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## [Early Days in the Willamette Valley]

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Title Early days in the Willamette valley

Place of origin Salem, Oregon Date Jan. 24/39

Project worker Sarah B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks L Reminiscences

Form A

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Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date January 24, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early Days in the Willamette Valley.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Frances Cornell. 260 Mission Street, Salem, Oregon.

Date and time of interview January 18, 1939, 11:00-12:00.

Place of interview Above address — home of informant.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant —

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Pleasant, well-furnished living room, with bright fire blazing in the fireplace. The floor was covered with scatter Oriental rugs, and comfortable over-stuffed furniture — chairs and davenport — were grouped about. A few pictures hung on the walls, and books and magazines were in evidence.

The house, of six rooms, is about twenty-five years old. It is painted a light brown with darker trim. A verandah runs across the front of the house.

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The surroundings consist of a corner lot, some 50 x 100 feet in size, with a lawn in front and shrubbery in the rear. The house faces north, and the neighborhood is middle-class.

### Form B

#### Personal History of Informant

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
  2. Place and date of birth
  3. Family
  4. Places lived in, with dates
  5. Education, with dates
  6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
  7. Special skills and interests
  8. Community and religious activities
  9. Description of informant
  10. Other points gained in interview
1. Scotch-Irish.
  2. Near Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, in 1854. (day and month not given).

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3. Father, Jesse Looney; Mother, Ruby Bond Looney. (Both father and mother were from the South.)

4. Marion County, Oregon, all her life.

5. Public schools of Jefferson, and Willamette University, Salem (date not given).

6. Aside from occupation, she was matron of the Oregon State Hospital (insane) for a number of years.

7. No special skills; interested in general matters.

8. Member of Eastern Star (Masonic) and the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was brought up in the Presbyterian faith.

9. A large, stout woman, of fine appearance. She has gray hair and hazel eyes. She dresses well. In speaking she terminates her sentences with "eh".

### Text of Interview (Unedited)

#### Text:

As I have already said, I was born here in Marion County. My father and mother, came to Oregon from Alabama in 1843. They came in the same train with the Applegates, the Waldos, Nesmiths, Smiths, Fords, Kaisers, Delaneys, Lovejoy, and many others who became prominent in Oregon history, eh. My people were opposed to slavery. They had six children when they left Alabama. Six more children were born to them in Oregon, of which I am one. They objected to bringing up their children where slavery existed. Their wagon train left Independence, Missouri, on May 22, 1843, and they arrived in the Walla Walla Valley in October of that year. Indian troubles were threatening when they reached the Whitman Mission, and they left hastily for Fort Vancouver, where Doctor McLaughlin extended his usual gracious hospitality. From there, on specially constructed rafts, they

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left for up the Willamette river, and father eventually selected his claim of 640 acres in the Chepulcum valley, 12 miles south of Salem, known generally as Santiam Valley. Chepulcum, in the Indian language means "Beautiful Valley." Father's 640 acres embraced what has long been known as Looney Butte, where his family was brought up and four of his sons maintained their homes until death came.

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My mother was the first white woman in Chepulcum Valley. Shortly after settlement in Oregon mother was invited by the Waldos to a wedding at their place over in the Waldo Hills, as they came to be called, eh. Mother went, expecting to enjoy quite a gala affair. She was out in the kitchen with Mrs. Waldo, when the interested young people's arrival was announced. Mother was a little disappointed in the lack of preparation, but still looked forward to something of what she had always associated with a wedding. When somebody called "Come quick, they're getting married", she got into the front room just in time to hear Mr. Waldo say, "I pronounce you man and wife, by God." Mr. Waldo had the authority through some source to perform marriage ceremonies, but he hadn't had much experience, and those few words were all he could think to say. Mother never did get over that, eh.

