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JESSE APPLIGATE

Pioneer and State Builder

By

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Head of the Department of History
University of Oregon



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“Often I have found a portrait superior in real instruction to half a dozen written ‘biographies’ as biographies are written; or, rather, let me say, I have found that the portrait was as a small lighted candle by which the biographies could for the first time be read and some human interpretation be made of them.”—*Carlyle*.

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JESSE APPLGATE

After a unique sketch drawn from memory by Mr. George Applegate. The original is in the possession of Joseph Schafer at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.



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JESSE APPLGATE

Pioneer and State Builder *

Jesse Applegate could claim pioneership by the three-fold title of inheritance, training, and lifelong habit. His father, Daniel Applegate, of English lineage, was reared in New Jersey. He entered the Revolutionary army as a fifer at fifteen, and when the war closed, emigrated to the wilderness of Kentucky. There he married Rachel Lindsey, of a distinguished pioneer family, and settled on a farm. Forty years later, caught up once more in the resistless "westward movement," he was carried over into the new state of Missouri, accompanied now by a large family. Jesse was the youngest child of Daniel and Rachel Applegate. He was born on the fifth of July, 1811, and was a lad of twelve years when the family moved to Missouri.

While Kentucky was no longer strictly a "hunter's paradise," as in the days of Boone and Kenton, pioneer conditions had by no means disappeared when the Applegates took up the line of march to a newer frontier. Yet the boy had acquired in his early home a good elementary education, so that on going to Missouri he was able, within a year or so, to fit himself for the work of a village school master. But this was a temporary occupation, for he soon found more congenial employment in the city of St. Louis, where he remained till 1831.

The "personality" of St. Louis, during this period of her history, presents a strange jumble of more or less contradictory elements. Eastern culture was represented to some degree in commercial circles, and more largely among the professional classes, while the convergence at that point of several great lines of wilderness activity brought prominently into the foreground picturesque Rocky Mountain traders with a motley crowd of dependants, the explorers of the farther west, and the military guardians of an exposed frontier. These elements blended at a few points but in the main they stood apart, or jostled roughly in street, mart, and public hall.

Into this environment young Applegate came with a mind dilated to its most divergent influences. No phase of life, rude or refined, was to him indifferent. The profane, but original and strenuous observations of the well seasoned "river-man," and the learned disquisitions of St. Louis' greatest lawyer, alike interested him; he sought information from men of classical training, and in libraries crowded with the works of great minds, but did not fail to go, also, to the humble and the rude fellow who had had some unique experience or could furnish a desired fact.

Applegate's strong pioneering bent is shown by the efforts he made, while at St. Louis, to gather information of every sort about the great western region embracing the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific slope. Whatever he could find in print he read, but that was very little; the most important single item was the journal of Lewis and Clark, published in 1814. But better than the written record of their wonderful journey was a personal meeting he had, about 1825, with Captain Clark himself, then a white haired veteran who inspired him, as he long afterward confessed, with a genuine enthusiasm for pioneering.

*An address delivered before the Oregon Historical Society, at the City Hall, Portland, Oregon, December 16, 1911. The address in nearly the present form, was delivered at Astoria, Oregon, in August, 1911, before the assembled teachers of Clatsop and Columbia counties.

Three years later, while clerking in the surveyor-general's office, Applegate gained the intimate friendship of Wilson Price Hunt, then post-master at St. Louis. Mr. Hunt will be remembered by all readers of Irving as Astor's agent in the dramatic commercial enterprise on which he sent the ship *Touquin* to the Columbia in 1811. He was the founder of Astoria, and, in a certain sense, of the trans-Rocky Mountain trade for which that port was the earliest emporium. Hunt talked freely about these romantic episodes of his younger days, stimulated no doubt by the eager inquisitiveness of his youthful friend. In this manner Applegate secured, from the highest living authority a graphic account of the first occupation of the Columbia, and this many years before the publication of Irving's *Astoria*.

