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James Perry

Richard H. Chused

New York Law School, richard.chused@nyls.edu

Mary Delano

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The Spousal Letters of Samuel R. Thurston, Oregon's First Territorial Delegate to Congress: 1849–1851

Edited by James R. Perry,
Richard H. Chused, and
Mary DeLano

Samuel Royal Thurston (1816–51), while serving as Oregon's first territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress between 1849 and 1851, wrote the letters to his wife that are excerpted in this article. H. K. Hines, in his *History of Oregon* (1893), wrote that Thurston embodied "more of the spirit and life that lay at the foundation of the new commonwealth . . . than any other one man, and did more to give trend and character to its subsequent history than any other of his period." (OHS neg. CN 020665)



THE OREGON Historical Society Research Library houses a revealing collection of nineteenth-century letters from Oregon political figure Samuel R. Thurston to his wife, a correspondence written while Thurston served as Oregon's first territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress between 1849 and 1851.¹ The letters are noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, Thurston's importance to the early development of the Oregon Territory has not yet been reflected adequately in biographical literature.² As territorial delegate from Oregon, he played a pivotal role in the adoption of several important acts of Congress, including measures to improve regional transportation and communication and the Oregon Donation Act, the territory's signal land-grant legislation.³ Publication of these letters thus fills part of the historical void on Thurston. Second, the letters speak to a number of more general issues important to nineteenth-century western history, including slavery, congressional politics, and territorial development. Third, Thurston's frequent mention of family matters in these letters—marriage, moving west, children, education, and finances—provides social and family historians of the West with a rich resource on the family considerations of a midnineteenth-century male politician.

*Samuel Thurston's
poignant
anticipations of
death and his role
in history.*

SAMUEL ROYAL THURSTON was born in Monmouth, Maine, on April 17, 1816, to Trueworthy and Priscilla Royal Thurston. The family moved to Peru, Maine, in 1819. The sixth of eight children, Thurston attended Maine Wesleyan Seminary in Readfield, Maine, in 1837 and 1838, Dartmouth College in 1839 and 1840, and Bowdoin College (from which he graduated) between 1840 and 1843.⁴

While details of Thurston's childhood have remained largely obscure, this collection of letters adds considerably to the body of knowledge about the politician's early life in Maine. The letter of June 15, 1850—a long, sometimes emotional reminiscence—is especially important. From it we learn of young Sam Thurston's extreme self-consciousness in relation to

*A documentary publishing
project undertaken by three
Washington, D.C., histori-
ans.*

people of means, his experience in being bound into indenture by his father, his attendance at Monmouth Academy just prior to matriculating at Maine Wesleyan Seminary, and the meeting of his future wife, Elizabeth McLench, while at Bowdoin College. His thoughts about these and other aspects of his life describe a set of emotional and political sensibilities that both fit his time and point to the character of his accomplishments in Congress.

The notion of an "independent suffragan" was a central feature of nineteenth-century debates about the roles of men in family life and political events. Thurston described this type of man as "beyond the compelling grasp of the rich lord or politician, and where viewing all measures for himself, he can think, and speak, and vote as a well directed and untrammelled judgment shall direct."⁵ Such men, supporting themselves and their families by farming or running businesses, were thought of as the backbone of a society and culture challenged with making decisions about its future course. From the days of Thomas Jefferson, the independent suffragan (or, more commonly in Jefferson's time, the "independent yeoman farmer") was viewed by many as the crucial component in the development of a stable republic.

Thurston's letter of June 15 is full of musings about his one-time dream of becoming an independent suffragan. He longed to be "the possessor of a competence, and be one among the honored and respected of the town," and to "become an independent farmer, and respected as such usually are." But "happening to be a poor boy," Thurston wondered, how could he possibly become "spoken well of"? He wrote: "How many times I have cried, and how many, have I prayed most earnestly to God to bring me out of those tribulations." He recalled times of embarrassment at being rejected by a woman "because I was poor"; times of shyness at seeing other boys "better clad"; and times of humility and pride, such as when he encountered a once-rich and haughty man in Maine who had been reduced to poverty and rags. Thurston's youthful experiences gave him both a sense of obligation to those less well off and a strong ambition to reach the cultural heights of those who had disparaged him.

His early urge to become an independent suffragan was chastened by the faltering financial status of his father. In the letter of June 15 Thurston wrote of being bound out to one Joshua Graham, in the hope of making a "sum of money" that would allow him after four and one-half years "to arrive at distinction by way of beginning to be a respectable farmer." A dispute with Graham eventually led Thurston to other work, first tending a carding ma-

chine and then clerking at the store of, and being tutored by, tradesman and lawyer Timothy Ludden. Though he thought *this* education “worthless,” Thurston resolved to seek another sort of education that would move him beyond the poverty of his family and the limitations of agricultural life.

With his father’s help, Thurston wrote, he made arrangements “to work night & morning to pay my board” at Monmouth Academy. Education, in time, opened new vistas for him. Thurston recalled noticing “that the fact that I was going to the academy was pleasing to my father,” and the student soon began to realize that education could provide him entrée to those parts of society from which he had previously been excluded. Recalling his life in the later 1830s, Thurston wrote: “That winter I for the first time attained a point, which I had always looked upon as very desirable in the path of honor—I became a school master.” He eventually matriculated at Bowdoin College and, after graduating in 1843, read law in Brunswick, Maine, with Robert Dunlap, then married and headed west with his new wife.⁶

What drove Thurston west is not entirely clear. The June 15 letter to Mrs. Thurston includes a cryptic reference to another letter that was the “cause of my leaving Brunswick,” but the recipient of that letter, “Geo Dunlap,” and the letter’s contents are unknown. It appears, though, that the letter may have helped Thurston land a job in Burlington, Iowa. He may also have been drawn in part by the extravagant descriptions of western settlements that often appeared in eastern newspapers, and by his own continuing desire to succeed as an independent suffragan. In any case, Thurston left Maine with a lawyer’s training, a strong sense of the importance of education, a sensitivity to the difficulties of agricultural life in the Northeast, and a lively ambition to be more successful than his parents.

Thurston rapidly became an important public person after leaving Maine. His first major stop was Burlington, Iowa, where he took on the task of publishing the territory’s major Democratic paper, the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*.⁷ From the first editions issued under Thurston’s editorial direction, significant amounts of space were devoted to the western territories and the “Oregon Question.” Lists of names of those moving west were regularly printed, along with letters about Oregon, stories about the politics of the region, and long editorials advocating immediate action to resolve sovereignty disputes with Britain so that the area could be absorbed into the United States.⁸

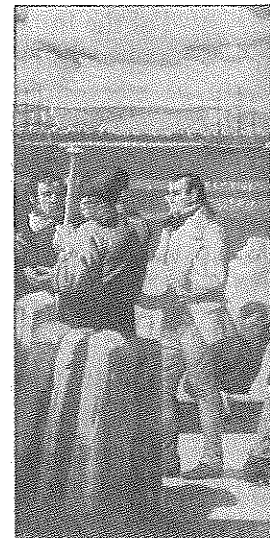
Thurston did not stay long in Iowa. Although advertisements in

the Burlington newspaper indicate that he practiced law while there, he could not have built up much of a practice. His stewardship of the *Iowa Territorial Gazette* ended in November 1846;⁹ then, three months after his first child, Henry, was born, Thurston departed with his family for Oregon, in March 1847.¹⁰ Little is said in the letters published here about the trip west. Thurston does, however, frequently mention his efforts to persuade relatives and friends to make the overland trek. For example, he reported on his decision to provide financial backing to others who were moving to Oregon, most notably Elizabeth McLench Thurston's brother Frank.¹¹

After arriving in Oregon in 1847, Thurston settled with his wife and child in the Willamette Valley town of Hillsboro and began practicing law. This sparsely settled country was perhaps the ideal setting in which an ambitious man could test the political waters, and Thurston took up the challenge shortly after his arrival. He was elected to the legislative assembly of the provisional government in 1848, and he successfully ran for delegate to Congress the following year. Before he left for Washington, D.C., his second child, Elizabeth, was born.¹²

Thurston's tenure as a nonvoting delegate to Congress, though short, was extremely important for the Oregon Territory. The major congressional enactment of his era was the Oregon Donation Act of 1850. While land distribution was a major issue in all of the territories acquired by the United States in the nineteenth century, it was a particularly thorny issue in Oregon. Even before

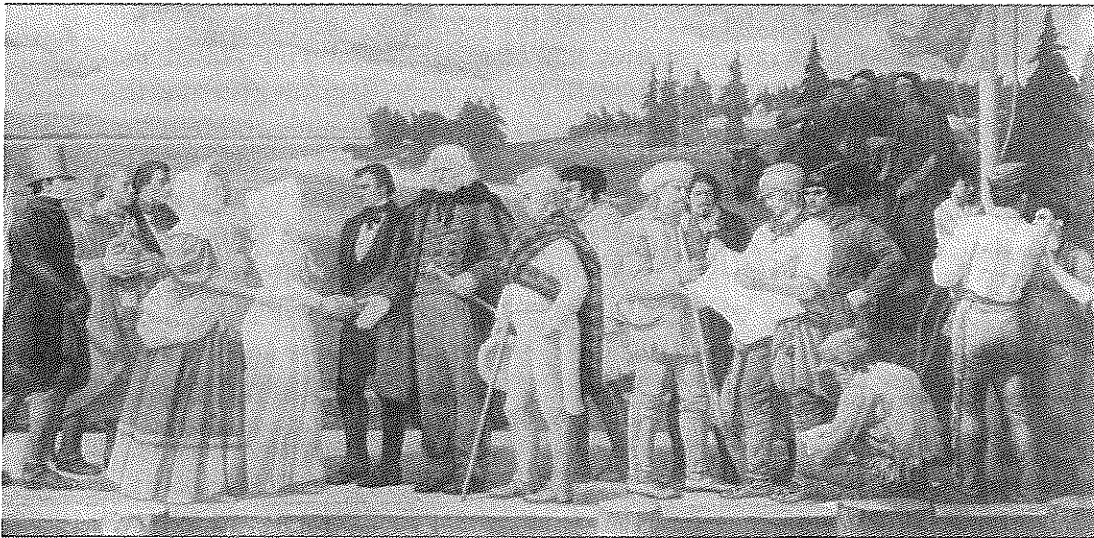
Samuel Thurston and other early Oregonians resented and distrusted Dr. John McLoughlin because of his long association with the Hudson's Bay Company. McLoughlin, however, had American defenders in his own time, and their more charitable vision of the doctor won out in the long run, as depicted in this contemporary mural in the Salem state capitol, showing a patriarchal McLoughlin bestowing greetings and kindnesses upon arriving Oregon missionaries. (OHS neg. CN 015824)



Britain and the United States settled upon a Canadian boundary in 1846, Oregonians had established a provisional government to, among other things, settle land conflicts. When Congress established the Oregon Territory in 1848, however, it explicitly nullified land interests established by the provisional legislature. Congressional failure to adopt a replacement land act at that time left landholders in the territory in a precarious legal position. Samuel Thurston publicly stated that getting a land bill passed was his highest priority as territorial delegate.¹³

Passage of a new land bill for the Oregon Territory in 1850 was a sizable accomplishment. The actual content of the Oregon Donation Act of 1850 makes it one of the most interesting and important in the history of federal land-grant legislation. Its provisions granting land titles to married women were unique. Before 1850 most states had adopted married women's property acts that removed some of the most objectionable common-law rules preventing married women from owning and controlling property. Virtually all of this legislation allowed married women to hold property free of any obligations to their husbands' creditors. A few, more progressive enactments also granted wives will-writing, contractual, and management authority.¹⁴ The Oregon Donation Act, however, was the only *federal* legislation that allowed married women to take title to land, and the available evidence strongly suggests that Samuel Thurston was responsible for these provisions of the act.¹⁵

Thurston's sympathies toward married women's property re-



form are revealed in this collection. Although the letters certainly contain much that was commonplace for correspondence between a man of Thurston's standing and his distant spouse—numerous requests that their son be educated carefully in preparation for a legal career; solicitous warnings that his wife be cautious and mind her health; detailed instructions on living arrangements and how to manage their farm—other material in the letters suggests that Thurston was more concerned than many men of his time about the education and public role of his wife and baby daughter. The familial tone of the correspondence was set immediately. On September 30, 1849, while waiting in San Francisco for passage to Panama, Thurston wrote detailed instructions to his wife on their financial situation.¹⁶ The letter's paternalism was balanced somewhat by Thurston's willingness to entrust his wife rather than a male friend with much of their financial dealings during his absence, by his description of political and social ideas to his spouse, and by his concern over the education of his daughter.¹⁷ After finishing his investment instructions, Thurston wrote, "So you see my dear, I am expatiating on things of this world, as tho life was certain. I do not think it wrong for me to converse thus with you, for it is highly proper that ones wife should be fully acquainted with his business affairs." And before closing, Thurston added, "I want you to spare no pains, in educating and properly training the children."

While showing concern for his daughter's education, Thurston had decidedly different educational visions for his son, George Henry, and his daughter, Elizabeth.¹⁸ George Henry was to be a public figure, a "great," "distinguished" lawyer.¹⁹ He was to be cultivated in the "principles of the moral law," and taught mathematics, literature, science, and language.²⁰ Thurston wanted his son to be combative but ready to conciliate, firm but generous to a fallen enemy.²¹ Thurston also desired that both children be "deeply read in moral sciences and moral and natural laws," adding that "the little daughter, and all that pertains to her, and to her growth, education and fortune in life is as dear to me as that of my boy."²² However, his daughter was "to be gentle learned & good, . . . my boy to be above board, invincible, immoveable."²³ Elizabeth Thurston was instructed to "teach Henry politeness, ease of manners, nature, firmness, stern integrity—patriotism—Lissy teach as a girl should be taught."²⁴

It is hard to imagine better descriptions of midnineteenth-century gender roles than are found in these letters. Thurston demanded much of both of his children. They were "to excel, for

once getting in the way of it, it will become natural and thus excite them to noble deeds of action when things of a more important nature shall come within the sphere of their duty."²⁵ And his wife, Elizabeth, was to be the crucial catalyst: "My dear you have got to shape my posterity, in heavens name give them a form that shall reflect everlasting honor on the artist."²⁶ His wife was exalted not only as a servant to her husband but also as a shaper of others, a molder of the future. Of such sympathies were nineteenth-century progressive males made.

Thurston's attitudes about women surfaced for a final time before his death in 1851. At the end of his term in Congress, he drafted a letter to his constituents in Oregon. It was a reelection campaign document that was eventually printed in the *Oregon Spectator*, a major newspaper in the territory. In the letter Thurston wrote of women:

I am not one of those who would advise her to change her sphere which she appropriately fills, with such effect on the world, for one of strife, and politics, and civil or military commotions, but I would throw around her all the protections and safeguards necessary for her safety. They hold the future destiny of the nation in their gentle grasp, and the master spirits of the rising generation are now being moulded by their skill.²⁷

There can be little doubt about Thurston's influence over and sympathy with the provisions for married women's land grants in the Oregon Donation Act. This sympathy arose, however, from a desire to surround wives with protections that would allow them to act as moral bastions for their families and as sources of comfort for their husbands. Providing land to married women free from the control of their husbands was not designed to make wives independent of their spouses and offspring but to protect men "against the hands of unfeeling oppression, and save from the jaws of pinching want." Should men get in financial difficulties, their families would still be economically secure. "In this way," Thurston wrote in a letter to his constituents, "every man will be placed on an eminence, where *he can be a man, and his own man*; where he can be an independent suffragen."²⁸

Though Thurston's influence over the course of legislation in Congress was significant, the scale of his impact is open to some dispute, especially on issues other than the Donation Act. In addition, Thurston's actions sometimes left a trail of controversy. He arrived in Washington, D.C., at a most propitious time to legislate for the Oregon Territory. The region's strategic position provided him opportunity both to press for passage of several leg-

islative measures and to satisfy some quite personal vendettas. For example, his structuring of one section of the Oregon Donation Act to deny John McLoughlin's claim to land in Oregon City engendered particularly harsh commentary in some segments of the Oregon community. These letters, as well as other material in Oregon newspapers, certainly confirm the testy feelings Thurston held toward anyone connected with the British-based Hudson's Bay Company.²⁹

The question of whether Thurston would have been denied reelection because of the Oregon City land-claim controversy became moot when he died off the coast of Mexico while returning to Oregon after completing his first term in Congress. We are left only with a "confidential" confirmation, in the same letter that contains the long reminiscence on his youthful days in Maine, that he would stand for reelection.³⁰ Despite controversies during his term of office and his subsequent premature death, the political-legal legacy of Samuel Thurston unquestionably influenced Oregon society and politics for many decades to come.

THE OREGON Historical Society's collection of letters from Samuel Thurston to his wife, some of which are printed entirely or excerpted here, does not include *all* letters written by Thurston to his wife during his years as Oregon's territorial delegate to Congress. Some of the letters in the OHS collection were numbered, and gaps are thus apparent in the complete correspondence. Furthermore, Thurston, in his diary, mentions writing seven letters to his wife that have not been located.³¹

In editing the OHS collection of Thurston letters for publication, we have transcribed them as literally as seemed practical. Thurston's idiosyncratic spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have generally been reproduced as they appear in the originals. We have rendered the ubiquitous baseline dash—used commonly as punctuation in the midnineteenth century in place of a comma, period, or dash, or in conjunction with a period to denote a prolonged or dramatic pause or a change in topic—as a dash followed by a space. Text underlined by Thurston is italicized here. Text that is questionable because of damage to the document, or unreadable for any other reason, is followed by a question mark within square brackets. Words or phrases added to explain or clarify are also enclosed within square brackets. Finally, omitted por-

tions of individual letters are indicated by a three-point ellipsis enclosed within square brackets.

A few additional forms of editorial intervention have been employed. For example, because Thurston's periods were generally indistinguishable from his commas, we have transcribed all punctuation at the end of sentences as periods. Also, because Thurston did not always clearly differentiate between uppercase and lowercase letters, we have, following modern practice, capitalized the initial letter of the first word following a period. Similarly, when it was not clear whether Thurston meant to capitalize a word or not, we have followed modern practice in transcribing the word. Occasionally, Thurston omitted punctuation at the end of his sentences, generally when the sentence ended at the margin of his paper; in these instances we have supplied a period. Finally, we have omitted Thurston's few cross-outs, and we have brought the infrequent interlineations into the text where indicated by the author.

Astoria August 16th 1849

My Dear Wife:

I arrived at this place, last Sunday — rather Saturday night just at sunset, after being all of six days on the route [from Linn City, Oregon Territory]. Since that time I have been here, getting such information as I could touching the various interests at the mouth of this river.³² The climate here is extremely cold, so much so that I have been under the necessity of purchasing a flannel shirt, and should have purchased also a pair of drawers, but could find none in the place. By reason, as I suppose, of changing climates, and being exposed to unusual cold, I have been quite unwell since I have been here. I am better, however today, having taken a dose of pills last night, and shall endeavor to be as prudent as I can. I am aware however there are many dangers on the route, and it will be extremely good luck should I escape them all. I do not deem it advisable not to speak to you freely on the subject, tho an opposite course might be more conducive to your peace of mind. But we may as well look at things as they are, and be prepared so far as in us lies to meet the consequences—

I have stopped at Van Dusen's since here, and of course treated kindly as I could wish.³³ I expect to leave here about the 23 inst, and shall arrive at the [San Francisco] Bay, with ordinary luck, about the 28th of this month. But I am not certain that I shall leave the Bay till the first of October. Genl Adair says he considers it very unsafe, insane, for me to venture

to go the trip so early, arriving as I should in New Orleans about the 18th or 20th of September, the worst month of the year for Cholera and yellow fever.³⁴

The cholera has been raging fearfully in the States, and undoubtedly is now. So say the papers. And the news is that there were three deaths on board the California, on her last trip from Panama to San Francisco. These were cases, no doubt, brought over the isthmus from the Atlantic. Under all the circumstances, therefore, if I can see my way clear, I shall stay at the Bay till first of October, tho I may leave there by the September steamer. I shall do this if the danger in waiting would more than counterbalance that of going. You may rely upon one thing, that I shall keep cool and temperate, and look out for the best, and if dangers come then, they must be met. [...]

