

THE VERSATILE DOCTOR 1837-1838

The Whitmans at Waiilatpu and the Spaldings at Lapwai carried on their work in their separate stations for about two years with but little outside help beyond that of a few Hawaiians and an occasional wandering mountain man. The restless Gray, who was supposed to assist in the secular affairs of the mission, had given only six weeks of his time to help Whitman and about four to aid Spalding before leaving for Fort Vancouver and then for the States. Both Whitman and Spalding were fully aware that the American Board expected them to be self-supporting, with the exception of a few basic staples which had to be imported. Such a policy meant that both men, and the associates who joined them in 1838, had to devote most of their time and energy to manual labor just to keep themselves and their families alive and fairly comfortable.

At Waiilatpu Whitman had to superintend or actually engage in such duties as farming, building fences to protect his crops, taking care of his animals, milking cows, butchering a horse when needed, sawing logs to make boards, making adobe bricks for the unfinished part of his house, plus a multitude of incidental duties connected with maintaining a home in the wilderness. Fortunately both Whitman and Spalding were versatile and energetic. Neither was afraid of work. Each had to be a jack-of-all-trades in order to survive. The multiplicity of such secular

duties, however, made it difficult for either man to spend much time on language study and on those professional duties for which each was especially qualified. The marvel is that they were able to accomplish as much as they did in civilizing and evangelizing the natives under such restricting conditions. With infinite patience and devotion, the Whitmans and the Spaldings gave themselves, without expectation of any material reward, to ministering to a people of an entirely different culture—to semi-nomadic, “heathen” Indians.

Our chief source of information regarding the activities of the Whitmans during the two years from their arrival in Oregon to the fall of 1838 is their correspondence. After that date, their letters are supplemented by the letters and diaries of the 1838 reenforcement. During their eleven-year residence in Old Oregon, beginning with their arrival at the 1836 Rendezvous, the Whitmans wrote 275 letters which are extant either in original or in copy form. Only six original Whitman letters written during 1837 have been found, and an additional one which was published. For the eight-month period beginning January 1, 1838, and ending with the arrival of the reenforcement in the early fall of that year, thirteen Whitman letters are known of which four were written by Narcissa. Even though the source material for these months is scanty, we can glean considerable information from them regarding Whitman’s activities as a doctor, a farmer, and a teacher.

WHITMAN, THE DOCTOR

Although Whitman was sent to Old Oregon as a missionary physician, we find that he rarely referred to his professional experiences in his letters. When writing to the Board, he would sometimes refer to the health of his wife or of his associates, but seldom would he mention the ailments of the natives. Here even Narcissa fails us. If the theory that her father was a Thomsonian is correct, then we can understand her hesitancy to say much about her husband’s medical practice to members of her family. Under such circumstances the tactful thing would be to say nothing about a subject over which there was such pronounced disagreement. We do find, however, a few statements in Narcissa’s letters which throw light upon the conditions her husband faced as a missionary doctor among superstitious natives.

Both the Cayuses and the Nez Perces had medicine men whom

they called *te-wats*. Like many medicine men of primitive peoples, they had, no doubt, some effective remedies. They also relied upon what the Whitmans considered to be sorcery, superstition, and deceit in trying to effect cures. A terrifying aspect of *te-watism* was their acceptance of the right of relatives of a deceased person to kill the *te-wat* if he were unable to cure his patient. This custom put Dr. Whitman constantly under threat of death and greatly restricted what he might otherwise have been able to accomplish.

In Narcissa's letter of May 2, 1837, she wrote that many of the Indians of their vicinity were ill "with an inflammation of the lungs." Many turned to Dr. Whitman for help. He was, in their eyes, a white *te-wat* of great renown, for had he not removed an arrowhead from the back of Jim Bridger at the Rendezvous of 1835? Among the afflicted was the wife of the irascible Chief Umtippe. Narcissa described what happened: "The old chief Umtippe's wife was quite sick and came near dying. For a season they were satisfied with my husband's attention, and were doing well; but when they would overeat themselves, or go into a relapse from unnecessary exposure, then they must have their *te-wat* doctors; say that the medicine was bad, and all was bad. Their *te-wat* is the same species of juggling as practiced by the Pawnees, which Mr. Dunbar describes,¹ playing the fool over them, and giving no medicine" [Letter 41].

"Umtippe got in a rage about his wife," wrote Narcissa, "and told my husband, while she was under his care, that if his wife died that night he should kill him. The contest has been sharp between him and the Indians, and husband was nearly sick with the excitement and care of them." Losing faith in Dr. Whitman, Umtippe sent for "the great Walla Walla *te-wat*," and thus Whitman was relieved of the responsibility if the woman died. The Walla Walla *te-wat* came and "after going through several incantations, and receiving a horse and a blanket or two, pronounced her well; but the next day she was the same again." Umtippe's rage was then directed against the *te-wat* and said "that he was bad and ought to be killed." Since Narcissa does not say whether the woman died or not, we may assume that she lived and that the *te-wat's* life was spared. A few weeks later Umtippe became ill. "Notwithstanding all his villainy," wrote Narcissa, "he came to my husband to be doctored. He was very sick, and we thought he would die; but the medicine given him soon relieved him."

A few days later, the grim superstition of the Indians wrought its vengeance on “the great Walla Walla te-wat.” Narcissa wrote on May 2: “Last Saturday the war chief died at Walla Walla. He was a Cayuse and a relative of Umtippe; was sick but six days; employed the same Walla Walla tewat Umtippe sent for, but he died in his hands. The same day... a younger brother of Umtippe went to Walla Walla; arrived about twilight, and shot the te-wat dead. Thus they are avenged.” Narcissa felt that as soon as some of the older chiefs died, no doubt including Umtippe, things would be different. She contrasted the older chiefs, who were “filled with so much war and bloodshed,” with the younger men, who had “an eager desire to adopt the manners and customs of civilized life; but they are ruled by the chiefs, and feel themselves obliged to bow in subjection to them.”

INTRODUCING CHIEF STICKUS

On Monday, May 1, 1837, another influential Cayuse chief called on Dr. Whitman and asked for medical attention. He was Stickus whom Narcissa called “an excellent Indian” and who lived with his band on the Umatila River about twenty-five miles from Waiilatpu. The Whitmans took Stickus into their home where they could give him personal attention. In doing so they realized the risk they ran if he died. Writing late in the evening of the following Wednesday, Narcissa said: “He has been taking medicine, and it appears to have relieved him in a measure; but, because he is not all about immediately, he became exceedingly uneasy and restless and talks about the te-wats. He, with many other sensible ones in the tribe, and men of influence, too, are convinced that it is a deception, and not of God, and yet no doubt feel a great struggle in their minds to entirely renounce that in which they have so long had implicit confidence.” The Whitmans found that customs generations old did not change quickly. They had to be patient, and they knew it was wise to exercise restraint.

Before Narcissa closed her letter, she made an appeal for additional workers, an appeal that comes again and again in the letters that she and Marcus wrote: “Who will come over and help us? Weak, frail nature cannot endure excessive care and anxiety any great length of time, without falling under it.” She then made mention of her husband’s health. “I refer more particularly to my husband. His labor this spring

has affected his health considerably. His old complaint in his side affects him occasionally." There is no evidence that Whitman had any physical problems while crossing the country or during their first months' residence at Waiilatpu. Narcissa attributed the recurrence of his old trouble to excessive labor, hence the plea for assistants.

Narcissa's letter closes with the following postscript: "You are indebted to little Alice Clarissa's disposition for this sheet. I have no cradle yet, and she has lain in my lap all day; for she does not like to be where she cannot see her mother, long at a time. She receives many kisses for her grandparents, uncles and aunts, every day. She is now in bed with her father, sleeping sweetly. She is pleasant company for me, here alone. One o'clock [a.m.] and I retire, leave the sick Indian to himself the remainder of the night." Stickus recovered, and the Whitmans had no more loyal friend during their remaining ten and one-half years residence among the Cayuses than this chief. How different would have been the history of the Whitman mission had the locations of Stickus and Tiloukaikt been reversed.

WHITMAN, THE FARMER

Both Whitman and Spalding saw the necessity of teaching the Indians the arts of civilization for two compelling reasons. In the first place, their semi-nomadic type of life gave them a precarious livelihood. The buffalo east of the mountains were being decimated. The missionaries realized that the day was rapidly approaching when the wild game would not provide sufficient meat for the natives. Narcissa wrote: "We are anxious to give them the means of procuring their provisions in a more easy way, so that there may be less starving ones during the winter" [Letter 46]. Therefore, the necessity to teach the Indians how to cultivate the soil. There is evidence to indicate that the Cayuses were aware of this need and were ready to make an adjustment to the circumstances which were being forced upon them, as increasingly they were asking for plows. At the same time this necessity to change their pattern of living may have been one of the most serious grievances that the Indians harbored against the white men.