Mr. Hunt's trading habit had not yet worn off; he continued to deal in furs, using the basement of the post-office as a warehouse. "Whenever I saw the old gentleman in his shop," wrote Applegate, fifty years later, "I took the occasion to take a lesson in natural history, not only about the wearers of the skins, but in what part of the earth the living animal was to be found."

Applegate boarded at the old Green Tree Tavern, an unpretentious hostelry which commonly served as the winter rendezvous of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. There the partners, Jedediah Smith, David Jackson and Wm. L. Sublette would meet, in their leisure time, to settle the season's accounts and plan the operations of the following year. Each of the three had spent many years in the heart of the Rockies. They knew to a nicety the resources of furs represented by the mountain streams; they were familiar with the native tribes of the region, with its geography, and, in a crude way, its natural history. Besides, the vast spaces beyond the Rockies were to them by no means a sealed book. Jedediah Smith had explored for his company an overland route from Salt Lake to Southern California; he had traversed the entire length of that then mysterious Mexican province, had forced a way northward to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia, where he spent the winter of 1828-29 as the guest of Doctor John McLoughlin, and had made himself conversant with the fur trade as conducted by the Hudson's Bay Company in Oregon under McLoughlin's skillful supervision. He therefore brought to St. Louis, when he next met his partners at the Green Tree Tavern, the freshest and most complete report obtainable on conditions all along the coast, from San Diego to Vancouver and inland from the Rio Colorado to Couer d'Alene Lake. And what tales he could tell of daring and dangerous exploits in the wilderness—of his hair breadth escape from the Mojave Indians, his brush with some Mexican officials in California, the massacre of his party and plundering of his furs and goods by the savages on the Umpqua. These, and many other incidents of his adventurous journeys, must have made the meeting at the Green Tree Tavern in the winter of 1829-30 an event memorable even in the annals of the far west fur trade. Little wonder that a high spirited, adventurous youth like Applegate should improve the opportunity of a fellow guest to ingratiate himself with these men in order to lose no item of their exciting discourse. "I was then handy with the pen," he writes, "and handier still with figures, and *volunteered* my services to these mountain heroes, my sole reward being to hear them recount their adventures."

Almost these veterans of the inland trade, with its glamour of romance and allurements of riches, had won in Applegate a convert to their wild, irregular mode of life. But the appeal of his kind, wise master, Colonel McKee, was even stronger than theirs, and our young pioneer was saved for other pioneering labors that should yield nobler fruits to society if smaller gains to himself.

This Colonel McKee appears to have been a large factor in Jesse Applegate's intellectual training, a process that was going forward

simultaneously with his preparation for the higher forms of pioneering. He is described by Applegate as a man of "vast and varied information" and of a fatherly disposition. Having the young man constantly at his elbow, in the office during the day and the private study evenings, and talking incessantly and well upon all manner of subjects, the effect was to impart to him the semblance of a liberal education.

Another man who, during the St. Louis period, exerted a profound influence on Applegate's mind, was the distinguished lawyer, Edward Bates, later a member of Lincoln's first cabinet. Edward Bates was a Virginia gentleman of the old school, with all the dignity and aplomb, the culture, the delicate sense of honor that the phrase implies. He was not only a great lawyer, but a student of social problems as well, with positive views on government and an active interest in public affairs. Politically he was an extreme conservative, reflecting to the end of his career, the federalistic tendencies of Washington's time. Thanks, probably, to his Quaker connection he was a pronounced opponent of slavery. We do not know the precise relationship subsisting between them, but we know that Bates was always revered by Applegate as benefactor and friend. There is a tradition that he assisted the boy to improve his education, also that he took him into his office for a time as clerk; at all events, the association between them was exceedingly close, and left an abiding record in the character of the younger man. It seems to me that this association helps to explain Applegate's clear, strong views on government, as he afterward impressed them, through numerous channels, upon the Oregon people; it may have contributed to develop in him the passion for order, and the punctilious regard he ever showed for forms and precedents in legislative matters. His militant nationalism and his abhorrence of slavery are explicable on other grounds, but to both traits the great lawyer's influence lent positive support.