You must not blame me if I dont write all, for I did not know till now, that the mail was to go up river today. You must write me by the next mail, directed to San Francisco. I may get it there, and should I leave before it comes, I will leave word with the Post Master there to forward it to Washington. See that my house is rented the first opportunity for not less than 100\$ per year.³⁵ Mr. Blain must have the garden.³⁶

Kiss the children for me— tell Geo Henry that Papa loves him and will be back *by by*. Now dear, dont be sad but happy, and pass your time as easily as possible, dont weary yourself with work, or anything, and believe I love you most warmly[?] and sincerely,

Samuel

San Francisco, on board
Barque Drummond.
September 30 1849

My dear wife: It is now eight o'clock AM. I have just finished my breakfast, and am able to state, that I hope I am on the mend. . . . I go on board the steamer "Oregon" this after noon, as she leaves in the morning at 5 AM. I must say I hate to leave so good quarters, while I am so feeble, but I am obliged to, otherwise my enemies might sieze on the occasion to charge me with a remissness of duty. So I go, trusting that He who holds all things in his hands will carry me safely to my journeys end. Should I live I will write you again from Panama. Some 3 or 4 of my Oregon acquaintance, among whom are D[r.] Sacket and Robt Pentland, go on the same steamer.³⁷

I sent you, by Truman P Powers, a letter inclosing a deed of a town lot in the City of Portland OT. [Oregon Territory] from

Stephen Coffin.³⁸ I also sent you three hundred dollars (300\$) all in American gold save one 10\$ piece in Oregon Coin. When you have occasion to spend any, I would like to have you spend that piece first, and take no more of the Coin struck at Oregon City.³⁹ I send you inclosed in this letter, the receipt I took from Mr Powers for the delivery of the money to you. Should this letter and the receipt come to your hand before he pays over the money, you will give him the receipt when he hands over the money. Should he have paid over the money before the inclosed receipt comes to you, you will keep the receipt untill such time as you can hand it to him. I requested Mr P. to let no one know that he carried you any money, and he said he would not. He will not of course, as I would put as much confidence in him as in any man in Oregon. I wish you to let no one know, not even your best friends, that you have any [money], unless you receive further instructions from me. Should our friend Blain want a favor[?] by way of loan of a few dollars occasionally, and should apply to you, you will accommodate him, but that even without letting him know how much you have. As I said, in my letter to Mr P, 'If you can pay your way, without endangering, *in the least*, your health you will do so.' At least so I should advise, from the fact that when one has money to lean on, one can get along quite safely, altho surrounded by enemies as thick as the mosquitoes in Portland. Now is the time to make and lay up money, for mark what I tell you, that altho it may not be believed, ten years shall not have elapsed, before there will be a revulsion in California and Oregon that will shake the business world to its centre. Now is the time to prepare for this crisis. We should live for a long life, altho it may be ever so short. I wish you would inform me by your first letter, after I shall have arrived at Washington and apprised you of it, how much money you have, for I have forgotten how much I left with you.— I have written to Genl Adair, requesting him, if he goes to Portland or Oregon City, next spring, after the close of the rainy season, to write you long enough in advance, so that you may be at Portland or Oregon City as the case may be, and go down with him in his boat to Astoria, where and at Clatsop I would like to have you spend some three months, or more if you like, as Mr P has agreed, that in case you would prefer to stop there, he will board you in his family. At any rate you will want to stop there for a season. But should you go, go clad as warm as possible in thick flannels.

I recd a letter from friends Blain and father Moore, and am glad to hear that our side of the river is looking up, and that improvements are soon to be commenced.⁴⁰ If we live, and look

out well, I think we can come off with a respectable fortune in Oregon yet. I wish you to keep your eye on those 2 H lots, as I shall, so soon as I get through, take care to have the whole purchase money sent on, and you may consider them worth, if the Town takes a start, one thousand dollars a piece.⁴¹ They then, and our six, may be safely put down at this time, worth \$5000. On the ten acres, we will set no value, for should the town go a head, as I believe, they are worth, to-day, ten thousand dollars, because it costs nothing to keep them. It will be policy for us to hold on to all we have got, and purchase more, whenever a favorable opportunity offers. I consider the lot in Portland had of Coffin, worth \$200, and I am to have an other of Lownsdale, for fifty dollars, worth the same.⁴² Mr C made me a present of that, tho you need not say so, and Lownsdale sells me the other for fifty, as a sort of a favor. I expect now to get hold of a lot or two at Astoria, from Genl Adair, as a present, all of which will be worth something. So you see my dear, I am expatiating on things of this world, as tho life was certain. I do not think it wrong for me to converse thus with you, for it is highly proper that ones wife should be fully acquainted with his business affairs. To my God I owe all things. I certainly mean from this on to lead a better life, and to live openly as a professor and possessor of religion. And I here repeat, should you keep house before I return, I desire you to ask a blessing at meals, and to have prayer at morning and evening repast, without regard to who may be present, and should I return, I will, by the grace of God, to continue it.

I hope you will have bought that cow, for by getting Frank to help you a little you can make lots of butter next summer, should you remain at Mr Hills, as I am rather inclined to think you will.⁴³ You must make him prepare that room, and if he does, you will take care to furnish it comfortably, so that you can enjoy yourself, especially when Sunday comes.

Those old Sundays how sweet are the remembrances of them! I hope the good Lord will spare me to enjoy many more of them with you and the children—

I want you to spare no pains, in educating and properly training the children. Tell Henry Boy, that Papa says he must be a very good boy and mind his mama— that I love him very much, and should cry, if I should hear that he was naughty. Little Libby, kis her for me and Henry too. As soon as I shall get through I wish you to write me a purely business letter, informing me minutely where the cattle all are, what disposition is made of the house, what, in the shape of improvement is done in the garden &c &c. My love to Mr Hills & family, and

my cordial respects to all my friends. So I will close, remaining
as ever your affectionate husband &c.

Sam R. Thurston

I cant stop to reread & correct.

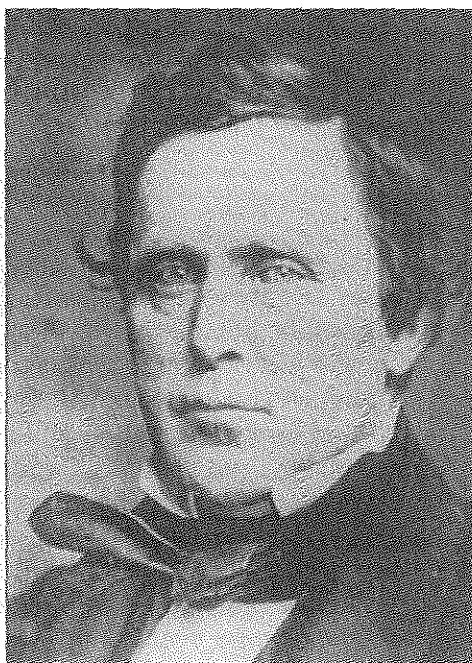
Rathburns Hotel, NY. City

Nov 11,/49

My dear wife: I have the high gratification of announcing to you, my safe arrival at this place, this morning about 8. oclock AM. I must be brief in this, as I have a number of letters to write, and wish to get off to morrow, on a flying visit to Maine, and you perceive I have but 18 days, to go there, make my visits, and back to Washington. I suspect you think I am dead, for if you have got my letters, you will have expected, before you receive this to receive a letter from me at Panama. I intended to have written from that place, but to tell you the truth I was not able to move a pen while at Panama. I was sick every day from the time I left San F. till I reached Panama, growing weaker and worse every day. I will give you some of the causes in an other letter. And I have no doubt, had I not fell in with Dr Tyson who doctored Mr. Crenfort[?] in the mines I should have died.⁴⁴ Leaving S.F. as I did, not able to sit up all day, and going 3500 miles through the tropics, with a fare on board the steamer that would poison a well raised hog, it was good luck indeed that I did not die. When I arrived at Panama, the day I went on shore, I did not sit up, over a half hour at a time, for the whole day. I determined, however, that I would not yield, so I mounted a horse the next morning, and rode to Cruses, 24 miles from Panama, over the worst road, ever traveled by a horse. You have no possible idea of its badness. But as good luck would have it, I arrived at Cruses just after dark. But I forgot to say, that the horse with which I started gave out 12 miles from Cruses, so that I had to leave him in the mud. Good Lord, what then was I to do,— in a wilderness, not able the day before to sit up one hour, now on foot, where the mud, half the way, was 18 inches deep. That, however, way my locus in quo, so I resolved I would not yield, but started on foot. I had not proceed far, before I came across a boy with a fresh horse, which I succeeded to hire for *one dollar per mile*. I mounted it, and arrived at Cruses as above.⁴⁵

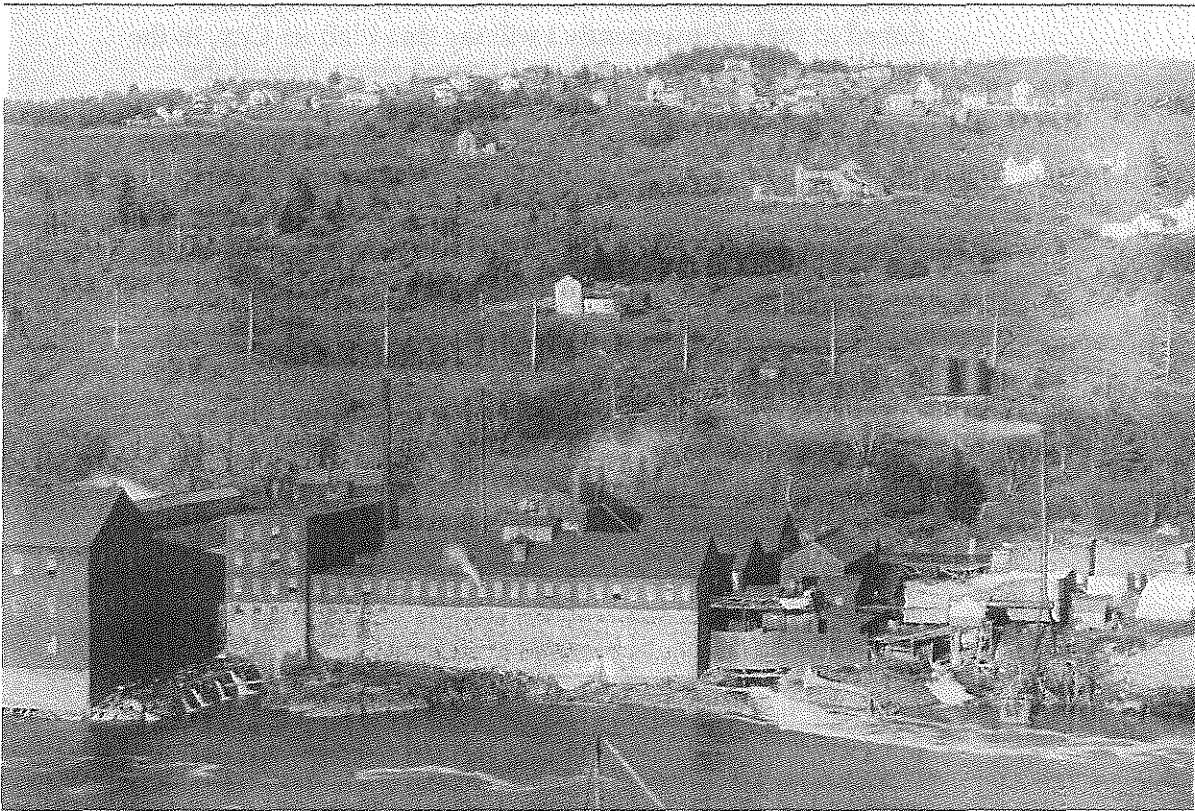
But there is an other part of the story. A gentleman from NY, who had been over the isthmus before, and having formed an acquaintance with me on the Oregon, seeing I was thus feeble contracted with a man at Panama, to carry his, mine, and the baggage of two other gentlemen from NY, from Panama to Crus,

Gen. John Adair (1808–88), son of the governor of Kentucky and a graduate of Harvard Law School, was named U.S. collector of customs at the port of Astoria in 1848, arriving there in April 1849. As was typical in territorial days, Adair's private and public interests overlapped: He arranged to have the Astoria post office located on his land claim, two miles from the town's center, thus inconveniencing many local residents. Thurston's letters show that he considered Adair a friend, suggesting to his wife that the general might be willing to transport her free of charge on his boat to Astoria in order to greet Thurston upon his return to Oregon. (OHS neg. OrHi 9241)



taking his receipt and contract for the same. When we arrived at Cruses our baggage did not come. We waited 4 days. It did not come, when we espied out the man lurking round Cruses, watching for us to leave when he intended to go back and rob our trunks which he had never started from Panama. We arraigned him before the Alcalde [judge], he denying everything, when we made him write his name, and upon comparing it with that in his receipt, he became scared, confessed he had never started it from Panama and gave an order to his colleague at P for the baggage. One John Furk[?], a man of responsibility at Cruses sent a man to Panama to get the baggage. This man is to attend to the matter for us, says he has no doubt he shall get the baggage. One of the men who lost the baggage with us, stopped behind to complete the matter. As for me I had to leave, or be left by the steamer, when I should not have been able to have left Chagres, untill the first of Dec, after the meeting of congress. Besides, Dr Tyson, who stuck by me all the way, assured me, that in my state of health, I could not remain on the isthmus, except at the almost certain loss of my life. This being the case I left, as did two of the others, the third staying behind to do[?] what he could to get the baggage. And I left just in time, for I, Dr T, and a relation of his, were the last down the river Chagres. When we arrived at Chagres, we found the Empire City, with steam and anchors up, and that she had been

sailing round the Bay for 4 hours waiting for us. She would have started in 15 minutes, and if she had I have hardly a doubt, but I should have left my bones in the Isthmus. The general opinion is, by all who know about these matters, that I will get my baggage, tho I have my doubts. In my trunk & carpet bag were all my fine clothes and every thing I had, save the coarse clothes I had on. There was in my trunk also, 165\$ in dust of my own, 500\$ in dust of Old Man Moores, all my letters & passes, and other things, sent by individuals from San F. Even my own credentials are there. I cannot say more now. I hope I shall get it. I may or I may not. I have been growing well fast, ever since I got on to the Empire City, and am now nearly my self again. I am in good spirits, and all hands in Oregon shall hear from me often and soon.



At the center of this twentieth-century photo of West Linn (originally Robins Nest, then Linn City) sits the home of Robert Moore (1781–1857), who established Linn City in 1844–45 and bought the *Oregon Spectator* in 1850. Thurston and Moore were evidently close, each entrusting the other with significant sums of money. (OHS neg. OrHi 65425)

My respects to all, and the little children— God bless them. Tell Mr Hill, to forward me by next mail, a list of the names of such influential men in Oregon, as he may know, particularly specifying in what county each person, lives. I think my baggage will come. So goodbye, in[?] good faith

Saml

Chicope[e, Mass.] Nov 26th 1849

My dear Lizzy: I am at Joseph's house, in this place, where I arrived, Saturday eve 9. oclock.⁴⁶ I leave here this evening at 7, for New York, directly on my way to Washington. I arrived at NY. Nov 11th, on board Empire City, and left Chagres Oct 29. On the 12 or 13th of Nov, I wrote you from that place, just previous to leaving for Maine whence I am now returning. Supposing, therefore, that you will have received that letter before you do this, I shall not stop to notice anything mentioned in that. Consequently I will say that I left NY City, in the morning train for Boston where I arrived about 7 PM of the same day. I took a hack for South Boston and stopped for the night at my Cousins, supposing I should there be able to learn something concerning my folks, concerning whom I had been anxious from my departure from home in Oregon, for you will recollect well, that some time before I stated, upon getting up one morning that you might rely that some of our folks [are] dead. Accordingly upon my arrival there, and after I had got pleasantly seated, I enquired for them, and upon looking him in the face, his countenance announced to me, before he had time to speak, that all was not well. My blood run chill, but it had to be told, that my good old father, and Br Benjamin also were dead. Father died the 20th of last July and Benjamin was buried just 2 months after 20th September. Father was sick for some three months, sometimes better and again worse, till at last he was taken down suddenly, and died in the course of two weeks. His disorder was that old complain[t] which you know he used to have, that of being in great distress, and raising large quantities of water or watery substance from his stomach. Our folks said he repeatedly got better, whenever he would cease from work but that so soon as he got a little smart, he would go out to work again, in spite of all they could say. He had been down to Clary's and was quite comfortable, able to go about over the farm, when one day he went out, under the promise of not working, but he commenced to do a little, and finally worked all the forenoon. The result was fatal— he was taken suddenly down same night, and took his bead from where he never rose— But he died happily and calmly, disposing of his

business, selecting his bearers, and the minister to preach his funeral sermon. I announce to you the fact— I will say no more— my own heart does him the honor due to so affectionate a father— Benjamin had the brain fever as long ago, as when I used to Board at Fayette Mills. Perhaps you are not aware of the fact. That fever was so violent as to misshape some parts of his head slightly. And tho, I may not have told you of it, I have never considered since that it left his mind in a healthy state. You know well that I have had many forebodings concerning him, and you will remember too, my dream concerning him last summer, and my fears then expressed to you. I am happy to say that no such thing as I then feared occurred. But for the last year his wife and others had discovered, that something was nawing at his constitution, and while the paleness of his countenance and a decline in his physical powers announced that his frame was giving way to disease, his continual complaint of pain in his head, and the growing instability of his mind, told that that disease was located on his brain. It grew upon him, till at last while or when father was first taken sick, our folks were informed by a friend from Poland [Maine] who came for the purpose, that he was insane. It was thought best to carry him to insane hospitle, at Augusta [Maine], whither he was carried, but to no good— he still grew worse and died, being buried in Peru by the side of father as I have said. Here too I was smitten by an other bolt, and ami[d] child like weeping, I was obliged to summon that cold philosophy to my aid, at whose mandate the bitter, heart-relieving tear, withdraws its suffering head, and hides behind the curtain of melancholy. The playmate of my infancy and boyhood, and the kind affectionate associate of my manhood is thus gone down to his Master to await the coming of his idol brother. [. . .]

As you may judge, I left Boston, next morning, sad, silent and pensive— but I rushed on, determined if possible to reach your house that night, where I might be hailed once more by the wellknown Growler, and greeted by that good old voice that had, in latter years, so cordially welcomed and greeted the idol of his idol daughter. Dr Cary of Wayne [Maine] happened to be in the cars, from whom I learned just as I left the cars at Portland, that *your father was also dead*.⁴⁷ I was loath to credit it but it was but too true. Those fatal fits, of which you have so frequently spoken to me, some two or three of which he had previously had, again seized him. He had once got some better, so that he walked about, and went to the neighbors but was suddenly seized again, and being in so weak a state, at the time of attack, his form[er]ly giant constitution gave way and

yielded to the agents of time for the death of mankind. The fit took him at 6 PM, and remained on him till one the next morning, when it left him. But nature was crushed and lay silent before the fatal visitor—he never spoke after, but lay silent and motionless for a half an hour, constantly gazing on the companion of his youth, and thus did the soul lingeringly gaze, upon that decaying clay that had so long and so faithfully nursed that kindred body from which it was then unwillingly and slowly retreating. [. . .]

Upon arriving at your house, I lingered[?] round the door. I gazed on the apple trees. I heard the plaintive wind of autumn, so pregnant of delightful associations to me, passing on through the tree tops. It was night, and silence reigned quietly and still. A light was in that sweet old north room where I loved, wooed and won my lissy, and I heard the well known sound of Franklins voice. In the Kitchen flickered that other light so familiar to me, but how could I enter! And while I stood occupied with these and similar meditations, upon the door rock, the door suddenly opened and Franklin called me by name. Your ma and Susan hastened to greet me, but the voice of the formerly presiding genius I heard not.⁴⁸ It was too much, my philosophy was not competent to the occasion, and before I could scarce utter a sentence, I had to retire, and alone to myself I cried like a child. I soon, however, called to mind that I called myself a man. I must therefore be manly, so I summoned up my energies, and caused my tears to be dry and my weeping to be still. I entered the house, and the scene changed. How conformable to nature! In the midst of death there is also life. Upon reentering the house, I learned that Susan was to be married, at 7 oclock next morning, and her intended, was there awaiting the time, with whom F was conversing when I heard his voice above alluded to. This was the occasion of the light in the north room—the last bridal light ever to be kindled there at the marriage of a M[c]Lench. The house is to be sold, your mother to come here and live with Joseph— Susan is now here with her husband, Selden Higgins, while Franklin is to go hence, I think I may say, if nothing happens, to Oregon—⁴⁹

I will now say, that all the folks, living of both families, are usually well. Both your mothers are much smarter than I expected to find them. Elvira is at home, where she will stay for the winter.⁵⁰ [. . .]

I go to NY, tonight, thence to Washington where I shall arrive, with good luck, Thursday. Say to Mr Hill he shall have a political letter from me so soon as I get settled.

Tell Geo. H. all about his pa, and devote much time to his culture— Dont neglect it— My special regards to all hands.

Now dear wife, goodbye, and may the good Lord bless us and our little family & permit us to meet again on earth. Mean while I am as ever

Samy

P.S. Your Father was 73, & upwards, mine 71, and d[itt]o.

You must correct whatever is rong or omitted [in this letter] for it is so long I cant stop to go over it.

Now dear Lissy, I charge you not to let this news trouble you— remember tis only the port of “The journey of a day.”

I am right well & hearty and my spirits never better.

