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GOVERNOR GEORGE L. CURRY ADMINISTRATION

May 19, 1853 to December 2, 1853

August 2, 1854 to March 3, 1859

Weapons Distribution Message, 1856

Source: Oregon State Archives, Oregon Provisional and Territorial Records, 1856, Calendar No. 9698.

9698

Weapons Distribution

Messages – Governor Curry

Year 1856

To the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Oregon:

I have the honor to inform the Legislative Assembly that I have recently received from the general government the quota of arms due the Territory. By the most recent law of Congress for the distribution of arms to the Territories, each Territory which has not received an equivalent to 2000 muskets, were entitled to that number. In the suppression of the Indian hostilities in Southern Oregon, in 1853 50 rifles were obtained by requisition from the ordinance stores at Fort Vancouver for the people of Jackson County which have been deducted from the number due, 2000 muskets.

The money value of the munitions of war furnished upon my requisition by the military storekeeper of [ordinance], at Fort Vancouver, for the repulsion of present Indian aggression, has also been deducted, agreeably to my pledge made at the time my requisitions were answered. These deductions have reduced the number to 1383 muskets.

The annual assignment of arms to the Territories after the year 1854, may be drawn in such arms, or field military, as may be desired. Consequently, for the year 1855, I made a requisition for 74 Colts Patent Revolvers, instead of 137 muskets due, and I am happy to state that they have been received and are now with the other arms in charge of the Department of the Quarter Master General of the Territory

Territory of Oregon, Executive Office

Salem, Jan 18th 1856,

Geo. L. Curry



Legislative Message, 1856

Source: Oregon State Archives, Oregon Provisional and Territorial Records, 1856, Calendar No. 8001.

8001

[untitled]

Messages—Governor G. Curry

Year: 1856

Gentlemen of the Council, and House of Representatives,

The unqualified and distinct separation of our Executive and Legislative departments is a peculiar feature of the act of Congress organizing the government of our Territory. I have no disposition to find fault with this original principle of withholding from the Executive, authority coordinate with the law-making power, but on the contrary, I commend it as most wise and salutary, in a system of government so imperfect and unsatisfactory, as that which the people of the Territories have been constrained to submit to. This characteristic of our fundamental law, it is presumable, has been the cause of the non-observance of the custom, [as it is] elsewhere, of an elaborate and digested expression from the Executive to the Legislative department of the government, at the commencement of each session, as to the condition and wants of the country. At loss, since I have held the position I now hold, whilst I have been ready, at all times, to cooperate with the Legislative Assembly, in every legitimate way, it has always influenced to [an earnest carefully] against any act that might be construed into an improper interference of one department with the duties of another. However, the courteous action, which you have been pleased to take, which has been communicated to me through your authorized delegation, could seem to invite me to the gratification I now take in expressing the privilege of thus addressing you, hastily, and without the accustomed preparation.

The calamitous events which had befallen the Territory, and the serious and threatening posture of affairs, which existed at the period of the commencement of the last session of the Assembly, had occasioned the profoundest anxiety and excited the gloomiest apprehensions. All our energies were employed in repelling the attacks of hostile Indians in a desperate warfare with a treacherous and faithless race, who had devastated most flourishing sections of our country, carried desolation and sorrow to the homes and spirits of our settlers, in the destruction of their fortunes and the wanton butchery of their helpless families.

It is a matter of the sincerest congratulation that the aspect of things has so much changed. A more cheerful feeling is [replacing] the anguish and suffering of the past, and the Territory is gradually recovering from the ruinous effects of a calamity so great. To the courage, gallantry and indomitable spirit of our citizen soldiery is Oregon chiefly indebted for that protection and defense which the general government did not afford. During a winter campaign they endured incredible hardships and privations. Poorly clad, and for weeks subsisting upon the flesh of their own horses, unflinchingly and courageously they maintained their posts—far out in the enemy's country at the North, and amid the snow-filled mountains in the South—with a fidelity worthy of the highest [commendation]. A resolution of thanks, in the name of the Territory, is due them for their meritorious and arduous services.

The memory of those who perished in the cause of their country, during the war, may be preserved in the pages of its history, but it would seem proper, by the creation of a monumental column, at the set of government, or by some other appropriate mode, to testify the public appreciation of the services, and to perpetuate the memory of the honored dead. They were true to Oregon.