Bates and Applegate, while differing much in mental gifts—the younger man being more brilliant and original than the elder—were so congenial that the friendship formed in this unequal manner grew stronger with the passing years and endured through life. It is said that even while under the enormous strain of his cabinet duties, during the war, Bates yearly wrote one or more long letters to Applegate, and those familiar with the latter's epistolary habit are well convinced that no letter failed of a response. This was one of the ways in which the "rancher" of the Oregon frontier kept himself in touch with national politics.

The St. Louis period, extending from about 1825 to 1831, or from his fourteenth to his twentieth year, is manifestly the time in which young Applegate was being specially schooled for his later career. It was then that his youthful fancy, rioting in tales of far west adventure, began to form those bold designs of pioneering that foreshadow the distinctive work of his life. And it was during the same period that he laid the foundations for a broad and accurate though general knowledge of literature, history, and science which marked him out later as one of the best read men on the Pacific Coast. He gained, also, some familiarity with Latin, became highly proficient in a limited range of mathematical subjects, and in some way developed a literary style which was singularly pure and graceful as well as verile and dignified. He acquired in addition at least the fundamentals of both law and engineering, each of which proved of distinct service to the new community he was to help build beyond the mountains.

Applegate's proficiency as a surveyor obtained for him, at the age of about nineteen, a deputyship in the office of surveyor-general. Thereafter much of his time was spent in field work, especially in the southwestern portion of the state. Marrying in the spring of 1831, he bought

a fine tract of land in the Osage Valley and made his home there as a farmer and stock raiser for twelve years, but he continued to act as deputy-surveyor also during the greater part if not the whole of that time. In 1843 he carried his trusty compass to the western shore of the continent and at once resumed its use in a significant service covering almost forty years.

The interest in Oregon had widened and intensified since Applegate first met the mountain traders at the Green Tree Tavern, and sources of information about the country had multiplied. Oregon was no longer, as it once had been, the object of desire to exploiters of furs only, but was coming to be regarded as a practicable field of operations for agricultural pioneers. The forerunners of that class, like the "long hunters" of Kentucky seventy-five years earlier, had reported the land both "pleasant and goodly." It was far away and difficult of access, but still, to men of their stamp, not unattainable. Several American missionaries, both men and women, had gone to Oregon overland in the previous decade, and continued to reside there, sustained by the friendly support of the Hudson's Bay Company. The mission stations were gradually assuming the appearance of settlements, especially in the Willamette Valley, whose soil and climate, and flattering commercial outlook had attracted a small group of American adventurers, and where the discharged operatives of the fur company were beginning to make homes. Irving, Parker, and Wyeth had written books about Oregon, and many letters, from missionaries and others living beyond the mountains, were finding their way into the public prints. Congress discussed plans to promote the settlement of the country, spreading far and wide printed reports embodying information about it; the department of state was trying to terminate the Oregon dispute with Great Britain, and the war department moved for the exploration of a road to the Columbia in order to facilitate emigration thither; something had already been done to establish proper relations with the Oregon tribes of Indians through the sending of an Indian sub-agent in 1842.

The government, however, was in general too slow for the pioneers. Before congress could pass a law to encourage settlers, before Webster and his successors in office could negotiate a treaty, before the war secretaries could accomplish the design of opening a road, the frontiersmen themselves, under leaders of their own choosing and hence of their own type, had rendered the contemplated governmental action if not superfluous at least less urgent. They had opened a road all the way to the Columbia, had occupied, in an orderly manner, for agricultural purposes, much of the best land in Western Oregon, and without charter, law, or other authorization beyond the treaty of joint-occupation which merely gave them a right to be in the country, they had organized on the shores of the Pacific a true American government, the first of its kind in that portion of the world.

