ASAHEL BUSH—PIONEER EDITOR, POLITICIAN AND BANKER

by

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PREFACE

This study endeavors to show the part played in Oregon during the years 1851-1913 by Asahel Bush, pioneer editor, politician, and banker.

The writer has made use of the plentiful source material available for the territorial period. The correspondence which the editor of the Statesman carried on with many men in Oregon has been fairly well preserved. Contemporary newspapers, particularly the Oregonian and the Argus, supplement the information about the political life, economic interests, and various activities gleaned from the Statesman. The papers of the territorial government give much reliable information. These are available for study in the Oregon Historical Library, Portland, Oregon.

Appreciation is due the Bush family in Salem, particularly Mr. A. N. Bush, whose interest and help have made the task more interesting. His kindness in making available his father's letters and the file of the Statesman (1851-1863) has been inestimable. A word of thanks should

be expressed to those members of the bank who so cheerfully assisted by providing a place to study.

Acknowledgment should be given Dr. R. C. Clark for his suggestions and assistance. Not least is the thanks due Miss Nellie B. Pipes, Librarian of the Oregon Historical Library.

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

Today as one enters the imposing Ladd and Bush bank in Salem, Oregon, his attention is usually drawn to the portrait in the fireplace room.[1] The stately countenance that looks down is that of the founder of Salem's chief financial institution; few realize that as a young man he laid the foundation of the Democratic party in Oregon. If he had not made a fortune in later years, he would still be remembered for his political activities.[2]

Asahel Bush was born in Westfield, Massachusetts, June 4, 1824.[3] Little is known about his boyhood and early years, since he refused to write or dictate an autobiography. When friends broached the subject to him, he said that he believed an autobiography would be of little interest to the public, and he could not be induced to consider such a

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1. This portrait was done by Webster from Chicago, Illinois. Conversation with A. N. Bush, Spring 1939.

2. Oregon Weekly Times, May 8, 1858.

3. Ladd and Bush Quarterly, (April 1914) p. 15.

proposition.[1]

He sprang from Welsh people who came to America in 1630. They settled near Westfield, Massachusetts, after having lived in Southwick, Connecticut, close to the Massachusetts line for some twenty years.[2] Most of his people pursued agricultural interests, Aaron Bush, his grandfather, and Asahel Bush, Senior, being farmers as well as three of his brothers. His particular bent towards politics seems to have been somewhat of a family trait since his father was a selectman of his town and a representative of the Massachusetts state legislature.[3]

To Asahel Bush and Sally Nobel, parents of the Oregon pioneer, were born six children, Asahel being the fifth child.[4]

Asahel attended the public school in Westfield where

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1. Senator Chamberlain, Oregon Journal, December 23, 1913, p. 1, col. 6.

2. Conversation with A. N. Bush, Spring 1939.

3. Joseph Gaston, Centennial History of Oregon, II, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), p. 267.

4. The children were Mary, the eldest who married Tom Kneil, a man interested in politics; Pamela, the wife of Ephraim Craig, who accumulated a comfortable amount of money; Luke, a farmer who spent his life on the edge of Westfield; Seth, another thrifty farmer; Edmund, the only member of the family who made the trip west and who died soon after his brother had brought him out to Oregon. Conversation with A. N. Bush, Spring 1939.

he apparently mastered his rudimentary knowledge in a satisfactory fashion, since his skill in spelling and composition was superior to that of most of his contemporaries.[1] Attendance at the Westfield Academy completed his formal education. When he was fifteen, the death of his father made further education impossible. Soon after this, he went to Saratoga Springs, New York, where he served as an apprentice for nearly three years in the Saratoga Sentinel office. After serving his apprenticeship for the trade of printer, he went to Albany where he worked for a few months in the state printing office.[2] Perhaps it was here that he discovered that public printing might be made quite lucrative; at any rate he received valuable experience for his printing career in Oregon. Next he went to Cleveland, Ohio, at which town he worked as a printer for nearly a year.[3] He returned to Westfield in 1846, where he edited the Westfield Standard,[4]

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1. Bush to Deady, December 25, 1862.

2. R. C. Clark, History of the Willamette, III (biographical), p. 44.

3. The Ladd and Bush Quarterly does not follow the same order as the historians. (1914)

4. Volume of this paper is in the possession of A. N. Bush.

January 24, 1849, to July 3, 1850, studied law under William Blair and Patrick Boise,[1] and served as town clerk. In May of that year he was admitted to the Bar.

It was in 1850 that Samuel R. Thurston, Oregon's delegate to Congress first met Asahel Bush.[2] Thurston decided his political fortunes could be best promoted by a newspaper. Accordingly while he was in the East, in 1850, he made arrangements with two men, Russell and Stockwell, to purchase a press for him and to ship it to Oregon.[3] They were to be the mechanical partners.

While Thurston was visiting his wife's people in Chicopee, Massachusetts,[4] he heard of an enterprising and promising young editor named Asahel Bush. In Washington, that same year Thurston and Bush came to an understanding about the future democratic paper. The exact basis of the transaction was not definitely settled. Stockwell and Russel were sent to Oregon and William Blain, editor of

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1. Uncle of R. P. Boise, who came to Oregon and was a well known jurist.

2. Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston, Oregon Historical Quarterly, XV (Sept. 1914).

3. Original agreement may be seen in the Oregon Historical Library.

4. Hence references to Bush as "Chick." Breakspear-Melodrama entitled Treason, Stratagems, and Spoils (by W. L. Adams, published in the Oregonian, 1852.) Deady to Nesmith, April 12, 1855:
"Now glory to the Salem Clique by whom his honor died
And glory to our Scribbling 'Chick' whose goose quill pierc-his side."

the Spectator had some sort of interest in the project.[1] Although Blain soon sold his interest in the Statesman he seemed interested in its success, as he obtained subscribers for the paper after he settled in Union Point. Bush's aggressive personality was shown in his demands on Thurston.[2] He desired eventual ownership and full control of the editorial policy. Subsequent controversy with Russell shows the wisdom of this demand. On December 1850, Russell turned over his share to Bush. It was not long before Bush was master of the Statesman.

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1. Ladd and Bush Quarterly, April 1915, p. 13.

2. Oswald West, The Politics and Politicians of Early Oregon, (Unpublished paper prepared for Reed College history class).

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL LEADER

Asahel Bush left Massachusetts in July, 1850, embarking on the Empire City for Aspinwall. His journey across the isthmus was by a boat poled up the Chagres River and by riding a mule over the mountains. He reembarked on the Panama and arrived in San Francisco where he remained a short time. He then continued his journey to Astoria, at which point he took a smaller boat up the Columbia, arriving at Portland and later at Oregon City, his destination, in September 30, 1850.[1]

In accordance with his understanding with Thurston, as soon as he arrived, he went about setting the stage for the establishment of the democratic paper—the Statesman. He carried letters of introduction to the leading Democrats of the Territory—such as the following:

> "The bearer is Asahel Bush who comes to make Oregon his home. He is a gentleman of high integrity and of the first order of ability. He is competitent to carry out with

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1. Joseph Gaston, The Centennial History of Oregon, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912) p. 267.

> great success the object he has in view in Oregon. He would be obliged to you for letters of introduction to other gentlemen in Oregon. Please lend him your aid, and patronize his enterprise."[1]

He maintained a life long friendship with some of the Democrats that he met on his arrival in Oregon City; one of these was M. P. Deady with whom he lived during his first year in Oregon. From most of these men he secured advance subscriptions and many of them solicited subscribers to his paper. How well he carried out Thurston's instructions is shown by the fact that he was elected clerk of the Legislative Assembly, December 2, 1850, and served until their adjournment the following February. Many were the remarks of jealousy evoked by this action. "A stranger" had been chosen clerk and soon to their consternation the stranger had had himself chosen territorial printer.[2] To make matters worse the printing right had been granted without the printer's press being in Oregon.[3] For a young man to have accomplished so much in a few months, presages his political influence in the following years.

As long as the Spectator was the only paper in Oregon

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1. Letter to Alfant, Driggs, Burkhart, et. al. (all from Linn County) from S. R. Thurston, July 28, 1850.

2. Spectator, February 20, 1851.

3. Oswald West, op. cit., p. 5.

it did what public printing was needed.[1] With the arrival of the Oregonian, Star and Statesman, competition developed, but Bush, quick to see the advantage that would come to his paper, managed to get the work by having the office of territorial printer created and himself appointed to that position. Thus it is evident that from the first issue of the Statesman there was to be war among the various papers in the Oregon Territory.

The new territorial printer was kept in a state of embarrassment and concern over the long delay in the arrival of his printing press. He expected when he left the East, that upon his arrival in Oregon, the press would be set up and ready for use, since Russell and Stockwell had preceded him for that purpose. When he arrived in Oregon City, he learned that the press had never left New York. He heard rumors that other papers might be started before his own. No ship left Oregon but carried a letter from Bush to Thurston. The following excerpt of one of Bush's letters will give an idea of Bush's concern:

> "If you knew how matters stood here, you would not suffer this delay. You would get that press here somehow if you had to start it across the Isthmus. Every day or two the report that it is abandoned and is not coming

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1. Ibid., p. 5.

> is started and finds more or less believers; that it is not to be a Democratic paper in the true sense of the word, but merely a Thurston paper, etc., etc. to the end of the chapter."[1]

Men unfriendly to Thurston made use of his reported ownership of the paper to discredit the enterprise. Bush had been warned to deny that Thurston was connected with the paper.[2]

The Spectator carried an announcement of the launching of the Statesman several weeks before it mentioned the Oregonian, but much to Bush's chagrin the first issue of the Oregonian came out December 4, 1850. T. J. Dryer, its editor, was known to have sympathy with the Whigs and in his early issues cast aspersions on Bush and his coming venture. Bush wrote Thurston as follows:

> "I hope you will write to your friends all about the territory by return mail to do all they can for the Statesman. It will start under very unfavorable auspices. Everybody is so impatient and there is so much competition. The territory is getting full of papers and some of them must die; I predict that in less two years from this time printing establishments can be bought cheaper in Oregon than New York."[3]

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1. Asahel Bush to S. R. Thurston, November 19, 1850.

2. S. R. Thurston to Asahel Bush, January 27, 1851. "In your first number, in a dignified manner, state that I have no control or influence whatever over the paper, and that I will be no further a supporter than any other good Democrat."