Washington Dec 15th 1849

My dear wife: I have just returned from the Methodist Church, and now sit down to write you this letter.⁵¹ Well, then, I am well, and have been so ever since I arrived here, which was two weeks last Friday night. I wrote you a letter last Sunday, but suppose you will be as likely as any way to get them all in a pile. It has now been two weeks since Congress met, and yet it is not organized. The Reps are so divided into parties, and so much involved in sectionalism, that up to last night they had not been able to agree on a speaker.⁵² The House now stands adjourned till tomorrow, Monday, at 12. oclock PM, when the attempt will be again made to elect, tho I am satisfied that no choice will be made, tomorrow, at least. What will be the result is almost impossible to tell. A portion of the Southern members, both Whig and Democrat act more like mad men, than like wise Legislators. They declare to the top of their voice, invoking God to the truth of what they say, that if slavery is restricted from the Territories of California & New Mexico, or should Congress interfere with it in the District of Columbia they will dissolve the Union. The Wilmot Proviso, you will recollect is the great arena in which these Southern gladiators are to fight the North. The Wilmot proviso is so called, because one David Wilmot, a representative from Pennsylvania, proposed an amendment to a bill having for its object the regulation of these Territories &c in the shape of a proviso, that neither slavery or involuntary servitude should exist in those territories except for crime. “Wilmot Proviso” has therefore become to be a term of very extensive and general import. It is used to cover every thing and every body opposed to the farther extension of slavery on the American Continent. You must, now, remember this explanation, so that if the subject should come up in conversation you will understand it, and

know how to speak of it. The doctrine advanced by these men, is the nullification doctrine advanced & begotten by Mr Calhoun, that no unconstitutional law, passed by Congress is of binding force on the individual states. That each state has the right to determine whether a law is constitutional or not, without waiting for the only constitutional remedy, its abrogation by the Supreme Court; and when the state has so determined, she has a right to resist its obligations. They have assumed in advance that the application of the principles of the Wilmot Proviso to our territories would be unconstitutional, and hence they say, if Congress should adhere to it, they, the south will dissolve the Union. They are not willing to wait untill the Supreme Court could pass upon such a law, and annul it, if it was unconstitutional, but taking the power of that court into their own hands, they declare it a nullity in advance, and swear they will act accordingly. But here is their dilemma. Should they merely attempt to treat the law as a nullity, by carrying their negroes into the Territory contemplated, after the principles of the Wilmot proviso shall have been applied to it, a case would immediately arise in the Supreme Court, by Habeas Corpus, perhaps, and the negroes would be set free. Therefore to get rid of all the difficulty in the case, they determine to dissolve the Union at once. They are not willing, when deciding in the capacity of the Supreme Court, to be content with the results of such a decision by that court, but strange to tell, they have come to the conclusion that for a law to be a nullity, by being unconstitutional, works, necessarily a dissolution of the Union. This is a summary of South Carolina abstraction. It has for its Father Mr Calhoun who, I have become satisfied, is laboring for one of two things, either that slave influence shall controll the destinies of this continent, or that there shall be a Southern Confederacy. But I deem the Union in no danger. These men will find it one thing to dissolve this Union and an other and different thing to do it, by threatening to do so in speeches made for benchmen[?].

A man on his way to California, found that bundle of notes & receipts of mine, that was in my trunk, on the sea beach near Panama, and knowing who I was sent it to me. This then seals the fate of my baggage. It was undoubtedly rifled, and my papers thrown into the sea, for concealment. The bundle referred to must have floated ashore. Good bye to it.

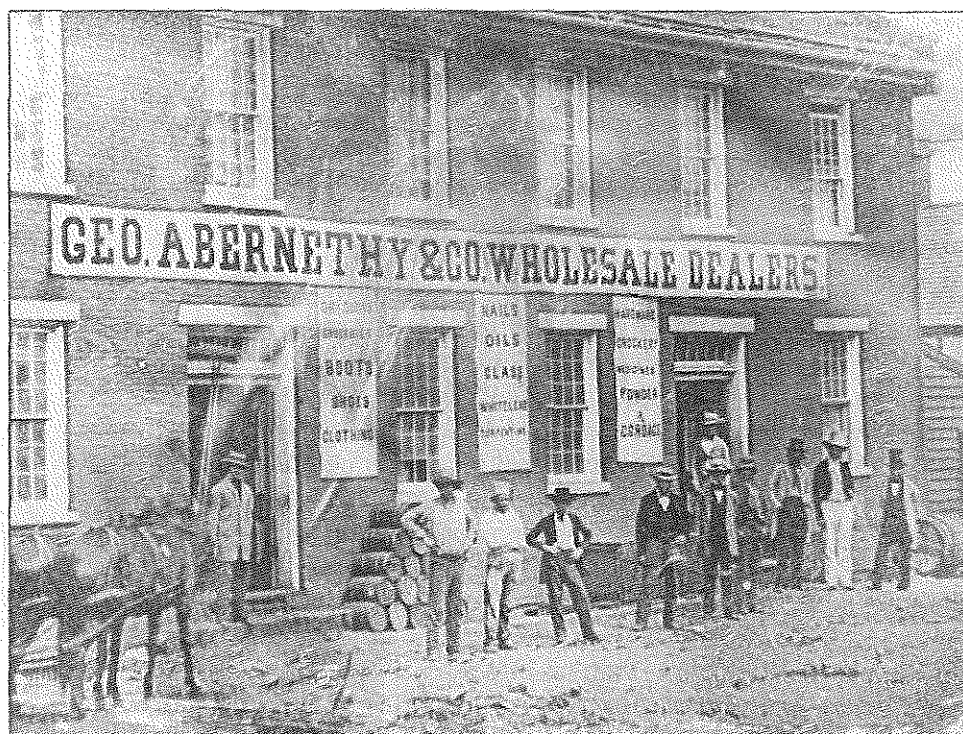
I am in right good spirits, only I am in want of some money, to forward the newspapers ordered or sent for by me. We cant get any money till the House is organized, so that I am not able to subscribe for the papers sent for so soon as I would have

liked to. I would like to have Mr Hill read this letter, and state the reasons why the papers are a little delayed, should he hear any thing said about it. More next Sunday. Save all the Documents I send you, respects to all, and dont forget the children. Tell Henry I will send him a primmer. Yours truly
Samy

Washington Jan 2 1850

My Very dear wife: Two days more, and it will be five months since I gave you and the children the parting kiss, and left my home on the Pacific, for this place. Since that time I have heard from you but once and that was while I was at San Frisco. I waited for the arrival of the Empire City from Chagres, on its last trip, with great anxiety, but when it came, it had no mail, but reported the mail lying at Cruces, fifty miles up the Chagres river when it left. I was much disappointed, but I wait patiently for the next arrival which will be in the course of 8 days from to day. The Empire City sailed from New York to day with the Pacific mail, and in that there is considerable for you, and more for the people in Oregon. There is also a letter apprising you, that I paid a draft drawn on me by Stephen Coffin for Eighteen [hundred] (1800) dollars, by arrangement between him and me. He agreed with me at San Francisco, to take up the note Abernethy held against me for 700 dollars, and hand over to you immediately.⁵³ He also lent me one hundred (100) dollars at San Francisco. He is therefore one thousand dollars in my debt, if he has handed you the 700 dollar note. As soon as you get this, if you have not received the other letter, and done it before, I want you to get Mr Hill, or father Moore, or Blain to call on him, and let him pay over to you the Abernethy note for \$700, and one thousand dollars, which you must receive in American gold coin as I dare not have you take the Pacific coin which may yet prove more or less spurious. You will show this letter to Mr Coffin, and say to him that I want you to have the money as soon as possible, as life is uncertain, so that I want you and the children provided for. This letter may answer to him as my order for him to [pay] over to you. . . .

I have been here ever since the last days of November, during which time I have been very well, and can truly say I have worked harder than I have done for a month before for five years. Nothing has ever been done, the history of matters are scattered through hundreds of volumes, and every thing has to be looked up before I can act with success. And the government officers have to be visited as did the widow the unjust judge, before you can get them to do any thing, even after they



George Abernethy (1807–77) built his wholesale merchandising business, located first in Oregon City and, after 1861, in Portland (as shown here), into a significant competitor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Abernethy's enterprises grew from the Willamette Methodist mission's former commercial ventures, and he retained a decidedly sectarian bias, helping Thurston to derail the Oregon City land claim of John McLoughlin, whom Abernethy called "a Catholic and one of the most bigoted kind." (OHS neg. OrHi 24306)

promise. I have got an order issued on Genl Adair to pay off the Legislature, and have got the Secretary of the Navy Department to order Aspinwall to run his mail Steamers to Nesqually & Astoria from and after six months, as it could not be done before, as they were entitled to six months notice before being called on to run up there, by a sub contract made by old Cave Johnson, in which the interests as well as the rights of Oregon were perfectly neglected.⁵⁴ I have now got a bill under way before the committee on indian affairs in the Senate, providing for the extinguishment of the indian title to all the land between 42 and 49 north latitude, west of the Cascade mountains, and to remove the indians East of the Cascades, and appoint agents &c &c. I think I shall be able to get this bill passed in the course of this month.⁵⁵ This is the first step towards our land law.⁵⁶

I am also occupied a good deal of my time in writing to all parts of the country to answer letters addressed to me for information concerning Oregon. You will find a long article of mine in the *Intelligencer* of this week, in reply to a most dirty letter written from Ft. Vancouver, slandering both Oregon and her people.⁵⁷ Of course I could not let it pass unnoticed, and you will see that I have handled the scamp without gloves. There is no doubt it was the dictation of the H B Company.⁵⁸ I will send you the *Boston Courier* in which the article appeared. Nothing has yet been done in Congress— not an officer of the House is yet chosen but a speaker. The House meets tomorrow, at 12 PM, when I shall commence to move some of my measures.

I promised Frank I would not tell you, but it is too good to keep. If nothing breaks, he will leave New York for Oregon, about the first of June next in Hunt & Coffins Steamer, and if he lives, and the boat has good luck, will arrive at Portland in September next.⁵⁹ That is the arrangement now. He writes me, that under my advice, he will leave home, in March. The first, to work in an engine shop, at Boston till the first of June, so that he can come out as third engineer of the boat. Mother will leave at the same time to live with Joseph. Joseph would come very quick but his wife wont go. I have had one letter from Joseph & Susan since I was there, one from Frank but none from home. Susan was boarding at Joseph's, and is the same kind harted Susan yet. I have also written to Mr Phelps & he has replied.⁶⁰ I shall banter him to go to Oregon. There will be a post to Oregon next season. I will close this now, and will write again soon, in which I shall have a little private talking. This letter you will let Mr Hill read, and tell him that I am on hand & nothing shall be neglected.

Dont fail to see that Mr Blain forwards me a copy of all the names of the males over 21, returned at the last census. Tell him to be prompt.⁶¹ Mean while tell Mr Hill to forward me a list of names of the most influential men all over the Territory, and let him note where each one lives. In the last month I have franked over one thousand papers and Documents to Oregon. Have sent five hundred Pres[idential] messages. I intend that the people shall derive some benefit from my franking privilege. I recieve over twenty papers per day, all of which I frank to Oregon. Give my love to everybody, and tell Geo Henry, his Papa wants him "to writ[?]" an other letter.

Kiss those little ones. Pay great attention to Geo Henrys education, and learn little Lissy to think of her Papa. So I close, as ever your affectionate husband

Saml R Thurston

Washington Jany 7, 1850

My dear wife

It is Sunday again, and I remember you.⁶² I am pretty well, tho I have to write so much it lames my stomach. The mail has not yet arrived from Chagres, tho I expect it will in 3 or 4 days, so that I have not heard one word from you since I was at San Francisco. Before you will have received this, Old father Moore will suppose his gold is lost, as I wrote him and you it was. I wanted to see what the old Coon would have to say whether he would blame me or not. Supposing he would or would not before this, and I want you to find out before you tell him to the contrary, I now inform you that it is not, tho my trunk, my own money 165 dollars at 16 per oz are all gone to the Devil. Old man Moors gold being saved was a miracle, for I had made up my mind once to let it be in my trunk I was so sick. Then I concluded I would take out the money. I undertook it, but absolutely had to give out before I could find mine, it being folded up in some of my clothes. I well remember how I felt when I took out Mr Moores, before we landed at Panama— the sweat farly streamed of[f] of me. Well I got Mr Moors out, and I would not undergo the anxiety again for five hundred dollars, for I had to keep that in my pocket as bungling as it was and at night lay it folded up in my coat under my head, and then fear and tremble lest it would be lost. Well I got it through, and the mint not being open when I came through Philadelphia I brought it to Washington. Christmas I started to go to Phil to carry it, but on getting to Baltimore I found I could send it by express and thereby save Mr Moore ten dollars expenses, so I did it but not hearing a word from the Mint for several days I became frightened, and thought [it] had probably gone at last, so I sent a despatch by telegraph, and received for answer, that the express man had deposited it, but did not leave any directions.

I then wrote to the mint to keep it subject to my order, and wrote to Missouri to Mr Moors friend to inform him that it would be paid over to him on call. My whole expense in going to Baltimore & telegraph is 6\$. And I suppose Mr Moore will get about \$18.25 per ounce. This is what I have heard. So you can tell him, and ask him whether he blamed me any for losing his gold. My own loss absolutely was over four hundred dollars. [. . .]

I sent you three hundred dollars by Mr Powers from San Francisco. Let me know if it came into your hands. I left you 150, I believe. If you get the \$1000, you will then have \$1400 and fifty to spend. Be saveing my dear and I will. When you get

that money, for mercy's sake, dont allow it to be stolen. Look out well— Keep it in your feather bead or in some safer place, and this letter let no one see or read. I want you to inform me how much money I left with Mr Blain, so that I may know how much I owe towards those lots. Write me all you can think of, to which end keep a little journal of what passes, is said or done, so that when you write you can remember. I love you very much my dear. You are dearer to me than all riches or honors.

Now dear, I want you to be very attentive to Geo Henrys education. First educate his heart, by inculcating into his mind the principles of the moral law, and the republican principles of equality. Then I want you to cultivate his imagination, for a good imagination is very essential to make an orator as I wish to out of him. And I wish you would not fail to learn him to make his “great big speeches” for the notion early inculcated has much to do about his future drift. Then get him to reading, and let him read such stories as will but develope his mind, awake his imagination, and strengthen his judgment. And an other thing be careful of, to learn him the worth of money, and to accumulate, hence you may hire him to make “great big speeches” at a half a dime a piece, and teach him to preserve the money, with which you can buy such needful things as you would buy any how. I can[’t] help laughing to myself, every time I think of his “great big speeches.” How sweet it would be for me to spend one evening with you and the children. That little angel of a Lissy. Kiss her many times for me. And you must tell Geo Henry, every time you get a letter from me, that I said some good thing to him. This you can arrange to meet the occasion, as I can make you my special spokesman in this behalf. Such[?] a course will make him love his poppa and remember him, and it will all help to make good indentations on his little young mind. Bless his little heart, my heart goes out after him, and loves him almost to idolatry— Oh, may our God spare him to us, and enable us to train him up to be a man of God, and of usefulness. [. . .]

I have a foreboding that I never shall see old Father Moore again. Not that I think I may not live, but that he may not till I come back. Say to the old gentleman, that I remember him with the warmest feelings, and that he must be careful of his health.

I suppose Mr Hill has got you that room fixed, if he has not he must. Now dear, I think for you to keep school there will detract too much from your ease and expose yourself. I want you to be happy and comfortable and therefore I think you had not better tax yourself, but devote your time to “Henry Boy”

and to your domestic work. I have bought me a fine watch chain and shall a watch. I think I shall have to buy you a gold pencil & chain and a breast pin, if you are a good girl, and I know you will be, for Lissy is always good. Now my dear love me, and think much of me. Be very careful of your health, and dont fail to have your good warm flannel shirts and drawers. I want you to narrate some of my sons feats since he has been to "Mister Hills." How is my stock? Have you bought that cow, and is all my stock at Mr Hills. Has he sold my horse . . . Good-bye, my dear, and love your affectionate

Samy

Washington Feby 10, 1850

My very dear Lissy. I am just up, and am now writing in my shirt sleeves. It is a lovely morning— pleasant as in April, and it is Sunday, a day in which I always write my loved one. Truly, my dear, you are my loved one. The more I am away from you, and the more I see of others, the more I love that Lissy of mine, whom to love is pleasure. She, associated with whom, are those darling children, our little "Henry Boy" and little "Hester," is to me a most deliteful object to meditate upon. O, how happy I shall be, to meet you again. I am so burdened with the labors necessary for me to attend to, that my mind is drawn from you much, and perhaps it is necessary that it should be, but when Sunday comes, and with it those lovely associations of bygone days, and happy hours, and lovely pasttimes, and pleasant, confiding, unrestrained conversations, when all these come, then rises my loveing, warmhearted, affectionate Lissy before me, to claim my thoughts and my attention. I know my dear, that you love me, and that you doubt not, cannot doubt, but that you are the darling object of my heart. So you are, and I trust, and pray you ever may be. I have frequently though[t] how heart rending it must be, after one has love[d] the object of his youthful choice for years, and been accustomed to look upon her as a part of himself, and the best loved half, to be appalled with the stern reality that she is untrue, unfaithful, unchaste. My God, how like a thunder bolt it would fall on me. Yet if the bolt should fall on me, I'd shift it, I would by no means be smitten down by it, I would stand erect amidst its shattered fragments, but I would ever after scorn the race of women. Sometimes I have thought it would not take much to make me do so, for I sometimes nearly do it now, with the exception of my Lissy. Such a race of women as are in Washington City! To marry one of them brought up here, is to drink damnation, is to blast him who marries her, unless he has the

“[The women of Washington, D.C.,] have their backs most elegantly clothed, but in 3 cases of four like the gray squirrel, cover their back with their *tales*.”

fortune of a Crassus, and if he has and be a man anywise inclined to retirement, or sober habits, she is a perpetual thorn in the side of his good inclinations.⁶³ They have their backs most elegantly clothed, but in 3 cases out of four like the gray squirrel, cover their backs with their *tales*. My breakfast bell is wringing, so I will finish this afterwards.

The Empire City arrived at NY the 6th, but no mails. The mails are now expected daily at NY. I hope I may receive something from you. I never have had a word from you except the first letter you wrote, which I recd at San F. I do hope I shall get mail enough to be informed what is going on in Oregon. . . . Have recd two letters from Mr Phelps. There is a vessel of upwards of 600 tons now lying at Boston, loaded with families mostly, who are to settle in Oregon, after stopping a while in the [California gold] min[e]s. I am negotiating with them to go to Oregon direct. They intended to settle in California, but I effected a change in their determination by writing to them. [. . .]

Washington March 24, 1850

My dear one. Yes, my very dear one, for I do love you most warmly this morning. It is Sunday with a beautiful sun, and I am just this minute through dressing and washing, for I wash myself all over every morning. How pleasant the thought, dear that I am on the last year, next before I shall, if the good Lord spares my life and health be on my way home to my wife and children. The thought is surely delightful. And if I could be there this morning with my angel wife and my two little ones we would have a kissing time of it. How does my little Lissy get along, dear? You must be sedulous to guard[?] he[r] against diseases, for I dote on her very much. You need have no fears that I shant love her, no, no fears for her little sweet image has been twinkling all the time like a bright star in the firmament of my mind. And the little Henry boy is the *Sun* of that horizon shining forth in “a great *beeg* light.” Bless the children. But, then, there is that anxious[?] sweet heart of mine, my Lissy, my loving wife, you my dear, in comparison to which all things earthly shrink into insignificance. [. . .]

You must excuse me for brevity, for you see Samy is Sammy

still. I expect to speak in the House tomorrow on the admission of California.⁶⁴ Now my breakfast bell rings so I will close, enclosing herein, to my imagination a score of the sweetest kisses to you and half the number to each of the babies which you may pay over for me.

Yours affectionately

Saml R Thurston

Washington Apr 15, 1850

My very Dear wife: It is Sunday, and I am just up washed, shaved and dressed.⁶⁵ The thought came to me that this is Lissys morning, so I sat down to write. And an other thought came to me, that is, whether in all this day Lissy will think to write to me. [. . .]

I am tolerably well, but am troubled a little with the tooth ache. And now by the way, if a Dentist comes to Oregon & D[r.] Sacket will be back this season, be sure and get your teeth fixed. Dont fail dear. How much are you learning Henry boy. There is a little boy whose parents board here, and he is but six years old, and he can read writing readily, and can wondrous[?] write very pretty letters to other little boys. Will you be up to that with Henry? Do, dear, be diligent with him. Bless his little stars & the stars of little "kitten" too. I dont know what time the session will close, but you may set it down for nearly the whole month of August. I say to you confidentially, that the prospect is now that the Hunt & Coffin steamer will tumble through. I cant account for Hunts conduct. He has acted more like a crazy man, than like a man of business. He has got three hundred dollars of my money which I wish I had back, and by the way, it would be a cooler if I lost that and the 1800\$ I paid for Coffin. If you have not got your pay yet, I want you to be diligent till you get it. [. . .]

Minute down all your transactions & preserve the same. I have written you before as to these matters, but write this, lest they miscarry, attend to them. If then the lots are paid & provided for, there will be left to you after C[offin] pays the A[ber-nethy] note, \$1000, and the \$400 & odd dollars I left with you say 1400\$. Now *confidentially*, after I pay for a press & get it to Oregon, with no bad luck, I shall be able to reach home with 2000\$ more, making rising \$3000 in cash, besides our property.⁶⁶ This will be the best I can do with the most rigid economy, for I am strictly so, tho it costs me much to keep Oregon right side up, by way of printing & circulating information. There then, excuse me, the 2 lots at LC [Linn City] 2000\$. The block at Asto[ria] \$1000, lots at Portland 300, where our house

is \$4000, and the ten acres enough to make up 10,000\$. But suppose we are or shall be if I live to get home worth ten thousand in all, that would have satisfied us five years ago. The Press (Confidential) will be worth 1000\$ at least. But be saving, dear, for if we live we shall want a good house & some conveniences by & by. Love me dear & be a good girl. [. . .]