In all of the momentous activities here outlined, Jesse Applegate was a prime leader. He, like many others of his time and section, had become discouraged at the long duration of the "hard times," which pressed heavily upon those frontier settlers living away from navigable streams, then almost the sole means of transportation for the country west of the Mississippi. Besides, the progress of slavery was rapid in Missouri. Applegate, who would not own negroes, was forced to hire their labor from neighboring owners in order to be able to cultivate his fields. He felt keenly the social as well as the economic evils of the slave system, and was constrained to remove his young family beyond its influence. He had kept up with the new information regarding Oregon, and was in personal correspondence with a friend who lived there. Applegate had long known, what others were just learning, that Western Oregon was a paradise for the stock raiser. So, after mature delibera-

tion, he decided to transfer his Osage Valley herd, which was all but valueless from the prevailing depression, to the virgin meadows of the Willamette, two thousand miles away.

The story of the great immigration to Oregon in 1843 has been frequently told, sometimes with embellishments that sadly mar the truth of history. It should be remarked that the movement was a perfectly natural expression of the pioneering genius of our people, and not, as often misrepresented, an outburst of Quixotic patriotism. The emigrating company of nearly one thousand persons was recruited by no one man; it gathered almost spontaneously, in response to feelings and motives that were widespread along the border, and that came to fruition in a variety of ways—sometimes through public discussion, oftener in the neighborly chat or the fireside conference. Personal influence was felt in this as in every large human event. Emigrating parties were organized in different localities, and the accession anywhere of an able or a prominent man was the signal for others less independent to give in their names. The decision of Jesse Applegate to go to Oregon probably caused a number of others in St. Clair County, Missouri, to do likewise, among them his two elder brothers, Charles and Lindsey.

The several companies from Missouri and other western states met near Independence, Missouri, in April, 1843, prepared for the long overland march. Applegate's outfit is said to have consisted of about one hundred head of livestock, and four wagons, "loaded * * with flour, bacon, and such fruits and vegetables as were fit for transportation; tools of all kinds; household goods and wearing apparel; a few valuable books, among them the school books of his children, some historical works, a Worcester's dictionary, a copy of Shakespeare, the Bible he had carried on his surveying trips, his mathematical works, * *" The emigrants organized for the journey with Peter H. Burnett as captain, intending at first to travel as a single great company. But at the Kansas River trouble arose over the question of caring for the loose stock, those having no cattle objecting with some justice to the performance of guard duty. Burnett now resigned and a reorganization took place, those without the incumbrance of cattle forming the light column, the others the so-called "cow-column." Of the latter company Jesse Applegate was chosen captain.

It is a trite but true remark among far west pioneers that no severer test of a man's fitness for leadership was ever devised than the captaincy of an Oregon or California emigrating company; and it is the universal testimony of the 1843 immigrants that Applegate more than met the requirements of this exacting office. By his accurate knowledge of the difficulties to be encountered, his resourcefulness in overcoming them, his tact and courage, his commanding personality, and withal the kind, helpful spirit he always manifested, he not only held the uniform respect of all these staunch frontiersmen but won their loyal affection. His charming essay, "A Day with the Cow Column," descriptive of the movement of his company across the plains, is a classic in the literature of western adventure.

From Fort Hall westward, the region through which a road had yet to be found, Applegate is said to have been in advance, with his compass, to determine at critical points the route to be taken. In this he was greatly aided by Doctor Marcus Whitman, whose general knowledge of the country enabled him to make valuable suggestions. While the company was descending the Columbia with rafts, from Fort Walla Walla, an accident occurred by which three persons were drowned; one of them was Jesse Applegate's eldest son, a bright studious boy of eleven summers, named, for his friend and patron, Edward Bates.

