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LETTERS OF REVEREND H. H. SPALDING AND MRS. SPALDING, WRITTEN SHORTLY AFTER COMPLETING THEIR TRIP ACROSS THE CONTINENT.²²

FORT WALLA WALLA.

Columbia River, Oct. 2, 1836.

To Brothers Wm. & Edward Porter & their wives:

Very Dear Brothers and Sisters

It gives me great pleasure that I am permitted to say, the Lord has brought us safely through our long, doubtful journey; and that our eyes have actually seen the long, long, long-wished-for Walla Walla, the end of our journey of 4100 miles. By the blessing of God, we arrived here on the 3rd of Sep., seven months and three days from the time myself and wife, left her father's house, a day that will I think be long remembered by us; a day may I not ask, that will be set apart by that little band at least of dear friends: (oh my soul, shall I never see them again!) assembled in that sacred room on the day of our departure, as a day of prayer and thanksgiving to that God, who has sustained, and finally brought to completion, the hazardous expedition undertaken by the missionaries of the Board. I cannot realize that I have crossed the Rocky mountains since the morning I drove sorrowfully out of Prattsburgh, and am now actually on the banks of the terrible Columbus, but it is really so. I have already been paid a thousand fold by what my eyes have seen, and all America with her gold and happiness could not purchase a place for me in the states, if I must leave these poor heathen standing thick around, pleading with their own tongues, actually, for the bread of eternal life, unpitied. Call my anxiety that I coldly expressed for the poor heathen when in the states, enthusiasm, madness or any other name which closed up the pulpit in my beloved Seminary against me as I passed last spring, and gave occasion for my beloved father in theology and one of the professors to absent themselves from the celebration of our departure, held in the Cong. Church of Cincinnati; the snowbanks of the Rocky mountains did not kill it, the hot blasts of the sandy desert did not wilt it, but the actual sight of what fancy only pictured before, told me in voice of thunder, I had not pleaded the cause of the heathen, only attempted it. Oh that our churches at home could see and feel what their missionaries witness every day on heathen ground! There would be a very different story told in their pulpits, and a very different one told on their treasurer's books.

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For particulars respecting the journey I must refer you to my letter to Mr. Green, if published, which occupies four or five sheets and consequently cannot be written over to every individual friend. I will however give a brief sketch, and first, you will please connect the following points with a line on some map which will give our route, very nearly. From Liberty, Mo., 300 miles above St. Louis, up the south side of Missouri river to mouth of Platte, Lat. 41 degrees, longitude 95 degrees, up the north side of Platte to the forks Lat. 41 degrees, Long. 102 degrees up the north fork to Ft. William of N.F.Co., foot of the mountains, Lat. 41 degrees 50 minutes, Long. 106 degrees, 40 minutes. This fort has been built three or four years,

²²This letter was secured through the late Prof. R. K. Warren, of Portland, a native of Bath, New York, about eighteen years ago.--George H. Himes, Assistant Secretary Oregon Historical Society.