3. Asahel Bush to S. R. Thurston, December 20, 1850.

When the first issue of the Statesman came out, Bush took the opportunity of returning some of the attacks made.[1] He wrote:

> "The Oregonian, Star, and Spectator recently worked themselves into a rage because the Legislative Assembly saw fit, before its adjournment, to provide for the election of and to elect a Territorial Printer, instead of farming out the public printing among disinterested publishers of these sheets. Each boldly asserts that it is competent to do the work, when any practical printer living could tell them that all combined would be utterly incompetent to execute it, or even make a decent commencement. The Oregonian office is provided only with a rude wooden "ramage press" used in the early days of printing but superceded and discarded nearly half a century ago, and a few cases of condemned and worn out type. Yet the editor unblushingly asserts that his establishment is fully competent to print the laws of the Territory, when he knows, if he knows anything about the business, that he can't print a two-penny tract so that his youngest apprentice would be unashamed to distribute it."

When Dryer complained about Bush's language, the Statesman replied:

> "The Oregonian, after announcing that the contents of the Statesman is a curiosity devotes half a column to a blustering attack upon personalities, and a whining complaint about having been attacked in that manner by the Statesman. Complaints of this kind come with poor grace from a paper devoted, from its first to last number, almost exclusively to the grossest personal abuse, the most foul mouth slander, groveling scurrility, falsehood and ribald blackguardism; insomuch that it has long since ceased to sustain any but a pot-

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1. Statesman, March 28, 1851.

> house reputation or receive the countenance and respect of any party or community.... He complains, and without reason of our employment of personalities, and whines over the matter like a whipped spaniel. He should learn to take blows before he ventures to give them.... If, as he asserts, the editor's reputation is unblemished, it will need no defense from his injudicious pen; if it is not, it will suffer from this being defended before it is attacked. In any event, silence is the part of wisdom."[1]

This gives an idea of the style with which the paper was launched. To read Dryer's side of the story is to encounter the same sort of attack.

Now that we have seen how the Statesman was started, let us consider how Bush went about to organize the Democrats in the territory. When Oregon became a territory, there were no established parties. S. R. Thurston, a Democrat hailing from Maine and Iowa, was supposed to be nonpartisan in his representation of the territory, although he seems to have represented the Methodists interests as opposed to the Hudson's Bay Co., and most of the Methodists were Whigs.[2] He was anxious to make himself clear to Bush:

> "You will understand my position, I have no objection to parties organizing but while I am Delegate, I shall not engage as a partisan, but consult solely the best interests of Oregon. It would be injudicious for me to take any other course, and I trust the Whigs

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1. Statesman, April 4, 1851.

2. R. C. Clark, History of the Willamette Valley, I (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1927), p. 412.

will not seek to drive me to any other position."[1]

The Oregonian and the Spectator opposed the establishment of political parties in Oregon, probably because they felt the Whigs were in the minority. The Statesman, however, stood for organization and began to have a series of letters published as to the advisability of such action. These letters were written by friends throughout the territory under assumed names, such as: Lafayette, Jefferson, Yamhill, etc.[2]

In order to understand the organization of the Democratic party it is necessary to review the political situation at the time.[3]

Joseph Lane, a Democrat from Indiana, had been chosen governor by President Polk. He was the sort of man who was popular with constituents—one that mingled with them and had a genuine interest in their problems.[4] Added to this, he had a military record which appealed to their imagination and he was dubbed "Old Marion." With the change in administration there came to Oregon in 1850 a new governor—a Whig—John P.

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1. S. R. Thurston to Asahel Bush, August 11, 1850.

2. S. R. Thurston to Statesman, November 30, 1850; Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, April 1, 1851.

3. W. C. Woodward has covered this period in such a complete manner that his book, The Rise and Early History of Political Parties in Oregon, has been used a great deal. Contemporary papers and letters were read first and the book verified the study.

4. H. H. Bancroft, History of Pacific States of North America, III (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888) p. 141.

Gaines. In personality as well as politics he differed from Lane. A man of "aristocratic bearing," he had the misfortune to represent "outside interference" as well as the party that was in the minority and as such came in for much criticism and even personal abuse. The question that was used as an excuse for building up feeling against the governor was the location of the capital. The territorial legislature had passed a bill providing for the location of three state or territorial buildings—the capitol at Salem, the penitentiary at Portland, and the university at Marysville (Corvallis). Gaines did not like the idea of moving to Salem, and raised the question of the constitutionality of the location bill, since the constitutional provision against an "omnibus bill" seemed to nullify the law. Gaines interpreted the second act, providing later appropriations, as giving him concurrent power with the legislature in designating the places. At any rate Bush, brought out to Oregon to build up the Democratic organization, saw a good opportunity to draw party lines, if not right then, at least for the future. In his correspondence he indicated:

> "I have no sort of interest in this matter and no preference of localities and I am not governed by the wishes of the friends of any living or dead man. Whatever others may think or say you are well enough acquainted with me to need no assurance of this nor also that on this or any other local question (God grant that there were less of them) I shall not go for

or against this side of the river."[1]

He saw the possibility of making as he expressed it "capital for the future against the governor, Holbrook, and all concerned in the affair." Bush did not want Gaines to have a triumph over the legislature and saw that by raising the question of the executive's right to interpret the law, he would have a good rallying point against the Whigs.

> "The Governor and Company should not be permitted to have an unqualified triumph. The question of validity should be immediately brought before the District Court."[2]

Not all his friends were so confident of the wisdom of this policy as Bush. To Deady he wrote:

> "You ask who Gaines is to triumph over? Suppose he succeeds in getting the law nullified without going to court? Will it not be a triumph for him and one which he would boast of? Most certainly. But suppose the matter goes to the court and there is decided void; you lose nothing, while Gaines is driven from his position and is partially vanquished.... I do not consider this exactly a party matter yet the parties concerned necessarily make it somewhat so, especially if we look ahead a few years. If five or ten years hence, you should be running against Holbrook for Congress with party lines drawn as they will be, the Democrats should raise Holbrook's conduct in this matter against him as they will be likely to do, it would be rather em-

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, August 19, 1851.

2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, August 5, 1851.

> barassing to have them retort that our candidate sustained them. You must recollect that the act will remain after the feeling which may now justify it shall have passed away."[1]

As Bush anticipated, men did divide on this issue, but in some cases new alignments were made where economic interests were stronger than the political party, e.g. James McBride of Oregon City, a Tennessee Democrat, went over to the Whigs. The legislature that met in Oregon City did not have a quorum. The meeting of that body was humorously, if abusively, reported by the Vox Populi, a paper put out five times by certain members of the legislative assembly at Salem.[2] In the January 2 issue appeared the "Grand Divertisement," a play to be given by Federal Whig officers. This was full of personal abuse. However, its form was copied and made more retaliative in Breakspeare— A Melodrama entitled Treason, Stratagems and Spoils (by W. L. Adams who later became the editor of the Argus.). It appeared in the Oregonian in five acts and later came out in pamphlet form.[3] It showed Pratt and his coteri Chick (Bush), Uncle Ned (Deady), Grub (Willson), Rex (King), Peter

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, August 19, 1851.

2. Copies are found in the Oregon Historical Library, Portland.

3. Oregonian, February 7, 14, and 21, 1852; March 3, 6, 1852.

(Waterman) et al. planning how they would dupe the territory by organizing a republic, introducing Mormonism, etc.[1]

Even judges were not neutral in the capital controversy. Judges Strong and Nelson (Whigs) decided the location law was invalid and held court at Oregon City while Judge Pratt, a Democrat, declared it valid and sat in Salem. To make a long story short, the capital was finally placed at Salem officially by a joint resolution of Congress which ratified and approved the act of the legislative assembly of the Oregon Territory.[2]

Bush did not end his attack on Gaines after the action of the Congress. The attacks on the Governor match anything Bush ever wrote against Dryer. He went back into his Mexican war record and dubbed him "Encarnación," because it was at that place that Gaines had surrendered.

> "Major Gaines at the head of about one hundred men was surprised at a place called Encarnación, by a small body of Mexican troops (not one fifth of the number stated in the Oregonian) commanded by General Minon, a full blooded negro, originally from Hayti, it is said. A surrender was demanded and a consultation of the American officers was holden.... They did surrender without firing a gun, to a band of 'greasers' headed by a negro,"[3]

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1. A list which identifies these characters is available in the Library of the Oregon Historical Society. This was given by the family of W. L. Adams.

2. C. H. Carey, A General History of Oregon, II (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1935) p. 472.

3. Statesman, March 2, 1852.

He insisted that the Oregonian was trying to whitewash Gaines' cowardly surrender at Encarnación. He added that even General Taylor had spoken of the surrender in terms of condemnation. The last point was very effective since General Taylor had appointed Gaines.

Gaines very naturally despised Bush. In the Statesman for January 27, 1852, we find:

> "In passing down Main Street last Thursday and when near the library room, without either seeking to meet or avoid him we came in collision with Governor Gaines who had just left his office. Upon encountering each other, he instantly said: 'you -----, did you intend to run against me?' We replied, 'No, Sir, nor do I intend to get off the walk for you or anybody else.' Flourishing his cane, when we prepared to defend ourself, he passed on railing and cursing.
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> The Governor saw us coming down the walk from his office window, and came out for the purpose of running against and getting up a pretense of caning us, but finding by our movements that we were armed and prepared to defend ourself against his cowardly assault, he desisted from his real purpose, and contented himself with the harmless amusement of flourishing his tongue and cane."

The editor worked cautiously in his organization of the Democratic party. Thurston had warned him to observe and feel his way, not attempting any territorial organization until the several counties were well organized. Thurston said,

> "Hereupon is the importance of getting the party drilled in such divisions thoroughly before you require it to mark time in one body. ....If during the next two years, we can get the party under drill in several counties, it

> will be a very auspicious time to make the grand rally at the commencement of the next administration."

This the Democrats did. At a caucus held by the Democratic members of the legislature, 1851, they passed this resolution:

> "Resolved, that it is deemed expedient to organize the Democratic party of Oregon."[1]

In January, 1852, the first Territorial central committee was organized of which J. W. Nesmith was chosen. The first territorial Democratic convention assembled in Salem April, 1853.[2]

Although certain Oregonians, headed by such men as Dryer of the Oregonian and Schnebly of the Spectator, complained bitterly about the organization of party lines, the die was cast and the Whigs were forced to organize when they perceived how effectively an organized party secured offices.