The inaction, and imbecile policy pursued by the officer commanding the U.S. troops upon the Pacific Coast, at a very critical juncture, and his more reprehensible conduct in the vindictive efforts he has made, through the forces, and by his letters and reports at Washington, to asperse and malign the people of the Territory, [may] have had a tendency to prejudice them against the savage.

This valuable arm of the public service, which is designed for the protection of the country, and to [abuse] the lives and property of those who deem it a duty to support it, has always enjoyed a high reputation of efficiency and gallantry, and I have no doubt, under the command of other than [superannuated] officers will continue to maintain its brilliant character, I have heretofore acknowledged its valuable aid, before its operations were controlled by a commanding officer whose Head Quarters were in an adjoining State, remote from the theatre of war.

Oppressed by the deepest anxiety, on account of the grave accusations, so [unaccountably] made, against the people of the Territory, in which I was charged with the grossest violation of right, I deemed it my duty to visit the seat of our national government, and confuting those accusations and charges, to know wherein we did wrong in defending ourselves from Indian aggression and barbarity.

It is enough for me to say, that, in this great capitol of the nation, I found no accusations that could be sustained, no one of respectability and influence to do us injury. While abroad I found the name of Oregon, a name commanding respect, and receiving distinguished consideration. The great and worthy of the land appreciate and hold in high estimation, the [base] industrious and enterprising character of her people. The delegate of the Territory was at his post, faithful and watchful; and it affords me pleasure to be able to bear personal testimony of his worth, ability and efficiency. His unflagging zeal, and indefatigable industry, procured no Congressional legislation in reference to the expenses of the war, when there seemed no hope of such a --- [consummation]. That legislation gave authority to the Secretary of War to appoint three Commissioners to adjust those expenses, which duty he has performed.

These Commissioners have met and organized, and are ready to proceed to the discharge of the trust [obliged] them, so soon as the Chiefs of the departments of the Territory are prepared to furnish their reports. The Commission is composed of able, upright and high [named] gentlemen, and is entitled to the respect and confident of the whole Community.

The Quartermaster, Commissary and Adjutant Generals, under my orders, have been, and are, [apudously] engaged in making up the complete and final reports of the entire transactions of their respective departments, to be presented to the Commissioners, who are to adjust the expenses of the war. I have learned, unofficially, of the passage of resolutions, by one House of the Assembly, calling upon the Quartermaster and Commissary Generals for detailed reports of their operations. The great [piers] of business that engrosses the . . . attention of these two important branches of the public service will, I am apprehensive, prevent an early and full compliance with the requirements of those resolutions. I am sure it would be a matter of general regret, when so large an interest is concerned as in the present case—that of the whole Territory—should the final reports of those departments be delayed in searching the speediest

action of the Commission, upon whose adjudication the accounts of the numerous claimants will ultimately be paid.

These officers are controlled by my orders, acting under my own immediate direction, and observation, in behalf of the Territory, for the United States, and while I am aware that efforts have been made, to prejudice them in public estimation, I hesitate not, to say, that I believe them capable, honest and faithful, and I cannot withhold from them my confidence. I beg to [implore?] you that I shall cause all the important information to be derived from these reports, when prepared, which it is [presumed] will about the 10th of next month, to be laid before you.

While in the city of New York, I expended five hundred dollars in the purchase of books for the Territorial Library, being the amount of an appropriation made by last Congress for such purpose. As soon as the books shall have been received, and they are expected by every [steamer], I will cause them to be placed in the possession of the Territorial Librarian, with a catalogue, and other papers, pertaining to the purchase.

The "Commissioners, for the construction of the penitentiary" elected at the last session of the Assembly, failed to qualify, with one exception. The vacancies were filled by appointments, I am happy to say, that the Commissioners have displayed superior ability, and discharged their duties with energy and fidelity. What they have accomplished I make no doubt will be to your entire satisfaction. As the Board, in accordance with the law, does not report to the Executive, but directly to the Assembly. I respectfully refer you to that document for information, in detail, as to the progress and condition of this public work. I have the honor to transmit, herewith, as the law requires, a statement of the condition of the funds for the erection of Capitol Buildings. Also a communication from the First Comptroller of the Treasury, in reference to the decision of that office in regard to balances due for services performed, and damages claimed by contractors, on that work, and allowed at the session of the Assembly of 1854 and 5. Seventeen thousand dollars of the moneys appropriated by Congress, to complete the Capitol Building, remain still in the Treasury of the United States.