The second reason why the missionaries urged the natives to take up cultivating the soil was to induce them to give up their semi-nomadic habits and accept a settled life. This was necessary before any consistent

program of education or religious instruction could be conducted.

Whitman found the soil and the climate at Waiilatpu admirably suited for agriculture. He began in the spring of 1837, with only one plow and fifteen hoes, the herculean task of cultivating sufficient land to provide for his needs and to teach the natives how to till the soil. Spalding was facing the same frustrating experience at Lapwai where he too lacked agricultural instruments. He tried to make a plow out of cedar wood, using large roots for the “chip and mold boards.”² This, however, proved unsuccessful. Whitman saw a plow that Pambrun was using, made out of wood with an iron point, and wrote to McLoughlin requesting that at least one of like kind be made for him. McLoughlin, in a letter dated June 23, 1837, replied: “The plough you request will be made.”³ When Jason Lee visited Waiilatpu in the spring of 1838, he found several of these wooden plows with iron points in use, but they were not very satisfactory.

Whitman hesitated to ask the Board to send plows, as he was aware of its limited resources. Moreover, he knew that some members of the Board would question the wisdom of spending benevolence funds for such secular objects as plows. How could the infant American Board, founded in 1810, with a limited constituency and restricted income, afford to venture into the field of furnishing agricultural tools to whole tribes of Indians? In Whitman’s letter to Greene of May 5, 1837, he stressed the importance of having plows and hoes, and suggested that if such were sent to the Hawaiian Islands, ships of the Hudson’s Bay Company would carry them to the Columbia.

The planting season of 1838, when the Indians showed an increased desire for plows, added to Whitman’s feeling of frustration. Writing to Greene on May 8 of that year, Whitman made the following plea for plows:

We are now at an important crisis, & need men & means to carry out what has been so auspiciously begun & that there be no reaction. There is danger of this, for the want of facilities to accomplish our plans, & to induce the Indians to settle around us that we may teach them & their children without interruption. Even this year I am confident if we had had suitable ploughs & hoes that they would have raised [enough] corn & potatoes &c. to have detained a large number with us constantly. We shall labour under great disadvantage until such things can be sent.

I have thought best not to ask the Board for them fearing what reception it might meet with & so have written to several gentlemen of my acquaintance to send us fifty ploughs & three hundred hoes, & in case of failure I have ordered my Brother [i.e., Augustus Whitman] to appropriate two hundred dollars on my account to that object. But this is not enough, what are three hundred hoes & fifty ploughs? We ought to have at least seventy five or one hundred ploughs & six hundred hoes immediately to save this starving multitude from an untimely grave.

Whitman's willingness to contribute two hundred dollars from his personal funds left with his brother speaks eloquently of his faith in this cause. This sum amounted to more than a schoolteacher's pay for one year. Whitman's appeal to the Board continues: "If the Board cannot approve of such an expense, I do not see how they can afford to proceed without it, for it seems evident that without them we shall not see the Indians at our station for any considerable time. On the contrary, if we had them, it would not be long before we should see them located around us with houses, fields, gardens, hogs & cows, & their children enjoying the benefit of constant instruction, at far less expense to the Board than to take them into our families for that purpose. They are fond of ploughing."

Whitman had to wait two years before he learned of the result of this appeal. Then to his great satisfaction, he heard that a shipment of supplies from the Board had arrived at Fort Vancouver which included ten plows, "18 or 20 doz. hoes, two cook stoves," and many other items [Letter 76a]. In the same shipment were twenty-five plows donated by the Rushville Congregational Church [Letter 89]. The arrival of these thirty-five plows came after the spring planting of 1840, but in time for the sowing of fall wheat. Thus we see that four years elapsed after the Whitmans had settled at Waiilatpu before enough good plows were on hand for the Indians to make a beginning in cultivation.

In his letter of May 8, 1838, Whitman wrote: "Had I one doubt of the disposition of the Indians to cultivate, I would not thus write: but having seen them for two seasons breaking ground with hoes & sticks & having given them the trial of the plough, I feel an entire confidence in their disposition & ability... Several of them have already planted half to an acre of potatoes & have considerable fields of corn and peas."

Whitman had only sixteen acres under cultivation in 1837. This was increased to forty acres in 1838 including “six acres of potatoes, two & half of wheat,” with peas, oats, and corn making up the balance. Much of what he raised had to be given to the Indians for seed. “This field is emphatically white for the harvest,” he wrote, “although we bring the gospel as the first object, we cannot gain an assurance unless they are attracted & retained by the plough & hoe, & in this way even before the language is acquired you may have the people drawn around you & ready to hear your every instruction. And why should not this be our method of proceeding? Is it not what Paul meant when he said, ‘I become all things unto all men,’ that he accommodated himself to the circumstances of the People? Why then should we not take the best, & may I not say, the only way to win them to Christ?” Here was Whitman’s philosophy of missions. Secretary Greene was inclined to begin with a sermon and end with the plow. Whitman and Spalding had the opposite emphasis—begin with the plow and end with the sermon.

At first it seems that no questions were raised by the natives regarding ownership or use of the land. Evidently Whitman had been invited by Umtippe to settle in his vicinity and there is no evidence that the chief asked for or received any compensation. Since the Indians were often absent from their home lands for months of each year, they had no sense of individual proprietary rights to any particular acreage. Not until the Cayuses had begun to cultivate the fields did the idea of private ownership of designated plots of land become a part of their thinking.

In his letter to Greene dated March 12, 1838, Whitman explained why the Indians, who did want to cultivate some land in the immediate vicinity of Waiilatpu, were eager for that particular location: “Their great fear is that other Indians will steal from them... & all are anxious to plant where I can watch their crops for, as they say, the Indians fear me but do not fear them.” A revolutionary new idea had taken root: the private ownership of land. Later this was an issue which would cause trouble for Whitman, when Tiloukaikt demanded payment for the lands occupied by the mission.

BEGINNINGS IN HORTICULTURE

While still at Fort Vancouver, Narcissa noted in her diary her intention to take some “sprouts of apple, peach & grape” with them when

they made the return trip to Fort Walla Walla. We may assume that this is what happened for, soon after they moved to Waiilatpu, Whitman planted an orchard to the west of their house. We have record of Spalding sending fifty young apple trees to Whitman in February 1842.⁴ Since it takes years for an apple orchard to become productive, we do not find many references in the writings of the missionaries to fruit being harvested at Waiilatpu. We do have evidence that the Whitmans were able to pick a few apples in the fall of 1846.⁵ There is no evidence that any of the Cayuses took any special interest in planting fruit trees; some of the Nez Percés, however, did so.

BEGINNINGS IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

No record has been found of the division that Whitman and Spalding made of their horses and mules after their arrival in Old Oregon. In his letter to Greene dated July 8, 1840, Whitman stated that he had seventeen head of horses. The Cayuses had large herds of horses; consequently Whitman was able to buy from them for as low as \$6.00 a head during the first five years that he lived at Waiilatpu, when he and his family were obliged to eat horseflesh. Spalding, in the inventory that he made of the Waiilatpu property owned at the time of the massacre, claimed that Whitman had forty-six horses of which number ten were broken to harness.⁶ This means that Whitman had been able to use Cayuse horses, often called ponies, to pull plows.

When the missionaries first settled among the Old Oregon Indians, the natives had only two domesticated animals—the horse and the dog. Although Whitman made mention of one Cayuse chief who had secured some oxen from the Hudson's Bay Company, these were on loan only. The Company did not wish to encourage the natives to raise cattle. This, however, became the policy of Whitman and Spalding who, from the very beginning of their missionary work, looked upon cattle raising by the natives as one good method of inducing them to abandon their roving habits and settle down to farming.

After Whitman and Spalding had divided their small herd of cattle which survived the long overland trek, Whitman had either five or seven heifers or cows. For five years the Whitmans refrained from eating beef, wishing to build up their little herd. During these years, Whitman found it necessary to butcher thirty-two horses for food.⁷ In his report

of mission activities at Waiilatpu, written for Greene on July 6, 1840, Whitman said that he then had "...five cows, two one year-old heifers & three heifer calves. One pair oxen, two pair of steers, two yearling bulls & two bull calves, twenty in all." Not until the summer of 1841 did Whitman feel free to kill his first beef, "a steer four years old" which had been fattened on the luxurious grass of the region and which "gave us one hundred and forty-eight pounds of tried tallow" [Letter 100]. After that time, the necessity of killing horses for food diminished.

With the increase of their respective herds, both Whitman and Spalding occasionally parted with some of their cattle, giving or selling them to a few selected natives who they believed would prize them. We have no accurate figures as to how many head of cattle the Indians owned at the close of the mission period. Since the Nez Perces were several times more numerous than the Cayuses and also since they seem to have demonstrated a greater desire to adopt the white man's ways, we may assume that they had more cattle than the Cayuses. At the time of the Cayuse War, 1848-49, members of that tribe were reported to have had forty head of cattle.⁸ It is possible that some of that number had been stolen from Oregon immigrants, or received through trading.