When the mail route was established between Portland and San Francisco by the California State Company, my father's farm was used as the first stage station south of Salem. It took seven days to go from Sacramento to Portland, with the stages travelling continuously day and night, the relay stations, where they changed their horses being about fifteen miles apart. First, after Portland, was Oregon City, then Aurora ("Dutchtown"), Salem, Looney's, Albany and two farmhouses between there and Eugene. Some of the relay points farther south were farmhouses near the present Grants Pass, Grave Creek, Phoenix ("Gasburg"), Jacksonville, Ashland. The stages used were of the heavy Concord type, with four to six horses being necessary where the road was hard-pulling — as most of the roads were in those days, eh —. Sometimes at the relay stations it became necessary to use unbroken horses, and that was exciting for everybody, most of all the

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passengers, eh. The horses were tied, blindfolded and harnessed. The driver clutched the lines as the passengers scrambled willy nilly into the swaying vehicle, the blindfolds were snatched off, and away they went, the stage swaying from side to side, the horses plunging, until the driver finally wore them down.

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As the incoming stage drove down the hill to the Looney station, the driver blew his horn once for each passenger on board. The number of toots indicated the number of eggs to fry and biscuits to bake. There is a marker now at the old farm, on the highway now known as Route 99 E, showing where the stage horses used to drink.

We used to have a lot of fun up here, around Salem, when I was a girl, eh. Nobody was extremely rich, but nobody seemed very poor either, eh. We all seemed to have comfortable homes, with plenty of room for entertaining, and there was much hospitality. Perhaps because we were a big family of young people, our home was always open house for everybody, and the young folks of Salem thought nothing of the twelve-mile drive out home, even though the roads were a far cry from what they are now.

There was a time in the 70's, I think it was, when what might be called the society of the capital and countryside went in strong for masquerade parties. There was one, I recall, given by the Werner Breymans, in their big house on State [street?]. There were over a hundred masquers at that affair, and the costumes covered everything from kings, cardinals and dukes to jockeys, among the men, and from Dianas to Bopeeps among the women and girls. If I remember correctly, I represented Phantasia, eh. Cap!

Along about this time we had a fancy-dress party at Jefferson, the town adjoining us, which we Looneys rather felt we owned, there were so many of us living thereabout. We had a band out from Salem to furnish the music, and everything was done up in grand style. Here's a clipping from some paper, that I have saved all these years, about that party, part of which you might like to copy:

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“The party broke up shortly after one o'clock, and the Band were invited to partake of refreshments and spend the balance of the night at Mr. Thompson's 4 the mayor of the city. The proceeds more than paid all expenses, and the ladies went home happy. 'A word to the wise is sufficient', and I trust that the following criticism will be taken and appreciated by those to whom it is due:

“The ladies have been very justly offended at the conduct of two or three young men at the parties this season, who make a practice of going out into the entry during the intervals of dancing, and smoking cigars, until the air coming through two open doors is thick with tobacco smoke, which is not only disgusting, but sickening, to some of the ladies, and the wraps hanging in the entry do not lose the offensive odor for days afterward. Now, the ladies think and say that if any gentleman is so wedded to his cigar that it is impossible for him to spend a few hours in their society without smoking, that he would better stay at home altogether, or at least take a walk in the open while he indulges in the deadly narcotic. Mr. Editor, I desire to ask you a question for information. Is it considered just the thing in the best society of Oregon, for a gentleman to catch a lady around the waist and hug her while he swings her in a quadrille, and is it tolerated by the ladies of Salem?”

I forgot to say that this party was one given by the ladies, so it must have been in a leap year.

Form D

Extra Comment

Comment:

As the daughter of the early pioneer, Jesse Looney, of Looney Butte, near Jefferson, Marion County, Oregon, Mrs. Cornell is familiar with the many phases of life in that section of the country. But now at the age of 85 years she appears not to care to recall much that would be of vital interest. The Looney clan - of which the recent Senator Steiwer was a

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member - is a very large one, with annual meetings. The clan's historian, another Mrs. Looney, lives near Jefferson. Unquestionably, this historian would have much information of both a historic and folklore character.

Two items were secured from the personal papers of the informant:

Uncle Jimmy Bates (newspaper article - attached).

The Cowboy Caller (poem - see Folk Rhymes).

Secured by

Miss Sara Wrenn

From the personal papers of

Mrs. Frances Cornell

260 Mission Street

Salem, Oregon

UNCLE JIMMY BATES

Reminiscences about the life of a prominent pioneer.