I have likewise the honor to submit herewith a copy of correspondence with the Secretary of War in relation to Indian affairs.

For the risk of a violation of [propriety] I take the liberty to observe, that, in my judgment, any legislation whatever, at your present session, with a view to the relocation of the seat of government, under existing circumstances, as the subject is regarded, by the authorities at Washington in a light [adverted] to the application of the [fund] at any new point would be injudicious and unproductive of any benefit to your constituents. The subject has been one that has engaged more or less engaged the time and attention of every session of the Assembly. It is a one too upon which there has been a great diversity of opinion, and which has already caused too much unkind and bitter feeling. It is a matter possibly that can be [interfacationly] adjusted only by the creation of a State Government. In view of the probability of a speedy consummation of such a measure. It would appear the part of wisdom to defer its further agitation with until that event shall have transpired.

The organization of a State Government for Oregon, with the experience obtained at Washington in reference to the position and treatment of Territorial interests there. I deem a subject of the first consequence. There are so many disadvantages and positive grievances entailed by the Territorial form of government, that in the acquisition of new territory by the United States. The consideration of Congress must, inevitably, be given to the remodeling and improvement of the whole system. The noble principle enunciated in the Kansas-Nebraska act

is a step in the advance, and may be regarded as an evidence of the encouragement that is in the future in this respect. The Indian difficulties when our frontiers have and will, for a time, deter an increase of our population by the ordinary means of overland immigration, which has been the usual source of important yearly accessions, chiefly to the agricultural class of our inhabitants. Hundreds of industrious and enterprising people would have started from the states, in the evening Spring, by the overland route to make their homes in Oregon, but for the unprotected condition of the route. Military posts, at Fort Boise and Fort Hall, are imperatively required to insure safe and unobstructed travel in the Indian Country and as links to connect the chain of such establishments on either side of the mountains. An independent sovereignty will be [certain] to induce, by the only other means of access, a character of population, differing in interests, but quite as requisite to the permanent prosperity of the country. Capital with her keen vision, would seek investments here. Our natural resources, as yet, comparatively untouched, would be just in process of development. In the train of capital will follow labor. There is no section of the whole union where the attainment of wealth is easier, or more certain, or the means of its accumulation more various, than in Oregon. Our wants are manifold. In the halls of our National Legislature a State demands and receives, while a Territory beseeches and is disappointed.

A state organization, based upon the principles of economy, guarding against extravagant expenses, high salaries, and excessive legislation, I am confident would be satisfactory, successful and prosperous. It is not for me to advise as to the manner in which you shall submit this subject to the people, and yet I would suggest the mode that will secure the speediest determination as the best.

The election for President of the United States has just transpired with more excitement than is usually incident to this quadrennial occurrence. For the first time in the history of the nation the candidate of a purely sectional party, powerful in numbers, has been sought to be elevated to power. The consequence of this was to have been forever. The whole nation was convulsed, and the Union threatened with dismemberment in the event of the success of that party. But fortunately for the country, the candidate of the democratic party has been elected. This party, the party of progress, from the triumph of its principles in the successful achievement and application of its measures for the public good, has become prominently the party of the Union and the Constitution—the Savior of the Republic.

In conclusion, I assure you that it will afford me pleasure to cooperate with you, so may be desirably in the advancement of the public good. May “He who ruleth all things well, have you in his holy [healing], bless your deliberations with harmony and make them promotive of the interests and welfare of the Territory.

Geo. L Curry

Territory of Oregon, Executive Office,

Salem, Dec 10th, 1856.

Legislative Message, 1857

Source: Oregon State Archives, Oregon Provisional and Territorial Records, 1857, Calendar No. 9376.

9376

Address to the Legislative Assembly

Messages – Governor G.L. Curry

Year 1857

Fellow Citizens of the Council and House of Representatives

As in all probability you constitute the last Legislative Assembly that will convene under our present form of government, I have deemed it appropriate if not in the line of my official duty, to address you upon an occasion which would seem to invite an expression of thought upon the past and present of our history, and to suggest a consideration of matters touching the interests of the Territory, as well as the welfare and prosperity of the State which is soon to be inducted into power.