President Pierce appointed J. W. Davis to the office of governor in 1853.[3] The Democrats had no reason to object to the politics of the new governor, but they raised the old

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1. S. R. Thurston to Asahel Bush, September 3, 1850 (Confidential).

2. C. H. Carey, op. cit., p. 493.

3. Ibid., p. 803.

cry about the unfairness of bringing "outsiders" into Oregon as officers when there were good men available in the territory. In 1854, after nine months in the territory, Davis resigned and Curry was the ex-officio governor. Pierce appointed Curry governor, who served as such until 1859.

An inner circle of Democrats, composed of such men as Bush, Nesmith, Deady, Harding, Grover, Boise, had become very powerful. They were known as the "Salem Clique," an expression which was used with a bitter connotation by the opposition. Bush, the voice of the "Clique," and usually considered the leader, came in for the greatest share of criticism. Shippee characterizes this group as a "dictatorial political ring, the moving spirit of which was Asahel Bush.... He made and unmade fortunes; his approbation must be secured before a future political life might be dreamed of; his opposition hounded a man to civil oblivion."[1]

One might expect the Whigs to denounce the Clique, but the Democrats outside the pale also had much to say.

> "Their organ, the Statesman though ostensibly the organ of the whole party, yet under the guidance of an editor with as many fruitful schemes of trickery and evidence of in-

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1. L. B. Shippee, "Echo of the Campaign of Sixty", Oregon Historical Quarterly, XII (Sept. 1911), p. 352.

> gratitude to benefactors as are seldom found attached to one man and under the dictation and intimate counsel of two men situated in the background, who are everywhere beginning to be known for their subtlety and deep plotting, aided by a few men in different parts of the country...."[1]

In addition to considering what was said about the Clique during territorial days, it is interesting to note what a man who had been a contemporary said after many years. In an address to the Pioneer Association, John McBride said:

> "The darkest period in the history of Oregon was the period of the territorial government. As Jackson and Van Buren had their kitchen cabinets, so Oregon had its 'Salem ring'. There measures were originated, party policy ordained, and political honors and offices decided upon and distributed. It seemed a sort of ideal being in politics, something like a corporation in business affairs. It was a sort of electrical force; it was never seen, but it made its presence known by its effects.... No rule was more strict or exacting. It forced its edicts with cruel and unfailing punishment; it demanded obedience that tolerated no hesitation and it was a stranger to all mercy.... To be fair, as I wish to be, I say now in looking back upon the years of political rule in Oregon under the Salem Clique, I believe it to have been a good one for the masses of the people. Taxes were low, economy was practised in public expenditures and no reproach of corruption ever tainted its administration. If it exacted political obedience, it equally required the most rigid integrity. It demanded unhesitating service to itself but it allowed no lapse from equally faithful duty

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1. Standard, June 12, 1856.

> to the people. It rewarded its friends and it was merciless to traitors, whether to itself or masses."[1]

In the fifties the United States was swept by three issues which had strong emotional appeal—prohibition, native American movement, and slavery. In Oregon the slavery question did not become important until the latter part of the decade, but prohibition and the so-called American party movement were widely discussed. Thus the newly organized Whigs found themselves beset by these two issues.[2] The Statesman sought to represent most of the supporters of these two issues as Whigs, but Bush was forced to admit from time to time that Democrats were also to be found in their ranks. In fact, the parties were divided on these questions.[3]

The Maine prohibition law which was passed in 1851 was discussed throughout the United States and Oregon was no exception, especially since in the provisional government days the Organic Laws gave the legislative committee power to regulate the introduction, manufacture, and the sale of liquor. Bush took a firm stand against this measure for personal as well as political reasons. This has been discussed at greater length in the chapter which deals with his views on public questions of his day.

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1. Oregon Pioneer Association Transactions, (1897), pp. 39-43.
2. R. C. Clark, op. cit., p. 416.
3. C. H. Carey, op. cit., p. 500.

Bush seemed to feel that the Know-Nothing movement offered the greater threat to party organization. Its very secrecy lent itself as an effective weapon against party organization. Considering his views on religion and his attitude toward foreigners, his stand on this agitation was consistent and not just a political device.

As early as 1852 he gave his views on the so-called American group:

> "We hardly expected to find in Oregon, peopled as it is by representatives of almost every state and country on the globe, an advocate of the narrow minded, illiberal doctrines of the odious native American faction which some years since had a brief existence in a few of our eastern cities...."[1]

In 1854, when he was in the East he reported the Know-Nothing situation there predicting, "It will be of brief duration." When he returned to Oregon he opened warfare on the group. Secret meetings were being held in the various communities. Friends informed him of the seriousness of the situation. Delazon Smith told him O. C. Pratt had joined while he was in California and having returned to Oregon had changed Leland of the Standard. There were several wigwams in Marion county that Bush knew nothing about and he even talked with men who were members, but whom he did not suspect.

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1. Statesman, March 30, 1852.

2. Delazon Smith to Asahel Bush, March 18, 1855.

As long as secrecy could be maintained, effective opposition was impossible. A despicable method was used of spying from within the order. A printer by the name of Beebe, having been guaranteed that his identity would be kept secret, told Bush the whole story.[1] Imagine the effect of the Statesman's coming out with a complete exposé of the rites of initiation, meetings, secret notices for meetings, etc.[2] In fact, the editor had the list of names of many of the members and threatened to print it.

The set back to the movement was immeasurable. Dryer ridiculing the exposure said:

> "We would suggest that a school be forth with established in the Statesman office to educate knot-hole peekers, and crack listeners in their profession."[3]

Bush was not satisfied with the exposure, but appealed to the Whigs to look within their ranks and to cast out the offenders, not deigning them even worthy of membership in the Whig organization. The editor was ruthless in his attacks, employing ridicule and abusive language.

The Oregonian did not take very favorably the suggestion that a purge should be made in the ranks of the

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1. D. W. Craig to George Himes; letter is on file in the Oregon Historical Library. Listed in W. C. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 67, 68. Beebe, the printer who made the exposure, soon left for California.

2. Statesman, November 1, 1854.

3. Oregonian, May 5, 1855.

Whigs:

> "In a late number of that delectable sheet a bush with his characteristic verdancy commenced a purification by reading out Governor Gaines, Mr. Chinn, ourselves, and others.... The Whigs, we imagine, will take care of their interest in Oregon without aid or assistance of this scrawny bush or any of the noxious sprouts or suckers of the democratic stalks which have grown to such a wonderful height in this territory."[1]

But the final weapon and most effective was the passage of the Viva Voce law or oral voting. After the enactment of this law there was little hope for an effective comeback, since this imposed a kind of censorship. Voters were obliged under this system to call out the name of the candidate for whom they voted or hand it to the judges who read the ballot aloud. Critics of the "Salem Clique" insisted that its purpose was to check not only the Know-Nothings, but also recalcitrant Democrats. It has been said that it operated as a check on those who had slavery designs at the time of the Constitutional Convention.[2] It is interesting to compare the stand taken by Bush at this time with an earlier editorial in the Westfield Standard.[3] In the earlier paper he deplored the control

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1. Oregonian, June 30, 1855.
2. C. H. Carey, op. cit., p. 503.
3. Westfield Standard, October 24, 1849.

exerted by oral voting. Later in the realignment of parties at the time of the Civil War it was a source of embarrassment to Bush and the Democrats who wanted to vote for other party men.

The Rogue Indian War became involved in the Know-Nothing agitation. The Statesman had taken a sane and rather detached view about the danger from the Indians in that region.[1] Dryer expressed great alarm over the peril to the settlers there and Bush ridiculed such hysteria. He even went so far as to imply that the war was excited for the economic benefit of the southern part of the territory.[2] This gave the Oregonian a chance to attack the Democrats on unpatriotic grounds. When Curry hastily filled the offices in the volunteer army without any regard for Bush's suggestions, Bush protested vigorously, belittling the danger and insisting that there was no excuse for filling the positions so quickly.

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1. His expression "expedition to fight the emigrants" aroused ire. Statesman, July 7, 1855.

2. J. W. Drew to Asahel Bush, November 16, 1855. "But you must remember that the Whigs and Know-Nothings in Jackson county incited this Indian war for political purposes and for a speculation in wheat and cattle...."

The "Salem Clique" went so far as to petition Governor Curry to remove Know-Nothings from office.[1] Dryer and Adams had much to say about this.[2] Suffice it to say that Bush created many enemies for himself because of his stand on the Indian question. In 1858, when he wanted to be chosen printer again, he told Deady that he needed his help in the southern part of the territory and asked Deady to make speeches in his behalf. He grew thoroughly disgusted with the whole issue before Wool was recalled.

The Indian wars also brought up the widely discussed subject of scrip. Dryer criticized the "Clique" for not making a strict account of the expenditures, and when the war was over the question of selling the war supplies came

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1. Territorial paper (filed at the Oregon Historical Library, Portland, Oregon) No. 6379.

2. "An effort was made to make party capital by these craven hearted patriots and white livered warriors, who fight valiant battles around the stove in the office of the Oregon Statesman at Salem.... The volunteers, the 'party' and country can justly charge the failure to the meddling, persecuting, dictating spirit of the 'Salem Clique,' and to the fact that Governor Curry permitted himself to be wheedled by the party knaves." Oregonian, February 23, 1856.

"The croaking political scavengers who would see the country and its inhabitants sunk to infamy and degeneration, if thereby they could get a few official crumbs say there is no Indian war in Oregon." Oregonian, March 29, 1856.

up.[1] Bush insisted that supplies should be sold for cash and Dryer said that scrip should be used. The editor of the Salem paper maintained that in the first place the goods had been purchased for scrip and that it would mean selling them for another receipt. This question of scrip was a source of great trouble to Oregon and played an important part in the admission of the state and in the rupture between certain Democrats and Lane.