Following the great California cattle drive of 1837, when about six hundred head of Spanish cattle were driven into the Willamette Valley, cattle became more easily available to the Indians. The Methodist missionaries introduced some cattle into The Dalles area in 1838. The Spanish cattle were of inferior stock as compared to the American breed, being smaller; also the cows were poor in milk production.

Spalding, in his Waiilatpu inventory, stated that Whitman had 290 head of cattle in November 1847, including "100 milch cows; 80 young cattle; 11 yoke of oxen; 80 calves; and 8 beef cattle."⁹ The fact that Whitman had one hundred milk cows does not mean that he was actually milking that many, rather these were breeding animals. We are not told just how Whitman was able to keep his live stock separate from that owned by the Indians before he was able to fence sufficient pasture land to keep them confined. Perhaps he had some system of identifying his stock by notching the ears of the young or by branding them. Whitman was handicapped in his efforts to erect rail fences at Waiilatpu because of the lack of nearby suitable timber.

INTRODUCTION OF HOGS AND SHEEP

In a letter that Spalding wrote to Greene in the summer of 1837, he reported getting three hogs from the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Colville.¹⁰ Whitman, in a financial report submitted to the American Board dated March 27, 1838, stated that he had spent £10-3-6 for "Flour & Seeds & Hogs." He did not indicate how many were purchased or when, though it was probably in the summer of 1837. Writing on December 3, 1839, Whitman stated: "I killed four hogs which weighed 1,083 lbs." Narcissa wrote on November 6, 1841: "Seven hogs have been butchered today." In order to keep large quantities of freshly butchered meat, the Whitmans would have had to dry it, smoke it, or salt it down. As will be mentioned later, the Oregon Mission received large shipments of salt from their associates in the Hawaiian Islands.

More important than hogs for both the Whitmans and the Spaldings were sheep. Evidence is lacking as to whether the missionaries were able to induce the natives to raise these animals. The Indians were quick to see the value of cattle as they could be turned loose to graze on the fenceless prairies, but hogs and sheep had to be confined and watched. Moreover, sheep were often victims of marauding animals such as wolves and coyotes. This was a problem that the natives were not as well able to meet as the missionaries, who controlled the predatory animals by resorting to the use of poison.

While still at Fort Vancouver, Whitman, Spalding, and Gray had jointly signed a letter dated September 19, 1836, which was addressed to the Rev. Hiram Bingham, head of the Hawaiian Mission of the American Board, in which they requested that he send some sheep to them. No doubt Dr. McLoughlin had encouraged them to do this as he was forbidden by the policy of his Company to sell any from the large flock at the fort. "Any number from 50 to 200 would be acceptable," the men wrote. Bingham was in full sympathy with the project, but had to wait until he could secure transportation for the animals on a ship bound for Fort Vancouver. An opportunity came with the unexpected arrival in Honolulu, during the latter part of December 1836, of a ship bearing a party of twelve Methodist missionaries, including three men, five women, and four children, on their way to the Willamette Valley. The party had sailed from Boston the latter part of the previous July. The voyage around Cape Horn had taken five months. The Methodists had

to wait in Honolulu for nearly four months before they secured passage on a vessel, the *Diana*, which was bound for the Columbia River. The missionaries consented to look after eight head of sheep which Bingham was ready to send to Oregon.

The *Diana*, with the first Methodist reenforcement for its Oregon Mission, dropped anchor at Fort Vancouver on May 28, 1837. Dr. McLoughlin notified Whitman that eight sheep had been left with him “but one of them died.” McLoughlin replaced the dead sheep with a ram from his flock, but charged Whitman for it. He also reported that Bingham had sent seventy bags of salt and a contribution from the Hawaiian Christians of \$79.87½.¹¹ The salt was a most welcome gift as it was needed to preserve fish and meat.

The first missionaries of the American Board had arrived in the Hawaiian Islands (then called the Sandwich Islands) in the early months of 1820 and met with immediate and rather fantastic success. By 1837 they claimed about five thousand converts and by 1853 the native church became both self-supporting and self-administering.¹² The first “foreign missionary” project of the infant Hawaiian Church was to contribute to the Oregon Mission of the American Board. The gifts made in 1837, although relatively small, were significant. Other gifts followed.

Mrs. Elkanah Walker, a member of the 1838 reenforcement for the Oregon Mission, wrote in her diary on May 17, 1839: “Mr. Bingham’s church has made our mission a present of about 400 dollars.” At other times the Hawaiian Christians sent kegs of sugar or molasses to Oregon. In May 1839 the Hawaiian Mission sent a small printing press to Oregon, of which mention will be made later. Many of the Hawaiians who entered the employ of the Hudson’s Bay Company or of the Oregon Mission were Christians.

In August 1837, Dr. McLoughlin turned the eight sheep over to the interpreter stationed at Fort Walla Walla, who happened to be at Fort Vancouver, with instructions to deliver them to Whitman. Writing to Levi Chamberlain, the business agent of the Hawaiian Mission, on October 7, Whitman related a sad story: “From his negligence & injuring their legs with cords (they were brought in canoes), three died after reaching Walla Walla. Only one ewe is living.” That lone ewe marked the beginning of the sheep and wool industry which once thrived in what is now often called the Inland Empire of the Pacific Northwest.¹³

Whitman, eager to get more sheep, wrote to Chamberlain a second time on October 16 and asked him to send “fifteen or twenty sheep, all ewes except one or two rams.” In this letter he also requested that two married Hawaiian men with their wives be sent. When Whitman began building at Waiilatpu, he had the assistance of two Hawaiians whom he had gotten through the Hudson’s Bay Company, but difficulties arose because they were single. Whitman explained: “The Indians are constantly urging them to take some of their women, & one asked liberty of me to do so, a few days since. But I replied he had a wife at home & for that reason must not take one here.” Whitman felt that if one or more couples could be sent at the same time as the sheep, they could care for the animals in transit. Another reason for wanting married couples was to have the women help Narcissa in her house work.

Acting on Whitman’s request, Chamberlain sent six sheep to the Oregon Mission in the spring of 1838 and a married couple, Joseph and Maria Maki Whitman acknowledged the arrival of five of the six sheep (one died en route) in a letter to Chamberlain dated October 30, 1838. The Oregon Mission paid £12 sterling for the fare of the Hawaiian couple. Joseph and Maria proved to be excellent workers and were a much appreciated addition to the Whitman household.

The sheep thrived in Oregon. Writing to his former mentor, Dr. Ira Bryant of Rushville, on May 24, 1841, Whitman reported: “The sheep belonging to the Mission breed twice a year & in some instances I think they have had lambs three times in twelve months.” With such a rate of reproduction, the flocks increased at a surprising rate. Spalding reported having forty-one sheep in July 1841 and 150 in April 1846.¹⁴ In August 1840 Spalding noted in his diary the completion of the building of a loom.¹⁵ The inventory of the Lapwai station, compiled after the Whitman massacre, listed not only the loom but also two spinning wheels. Whitman reported having eighty sheep in April 1845 [Letter 170] and the Waiilatpu inventory listed ninety-two sheep and two spinning wheels. Since both Whitman and Spalding may have given or sold some sheep to the Indians, no accurate statistics regarding the increase of their flocks are available.

Whitman saw the possibilities of a booming sheep industry in the upper Columbia River country. Writing to A. B. Smith, after the latter had left the Oregon Mission and gone to Hawaii, on May 31, 1844,

Whitman described Oregon as: "A country where a man can winter a thousand sheep easier than he could feed half the number from a well stored barn in your own native Vermont." Whitman looked into the future and dreamed of the day when: "The wool grown here & manufactured in the country would be exchanged for domestick articles, the same as a trade with the Islands... no foreign fabricks can come in competition."¹⁶ Today large woolen mills stand at Pendleton, Oregon, in fulfillment of Whitman's dreams.

MEETING THE THREAT OF MARAUDING ANIMALS

The introduction of sheep into the interior of Old Oregon back in the 1830s and 1840s had its difficulties and precipitated some serious complications, as will be noted. One of the members of the 1838 reinforcement to the Oregon Mission, the Rev. A. B. Smith, writing from Kamiah on September 3, 1840, critically commented: "He [i.e., Spalding] & Doct. W. were in such haste to introduce all the arts of civilization among the Indians at the very onset, they encumbered themselves with sheep; but the [Indian] camp was so full of dogs that the poor harmless sheep could have no peace but were in danger of being destroyed at once." Spalding tried to meet this threat by offering a reward for every dog killed but, according to Smith, this proved highly unpopular with the natives who liked their dogs.¹⁷

Another and a more serious threat to the sheep came from the marauding wolves and coyotes. Spalding made several references in his diary to wolves attacking and sometimes killing young cattle and even horses. The helpless sheep were easy victims. On October 2, 1839, Spalding wrote to Greene requesting: "A quantity of strychnia or Nux Vomica sufficient to kill 1,000 wolves."¹⁸ We have no evidence to indicate how much of this poison, if any was sent by Greene. Whitman had to face the same problem as Spalding in protecting his sheep from marauding animals. Although no record has been found in any of Whitman's letters to Greene asking for poison, he may have received such from Spalding or from the Hudson's Bay Company. As will be noted later, the fact that Whitman did use poison to kill wolves became the basis for certain serious charges made at the time of the massacre.

