



Oregon State Archives

800 Summer Street NE

Salem, OR 97310

503-373-0701 ext. 1

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GOVERNOR KINTZING PRITCHETTE ADMINISTRATION

June 18, 1850 to August 18, 1850

Biographical Note

Source: Text courtesy of the Oregon State Library.

For one who was acting Governor, the only governor Oregon had for two months in 1850, Kintzing Pritchette received scant attention from Oregon's press. The press at that time consisted of one paper, the Oregon Spectator published in Oregon City, seat of the territorial government.

So he's rather a vague figure in Oregon history. A native of Philadelphia, born June 24, 1800, Pritchette was sent to Oregon by President Polk as secretary of the Territory, serving from April 9, 1849, to Sept. 18, 1850. He had previously served for two Years as the last secretary of Michigan Territory before its admission to the Union in 1837.

After Whig Zachary Taylor succeeded Democrat James K. Polk as President, General Joseph Lane, who had never got along with Taylor while both were serving in the Mexican War, resigned, two months before his success or took over. The successor was General John P. Gaines, another Mexican War veteran who had been decidedly less than a buddy of Lane's in the Mexican fuss. This left the opening for Pritchette as acting governor. The Spectator, apparently, did not "cover" the Governor's office carefully for news, for the only mention he got as Territorial chief executive was a few lines covering his speech at the Oregon City Fourth of July celebration in 1850. The few lines occurred in the middle of a routine story a column long, which credited him with giving "an interesting oration" with "a smooth and even flow of thought" and "occasional flashes of eloquent and beautiful sentiment." It failed, however, to give the least hint of what he said. liev. Wilson Blain, United Presbyterian clergyman, was editor of the Spectator at the time, and there was as yet no real reporter in Oregon.

The only other mention given the acting Governor was a bare reference to him as attorney in some cases in federal court. He was one of the prosecutors of the Indian murderers of medical missionary Marcus Whitman.

On leaving Oregon he went back into service with the federal departments, and his career ended in gloom in the Fiji Islands, where he was officially said to have suffered from delirium tremens while serving at Lautala.

When Pritchette went to Michigan as territorial secretary, he was described as "a fashionable, good-looking. well-dressed young man, about 5 ft. 11, weighing about 160....sandy complexion, clean shaven; always wore gold-rimmed spectacles...a classical scholar and a man of

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considerable ability and mental attainments." Oregon's state archivist, David C. Duniway, has been trying for several years to get a picture of this apparently personable official. Up to date (July, 1959) he has been unable to get one. Pritchette is Oregon's only "faceless" Governor.

Even his name has some haze about it. There seem to be three or four distinct spelling-Prichett, as it appeared on his birth certificate; Pritchett, as it appeared on his birth certificate; Pritchett, Prichette, and Pritchette. The 1959-60 Oregon Blue Book has gone over to the long spelling (Pritchette) after using two of the others in the last few years.

Bibliography:

1. Turnbull, George S. *Governors of Oregon*. Binford & Mort, Publishers, Portland, Or 1959.
2. Michigan Historical Museum
3. Political Graveyard