Washington May 26, 1850

My Dear Wife.

I love you very much this morning. I lay on my bed this morning, and thought of you and the little ones, and O, my heart went out in prayer for your safety. I frequently learn, before I know it the depth of my love for you and the babies. When I find my heart involuntarily praying for your safety, and that I may meet you again— When I find my self regaling in the imagination that Henry Boy, and little Lissy are on one side of me in bed kissing poppa, & Lissy, my dear wife, on the other side, breathing kindness & kind words, I conclude I love them and I did not know how much till I left them. O I hope the Lord will permit us to enjoy long years together again

My Dear Henry will be four years next December. Dont fail, Dear to have him be learning all you possibly can. Always tell him that Papa speaks kindly of him and wants him to be good to his mama and a good boy, and that Papa wants [him] to learn fast. Bless his little heart, I can see his black eyes sparkle as you so tell him.

If Franklin is alive, he is now on his way between Panama & Oregon. I tremble lest something may befall him. I pray he may reach you in safety. It will be such a consolation to you. I will bid you good bye dear. Remember me faithfully, and believe me your true hearted husband.

Saml R Thurston

Washington June 9, 1850

My Dear wife

One word to you before breakfast. I have just got up and am now in my shirtsleeves. The weather is very hot and I dread it. So far I have kept from being down sick by constant attention, but I do fear three months more in this hot place.

You will have heard that I have got my Indian bill for treating with the Indians through, yesterday.⁶⁷ I also got a bill finally passed appropriating \$20,000 for a penitentiary, and \$20,000, in addition to the five thousand for public buildings.⁶⁸ I hope to get my land bill through, but it is only by unparalleled exertions that I have got any thing done.⁶⁹ So bitter has

been the session, and so hostile one section against the other, that it is next to impossible to get any thing done. I have succeeded so far, and have in all, already, got eighty thousand dollars appropriated to be expended in Oregon.⁷⁰ [. . .]

Washington June 15, 1850

My Dear, very Dear wife: It is Saturday night & the middle of June. After tea, to night, I walked pensively out, by myself, to the Capital grounds, and lay down under a shade tree, on the carpet of nature. Gray night was settling down on earth, and the busy hum of the Pennsylvania Avenue, reminded me of busy yet passing life. I involuntarily fell into one of those moods better realized than described, when busy recollection brought up before, in full panorama, the whole fold of my passed life. As swift thought ran on, she stopped to cast a passing look at my present age, at which my reason admonished me, that if fortunate above the common lot my race was quite or well nigh half run. With a bound, association led me to the rugged hill side, where I learned to toil with my father, then more vigorous than I am now, and now lying at sleep hummed by the din of passing nature. There with him I labored in expectation, and there with him I suffered and toiled and sorrowed. There I looked into nature's book, and there I pined at what seemed to me her cruel partialities. Then & there I had my public aspirations, always wishing that I might some day be the possessor of a competence, and be one among the honored and respected of the town [Peru, Maine]. I had not hoped to arrive at high honors, such as a sickly taste terms honors, for I could not see how I could reach them. I had no Education; long years were necessary to acquire one, and how could I, with not a dollar in my pocket, or friend to call on for one, obtain that education? It seemed I could not, and hence at the earlier part of boyhood I did not think of it or if I did, it was only to think I could not get it. Wherefore I thought, and so reasoned, if I could become an independent farmer, and respected as such usually are, it appeared to me that I should attain my aim. So I used to paint to my self my farm and buildings, my wife and children, and in these thoughts I was happy.

How little then did I realize my devious life! How I planned, but planned in vain. Events shaped my course, and as you have frequently said, in the language of an other "There is a Divinity shapes our ends." How true this is! It seems, and such is the case, that the falling of a leaf, or a spi[k]e of grass, caused by some power perhaps unseen, unknown, turns the stream of life, and causes it to run in a channel which it never would have

Meeting House near Bolsters [Bolster Mills, Maine], seeing *all the other boys*, all most, better clad, and how shy I felt! How bashful, how fraid, and with what fear would I approach Bolsters house, lest I might furnish cause for remark to some of the inmates! And such would or might have been the case, and perhaps it was so. I desired to be spoken well of, but how could I? I had not the apparel, and hence such grandees as the Knap, the Halls, the Farnams, the Vagins[?], and the Adamases, would not notice me, or if they did, it was to laugh at me. How many times I have cried, and how many, have I prayed most earnestly to God to bring me out of those tribulations.

Time rolled on, and in her orbit she has wrought many a change. Oh, may I never boast, or be exalted in my own eye. Would that I could write & keep pace with my thoughts for they are on nimble wing, and they discourse eloquently. But a little incident. Last fall, when Frank carried me up to Peru, he & I went up to Bolsters, down by the falls & home. "Stop the horse" said I to Frank and it was done accordingly. "How do you do, Mr Knap." He stares intensely, and surveys me from head to foot. "You know me dont you." "O, I swear, is that you Thurston" said David Knap, as he rushed up and shook me by the hand right heartily. This was David Knap, the greatest gentleman in all the country round, when I was a boy of sixteen. Now he was ragged & poor. Then Mr Thurstons son, of Tally-vally[?], was beneath his notice.⁷¹ Many a time have I seen the haity young man stalk passed me, as if to scorn the earth, and to convince me of his Mightiness. I used to go to spelling school, in the Withington Neighborhood, & true[?], in chosing sides I was honored in being chosen among the first, but then there used to be this David Knap with a host of other grandees, acting the part of the Tyee, either condescending to play the pedagogue, or to sit in state, and listen to the spelling.⁷² O, that I had brush & paint adequate to the throng of thoughts. How great were these yong ones! This one lived in a two story white house; that one in red of same dimensions, while a third in one of brick— all dressed fine, as was then & there thought, and all perhaps, rode in state in some dashy buggy or chaise, and to make the whole more imposing, the ladies carried fans, and to the waistband of the dandy dangled the massive watch seal. But there was I, the plainly clad boy, in thick shoes if shoe at all, in felt hat, and my home was the rude log cabin! What an eternity of distance, as I then thought between me & them. But time works out her task. Little by little have I seen that distance lessen, and terminate in most cases, like the instance above alluded to. And O what a lesson! "Let

him who thinketh he stands take care lest he fall." How careful ought man to be not puffed up, or proud, or wish to overshadow his neighbor. And what abundant reason there is when one supposes he is elevated to be humble, and unpretending. O, my dear wife, if God spares our children, labor to make them generous & noble and while they are to be taught to scorn man service, and the idea that one is to be the footstool of an other, let them be taught also to turn aside, if they should be blessed with a fortune in life, to pay respects to the poor and to encourage them. I well remember when I used to resolve, before I could see a gleam of hope for accomplishing my resolve, and could I have had those whom I fancied to be, in their own opinion at least, my superiors, give me a word of encouragement, how it would have closed up & strengthened the shattered forces of my wavering resolutions. But to return to the incidents in my own life, changing what before seemed to be its future course.

About the time I was sixteen, in my 17th year I boarded at David Marbles, in Poland, a cousins, where I worked morning & night & went to school. How m[an]y times I have been chagrinned there by this same pretended superiority in society. How many young ladies have slighted me, who, since, might not have done so. Then I *sort of* fell in love with a girl. Well she slighted me because I was poor, & well she did, for had she not, my whole destiny in life would have been changed. The winter I was there, my father agreed with one Joshua Graham to bind me to him, till I was 21, for this 4 1/2 years hard service I was to have two months schooling, two suits of clothes, and \$125, when I was 21.⁷³ And this was thought a *right smart chance*. Truly I thought, if I could see 21, & be allowed to retain this sum of money, I should be in a fair way to arrive at distinction by way of beginning to be a respectable farmer. So I left Poland, yet in love with the girl, hoping really that I might be fortunate enough to become 21, get my \$125 and her. But as I said, I was poor, & she thought she had better. I knew, nay, I well remember, I reasoned the cause at the time, and traced it to this fact. Well, I remembered too, while yet sorry that it was so, that I prayed and resolved to overcome this cause of my being slighted. And is it wicked? I know it is, but I can hardly suppress contempt, when in latter times I have been *cordially* received by the same personages.

Well, I worked at this Grahams very hard for eight months, and becoming dissatisfied, and resolving not *to be bound by indenture*, a flare up ensued, and I left, and never received a dollar for my work. Should I live to go to Peru, this summer, I

intend to visit this Graham, and take dinner with him & climb that mountain once more, where I have gazed on the silvery thread of the river, and held anxious converse with my own meditations as to what my future life would be. Sweet old recollections, and sweeter for being now seen through the vista of the passed. *I would not be bound*, changed my destiny. How fancy starts up, and figures that Divinity of ours, whispering in the ear of the mountain boy, admonishing him not to be bound. Thank God that I was not bound.

I next went home, with a full determination that *I would live at home*, and inherit the homestead. Well if I had, it would have added much to the happiness of my aged parents. Then I used to think, when the unwelcome moment would arrive, calling upon me to stand by the bed side of those loved parents, and do the last offices of life. In that I have been disappointed. My father is no more, and when my mother will follow the Lord knows.

My father being in debt, I sought an opportunity for labor. Consequently I went to Livermore falls, & hired out in a carding machine with Nath Mayo. Here I worked six months & made some 60\$ for my father; and here too, I again felt the weight of society upon me. Here too, I was second grade, in dress, and that was the whole man. Here I was slighted by the young ladies again. Well while here I made up my mind to learn the trade, but Mayo acting a little hoggish, as I thought, in keeping some of the art of dying from me, made me mad, and I abandoned the idea. And here again was the line of my march changed. About this time I became sick, and for a long time, I was suspended between life and death. I was at that age when there appears to be a corner to turn in life at which many a traveller falls. The contest was doubtful, but I was successful—The corner was turned.

My next pass in life, of more immediate note, was my commencing to study under Timothy Ludden.⁷⁴ So sick I could not work, I tended his store, and devoted some three months time to study under his direction, in a way that was worthless. This was in the spring. And I well recollect, that one day I made it a *matter of record*, that I would never give it up till I got through College. But how I could get through I could not see, but I resolved in the Dark. One night as I was going home, with the side ache, & sick, as I stopped to pant at the bottom of the Hill, this verse in rime came to me, which I have always remembered since "Well said I, in silent thought, Learning to me is dearly bought, But I ne'er will give it ore. Untill I have perused it more." It was this spring that I cut the acquaintance, *for*

“Had your constancy shaken, how can I tell on what rock [my barque of life] might have dashed, or on what quick sand wrecked.”

cause, of an early lover, and formed a new attachment to the Hall Girl, one of the aristocracy I have named. I had begun to look up a little. But the fact, that I did not get her letter, as I have explained, to you, probably changed my destiny again. If I had become engaged, my course of studies never would have been, & I should have travelled an other path.

This being the case, I persuaded my father, to let me go to Monmouth academy the next fall.⁷⁵ He carried me down to Newell Fogg, & made arrangements for me to work night & morning to pay my board.⁷⁶ I recollect to have perceived that the fact that I was going to the academy was pleasing to my father. I can now well conceive the reason — I was his son. Oh, that God could have spared him to me a few years longer, but his ways are not mans. I studied hard, and that winter I for the first time attained a point, which I had always looked upon as very desirable in the path of honor — I became a school master.⁷⁷ Then it was, that the mountain boy began to be spoken of [as] a likely young man. And how gratified was I, that I had so far overrode the obstacles of life. I resolved to press on; and the next spring as I was proceeding to Kents Hill I met the Hall girl in the road, but being half bashful, half indignant, that she should have slighted me, for what I could not help, I passed independently by & did not speak to her, and I have never spoken to her since. When I go home I mean to do so. But had I spoken, and learned what I have since learned, how changed might have been my course. That course then hung upon a hair, but a Divinity shaped my end— I went on to school.⁷⁸ And then, at that school, the next year, by a mere accident, I was thrown across your path. I have often trembled lest it might turn out to your misfortune — since I am [certain] it did not to mine. My dear wife, how much cause have I for loving you, I may not particularize, but you was to me an anchor, have been to me an anchor, and still are, around[?] which my barque of life has been tossed amidst all manner of gales, but it has out rode them all. Had your constancy shaken, how can I tell on what rock it might have dashed, or on what quick sand wrecked. May the Lord preserve that Lissy and bless me with abundance for her happiness and support.

Now you recollect, the year before I entered college, how feeble I was.⁷⁹ O, how heavily I was weighted down. [. . .] But you will recollect, that I was at one time about on the point of abandoning my college course, and thought of studying law with Foster. I never shall forget, the time, when Lissy modestly hinted to me that she would prefer to have me go to college, and how quick, I well remember, did that hint determine my course. Had you acquiesced in my not going, or had as gently hinted that I ought not, I should have acted accordingly. And here again was my course in doubt, and who knows where & how it might have run.

To pass quickly on. My warm advocacy of the annexation of Texas led me to write Geo Dunlap that letter.⁸⁰ That letter was the positive[?] cause of my leaving Brunswick [Maine]. I am next at Burlington [Iowa] & my connection with that Press is the secret of my leaving Burlington.⁸¹ Now to pass over all and to advert to the Case Law Suit. Hembree came after weight[?] & he could not go.⁸² Had he gone, I might not & probably would not have been here. I went to take his place, and by reason, was afterwards employed by the other party, and after I had attended to the suit, on my way home, I stopped at Squire Demicks[?] where was Ben Simpson attending to a case at law before the Justice.⁸³ He was unknown to me. But hearing I was a lawyer, and being in a tight place, he called on me to help him out. I did so, and from that grew up the acquaintance betwixt me & Simpson, and to Simpson I owe my election.⁸⁴ I do not mean that he elected me, but I so trace influences, that had it not been for him I should never have been a candidate.

To pass over, ten thousand other parts in my life, a part of which I have often thought it would be well to chronicle for the use & encouragement of my children, I will now come to that night, after the election when it was definitely ascertained I was elected. The most restless night of my whole life! I could not but see the wicked efforts that had been made against me, & how narrowly I had escaped. I could not realize the fact, that I had attained the position, and I was glad for your sake, for the sake of my children, and for the sake of others. I shall never forget the warm friends that rallied around me. That I may prove myself worthy of their confidence is my most earnest desire.

But I must hurry on. That day I left you I shall never forget. And the thousand anxieties I had on the way will always dwell with me in memory. How could I leave my dear ones. Yet I was happy that I had been able to leave them a little [money], and should I be cut down I should be happy that I should be able to leave them a little more. I send you herewith Franklins note.

From this there must be deducted what he may have to pay out for Russel on the way, which Russel has promised to pay over to you the first money he gets in Oregon.⁸⁵ [. . .]

Be prudent, my dear, and calculate at acc[oun]ting in matters of money as tho you were alone in the world, for life is uncertain. I desire you to encourage Franklin after he arrives, first taking care that he get fairly recruited from his journey. Tell him from me, to make all & save all he can. He had better, if blacksmiths get as high wages as I hear, hire out in that branch. I will ship him a complete set of blacksmith tools by & by. Now dear I must close, and I love you very much, and very much the children. D[ear] dont spare their education. Tell Henry he must writ[?] his papa and you must let him, as often as you do.

I am tolerably well, tho not wholly so. Goodby dear. May God bless you, & return me in safety to you.

(*Confidential*) I shall be a candidate for reelection.

Yours truly &c

Saml R Thurston

Washington July 7, 1850

My Loved wife

I feel better than I did this morning. How I wish I was with you dear, and those loved little children. I want you should tell Geo Henry, that his papa thinks of him every night, when he goes off to the land of dreams, and every morning when he wakes up. Tell him I say he must writ[?] his papa letters by every mail, and that he must learn his letters, and learn to read, and then to write, so that papa can corrispond. Tell him he must not fight, but must be good, and kind to all the little [children] so they will love him, that he must not be cruel to any animal, or fly, or to any living thing. Tell him he must be polite, and learn to touch[?] his hat, and above all must he learn to make *great big speeches*, very often to his mamma, and his mamma must tell him how to do it. Do be careful of him, dear, and not let him get hurt, or killed. Read over to him all I have said, and then converse with him upon these things, so as to set his mind in the right channel as early as possible. Then there is my little Lissy. I suppose she cant talk yet, tho she is near 14 months old. Learn her to say papa, and tell her papa will come home by and by. & By the way dear, try to get Geo Henry off the notion of fisting[?], for it will make him many unhappy hours.⁸⁶ And an evenness of temper is a fine thing. Love me dear & trust in my return.

S R Thurston

Washington July 14, 1850

My Dear Wife

It is Sunday again. I feel a little stronger, and if I continue better till tomorrow evening or next day morning, I shall go to New York on some business for Mr Moore, and down to Chicope to see if I can get well again. I am quite weak yet, but believe I am on the mend. [...]

Contrary to your orders I sent your letters to Joseph's folks, telling them to let no one else read them. They know who Lissy is. You would have done so, for they are extremely anxious to hear from you, and of our children. They think a great deal of that Henry Boy of ours. That little incident about Henry sucking the egg and his lawyer like special pleading pleased me a great deal. I laughed heartily and often over it. All such little incidents as these, dear, come to me as precious morsels, and I hope you will continue to let me know all such. This was peculiarly pleasant, because I think I saw in [it] a *tact*, and *shrewdness* of intellect which if rightly shapen and cultivated will make our Henry Boy a distinguished lawyer, what I desire him to be. I hope my dear you will lead his little mind by small steps at first, but by rational mathematical ones, into the science of reasoning, and thus teach him at an early day to predicate legitimate conclusions on bases from which such and only such could be properly adduced. I desire him first to have a comprehensive mind, secondly a logical mathematical mind which can see and reason consecutively, and thirdly a mind richly stored with literature, sciences and the languages. Of course all these should be guarded with a thorough moral education. I desire all my children deeply read in moral sciences and moral and natural laws. An embellished mind is very fine, yet if but one can be had, a strong comprehensive mathematical mind is a safer basis of success than any other. I would *not* have [you] weaken Geo Henry's combativeness by any means. Rather strengthen it, for it is a giant in this world of war. Take care to give him the necessary accompaniments, conscientiousness and a full sense of moral obligations, and then teach him, guided by these, to plant his battery of combativeness and storm the very citadel of his enemies. Indeed, I desire him to be taught, when conscious of rectitude never to surrender, nor flinch from the most scorching focus of war. This letter you may keep for his guide when he grows to riper years. You know there is uncertainty of life. I may be taken from him, and I desire him to know that I live only for you and my children. He should also be taught, upon the first indication of his enemy to cease war, to be noble, magnanimous, and

never to persecute a fallen foe. To his enemies he should always be generous and liberal so far as he can without furnishing them a weapon with which to strike him. Always be ready to make peace — *never to ask it* — always ready to grant the most honorable terms of capitulation to an enemy, but push rather than ask them— fight to conquer but not to destroy— But I must close. Pray God, my dear, that we may meet again, when we can mutually train our children, and mutually enjoy each others love. Your own husband

S R Thurston

Washington July 29, 1850

My Dear wife. I am back here again, but am any thing than well. I will be careful, but the truth is I am worn down by labor.

I received by the mail just in the intelligence of Mr Hills death. It is of no use to reflect on the works of the Almighty, but really my heart sickened as I read it. One of the best men of Oregon has fallen. I did not imagine even, when I left, that I should never see him again. I am much indebted to Mr Hill for his warm friendship towards me. He was a true friend and a generous and noble man. Please assure Mrs Hill that I most truly sympathise with her in this sad calamity.⁸⁷ I have lost a very valuable friend, she a kind husband, and her all.

But this event has changed your condition. I desire you, as soon as you get this letter, to consult with Franklin how to manage till I return. Till I return! O, may God grant that I may be preserved to do so. Tell Franklin, that he must not feel bound at all to be governed by what I say. He is on the spot, and can tell what will be for his advantage better than I can. He had better take him a claim in season, so that if the land bill passes, and he has to live on it, and I should happen to return here again, you can live with him.⁸⁸ Hence I would like to have him take two claims adjoining, one for me and one for him. But if he was in business at Linn City, you could live at home and he with you. You and he must consult for the best, only, my dear, take *good care* to be located where you can be comfortable and happy. I wish you was with Wesley Shannon.⁸⁹ He has a wife and no children. Mr Powers folks, or Van Dusens, would board you. Dont be at all dispirited, dear, but act on your own judgement, making it the first part to preserve your health and that of the children. Whatever you shall do, will be approved by me, only look out, that you are not *swindled* and speculated out of. If you think it best to move home, and Franklin could occasionally see that you had wood and provisions, I should approve of that, and would advise it, were it not that you, being

on the spot can tell best what to do. This letter will reach you the very last of Sept or first of October, about seven months before I shall reach home, if alive and well. I should stay at home five months anyhow. During this time we would want to be at home. This may be a reason in your judgement for being at home as quick as you can. Let *no one* live in the House with you. Have it all to yourself. I shall build an other house as quick as I get home. Tell Franklin to write me what kind of blacksmith tools he wants. I desire you to keep an eye to Mr Hills farm. If it is to be sold, I want the refusal of it. I would like to own it not only for it, but out of respect to the memory of Mr Hill. [. . .]