OTHER INNOVATIONS

In addition to the introduction of cattle, hogs, and sheep, the Whitmans and the Spaldings had poultry. Writing to his friend and former mentor, Dr. Ira Bryant, on May 24, 1841, Whitman listed some of the improvements made at Waiilatpu which included “some out houses as Corn Cribs, & Granary, Harness House, Smoke & hen houses, double back houses.”¹⁹ The reference to hen houses indicates the presence of poultry, and Narcissa once wrote of having a few turkeys. Spalding informed Greene in September 1838 of having forty hens. Neither of the inventories of property lost or destroyed at Waiilatpu or at Lapwai following the massacre, however, mentioned poultry.²⁰ We do not know to what extent, if any, the natives were encouraged to raise chickens but with the Indians’ fondness of dogs, we doubt that this experiment proved successful.²¹

WHITMAN, THE MISSIONARY TEACHER

The task of establishing a home in the primeval wilderness was so tremendous that we marvel how Whitman found time to learn the language and to conduct a school for the natives or to give any instruction in the basic truths of the Christian religion. As a doctor he had a major responsibility to minister to the physical ailments of his associates and, as far as possible, those of the natives. He was not expected to perform the duties of an ordained minister, yet as a conscientious Christian, he felt an obligation to do all that he could to educate and to evangelize the natives. In this he had the wholehearted cooperation of Narcissa.

By the fall of 1837, the Whitmans felt that they had sufficient mastery of the language to begin a school. Writing on April 11, 1838, Narcissa said: “We have had a school for them about four months past, & much of the time our kitchen has been crowded & all seem very much attached.” By that time Spalding had made a beginning in reducing the Nez Perce language to writing and had submitted a manuscript primer of seventy-two pages to the Whitmans for their approval. Narcissa copied this primer before it was sent to the Hawaiian Mission to be printed. Whitman knew that a printing press was there because his friend, Elisha Loomis of Rushville, had taken one out to the Islands in 1820. The primer was never published in full, only a few proof sheets were

run off, as it was discovered that Spalding's transcription of the language was incorrect.

In Whitman's letter of March 12, 1838, to Greene, we find the following account of his method of religious instruction: "We have two meetings for Indians on the Sabbath & in the evening what we call a sabbath school for the children & youth. The attention on religious instruction is good & solemn. Worship is strictly maintained in the principal lodges morning & evening. Lately I have been explaining the ten Commandments & our saviour's first & great commandment to which they listen with great attention & from their inquiries I think they understand them."²²

A reference to Cayuse Halket is found in this letter: "The young Cayuse who had been about seven years at the Mission School at Red River died about a year since just as he was about to return to his people." As previously stated, Cayuse Halket was buried at Red River on February 1, 1837. "We had looked for his return with much interest," wrote Whitman, "as he had been home on a visit & behaved very well."²³ But Providence has removed him from either good or harm in his life any further than his people remember his good advice." If Cayuse Halket had been active or effective in any endeavor to introduce Christianity among his people, as some have suggested,²⁴ surely Whitman would have mentioned it. Whitman dismissed the youth's influence simply by saying that he had "behaved very well," and had given some good advice.

The news of Cayuse Halket's death was carried to Oregon by the Hudson's Bay Company's westbound express of 1837. Dr. McLoughlin was disturbed, as is shown in a letter he wrote to Spalding on November 27, 1837: "In my opinion, Indians ought never to be taken from their lands to a Civilized Country, as they will see so many things new to them, that they may form very mistaken opinions, and if any thing happens to displease them, they may give those who take them there an immensity of trouble. You see the return we get for sending the young Cayuse Chief to be educated at Red River, now that he is dead, his Relations, at least some of them, give it out that we killed him."²⁵

Narcissa in her letter of April 11, 1838, also commented on their endeavors to teach Christianity. She wrote: "For several Sabbaths past, our worship with them has been very interesting. All seem to manifest a deep interest in the instruction given them. Some feel almost to blame

us for telling them about eternal realities. One said that it was good when they knew nothing but to hunt, eat, drink, and sleep; now it is bad." Here is the age-old question: Is it better to live in ignorance of the divine law and be content, or to have an enlightened conscience and be discontented?

Narcissa wrote especially about the children. "There are many very interesting children," she commented, "both among the Nez Perces and Cayuses. We have generally given names to those that have attended school. One boy about ten years old, we have given the name of Edward, - a bright, active boy, and loves his book." We shall hear more about this Edward, who evidently had been named after one of Narcissa's brothers. He was a son of Chief Tiloukaikt and was also known as Shu-ma-hici. His portrait, painted by John Mix Stanley in October 1847, is reproduced as an illustration in volume two of this work.

In this letter of Narcissa's of April 11, we find another reference to Umtippe. "The old chief, Umtippe, who threatened my husband's life last spring, is especially changed," she wrote, "particularly in his deportment to us, and about the house." Narcissa stressed the fact that "becoming familiar with the language" had made instruction much more effective. Interpreters were never satisfactory, especially when dealing with theological terms. Later on, in a letter dated May 10, 1838, Narcissa wrote: "Under date of April 11th, I spoke of old Umtippe's appearance. He seems to be declining fast. Last Saturday he came here, he said, on purpose to spend the Sabbath. Said he had had recently three fainting turns, and felt that he could not live a great while. He had been very wicked, and did not know where his soul would go when he died - was lost about it." The Rev. Jason Lee happened to be at Waiilatpu that week-end and was invited to speak at the Indians' worship service. Of course an interpreter was needed and perhaps Whitman was able to serve in that capacity. Lee's words made a deep impression on Umtippe. "Never can a person manifest a greater change," wrote Narcissa. "That selfish, wicked, cunning and troublesome old chief, now so still and quiet, so attentive to the truth, and grateful for favors now given! Surely nought but the spirit of God has done this."

One of the problems that the missionaries experienced when trying to convert the Indians was that of getting them to understand Calvinistic doctrines. To the missionaries, becoming a Christian meant not

only that one should show penitence for sins committed but also have an understanding of what it meant to accept Jesus Christ and his forgiveness. This was the faith in which the missionaries had been reared and it was natural for them to make these requirements of their would-be converts. Turning again to Narcissa's letter of April 11, 1838, we read: "We are not yet satisfied how much he [i.e., Chief Umtippe] understands of the atonement, or whether he has any correct views of salvation through Jesus Christ. But this we do know, that God is able by his spirit to take what little truth we are able to give, and impress it upon the hearts and consciences of the most benighted minds."

The doctrine of the atonement of Christ, often puzzling to informed Christians, was doubly so to the Cayuses who were hearing about it for the first time from the Whitmans. "To hold up before them the atonement," wrote Narcissa to the American Board missionaries in Honolulu, "and [say] that their sins bore a part in crucifying the Lord of glory; they say, 'It is another saying; we never heard it before; we do not understand it.'" ²⁶ Here is one reason why the Roman Catholic missionaries were able to baptize Oregon Indians by the hundreds, while the Protestants had so few whom they felt were qualified for church membership; their standards were too difficult.

Although Narcissa, in her letter of May 10, 1838, reported that old Chief Umtippe was in failing health and might die at any time, he lived for more than two years after she wrote. In a letter to Greene dated March 28, 1841, Whitman stated: "The old chief Cut Lip died last winter, which has removed a very troublesome cause." In all probability Cut Up, also referred to in some contemporary writings as Split Lip, was none other than Umtippe.²⁷ Evidently Tiloukaikt took over the chieftainship of the band living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu before Umtippe died. Whitman, in his letter to Greene of November 11, 1841, mentions a brother of Umtippe, Waptash-tak-mahl, five times. This subchief of the Waiilatpu band of Indians, was also called Feathercap or Tamsucky.²⁸

To the missionaries, the Indians acted like children in many respects. They were dutiful and obedient at times, and again petulant and threatening. In his letter to Greene of March 12, 1838, Whitman wrote that the Indians "were much more friendly & accommodating than last year, but still I need not tell you we have many perverse dispositions to

encounter.” The Cayuse men considered manual work to be beneath their dignity and were even fearful that the missionaries would make their children work if sent to school. “Gratitude,” wrote Narcissa, “has no place in their hearts” [Letter 46]. On the other hand, she also told of their respect for the white man’s property: “I have let my clothes remain out over night, feeling just as sale in doing it as I used to in Prattsburg” [Letter 40]. Later, however, the extent of the family wash became a controversial issue as the Indians looked with envious eyes upon what they considered an excessive amount of clothing owned by the Whitman household.