Applegate selected a piece of land within the present limits of Polk County, where he remained till the year 1849. He followed farming to some extent, raised a fine herd of cattle, built a small grist mill, and worked much at his profession of surveying, laying off the settler's claims, marking out roads, etc. The legislature of 1844 appointed him surveyor-general of the colony, with the special duty of investigating certain canal projects. He was a man of great activity, industry, and skill, accomplishing with apparent ease seemingly difficult undertakings, and with the disposition to multiply interests in such a way as to keep himself more than fully occupied. There was no busier man in the little colony.

Applegate often averred that he had in this period no time for politics, the care of a growing and still helpless family absorbing all his energies. But his sense of duty impelled him, in the summer of 1845, to devote not only his time but his best talents to the public service in the hope of improving the political condition of the people.

Government in Oregon had thus far been in process of painful evolution. The Hudson's Bay Company's officers had exercised a civil jurisdiction adequate to the needs of an unsettled country harboring a few traders. But when Americans began to collect in numbers around the Methodist mission a demand soon arose for some sort of American government. Inasmuch as the United States was merely a claimant to the country, not its sovereign, congress felt unable to afford relief but left the people of Oregon to create for themselves such political institutions as were deemed necessary.

A preliminary step was taken in 1841, when, to meet a sudden emergency a probate judge was elected by the people. This seemed at the time to be all the "government" needed. The first formal organization, in May, 1843, was probably premature. For practically one-half of the settlers voted it to be unnecessary, and the Hudson's Bay Company were prepared, for national reasons, to place obstacles in the way of its successful working which there was not strength enough in the American portion of the community to overcome.

The organization itself was faulty. There was a body of "organic laws," somewhat loosely drawn, which had been adopted by popular vote. It professed to create a provisional government for Oregon until such time as the United States should take the country under its jurisdiction. The frame of government embraced an executive committee of three, a legislative committee of nine, and several justices, constables, a sheriff, recorder, etc. To support this somewhat pretentious system resort was had to the fatuous expedient of a popular subscription. The executive committee was as ineffectual as such committees usually are, and the judiciary was peculiarly ill adapted to its work. Moreover, the Methodist mission, whose agents had engineered the provisional government movement, granted to itself an entire township of land, giving a like amount to the Catholic mission, a move which many felt was wholly political and which engendered much opposition.

When the great body of new immigrants arrived in the following winter, the effect was to subordinate the missionary party, as well as the fur company. In the next election the pioneers secured control of affairs and proceeded at once, by their legislative committee, to reorganize the government. The three headed executive was abolished and a "governor" substituted, a legislature of thirteen members was created, and the judiciary was reformed. The committee also struck a blow at their missionary predecessors by restoring to individual entry the two townships of land appropriated by the two missions. Finally, they adopted a simple but effective method of raising money by virtual taxation.

While the character of this legislation was undeniably wholesome, the

committee showed a surprising lack of orderliness and foresight in the mode of its enactment. They practically ignored the existence of a constitution, treating the organic laws adopted by the people the year before as mere statutes, subject to unlimited amendment or to abolition by a body which, though actually deriving its existence from them, assumed thus to stand outside of and above the laws. Nor did the committee submit their acts to the people, who alone had the power to legitimize them, but on their own motion declared them to be in effect throughout that part of Oregon south of the Columbia. Since the organic laws had applied to the whole of Oregon, it could be plausibly charged against the committee that in addition to their other high handed acts, they had also sought to limit the American territorial claims.

Testimony varies as to the effect of this revolution upon the country. Perhaps the danger of "anarchy and internecine war" was not so imminent as Applegate at a later time supposed it to have been, yet, between the positive and the negative acts of the committee, many thoughtful persons felt that the people had been grievously wronged. The upshot of the agitation was another reorganization which brought order and political prosperity to the distracted colony. In this final readjustment the guiding hand was that of Jesse Applegate.

Applegate allowed himself to be chosen, by the people of Yamhill, a member of the legislature of 1845. He entered the session with a complete program of reform which he was able to carry out to the letter. "My intention was," he wrote at a later time, "to reassert the right of the United States to the whole of Oregon, which the legislature of 1844 had limited to the south bank of the Columbia—and to secure the peace of the country by binding the whole white population in a compact to maintain it."