Tell Frank to look out sharp for money making— Let him make all the dimes he can and lay them up in good investments

Have you got that money from Coffin. *Confidentially*, I expect Bryant to take half of the press and if so he will pay you over 300 or 400 dollars.⁹⁰ Be as saving as you can consistently. Mr Bush will come by the same mail as this.⁹¹ He will bring you a black silk shawl and some other matters. Then there is a box to come on the Columbia, to care of Lownsdale, containing a web of shirting, a bolt of calico, a lionese[?] dress for you, two pr of stockins, some stuff for Henry boy, some clothes woollen yarn & c.⁹² Bush will bring you three Pocket Handkerchiefs, and nine small ones for the children. I did not know what to buy for Little Lissys dresses. Be pleased to write me and send me a list of such domestic articles as we may want for family use, so I can buy & ship them before I go home. We will get them so for half price.

May God preserve you and the children, dear. Be cheerful, and happy and write me often.

Saml R Thurston

Wash. Aug 11, 1850

Sunday. My very Dear wife. I have before said to you, that I got no later mail by the Carolina, but, last night a Mr Abrams from Portland, who left Oregon by her, informed me that the Oregon mail brought to San F by the Carolina, was left at San Francisco.⁹³ This is infamous, & they will hear from it certain.

I am now tolerably well. Mr Abrams informs me, that my cause has highly gratified every body in Oregon, and that I have no idea of the good feeling there is towards me. This is no more than right, for I have worked, in almost an unearthly manner for Oregon for the last 8 months. I will do my duty & leave the result with the people. I was perfectly mad to learn from Frank & Russell that they were to take a sailing vessel for Oregon

about the 23 of June. Hope they have got to Oregon in safety. (Confidentially) There is a whig press on the way, owned by Coffin & others & to be edited by Chapman.⁹⁴ [. . .] I learned with no little pleasure that Chapman was beaten & that Moore was elected. Chapman will always be a candidate for every thing. But wont there be war with or between Linn [City] & Portland al[l]ies Lownsdale Chap &c on one hill & Moore & Co, on the other, when the press gets there?⁹⁵ Let it wax hot, meanwhile, dont say a word but be cautious how you speak.

But I admire the spunk[?] of these Portlanders. They sent on by Abrams \$900 to purchase a library with! What is Linn City about. Where is Oregon City? Salem, Milwaukie, &c?

My Dear, you must exercise your own Judgement, as to how & where you will live next winter. Do go to some D[r.] & have out that tooth, *cost what it may*. Consult your health & that of the Children. Bless them, kiss them for papa. Tell Henry Boy, that I remember him all the time, and that I hope to come home next spring and go with him to *bang a deer*. [. . .]

Oregon is looking up. From all parts of the country Emigrants are heading towards it.

How much will Mrs Hills claim cost? Let me know by next mail.

I got my Land bill through last Thursday, through the House.⁹⁶ I think it will pass the Senate.

I have already got \$96,500 for Oregon.⁹⁷

God bless & preserve you my Dear. You are invaluable to me. In you is cast my anchor, and around you the vessell of my life is tossed, always pointing to its mooring, and feeling that it is safe. Be true to me, & let me have Lissy untarnished by thought, word or deed, when I return. Love the little ones for me, & learn them to be good, to think deeply, my girl to be gentle learned & good, but my boy to be above board, invincible, immovable & rockbound.

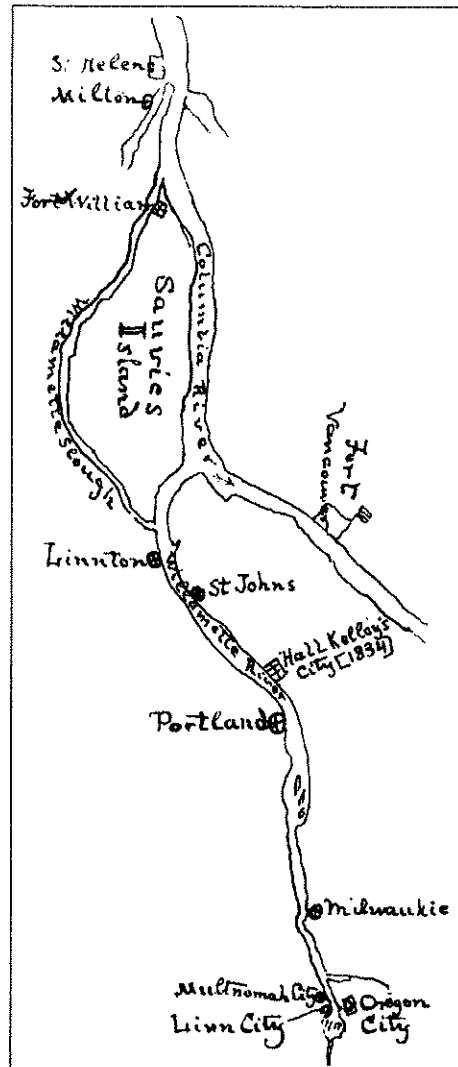
Goodbye dear. While I remain as ever your own dear husband

Saml R Thurston

Washington August 17, 1850

My very Dear wife: This is Saturday evening, but still I cannot refrain from writing you a few words. The immediate reason is, that I recd your letter today wherein you told about my little Chevallier's nocking the Indian. I know not how the letter came, or how to account for the irregularities of the mail. No steamer has arrived, yet several days after the last one arrived, I received this and several other letters. But leaving this, I must

During Thurston's era in Oregon, a struggle for dominance raged among fledgling towns on the Willamette and Columbia rivers. Residents of Linn City and Oregon City, cross-river neighbors, figure especially prominently in Thurston's words about town rivalries. Though Thurston was a Linn City man, he recognized and admired the "spunk" of early Portlanders. From J. Gaston, *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders* (vol. 1, between pp. 192 and 193). (OHS neg. OrHi 81958)



say, my dear, the story about my Henry Boy, pleased me very much. I think you must have been telling him some of the feats of knight arrantry, and talked to him of the laws of knighthood and chivalry, or he would not have been so prompt to vindicate of his insulted lady. [. . .]

An intellect at once acute, comprehensive and *ready*. In other words I see in him the elements of a great lawyer, and I pray Heaven that I may live to see him stand at the head of the bar in his beloved Oregon. But while we are proud of him, and are ready and pleased to see his good qualities, we must also be very diligent, my dear, to detect those of the opposite kind, and, while it is yet time, eradicate them, or give them such a

direction as to aid in strengthening his mind. Now, there is combattiveness when carried to excess, is bad, but yet it would be fatal to break down this element in his nature. We should keep it in its full vigor, but so train him that he will know when to call this passion from its depths and wield it with effect. While I want him cautious, considerate, and ready to conciliate, I desire him if need be, to be able to summon a spirit to his aid that will spread dread & terror at its approach. Then there is firmness, when carried to extreme, becomes to be called stubbornness or muleishness. [. . .] Yet we should also teach him, while his own judgement approves his course, to stand like a frowning cliff, or rockbound shore, as it bares its breast in defiance to the surging noisy billows which break harmlessly at its feet. [. . .] Be very watchful of his physical constitution, for that is the resting place whence mind & spirit put forth their efforts — this is the medium through which the mind speaks to man, the lenses in the telescope of mental vision, and if these are dimmed, or defaced, or incompetent to perform the proper office, notwithstanding the mind may be of the giant order, its power cannot be exerted, and the vision fails to grasp the object which is sought to be comprehended. And may our Heavenly father enable you to discharge towards him a mother's whole duty. [. . .] The little daughter, and all that pertains to her, and to her growth, education, and fortune in life is as dear to me as that of my boy. The thoughts of her are as warm, and I think of her as tenderly, and her little form sports in the green places of my imagination as delightfully as does that of our son.

I love to have you detail to me their little exploits, and Henry's remarks about his papa, and his different phrases, and developments of mind, are all read by me with so much delight! [. . .]

All the letters I receive assure me of the high approbation in which I am held by the people— all concur, in this, that I am gaining strength every day. (Confidential) John B M[c]Clane writes me, that at least twenty men have told him that they are ready to support me at the next election.⁹⁸ [. . .]

Washington Sept 16, 1850

My Dear wife: Congress is to adjourn in two weeks from tomorrow morning. I had been in hopes of getting my land bill through before this, but have been prevented by the interference of the military officers in Oregon.⁹⁹ I am satisfied there is a conspiracy to kill the bill, yet I hope they will not be able tho I very much fear. Were I in the Senate there would be no danger, as I could have got it through long ago, but now I have to wait

every Senators motion, each one having many measures which he wants to get through, consequently he will not put my bill ahead to the exclusion of his own.¹⁰⁰ In this way, if at all, I expect to lose the Bill. But I am doing all I can, having nearly worn myself out in my efforts, and will continue to do so to the last. I shall be able by next Sunday to inform you of its fate; as I shall despair of its passage, unless I can get it through the Senate this week. I am satisfied there is more influences to work that I know of, against it, as every night in my sleep I have a conflict with snakes. Night before last I got after a rattle snake who fled like the Devil, so that the most I could do to him was to hit him one lick with a club which knocked the rattle from his tail. On the same night I had to cross a riv[er] whose waters ran[?] booming and muddy by a fer[ry].¹⁰¹ My boat was loaded down to within one inch of the edge by passengers who were endeavoring to stop me. But I was in the head of the boat. Some one was steering, and he steered wrong frequently, and I as often would command him how to steer. At last having gone up stream along the shore, standing in the bough of the boat with buddle in hand I ordered him to wheel into the current[?] which was rushing down most fearfully, when he and the other passengers remonstrated saying that I would come in contrast with an other boat, loaded with passengers which the current was boring down stream a little ways above and out in the stream.¹⁰² However I had started, and with the quickness of thought I reflected that something *must* be ventured, so I applied my buddle with all my might directly in front and above my boat, so as to both propell and steer it, not daring to look back. Just as I had made the current down came the other boat and the two struck, but mine knocked the other about, but neither was upset, and while I looking asance see the current bearing that rapidly down, I did not speak or look back, but paddle with the seeming strength of a giant, when, at length I had crossed the river and gained the opposite shore. These may be favorable omens. One thing I do know it is an exact representation of the history of my bill in the House, for never should I have got it through there, had I not propelled and steered it, and pushed out into the stream while there was yet time. Could I have the same privilege in the Senate, the bill would long since have been a law. You see, my dear from this *dream* what are the anxieties of my mind. But I can do no more than[?] I can.

I have sent you today a fig branch containing three green figs, some leaves and slip[?] which I cut from a fig tree in Genl Washingtons old garden at Mt Vernon. It is truly melancholly

to visit the old place and travel over the decayed and ruined possessions of the old Hero, when we reflect, too, of its former beauty.¹⁰³ It is a pregnant history of the fruits of niggerism, which ought to satisfy any rational man, that there is no surer curse to a state, people, or to a single individual, than to depend on slaves to do your work. God grant that Oregon may never be afflicted with this curse. I cut me a hickory cane on the farm and intend to have it put in shape and bring it home for my walking stick.

By the way, Wesley Shannon writes me that amidst the utmost universal approbation of my speech, old Col Ford is opposed to it, *because* it does not *favor* slavery.¹⁰⁴ Poor old sot! I am ashamed that there is one man in Oregon who would if he could curse Oregon by the introduction of a servile race whose presence would at once blast the very heart of our prosperity — free white labor. But, dear wife, I have no compromises to make, for dearly as I love Oregon, should she ever so far forget



Col. Nathaniel Ford and his wife, Lucinda. While the colonel favored the extension of slavery, Thurston spoke in Congress against its establishment in Oregon, explaining to his wife that he feared “the introduction of a servile race whose presence would at once blast the very heart of our prosperity—free white labor.” Ford (1795–1870) had moved to Oregon from the South in 1844, accompanied by two slaves and their daughter. After the slave couple had two more children in Oregon, Ford freed the parents but kept their offspring. Ford was forced to free the children as well in 1853, when the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited slavery in Oregon unless authorized by the territorial government. (OHS neg. OrHi 46159)

herself as to allow slavery to exist in her midst, which may God avert, we will quit her borders and flee to a *free* state.

I *really* pray that, when this reaches you, you will be at *the home*, and that Franklin will be engaged at Linn City. Tell him to look out for *every thing* till I come, for I know he and I can make two good estates, in the course of twenty years. Tell him to be *saving* and industrious. Should or should not I be re-ele[cted] I will make him an offer which will be advantageous to him and me and satisfactory on his part. Should he locate himself a farm before I come tell him to take what stock I have got onto it.

Of course dear, you will always consider what I write you confidential, unless I order the contrary. I consider Franklin the family & he can see any thing which *you* are wishing to have seen. Goodbye, now, dear till next Sunday.

Saml R Thurston

Washington Sept 22 1850

My Dear wife: It is now three PM. I have been writing out some remarks of mine all this fore noon, and have delayed writing you, and was nearly of a mind not to write you today, because I had not my Land bill through yet. I have got it threw the Senate, so that it has now been through both house[s]. The Senate, however, amended it in some points, so that I have got to get the House to concur in those amendments before it can become a law.¹⁰⁵ I hope to get it done, tho I am extremely anxious about it, as but one more week remains of the session, and I fear opposition to it may come from Oregon, and there has been from the start a set effort to defeat it here. I will do all I can, and shall have to announce you its fate next Sunday. I dare not predict what that will be.

The steamer is in New York. [. . .] I shall expect a mail from Oregon tho I hope none will come, for I fear it will bring opposition to my land bill.¹⁰⁶

I hope, too, to hear that you have gone home, and that Frank is at work at Linn City. I see O C Pratt came by this steamer, and I fear old M[c]L[oughlin] and Thornton may have sent him on here to look after British influence.¹⁰⁷ I hope in God he has left the Country for good, for from what I have heard of his decisions, I think they smell of money.

I made a lucky hit the other day about which you will say nothing. I got my mileage so changed, that I got some \$800 more for this session. On the ground that Coffin pays you, and Frank & Russell, and Blain & Moore, you will have certain \$2000 with this extra mileage. I mean to save \$1000 more this

session, and to save \$2000 next session. So that if you and Frank can get along with the 100\$ I left you and what things I send you, I hope to save 5000\$. [. . .] If I can save \$5000 this congress, and come once more, and save say 3000\$, or 8000 in both, that with our other property and what we can do at *home*, will make us as independent as wood sawyers. I believe, if I can save the \$5000 this Con[gress] that we may then recon we are worth \$10,000 and should I be so lucky as to get my bill through, I am not certain that I shant go on to a claim, for I consider that would be worth \$5000. [. . .]

Tell [Frank] to work all the time and to *save every red cent* he gets. It is money makes the man go.

D[itto] dear. I beg of you, keep the ague off of my little son. *Dont* let him take any Calomel. Be careful of his diet, and keep his bowels loose. A little sulfur, mornings, would be good—very good for him. I sent him another picture book. You must learn him. Tell him Papa was glad he was a good boy, and that Papa loves him all the time. I dreamed having a fine time last night with my little Lissy. I thought she could jabber[?] with her papa right well. [. . .]

Washington Sept 29, 1850

1/2 past 2 P.M

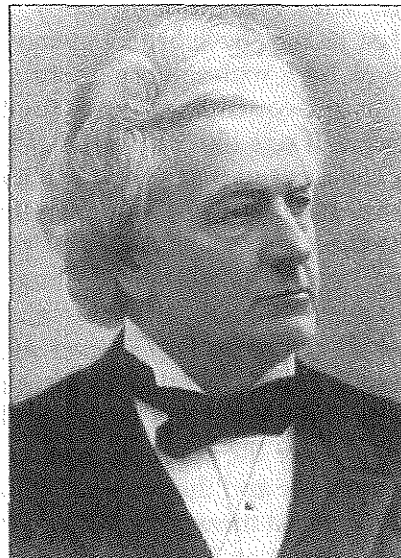
My Dear wife: The arduous toil of ten months is over, and we are to adjourn to morrow morning. I have been getting ready today to leave tomorrow at 5 PM, for NY, and to the east, but there is a void. O, could I now throw myself into the arms of my wife and little ones for two months, how happy I should be. But I will not be unhappy, for the past year, or rather the last 18 mos have been a memorable period to me. I shall always look back with intense interest on my canvass in Oregon, and the consequences to me & my family which hung upon its issue. It was like a man struggling with a band of robbers. But I came out of it safe, and I think I may announce to you, that they have fallen by a defeat a thousand times more disastrous to them than that was. Their present defeat is my triumphant success at this session of Congress, which arms me with a force against which they cant stand. Truly, dear, never did a Delegate come out of his first session so lucky and so successfully as I have. This Land bill, this great measure for Oregon is now the law of the land, and as the smoke clears up, and I look over the field, I see the scattered bones of D[r.] M[c]Laughlin, the HB Company and their actors.¹⁰⁸ Last night I made my last struggle for the last measure which I wished to urge at this session, the appropriation for my lighthouses & buoys. I came out of it

successfully, and won 65,000\$ for this purpose.¹⁰⁹ Three days ago I made a grand rally for 52,000\$ for the survey of our coast, and tho I had the committee of ways and means against me, I carried the House and got the appropriation.¹¹⁰ My Indian bill you have learned about, and my \$45,000 for a penitentiary & public buildings.¹¹¹ My post road bill is a law.¹¹² The final hour got for Oregon between 2 and 3 hundred thousand dollars in appropriations, besides her land bill which is worth millions to her. But I must close. I can say it to you that what I have accomplished for Oregon since I have been here astonishes myself. We shall be a state in three years. [. . .]

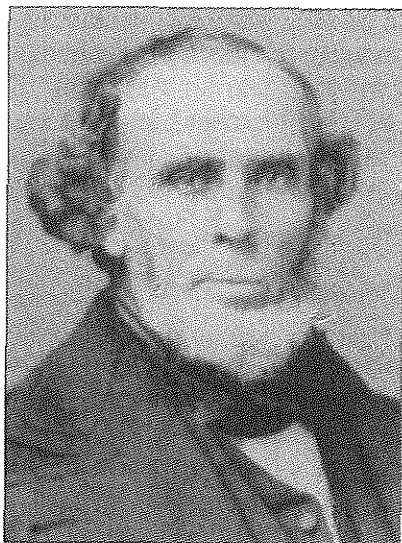
Washington Nov 30th 1850

My Very Dear wife: My whole heart loves you today sincerely. I frequently wonder, how it can be that you entertain the notion ever, that I dont love you. I know I *do* love you with a love stronger and purer, and more constant than I can discribe. I can *feel* it, but I cant tell it. Well, dear, today is Saturday. I arrived here last night, and have got my table *blocked up* again, and room in order, and have resumed my hard labor. I am at the same old place. As I shall be very busy tomorrow, you must consider this your Sunday's share. Now to business first. I brought on to NY, a pair of skin boots for me, one for Frank, two pairs for Henry boy, and a pair of clothcovered rubbers[?] for you. One pr of Henrys boots, and your rubbers[?], I brought here, and shall send them by Mr Ferguson who leaves here for Oregon the 10th December.¹¹³ The others I left with

Orville C. Pratt (1819–91) attended West Point for two years before turning to the law. He came to Oregon in 1849 and served as associate justice of the Territorial Supreme Court. Like other early Oregonians, he mixed his public and private interests, though he denied an accusation that he had accepted money from the Hudson's Bay Company while serving on the bench. After unsuccessfully challenging Joseph Lane for Congress in 1856, he left Oregon for San Francisco. (OHS neg. OrHi 45995)



Gov[?] Abernethy to be sent with his goods. I also bought me a hat and Henry boy a nice cap which will come with his goods. Then I left with Abernethy \$140.00, with which he will buy sugar, coffee, Tea, saleratus, molasses, spices &c, and some cotton cloths & a vest[?] or two of calico, and some cloth for pants, all of which with the things I left there will be shipped in his vessell and will arrive in Oregon next summer.¹¹⁴ In this way I will have, when I get home either there or on the way enough of provisions and clothing, aside from wheat and vegetables, to last us two years. Our wheat we can buy *or raise*, and our vegetables I know we can raise. In this way, dear, should I not be elected, as I have no doubt I shall be, we can go to work again, and go along as happy together as two early lovers, much more happy than we shall be if I *am* elected. Not only will we have enough to last us two years, but if the good Lord blesses me to get home well, we will have our property, and we can get our land, and we will have at least \$3000 in cash. If we could get along when we began in Oregon with *nothing*, surely we can then. So you see I am not at all alarmed about not being elected. Let us always be saveing, and so manage that we can be independent, whether fortunate in politics or not.— Well, I also bought Lissy a gold bosome pin in NY which I shall send by Ferguson which you may tell them cost twenty dollars, tho I paid but ten for it, and that I did pay. I also procured to have made 12 silver tea spoons, 6 large table spoons, two butter knives, and a sugar shovel, which will cost some fifty dollars. These I shall send you by Mr Ferguson. These and the pin as



J. Quinn Thornton (1810–88) was sent to Washington, D.C., by Gov. George Abernethy to lobby for territorial status for Oregon. Thornton met Pres. James K. Polk at least twice in May 1848, and the Oregon Territorial Act was approved by Congress on August 14, 1848. (OHS neg. OrHi 9493)

what I sent you by Frank, by Bush, and by the Columbia, you may kiss me for when I come home. I thought Lissy must have the bosome pin, and had I known the size of your finger I would have bought you a ring. I want my dear wife to appear well, and one of these days I mean she shall have her ictas, but now let us do with as few as we can.¹¹⁵ I spend nothing except what is absolutely necessary. My campaign is going to cost me something, but I know you would rather have but one meal a day, than to see me put down. My address to the people will cost me \$75. I have 5000 copies, and it is a pamphlet of 24 pages.¹¹⁶ The truth is, I dont want any thing to go out of my hands unless it is tolerable able. Hence I put a little science into it as you will see when it comes. Say not a word to any one about what it costs. I am not to be outwinded without a fight, nor will I give back, or fall, till my spear is shivered. This address is not all. They will find I have a bit to say about M[c]Laughlins letter, as of other things.¹¹⁷ As far as I have recd letters the people of Oregon are OK. I have found Grays letter.¹¹⁸ Keep Barclays safe.¹¹⁹ I will make little pennyweight and old Thornton rue the part they have plaid.