ELIZA SPALDING BORN

Whitman’s letter to Greene of March 12, 1838, and Narcissa’s letter to her parents written two days later, tell of their visit during the previous November to the Spaldings at Lapwai when their baby girl was born. This was the first time that Narcissa and Eliza had seen each other after they had parted at Fort Walla Walla on November 22, 1836. Realizing that the Whitmans would be taking their eight-month-old daughter with them, Spalding sent three of his Indians with a “leather lodge” [i.e., a buffalo skin tepee], to Waiilatpu for their use. With that convenience, wrote Whitman, “we could have a fire at night & be secure from the weather although doomed to suffer some from smoke.”

After boarding up the windows, locking the doors, and giving a trusted Hawaiian precise directions for the care of the animals, including the sheep, the Whitmans left for Lapwai on Tuesday noon, November 7, 1837. Whitman had a second Hawaiian man go with them. They traveled only ten miles the first afternoon which would have taken them a little beyond present day Walla Walla. The Whitmans felt “obliged to make all possible speed,” as Narcissa explained, because of a late start. On Wednesday, the 8th, they rode nearly thirty miles and camped on the Touchet River, a tributary of the Walla Walla River, in the vicinity of what is now Dayton, Washington. They were following an old Indian trail which connected the Walla Walla Valley with the Clearwater. Lewis and Clark had gone that way in the spring of 1806 on their return trip to the States from their winter’s camp south of what is now Astoria, Oregon.

Riding side-saddle while holding a lively child was no easy task for Narcissa and, no doubt, Marcus shared the responsibility part of the

way. Narcissa wrote that they got very tired before they stopped to camp on Wednesday. It started raining that night and continued until noon the next day, so they moved only six miles on Thursday. When they awoke on Friday morning, they found two inches of snow on the ground. Whitman wrote: "We made a long day's ride & encamped on waters emptying into Snake River." This would have been the Tucannon River or its tributary, Pataha Creek. On Friday they encountered both snow and rain until two o'clock in the afternoon. On Saturday morning, after going over a high divide, the Whitmans arrived at Chief Timothy's lodge at Alpowa²⁹ Creek, where they found a note from Spalding urging them to press on with all possible speed. Timothy was one of Spalding's first converts and was without doubt the most faithful and sincere of native Christians.

Narcissa gives the following account of their experiences on Saturday, the 11th:

We rode all day in the wind and rain and came to the Snake river about the middle of the afternoon and thought to stop, but it cleared away, and after making a fire and warming a little, we started again and came to the crossing place, and when the sun went down, it found me sitting by the root of a large tree on stones with my babe in my arms, watching by moonlight the movements in crossing our baggage and horses. This was the only piece of woodin sight and with a few bunches of wild sage, a fire was made against it to warm me while waiting to cross. Soon I was seated in a canoe with my babe and landed safely across [Letter 44].

The Whitmans were then at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, the site of present-day Lewiston, Idaho, and about twelve miles from Lapwai. Since the next day was Sunday and there was "a good moon," as Narcissa described it, they felt an urgency to keep traveling. After some deliberation, Narcissa claimed that she was "too much fatigued," so they camped for the night. On Sunday morning, the 12th, the Whitmans rode on to Lapwai, but left the Hawaiian and the three Indian helpers with the baggage and the other animals to follow on Monday morning. "It was with no common emotion," wrote Whitman, "that we met after a years absence & so far as Mrs. Spalding was concerned, the year was spent without seeing any civilized friends after Brother Gray left the December previous. We found Brother Spalding situated under

better circumstances than we could expect from his single-handed situation" [Letter 43].

The Spalding baby, a girl, arrived on Wednesday morning, November 15. She was the first white child to have been born in what is now the State of Idaho and the first born of white American parents in Old Oregon who lived to maturity.³⁰ She was named Eliza after her mother. On Sunday, November 26, Spalding baptized his daughter and Alice Clarissa, and administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Narcissa referred to this as "a blessing which we have not enjoyed since we sat at the table with our beloved friends in Angelica on the eve of our marriage." This was the first time that the missionaries had been able to use the silver communion set received from the East Liberty Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, while on their westward journey.³¹

Whitman reported to Greene: "We prolonged our visit for Mrs. Spalding's recovery, as in a former sickness she had a protracted and tedious recovery." Eliza had some difficulty in nursing her baby for lack of milk. "Little Alice Clarissa," wrote Narcissa, "has been very much favored; she has had enough to spare most of the time." The weather continued cold with snow on the ground. Narcissa felt appalled as she contemplated the long journey by horseback to Waiilatpu. It was so difficult under such conditions to care for a child still in the diaper stage. The Whitmans, therefore, decided to return by canoe, going down the Clearwater to the Snake, and thence down the Snake and the Columbia Rivers to Fort Walla Walla. A suitable dug-out canoe was made available, and Spalding induced some of his Indians to man the little boat. Whitman was impressed with the friendliness of the Nez Percés at Lapwai, whom he found much more cooperative than the Cayuses at Waiilatpu.

THE RETURN TRIP BY CANOE

After turning their horses and some of their baggage over to the faithful Hawaiian and the three Indians who were to take the overland route back to Waiilatpu, the Whitmans with their little girl embarked in their log canoe on Saturday, December 2, for their return trip. They camped that night at the confluence of the Clearwater and the Snake Rivers. One wonders why they left the Spaldings on Saturday rather than waiting over another Sunday until Monday. The presence of a

large encampment of Nez Perces at the mouth of the Clearwater might have been the reason. Whitman informed Greene that the Indians there were “very attentive to religious instruction as all the Indians do in this section.”

The return trip took four and a half days, not counting the Sunday spent with the Indians. The river was low and navigation was dangerous in some places. Once they had to portage. “We had a tedious journey home,” wrote Narcissa, “almost every night were obliged to clear away the snow to find a place to camp upon.” They arrived at Fort Walla Walla on Thursday, December 7th, and after spending the night there, left for Waiilatpu the next morning. Narcissa wrote that Alice Clarissa “rode with her father all the way from Walla Walla (twenty-five miles) and we only stopped once to nurse and change her, which she did not relish quite so well as to be moving” [Letter 44]. No wonder the child objected; having a diaper changed out-of-doors in a snow storm was not a pleasant experience. “It was some time after dark before we reached home,” wrote Narcissa, “and [we] were not a little rejoiced to see it again.” To their relief, they found everything safe and in good condition.

The Whitmans had been gone from November 7 to December 8; it had taken the doctor a month to make one professional call. During the eleven-year history of the Oregon Mission, sixteen children were born to five of the six missionary wives.³² With but few exceptions, Dr. Whitman was the attending physician. An inordinate amount of time was spent in making long horseback rides and in waiting for the babies to arrive. Mrs. Elkanah Walker gave birth to four children and Mrs. Cushing Eells to two while the two families lived at Tshimakain near present-day Spokane, Washington, about 140 miles from Waiilatpu. Whitman was present at four of these deliveries. On a fifth occasion he arrived a few days late; Mrs. Walker met him at the door with her baby in her arms.³³ The total distance covered on these five journeys was more than 1,400 miles, nearly one-half the distance across the United States, and the elapsed time in travel and in waiting amounted to about one hundred days.

THE FIRST ADOBE HOUSE

When Whitman began building at Wailatpu on October 14, 1836, he ambitiously planned a story-and-a-half building, 30 x 86 feet, similar in style to the salt-box house common in New England. As has been stated, he found it necessary to abandon work on what had been started and to concentrate on the erection of a lean-to on the west side of the house, which measured 12 x 36 feet. Just when Whitman was able to complete the construction of the main part of his house is not known, as there is a hiatus in the extant Whitman correspondence to the Board from May 5, 1837, to March 12, 1838. In his March 12 letter, Whitman mentioned some window sash which Spalding had made for him and which he evidently took back to Wailatpu on his return trip from Lapwai in December 1837. Possibly the Whitmans moved into their enlarged quarters sometime during the early part of 1838.

Some incidental descriptions of the Whitman home are found in the writings of members of the 1838 reenforcement who arrived at Wailatpu on August 29, 1838. Mrs. Cushing Eells commented: "Dr. W's house... is built of adobe... I can not describe its appearance as I can not compare it with anything I ever saw. There are doors and windows, but they are of the roughest kind; the boards being sawed by hand and put together by no carpenter, but by one who knew nothing about such work, as is evident from its appearance... The furniture is very primitive.³⁴ The bedsteads are boards nailed to the side of the house, sink fashion, then some blankets and husks made the bed; but it is good compared with traveling accommodations."³⁵ Mrs. Elkanah Walker mentions the house having "three large rooms, two bedrooms," but she does not indicate whether this included the three rooms in the lean-to. We have no accurate information regarding the floor plan of the main house.

