt of their readiness to adopt cultivation & when they have plenty of food, they will be little disposed to wander.”

There is no evidence, as some have suggested, that the Indians turned reluctantly to farming. As soon as they appreciated the relative ease with which they could obtain food from the soil, as compared to the time-consuming treks into the buffalo country or elsewhere for food, they began to clamor for hoes and plows.

Again and again in the first letters that Whitman and Spalding wrote to the Board or to relatives or friends, we find them pleading for hoes and plows, especially the latter. Spalding, in his letter to Greene of September 11, 1838, summarized his philosophy of evangelism, which Whitman fully shared: “While we point them with one hand to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, we believe it equally our duty to point with the other to the hoe, as the means of saving their famishing bodies from an untimely grave & furnishing the means of subsistence to future generations.”³² This emphasis on settling the natives on farms was in full harmony with the views of such an enlightened Indian Agent as Major John Dougherty, to whom reference has been made. As early as 1829 Dougherty was urging the government to encourage the Indians to take up farming.³³ Whitman had called on Dougherty at the Oto Indian Agency in May 1836, at which time, no doubt, this subject of settling the Indians had been discussed.

A few critics have accused the missionaries of taking part in the expropriation of the lands and resources of the Oregon Indians. The reverse is the case. No group of individuals did more to help the natives bridge the gap from a primitive, semi-nomadic life to a civilized, settled existence than did the missionaries. As far as the Cayuses and the Nez Perces were concerned, Whitman and Spalding introduced the hoe and the plow and taught the natives to plant vegetables, especially potatoes, wheat, and corn. They helped them obtain American cattle. They reduced the language to writing, and printed primers and other little books in the Nez Perce tongue on the first American press to be brought to the Pacific Coast. To civilize and educate the natives was a fundamental part of their endeavors to evangelize them. The Indians had to be settled before any consistent program of education could be conducted. They had to be able to read before they could appreciate the teachings of the Bible.

Whitman and Spalding never debated the question as to which should receive the major emphasis—to civilize or to evangelize. The two went together. And with all due respect to the activities of the Methodist missionaries, who established their work in the Willamette Valley in 1834, and to the Roman Catholic priests, who entered Old Oregon in 1838, no missionaries did so much for the improvement of the material welfare of the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians as Marcus Whitman and Henry Spalding.

THREE CAYUSE CHIEFS

Narcissa, in a postscript dated January 2, 1837, to the letter to her mother which had been begun on the previous December 5, mentioned three Cayuse chiefs, each of whom was to play an important role in the unfolding drama which had begun to take place at Waiilatpu. They were Umtippe,³⁴ "Towerlooe" (Tautitai) or Young Chief, and Tiloukaikt. Umtippe was an old man when the Whitmans arrived and died sometime during the winter of 1840–41. The problems he caused remained as a source of irritation for the Whitmans long after he had died. Both Young Chief and Tiloukaikt lived throughout the eleven-year mission period.

In her note of January 2, Narcissa wrote: "We are on the lands of the Old Chief Umtippe who with a lodge³⁵ or two are now absent for a few days hunting deer. But a few of the Cayuses winter here... The Young Chief, Towerlooe, is of another family & is more properly the ruling chief. He is Uncle to the young Cayuse Halket now at Red River Mission whom we expect to return this fall & to whom the chieftainship belongs by inheritance. The old Chief Umtippe has been a savage creature in his day. His heart is still the same, full of all manner of hypocrisy, deceit and guile. He is a mortal beggar as all Indians are. If you ask a favour of him, sometimes it is granted or not, just as he feels; if granted it must be well paid for. A few days ago he took it into his head to require pay for teaching us the language & forbade his people from coming & talking with us for fear we should learn a few words from them." It should be noted that Narcissa did not claim that the avaricious Chief Umtippe asked payment for the land occupied by the mission but rather for such services as he or others had rendered in teaching the language. Upon the death of Umtippe, during the winter of 1840–41, Tiloukaikt succeeded to the leadership of the band

living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu. When Narcissa mentioned Tiloukaikt in a note dated March 30, following the birth of her baby, she then called him “a friendly Indian” [Letter 39].

ALICE CLARISSA WHITMAN

On the evening of Narcissa’s twenty-ninth birthday, March 14, 1837, a daughter was born to the Whitmans. They named her Alice after the mother and sister of Marcus, and Clarissa after the mother and a sister of Narcissa. She was the first white child to be born of white American parents in the Old Oregon country and the second girl of American parents on the whole Pacific Slope of what is now the United States.³⁶ I was sick but about two hours,” Narcissa told her family. “She was born half past eight, so early in the evening that we all had time to get considerable rest that night” [Letter 40].