In love dear.

Saml R Thurston

Washington Dec 10, 1850

Dear Wife

[. . .] My dear, I was wakened this morning, in agony, dreaming my Henry Boy was dead. I thought I saw him, as he lay dead, and asked you if you thought we should ever have an other. My heart then appeared to burst, and it did seem to me that I could not live. O, Lissy, do be very watchful, vigilant of those dear gems. The longer I am away the more I love them. The same with you. Dont doubt my love dear for all of you.

I have sent Mr Moore a copy of D[r.] Fletcher's letter to me about the Oregon City lots, and asked him to publish.¹²⁰ Keep dark, but tell Frank to look out. It may be published — think it will.

Yours in love

S R Thurston

Washington Dec 15, 1850

My very Dear wife: I hasten this morning to write you my Sunday letter— I have been quite well since I returned, but have had to work very hard. I am now writing a speech which you will see when it comes. I intend to deliver it on the occasion of presenting the Oregon City memorial.¹²¹ It may be that

Wait & Thornton will get cudgelled a little.¹²² I may as well jump upon those fellows, for they will do me less harm when it is known there is a state of warfare betwixt us, than they can now, by professing that they speak from conscientious conviction. You need not lisp a word till it comes— I have received two receipts from you for one hundred dollars each to be paid over for Russells wife. I supposed they were for one and the same money. They were of different dates, and nothing in them from which you could infer that fact. I mention this dear to show you that you are a little car[e]less, as I might be held for two hundred dollars instead of one. You must allways deal as tho you had an enemy to contend with— that is safely to yourself— I shall not be able to leave NY before March 13, consequently shall not be able to reach home as you and Genl Adair supposed I might. Can you meet me at Astoria, without the heavy cost of the usual fare to Astoria and back, I would be pleased to have you, but the expenses are so great in Oregon, that without income, we must be very careful. I have supposed that Adair might offer to take you to & from free of charge. If so go, if not I had rather pay the money for something lasting for Lissy. But my dear, I entreat you not to anticipate, lest your heart may be broken with the sad disappointment. Col Lee was here to see me in better health than I am in or shall be, also the Moss's boy. Both died on the way to Oregon. I name this to caution you, for Oh how heart rending it would be if you and those gems of ours should be upon the beach at Astoria, anxiously looking for my form, and should be informed that I "was burried at Sea." Pray God, dear to return me safe to you.

I don't know yet, whether Frank Keene will come with me or go over land. I expect Higgins and brother Danl will go over land, and I have written to Keene to know if they are willing Frank should go over land, as it will not cost him over 100\$ that way.¹²³ I expect to hear in a few days— I have had all I can to get Susan to go over land with H, but she wont.¹²⁴ I dont think she does right. I offer to get them through, and let him have the team to work with, but all is of no use. Mr Higgins is without a single dollar to help himself to, and nothing to depend on but his labor. And so long as he remains in Mass he cant lay up a dollar, and then if either are taken sick, you see the consequences. He is a smart man to work, and now is steady. I cannot say he has not always been, but the fact that he is at least 40 yrs old, and has not a dollar makes me suspicious. I even lent him some money when there, and he applied for more in a letter just received. But I cant do it — dont feel it would be right, when I have offered to furnish team & driver

and money to get them through, and she will not go. I know what my Lissy did, and I owe too much to her not to make her the recipient of all I have. This lack of spunk I do deplore. I have paid \$100 for Russell, \$120 for E F Skinner of Benton Co, for which let Frank take a note, \$28. for Jacob Conser for which, d[itto], three for Gov Gains.¹²⁵ You must always make a memorandum of all these things, because they all pass from me no more to be remembered. Get that money of Coffin. He is a damned rascal or he would have paid it. I understand money is worth 5 percent pr month in Oregon. [. . .]

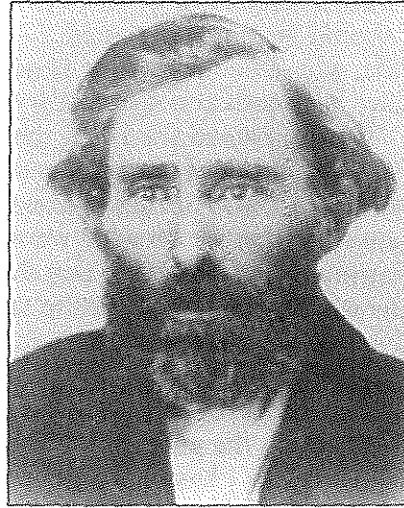
Washington Dec 22 1850

My very Dear Wife: December is drawing to a close, but I dare not anticipate the time of my departure or my arrival at my home, sweet home. Death lurks[?] round so thickly in every place, that my expectations may be cut off. The cholera in California is perfectly frightful, and I pray God it may not reach Oregon, tho I fear it will. Be careful to keep clean, and have your bowels as free from costive billious habits as possible. Live light, and wash every morning in Cold water.

The other day I recd a letter from Higgins, saying he & Susan would go to Oregon next spring. Today I recd one from Mr Phelps saying that they will go, but I have to furnish both the means. Now it will take for both Families & Daniel & Frank [Keene] at least 2000, but I believe I shall go it. I know I may lose, but there will be the teams & wagons, and then I must rely on them for the balance. But I do want Lissy to have some special friends in Oregon so much that I have concluded to stand it. [. . .] I dont know as you will approve my dear, but I have heard you so often repine that you had no relations in Oregon, that I have felt that I would bring you some if I could. [. . .] Indeed if they live to get through I dont think I will lose, and if I should Lissy will [have] some body to go to see where [she] will not have to manifest a cool care lest she be deceived. I am determind the whole race shall be transfered to Oregon, and let us scrich and be saving, and we will come out bright by and by. [. . .]

There will be a tremendous rush to Oregon next spring. Should Higgins & Phelps with families start, of which I shall apprise you before I leave here, Frank [McLench] must make calculations to meet them at the Dalles with aid & comfort.¹²⁶ [. . .]

An avid Oregon booster while serving as territorial delegate in Washington, D.C., Thurston financed the overland move to Oregon for family members and other acquaintances, including Eugene F. Skinner (1809–64), who arrived in 1846 and claimed land on the Willamette River one hundred miles south of Oregon City. The city of Eugene was named for him. (OHS neg. CN 002534)



Washington Dec 29, 1850

O, My dear wife: How I sigh to be at home. My circular which I supposed would relieve me from the thousands of letters heaped upon me has had the contrary effect, and doubled them.¹²⁷ All last night and this morning I was hurrying to get through, but behold when I was answering the last but one six or 8 more came by the mornings mail. So here I am, nearly sick too, toiling on through the crowd of letters yawning before me. Then again I have three thousand speeches to get off by the mail of the 11th prox, which will raise some of a breeze in Oregon.¹²⁸ HB Co. Mr Thornton & Wait are shook up to get them. I believe I am as celebrated in the states as almost any body else, for all creation appears to be paying their addresses to me. However, hope the good Lord will spare me strength two months more, and then let me reach home in Oregon in health. [. . .] Look out for my dear ones. Teach Henry politeness, ease of manners, nature, firmness, stern integrity— patriotism— Lissy teach as a girl should be taught. My dear you have got to shape my posterity, in heavens name give them a form that shall reflect everlasting honor on the artist. [. . .]

Washington Jany 1, 1851

My Dear wife

Today has been a gal[a] day with all hands. There have been drinking, and riding and visiting &c. but as for me, I have labored all day in my room from early morning untill now, which is 4 PM. I have not drunk a drop, and have eaten very sparingly of the lightest food. So far, my dear, I can truly say

I have steered clear of all vices and frolicking of every kind. I should be quite contented if I only had my dear wife by my side, where I could lay my head on her bosom when tired, and have her sooth and speak peace to livid nature.

When I named the 1851, the thought rushed across my brain—"another year numbered." How soon dear, our glass will be run, and the grass growing over our graves. How important dear, that we do what we have to do, and do it speedily. For myself, I see clearly, that duty calls me to be busy, so that the world shall not be able to say it is no better for my having lived in it. Could I remain here, dear, 20 or 30 years as some have, who are h[er]e, I see no very great obstruction to my carving out a name as they have done, and perhaps as lasting. But I am on the popular wave, liable as are all others to shipwreck before I have hardly commenced my voyage. But while I am here, I am determined to play well my part. It is very important that we do well *now*, and perform our *present* duties with skill and judgement. This you must teach your children. Let them learn, that whatever the thing may be which is to engage their attention *for the time being*, they must let none excell them, no matter how trifling or unimportant the matter may be, teach them to excel, for once getting in the way of it, it will become natural and thus excite them to noble deeds of action when things of a more important nature shall come within the sphere of their duty.

I love you, my dear wife; and the longer I am from you, the brighter your virtues shine out to view. Could you read my heart, dear, I am sure you never would doubt me again, or wound with that keen shaft of yours a heart that devotedly loves. I must close, dear. Be assured I am Samy still

Saml R Thurston

Washington Jan'y 5 / 51

My Dear wife:

[. . .] I am expecting the Oregon mail sometime this week, and I am more than usually anxious to get it, for I fear the cholera may have reached Oregon. If it should be there, and you are all safe when this reaches you, tell Franklin to get some lime, quick lime if he can, if not slaked lime, and scatter it all round the house on the filthy places. I am also anxious to hear further as to the moves of Thornton M[c]Laughlin Wait & Co. They will catch it by the same mail which brings this— I send you all the letters I got from our folks or any one else so that you will learn all I know— I notified you a day or two ago, that I had mailed you Rollin's A History 4 vols, History of Oregon 1

vol, Aesophs fables 1 vol. I also send you by this mail the *entire* writings of Genl Washington in 12 large folio vols bound in calf costing here \$20, that is in N.Y. They are carefully enveloped, and I dreaded to send them by mail, lest they might be lost or spoiled but I risk it. Recollect twelve volumes. Attend to them. By next mail I shall send you 15 or 20 vols of other works which I have carefully selected for Lissy & the children when grown. I like to have said, that you have no idea how my heart and providence goes out for those blessed children (and now I wonder again how Lissy could ever have dreamed I did not love her!) I also send you by this mail in bundles 700 or 800 of my California speeches for distribution when I come home. They are each franked so that you *will pay no postage* on them. Tell Frank to give one copy to every new Emigrant he sees. You will pay no postage on any thing I send— Has Frank picked me or him or both of us a claim. Let him attend to it for me, and he can best judge whether for himself or not. Have it *done for the whole world* is coming to Oregon. [. . .]

Washington. Jany 8th 1851

My Dear wife

I have sent you a long letter to correct for the Spectator.¹²⁹ The enclosed letter was designed as part of it but was left out by mistake.¹³⁰ The letter comes with a public Document and is in brown wrapper and marked Pub Doc. Have the letter herewith marked be placed in its place, carefully correct the whole and then deliver it to father Moore in person and tell him that I want him to publish it. Should he refuse, send it to Whitcombs paper unless the Statesman may be in operation.¹³¹ You will, if sent to Whitcomb's paper, let Frank do it.

I shall, if alive and well be at Astoria the last of April, and if you can go without cost, I would be happy to meet you at Astoria.

Yours as ever

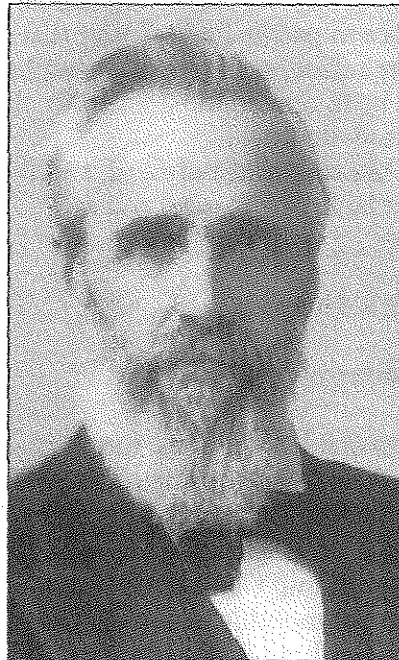
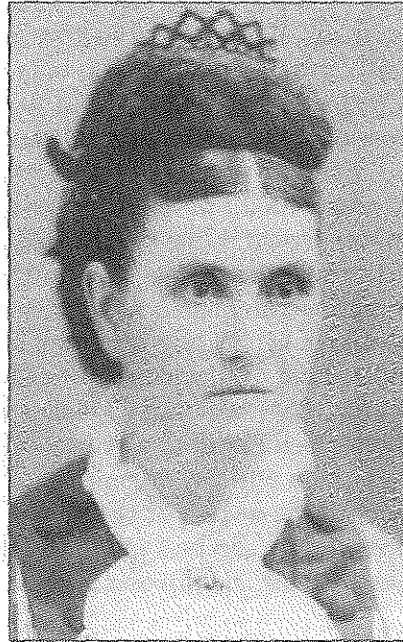
Saml R Thurston

Washington Jany 19, 1851

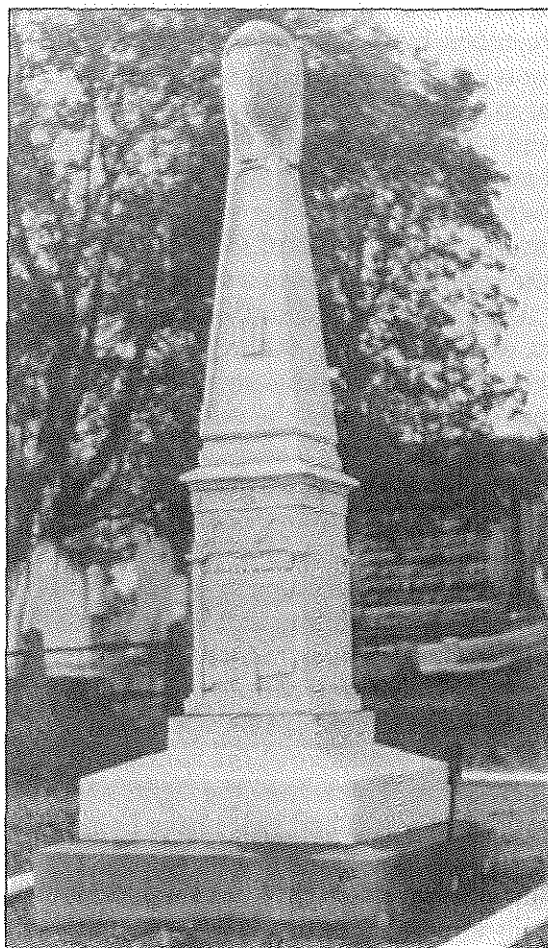
My Dear wife

Upon writing this date, I perceive it has been just four months since the Thornton and Wait meeting came off at Oregon City, since which I have had no news from Oregon giving me an account of any farther proceedings of the Arnolds of Oregon, tho I have had letters well into October.¹³² I have previously informed you that the last monthly mail from Oregon did not come, but it will now, without doubt reach me in

Elizabeth McLench Thurston (1816–90) faced an uncommon degree of financial and parental responsibility because of her husband's absence and premature death. Samuel Thurston, seemingly anticipating his own early demise, included much detail about his business dealings and educational aspirations for the couple's children in his letters to his wife. Following Thurston's death in 1851 at age thirty-five, Elizabeth Thurston married William Holman O'Dell in 1855. (OHS neg. OrHi 90858)



W. H. O'Dell (1830–1922) administered the estate of Samuel Thurston before marrying the late delegate's widow, who was some fifteen years his senior, four years after Thurston's death off the coast of Acapulco in 1851. He pursued the professions of teaching (operating, for several years, the Santiam Academy, in Lebanon, Oregon, with his wife) and civil engineering (once entering into partnership with his stepson, George H. Thurston, in the construction of the Oregon Central Military Wagon Road). He outlived his wife Elizabeth and married again in 1894. (OHS photo coll.)



This monument stands in the Odd-fellows pioneer cemetery in Salem, marking the grave of Samuel R. Thurston. After serving one term in Congress, Thurston died, during his return voyage to Oregon on the steamer *California*, off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico, on April 9, 1851. (OHS neg. OrHi 91746)

four days, and by it I expect news down to the middle of November. I am very anxious to hear from you, because by the monthly mail which left Oregon on the last of October I did not have a word from you, so that you perceive it is now over *four* months since your last dates which I have recd. I am, I cannot say anxious, but curious to receive the mail for the purpose of learning what has been done and said in Oregon since my last dates. I expect my enemies have taken advantage of the quiet and not reception of much news consequent on the recess to blow their blast against me, but the news of my success must have reached Oregon by the last of November, and if I am not mistaken they will find it hard work to roll back the tide of enthusiasm consequent upon it. I suppose every appliance will be made to set the Assembly against me, but I am mistaken if

they can succeed. I am aware that my address should have reached Oregon in December, but it will not untill the last of this month.¹³³ But I see it happened very appropos, that my address written & sent to you was published after the proceedings of that meeting, tho I have recd only the paper containing the first part of it.¹³⁴ I am apprised that it took first rate. That will extend into October. Then in November will have come the success of my measures with a sketch of some efforts made by me. In December the result of my efforts will have been communicated to the Assembly. In this month comes my address to the electors, with my circular to the people of the United States.¹³⁵ In Feb will come my skinning speech of Thornton & Co and my short speech on the postage bill.¹³⁶ In March will come my last speech on the postage bill by which I procured a bill to pass the House so shaped that our postage to & from the states is reduced from 40 to *three* cents on letters, and from five or 6 to one on papers.¹³⁷ And in April, by the blessing of our merciful God I hope to come in person which latter arrival to my dear Lissy and children will be worth all the balance. So I think my enemies will have to be tolerable busy to stem the tide against me. I dont know what the people may think, but I have performed an Herculean task since I have been here, and have exerted an influence in the House entirely unusual to Delegates heretofore. Twice have the rights and standing of a Delegate been struck at and twice have I vindicated them and been maintained.

But my Dear, my labors this session have been more than double, and it does really appear to me as the labor will kill me. I have now been combatting the approaches of a billious feaver for a week, during all the time I have had to labor, and to sit in my seat in the House all day to watch that postage bill. I am quite unwell today, and weak but hope the Lord will give me strength and preserve my health. I constantly send you the letters of all our friends, so that by reading them you will know all I could write you. I have forwarded the proceedings of a meeting to the Spectator by which you will learn that 7 young women are coming to Oregon in the spring as teachers. Among them is a Miss Miller whom I never saw, about 18, who[se] father is a presbyterian. If I find her to be the right *breed* upon inspection, I shall throw anchor to winward and try to haul her along side of Frank.¹³⁸ This is *inter nos* [between us] strictly, as she is to be entrusted to my care, unless her father goes too. And should F. read this letter as he will of course, you will charge him not to drop such a word by joke or otherwise, because you see the use which would be made of it.

I am informed that Mr Holbrook is very liberal in his denunciations of me.¹³⁹ Let him alone, he will work out his own fate, and seal & sign his own warrant.

Mr Walker who came on here from Milwaukee, is a very warm friend of mine— has become so since his arrival in the states as I did not know him before.¹⁴⁰ This keep to yourself. He has much influence with Whitcomb and consequently with that paper at Milwaukee. [. . .]

Washington Feby 9 / 51

My Dear wife

Aside from the books of which I wrote you two or three days ago, I sent you yesterday four large vols of the Con[gressional] Globe & Con Globe with the appendix, and a few other vols. for your own keeping. That is for our library. I may send by tomorrows mail a large number of Pub Doc to you, but if so I will write you. On Friday night, if well I think of going to Chiscopee to start off the folks for I hardly dare trust them to go without seeing them all together and giving them instructions, so I think I shall go. It is going to cost me \$2000 to get H & his wife, Phelps & family & Danl & Frank to Oregon. But I hope it will turn out well enough. It will if we all live. Had I known a month ago that things would have come out as they have, I should have left for home on Thursday next, but now I wait one month. I have had most brilliant success. I have the Cayuse war bill through in spite of the delays of Wait & Co.¹⁴¹ This is a damper to them, but by determined struggles it is done. I have got Oregon divided into three collections districts, with three ports of entry and 4 ports of delivery.¹⁴² And many other things done with which I will not trouble you. See my speech for an other measure. I have in one short Congress got every great measure consummated which Oregon had [desired] and my success, for a Delegate, or Rep even, has been unparalleled, and they, my enemies, cant help it if they would. [. . .] Take good care of the little ones. O, Lissy, how I do love them, and how wide you missed the mark in supposing I should not love Little Blandena. You have no conception how her little image hovers round my heart, and Little Henry Boy, God bless and preserve him, and you all for I love you all with a love undying.