When the history of Oregon comes to be written the mind of the historian will be impressed by the earnestness and sincerity of character—the unobtrusive, unostentatious conduct of those who formed its population from the first reclaiming of the wilderness—the pioneer epoch—to the more refined advancement into social and political existence. Another generation, in the realization of the ease, comfort and affluence, and the various enjoyments of a higher civilization, which will have resulted from ceaseless industry and undiscouraged enterprise, may accord the need of praise to the unwearied toil and patient suffering of those who tracked the wilderness and subdued it to the wants of man. Our pioneer settlers possessed integrity of character. They were energetic and diligent, warm-hearted and strong-willed. Difficulties and [reverses] did not dishearten them, dangers could not. These attributes and labor constituted their only capital and with them they achieved success. They were co-laborers in the service of utility; the pinchings of poverty and their daily privations only made them be more apt and efficient workmen. They accomplished a purpose with every effort. They congregat[e] to reward a bounty for wolf-scalps, and separat[e] after having inaugurated the first republican government on the shores of the Northern Pacific—the polity of which has received the unqualified commendation of the first statesmen of the Union. The only instance of true and successful “squatter sovereignty” in the history of our Country.

The Territorial system of government may be regarded as somewhat [___lous] under the federal Constitution, in its definition of the enjoyment of the full rights of citizenship. It is an imperfect and unsatisfactory form of government, and may continue to be a fruitful source of trouble and discontent. It would seem just and politic, having full faith in the capacity of the people for self government, that the citizens of the Territories should no longer be [debarred] the right, which no Constitutional power prohibits, to elect their own executive and judicial officers. Such an amendment of the system would free it from its most objectionable feature—that vestige of monarchical custom which should find no practice, or toleration, in a confederation of republican States, where the intelligence of the people is the basis of the government.

The provisional government which had been instituted by the mixed population of Oregon, after an existence of nearly six year, having admirably achieved its purpose, gave place to the jurisdiction of the United States, in our present Territorial system, on the 3rd day of March, A.D. 1849. In a few months a more satisfactory change will have transpired in the assumption of the powers and authority of a sovereign State. It is a circumstance especially gratifying and congratulatory that, while other Territories have been afflicted with turbulence and desperate feuds, in this effort to perfect their form of government, Oregon has accomplished it with dignity, determining the same questions and causes of unhappiness, without the [disruption] of social

obligation, the violation of peace, or the infringement of her honor. This in the main is owing to the fact that we have been let alone by outside pseudo-reformers and philanthropists, that we have not been cursed by the presence of political advocates and emissaries of fanaticism to excite indecent passion, prostitute the public good, and make the blessings of our fathers a [byword?] and a scorn.

The people of the Territories are fully competent to manage their own political concerns. They know best their own interests and necessities and least of all do they require foreign influences to educate them as to their political rights and duties. In the peaceful pursuit of agricultural life the settler seeks to obtain a comfortable subsistence. Nature is his daily companion, and the sentiments she inspires elevate his mind and pacify his heart. Is he not to be trusted in the exercise of his prerogatives! Vice does not flourish where agriculture has made her home. The Territories, as the common property of the nation, should be regarded as neutral ground, rather than as arenas for fanatical strife. Life has a better and higher purpose, and the nation a nobler mission than is involved in an interminable one-[sided] crusade.

The Constitution, which has been adopted with such a feeling of unanimity, reflects credit upon those who framed it and our citizens have exhibited their excellent judgment in approving it as the fundamental law. It is liberal in its provisions, and its spirit is in harmony with the progressive and improving impulse of the age. It inculcates the principles of economy in the administration of the government, which it is to be hoped may be always rigidly observed and maintained, for extravagance has characterized the times and should be guarded against by every prudent means. There is nothing that will so fetter the usefulness of the State and impair its healthful vitality. It is an instrument that should be patiently submitted to the test of time, and careful practice and construction, before any encouragement is given to any change whatever.