Anticipating the need for some assistance, the Whitmans had sent for Mrs. Pambrun, who arrived with two of her children about two weeks before the baby was born, but, according to Narcissa, she was not of much help. “She with my Husband dressed the babe,” Narcissa wrote. “It would have made you smile to see them work over the little creature. Mrs. P. never saw one dressed before as we dress them having been accustomed to dress her own in the native style... Thus you see, Beloved Sisters, how the missionary does in heathen lands. No Mother, no sister, to relieve me of a single care, only an affectionate Husband, who as a physician & nurse exceeds all I ever knew.”

Narcissa’s confinement came at an exceedingly busy time for Marcus. He had started plowing the first week of March and felt the need to complete his planting. About this time, a party of Indians arrived who desired instruction as to how they could begin agriculture. Hoes, seed corn, and potatoes had to be distributed. Whitman then had to take time to show the natives how to prepare the soil and plant the seeds. A few days after the birth of the baby, Pambrun arrived to take his wife and family back to Fort Walla Walla. With him were Gray and Ermatinger who remained a few days at Waiilatpu before leaving for the Spokane country. Regarding her husband, Narcissa wrote: “He was excessively pressed with care and labour during the whole time of my confinement. Beside the attention I required of him, he had my washing & the cooking to do for the family.”

Narcissa made a rapid recovery. Within a week she was up and carrying on the work of her home: Writing two weeks after her baby was born, Narcissa gave the following description of the child: "Her hair is a light brown... She is plump & large, holds her head up finely & looks about considerably. She weighs ten pounds." The proud and happy mother called her "a treasure invaluable" [Letter 40].

When the Pambruns returned to the fort on Saturday, the 24th, they left their twelve-year-old daughter, Maria, with the Whitmans to assist in the house work and to learn more English. On April 1, an Indian girl, possibly a half-breed, sixteen years old, arrived, who appeared no larger than an average American girl of twelve years. Narcissa named her Sarah Hull after the wife of the minister who had officiated at her wedding. "You have no idea," wrote Narcissa to her family, "how difficult it is to realize any benefit from those who do not understand you."

This practice of bestowing Bible names or the names of relatives and friends on natives, especially converts, was common to Protestant missionaries of that generation. The practice was followed by the missionaries of both the American Board and the Methodist Society at work in Oregon. Some of these New England surnames and Bible names continue among the Cayuses and Nez Percés to this day.

The Cayuses were tremendously interested in the birth of a white baby in their midst. On March 30, Narcissa wrote: "The Little Stranger is visited daily by the Chiefs & principal men in camp & the women throng the house continually waiting an opportunity to see her. Her whole appearance is so new to them. Her complexion, her size & dress & all excite a deal of wonder for they never raise a child here except they are lashed tight to a board & the girls' heads undergo the flattening process" [Letter 40]. In this same letter, she wrote "Tee-low-kiki [Tiloukaikt], a friendly Indian, called to see her the next day after she was born; Said she was a Cayuse Te-mi (Cayuse girl) because she was born on Cayuse wai-tis (Cayuse land). He told us her arrival was expected by all the people of the country... The whole tribe are highly pleased because we allow her to be called a Cayuse girl."

Narcissa made two additional references in her letters to the native custom of flattening the foreheads of some of their newly born infants. On May 3, she wrote: "The system of head-flattening exists among their people in a degree, but not to excess. The girls' heads only are flattened.

They consider it a peculiar mark of beauty and it makes them more acceptable in the sight of the men as wives. They raise but few of their children. Great numbers of them die" [Letter 41]. Narcissa was writing of the natives in the vicinity of Waiilatpu and not of the lower Columbia River country where the head-flattening custom was more prevalent.

In an hitherto unquoted letter of Narcissa's is found her third reference to this custom. Writing to Mrs. G. P. Judd of the American Board's Mission in Honolulu on September 1, 1837, she said: "Our babe has scarcely seen a sick day since she was born. She is now nearly six months old and weighs twenty-two pounds. I do not know as she is larger or heavier than children usually are at home, but the natives here are much surprised at her size and strength, and her rapid growth, which is very different from their children. Her clean, round, natural head is a striking contrast to their scurfy, ill shapen, flat heads, and they feel it so. It speaks louder than words, against their cruel, murderous system of flattening the heads of their infants. My heart bleeds for suffering infancy about me. O when will these mothers possess the feelings that belong to their endearing name?" [Letter 42a.]