Mr. Bates was born and raised in Washington City, D. C. His father, David Bates, was from Maine, his mother, whose maiden name was Venable, was born and raised in Washington, D. C. James was the youngest of eight children, four boys and four girls. Their father died while James was a mere lad, leaving to the family a large estate. James, being of an eccentric disposition, and the youngest child, was, no doubt, a spoiled boy. The family, however, succeeded in keeping James at the academy until he was fifteen years old, about which time a small book, "Riley's African Shipwrecks", fell into his hands.

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Up to this time he had made good progress in his studies and was nearly ready for college, but he became so interested in the adventures related by Riley that he lost all interest in school. His mind was all absorbed in the matter of ships and their rigging, with the seas and their monsters, sea islands and their hideous inhabitants, with hair breadth escapes and daring deeds. His people were shocked and grieved at this unexpected turn in the affairs of young James, his fine round forehead, his quick ear, his bright eye and his small but wiry frame had led to hopes of a brilliant future, but the more his friends and relatives protested the more persistent he became, until a decision was reached to send the boy to Philadelphia and place him in the book store of his eldest brother ... But all to no avail. The land had lost all charms, nothing but "the sea, the sea, the boundless sea", had any allurements for this lad. He embraced the first opportunity to slip away from his brother, and with but the clothes on his back, and not a penny in his pocket, he boarded the first vessel that would accept him. This proved to be only a coaster... No better opportunity afforded him to get to sea until the following year. One day while the little coaster was lying at anchor in Boston harbor, and young James was rehearsing in his mind the brilliant achievements of that midnight party that tipped King George's tea into the harbor and the mighty results that followed that innocent amusement of our daddies, his thoughts drifted back to the Mayflower and the struggle of that faithful band of Pilgrim Fathers. He longed to stand upon the prow of some noble ship and look upon a land yet untrodden by the foot of civilization. He immediately determined to visit every vessel in the great harbor and if possible find some opportunity to cut off every possibility of being apprehended by his relatives. The fortune left by his father was hardly thought of by this ambitious but rash youth... Finding no opportunity to join a fur trading vessel as he desired, bound for the west, he concluded to board a full rigged merchant ship, loading for Europe, the American ship, [George Gebatte?]. This gave him the opportunity, at least, to get beyond the danger of being discovered by his friends. June, 1828, young Bates being now 19 years old, finds the long sought for opportunity to go west on a fur trading expedition. This was at the time when every adventurer who could pay for a stock of provisions and a few traps, turned his face toward the Rocky Mountains, and he who could not set up in

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business on his own account, was eager to join some expedition by land or sea and share with the proprietors the result of his labors. Marshall & Wild of New York, were fitting out an expedition to the North West in search of furs, Mr. Bates took employment of this firm, under Captain Pentle, of the ship [Rudder?]. The ship, loaded with old iron, rusty nails, calico, beads, knives and trinkets, sailed away for the western world. She stopped at Hayti, then proceeded to the Straits of Magellan. Three weeks' wind in the straits delayed the passage and caused the loss of two anchors. The South Sea Islands were visited. Many old trinkets were traded for sealskins and tortoise shells, but the objective point 3 was Gray's Harbor. This was not reached until March, 1829. There the good ship remained at anchor two or three days. Here was witnessed one of those unavoidable calamities, which the reader of "Riley's Narratives" could realize in a new light. The [Mary Ann?] of London, a Hudson's Bay Co. brig, foundered and twenty-six men were lost. Some of the bodies washed ashore at Chinook point. The brig came ashore, bottom up, at Sand Island.

The [Rudder?] proceeded up the Columbia. At the first rapids the 1700 pound anchor was lost. The captain traded along the shore with the Indians, met Dr. McLoughlin at Vancouver, came up the Willamette as far as the mouth of the Clackamas, where the vessel grounded and had to be unloaded. The Indians thought of taking the crew after everything else was landed.

A messenger was sent to Dr. McLoughlin for advice. He persuaded the Indians to treat the palefaces kindly. Many weeks were spent here, trading with the Indians. I think this was the first ship ever seen so high up the Willamette, if not the first one that had ever passed above where Portland now stands. A 50 pound salmon was bought for a few beads. One bunch of beads was exchanged for ten salmon, a butcher knife for a deer. From the Clackamas the ship descended the Willamette to Scappoose Bay (a point below Portland, here the main mast was taken out and a new one prepared. The mast was cut one-half mile from the river and conveyed by hand to the ship without the aid of the Indians. The ship lay in Scappoose Bay about three months, during which time a garden was planted and grown, which is the first garden that was ever planted on Oregon soil and the first

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one west of the Rocky mountains by Americans. I think the pioneers of Oregon honor Mr. Bates as being the first man who planted potatoes on our generous soil. However, this was an off year for potatoes, as they were not large enough to use when the ship proceeded down the river, and no doubt the Indians destroyed them prematurely.

