

Oregon Secretary of State

Willamette Cattle Company Agreement, 1837

Transcript of Original Document

Oregon Territory, Wallamette Settlement Articles of Agreement made and entered into this 13th day of January in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Seven

Whereas, we the undersigned settlers upon the Wallamette River, are fully convinced of the Importance and necessity of having neat cattle of our own in order successfully to carry on our farms and gain a comfortable livelehood, and whereas we find it impossible to purchase them here, as all the cattle in the country belong to the Hudsons Bay Company, and they refusing to sell them under any circumstances, and as we believe that the possession of cattle will not only benefit us personally, but will materially benefit the whole settlement, we the undersigned do therefore Agree

1st To avail ourselves of an offer of W Slacum Esq. to take passage in the American Brig Loriot Capt Bancroft, free of charge, to proceed to California to purchase cattle for ourselves and all our neighbors who choose to join us in our Enterprise either by accompanying us themselves or furnishing the means of purchasing cattle in California

2 We agree to furnish funds according to our means making a common stock concern subject to the following conditions. The expenses of all those who go down to California are to be borne by the company calculating the time so employed at the rate of twenty dollars per month provisions likewise to be paid by the company.

3 The wages of the men thus employed to be calculated as so much money, and each one is to be credited accordingly; and each and every memeber of the company shall have his portion of the cattle which may arrive safely at the Wallamette, there to be divided agreeable to the capital and wages employed in the enterprise.

4 All those who go for the purpose aforesaid to California hereby bind themselves to return to the Walamette with the cattle and to use their best endeavors to protect the same

Background

Early Oregon settlers depended on the Hudson's Bay Company for supplies. This included cattle, which the Company would lease to immigrants but refused to sell. Lieutenant William Slacum, who had been sent by President Jackson to report on conditions in Oregon, noticed this and persuaded settlers and some officers of the Company to send a party to California to buy cattle. The organization they formed to do this was the Willamette Cattle Company. This contract states the terms by which 11 men went to California in 1837 to buy cattle. Despite the participation of some Company employees, this venture was a first step toward economic independence.

Oregon Territory, Wallamette Settlement

Articles of Agreement made and entered into
this 13th day of January in the Year of Our Lord One
Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Seven

Whereas, We the undersigned settle upon the
Wallamette River, are fully convinced of the Importance
and Necessity of having ^{near} Cattle of our own in order ~~to~~
= fully to carry on our farms and gain a comfortable
livelihood, and whereas we find it impossible to
purchase them here, as all the cattle in the Country
belong to the Hudsons Bay Company, and they refusing
to sell them under any circumstances, and as we
believe that the possession of Cattle will not only bene-
= fit us personally, but will materially benefit the whole
settlement, We the undersigned do therefore Agree

1st To avail ourselves of an offer of Miss Isaac Esq
to take passage in the American Brig Forest Capt
Barnett, free of charge, to proceed to California to
purchase cattle for ourselves and all our Neighbors
who choose to join us ~~with~~ in our Enterprise either
by accompanying us themselves or furnishing the
means of purchasing Cattle in California

2^d We agree to furnish funds according to our
Means making a common stock concern subject
to the following conditions.

The expenses of all those who go down to California
are to be borne by the Company calculating the time
so employed at the rate of twenty Dollars per Month;
provisions likewise to be paid by the Company.

3^d The wages of the men thus employed to be calculated
as so much money, and each one is to be credited
accordingly; and each and every member of the
Company shall have his portion of the Cattle