No reference has been found in any of Spalding's writings to the practice of head-flattening among the Nez Perces. Yet it seems that the custom must have been in vogue to some extent among these people, as one of the four Nez Perces who went to St. Louis in 1831 had such a deformed head, as shown in the drawing made by William Walker which was published in the New York *Christian Advocate*. By the time the Whitmans settled at Waiilatpu, the custom was dying out among the Cayuses. Alice Clarissa's "clean, round, natural head" was an eloquent and persuasive object lesson for them. It requires little imagination for us to believe that no Cayuse mother would willingly deform her baby's head after seeing Alice Clarissa. Here was one of the unexpected good results of the ministry of Marcus and Narcissa among the Cayuses.

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

Many of the trials experienced by the Whitmans during their first four months' residence at Waiilatpu foreshadowed greater difficulties which were to come. The language problem was more baffling and frustrating than they had expected. The Whitmans had no good teacher or interpreter. Richard, in whom Whitman had placed so much

hope, proved to be unreliable. Chief Umtippe, whom Narcissa called a “mortal beggar,” was demanding payment for any help given the missionaries in learning the language.

The winter of 1836-37 was unusually severe for that region; snow stayed on the ground for six weeks. For several weeks the Whitmans found it difficult to keep their house comfortably warm as they had nothing but blankets for windows and doors. For want of beef or wild game, the Whitmans had to turn to eating horse flesh. The failure of Gray to stay and help with the building and the farming must have been a great disappointment, yet there is no word of complaint on this subject in any of the extant letters of either of the Whitmans written during 1837.

Their trials, however, were more than offset by their accomplishments. In spite of many difficulties, a beginning had been made. Their house was gradually being made more comfortable. Both Marcus and Narcissa enjoyed good health. We hear less of Marcus’ physical disability which had caused the American Board to reject his application in the spring of 1834. It has been conjectured that Whitman’s trouble had been stomach ulcers which cleared up. This could have explained the pain he experienced in his left side. A beginning had been made in language study and agriculture. Some of the natives had shown a desire to be taught the principles of Christianity, and even though Chief Umtippe created some difficulties, the Indians, for the most part, were friendly and cooperative.

Completely removed from the protection that the United States could give in case of trouble, and living some twenty-five miles from Fort Walla Walla, the Whitmans had established their home in the wilderness in the midst of an uncivilized tribe where they were to live for several years without fear of physical harm. The coming of Alice Clarissa had established a bond of sympathy between the natives and the missionaries. The outlook was propitious.

CHAPTER 10 FOOTNOTES

- 1 The original Cayuse language is now extinct. Deward E. Walker, Jr., states in his *Mutual Cross-Utilization of Economic Resources in the Plateau...*, Washington State University, Laboratory of Anthropology, Pullman, 1967, *Reports of Investigations, No. 41*: "Nez Perce was a *lingua franca* from the Bitterroots in the east to the Dalles-Celilo region in the west..." by the time these Indians had their first contacts with the white men. "The Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Palouse were so intermarried... it was virtually impossible to distinguish them particularly for the Nez Perces and Cayuse." Pp. 18 & 21.
- 2 The most reliable estimates of the numbers in the Nez Perce and Cayuse tribes were made by A. B. Smith in 1839 and 1840. See Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 109, 129, & 136.
- 3 Indian name for "little river."
- 4 The automatic guides, i. e., the little electronic speakers installed at several points on the grounds of the Whitman Mission National Historic Site, place the accent on the second syllable. According to an explanation given me personally by the late Dr. Stephen B. L. Penrose, President of Whitman College, Myron and Edwin Eells, sons of the Rev. Cushing Eells, differed as to the correct pronunciation of Waiilatpu. One placed the accent on the second syllable, and the other on the third. On March 30, 1837, Narcissa spelled the name "Wi-el-et-poo."
- 5 Lewis and Clark called the river Kooskooske, whereas the missionaries referred to it as the Clearwater, which is the name that prevailed.
- 6 Narcissa in her letter of October 24, 1836, wrote: "The Nez Perces are exceedingly anxious [for us] to have a location among them, Husband writes. Say they do not have difficulty with the whites as the Cayuses do & we will find it so."
- 7 Lapwai is usually explained as meaning "place of butterflies."
- 8 The hills along the Clearwater at Lapwai Creek rise to an elevation of about 2,600 feet above sea level, or about 1,800 feet above the river.
- 9 Drury, *Spalding*, p. 159.
- 10 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 127.
- 11 Possibly Gray was also making adobe bricks and such necessary items of furniture as chairs, stools, and tables, during the absence of Whitman from Waiilatpu.
- 12 Spalding to Greene from Fort Vancouver, Sept. 20, 1836, Coll. A. Spalding gave different figures at a later time. See Drury, *Spalding*, p. 162, where the total distance was estimated at 6,155 miles. The earlier figure is to be preferred.
- 13 T. C. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies*, Toronto, 1962, p. 33.
- 14 Mrs. Elkanah Walker's side-saddle is in the museum of O.H.S., Portland. A picture of this saddle is in Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:68.
- 15 HBC Arch, A/11/69. Jessett, *Herbert Beaver*, p. 22. See Chapter Nine, fn. 37.
- 16 From archaeological findings, Whitman Mission National Historic Site.
- 17 A twenty-seven foot high granite shaft, including height of the base, now crowns the top of this hill as a memorial to the Whitmans.
- 18 Gray's *Journal, W.C.Q.*, June 1913.