In the latter part of December 1837, a warm wind (known in that region as a chinook) melted the snow on the Blue Mountains so rapidly and in such quantities that the Walla Walla River overflowed its banks. Narcissa tells what happened:

On the eve of the 28th, the waters entered our cellar; the walls settled; the props gave way one after another; & for the whole night we were in the utmost anxiety, fearing the consequences

to our whole house. Soon after dark our men & Indians went to work dipping out the water & throwing earth against the walls & continued all night long. In great mercy to us our house was preserved to us standing, although the wall is materially injured... We were obliged for several days & nights in succession to keep the water bailed out.³⁶

On May 8, 1838, Whitman reported another flooding: "A second rise in March has so far damaged my house that I shall be obliged to build again this summer as the present one will not answer to finish. I intend to build of dobies again with projecting roof & without a cellar³⁷ on a place where I think there is no danger." During the winter of 1837–38, Whitman sent the Hawaiians to the foothills of the Blue Mountains to saw some pine boards. With the prospect of building a new house on higher ground, the need for lumber was imperative.

THE WHITMAN HOUSEHOLD

A new house was needed also for an expanding family. Mention has been made of Maria Pambrun and the Indian girl, Sarah Hull, who were received into the Whitman home in the spring of 1837. Just how long Maria remained is not known. Sarah lived with the Whitmans until her death on August 11, 1838. Just where she stayed when the Whitmans made their trip to Lapwai in the late fall of 1837 is not known. Sarah quickly learned enough English to be of real assistance to Narcissa and perhaps she was able to help both of the Whitmans learn the Nez Perce language.

Following the Whitmans' return from Lapwai, Mungo Mevway, a lad twelve or thirteen years old, the son of an Hawaiian father and a native woman, was also received into the Whitman home. He had been sent by Dr. McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver [Letters 54 & 42c]. Mungo remained with the Whitmans until October 1841, when he went to live with the Walkers at Tshimakain. There, a year or so later, he married a Spokane girl. His name frequently appears in the writings of the missionaries.

Each of the three men whom the Whitmans met at the 1836 Rendezvous—Tom McKay, Joe Meek, and Jim Bridger—sent a half-breed daughter to live in the Whitman home and be educated. The first to be received was the teen-ager, Margaret McKay, who arrived at Waiilatpu

during the winter of 1837–38. Narcissa wrote: “She is a good girl, for one who has had so few advantages, and renders me much assistance in my domestic labors.” As will be told later, the Meek and Bridger girls came in 1840 and 1841.

Whitman had two single Hawaiians working for him from the fall of 1836 to the spring of 1838. Sometime in the spring of 1838, Charles Compo, the French Canadian mountain man, who had served as interpreter and guide for Samuel Parker, moved with his Nez Perce wife and infant son from Fort Walla Walla to Waiilatpu and entered Whitman’s employ. Both of the Whitmans made favorable mention of him in their 1838 letters.

Writing to her sister, Mary Ann, on September 25, Narcissa said: “Charles Compo... came here and put himself under our protection, and went to cultivating land here, and assisting my husband in his cares. He is an excellent man, and we feel as if the Lord had sent him here. Husband left him in charge when he went to Mr. S’s, having got all the crops in...” And in her letter to Mrs. Parker: “We have employed him to take charge of the farm, etc., and find him very faithful and trusty. His superior knowledge of the language makes him truly a helper in our work. He has been a regular attendant upon our family social and Sabbath worship” [Letter 52]. Compo, born in Canada, had been reared as a Roman Catholic. He evidently had some connection with either the Hudson’s Bay Company or some American fur company before entering Parker’s employ in 1835. There is no evidence to indicate where Compo and his family lived at Waiilatpu, perhaps in his own lodge.

From the very beginning of Waiilatpu, the Whitman mission virtually became a convalescent home or hospital. The Black, John Hinds, had accompanied the Whitman–Spalding party from the 1836 Rendezvous to Fort Walla Walla in order to get medical help from Dr. Whitman. He followed Whitman to Waiilatpu, where he died during the last week of November 1836. In Whitman’s letter of March 12, 1838, he mentioned a sick half-breed boy whom Dr. McLoughlin had sent from Fort Vancouver for “medical aid.”

On June 28, 1838, Joseph and Maria Maki arrived at Waiilatpu, both being members of the mission church in Honolulu. With them was a single Hawaiian, referred to as Jack, who worked for either the Whitmans or the Spaldings for several years. The Makies were the only

Hawaiian couple to be sent to the Oregon Mission; the others were single men. The Whitmans were delighted to have a married couple, who were Christians, in their home. "You cannot imagine," wrote Narcissa, "how it strengthened our hearts to hear them pray, notwithstanding we could not understand a single word" [Letter 54].

Joseph and Maria proved to be most dependable. Thus with their own baby; the four Indian or half-breed children; and four, or possibly five, Hawaiians; the Whitman household numbered eleven or twelve, not including the Compo family. Moreover, the Whitmans were confident that Gray would be returning that fall with a reenforcement. There was indeed a need for a larger house. Although Whitman, in his letter to Greene of May 8, 1838, mentioned his intention to rebuild on higher ground, little was actually done in this regard during the summer of 1838 with the possible exception of having some boards cut.

WILLIAM CAMERON MCKAY

During the first part of March 1838, Tom McKay, who was on his way to Fort Hall to get some furs from the Hudson's Bay Company, stopped at Waiilatpu to see his daughter, Margaret, and his friends, the Whitmans. With him were his three sons, William, John, and Alexander. McKay told the Whitmans of two other visitors who would be following him to Fort Walla Walla. The first was Dr. John McLoughlin who would be traveling with the Company's eastbound express to Montreal. From thence he expected to visit Boston and New York before sailing for England. Dr. McLoughlin was expected to arrive at Walla Walla the latter part of March. McKay, who wanted his son, William Cameron, 1824–1892, to be a physician, had made arrangements for him to accompany Dr. McLoughlin to Scotland, where relatives had promised to assist the lad financially in getting an education.

The second expected visitor would be the Rev. Jason Lee who, according to McKay, would probably arrive at Walla Walla the first part of April. Lee was going East by the overland route in order to get reenforcements for his mission. McKay had already made arrangements for Lee to take the two younger sons to the States and place them in Lee's Alma Mater, Wilbraham Academy, in Massachusetts.³⁸

Tom McKay and his children were indirectly related to Dr. McLoughlin as the doctor had married Alexander McKay's widow,

Margaret, the mother of Tom. Margaret was a half-breed. Tom married a native woman; therefore his children had five-eighths Indian blood. Tom's son, William, had been one of those who witnessed the arrival of the Whitmans and Spaldings at Fort Vancouver on September 12, 1836, and no doubt was thrilled to see his step-grandfather welcome the white women to the fort. He and his brothers and sister had been in the school when Narcissa taught the children to sing some of her favorite religious songs.

On February 21, 1885, nearly fifty years later, Dr. W. C. McKay recalled: "When Dr. Whitman learned what the plans were for my future, he protested and earnestly urged my father to send me to the United States and make 'an American' of me. He said this country would certainly belong to the United States in a few years, and I would succeed better here if I was educated in the States, and became an American in thought and feeling." When McKay explained that he was financially unable to pay the costs of keeping three boys in eastern schools, Whitman offered to give "a draft on the missionary board which he represented and taking from my father the equivalent in property needed at the mission."³⁹

Tom McKay had to make a critical decision there at Waiilatpu. Should his son go with Dr. McLoughlin to Scotland and become a Britisher in training and outlook, or go with Jason Lee to the States and become an American? Although the British Government did not officially assert any claim to the Oregon country to the south and east of the Columbia River after signing the joint Occupation Treaty with the United States in 1818; nevertheless the Hudson's Bay Company continued to look with longing eyes for many years on all of Old Oregon. Two of the Company's forts on the Columbia—Walla Walla and Colville—were on the east bank of the river and Fort Boise and Fort Hall were far in the interior of Old Oregon. By 1838 the Company, beginning to face realities, felt it wise to concentrate its efforts on retaining the area to the north and west of the Columbia River.

McKay, as a step-son of Dr. McLoughlin, would have been aware of the apprehension felt by his Company over the growing American influence in Oregon. As has been stated, it was he who, when he first saw Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding at the 1836 Rendezvous, said: "There is something that Doct. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the

country so easy.” McKay finally accepted Whitman’s reasoning and decided to send his son William to the academy connected with the Medical School at Fairfield, New York, where Whitman had studied. William was to be an American!

McKay took his three sons with him to Fort Hall. Jason Lee, who followed McKay, arrived at Fort Hall on June 12 and took the three boys with him to the States. After spending several years in the academy at Fairfield, William transferred to Geneva College where he was a student in 1841–42. He then followed one of his teachers to a new medical school at Willoughby, Ohio, where he apparently remained until he returned to Oregon in the latter part of 1843.

Tom McKay moved to the Willamette Valley in 1839 and threw his lot in with the Americans.⁴⁰ In this incident, in which we find Whitman urging Tom McKay to send his son to a school in the States to be educated, we see the first indication of Whitman’s convictions regarding the future of Old Oregon. He was convinced that the lower Columbia River Valley was to be a part of the United States!