His point of departure was the organic laws of 1843. These he revised and improved, producing a document which in form and substance was a true constitution. He then asked the people to choose between the old organic laws and the new, copies of both, written laboriously by hand, being read to them at the polling places. By an overwhelming majority they chose the revision, thereby indicating complete satisfaction with the legislature's work. A new lease of power was also voted to the officers chosen in June.

Applegate's program having triumphed so signally among the Americans south of the Columbia, he proceeded to the more delicate task of securing for it the endorsement of the British residents north of the river. For this purpose he became the diplomatic agent of the Oregon government to negotiate an arrangement with McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company. McLoughlin at first repelled the idea of British subjects becoming parties to an American government; but Applegate had prepared the way for union so skillfully, he urged his reasons with such convincing force, and was so fair in his treatment of the company's interests, his personality commanded such unlimited respect, that gradually every obstacle was removed. The officers of the company formally gave in their adherence to the provisional government, agreeing to accept its jurisdiction, to pay certain taxes for its support, and in all respects to abide by its laws. This brought to an end the dual jurisdiction which had subsisted for several years, and incidentally demonstrated to the world that the much mooted occupation of Oregon by Americans was a fact accomplished. The effect upon the British government may be inferred from the words of one of its special agents, Lieut. Henry Warre, who had been sent to report on conditions in Oregon and who reached Fort Vancouver a few days after this diplomatic episode was closed. "The Hudson's Bay Company," he wrote, "were so completely overruled by the number of Americans that they were obliged to join in this compact which neutralized their authority in the country * * ."

Applegate's significant work of reorganization was now completed, and the government he put in operation remained in force till March, 1849, when Oregon was proclaimed a territory of the United States. In all that time it commanded universal respect, secured equal justice, and promoted the prosperity of the colony. The people had gained full control of affairs, and special interests had to comply with laws passed for the general good. "Both the Methodist mission and the Hudson's Bay Company ceased to be political powers either to be feared or courted in the colony, and to the end of its existence the Provisional government of Oregon attained all the ends of good government."

The verdict of history on the Oregon provisional government, is identical with the judgment expressed by Applegate himself in the words just quoted. Yet, so imperfectly has the work of 1845 been differentiated, in the popular mind, from earlier and tentative essays at political organization, that Applegate's right to be honored as the true founder of Oregon's pioneer government is, by the present generation, commonly ignored.

In the beginning it was not so. Oregonians of that day gladly acknowledged him as the sage and law-giver of the colony, while British visitors to the Northwest coast instinctively recognized his leadership. Lieutenant Warre and his associate, Lieutenant Vavasour, paid their respects to this extraordinary American frontiersman; and Lieutenant Peel, son of the then premier of Great Britain, visited him at his farm, enjoyed the simple bounties of his table, and discoursed with him concerning the qualities of the men who would cross a continent in order to make homes in the Oregon wilderness. Dr. McLoughlin's letters to the Hudson's Bay Company in London afford a complete proof of Applegate's superior agency in securing the company's adherence to the provisional government.

The record of the sessions of 1845 is preserved, with those of earlier and later proceedings, in the manuscript archives relative to the provisional government. To the student who will scan patiently the documents in that mass of unarranged material—reading over resolutions, laws, memorials to congress, and constitutions—so many of which are in Applegate's handwriting, his legislative pre-eminence in this age of beginnings will stand revealed. Such a study cannot fail to engender a feeling of profound respect for the pioneer statesman who, under the conditions, was able to lay such true foundations for America's first commonwealth on the Pacific Coast.

Applegate's later career was almost wholly that of a private citizen. In 1857 he represented his Southern Oregon constituency in the convention which framed the State constitution but, owing to a serious objection to the policies of those who controlled that body, he refused to remain till the convention completed its labors. For this he has been much criticised. The incident seems to illustrate some of his shortcomings as a public man—he lacked that sense of humor which characterizes the "good loser" and he had an almost Jacksonian disinclination to follow another's lead.