373 raises grain, and have fine cattle. Up the west branch still, till a few days of rendezvous, a place appointed this year on Green river, a branch of the Colorado, to meet all the trappers perhaps 300 of the Co., in the mountains; also the Indians that came to trade. Then about 42 degrees, 56 minutes, Long. 110 degrees, 5 minutes, S. W. into the borders of Mexico onto the waters of Timpanagos or Salt Lake, so called from its depositing great quantities of salt, Lat. 41 degrees, 50 minutes, Long. 111 degrees, 25 minutes, south of this lake. I have just learned there is a fine country of land, well timbered with pine, oak, and what is unknown so far as I have been able to learn in any other part of the mountains, sugar tree. No winter, grass green through the year, Utaws and Navihoes in the vicinity, wild Indians, no man safe among them. Navihoes raise great quantities of grain, cattle, sheep, etc., and make their own clothing, and have their own religion, reject the Catholics of California, could be reached without doubt by any other religion. Who will go? Thence west to Fort Hall, on Snake or Lewis river, Lat. 42 degrees, 13 minutes, Long. 113 degrees. This fort was built in 1834 by Capt. Whyeth of Boston, who came that year into the country to engage in the fur trade and with whom the missionaries Lees came. No female accompanied them. Here turnips have been raised but too frosty for farming. Some timber on a small spot and apparently several thousand acres of good soil. This is a dangerous situation, in the vicinity of the Black Feet, a blood-thirsty Indian tribe, frequently at the gates of the fort, have destroyed many lives and stolen hundreds of horses. From this fort, north of west down Snake river, to Snake Fort at the junction of Wood and Snake rivers, Lat. 44 degrees 10 minutes, Long. 116 degrees 20 minutes, called Wood river from its having a little timber on it, a species of poplar called cotton wood, found abundant in the western states, and the only timber except a little pine sometimes on the mountains, found whenever any is found in the mountains. This fort was built last year by the Hudson Bay Co., where 16 years ago a fort, and all the men except one were cut up. On Wood river there is considerable land not subject to frosts, a favorable situation for settlement, the first we met with from fort W., a distance of 1050 miles. This is a safe country; Indians friendly, Snakes and Bonnocks. From this fort northwest to Walla Walla, at the junction of Columbia and Walla Walla rivers Lat. 40 degrees 10 minutes Long. 119 degrees 15 minutes. This fort was built 19 years ago by the Hudson Bay Co. Much good land up the Walla Walla river some 50 miles; timber plenty near the mountains, some 90 or 100 miles; none within 60 miles of the fort, except flood wood down the Columbia; fertile spots of 5 or 20 acres within 16 or 18 miles. Abundance of corn, potatoes, peas, garden vegetables, cattle, hogs &c., raised here. Natives very friendly, formerly very dangerous cannibals, one man perfectly safe among them anywhere now. Cheycooses²³ [sic] and Walla Walla speaks the Nez Perces language; one of us will probably settle on the W. river. About six days to Walla mountains, the valleys became covered with a short fine bunch grass, evidently a very strong species of grass, from the fact that cattle and horses grow very fat on it, summer or winter. Our cattle were in good flesh when they ended their long journey. They are now good beef. The cattle and horses of the country exceed for fatness, anything I ever saw in the states. This grass extends for hundreds of miles around. The Walla Walla country is consequently good for herding. The system of the Hudson Bay Co. forbids them to sell cattle to any person, even their own traders or clerks. They will lend to any extent, none killed. In this way, the country is fast filling up with cattle.

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²³Cayuses.

375 However, a few have been killed this year at Vancouvers, and Dr. McLoughlin has ordered Mr. Pambran^{23a} to kill one fat ox at this fort--we are to have half of it. There are at Vancouver, 700 head of cattle; from 20 to 100 at several other posts. Three days after arriving at this fort we started on a visit to Vancouver, 300 miles; went down the Columbia in a boat propelled by six oarsmen, were detained two days by head winds, and reached Vancouver the seventh day. We were very kindly received by Dr. McLoughlin the chief factor in Columbia. We were much disappointed at the abundance of necessaries and comforts of life here to be obtained, and cheaper than in the city of New York, from the fact that all goods come to this country free of duties. Two ships from London this year heavily laden with goods. Two now in port, one from the Sandwich Islands: both sent this fall. Two more expected soon from the coast. The company have also a steamboat for the coast. The farm at Vancouver produced 4,000 bushels of wheat and other grains except corn, in proportion. The Dr. has a beautiful garden of about 15 acres, containing all manner of fruit. As soon as we get a location, we shall, Providence permitting, supply ourselves with fruit trees. I will name some: Apple, peach, plum, cherry, grape, prunes, etc. We left our wives at Vancouver till we find a location and build, as they can be better accommodated there than in this place. Two white women arrived at Vancouver before them. The farmer's wife in the spring and the Rev. Mr. Beaver's wife in the ship just arrived. We remained at Vancouver a week, returned in 12 days with the boat heavy laden with supplies for us, such as flour, pork, butter, tallow, salt, farming utensils, Indian goods, etc., etc. The Columbia is the most frightful river I ever saw navigated by any craft. The Cascades or rapids, about 100 miles from Vancouver and 200 miles from the ocean, it is easy passed with any craft from there to the mountains, a distance of 700 miles it is a swift current, frequent rapids, three or four compressed channels and one or two falls--I believe there are six in the whole river, three between this and Vancouver. Portages are made of property, one of boat and property carried by 50 or 100 Indians for a small piece of tobacco. Tide sets up 50 miles above Vancouver. Probably a larger quantity of water must flow than in the Mississippi, but it is frequently pressed into a channel of ten rods. Many lives are lost in this river. None but Canadians and Indians would ever think of navigating this terrible Columbia. Last night we had a little shower of rain, the first drop in this region since the first of May and the first we have experienced since the 24th of June as we were entering the mountains. Air is very pure and healthy. I think this the healthiest country in the world. Rain is plentiful in Columbia in the winter season; water in this country is most delicious. We have become so attached to our mode of living as to prefer a lodging in the open air to indoors. The atmosphere at night is exhilarating.