From the beginning of the territorial organization people desired to elect all their own officers and to obtain statehood. Sides were not consistently drawn as to the issue of statehood. When the Whigs were in, the Democrats advocated statehood, but the Democrats did not oppose all consideration of the matter when they had the political offices. In March 12, 1853, Bush seemed ill disposed to the economic burden that statehood would entail, but by 1854 he advocated it for the improvements that it would bring and he said that the matter of expenses would not be so great with the increase of population. Some of the Whigs opposed state organization because they thought it would make more offices for the Democrats. The question of calling a constitutional convention was put to the people four times, the first three being unsuccessful. In 1854 the majority

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1. Oregonian, November 3, 1855.

against was 869; in 1855, 415; in 1856, 249, but in 1857 the vote was favorable by 6038 votes.[1] Two factors seemed to work for the change. In the earlier votes Southern Oregon was considering a union with northern California and in the later period the slave question made many desire a state lest slavery be inflicted on the territory.

Before we discuss the divisions which arose in Oregon at the time of the admission of the state we should mention the discord which had developed in the Democratic ranks—discord which later expressed itself on the slavery question and the union, but which in 1857 was the result of local issues.

It is not surprising that there was discord within the ranks of the Democrats. Some objected to the iron-clad discipline imposed by the "Clique". Others were unable to satisfy their desire for office. In 1857 the break became so imminent that when the convention met in Salem in April, the "Clique" put through the famous fifth and sixth resolutions which were to bind members of the Democratic party by the nominations of the convention or caucus. There had been dissatisfaction with Joseph Lane for some time and some already objected to his pro-slavery inclinations. The "Clique" had tried to suppress any feeling adverse to the

1. R. C. Clark, op. cit., p. 424.

delegate, but correspondence shows that the "Old Statesman" was not in any too high favor.[1] Those who refused to be bound by the selection of the party called themselves "National" Democrats, trying to give the impression that they still believed in the fundamental principles of the party, but objected to local organization of the "Hards". The "Softs" withdrew and nominated their own group, but the organization of the "Hards" or "Clique" was strong enough to win the election. Some of the rebels advocated a primary, but Bush had much to say about the impracticability of such an order of procedure, warning them to beware of bogus Democrats in primaries or mass meetings.[2]

The Statesman insisted that there was no difference between Oregon Democracy and National Democracy. The editor said that certain papers were talking about leaders of the Democrats in order to arouse jealousy.[3] The Democratic party was founded on old established principles and he decried the attempt to bring personalities into the party. This sort of thing he classified as "Man Worship". "Let's have no Williams' party, no Smith party, no Lane party."[4]

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1. J. W. Drew to Asahel Bush, September 19, 1855. Drew used the nickname for Lane.
2. Statesman, February 24, 1857; May 12, 1857.
3. Statesman, February 19, 1856.
4. Statesman, June 30, 1857.

The Whigs, of course, were delighted with the outcome. Dryer played up the charges made by Shuck, Olds, Allen, Short, Henderson et al. He said Bush had read out and expelled every man from the party who would not become "the hewer of wood, the drawer of water, the scavenger, scullion, and menial slave of the Statesman and 'Clique'.... Will the people longer submit to be gulled, duped, fooled and lashed into submission to the ordeals of the Salem Clique."[1]

> "We recommend to the 'Salem democracy', alias Salem dynasty, alias Salem junta, alias Salem inquisition, alias Salem conspirators, the manufacturing of a large quantity of brass or iron collars and steel shackles to be indelibly engraved thus: 'This thing in the shape of man has surrendered to the 'Salem Clique' all the rights and privileges of manhood; has sold his birth right for the glorious privilege of wearing this collar as an evidence and insignia that we the Salem democrats recognize him a good, reliable democrat.'"[2]

Dryer made much of the fact that he had been attacking the "Clique" for the same charges now made by the National Democrats: "If the object of the Nationals is to cleanse the Augean stables of Oregon of its putrid party etc., we welcome it."[3]

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1. Oregonian, February 13, 1858.
2. Oregonian, March 20, 1858.
3. Oregonian, March 13, 1858.

By 1858, Dryer seemed to have shifted his position on the organization of parties considerably, for he insisted that there was a need to organize a party upon some "tangible, permanent and correct doctrine, predicated solely and entirely on the ground that the people are soverign in all representative government and that office holders, office hunters and politicians are responsible to the masses of the people."[1] This tied in with the agitation against Drew, the Oregonian insisting that as Quartermaster of the volunteers he should account to the people for his expenditures.[2]

During the years of the "Clique" supremacy, Dryer had been loud in his disapproval of Lane. He charged that he was always boasting how much he would do and how great his influence was in Washington, but the results spoke for themselves. Lane's personal interest came first. The Indian war debt had not been taken care of and the admission of the state had not been pushed. During these same years Bush in his paper had upheld Lane, refuting with venom charges made by the Oregonian. In 1855 Bush supported Lane

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1. Oregonian, March 13, 1858.

2. Oregonian, February 14, 1857. "Mr. Bush of the Statesman as is evidenced by this and a thousand other instances of like character assumes to direct and control the party, who posses according to his doctrine, unqualified ownership of the country and people." .... "According to Bush it is rank heresy for one of the party to utter or express an opinion in relation to men or measures different from those uttered by the Statesman."

against O. C. Pratt when they were seeking the office of delegate to the United States' Congress. On June 9, 1855, Bush put Lane's name at the mast head of his paper as a future presidential candidate. But as time passed, he became weary of Lane's profession of sacrifice and toil for Oregon.[1] In 1857, Lane wrote a letter deploring the discord in the Democratic party. Then in order to have control of a press he put E. C. Hibben, a mulatto, as editor of the Oregon Weekly Times published at Portland. The estrangement between Bush and Lane grew wider until in the convention of 1859 the Lane forces were open in their opposition to the "Clique." Bush had charged Lane with the blame for Oregon's not being admitted to the Union. Too, it seems that Bush wanted the public printing (probably laws, treaties, etc. of the United States government) as is shown by a letter from Delazon Smith after he went to Washington as senator.[2] Bush thought Lane had not attended his interests as is shown in a letter from Bush to Deady:

> "Lane didn't get anything allowed me for that second volume of statutes. He says the Black Republican prevented him. Likely I reckon he thinks it best to keep that suspended over my head to 'hold the wretch in

1. Statesman, March 29, 1859.
2. Delazon Smith to Asahel Bush, February 2, 1859.

order. Well, let it. 'Who's afraid?'"[1]

At any rate Bush now turned on Lane in a series of damaging editorials. Dryer said that he had been saying the same things about Lane but in a milder manner. It is interesting to note that years later when the animosity had been forgotten and Lane was running for state legislature, Bush came out in his behalf and even gave money toward his campaign fund but the damage of early years kept Lane from carrying Douglas county.[2]

June 29, 1858, Lane had written Oregon that the bill of admission had passed the house and that the admission was assured. He advised the territory to go ahead with its organization as if admitted.[3] Bush counselled against this since he feared a situation similar to that in Kansas might develop. Lane blamed Bush for Congress' not admitting Oregon, since he said that Bush wrote unfavorably about the population and had discouraged state organization. Various interpretations have been placed upon Lane's action in this situation.[4] One is that he wished to bring discredit upon

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, October 11, 1856.
2. Conversation with Asahel Bush, 1939.
3. Statesman, March 29, 1859.
4. H. H. Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 432, 433 (note).

the state in connection with his Pacific Republic venture. Another is that he was anxious to have the territory become a state until he was sure of the presidential nomination. Even his desire for double mileage allowance has been given as a reason.

Naturally Lane had the federal political patronage under his control, and according to Bush instituted proscription, removing men like Nesmith and Zieber from their positions.

It was galling for the Salem Clique to submit to this kind of treatment and the members did not do so very gracefully. The editorials were of the bitterest sort. Since the Weekly Times supported Lane, it came in for much abuse.

The "Softs" had a real opportunity in the break between the Clique and Lane.[1] In the Democratic convention held in Salem, April 20, 1859, Lansing Stout, a man of for-

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1. Argus [quotes Times], February 5, 1859. "You have no doubt, marked with regret the course the Statesman has seen fit to adopt in regard to our delegate and first senator, General Lane. Some three years ago, the Standard was read out of the party for the 'wholesale traduction of the Democrats'.... Where has its malediction been bestowed for the last six months? Principally upon members of the party which have warmed and nourished a viper in its bosom only to be stung for its favors...."

ner Know-Nothing inclinations, was nominated instead of Grover for congressman. Bush was upset and wrote bitterly and extensively on the situation. He did not praise Stout, as had been his wont with former Democratic nominees. In fact he made certain concessions which might be interpreted as overtures to the newly organized Republicans. Although he voted for Stout, he did not particularly want him to win.

However, local differences were soon dwarfed by the larger issue of slavery. The Democratic leaders had tried to keep the question in the background. Above everything they wished to keep their organization intact and sought to avoid controversive questions. T. W. Davenport said,

> "The Statesman engaged in such personal partisan warfare with opposition papers devoted to the free state cause, thereby subordinating all other questions of a political nature, that its influence must have been to befog the voters in its own party."[1]

It is hard to realize how vital the slavery question became in Oregon. Many of the immigrants had come from the southern part of America, and were not opposed to slavery; such an eminent man as Judge Deady was pro-slavery. Mr. Bush was by reputation free state but had no sympathy with abolition. In fact he maintained such a neutral position that

> "on account of its [Statesman's] great circulation and autocratic influence, its course

1. T. W. Davenport, "Slavery Question in Oregon", Oregon Historical Quarterly, IX (September, 1908), pp. 228, 229.

during these critical times gave great anxiety to the radical opponents of slavery."[1]

This half way position made it possible for him to assume whatever policy seemed expedient.

He supported Douglas' "popular sovereignty". To him it was in complete accord with the principle of independence and self-determination which he regarded as inherent American rights. As far as Oregon was concerned he did not see any conflict between the doctrine and the Dred Scott decision. But he refuted the charge that popular sovereignty was the same as black republicanism. Although he did not see any advantage to be gained by the introduction of slavery, he maintained "Oregon wants no outside interference. To send abolitionists would mean that Oregon would go for slavery."[2]

When the break came in the Democratic ranks, it was assumed that the "Hards" were free-state men, but the "Hards" charged the "Softs" with black republicanism. There was much incongruity in the stand taken by each group, e.g. the "Hards" endorsed the principle of popular sovereignty but Whiteaker, the nominee for governor was pro-slavery.[3]

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1. Ibid., p. 229.
2. Statesman, August 2, 1859.
3. Statesman, March 31, 1857.