After the beginning of the gold rush to California Applegate, in 1849, had removed his family to the Umpqua Valley and settled at a place which he named Yoncalla on the Oregon-California trail. There, under the shadow of the mountains, he tilled his fields and cared for extensive herds of cattle reared for the California market. There he built his great house, a kind of latter-day Shirley or Westover, where for many years he dispensed a generous and equal hospitality to visitors of all grades of social merit. Today it might be a rude woodsman wanting fodder for his cattle, shelter and food for himself; tomorrow a polished jurist or publicist eager for the sage discourse for which the host was famed. Occasionally he entertained men of national distinction,

as in the fall of 1865 when Schuyler Colfax and Samuel Bowles alighted one morning from the California stage to breakfast with him.

From his frontier retreat at Yoncalla Jesse Applegate looked out upon the world of politics with the pathetic interest of one whom nature has designed for leadership and fate condemned to a humdrum existence. Not being in a position to direct public affairs, he scrutinized sharply the conduct of those who were, and always assumed a direct personal responsibility for the doings of those he had helped to place in office. His opinions on public questions, always luminous and finely wrought, if sometimes suggestive of the closet rather than the council, were impressed upon his fellows through hundreds of letters to friends or public men, through political platforms, legislative bills and newspaper articles. The investigator rarely finds in the spontaneous written utterances of public men such vitality of thought or such blended vigor and felicity of expression as are to be met with in the everyday familiar letters of this extraordinary pioneer. They reveal a character not unmarred with idiosyncrasies, not free from pécadilloes or even serious faults, yet upright and generous, with broad sympathies and a sensitive regard for social justice. He was an unselfish, sacrificing, public spirited citizen.

Applegate was a member of the government commission appointed to settle the treaty claims of the Hudson's Bay Company and the affiliated Puget Sound Agricultural Company. In this connection he prepared a voluminous report which is in the nature of a closely reasoned legal brief. It illustrates his justice to opponents, his scrupulous regard for the public welfare, and his extraordinary grasp of the principles of equity which the case involved. He always flattered himself that through this report he had saved the American government a large sum of money.

In 1865 Applegate wrote at the request of Schuyler Colfax a series of letters on the then paramount problem of reconstruction. They were printed in the Oregon State Journal, published at Eugene, and also sent to Mr. Colfax. These letters, constituting a treatise, are cast in a pleasing literary mold, and, although somewhat disappointing from their impracticable recommendations and their innocence of research, they will not fail to charm the reader who appreciates original thinking on political questions or a unique restatement of time-worn principles. His views on the race question, on negro enfranchisement, and the general diffusion of political power are highly suggestive. His theory that the right of suffrage should be regulated by the nation on a uniform basis was logically consistent but it was destined to make little impression upon the reconstruction committee of congress.

Samuel Bowles, who possibly as an eastern man was unprepared for such a phenomenon, marvelled to find a political sage in the Umpqua forests and wrote it as his opinion that the people of Oregon ought to send Jesse Applegate to the United States Senate. Applegate, however, had none of the politician's arts and his frontier individualism was of that militant cast which rather repelled than encouraged the assistance of friends who sought his elevation to high office. Once, it is said, he could have had a senatorship at the behest of the reigning "boss" and in declining to receive it on such terms he honored his manhood more than any office could honor it.

Jesse Applegate died in 1888, having suffered during life's final span crushing reverses and bitter sorrows. His bones rest under a lone fir tree on a gentle slope of Mt. Yoncalla, a plain slab of native sandstone marking the grave. The lusty commonwealth nurtured to vigor by his fostering hand would honor itself and win the blessing of reverence well bestowed by erecting on that spot or elsewhere a suitable memorial to this prince among Oregon pioneers.

—JOSEPH SCHAFER.



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