

Albany Ore Feb 4 1916

To The Editor of The Journal

Probably no class of persons outside of Portland more regret the devastation wrought in Portland by the late "silver thaw" than do we pioneers. Much is being said about our unusual cold and stormy weather this winter, the severest it is said that the present generation has experienced. "Lest we forget" I will briefly recount those experienced in early pioneer days on down to later years, as more fully described in my "Memories of Old Oregon" dating back to 1838, when my parents "crossed the plains" coming out as missionaries to the Spokane Indians, with them Rev. C. Ellis & wife. I hope to have these memories issued in book form in the no distant future.

The first hard winter I ever experienced was when I was 8 years of age, the winter of 1846-7.

At our above mission the snow was 4 feet deep.

We had a yard around the east and north sides of our log house enclosed by pine poles about 8 feet in length set upright in the ground leaving a fence about 6 ft high. Through this the snow drifted on east side so that I could step over the same. ^{and Coyotes from catching the sheep} Fence was to keep Indian dogs. That winter the Spokane Indians lost nearly all their horses many dying from weakness as spring weather approached; and the Indians went to work making bows and arrows, set to trade to the Coyuses for more horses. We saved most of our stock, cattle and horses, by driving them over

to a swamp westward of the mission some miles, where the pine timber had more or less of moss, and cutting trees down the stock browsed upon them. I accompanied my father & Mr. Ellis the first trip.

One day during the deepest snow the Indians chased some deer from the eastern hills out onto the prairie. One of these laid down on the prairie north of our home, so my father put on his Indian snow shoes and went out to it, I following on my like snow shoes.

As we approached the deer jumped up and ran into the then dry bed of Pshimakain Creek, where my father caught it, and downed it holding it until an Indian shot it in the side with his bow and arrow. In pulling out the latter the barb came off.

Freed, the deer jumped up ran a few rods

and fell dead. It seemed cruel worst
to me.

Rev H. H. Spalding & wife ^{were} stationed at
the Lapwai mission on the Clearwater
He wrote a letter on Mar 8 that he sent
to us by a Mr Hart - Mrs Spalding's brother.
in which he said. "This has been the
severest winter as to snow, cold weather
and want of grass ever known by the
oldest Indians in this region

Very many horses and cattle have
died and some persons have frozen
to death. I tremble to hear from you
I fear you have lost all

There has been snow and cold weather
for three months. For two weeks the
snow was over a foot deep in this valley
Jan 16 & 17 were the coldest days I ever
experienced in this country. Think the
mercury would have fallen to thirty
degrees below zero."

The next winter claiming mention was that of 1849-50 our first-winter at Forest Grove Washington County Oregon. Early in December snow began falling reaching near 2 ft-deep, staying on near three weeks, then went off with a warm rain that made the first flood in the Willamette to ^{do} damage at Oregon City.

Winter of 1852-53 was still harder especially for immigrants who crossed the Plains summer of 1852, Oregon's largest immigration. Wheat 5.00 per bush Flour 2.00 per Bbl.

Fully three weeks snow was 2 feet deep then came a change ushered in by a "silver thaw" that broke off some limbs from the oak & fir trees.

Just as the snow was thoroughly saturated, and portended a tremendous flood, it turned round and froze one night, and saved the Willamette Valley.

From a raging flood
 As it was, it was bigger than 1849-50
 doing more damage at Oregon City
 Of all the hard winters that of 1861-62
 caps the climax.

First week in December began the
 biggest flood known to white men.
 After a considerable snow fall in the
 mountains came a real Chinook,
 with rain for three nights, day times
 "Oregon mist-".

I was then farming and dairying in
 Scoggins Valley 9 miles west of Forest Grove
 We lived in the forks of two streams
 and were shut in to the east by the
 flood in the larger stream, for nearly
 a week, as the stream had no bridge
 Here at Albany the records show that
 on Dec 8 the Willamette was 36 feet above
 low water, the highest ever recorded.
 At Oregon City Mr. Roughton's Flour mill was
 carried off. Linn City opposite Oregon City

quite wiped off the map. (7)

After the flood came cold freezing weather,

First week in January came a ^{big} snow storm and we saw no more the ground until the snow went off by the sun's heat in March.

We had sleighing galore.

Sometimes it would moderate, rain a few hours then whip around into the north west as it has been doing this winter.

With snow over 2 feet deep much of the time. Hay that in previous summer could hardly be given away, could not be had even at 40.00 per ton except in Portland, and that wild oats hay from California, 40.00 in Portland.

That's when wild oats started in the Willamette Valley is my opinion.

Some clear nights in February were intensely cold. It was the rumor at Forest Grove that in Portland it was 20°

below zero. Certainly must have been 10°

Cattle in Eastern Oregon nearly all perished. The river at Portland was crossed by teams on the ice

The winter of 1858, 59 had also ^{been} severe
 Had quite a snowfall in Nov 1858, then
 warm rainy weather until in January
 when it started in with cold stormy
 weather such as we have been having
 The prevailing weather then was as it
 has been here since Jan 1. This year
 no deep snow at any one time, but
 continued snow squalls. In the morning
 ground covered. All gone by evening.
 Settled weather did not come until April
 1. Then cleared off and gave us the
 driest spring and early summer I have
 ever known. Spring crops came the
 nearest to being a failure in all my experience.
 The winter of 1867, 68 I was at Dayton
 Yamhill Co. Jan 9 came a blizzard
 that closed the Yamhill river so that
 for near 6 weeks no steamboat came
 up to load at the warehouse I was in
 charge of. Snow did not all go off
 until in March.

The winter of 1874-75 - I was at Astoria. January 11 came a blizzard down the Columbia and for near six weeks cut off all steamboat-communication with Portland.

I came on about two o'clock AM.

By morning house plants were frozen. Nine sailing vessels anchored off Astoria had to move into the cove above the city.

The steamship from San Francisco came at least twice & returned.

The last-time some of her passengers struck out on foot for Portland by the way of the Nehalem Valley and the Prelater Plains. The Willamette was again frozen over at Portland.

Lowest mercury at Astoria was 10° above zero is my recollection.

A Mr Hoyt of a steamboat-company was the first man to venture on the ice on a trip from Portland to Astoria

The winter of 1884-85 was a terrible one in Eastern Oregon, though quite a hard one in this valley.

The storm began about 2 AM Dec 15-1885; with it at the Warm Springs Indian Agency. Within 4 days the snow was 39 inches deep. I caught the range stock and kept them near where I found them. The Chinook did not come until Jan 8. Hundreds of Indian horses perished.

It was pitiful the next spring to see the carcasses of a score or more ^{in a place} where they had fallen around a clump of Juniper trees. The coldest night recorded 18° below zero. In the Dalles the snow was said to be 6 feet deep, and had to be tunneled to admit of passage through streets. Here at Albany the snow is said to have been 27 inches deep. A thaw came & then a freeze, so one could travel anywhere on the coast.

During January 1888, we had quite a snow fall at Warm Springs Agency. Then a "freeze up" with one night - the coldest recorded temperature I have ever known 34° below zero.

Cold as that was when I went down to the Des Chutes that morning there was not a particle of ice to be seen in the stream. That river is a remarkable one in many respects.

Feb 3 1899 after a very open winter here at Albany; we had a light fall of snow and mercury went down to zero. Many pine trees were killed, as the previous warm weather had caused the sap to rise.

Lastly I mention Jan 12 1909 After a considerable fall of snow morning of the 12th mercury was down to 3° below zero. Since then our winters have been uniformly "mild"

This winter is a break, so to speak surely Oregon will resume her normal next winter quite. I look for a fine crop season - Cyrus H. Walker