- 19 Gray to Greene, Sept. 19, 1836. Coll. A.
- 20 From testimonial letter of Chauncey Eddy to Greene, Feb. 17, 1836. Coll. A.
- 21 Narcissa succeeded in getting some broom corn seeds, for on July 7, 1842, in a letter to Maria Pambrun, she wrote: "Our broom corn did not do well last year."
- 22 The Hudson's Bay Company would loan animals to natives or settlers on condition that the Company would receive any increase of stock and also be paid for any animal lost. Whitman letter 42.
- 23 Ordinarily a man with a two-horse team and a 16 inch plowshare can plow about three acres a day. Whitman with a yoke of oxen working in tough virgin soil studded with clumps of rye grass would have been fortunate to plow one acre a day.
- 24 Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama*, Philadelphia, 1952, pp. 59 ff., gives a summary of the beginnings of mission work by the American Board with the American Indians.
- 25 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 104 & 138.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- 27 Drury, *Whitman*, p. 172, quoting from Spalding's letter to Parker of Feb. 11, 1837. See also Whitman letter 42. Josephy, *Nez Perce Indians*, p. 382, lists Richard as one of the Nez Perce chiefs who signed a treaty with the U.S. Government on Aug. 6, 1858. Yet Victor, *The Early Wars of Oregon*, p. 208, claims that he was killed during the Cayuse War of 1848. According to another account in the *Pacific Northwesterner*, Summer, 1958, p. 45, Richard was killed in the Steptoe campaign in May 1858.
- 28 Gray, *Oregon*, p. 109, states that one of Narcissa's "amusements" while crossing the country in the summer of 1836 was "to teach the Doctor to sing, which she did with considerable success."
- 29 Simpson, in his *Character Book*, HBC Arch., described Pambrun as being in 1832: "...about 45 years of age—17 years in the service; an active, steady, dapper little fellow." He had the rank of clerk when given charge of Fort Walla Walla; was promoted to chief trader in Nov. 1839; remained at the fort until his death on May 15, 1841.
- 30 No indication is given whether the songs and prayers taught to the Indians were in Latin, French, English, or Nez Perce.
- 31 See section, "Oregon Indians in the Red River Mission School," Chapter One, for information about Cayuse Halket.
- 32 See illustration in this work of Spalding holding a Bible in one hand and a hoe in the other—symbolic of his philosophy of Indian missions.
- 33 *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. LXV (April 1971): pp. 252 ff.
- 34 Possible Umtippe was Tum-a-tap-um mentioned several times by Alexander Ross in his *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, K. A. Spalding (ed.), Norman, Oklahoma, 1956. On page 123, we may read: "Notwithstanding reiterated professions of friendship, it was observed that his disposition was uncommonly selfish. He never opened his mouth but to insist on our goods being lavished on his numerous train of followers, without the hope of compensation. The more he received, the more his assurance increased, and his demands had no bounds."
- 35 A Cayuse Indian lodge was an oblong shelter made out of reed mats or skins supported by willow poles and large enough to accommodate several families, each with its own hearth.

36 The late Dr. John A. Hawgood of Birmingham, England, discovered the baptismal record of Isabelle Anna, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas O. Larkin, born on January 31, 1833, at Monterey, California, where Larkin was U.S. Consul. California was then a part of Mexico. The baby died in infancy. A son, Thomas O. Larkin, Jr., was born on April 13, 1834. Information received in a personal interview with Dr. Hawgood.