The mail has not got here yet, tho it was due at N.Y. on the 6th, 3 days ago. If I get it in the morning I will drop you a line. Tell Frank to lay on and make the Dollars. By the way, those pills I sent you to operate on the liver have blue Nap[?] in them tho I did not then know it. After you take one at night be sure and take physic in the morning to work them off, and avoid

cold and cold water. Love me, dear, and have our garden planted well.

Goodby, for today.

S R Thurston

Washington Feby 28, 1851

Dear Wife

I wrote you from Chicopee informing you that I had certain notes signed by Danl, Frank Keene, Higgins and Mr Plumer respectively.¹⁴³ After that I let Daniel have 4 1/2 dollars which he was to repay in Oregon. Then I put into Mr Phelps hands eighteen hundred (\$1,800) dollars [with] which he was to purchase teams, a horse, two cows &c, have expenses and get all hands to Oregon. I instructed him to spend no more than necessary. He is to keep an account how much he spends, for what and how much on account of whom. The oxen, cows, wagons & horses &c will be mine on arriving in Oregon, at the price paid for them in the states, and whatever is lost of Higgins team he will pay for and whatever of Phelps he will pay for. Then if there is any money of the \$1,800 left that will be paid over to us, and next each individual will pay over to you, first the notes and then what money may be expended on his account after leaving Chicopee. I write you this account of course as a matter of safety to you, in case any thing should happen to me. [. . .]

Notes

Page 5

1. The letters discussed and excerpted here are part of a larger collection of Thurston family papers (Mss 379), Manuscripts department, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

2. Although there is no Thurston biography, materials with significant references to him include: Malcolm H. Clark, Jr., *Eden Seekers: The Settlement of Oregon, 1818-1862* (Boston 1981), 229-46; James E. Hendrickson, *Joe Lane of Oregon: Machine Politics and the Sectional Crisis, 1849-1861* (New Haven, CT 1967), 26-27; Hiram F. White, "The Career of Samuel R.

Thurston in Iowa and Oregon," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 14 (Apr. 1916); George H. Himes, introd., "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 15 (1914), 152-205; Mrs. W. H. (Thurston) Odell, "Biography of Samuel R. Thurston," Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS; and Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 1848-1888 (San Francisco 1888), 112-38, 150-56, 265-68. Thurston is also mentioned in *History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon* (Portland 1910), 278-79; Philip A. Cogswell, *Capitol Names: Individuals Woven into Oregon's History* (Portland

Notes

Pages
5-9

1977), 87-88; and Hollis Turner, *The History of Peru in the County of Oxford and State of Maine from 1789 to 1911* (Augusta, ME 1912), 241-45. See also Brown Thurston, comp., *Thurston Genealogies, 1635-1892* (Portland, ME 1892).

A smattering of material is also available on Samuel Thurston's wife, Elizabeth McLench Thurston, and on other relatives who migrated to Oregon. See William H. Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849* (Portland 1870), 570-74; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York 1979), 181; and Polly W. Kaufman, *Women Teachers on the Frontier* (New Haven, CT 1984), 211-23. The short, unpublished biography of Samuel Thurston mentioned earlier in this note was written by Thurston's widow, who married W. H. Odell a few years after Samuel Thurston's death.

3. For details on the history of the Oregon Donation Act and Thurston's role in its adoption, see Richard H. Chused, "The Oregon Donation Act of 1850 and Nineteenth Century Federal Married Women's Property Law," *Law and History Review* 2 (1984), 44; and Richard H. Chused, "Late Nineteenth Century Married Women's Property Law: Reception of the Early Married Women's Property Acts by Courts and Legislatures," *American Journal of Legal History* 29 (1985), 3. See also James M. Bergquist, "The Oregon Donation Act and National Land Policy," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 58 (Mar. 1957), 17-35.

4. Contact with the alumni and library manuscripts departments of the surviving institutions produced little of note on Thurston.

5. For an introduction to the rela-

tionships between suffrage, property ownership, and concepts of citizenship in the early republic, see Robert J. Steinfeld, "Property and Suffrage in the Early American Republic," *Stanford Law Review* 41 (1989), 335. The quotation from Thurston is from "To the Electors and People of the Territory of Oregon" (Nov. 15, 1850), Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS.

6. Dunlap was an ex-governor of Maine and an important public figure in the state.

7. Thurston, with James Tizzard, purchased the paper from James Clark, Esq., when the latter was named territorial governor of Iowa. These events were reported in the November 22 and 29, 1845, issues of the paper. Although Tizzard was apparently a coinvestor, Thurston acted as editor. Copies of the *Iowa Territorial Gazette* are available on microfilm at the Library of Congress.

8. The issues of December 13 and 27, 1845, and January 3 and 17, 1846, are typical examples containing letters, editorials, and stories about Oregon.

9. The November 14, 1846, issue of the paper was the first published only by Tizzard. It also contained a notice that the Thurston-Tizzard partnership had been dissolved.

10. Henry is sometimes called "George Henry" in the letters.

11. The letters on these subjects also provide a significant amount of information about the cost of the trip.

12. Elizabeth is referred to by a variety of names in the letters—Libby, Lissy, Hester, and Blandena.

13. More details on this history can be found in Chused, "Oregon Donation Act." See also "To the Electors," Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS.

Notes

Pages 9-12

14. For the history of married women's property legislation, see Richard H. Chused, "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850," *Georgetown Law Journal* 71 (1983), 1359.

15. See Chused, "Oregon Donation Act," 69.

16. Other letters with financial instructions were those dated January 7, 1850; April 15, 1850; August 4, 1850; September 22, 1850; December 15, 1850; February 9, 1851; February 28, 1851; March 8, 1851; and March 11, 1851.

17. Some of the issues of political and social concern discussed in Thurston's letters to his wife were the Wilmot Proviso and other slavery matters (letters of Dec. 15, 1849; and Sept. 16, 1850), congressional events (Jan. 2, 1850), termination of Indian title in portions of the Oregon Territory (Jan. 2 and June 9, 1850), the Oregon Donation Act (Aug. 11, Sept. 16, Sept. 22, and Sept. 29, 1850), and Oregon politics generally (Sept. 22, Sept. 29, and Nov. 30, 1850; Jan. 5 and Jan. 19, 1851).

18. Thurston discussed the education of his children in the following letters: September 30 and November 26, 1849; January 2, April 15, May 26, June 9, August 4, and September 22, 1850.

19. See the letters dated August 17 and July 14, 1850.

20. See the letters dated January 7 and July 14, 1850.

21. See the letters dated July 14 and August 17, 1850.

22. Ibid.

23. See the letter dated August 11, 1850.

24. See the letter dated December 29, 1850.

25. See the letter dated January 1, 1851.

26. See the letter dated December 29, 1850.

27. "To the Electors," Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS.

28. Ibid.

29. John McLoughlin (1784-1857) was born in Quebec, Canada, was trained in medicine, and first joined the North West Company—which later merged with the Hudson's Bay Company—as a physician. He was named chief factor of the HBC's Columbia district in 1824, a position he held for twenty-two years. McLoughlin was widely respected among British, French-Canadian, and American settlers, although some Americans did resent the monopoly trading position held by his company in the region. Prior to his resignation from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1846, McLoughlin took a land claim in the Oregon City area. After settling there in the same year, his claim was nullified by a provision of the Oregon Donation Act of 1850. Thurston alleged that McLoughlin held the Oregon City claim as an agent of the British company, a charge disputed by others, including McLoughlin, who insisted it was his private claim. See Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 27-31, 155-60, 162-67.

30. Thurston's decision to run again may well have displeased his wife, who, in her husband's absence in Washington, D.C., was left largely on her own in caring for the couple's two children. We might also speculate that the sentimental content of much of Thurston's June 15, 1850, letter to his wife was meant to soften the blow of his decision to seek another term.

31. The missing letters were written on December 29, 1849; January 13

and 20, 1850; February 17, 1850; April 8, 1850; June 23, 1850; and July 4, 1850. See Himes, "Diary of Samuel Thurston," 171, 178, 180, 190, 194, 199, 201. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the numbers on the letters indicate the order in which they were sent. Rather, the numbering was probably done by Thurston's wife (it appears to be in a hand different from the letters themselves) and reflects the erratic order in which the letters arrived in Oregon. The mails were notoriously prone to delays and confusion, as Thurston mentions several times in the letters printed here.

32. This general reference to "various interests at the mouth of this river" undoubtedly encompassed issues ranging from transportation and navigation to land claims to the location of public (in particular, federal) facilities.

33. Adam Van Dusen (1823-84) arrived in Oregon in 1847. He first settled in Oregon City but then moved to Astoria, where he established a store. See Fred Lockley, *History of the Columbia River Valley from the Dalles to the Sea*, 3 vols. (Chicago 1928), vol. 3, 567.

34. Gen. John Adair (1808-88) was appointed u.s. collector of customs for the port of Astoria by Pres. James K. Polk in 1848. Adair moved his family to Oregon the following year. See Harvey K. Hines, *An Illustrated History of Oregon* (Chicago 1893), 657.

35. The house was in Linn City (now West Linn, Clackamas County), where Thurston lived before being elected to Congress.

36. Wilson Blain (1813-61), an ordained Presbyterian minister, settled in Linn City in 1848. He moved to Oregon City and became editor of the

Oregon Spectator in 1849, a position he held until September 1850. He also served as a member of the first territorial legislature. See *Oregon Spectator* (Dec. 14, 1848); George S. Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers* (Portland 1939), 75-77; and George H. Himes, "History of the Press of Oregon, 1839-1850," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 3 (Dec. 1902), 354-55.

This letter was addressed to "Mrs Elizabeth F Thurston" in "Linn City O.T.," "Care of The Rev Mr. Blain."

37. Dr. Sackett (no first name is known) was the first dentist to locate in Oregon, arriving in 1846 in Oregon City. He may have been in San Francisco on this occasion to procure dental supplies. See W. Claude Adams, *History of Dentistry in Oregon* (Portland 1956), 5, 8.

Robert Pentland (b. 1820) migrated from England to the United States in 1844 and came to Oregon in 1845. He ran a grist mill belonging to George Abernethy in Oregon City until 1849, when he visited California. On his return to Oregon he took up land near Albany, where he engaged in flour milling and merchandising. See H. O. Lang, ed., *History of the Willamette Valley* (Portland 1885), 643.

38. Truman P. Powers (1803-83) came to Oregon in 1846. After traveling to the gold mines of California, he returned to Oregon and settled in Clatsop County near Astoria, where Gen. John Adair appointed him deputy collector of revenue. Powers served in the territorial legislature in 1850. See Elwood Evans et al., *History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington*, 2 vols. (Portland 1889), vol. 2, 525; and Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 143.

Stephen Coffin (d. 1882) arrived in

Notes

Pages 15-16

Oregon in 1847 and settled with his family in Oregon City. Following his purchase of a one-half interest in the townsite of Portland in 1849, he became an important figure in the city's growth as a commercial center. See Joseph Gaston, *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders*, 3 vols. (Portland 1911), vol. 3, 496-97; and E. Kimbark MacColl with Harry H. Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power: The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913* (Portland 1988), 13-17, 49-61, 69-70, 72-73, 217-18.

39. Five- and ten-dollar gold pieces were in circulation in Oregon between 1849 and 1854. The so-called "beaver" coins (an image of a beaver appeared on one side) were minted by a private company after the territorial governor objected to their being struck officially. When the San Francisco mint opened in 1854, the federal government bought up the old coins and removed them from circulation. See Arthur L. Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts: Merchant Adventures on the Western Frontier* (Portland 1961), 99-100.

40. Thurston here referred to the Linn City side of the Willamette River. Robert Moore (1781-1857) came to Oregon in 1840. He played an important role in forming the provisional government before Oregon became a U.S. Territory, serving on the committee that drew up a provisional constitution and code of laws. He established Linn City and owned the *Oregon Spectator* for a time during 1850-51. It is not clear why Thurston called Moore "father." He may have done so because Moore was the founder of Linn City, because he was a relatively old man in the young territory, or because he had ten children. See Howard McKinley

Corning, *Willamette Landings* (Portland 1947), 37-52.

41. Thurston was probably here referring to two lots owned by Felix Hathaway (1798-1856), a shipbuilder, mechanic, and early settler in Oregon, who arrived in 1829 on a fur-trading schooner. He signed the Oregon petition to Congress in 1843, requesting federal attention to the settlers' needs and protection for their lives and property. Although there is no record of Thurston ever buying lots from Hathaway, the provisional land-claim records do note that Felix Hathaway of Linn City sold 320 acres to Joseph Meller. This land was bordered by the ten-acre claim of Robert Moore, which Moore sold to Elizabeth F. Thurston, Samuel Thurston's wife. There is, therefore, a possibility that Thurston had some Hathaway land in mind but never consummated a deal for it. See Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 1, 247; and Lottie LeGett Gurley, comp., *Genealogical Material in Oregon Provisional Land Claims, Abstracted: Volumes I-VIII* (Portland 1982).

42. Daniel Lownsdale (1803-62) was one of the principal original proprietors of the townsite at Portland. In 1849 he sold half of his proprietary interest to Stephen Coffin. See MacColl with Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power*, 12-18, 49-61, 108-9, 169-70.

43. "Frank" most likely referred to Benjamin Franklin McLench (1825-91), brother of Elizabeth (McLench) Thurston, Samuel Thurston's wife. Later letters revealed plans for Frank McLench to travel to Oregon in 1850, and those plans may have been well advanced at the time this earlier letter was written. McLench arrived in Oregon in July 1850 and subsequently settled in Polk County. See Joseph H. Un-

derwood, *History of Fayette* (Augusta, ME 1956), 129; and *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims* (Portland 1957), vol. 1, 96.

David Hill (1809–50) settled on the present site of Hillsboro, Oregon, in 1842. He served on the executive committee during the early days of the provisional government. He also served four terms in the legislature of the provisional government and one term in the territorial legislature. See Caroline C. Dobbs, *Men of Champoege* (Portland 1932), 195–97.

44. This was probably a reference to James Lawrence Tyson (b. 1813). Tyson studied pharmacology at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and practiced that profession before studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Tyson traveled to California in 1849, acting as chief surgeon at a hospital in the northern gold regions before returning to Philadelphia. See William B. Atkinson, ed., *The Physicians and Surgeons of the United States* (Philadelphia 1878), 244.

45. Here Thurston described his overland trip, of twenty-plus miles, from the vicinity of present-day Panama City to “Cruses,” near the Chagres River. (The site of Cruses was most likely inundated when the Panama Canal was built between 1904 and 1914; the present-day town of Gamboa is close to the now-flooded Cruses.) Thurston and other travelers of this route navigated the Chagres to its drainage into the Caribbean Sea, where passengers then boarded ship for the Atlantic voyage to points on the East Coast of the United States. See Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields: The Migration by Water to California in 1849–1852* (New York 1949), 179–82.

46. Joseph Underwood McLench (b. 1813) was Elizabeth (McLench) Thurston’s older brother, the fifth of nine children. See Underwood, *History of Fayette*, 129.

47. Nelson H. Cary (1807–77), an 1828 graduate of Maine Medical School, settled in Ware, Massachusetts, before moving to Wayne, Maine, in 1837. See George W. Walton, ed., *History of the Town of Wayne, Kennebec County, Maine, from Its Settlement to 1898* (Augusta, ME 1898), 113.

48. Susannah McLench (b. 1822) was Elizabeth (McLench) Thurston’s younger sister, the eighth of nine children. See Underwood, *History of Fayette*, 129.

49. Selden Higgins (1806–87) was born in Connecticut; he married Susan McLench on November 15, 1849. The couple migrated to Oregon shortly after they married, arriving in September 1851; they settled in Polk County. See Katharine Chapin Higgins, *Richard Higgins and His Descendants* (Worcester, MA 1918), 398–99; and *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*, vol. 1, 100.

50. Elvira Thurston (1822–1900) was the youngest of Samuel Thurston’s seven brothers and sisters. She was born in Peru and later married John Lunt. See Turner, *History of Peru*, 244.

51. This letter should be dated December 16, 1849, which was a Sunday. In his diary Thurston referred to this letter, in an entry dated December 16, 1849. See Himes, “Diary of Thurston,” 166.

52. Discussion of the difficulties of organizing this Congress also appear in Thurston’s diary. See *ibid.*, 158, 160–61, 163–65, 168–69.

53. George Abernethy (1807–77)

Notes

Pages 25-27

arrived in Oregon in 1840, in his capacity as "mission steward" for the Methodist "family" at Willamette. With a background in business and accounting, Abernethy's task was to oversee all mission accounts. Later, as proprietor of what had formerly been the mission store in Oregon City, Abernethy became a major supplier of the early settlers in Oregon and a significant competitor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Abernethy's other business endeavors included the *Oregon Spectator* and the Oregon Exchange Company (which coined Oregon's "beaver" money). Abernethy served as governor of the provisional government from 1845 until 1849. See *Dictionary of American Biography*; Throckmorton, *Oregon Argonauts*, 23-24, 65-66, 90-93; and Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 151-52, 193-94.

54. William H. Aspinwall (1807-75) was born in New York City and trained there as a merchant. In 1837 he was involved in the establishment of a firm, Howland & Aspinwall, which became the largest Pacific trade firm in the city. Around 1850 he resigned active control of the company to take up other business ventures, including the founding of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. See *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Cave Johnson (1793-1866) served as President Polk's postmaster general from 1845 to 1849. See *ibid.*

55. Thurston was, in this case, overly optimistic about the speed of congressional action. The bill referred to here—"An Act authorizing the Negotiation of Treaties with the Indian Tribes in the Territory of Oregon, for the Extinguishment of their Claims to Lands lying West of the Cascade Mountains, and for other Purposes"—

was not enacted into law until June 5, 1850. See *Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America*, vol. 9, 437.

56. Extinguishing the claims of Native Americans to land in the territory was a prerequisite to establishing a land-distribution process for white settlers. The land law referred to here—"An Act to create the Office of Surveyor-General of the Public Lands in Oregon, and to provide for the Survey, and to make Donations to Settlers of the said Public Lands"—was signed on September 27, 1850. See *ibid.*, vol. 9, 496.

57. The *National Intelligencer* article was reprinted in the *Oregon Spectator* of April 18, 1850. It was a long letter replying to an unsigned letter published in the *Boston Courier* on December 13, 1849.

58. As a quick perusal of these letters indicates, Thurston often blamed events not to his liking on the Hudson's Bay Company. In this case there may be some credence to Thurston's charge, because the letter in question was posted from the company's offices.

59. Henry Hunt (1811-52) arrived in Oregon in 1844, settled a claim, and established a mill in Clatsop County. In 1849 Stephen Coffin commissioned Hunt to secure a steamer suitable for the Portland trade. Hunt contracted for the ship to be built in New York, but money ran out before the ship was completed and Hunt sold his interest. See *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*, vol. 2, 89; and Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 189.

60. Lucius W. Phelps (b. 1807) of New Hampshire moved with his family to Oregon in 1851. He settled in Linn County. See *Genealogical Mater-*

ial in *Oregon Donation Land Claims*, vol. 2, 65.

61. A letter from Thurston dated January 19, 1850, is printed in the April 18, 1850, *Oregon Spectator*. In this letter Thurston noted that he lost his list of Oregon males when his baggage was taken in Panama. In the letter to his wife printed here, Thurston showed he was trying to replace the list.

62. This letter should be dated January 6, 1850, which was a Sunday. In his diary Thurston mentioned writing this letter on January 6. See Himes, "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," 175.

63. This was probably a reference to Marcus Licinius Crassus (d. 53 BC), a Roman citizen known for his great wealth.

64. Thurston gave a major address on the subject of California in the House of Representatives on March 25, 1850. The speech was his first major oratorical effort. See *Congressional Globe*, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix (1850), 345-54.

65. The date of this letter should be April 14, 1850, which was a Sunday. In his diary Thurston recorded writing this letter on April 14. See Himes, "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," 195.

66. Thurston planned to buy a printing press to start a Democratic party newspaper in Oregon. The history of Thurston's involvement in this venture is discussed in "The History of the Origin of the Oregon Statesman," *Ladd & Bush Quarterly* 3 (Apr. 1915), 3-11.

67. See notes 54 and 55.

68. The original \$5,000 for public buildings was included in the 1848 legislation establishing the Oregon

Territory. The dual \$20,000 appropriations were contained in "An Act to make further Appropriations for public Buildings in the Territories of Minnesota and Oregon." See *Statutes at Large*, vol. 9, 329, 438.