Bush in his neutral position opened his paper to correspondents from both sides. Most writers agree that great influence was exerted by Judge Williams' "Free State Letter."[1] Davenport says that it was just the thing that was needed at this time—an argument not advanced for sentiment or moral reasons but an earnest, thoughtful communication by a man who was free from any suspicion of having designs on the unity and political harmony of the Democratic party.[2]

The impracticability of slavery from an economic point of view seemed to carry much weight. J. W. Mack and F. B. Martin presented the other side of the question.[3]

In 1858, the Statesman editor was up for reelection as printer and did not press the issue of "popular sovereignty" as advocated by Douglas in the Kansas question, but by 1859 and 1860 he had returned to the support of Douglas.

The position taken by the Oregon Republicans at this time took a more conservative cast. Dryer and Logan accepted "popular sovereignty" and as has been pointed out by Wood-

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1. Statesman, July 28, 1857.
2. T. W. Davenport, op. cit., p. 238.
3. W. C. Woodward, op. cit., p. 113.

ward there was little difference between the stand taken by Douglas Democrats and Oregon Republicans.[1]

However, in April, 1859, Bush warned the Democrats of Oregon to be vigilant because the Republicans in Congress had voted for Oregon's admission with the idea of Oregon's joining their ranks.

When Delazon Smith's term as United States senator had expired, the legislature could not agree on his reelection or the choice of a successor.

That slavery was an issue in Oregon is shown very clearly by the vote at the time of the adoption of the Constitution. The convention was composed of men of such different attitudes that they attempted to steer clear of that issue. The constitution was submitted to the people and the vote was 7,195 for and 3,215 against; against slavery the vote was 5,082 and against free negroes 7,559. Various historians have pointed out the anomaly that existed—slavery was voted down, free negroes were severly objected to, and the governor chosen was a pro-slavery man as were the two senators. Congress faced an interesting situation.

Although the rupture in the Democratic party still had personal elements, the larger issue served to draw the lines more clearly. The legislature of 1858 which had

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1. Woodward, op. cit., p. 159.

elected Lane and Smith had been pro-slavery, but when the time for the election of 1860 arrived, the situation had changed.

Since the pro-slavery Democrats had repudiated "popular sovereignty" the Republicans could afford to stress the doctrine of non-intervention. The man that was brought from California as their nominee for senator—Colonel E. D. Baker—had full sympathy with the Douglas position.[1] Coupled with this fact was his ability as a politician. When the Democrats continued to war among themselves, he entered into a bargain with the anti-Lane forces so that the final result was the choice of Nesmith, anti-Lane Democrat and Baker, Republican, as United States senators.

The national Democratic party was split into two factions and two nominees were put before the people—Douglas and Breckinridge. Bush had always been sympathetic with Douglas, although in 1858 he had been rather silent on the subject. In the ensuing campaign he attacked both Republicans and "Yanceyites," who he charged were both bent on destroying the union by their radical doctrines.

Much to his disappointment Douglas was defeated, but when the question of standing by the Union arose, Bush did not hesitate a moment. He joined forces with the so-called

1. W. C. Woodward, op. cit., p. 184.

Union party—a group composed of Republicans and the Douglas Democrats. He was cautious in his support of this group because he felt that the union was for expediency. He hesitated to have a regular party organization develop and urged the Douglas Democrats to maintain their identity.[1]

His attitude toward Lincoln was free from any political rancor. He believed he was too good natured and easy going, criticizing his willingness to give different people a chance to try their ideas:

> "The irreparable evils of the radicals' clamor and the President's easy vacillating nature are nowhere more apparent than in the never ending changes in the command of the army.... Thus his good nature rather than his judgment has been the constant dupe of designing knaves and fools, political stock jobbers, senseless theorists and addle brained philanthropists, each of whom has in turn promised to break the back of the rebellion."[2]

He admitted that Lincoln seemed an honest man and sincere patriot, but that nobody pretended he was a great man. On October 21, 1861, he paid Lincoln this tribute:

> "Mr. Lincoln alone of the great actors in this drama is without any incentive to ordinary ambition. The force of the party has thrust upon him some very bad and inefficient men in important places."

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1. Statesman, June 24, 1861. "When this contest, be it long or short, is closed, the men who have trained under the great political captain (Douglas) will find themselves the nucleus of a radical party, opposed to the federal element grown strong in the centralising work of crushing out rebellion."

2. Statesman, September 29, 1862.

Like many other Americans he had great admiration for McClellan. In his letters and later in editorials he blamed Lincoln and his advisers for their interference in army activities. In fact, he attached the adjective "Napoleonic" to the ill-fated general.[1] His attack on the rebels was devastating, showing absolutely no mercy toward any one who did not sympathize with the Union. Treason, by the law, consigns its perpetrator to death. It is the business of the officers of the law to see that its provisions are executed.[2]

By 1863 Bush had given up his interest in the Statesman and with that ended his connection with state printing. In 1862 he was nominally out since Harvey Gordon ran as state printer, but with the death of Mr. Gordon, Bush carried on until the Republican candidate, Pittock, was elected in 1864. In the national election of that year he campaigned for McClellan against Lincoln.

As soon as Bush severed his ties with the newspaper his political career is difficult to follow. Unlike Deady and Williams, he returned to the Democratic ranks and played a prominent, if less evident role, than in the days of the Salem Clique. He was a member of the national Democratic

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1. Statesman, September 29, 1862.
2. Statesman, June 30, 1862.

convention in 1884 that nominated Cleveland as presidential candidate, and in 1888 was chairman of the central Democratic committee for Oregon.[1] Cleveland offered him the post of a secretary of the treasury, this offer speaking well for his financial ability and his standing in the Democratic party, but in accord with his desire to keep out of the limelight he did not accept the cabinet post.

He continued to take an interest in the political questions of the day as is seen in conning his correspondence; much was written about Johnson, Hayes, Grant, Arthur, et al.

1. H. R. Kincaid, Political and Official History and Register of Oregon, (Biographical Appendix of the Secretary of the State's Report, 1897), p. 208.

CHAPTER III

EDITOR OF THE STATESMAN

Much has been said about the Oregon style of journalism—that style which was personal, invective, and vindictive to a degree unknown today. That it was truly an Oregon product as far as Bush was concerned can be proved quite conclusively by comparing his Statesman style with that of the Westfield Standard.[1] In the latter there is little or none of the personal abuse that was so much a part of the style of the Statesman. In a prefatory statement made by him in the eastern paper he stated his aims which are inter-

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1. Westfield Standard, January 24, 1849. "Wholly unaccustomed to the conduct of a public journal we enter with diffidence upon the performance of difficult duties; and did not custom seem to require it, should make no promises for the future, till experience had tested our ability to redeem them.... But while we shall resolutely and steadfastly advocate and defend our own opinions, we shall endeavor to observe courteous and respectful demeanor towards those who may chance to differ with us; awarding to all the same freedom of thought and opinions that we claim for ourselves, and combatting rather measures than men.... Independent of the political character of the Standard, the undersigned will aim to make it an agreeable Family Newspaper, and so far as possible a vehicle of late and correct general and local intelligence."

esting in the light of what he had to say about soft language in Oregon and about a local paper.[1]

It is interesting to note that not only to us does the style employed in Oregon seem abusive and scurrilous, but also to contemporary California and eastern papers.[2] Each issue indulged in the same sort of vituperative language. Expressions which today would involve a man in a libel suit evoked a similar retaliation.

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1. Statesman, January 10, 1860. "So long as newspapers use only classic English, the public have no right to complain at any development of rottenness among candidates who aspire to serve them."

2. San Francisco Times as quoted in the Argus, June 19, 1858. "Instead of current news, opinions of leading topics or well selected items of useful information, the whole sheet is occupied with political discussions of no practicable importance, and the most violent tirades of vituperation and abuse. Column after column and page after page is crammed with fulsome panegyrics on one set of political opponents and bitter denunciations of another. Picking up an organ of one political faction, we find terms strung together like the following when speaking of an opponent to some petty office in the Territory: 'Benedict Arnold, Judas Iscariot and the devil', Blue light Federalist, British Tory, and cut-throat Tory, Black leg debauchee, lying scoundrel, and sneaking hypocrite. We might fill our entire paper with like expressions gleaned from the same source, but this will suffice to give the reader some idea of the Oregon style of literature.

Now what these blackening fellows say about each other is probably mostly true; yet that is no reason why they should disgust the public with this species of indecent exposure and what renders the billingsgate the more intolerable is that these men are not contending about any principle of measure of any importance but simply for their fees and spoils of office, or some trifling matter about which the public are equally indifferent."

The editor of the Statesman never let anyone outdo him in these personal attacks. His wit was incisive and bitter, and he did not hesitate to vilify his opponents.[1] Some of these men who came in for these attacks were Dryer, of the Oregonian, Adams of the Argus, Leland of the Standard, Hall of the Occidental Messenger, and Delazon Smith, who incurred his disfavor in 1859.

Compared with the attacks returned by these men, Bush seems no worse. Perhaps his wit was a little keener and a shaft of a couple lines or a word or two sometimes equalled longer discourses of the others. Epithets were hurled back and forth.[2] Bush often refused to pursue an argument, but preferred to use ridicule or catch phrases to such an advantage as to becloud the matter under consideration.

> "The editor of the Statesman never wasted ink in refuting the Oregonian's editorials. There was sufficient satisfaction in referring to them as cogitations of 'Toddy Jep' a name the initials of which he could not disavow and the meaning of

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1. Statesman, June 22, 1852. "The Oregonian is the most unvarying liar we ever met."

2. Bush was a "pensioned hireling", "Bush-eye", "bush" (without the capital), "editor of Czapkay's Organ" and even "Ass of Hell." Dryer was the "Sewer man" and "Toddy Jep". Hall was "Avery's ox." Adams was "Parson Billy of the Air-goose". Waterman was "Peter". Leland was "Joshua" or "Algerine Alonzo" (the latter was derived from the editor's activities in the east at the time of the Dorr Rebellion).

which he would not discuss."[1]

The newspapers of this period are replete with trenchant attacks, but the height of this sort of writing is found in Vox Populi, a paper published in Salem at the time of the capital controversy in 1851-1852.[2] The melodrama by Breakspear, "Treasons, Stratagems and Spoils" was put out to attack the "Clique". Assumed names were given the actors appearing in the play, but the interesting thing is that many of these stuck in later years. Unless one knows to whom these refer, there is much confusion in reading correspondence and territorial newspapers. "Chick" is used for Bush, "Ned" for Deady, "Peter" for Waterman.[3] A term like "basaltic" was used for years by the members of the Clique.