Oregon presents herself for admission into the Confederation of States in no [unserviable] attitude. No indecent haste impairs the undertaking. Time has matured the event. Her Constitution compares favorably with those of other states. She has adjusted creditably, permanently and satisfactorily all subjects involving differences of opinion. She has evaded no issue, or responsibility, however delicate or exciting. She understands herself and can be readily comprehended by all. Her manifold interests, in their daily increasing magnitude and importance, demand, and inspire the hope, that there may be no hesitation, or delay, in the acknowledgement of her sovereignty.

You are doubtless aware that Dr. John Evans, a gentleman of high scientific attainments has been engaged for several years, under direction of the general government, in making a geological reconnaissance of this and Washington Territory. With the character of his explorations, and the zeal and energy with which they have been conducted, you are likewise familiar. The publications of his report, which is now complete, ought to be a matter of considerable interest, especially to the two Territories, for we may confidently calculate that he has collected much valuable information which will be of importance to the growing interests of this section of the Union. It is desirable that the fruit of his investigation should be made known to the world. I have no doubt that the passage of a joint resolution, by your respective bodies, instructing our delegate to request Congress to make the necessary appropriation for the early publication of the work might be of service in accomplishing that and The Commissioner of the General Land Office estimates the requisite amount for this purpose at \$21,400.00. Consider the labors of Dr. Evans "as eminently useful in a scientific point of view as well as subserving the interests of the Pacific coast, by indicating the localities of the Country possessing mineral and agricultural wealth." He correctly observes—

“ Either what has been done in the way of exploration and development of coal deposits, under appropriation by Congress, is to go for nothing and remain useless, or be brought to light in proper form, as proposed by further appropriation, to close the business and make the results available. The effect of the . . . measure will be to open up new sources of trade to active industry in the extraction and sale of coal on the Pacific, thereby furnishing the material for propulsion, essential in our rapidly growing steam commerce on the Pacific, at cheap rates, instead of the enormous cost of the article imported from the east.”

Our Indian relations remain in an unsatisfactory state. As demand has been made for the surrender of the murderers of Agent [Bolen] and Wright, and other Indians guilty of similar outrages, although the Superintendent of Indian Affairs has signified to the commanding officer of this military department, the justice and necessity of such an act. Notwithstanding the uncertain [posture] of affairs no apprehensions need be entertained of hostile demonstrations on the part of the Indians west of the Cascade Mountains so long as the government; by an adequate military force and ample appropriation, maintains its present policy of keeping and subsisting them upon reservations.

The abrogation of the treaties with the Indians east of the Cascades, or rather the failure of the Senate to ratify them, has been regarded as a sufficient cause to justify the closing of the large extent of country beyond the Dalles of the Columbia against settlement, or occupation by the whites. I shall not now undertake to oppose the policy of the measure, however questionable it may be, but I have to observe that the section of the Territory allotted to had been opened to settlement by the positive enactment of Congress. The ratification of the treaties with the Indians west of the Cascades, it should be borne in mind, is only of comparatively recent occurrence. Indeed the first treaties were rejected. Because of this no authority military or other, attempted the assumption and exercise of a power doubtful, at least. When the jurisdiction of the United States was extended over this Country, and its authority established, through executive and judicial officers, it was, it is presumed, for the purpose of protecting its citizens in the enjoyment of their rights and interests and afterwards, in order to foster those interests and increase the population, liberal grants of land were made to those already occupying portions of the public domain, and others were invited to become settlers upon it by virtue of the provisions of the same law and receive a similar gratuity. Wherever the settler located his right he held independent of the possessing rights of the Indians, which was unextinguished, and the “intercourse law”, which was quite as applicable as now. It was not his business to inquire who owned the land. He paid for it by his labor to a proprietor powerful enough to guarantee his [patent]. The expiration of certain provisions of the land law does not effect the inherent principle involved in the subject.

Large sections of the country from which the whites have been thus excluded are well adapted for purposes of pasturage, being covered with highly nutritious grasses. Our citizens had been regarding its occupation as highly advantageous for their rapidly augmenting herds of cattle and other stock.

Our present highly capable Superintendent of Indian (Affairs) is wholly engaged in the efficient discharge of the difficult duties of his responsible position. An increase of jurisdiction has made his labours truly Herculean. From the forty second to the forty ninth parallel of north latitude and from the ocean to the Rocky Mountains forms now but one Superintendency. This district of country is much too extensive for any one Superintendent, be he ever so efficient. It will be impossible to give entire and complete satisfaction. There should be two, at least, if not three such officers for a field of service so extended and important. I would respectfully suggest the expediency of your memorializing Congress upon the necessity of authorizing additional

Superintendents so as the better to insure the prompt discharge of every responsibility pertaining to this important branch of the public service.