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The supply of merchandise having become exhausted, the ship sailed down the coast of California, where the captain purchased from the Spaniards a small cargo of Mexican horses which he took to the Sandwich Islands and traded for more merchandise. Returned again to the Columbia river. Anchored awhile at Baker's Bay. During the summer the vessel cruised in the northern waters along the coast from Gray's harbor to Alaska. In the fall (1830) the ship entered the Columbia for the third time, before bidding adieu to the now familiar river and beautiful scenery of the West. Mr. Bates longed now to quit the sea and cast his fortune in the splendid Willamette Valley. He had seen the early spring, the delightful summer, the late and mellow autumn, and he could imagine the open, cheery winter, and he felt that the burdens of life must be light and the pleasures excessive in a climate like this. But like his first longings, these could not be satisfied. Not an American home could be found in the Willamette valley. Nothing remained for Mr. Bates but to return with the ship to the Sandwich Islands, load up with sandal wood, sharks' fins and mother-of-pearl, carry these to China, trade them to the lovers of Confucius for nankeens, silks, teas, and Chinese curios, sail away for New York, and to the delight of the owners of the vessel, land in safety with a cargo worth \$100,000 to the proprietors of the expedition.

I will not follow Mr. Bates any farther, but will simply say that his desire to join a party of settlers for the now country was not realized until he met Dr. Wilson and his party in 1857, at Honolulu, as explained in my previous article in the Journal of Oct. 15, 1891.

It is not positively known that Mr. Bates ever wrote his people after leaving home. By some means his people learned that he was in the Willamette valley. I think it was through our delegate to congress, Samuel R. Thurston, Mr. Bates conversed freely on any subject

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save his own history, and no doubt the 5 widow Caldwell married him on his own merits, as very little could be learned as to his people or history. It was only last summer that his daughter, Mrs. Anna Vaughan, of Jefferson, in examining the contents of an old trunk, found a letter from one of (Mr.?) Mrs. Bates' sisters. The letter was dated Washington, D. C., 1852. This letter threw some light upon the family history. Mrs. Vaughan, wishing to get more information on this, to her, interesting subject, interrogated her father, and drew out from him the startling information that there was a secret drawer in one end of the trunk, and that he found a letter from one of his brothers, which had been locked up in the drawer and known only to himself, for about thirty years. Opening the drawer the old letter came forth, to tell the secrets of nearly half a century. Neither of these letters had been ever answered, and the writers having given up that brother for lost, had long since been laid away to their final rest. Miss Ora Vaughan a granddaughter of "Uncle Jimmy", wrote to Washington City, and finally succeeded in getting into correspondence with the two daughters of Uncle Jimmy's youngest sister. One is Mrs. McElhinney, and the other is Mrs. Julia B. Schoefp; also a nephew, Edward Lundy. While Mr. Bates was encountering the gales at sea, that tossed his bark into the jaws of coral reef, his relatives on land were vainly trying to buffet the storms of financial adversity... and from what we can learn, no doubt "Uncle Jimmy" enjoyed, especially during the last years of his life, as much pleasure and tranquillity in his humble home in the far West as he could have done in the bustling city of Washington, the nation's capital. As to the noble character and peculiar eccentricities of this man, see the [Capital Journal?] of Oct. 15, 1891.

W. T. Rigdon

Salem, Oregon, Feb, 15, 1892.

Mr. Starkweather, who is one of the owners of and superintendent of the above mentioned down-town business building, in intensely interested in the history of his native state; and, like most of those interviewed for the Oregon Folklore Studies, he is heartily interested in this project. But while cooperative with the interviewer's objective, it was hard for him to

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dissociate folklore from history. With the thought that he might divulge or reveal new items or new slants of history, the interviewer incorporated practically everything he said. As Form B shows, Mr. Starkweather has been active in many phases of Oregon's political and economic life.