DR. McLOUGHLIN VISITS WALLA WALLA

Dr. McLoughlin arrived at Fort Walla Walla on March 28, 1838, en route to London. Since he had been delayed in his travels, he sent advance word to the Whitmans, saying that he would be unable to go out to Waiilatpu and requesting that they meet him at the fort. A heavy rain on the morning of the 28th prevented Narcissa and her little girl from going, but Marcus made the trip and met with Dr. McLoughlin that evening.

Letters between Old Oregon and the States were carried by one of three routes: (1) by a voyage of nine months or more around South America via Honolulu; (2) by some trusted traveler who planned to cross to the States over the Oregon Trail, or (3) by the Hudson’s Bay Company’s express across Canada. The Company was cooperative in its willingness to carry mail, and both the Whitmans and the Spaldings took advantage of the opportunity to send letters with Dr. McLoughlin.⁴¹

Dr. McLoughlin had previously informed Whitman and Spalding of his hope to call at the headquarters of the American Board in Boston; therefore, Spalding wrote a letter of introduction to Secretary Greene on March 12, which Whitman also signed. They mentioned with deep appreciation the “numerous favors” extended to them by Dr. McLou-

ghun and others in the Hudson's Bay Company. On the same day, Whitman wrote to Greene: "We cannot speak too highly of his kindness to us since we have been in this country." Dr. McLoughlin replied on March 29, modestly stating: "You put too high a value on the little I have done."⁴²

This exchange of letters indicates the good feeling which existed between the Company and the Whitmans and the Spaldings. Beginning in 1838, the Company's officials at Fort Vancouver began to doubt the designs of the Methodist missionaries in the Willamette Valley. They suspected them of wishing to engage in trade and to promote American colonization. Thus there was a growing coolness towards the Methodist missionaries not shown to those under the American Board.

JASON LEE VISITS THE WHITMANS AND THE SPALDINGS

On Friday, April 13, 1838, the Rev. Jason Lee arrived at Fort Walla Walla on his way to the States to get reinforcements for the Methodist Mission in the Willamette Valley. The next day he rode out to Waiilatpu, where he met the Whitmans for the first time. He described their meeting in his diary: "Dr. Whitman met us and conducted us to the house. Mrs. Whitman met us at the door, and I soon found myself seated and engaged in earnest and familiar conversation as if we were old acquaintances."⁴³ On the following day, Sunday, the 15th, Lee preached to the Indians with Whitman interpreting. Chief Umtippe attended this service.

Lee was favorably impressed with the progress the Cayuse Indians had made in cultivating the land. On the 16th he noted in his diary: "Visited the In[dian]'s farms and was surprised that they had done so much in the absence of almost every tool necessary to do with. Some had two or three acres, wheat, peas, corn & potatoes." Of Lee's visit, Narcissa wrote: "Our visit with him has been a refreshing one. He is the first Christian brother that has visited us since Mr. Gray left last March, 1837."⁴⁴

Lee left for Lapwai on Thursday, April 19, and spent the week-end with the Spaldings, whom he also met for the first time. More will be told of this visit in a subsequent chapter. Lee started back to Waiilatpu with Spalding on Monday morning, the 23rd, and for some reason the two felt the necessity of riding 140 miles to Fort Walla Walla in two days.

In a letter to his nephew, the Rev. Daniel Lee, dated from the fort on April 25, Lee commented: "Both the Kioose and the Nez Perces are doing a great deal in cultivation, the former with wooden ploughs with a little bit of iron nailed upon them, and hoes, and the latter with hoes alone. Some of the Nez Perces came to the Doctor's for potatoes to plant, a distance of 300 mil. [i.e., for the round trip]. I was astonished to see the industry of these Indians. The fact is they are starving, and they will be forced to work their land."⁴⁵

Regarding his visit to Lapwai, Lee wrote: "They [i.e., the Nez Perces] expressed a great joy at seeing me, and several made very sensible speeches, and all seemed anxious to be taught. But still he [Spalding] has his troubles with them. The truth is they are *Indians*; though they are certainly superior to those upon the Willamette, and though his things are much exposed as they can be, they steal nothing from him."

Lee felt that Whitman and Spalding had been able to accomplish more in civilizing and evangelizing the Indians by having two stations than could have been possible if they had stayed together. Yet, he doubted the wisdom of the separation. "It was rather a rash measure," he wrote, "to put themselves so entirely into the hands of the Indians where there was no absolute necessity for it." Evidently Lee was not told the real reason for the separation.

"LET THEM FEEL THE LASH"

In his letter of April 25, 1838, to his nephew, Lee made the surprising statement: "Both Mr. W. & Mr. S. use highhanded measures with their people, and when they deserve it, let them feel the *lash*."⁴⁶ Lee was mistaken in believing that Whitman ever used or ordered the use of the whip, but was correct in stating that Spalding did. Whitman was a pacifist and consistently refrained from using force to discipline the natives. Not one reference to Whitman using the whip himself or ordering the chiefs to use it on the natives has been found, even in the statements of his critics.

Spalding's diary contains at least two references to Indians being whipped, evidently on his orders. On January 9, 1839, he wrote: "Williams wife left him last night." Williams was a mountain man who had been married by Spalding to a Nez Perce woman. She was so mistreated by her husband that she left him, but it was not Williams, but the

woman who was punished. Spalding wrote: "Williams wife is whiped, 70 lashes. Indians come nigh whipping him."⁴⁷ The second diary entry is for August 19, 1841: "Cause three children to be whiped for stealing corn." Since Lee visited Lapwai in 1838, before the above entries were made, it seems evident that Spalding had been ordering offenders to be punished by the lash on earlier occasions.

Only one reference has been found of Spalding himself using the whip on an Indian and then he was forced to do so by other Nez Percés.⁴⁸ The very fact, however, that he consented to such humiliating punishment as that inflicted on the wife of Williams seems reprehensible. We should, however, place such incidents in the context of that generation.

In a country where there were no prisons or law-enforcing agencies, the white man adopted the lash as a quick and effective way to punish wrongdoers and to inculcate respect for the rights of others. Long before the missionaries settled among the Indians of Old Oregon, the Hudson's Bay Company had authorized the use of the lash on Indian offenders. In a letter to Greene dated May 5, 1837, Whitman wrote: "A system of punishment for crimes established by the traders has done much good."

Although Whitman did not specify that the Hudson's Bay Company approved the use of the lash, we do find evidence of this in a letter Dr. McLoughlin wrote to Spalding on November 28, 1837. Dr. McLoughlin was unhappy over the attitude of Ellis and Garry who, after their return from the Red River Mission school, said they had been taught that it was wrong to whip wrongdoers. McLoughlin wrote: "You see the return that Ellice is making us for the expense we have been upon him and you know how Garry has acted. When he came [back] he found that the chiefs were in the habit of flogging, at our suggesting, those who stole, &c., and by which in a great measure they had put a stop to those evil practices, and made their followers live more correctly than before. In the same way as Ellice, who told the Chiefs we misled them, that Mr. Johns⁴⁹ had told him it was wrong to flog on any account... and they consequently gave over [i.e., up] flogging and last year the Cayuse Chief told me that he now saw they were wrong in giving up flogging, as the young men would not attend to anything."⁵⁰ We therefore see that the Hudson's Bay Company and the Indians themselves were using the lash before the missionaries arrived. This throws new light on Lee's hasty

statement that both Whitman and Spalding used “highhanded measures with their people.”

The lash was commonly used at the Roman Catholic missions in California during the mission period as a means of enforcing discipline. Flogging was a common punishment in the United States Navy until it was abolished by Act of Congress on September 28, 1850. As will be mentioned later, Indian Agent Elijah White in the late fall of 1842 induced the Nez Perces and the Cayuses to accept a code of laws. Four of the eleven articles specifically listed a penalty of from twenty-five to fifty lashes for each offense.⁵¹

MADAME DORION

Among the visitors who called on the Whitmans in the spring of 1838 was Madame Dorion, the heroine of Washington Irving’s *Astoria*. Of this visit Narcissa wrote: “Saturday [i.e., April 14] Mrs. Pambrun came with her three daughters, Maria, Ada, & Harriet, also two daughters & a son of an Iowa [Indian], the old woman spoken of in Washington Irving’s *Astoria* (Perhaps Father has not seen the book, it contains a more just representation of this country than any other written previous.)⁵² She is now the wife of a Frenchman now residing at the Fort. She was here with the rest & spent the Sabbath & left today. Mr. Lee arriving at Walla Walla on Friday came with them [Letter 46].

Pierre Dorion, with his wife and their two little boys, had been a member of a trapping party working along the Snake River in January 1814 when attacked by Indians. All of the men were killed. Madame Dorion managed to escape with her boys and two horses. She had a limited amount of provisions and a few buffalo robes and blankets. She fled into the Blue Mountains where alone, hundreds of miles from friends, she managed to keep herself and her children alive through the winter months. She killed the horses and smoked the meat. With their hides and the buffalo robes, she constructed a rude shelter. She had no guns, only knives. As soon as possible in the spring, she continued her journey towards the Columbia River and was found by some Walla Walla Indians who adopted her and the little boys into their tribe. This is the story to which Narcissa referred; it is told in more detail by Washington Irving.