As I hope, and expect, in a few months to be relieved from the further discharge of official duty, by the organization of the State government, and as I shall have no opportunity more fitting, I desire to avail myself of the present occasion to make some brief observations in reference to my course of action during the recent period in which the Territory was engaged in repelling the attacks of hostile Indians. I do so with the more reluctance because so much has been said already upon the subject of the war. The willful perversions of truth in regard to the policy and conduct of the war—the wanton and calumnious assaults which have been made upon those engaged in it, might pass without notice, so far as they effect me personally, but as they reach the people of the Territory, and particularly those brave and patriotic citizens who constituted the volunteer forces, a sense of duty impels me to a difficult course. I have at all times cheerfully held myself responsible for my official conduct, and I cannot but consider it [ungenerous] and unjust, that those who have no accountability in the matter, having merely complied with the directions and requests of their Chief Executive Authority, should be subjected to [accusations] and abuse. An incompetent general, lately in command of the military department of the Pacific, whose vanity and [imbecility] made him unequal to the great emergency that occurred, in order to divert the public mind from his glaring omissions of duty and great military mismanagement, has chosen to make it his especial business to lead on these assaults. The grossness and mendacity of his communications, whether official, or as a newspaper correspondent[s], render him no longer worthy of respectful notice, or consideration. During the war he was chiefly engaged in traveling upon a safe and comfortable Steam ship between here and San Francisco in incubating his opprobrious compositions against a neglected and endangered people, and in bickering and fault-finding with those of his officers who sought to do their duty.

Some of the newspaper editors of the refined east, where the chiefest danger to life arises from voluptuous living, who know the Indian character only through poetry and romance, who seem to care more about cultivating treasonable machinations, and fostering disaffection to the Union, than the advocacy of truth, have filled their columns with wholesale denunciation of their fellow citizens, inhabiting an isolated portion of the Country, who resorted to arms in defence of life and property, rather than risk the general ruin and butchery by remaining cowardly inactive. It is painful to conclude that the success of the whites, in repelling the attacks of the ruthless invader, was less gratifying to such mental organizations than would have been the depopulation of both territories by Indian conquest.

It was the general belief, which has subsequently been fully confirmed, that the most powerful tribes adjacent to our frontier had entered into hostile combination against the whites. In this connection an officer of the regular army has thus written:

“ As you will already have learned the Indian War has become general, and a combination for purposes of hostility to the whites been formed on a scale which those most intimately acquainted with Indian character have heretofore believed impossible. x x x x x. In southern Oregon the Rogue river Indians combined with some of those on the coast, the Umpquans, Pitt river and Shasta Indians, have also broken out into a fresh war and one of evidently included extermination, against the Whites.”

It is unnecessary for me here to account for the cause of this combination and the subsequent acts of hostility which simultaneously occurred at both extremes of the Territory. The antipathy existing between the two races is no new circumstance. It had its origin far back in the past, in the infancy of the republic. The history of the settlement of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys

affords overwhelming testimony of the cordiality of its bitterness. Indeed the westward progress of civilization has been continually marked by Indian massacre and warfare. For had this Territory been without a successful record of the turpitude and atrocity of the Indian character, to which the late calamity has added a most melancholy page.

Before the enrollment of a single volunteer the Indian hostilities had assumed a most serious and threatening character. In the South our people were being surprised and slaughtered and the settlements laid waste. murder and repine held high carnival at noon day. In the North an Indian Agent and other whites had been murdered and a strong body of U.S. troops repulsed with great loss. In the presence of these exacting and formidable circumstances, while the dismayed settlers were calling upon me for protection, was it for me to calculate the cost of defending the Territory and because it involved great expense timidly decline to act and allow independent and irregular action to override the constituted authority? An impartial judgment will answer, no! I should have been recreant to duty had I so done, and deserving of that condemnation which is now sought to be passed upon me.