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1. T. W. Davenport, "Slavery Question in Oregon", Oregon Historical Quarterly, IX (September 1908), p. 244.

2. (a) Copies of Vox Populi are in the Oregon Historical Society's Library, Portland, and Mr. A. N. Bush has copies in his collection. (b) Oswald West says that in later years Mr. Bush would not commit himself as to the authorship of this scurrilous sheet, op. cit.
(c) Drew to Bush, May 7, 1855, "Gaines tells our people that I was a good Whig up to the close of the Salem legislature at Salem in 1851-1852. I did not know before that the Vox Populi was edited by Whigs. It will be news to you."

3. At the time, the Democrats bought up as many copies of the work of W. L. Adams as they could so as to prevent its circulation. In later years when the old animosity was forgotten, Adams bought up old copies.

This word was used by one of the legislative members who refused to join those who met in Salem.

As early as 1876 the Oregonian looked back on the journalism of the fifties as immature, speaking of it as crude and primitive and from the typographical appearance far from pleasing.[1] The set up was very monotonous, since no satisfactory system of news gettinghad developed, and no photographs were available. The style of the Statesman compared favorably with contemporary papers.[2] The type, of course, is very hard on the eyes when compared with what we have today. Bush took an interest in the appearance of his paper by purchasing new equipment. Considering the amount of work he had to do and difficulty in obtaining help during the gold rush fever, one is impressed with the composition of some of his articles. It is said that he set up many of his saucy, succint editorials and epigrams without copy.[3]

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1. Oregonian, March 29, 1876.

2. H. H. Bancroft, History of Pacific States of North Amer-America, (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888) p. 147. "As a party paper it was conducted with greater ability than any journal on the Pacific coast for a period of about a dozen years."

3. C. H. Carey, History of Oregon, II (Chicago: The Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 51.

If the style of the Statesman is considered apart from abuse and political tirades that characterized it, Bush's ability as a writer makes him compare favorably with any other editor in America. He believed in the efficacy of repetition but he also stressed the importance of being brief, if one wished to be read. He took pride in expressing himself well, and in later years when he felt himself too long removed from such activities, refused to write a sketch of Deady.[1]

The advertisements of the early papers are interesting as well as amusing. Bush refused to solicit them and was not dependent upon them as some of his opponents charged.[2] He realized their importance and once stated, "Advertising is often much more interesting than editorials."[3] The heads used for these show the political interest of the people. An announcement of mercantile goods might carry an inscription "Free State Men", or another might read "Court of Common Pleas." One notice that the Statesman carried came in for ridicule in the Argus.[4] A Czapkay's medicine .

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, June 28, 1889.

2. Spectator, June 12, 1855: "The Statesman doesn't inspire enough confidence for ads."

3. Statesman, March 18, 1860.

4. Argus, June 28, 1856; and January 29, 1859.

claimed all sorts of wonderful properties, as a result of which the Statesman was dubbed "Czapkay's Organ" and every one knew what paper was meant.

The Statesman prided itself on being more than a local paper. Bush was forced to make such claim because his paper followed the seat of government from Oregon City to Salem to Corvallis and back to Salem. When he returned to Salem after his brief sojourn in Corvallis, he stated,

> "We have never published a local paper, an Oregon City, Salem, or Corvallis paper, and never expect to. The Statesman has been pre-eminently an Oregon journal and will continue to be such."[1]

A reading of the Statesman files from 1851-1863 shows that Bush lived up rather well to the tenets set forth in the first issue, March 28, 1851.[2] Some of these guiding principles were as follows: to uphold the interests and prosperity of the territory, to be democratic in politics, to preserve the integrity of the Democratic party, to be for universal toleration in religion, and to advocate truth, temperance, etc. The editor after completing the tenth volume said:

> "From its first issue to the present, for ten years it has never failed to appear on

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1. Statesman, December 18, 1855.

2. Statesman, March 28, 1851.

> the regular day of publication. It has never tied itself to the personal fortunes of any candidate, but has always sought to earn a generous support by a bold, outspoken maintenance of such measures as the country demands. How well it has succeeded in this purpose the patronage the public have seen fit to bestow on it may answer.
>
> It has denounced all manner of humbug speculations and all rotten candidates for office, and has unveiled pretension, hypocrisy, and personal puffery whenever they have been thrust upon the public. In retaliation we are opposed with a bitterness unknown in the history of newspapers here and perhaps anywhere else."[1]

Although the editorial page has reflected so much of personal animus, much can be gleaned from it concerning the attitude of the editor on the social, religious, economic and ethical questions of the day.

The editor of the Statesman was a decided believer in the superiority of the white race. Any agreement shown with General Wool in his criticism of the whites in their treatment of the Indians did not rise from any particular fondness for the red man.

He concurred with the opinion expressed by John Montgomery, Indian agent in St. Louis, when he said that he had little sympathy with Indian missionary activities.[2] He considered any attempts to civilize them highly unsuccessful.

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1. Statesman, March 11, 1860.

2. Statesman, October 14, 1856, and May 26, 1857.

In fact he thought the Indians little better than animals, expressing his belief in the futility of making treaties and contracts with them. This is shown by the following editorial written during the period of treaty making in the fifties:

> "The truth is that Indian treaties and the acknowledgment of Indian title to any portion of the soil are down right unmitigated humbug. They are calculated to give the Indians too great an idea of their own importance and in fact, their effect is to raise the degraded and bestial savages at least in their own estimation to a political equality with the whites.... Justice and humanity require that some care should be extended by our government over the Indians, who in the very nature of things are compelled to give way to the 'manifest destiny' of a superior race, etc...."[1]

The fact that he hailed from Massachusetts did not make him sympathize with abolitionists. From the first he had no love for negroes and criticized abolitionists as "nigger-loving dames" or "old grannies". He opened his paper to both sides of the question, but we shall see when we consider the political situation of the time that he did this for expediency. His support of Lincoln came because his love of the Union would not let him follow those who went against it. He broke with the president when he could not follow his emancipation plan. In 1857 he wrote:

"We believe that the African whatever his

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1. Statesman, November 23, 1858.

> nominal condition, is destined to be the servant and subordinate of the superior white race, and that it is best for both races that that servitude and subordination should be regulated by law. And we believe, also, that the wisdom of man has not yet devised a system under which the negro is as well off as he is under that of American slavery."[1]

This attitude which he frequently expressed brought forth much bitter criticism from the anti-slavery forces.[2]

Not long after the Civil War broke out, Asahel Bush went east and wrote to the Statesman from various points along the way. He visited Oberlin College where he was thoroughly disgusted with the pro-negro feelings. His impressions were as follows:

> "On the whole I found Oberlin quite up to its unenviable reputation for practical negro equality and more deserving its odorous name than I had thought."[3]

As the time for the emancipation drew near the Statesman made clear Bush's stand on freeing the negro:

> "Bush is what he has been at the start—in favor of maintaining the Government at every hazard to the last extremity. He wouldn't destroy the government either to enslave or liberate niggers; he believes it to be a government of white man, and if the liberties of that race can be preserved, he regards it of comparatively little consequence what fate betides the

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1. Statesman, August 4, 1857.

2. Argus, June 20, 1857. Adams offered to make "Chick" a slave since he thought slaves were well cared for.

3. Statesman, October 28, 1861.

> nigger. It [Statesman] will not give in its adhesion to any scheme that looks to the liberation of the slaves as the principal end to be attained and makes the preservation of the Union, if considered at all, a secondary consideration. We are for the Union first and union only. He who is not on our platform, had better examine his heart and see if he is not either a pro-nigger or anti nigger traitor."[1]

When many years had passed by, Bush still showed that he had not changed his mind about the negroes. In 1889 he had a lengthy correspondence with Deady about the propriety of the term "Rebellion" and "Civil War", Bush refusing to have his name used with the term rebellion. At the time he reviewed his opinion of Stephen A. Douglas and reiterated his belief in the inadvisability of the emancipation.[2]

He viewed with approval the attempts in the state to discriminate against the Chinese. In his correspondence he admitted a personal distrust of them.[3]

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1. Statesman, December 8, 1862.

2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, April 29, 1889. "I never sympathized with the negro question in any form. I had no reason to expect that Lincoln would omit any opportunity offered by the war to strike at slavery, but when the trend in that direction towards giving him the ballot was manifest, my ardor cooled. I considered then and now that act was a crime against civilization and I have no quarrel with any act of the southern people to prevent the domination to their politics by that vote. I do not think the negro should be admitted to the suffrage north or south. If the white people can not properly govern without the assistance of the negro they had better abdicate and let the negro try it."

3. Ibid., July 7, 1866.

Although he showed this extreme racial prejudice and a belief in the "white man's destiny", he did not view with approval any attempt to foster distrust of the so-called foreign groups in our country. He criticized Dryer for his anti-Jewish feelings.[1] Perhaps this was due to the fact that he was playing for political votes; yet his attitude here seems consistent. He attacked the same editor for casting aspersions on the German-born element in Oregon by saying,

> "This merry making over the inability of adopted citizens to speak plainly our language is worthy of a Know-Nothing sheet."[2]

Bush's family were Universalists, a sect which seems to have been rather liberal.[3] He himself, did not advocate any one denomination, but evidently leaned toward the Unitarian faith inasmuch as his funeral service was conducted by the Rev. Charles Eliot, well-known minister of the Church of Our Father, Unitarian, in Portland.

Throughout his editorial career he showed tolerance toward all sects. This is evident in his stand on the Know-Nothing agitation in 1854-1856 and in his attitude toward the Mormons. He denounced those who heckled a Mormon meet-

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1. Statesman, October 5, 1858.
2. Statesman, March 9, 1858.
3. Joseph Gaston, op. cit., p. 267.

ing,

> "If any prefer not to hear them, they have but to remain away. Religious toleration is a marked feature of our free institutions."[1]

In 1865 he visited Salt Lake and was greatly impressed by the industry of the Mormons. He indicated in a letter to Deady that he liked the Mormon plan of collecting all of their members together and expressed his wish that the Methodists might be herded together instead of scattering all over the earth "troubling other people."[2]

On various occasions Bush expressed his belief in the desirability of complete separation of spiritual and temporal affairs. In 1859 he objected strenuously to the governor's proclamation for a day of Thanksgiving.