69. The most complete history of the land bill referred to by Thurston can be found in Chused, "Oregon Donation Act of 1850." On February 25, 1850, Thurston obtained passage of a resolution asking the House Committee on Territories to investigate the need for a land bill for Oregon. That committee was probably responsible for the major drafting work on what eventually became the Oregon Donation Act. The committee reported on its work on April 22, and the bill was then referred to the Committee on Public Lands. That committee reported on May 20, and the bill was briefly debated on the House floor on May 28 and 29. Further action did not occur until August 8. Although a companion bill had been introduced in the Senate, no action occurred there until after the House had passed its version. This letter was written just after the short House debate on the bill, leaving Thurston somewhat frustrated at the difficulties of moving his bill through Congress.

70. In addition to the two \$20,000 appropriations already noted, the Indian bill contained appropriations of another \$29,500. Where Thurston found the additional \$11,500 is not known.

71. Thurston may here have been using a slang word for Tollawalla, a neighborhood in Livermore, Maine, with a less-than-desirable reputation during the first decade of the nineteenth century. See Israel Washburn, Jr., *Notes, Historical, Descriptive, and*

Notes

Pages 36-40

Personal of Livermore . . . Maine (Portland, ME 1874), 113-14.

72. Tyee is Chinook Jargon for "chief."

73. Presumably Thurston was to receive two months of schooling each year.

74. Timothy Ludden (1806-59) engaged in trade in Peru before studying law under the guidance of Charles Andrews of Turner, Maine. He was admitted to the Oxford County bar in 1841 and began practice in Turner. See Wallace Ludden, comp., *James Ludden: The Old Planter 1611-1692 and Descendants* (1971), 62.

75. This school, begun in Monmouth, Maine, around 1805, started as a grammar school but expanded to an academy in 1809. See Raymond Stevens Finley, *The History of Secondary Education in Kennebec County in Maine* (Orono, ME 1941), 24-25.

76. Newell Fogg (1783-1849) lived in Monmouth. See Phyllis O. Whitten, comp., *Samuel Fogg, 1628-1672, His Ancestors and Descendants* (Annandale, VA 1976), vol. 1, entry 800.

77. It is not known where Thurston taught. He might have taught in Turner, Maine, near Monmouth, where he attended the academy. Alternatively, the letter's reference to Kents Hill suggests that Thurston may have worked while attending Maine Wesleyan Seminary, located in Readfield. Records of the seminary confirm that he was enrolled there at least for the spring term of 1837 and the fall term of 1838. (Other catalogues were not available.) The seminary's catalogues also confirm that the institution was coeducational. This is noteworthy because of Thurston's later sponsorship of the Oregon Donation Act, the only nineteenth-century federal land-grant

legislation that allowed married women to gain title to land. See Edward W. Hall, *History of Higher Education in Maine* (Washington, ME 1903), 219-23; and Maine Wesleyan Seminary Catalogues, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

78. The school referred to here was Maine Wesleyan Seminary.

79. Although it is not certain when Thurston began college, it is known that he graduated from Bowdoin College in 1843, and that he attended Dartmouth College during his freshman year. If he progressed through school in four uninterrupted years, he must have matriculated in 1839. See B. Thurston, *Thurston Genealogies*, 233. The reference to serious illness in this letter may indicate that Thurston took time off from the pursuit of his education.

80. The identity of George Dunlap is unknown; the letter referred to has not been discovered.

81. Thurston and his wife arrived in Burlington, Iowa, in August or September 1845. After Thurston purchased an interest in the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, the most important Democratic party voice in the new Iowa Territory, a great deal of space in the paper was devoted to the dispute between the United States and Great Britain over sovereignty in the Pacific Northwest. See White, "Career of Samuel R. Thurston," 239, 243-45.

82. Absalom J. Hembree (1813-56) migrated to Oregon in 1843. He served in the provisional legislature between 1846 and 1848 and then in the territorial legislature. See Harvey W. Scott, *History of the Oregon Country*, 6 vols. (New York 1924), vol. 1, 316; vol. 2, 17, 233-34, 278.

83. This brief explanation by Thurston—for his movements west, in successive stages, and for his emergence into Oregon politics—remains largely obscure, with reference to existing, known sources.

Benjamin Simpson (b. 1818) came to Oregon in 1846. He established lumbering and merchandising businesses in several Oregon towns and lived in a number of locations. Simpson served in both the territorial and the state legislatures. See Frank E. Hodgkin and J. J. Galvin, *Pen Pictures of Representative Men of Oregon* (Portland 1882), 166-68.

84. Thurston's first elective office was as a member of the territorial legislature in 1848. He was elected to Congress as Oregon's first territorial delegate in 1849. See Himes, "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," 153. The context of this letter suggests that Thurston was referring to his election to Congress.

85. Henry Russell and A. W. Stockwell were persuaded by Thurston to leave Massachusetts and come to Oregon to work on Thurston's newspaper project. Russell and Stockwell were to be in charge of printing, but because of conflict with editor Asahel Bush, Russell sold his interest in the paper. (It is not clear whether Stockwell ever actually went to Oregon.) See Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers*, 74-81.

86. Thurston was perhaps referring here to "fighting."

87. David Hill married Lucinda Wilson, who had come to Oregon from Missouri, in 1846. See Dobbs, *Men of Champoege*, 195-97.

88. Although Thurston's land bill was still tied up in the House of Representatives, both the provisional and

the territorial governments in Oregon distributed possessory interests in land pending establishment of a system for distributing federal patents. Although the Oregon Donation Act that finally passed differed somewhat from the possessory claims process, the new law had the effect of confirming most preexisting land claims in the territory. For a history of the land system prior to the Oregon Donation Act, see Chused, "Oregon Donation Act of 1850," 56-60.

89. Wesley Shannon (b. 1820) migrated to Oregon in 1845. He served in the territorial legislature in 1849 and spent most of his life as a farmer. See A. G. Walling, *Illustrated History of Lane County, Oregon* (Portland 1884), 476.

90. William P. Bryant (1806-60) was an Indiana lawyer who was named by President Polk as chief justice of the Oregon Supreme Court in 1848. He stayed in Oregon only during six months of 1849. See Sidney Teiser, "The First Chief Justice of Oregon Territory: William P. Bryant," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 48 (June 1947), 45-54.

91. Asahel Bush (1824-1913), born in Massachusetts, was trained as a printer and then studied law. He left for Oregon in 1850 and, with the backing of Thurston, set up a Democratic party newspaper, the *Oregon Statesman*, in Oregon City. The paper was first published in March 1851. See *Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, Oregon* (Chicago 1903), 27-29; and Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 244-46, 249-58, 268-69, 293-94, 295-98.

92. Thurston may have meant "lyonnaise," or in the manner of Lyons.

93. William P. Abrams (b. ca.

Notes

Pages 44-49

1820), a millwright, was persuaded by Stephen Coffin to leave San Francisco and move to Portland in 1849. With Coffin's backing, he built Portland's first steam sawmill. An advertisement in the May 16, 1850, *Oregon Spectator* noted that Abrams was "about to return to the United States" and was available to select and furnish engines for mills and steamboats. See Eugene E. Snyder, *Early Portland: Stump-Town Triumphant* (Portland 1970), 69-70.

94. William W. Chapman (1808-92) came to Oregon in 1847. Prior to his arrival, he had joined the Virginia bar, served as U.S. attorney for the Wisconsin Territory, traveled to Washington as the Iowa Territory's delegate to Congress, and participated in Iowa's constitutional convention and state legislature. In 1849 he purchased a one-third interest in the Portland townsite from Daniel Lownsdale and Stephen Coffin. He also helped establish Portland's first newspaper, the *Oregonian*, on December 4, 1850. Chapman served in the territorial legislature and participated in a number of commercial ventures in Oregon. See Gaston, *Portland*, vol. 3, 218-23; and MacColl with Stein, *Merchants, Money and Power*, 15-17, 49-61.

95. Chapman was a Portland backer with Lownsdale and Coffin. Thurston was probably referring here to the arrival of his press for use by the *Oregon Statesman*, which first appeared, under the direction of Asahel Bush, in March 1851.

96. The bill was passed by the House on August 8, 1850. See *Congressional Globe*, 31st Cong., 1st Sess. (1850), 1034.

97. Thurston may have transposed the 9 and the 6. See note 69.

98. John Birch McClane (b. 1820)

came to Oregon in 1843, settled a claim near Salem, and became the owner of several mills. McClane was the first postmaster at Salem and held the office of treasurer of Marion County from 1851 to 1852. He signed a resolution drafted by Marion County residents that endorsed Thurston's actions in Congress, especially his efforts to pass the land bill. See *History of the Pacific Northwest*, vol. 2, 451-52; and *Oregon Spectator* (Nov. 7, 1850).

99. Thurston was clearly upset by the land bill debates. On September 3, 1850, he wrote to a fellow Oregonian that the land bill "would have passed in one half hour had it not been for an attempt on the part of Jeff Davis, as Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, to give power to the officers, in Oregon, to seize your farms and houses and stores." Thurston continued that "this has been brought about through the mission of Capt. Hatch, operating on the Secretary of War. It is contended that our people have no rights, and that the President should be authorized, through these officers, to remove *whoever they please* without ceremony." This letter was published in the October 31, 1850, issue of the *Oregon Spectator*. It is not clear what motives Thurston believed the War Department had in actively opposing the land bill.

100. Debate on the land bill began in the Senate on September 3, 1850, and continued sporadically until September 19. See Chused, "Oregon Donation Act of 1850," 67-69.

101. This letter is torn in several places, making transcription difficult.

102. A buddle is a shallow, inclined vat in which ore is washed.

103. In 1850 Mount Vernon was managed by John A. Washington, Jr.,

grandson of Pres. George Washington. With John Washington's encouragement, a bill had been introduced in Congress the year before to buy the mansion, the tomb of George Washington, and two hundred acres of the estate, but the effort failed. In 1858, after a five-year fund-raising campaign, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association purchased the house, tomb, and surrounding acreage. Two years later, John Washington vacated the mansion, and the association took possession. See Harrison Howell Dodge, *Mount Vernon: Its Owner and Its Story* (Philadelphia 1932), 48-51.

104. Thurston was here referring to his speech on the admission of California to the Union. See note 63. Nathaniel Ford (1795-1870) was born in Virginia and brought up in Kentucky. After moving to Oregon in 1844, he served in the provisional and territorial legislatures. When Ford came to Oregon, he brought two slaves and their baby daughter with him. These two slaves gave birth to two more children before Ford freed the parents and kept their children. The children were freed in 1853 when the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that slavery was illegal in the territory unless authorized by the territorial government. See Lang, *History of the Willamette Valley*, 304, 333, 622; and Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 259-61.

105. The Senate approved the bill on September 19, 1850. See *Congressional Globe*, 31st Cong., 1st Sess. (1850), 1869.

106. Thurston probably feared opposition to Section 11 of the bill, which denied John McLoughlin, formerly chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, his Oregon City land claim. When news of

this part of the bill reached Oregon, substantial opposition did indeed surface. Thurston was fortunate that the bill adopted by the House was not printed in the *Oregon Spectator* until September 5, 1850. Opposition to Section 11 appeared in that newspaper on September 12, 1850, in the form of a letter from McLoughlin himself, and other letters in opposition continued to appear in the paper for some time. News of this dispute, however, did not reach Washington until after the bill was adopted.

107. Orville C. Pratt (1819-91), a lawyer, came to Oregon in 1849, and in that year President Polk appointed him judge on the Oregon Supreme Court. At the end of 1850 Pratt returned to the East to lobby for his own appointment as territorial chief justice and, while there, argued with Thurston. See Sidney Teiser, "First Associate Justice of Oregon Territory," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 49 (Sept. 1948), 171-91; and Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 251-53.

J. Quinn Thornton (1810-88), a lawyer, moved to Oregon from Missouri in 1846. He was appointed to the supreme court of the provisional government in 1847 and, at the request of Governor Abernethy, traveled to Washington, D.C., to seek passage of legislation establishing an Oregon Territory. He remained active in Oregon politics and law. See *Dictionary of American Biography*; and Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 192-94, 221-23, 228-31.

108. "An Act to create the Office of Surveyor-General of the Public Lands in Oregon, and to provide for the Survey, and to make Donations to Settlers of the said Public Lands"—the so-called Oregon Donation Act—passed Congress on September 24, 1850, and

Notes

Pages

51-54

was signed into law by the president on September 27, 1850. See *Statutes at Large*, vol. 9, 496.

109. "An Act making Appropriations for Lighthouses, Light-Boats, Buoys, &c., and providing for the Erection and Establishment of the same, and for other Purposes" was signed into law on September 28, 1850. See *ibid.*, 500.

110. Thurston must have been forced to compromise later, because the final appropriations bill included only \$40,000 for the continuing survey of the western coast. See *ibid.*, 523, 540.

111. See notes 54, 55, and 67.

112. "An Act to establish certain Post Roads in the United States" became law on September 27, 1850. See *ibid.*, 473, 496. This bill was undoubtedly not Thurston's alone, since it was a lengthy piece of legislation designating post roads all over the country.

113. John Ferguson, who arrived in Oregon in March 1851, was an agent for establishing mail accommodations in Oregon. He lived in Portland for about one year and was then reassigned to similar tasks in California. See *Oregon Spectator* (Mar. 20, 1851, and Mar. 16, 1852).

114. *Saleratus* is an ingredient used in sodium bicarbonate, or baking soda.

115. *Ictas* is Chinook Jargon for "things."

116. This was probably a reference to a pamphlet dated November 15, 1850, entitled "To the Electors and People of the Territory of Oregon." See Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS. If the "address to the people" mentioned by Thurston was, in fact, this pamphlet, he either was mistaken about the number of pages (the pamphlet consists of sixteen, not twenty-four, pages) or was

referring to a handwritten or unedited version of the pamphlet that might have contained more pages. Apparently Thurston's cost in having these pamphlets printed was \$75.

117. This was a reference to the letter by John McLoughlin published in the *Oregon Spectator* on September 12, 1850. The letter commented on the draft of the Oregon Donation bill as well as on Thurston's remarks during the House debates on the bill. See note 105.

118. Thurston received a letter from a Mr. Gray that had been postmarked by hand in Astoria on September 1. In the letter Gray discussed California, the land bill, and a variety of other matters. The letter also urged Thurston to continue his course of action against the Hudson's Bay Company. See Thurston papers, Mss 379, OHS.

119. This is most likely a reference to a letter, now apparently lost, that Thurston received from Dr. Forbes Barclay (1812-73), a physician employed by the Hudson's Bay Company between 1840 and 1850. Barclay left the HBC in 1850 and settled in Oregon City, where he lived the rest of his life. See Lockley, *History of the Columbia River Valley*, vol. 2, 433-36.

120. This could have been a reference to Francis Fletcher (1814-71). Although not known to be a doctor, Fletcher lived in Yamhill County and would have been aware of events in Oregon City. Fletcher migrated to Oregon in 1839 and participated in the Champoege meeting that established Oregon's provisional government in 1853. See Dobbs, *Men of Champoege*, 100.

For more information about the dispute over the Oregon City claim of

John McLoughlin, as well as the claims of those who bought lots in that town from McLoughlin, see Clark, *Eden Seekers*, 155-71, 237-39; Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 120-30; and White, "Career of Samuel Thurston," 239, 247-64.

121. The "Oregon City memorial" was published in the September 26, 1850, edition of the *Oregon Spectator*. It protested the land bill's attack on the claims of McLoughlin and others. See Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 126-27.

122. Aaron E. Wait (1813-98), a lawyer, came to Oregon in 1847. He edited the *Oregon Spectator* from 1848 to 1849, served in the territorial legislature, and practiced law. Wait openly denounced Thurston for his role in stripping McLoughlin of his land, played an important role in the Oregon City memorial meeting, and wrote letters to the *Oregon Spectator* about the meeting. See Himes, "History of the Press of Oregon," 351-53; Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 161, 126-27; and *Oregon Spectator* (Mar. 6, 13, 20, and 27, 1851; Apr. 3, 1851).

123. The identity of Frank Keene is unknown. By "Danl" Thurston was probably referring to his older brother, Daniel Thurston (b. 1808). Daniel took a trip to Oregon before the date of this letter, but there is no evidence that he took a later trip. See B. Thurston, *Thurston Genealogies*, 223.

124. Thurston was here referring to his wife's sister Susan and her husband, Selden Higgins.

125. Eugene F. Skinner (1809-64) came to Oregon in 1846 and settled a claim on the Willamette River, one hundred miles south of Oregon City. The city of Eugene, Oregon, is named after him. See Frederica Coons, *The*

Early History of Eugene (Eugene, OR 1957), 9-17, 51.

Jacob Conser (1818-93) settled near Santiam, Oregon, in 1848. After the winter flood of 1850-51, Conser, a millowner who served in the territorial legislature, moved two miles upstream and founded the town of Jefferson. See Jesse Steiwer Douglas, "Syracuse and Santiam City, 1845-1861," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 32 (Sept. 1931), 203-4; and Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 72.

John P. Gaines (1795-1857), a Whig, was appointed third territorial governor of Oregon. Thurston had some contact with him in Washington before Gaines left for Oregon. The governorship of Gaines was marked by contention, particularly over the location of the territorial capital. See *Dictionary of American Biography*; and Himes, "Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston," 167, 168.

126. "The Dalles," as used here, referred to the narrows of the Columbia River, located just above the present city of the same name.

127. The short biography of Thurston written by his wife, Elizabeth Odell (her later married name), referred to a circular he wrote to answer general questions about Oregon. See typescript in Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Apparently the widespread publication of the material on Oregon only increased Thurston's obligations to correspond.

128. This was probably a reference to a speech Thurston delivered in the House of Representatives on December 26, 1850, in defense of his actions relating to the land bill. However, the reference might also refer to Thurston's California speech, copies of which he was still mailing at this time.

Notes

Pages 57-63

See the letter, excerpted here, dated January 5, 1851.

129. Thurston was probably here referring to a letter dated January 8, 1851, which was printed in the April 10, 1851, edition of the *Oregon Spectator*. The letter contained information on various bills pending in Congress, as well as criticism of the appointment of persons to federal office in Oregon who were not already residing there.

130. The enclosure has not been found. Most likely it was merged with the long letter of January 8, and published in the *Oregon Spectator* on April 10, 1851.

131. Thurston was here referring to the *Western Star* of Milwaukie. Lot Whitcomb (1806-57), who moved to Oregon in 1847 and founded the town of Milwaukie the next year, built a sawmill, a flour mill, a warehouse, a ferry, and several vessels. He was also the town's first postmaster. On November 21, 1850, the first edition of Whitcomb's newspaper, the *Western Star*, appeared. When Whitcomb experienced financial difficulties the next year, the press was taken over by his editor and printer and moved to Portland, where it became the *Oregon Weekly Times*. See Snyder, *Early Portland*, 55-63; and Himes, "History of the Press of Oregon," 361-62.

132. Thornton and Wait both signed the memorial opposing Thurston's efforts to deny McLoughlin his claim. See note 120. Apparently Thurston considered the behavior of Thornton, Wait, and their allies akin to that of the well-known American traitor Benedict Arnold.

133. This was probably a reference to Thurston's address entitled "To the Electors and People of the Territory of Oregon." See note 115.

134. This was probably a reference to a lengthy essay published in four installments in the *Oregon Spectator* (Sept. 26, Oct. 3, Oct. 10, and Oct. 17, 1851). It was entitled "Address of Hon. Samuel R. Thurston, to his Constituents in Oregon Territory."

135. For the address to the electors, see note 115. The circular referred to was probably a promotional tract encouraging migration to Oregon. See also note 126.

136. This was probably a reference to the speech, or a version of it, delivered by Thurston on the floor of the House on December 26, 1850, at the same time he presented the Oregon City memorial.

137. Although "An Act to reduce and modify the Rates of Postage in the United States, and for other Purposes" was not signed until March 3, 1851, Thurston obviously anticipated its passage. See *Statutes at Large*, vol. 9, 587.

138. Things did not work out quite as Thurston planned. Elizabeth Millar, daughter of Rev. James P. Millar of Albany, New York, married Judge Joseph G. Wilson, and Frank McLench wed Mary Almira Gray, a schoolteacher from Vermont, who was also on the ship with Thurston and Miss Millar. See Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 136-37; and *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*, vol. 1, 96.

139. Amory Holbrook (1820-66), an aspiring Whig lawyer and politician, was appointed U.S. attorney for Oregon, arriving there in May 1850. See Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 2, 91-97.

140. This might have been a reference to Robert Walker (b. 1825), who settled a claim in Washington County

Notes

in February 1850. See *Genealogical Material in Oregon Donation Land Claims*, vol. 2, 102.

141. On February 14, 1851, the president signed "An Act to settle and adjust the Expenses of the People of Oregon in defending themselves from the Attacks and Hostilities of Cayuse Indians, in the Years eighteen hundred and forty-seven and eighteen hundred

and forty-eight." See *Statutes at Large*, vol. 9, 566.

142. "An Act to create additional Collection Districts in the Territory of Oregon, and for other Purposes" was signed into law on February 14, 1851. See *ibid.*, 566.

143. The identity of George Plumer, referred to by his full name in another letter, is unknown.

Pages
63-64