In the embodiment of the volunteer force for service on the northern frontier, a sense of the insecurity of the settlements, and a determination to keep the war beyond them, were the controlling motives which prompted me to augment that force beyond the number I have been called upon to provide by the officer of the army who made the requisition. The number of U.S. troops in the country, beside being stationed at different and remote locations in Washington and Oregon, were inadequate to protect the Territory at the various assailable points. Notwithstanding the increased force called for by my proclamation of October 11th, 1855, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at the time, express his appreciation to the head of his department that "any force that might be obtained under it would be insufficient for the service required." The aim of my policy was a complete and effectual suppression of hostilities, and that by the usual and legitimate mode of warfare. I most emphatically give my denial to the bold assertion that the war was one of intended extermination against the Indians. Neither was there an inclination, or disposition, manifested by any in authority to give it that character, either, by word or deed. The idea is altogether the coinage of a distempered imagination. It is true that the brutal and revolting treatment of our women and children made prisoners – in the [inaptive] attacks of the Indians – the most cruel shameful and insulting advantages which were taken of their captivity and the horrible mutilation of their persons before and after death, very naturally caused a high degree of exasperation in the public mind. Only towards those who were guilty of these aggravated outrages was it desired to meet out a merited punishment. There may have been isolated instances, where, moved by the deep emotion of the ineffable wrong that had been perpetrated, the passions were superior to the sober judgment, in the bosom of the relative, and made him the instrument of retributive justice.

As I have intimated, my policy contemplated a successful conclusion of the war, my plans were matured, my time and energies devoted to this cause. Whether the season was or was not favorable for operation against such an enemy, there was no alternative but to make an effort for success. In the south the effective operations of the volunteers and regulars drove the enemy from their mountainous fortresses and compelled them to surrender and come in upon the reservations. In the north, after the Yackima campaign, the regulars were ordered into garrison, at a time when their services were of the utmost consequence; therefore the only decisive operations in that quarter were by the volunteers.

So soon as I became aware of the inactive policy determined upon by the officer commanding the military department of the Pacific, as to the confederated tribes of the Columbia, I had either to recall and disband the volunteers who were then advancing toward the Walla Walla, and

leave the settlements on the north open to incursion and depredation, or prosecute the war with all the vigor it was possible to command. I decided upon the latter course for these reasons: To have retired from the contest at that time would have been Catamount to a defeat. It would have been so regarded by the enemy and would have emboldened them to the commission of greater outrages and afforded them time and opportunity to strengthen themselves by new alliances. The whole upper country was held by the hostiles, and beyond them were parties of our own citizens in the coalville mines, who if the enemy were left in undisputed possession, and their attention and power unoccupied, were liable to molestation and destruction. Besides the U. S. Commissioner to the Blackfeet Indians, and his party, were presumed to be upon their return and would inevitably be exposed to the hostile designs, which, I was credibly informed, had been determined upon against them. When direful necessity compelled me to institute the volunteer service I appreciated alike the magnitude of the undertaking and the inexcusable circumstances that required it. To have recalled and disbanded the volunteers upon the threshold of their duty and left the Territory without defense, would have been, in my judgment, an act unpardonably wrong, and an evidence of gross official incompetency. It would have been a license to Indian aggression and atrocity. The result has vindicated my policy. The brilliant success of the volunteers broke up the combinations of the enemy. Driven from their winter quarters, defeated, dispirited, and dispersed, they fled into distant localities.

In directing the movement on Walla Walla I made no "war on unoffending and friendly Indians." It was within the scope of stubborn malice and senseless prejudice only to give utterance to an accusation so base and false. I may have committed grave errors in the discharge of my official trusts, but my own conscience, and the truth of history will requite me of one so serious as this.

Unfortunately there was a difference in the policy that controlled the action of the chief officer of the army on this coast and that which guided me. His policy indicated a cessation of operations, and a resistance by the regulars, in case of attack upon them, only in garrison and those garrisons were all within the settlements. Mine included the public security and the successful suppression of the hostilities by active operations and the maintenance of the war in the enemies country, that they should the more effectually experience and appreciate its horrors and to be moved to peace. It was the success of the Territorial troops, acting under orders in pursuance of this policy which secured to have made a necessity for self vindication on the part of that officer, for neglect of duty, be efforts however, vain and impotent. Hence the calumnious reports and untruthful accusations emanating from this, and similar sources.