> "We believe that the appointment of days of public thanksgiving as festivities of a purely religious character, by the secular authorities is a custom for the continuance of which there exists no good reason. The office of the executive is purely temporal and has and should have no connection with religious affairs. If there is a need of setting apart of stated times for grateful remembrance of a protecting and assisting Providence, let the ecclesiastical officers designate the times and occasions."[3]

Lest this be considered prompted by hostility toward Governor Whiteaker the reader may note that he had expressed

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1. Statesman, July 28, 1857.
2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, September 29, 1865.
3. Statesman, December 27, 1859.

a similar sentiment in his Massachusetts paper in 1849.[1]

A similar attitude as to the separation between state and religion was shown when he criticized an attack made on a candidate for office because of his lack of religious faith.[2]

Clerical politicians were an anathema to him.[3] On several occasions he lashed out with invective against meddling clergymen, charging that "clerical opposition has usually been on the unpatriotic side."[4]

A lively duel ensued between Bush and the Reverend Mr. Pearne of the Pacific Christian Advocate. The latter insisted that the Constitution forbade the paying of money from the treasury to those who invoked a blessing in the legislature, asylum, or the penitentiary. The Statesman editor retorted:

> "If there can be no praying without paying, and the members think it important to have it, let them pay for it.... We hope and believe that while the human race shall need them, such men will be found without depending upon pen-

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1. Westfield Standard, November 28, 1849.

2. Statesman, June 16, 1857. "When a man, competent and worthy, is opposed on account of his belief upon the subject of religion, we hope it will ever be with the same successes as in Mr. Robbins' case (who was elected although charged with being an atheist)."

3. Statesman, June 23, 1857.

4. Statesman, September 23, 1856.

> sioned hirelings (a term, by the way, often applied by the opposition to Bush) of the state who would fain peddle prayer with as much of an eye to the main chance as old Isaac of York."[1]

Continuing discussion about state chaplains he said,

> "As to the Lunatic Asylum we do not see how they are to suffer much by the loss."

When Bush was Superintendent of the Penitentiary, prisoners complained that they were deprived of the consolation of religion. His reply to this charge gives a good insight to the humor of the man. In the Oregonian an interview was written about Bush's view on the matter. He insisted that the complaint was a reflection on the preaching of Rev. J. L. Parrish, who it seems preached vividly of the "wrath to come".

> "If that don't constitute the consolation of religion I fail to understand the meaning and that is the only kind suited to those fellows. The modern soft-handed style would not take effect on them. Even with the vigorous sort I doubt if the crop of saints will be found very large. Father Deilman has been invited to hold occasional services, but he don't seem to have faith in the field."[2]

Seriously, though, his religion seemed a very practical code of doing good to those who needed it. Once he said half facetiously that "The staple prayer I was bred on ran 'be a father to the fatherless and the widow's God'".[3]

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1. Statesman, September 8, 1857.
2. Oregonian, August 8, 1879.
3. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, February 10, 1867.

Few were able to estimate the good that he did for numerous individuals as we shall see when we mention a few of the tributes paid him at the time of his death.

When he was in the East in 1861, he visited the church of Henry Ward Beecher. His comments on the famous preacher are interesting. He expressed disappointment in him by saying,

> "....That he is an able man none can gainsay; but he has an accent and air of court heightened by long soap-locks pushed behind his ears, unworthy of his mind and fame. He seems to me to affect the tone, manner and appearance of an old time parson."[1]

As he grew older, he expressed no assurance of a belief in personal immortality. In 1871 he wrote:

> "....I notice how swiftly time flies.... Does it seem to pass more quickly as we grow older? If so, what is left to you and I will seem scant enough when we come to near its end and look back upon it. Man's life should have been a thousand years. As it is he is not prepared to live before he is fated to die. The contemplation of the end is not pleasant. I hope it will be less distasteful as we approach it."[2]

It is interesting to add that he lived some forty years after this utterance and reiterated his belief many times.

The Temperance question became an issue in Oregon in the fifties. The Maine law was discussed throughout the

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1. Statesman, July 8, 1861.
2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, May 5, 1871.

United States and Oregon reflected the same interest. Bush took a firm stand against Prohibition, partly from conviction but more from political reasons.[1] The Whigs seemed to espouse the idea, as Woodward says:

> "The Whigs worked hand in glove with the Maine law association. Both saw in Oregon democracy the personification of evil and in Asahel Bush the Mephistophelian marshall of that host. Bush disliked prohibitionists. He disliked Whigs. He detested the alliance of the two. He could find only evil in any man, party or issue that would draw votes from his Democratic machine."[2]

Since the editor of the Argus, "Parson Billy Adams" and Dryer, "Toddy Jep", embraced the prohibition movement, Bush was certain to oppose it. He did this by ridicule and argument.[3] He did not think that the prohibition law could be enforced in the sparsely settled territory, and cited instances of the difficulty in the eastern states. Then, too, he did not believe that evil could be abolished by legislation. To him a rigidly enforced licensing seemed more practical. The editor of the Argus made much of this reason-

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1. Conversation with Mr. Bush, 1939. Bush was moderate in his use of liquors. B. F. Harding once said within the presence of A. N. Bush that he had never seen Mr. Bush intoxicated.

2. W. C. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 63, 64. Quoted by J. E. Caswell, "The Prohibition Question in Oregon", Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXIX (September 1938), p. 246.

3. Statesman, May 2, 1854, and December 6, 1853.

ing and tried to connect him with other forms of licensed vice.[1] Bush refuted his charges but the attack seemed to fit in well with the attack on the advertisement that Bush carried for a certain patent medicine. For many issues Adams dwelt on the matter of the "Czapkay" advertisement.

Considering the period in which he lived, we would not charge the editor with ultra-conservatism toward women. In 1858 a woman named Ada M. Weed came to Salem to lecture on women's rights.[2] Although Bush made a point of reporting some of her ideas, he refused to give her publicity by a lengthy tirade against her. He believed the true sphere of the women was in the home but he counselled a moderate attitude.[3] When the matter came under discussion about the exemption of a wife's share of the donation claim, he upheld the law which saved her share from being seized for debts incurred by the husband.

As a journalist, and later as superintendent of the superintendent of the penitentiary, he expressed a desire for speedy and effective justice.[4] He believed in prisoners be-

1. Argus, June 20, 1857.
2. Statesman, November 30, 1858.
3. Statesman, November 9, 1858.
4. Statesman, November 24, 1857.

ing put to work and he was a firm believer in capital punishment, not only for capital crimes but for the repetition of crime after several pardons or paroles.[1] He took a decided stand against the policy of hanging a criminal in public.

When he was superintendent of the penitentiary, he maintained strict discipline and was criticized for his bestowal of merit points. It seems that points were awarded for good behavior, but Bush differed from the previous administration as to the interpretation of the word "good". He said that ordinary good behavior was the expected type in a prison, and to win merit points prisoners would have to do something of an extraordinary nature. He didn't think that the prison should be a very comfortable place and ordered the plainest kind of food. When he was asked about this, he said that they had plenty of plain food but he didn't believe that any of them would suffer from gout.[2]

He looked with alarm on what he considered the increase of crime and offered the suggestion that the whipping post might be introduced into Oregon and that the death penalty should be extended.[3] Despite his adamant attitude toward

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1. Statesman, December 29, 1857.
2. Oregonian, August 8, 1879.
3. Oregonian, August 18, 1879.

confirmed criminals, he evinced a sympathetic attitude toward first offenders and toward those who had dependents.[1]

Like the "proverbial Yankee", Bush took a very practical view in the matter of economic development. Time after time through the columns of the Statesman he urged the importance of a sane development of Oregon's resources. He pointed out the fool hardiness of leaving a well-established business for the mines. Much of the time his admonition went unheeded. At the time of the Frazier gold strike in 1858, he advised

> "Keep cool, you couldn't mine now if you were there and had better stay at home and attend to your business if you have any. If the mines are rich and wide spread it will be ample time to go when those facts are established. If they are pretty much of a humbug as we incline to believe, you will have saved morals (for in that case you will swear some), money, and moccasins by remaining at home."[2]

When he was accused in 1862 of creating erroneous impressions about the mines, he insisted that a tremenduous system of humbug was practised to draw people in that region for the benefit of private speculation.

> "That very considerable sums have been and are flowing out of the mines, we have no reason to doubt, but considering the number of people engaged in digging it, the sums are

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, July 31, 1882. [Letter about Jo Osborne's boy.]

2. Statesman, July 20, 1858.

not large to each individual."[1]

For failing to overpraise Oregon's resources he was severely criticized.[2] He did not deny that Oregon had much rain and the winters were often disagreeable, but on the other hand he pointed out the possibilities for farming and for the development of a great industry from timber.[3]

Oregon seemed unproductive to him and he insisted that the most natural mode of production was labor. As late as 1859 in an editorial "Verbum Sapientibus" he dealt with the number of consumers as compared with producers. He felt that there were too many professions for the population and "except for those engaged in mechanical and laborious pursuits the number of people employed is greatly disproportionate to the population."[4] He said that a good vegetable garden was a rarity. Farmers seemed to be wanting in management and were more interested in chimerical ideas, hoping to get rich within a very short time. During the hard times he did not hesitate to say that the Oregonians were improvident.[5]

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1. Statesman, September 15, 1862.
2. Statesman, September 18, 1852.
3. Statesman, March 19, 1853.
4. Statesman, November 11, 1859.
5. Statesman, August 16, 1859.

Even before he became the well-known banker he advocated a sound currency. He deplored the green back currency of the Civil War and expressed himself very vehemently along these lines. In his editorials he insisted that the new currency should not be legal tender for debts contracted before the war. When people in Oregon attempted to pay for the Statesman with green backs (shin plasters as he called them) he said:

> "We have thus far uncomplainingly taken payment of dues to this office legal tender notes at par.... We cannot pay out a bill for more than its market value—at present ninety cents on the dollar. We will not ask our workmen to take them for more than they can use them for."[1]

He did not consider the issuance of these notes as a necessity of war. They disarranged the currency and would bring financial distress and ruin according to his ideas.

When Matthew P. Deady borrowed a thousand dollars from Bush during the period of the greenback currency, Bush asked Deady to insert a coin clause in the note. This was probably done to make Deady a little more aware of the undesirability of green backs since he did not seem so perturbed as Bush.[2]

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1. Statesman, December 15, 1862.