Madame Dorion later married John Toupin, a French Canadian, who became the interpreter at Fort Walla Walla. In July 1841, Father A. M. A. Blanchet, one of the pioneer Roman Catholic missionaries to Old Oregon, blessed a relationship which had existed since 1824.

Narcissa's letters show that life at Waiilatpu was not dull; interesting guests were coming and going; Tom McKay and his four children, Madame Dorion and her three daughters, Jason Lee and the two Indian boys he was taking to the States, and Pierre Pambrun, his wife, and their children. These were but the forerunners of many more who, during the following years, were to visit the Whitman mission, some to spend months or even years there.

CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

- 1 *Kansas Historical Society Collections*, XIV:706; Hulbert, *O.P.*, VII: 10.
- 2 Drury, *Spalding*, p. 168.
- 3 HBC Arch., B/223/b/17.
- 4 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 329. On Oct. 13, 1936, in company with the late Dr. Arthur H. Limouze, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, I visited the site of Spalding's first home at Lapwai. We there found a shoot growing out of an old apple tree trunk, perhaps one that Spalding had planted, on which were some apples identified as the Gentian, a fall apple common in New York State a century ago.
- 5 Drury, *F.W.W.*, II:302, with reference to diary of Mrs. Elkanah Walker, Oct. 2, 1846, where she refers to receiving three apples from the Whitman orchard. She wrote: "They . . . are very nice."
- 6 Following the Whitman massacre of 1847, Spalding compiled an inventory of property lost or abandoned at Lapwai. This was published in Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 359 ff. A similar inventory was compiled for property lost or abandoned at Waiilatpu which appeared in Richardson, *The Whitman Mission*, pp. 149 ff.
- 7 Palmer, *Journal of Travels*, p. 57.
- 8 Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, p. 211.
- 9 Richardson, *The Whitman Mission*, p. 153.
- 10 Drury, *Spalding*, p. 178. Although Spalding, in the inventory he compiled for Lapwai, listed thirty-one hogs, he made no mention of hogs in the similar inventory compiled for Waiilatpu. This was probably an oversight.
- 11 HBC Arch., B/223/b/17, letters of Dr. McLoughlin to Whitman of June 23 and August 3, 1837, and letter of September 27 to Spalding. *The Hawaiian Spectator*, Vol. I (1838), p. 331, quotes from a letter of Dr. Whitman's for Oct. 5, 1837: "The donation of salt, by the King and his sister, gave us much satisfaction, as a token of respect for the servants of the Lord Jesus."
- 12 Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama*, pp. 57 ff. The Hawaiian Evangelical Association organized in 1853, took over the administration of the former activities of the American Board in the Islands.
- 13 For years Idaho ranked first among the states of the Union in the production of wool and mutton.
- 14 Drury, *Spalding*, pp. 269 & 315. W. D. Breckenridge, a member of the Wilkes Expedition, visited Lapwai in June 1841 and wrote in his journal for the 25th: "He [i.e., Spalding] showed me a Yewe that had 7 lambs in one year, viz: 2 in the early part of January, 3 in June, and 2 in Decr. Yewes breed with him twice every year. He showed me also 38 sheep the off spring of two Yewes in three years." *W.H.Q.*, XXII (Jan. 1931), p. 51.
- 15 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 320.
- 16 Whitman, in this letter, believed that the Pacific Northwest would become a great wool producing and manufacturing country. Here was an activity which the white men, and not the Indians, would control.
- 17 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 174.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

- 19 Archaeological excavations at Waiilatpu indicate that double toilets or “back houses” were at the east end to the “T” of the main mission house. The excavations of the pits revealed a large number of artifacts, such as broken dishes, etc., which had been discarded there.
- 20 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 265 and 359 give evidence that Spalding had chickens at Lapwai.
- 21 Drury, *F.W.W.*, II contains many references to the difficulties the missionaries at Tshimakain had raising chickens because of the tendency of the Indian dogs to kill them. See index in that volume.
- 22 Whitman, in this letter, refers to a former communication to Greene which he had written in the fall of 1837 in which he had given an account of his evangelistic work. Evidently this letter was lost in transit as it is not now in Coll. A.
- 23 Two dates have been given as to the time of Cayuse Halket’s visit to his people. Wm. McKay in Boyd’s *History of the Synod of Washington*, p. 231, suggested 1831. Tucker in *Rainbow in the North*, p. 74, more accurately gives 1834.
- 24 See Chapter One, fn. 29.
- 25 HBC Arch., B/223/b/18.f.g.
- 26 *Hawaiian Spectator*, I:332 quoting from an undated letter of Narcissa’s but written before the end of 1837.
- 27 Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 18. Brouillet claimed that the mission site at Waiilatpu belonged to three chiefs: “Splitted Lip or Tomtipi [Umtippe], Red Cloak or Waptashtakamal, and Pilankaikt [Tiloukaikt].”
- 28 Hulbert, *O.P.*, VII:248, quoting from Whitman’s letter of Nov. 11, 1841, identifies Waptashtakmahl with Feather Cap. Cannon, *Waiilatpu*, p. 103, states that Feathercap belonged to Tiloukaikt’s camp and was also known as Tamsucky. The variety of names given to the same individual makes positive identification difficult.
- 29 Timothy named his camping site Halahpawit or Alpowa which means “Sabbath rest” in the Nez Perce tongue. The very name is evidence of Timothy’s desire to keep Sunday as a day of rest. Alpowa is about twelve miles west of Lewiston, Idaho, on the road leading to Walla Walla.
- 30 Mrs. Eliza Spalding Warren died at Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, June 21, 1919.
- 31 See Chapter Seven, fn. 45.
- 32 See Drury, *F.W.W.*, I:22, for list of the children of the missionaries with their birthdays.
- 33 *Ibid.*, II:265. The baby was born Feb. 10, 1844. Dr. Whitman arrived on the 22nd. Rev. and Mrs. Elkanah Walker and the Rev. and Mrs. Cushing Eells were members of the 1838 reenforcement to the Oregon Mission.
- 34 Narcissa in a letter to her parents, April 11, 1838, told of Pambrun sending her a rocking chair, and also a little chair for her daughter.
- 35 Drury, *F.W.W.*, II: 116.
- 36 *Ibid.*, I:132. This quotation was not included when the rest of the letter was published in *T.O.P.A.*, 1891, pp. 101 ff. See below, fn. 44.
- 37 Archaeological excavations at Waiilatpu show that there was a cellar beneath one of the rooms in the long arm of the “T” shaped mission house.

- 38 Brosnan, *Jason Lee*, p. 107.
- 39 Dr. W. C. McKay's reminiscences appeared in Boyd, *History of the Synod of Washington*, pp. 280 ff., also in *T.O.P.A.*, 1889, 91 ff.
- 40 Larsell, "Development of Medical Education in the Pacific Northwest," *O.H.Q.*, XXVII (1926), 65 ff.; see also chapter on Tom McKay in Hafen, *Mountain Men*, VI: 259 ff.
- 41 Whitman, Letter 89, stated: "We write you twice & sometimes three times a year, once in the fall by the Islands & in the spring by Canada & by the American Rendezvous." In Letter 42c he wrote: "The American traders will not forward letters coming this way." Dr. McLoughlin, writing to Spalding on April 14, 1837, stated: "I am of opinion the Hudson's Bay Company would agree to bring any dispatches for you by the Express from Canada and for this your correspondents have only to send their letters (forty letters could come) to Hudson's Bay Company's office at Montreal, or rather Lachine." HBC Arch., 2/228/b/17.
- 42 Original in Coll. A.
- 43 *O.H.Q.*, XVII (1916), 417 ff. Lee, who had been at Fort Vancouver during the week before the Whitman-Spalding party arrived, had left to return to his station on Sept. 10th, not knowing that the American Board missionaries would arrive two days later.
- 44 About 1,400 words of this letter (No. 46) were omitted when it was published in *T.O.P.A.*, 1891, pp. 101 ff. Although the letter was dated April 11, 1838, it contains some entries under later dates.
- 45 Brosnan, *Jason Lee*, p. 95.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 173 & 252.
- 48 Brouillet, *House Document*, p. 20, quoting John Toupin who claimed that the Indians told Spalding: "Whip him, or if not, we will put you in his place and whip you."
- 49 A reference to the Rev. David T. Jones, one of the clergyman at the Red River Mission School when the Old Oregon Indian boys were there.
- 50 HBC Arch., B/223/b/18, fo. 9-9d.
- 51 See below, Chapter XVII, "Laws of the Nez Percés."
- 52 This work appeared in Philadelphia in 1836. Just how or when Narcissa got to read this book is not known.