If the Walla Wallas and their confederates were friendly why did they conduct themselves in such a manner as to inspire distrust and alarm in the mind of the settlers among them, which ultimately forced the whites to abandon their homes at the sacrifice of their property? If they were unoffending why did they furnish recruitments to the Baskins and Klickitats? If they were friendly why did individual members of the tribes warn some of the settlers that they were in imminent dangers and urge them to fly without preparation or delay?

If they were unoffending and friendly why did they conspire against the life of their agent? And why did they pillage and destroy Fort Walla Walla and the agency buildings? But it is needless to consume your time in the refutation of a charge so malicious and unfounded.

I have then briefly and plainly alluded to the motives that influenced my action and the policy by which it was governed. Whatever may be the ultimate result to myself, whether or not, I be condemned for doing that which a momentous and critical state of affairs made an imperative duty is of inferior consequences to the early liquidation of the indebtedness accruing from the war. I entertained the confident belief that the general government in to magnanimous and just

to permit the patriotic and self sacrificing spirit coined by my Fellow citizens, in devoting their personal services and property to the urgent demand of the occasion to remain long acknowledged and uncompensated. It is the highest obligation of the government to protect the lives and property of the people, and for such an omission to make the only indemnification possible. Precedents are abundant to show that in similar exigencies the government has always been actuated by that sense of justice and impartiality which should continue and doubtless will to distinguish its conduct. When recently at Washington I succeeded in my efforts in conjunction with those of our indefatigable delegate, in procuring from Congress such action as authorized a board of Commissioners to ascertain and audit the expenses necessarily incurred in the war, I had no reason to entertain any apprehensions as to the final payment of those expenses by the general government.

The Commissioners have made their report and it has gone forward to the Secretary of War. The manner in which these gentlemen have performed their duty will no doubt prove satisfactory to the government.

I would not presume to intimate that there may be no contest upon the appropriation of so large an amount as is necessary to defray these liabilities. The incidents and experiences of Congressional Legislation teach otherwise. However, just and worthy a cause may be, it is never free from trials and [tribulations]. While we hope that no needless delay may occur in obtaining such action of Congress as may be desirable and satisfactory, still any deferment of that action cannot be regarded as prejudicial to ultimate success.

The positive necessity that the military power of the government should afford protection to the to the annual immigration by the overland route to the Pacific is every year more and more apparent. The past season has furnished a sad catalogue of atrocious crimes perpetrated upon such parties by savage hatred and rapacity. The security of the life and property of the American citizen, in his travel through the domain of the nation, must be assured whatever the burden of expense. The protecting power of the government should always surround its citizens, especially within the limits of its own jurisdiction, else its authority becomes a mockery and reproach.

I desire to call your attention to the necessity of some additional provisions to insure the punishment of crime. That portion of the Penitentiary building, which has been used for the confinement of criminals is now insufficient for that purpose, on account of the increased number of convicts, and other arrangements are requisite to be made to guarantee their security and punishment. I would respectfully recommend that some plan be devised to make the institution a self-sustaining one. As at present conducted it is a heavy expense to the Territory.

The offices of the Financial department are required be law to report directly to the Assembly. Their reports exhibit a most satisfactory condition of affairs and I feel it my duty to commend these gentlemen for the faithful and efficient manner in which they have performed their responsible duties.

I congratulate you upon the flourishing condition of the Territory. Town and country are in the enjoyment of excellent health and abounding plenty. Active industry in every department of labor is realizing its encouraging reward. The revenues and discouragements incident to the war have served to exhibit in a most gratifying manner the resolute and energetic character of our population. The spirit of improvement is every where manifest, and the future is radiant with promise.

It is a pleasant reflection, and one that will go with me in my retirement from official duty, that during the period of my administration, which has not been without unusual trials and embarrassments, amid calamitous events, and times of great public exigence, the Territory has steadily advanced in the development of those means and capacities which make a country truly great, and the people prosperous and happy.

May the dispenser of all good continue the bestowment of the divine Favor, that the Future may redound to his honor and glory and the advancement and welfare of the country.

I have the honor to assure you of my desire to cooperate with you cordially in the promotion of the public good.

Executive Office

Salem, December 7th, 1857

George L. Curry