376 Have just returned from exploring the Walla Walla river. Doct. W. has found an excellent strip of land; timber sufficient in 25 miles instead of 50; rich soil extends for about 12 miles in length; beneath [beyond?] on the mountains in about four miles of this building spot is the greatest country I've seen yet. His location is about east of this. Brother Gray and the men will go to building immediately. Doct. W. and myself expect, God willing, to go into the Nez Perces country on the 9th. Several Nez Perces have arrived to conduct us to their country. My beloved chief, spoken of in several letters, who came out to meet Mr. Parker, Dr. Whitman and myself, and who has stuck by us from the beginning, I think will be here tomorrow. The Nez Perces are

^{23a}Mr. Pambran.

certainly the handsomest Indians I ever saw, the most friendly, a most likely of the red men and live better than any other tribes on this side of the mountain. The Cheyocs among whom Doctor has settled, next; the Walla Walla's next. All these speak the Nez Perces language. But as we pressed west the Indians became more wretched and filthy. The women have a small covering about the loins, the men are entirely naked, with no appearance of shame. You may frequently see four or five hunting in each other's herd [heads] and eating the prey. They were formerly in the habit of shooting all the horses of a chief over his grave. I saw a large pile of horse bones the other day in such a place. This custom the Hudson Bay. Co. have broken up. It was once the custom, if a mother died at any time within six weeks after the birth of a child, to bury the living child with the mother. This custom was also broken up by the Company. There has been no case until now for five years. A Walla Walla woman died soon after the birth of a child. The father gave a horse for another woman to nurse the child; three days after, the father of the mother, took the child and buried it alive with its mother. The father of the child takes it very hard. The women of this country are great gamblers; six or eight of them will frequently stake property, especially among the Nez Perces, to the amount of \$500.00 mostly ornaments. Let me tell the dear Christian ladies who lay out the Lord's money to appear fine, could they see a Nez Perces woman with herself and house [horse] equipped, pass through one of their cities, they would go to their drawing room, take down their sham trappings and cast them into the fire, as not worth noticing in comparison with the splendid equipage of a Nez Perces lady and her milk-white steed.

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You will hardly believe when I tell you, that Mr. Pambra [Pambrun] who has done so much to forward our object, spending more than a month in traveling with us, and has been with us to look at a location, and says he will do everything in his power to help us, and wishes us to take his children to bring up, is a Roman Catholic.

Tell your dear children all, I remember them. Have seen 5000 Buffalo at once probably. Hope they will all become missionaries. Letters or a box of good clothing can come to us by way of the Sandwich Islands. Direct, postpaid to Rev. David Green, Boston, to Doct. McLoughlin, chief actor of the H. B. Co., Vancouver. Tell Mr. and Mrs. Bridges I am much pleased with their new relation. I supposed Miss Hopkins was to marry Mr. Bull, till I received your letters. Get all the good friends in P. to write six sheets in one letter to me. Give my love to your dear father and all friends in P.

H. H. SPALDING.

P.S. -- Oct. 20, Vancouver. -- God has brought me back to this place. Since I left Utica, I have traveled 5,300 and my wife 4,900 miles; we have yet to travel 425 to end our wanderings. The Lord directed us to a favorable location, among the Nez Perces, 125 miles east of Walla Walla, and 12 east of Lewis river on a river putting in from the north called Kooskoos. The Nez Perces are much rejoiced that I have found a place. They say, "only let us know what you want, and it shall be done at once." They are to meet me at Walla Walla, the 15th of November to take all my effects to their country. In the meantime, God willing and assisting, I expect to take a boat load of supplies with the hands up the river while Doct. W. remains to prepare his house.

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Merrill J. Mattes, 1/21/49.