2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, April 16, 1863. "The only reason why I wanted coin expressed was that in case you should be called to Abraham's bosom.... It is all right; however you will not die before payment unless you die before you are prepared."

The same belief in sound money prevailed in the late nineties. He and Pennoyer had many a round on this subject.[1]

Bush did not believe in saddling a community or state with debts. He took a stand against the incorporation of Salem because he felt it would make possible unwise expenditures.[2] His paper was friendly to the Agricultural Society (which became the State Fair) but when they wanted special appropriations he openly opposed it, maintaining that if special appropriations were made "our Treasury would never again have occasion to report a balance."[3]

He cherished a regard for orderly government and rebuked Dryer for his suggestion of establishing a vigilance committee.[4] When Isaac Stevens declared martial law in his struggle with the Indian problem, Bush in the editorial page declared that Steven's offense was treated too lightly.[5] He warned Washington Territory to guard its liberties. That brings up an interesting sidelight that is not mentioned very often and that is that Bush did not hesitate to comment

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1. Leslie M. Scott in the Oregon Statesman, March 29, 1931.
2. Territorial Papers, Petition No. 10890.
3. Statesman, April 3, 1860.
4. Statesman, August 26, 1856.
5. Statesman, September 16, 1856.

on problems in the territory to the north of Oregon. There were individuals who wanted him to do this but did not want the pressure too strong because Washington Territory was averse to "foreign interference."[1]

As late in the fifties Bush felt it proper to declare his attitude on dueling. Several editorials expressed his disapproval of this means of settling difficulties. Oregon had an interesting incident along this line. When Mr. Bush was away on one of his trips his editor, Beggs, was threatened—in fact—challenged for certain remarks he had made about a letter signed "Couer d'Alene". Mullen challenged Beggs to meet him on an island in the Columbia; however, Beggs objected to the selection of the place and said that he was sending a bottle of strychnine instead.[2]

One view expressed by the editor sounds very modern. The capital question brought forth many arguments about the Constitution. The continual reference to the document provoked Bush to write:

> "The imposing name of Constitution is thrust forward on every occasion as though there actually were a question here in reference to it. The use of the name of the Con-

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1. B. P. Anderson to Asahel Bush, March 1, 1860.
2. Statesman, November 30, 1856.

> stitution presumes upon the ignorance of the people and is a downright insult to whomsoever it is used."[1]

Like his friend Deady, Bush was to be remembered for some of his early utterances about education—remarks, some of which were to sound very out of date in later years. He was opposed to state education for several reasons: first, he believed Oregon too sparsely settled; second, parents in Oregon were able to pay for their children's education; and third, people would take insufficient interest in hiring competent teachers.[2] His own children were educated in private schools and his correspondence has many references as to his interest in their education.

Lastly, his view on the changes in history will show the well balanced character of the man.

> "History consists not so much in the mere smoke of battles, the blustering of diplomats, the downfall of cabinets or the rise of new dynasties, as in those real but often quiet changes which permanently affect a people either for good or worse."[3]

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1. Statesman, May 25, 1852.
2. Statesman, September 29, 1857.
3. Statesman, January 17, 1860.

CHAPTER IV

PIONEER BANKER

The most enduring foundations for Asahel Bush's fame were laid in the field of business. To his contemporaries after 1863 he became best known as a banker. At the time of his death great tribute was paid his financial ability. The Morning Oregonian stated that he was one of the early financial geniuses of the West.[1] The Oregon Statesman remarked that men who had watched the growth of Oregon from the time that it was a wilderness to the time of his death generally agreed that no one had had such an influence, through his discernment in affairs of finance, trade and commerce and his unselfish and disinterested desire to witness the economical utilization of the partially developed resources.[2] Although Bush did not belong to the earliest group of immigrants, those individuals who have been immortalized in literature because of the romance of the fur

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1. Oregonian, December 24, 1913.
2. Statesman, December 23, 1913.

trade and the Oregon Trail, we must remember that when Bush came to Oregon in 1850, it was still a wilderness.[1] Men who have worked for him testified and still do to his shrewd business acumen, but they also temper it with a staunch avowal of the unknown good he did in making smaller business ventures possible and of integrity in business dealings.[2]

If not quite penniless on his arrival in Oregon, Bush possessed little or no capital of any kind. In fact, he borrowed money to buy the Statesman after he saw that it was to his advantage as well as the party's for him to have a free hand in the enterprise. If one were to believe Dryer and other editors who did not succeed in securing the "political plum" he had one of the most lucrative political offices in the territory. He denied this in the Statesman by pointing out how much more California spent for its printing, but in 1856, when he considered giving up the paper for another venture since he said that the paper was a regular "tread-

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1. T. W. Prosch, "Notes from a Government Document on Conditions in the Fifties", Oregon Historical Quarterly, VIII, (June 1907) p. 193. Communication was very poor. There were two steamboat routes, one from Portland to Astoria; and the other from Portland to Oregon City. As late as 1856, all mail routes in Oregon were 986 miles, 729 of which were trails suitable only for horses.

2. (a) Oswald West, Oregon Journal, December 13, 1913. (b) E. B. Millard, Conversation, July 1939.

mill" he urged Deady to assume the control for he said,

> "You can make a good deal of money out of the concern, much more than you can as judge .... You can keep and make the Statesman office the best property in Oregon, in a pecuniary view. I state what I know when I say it will afford you an unfailing income.... The extent of that income or rather a portion of it of course depends upon the retention of the printing."[1]

The amounts gained from the printing seem rather high judged from later prices paid, but in later years, as at the time, Bush insisted that they were commensurate with other prices in Oregon. The territorial papers in the Library of the Historical Society are very enlightening because they show exactly for what he was paid; everything is down, even items like an insertion for a warning about the foundation of the Capitol. When Harvey Scott in later years made an investigation about the so-called state printing steal, he was unable to find any fraud on the part of Bush when he checked past records. At any rate in his correspondence with Deady, Bush did not show any nervousness at having back records searched, for as he indicated, if there had been the desire to steal on his part the character of the comptroller, Elisha Whittlesey would have prevented it. In fact,

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, November 2, 1856 (private).

2. Some of the Territorial Papers which indicate charges: Numbers 10983, 10439, 10459, 9354.

letters in the files show how carefully the comptroller checked the expenditures of the printing.[1] One instance is the time Whittlesey refused to pay for the indexing of the journal which he said was the Secretary's duty and B. F. Harding, the Secretary, had to take care of the matter.[2]

Although Bush suffered a set-back financially when he lost a new printing press in a disaster at sea, the Marion county assessor's records show that he was rapidly gaining a fortune in the territorial days.[3] Long before he entered into the banking business he was lending money to his associates. The rates seem exorbitant, but they need to be considered in their time. Some of the notes were written for ten per cent per annum, but most of them indicate a rate of two per cent per month. He was lending money not only to men in Marion County, but to men in Portland and even in Washington Territory. An interesting deal was nearly consum-

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1. Territorial Papers: Numbers 9360 and 7361 will serve as typical papers. These are filed under Bush, Asahel, by numbers. Each number on the cards is followed by a brief statement as to the contents.

2. Territorial Paper Number 9360: Allowing 450 sheets to the ream instead of 480, to provide for wastage and bad sheets and you have 14 reams exactly. This is a liberal allowance and ought properly to fall upon the printer and not upon the government, more especially when the cost of printing is so high as it is in Oregon.

3. Marion County assessors' records: 1854, $5200; 1855, $1000; 1856, $6060; 1857, $15,000; 1858, $24,000; 1859, $35,300.

mated whereby Bush would have lent money to B. P. Anderson with which he was to buy a press so that he could become public printer there, but politics in the north prevented the deal.[1] Well-known men like Stark were borrowing money from the Salem man.[2] Through such loans he secured mortgages on very valuable Portland property. Some of his political control no doubt came from the financial obligations to the editor. This is proved by letters from public officials who were glad to ask Bush to help them out when they found themselves in difficult positions.[3]

Bush invested his money in various enterprises. He became a member of a mercantile establishment with Lucien Heath; he owned the Salem Foundry, was president of the Salem Flouring Mills, had an interest in the Salem Woolen Mills and in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company.[4] Some of his money was put into land; in addition to the family estate he owned land out in what was called Wallace's

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1. B. P. Anderson to Asahel Bush, December 8, 1858.

2. John MacCracken to Asahel Bush, July 24, 1859.

3. Nat Lane to Asahel Bush, May 14, 1857.

4. Portrait and Biographical Record of Willamette Valley, Oregon (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903) p. 155.

Prairie, near Keizer today. The Ziebers, Bush's wife's people, had settled in this part of the country.[1]

His greatest influence was exerted as a banker; a great share of Salem's and Marion county's business was financed by his institution which was the first bank in Salem. As the bank entered its sixtieth year, the Capitol Journal reviewed the activities of the establishment:

> "The history of the Ladd and Bush bank represents the development of the Willamette valley. A glance through its archives finds among the thousands of patrons the names of nearly all who have had an outstanding part in the establishment of agricultural and commercial relations. It is in the substantial banking house at State and Commercial streets that the heart throb of this valley, a distinct valley in itself, are felt."[2]

In 1868 the bank of Ladd and Bush was organized in Salem. The partnership consisted of the Ladd and Tilton bank in Portland and Asahel Bush. This year which marks the seventieth anniversary of this financial institution seems a fitting time to review its history.[3] They selected a site on the corner of State and Commercial where the first unit of the banking house that remains in use today was erected. The bank opened for business on March 29,

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1. Statesman, November 14, 1929.

2. Capitol Journal, March 29, 1929.

3. This information is really a resume of the material found in the Ladd and Bush Annual (1930), pp. 1-5.

1869. The capital investment was $50,000; at the end of the first day the deposits were $1450.[1] Interest on loans at the rate of twelve per cent was collected in advance. At the end of the first year the deposits were $80,000. Pioneers were distrustful of banks.

In 1882 Bush bought the Ladd and Tilton share. From that date he was sole owner, although he retained the old name. By 1890 the bank deposits stood at $900,000. With the increase of business came a necessity for enlarging the bank building but the original unit was kept.

The next decade was harder going. 1900 found the deposits at $1,000,000 with cash on hand of $900,000 and its loans were reduced one-half.

The fourth decade ended with deposits of two million dollars. It was in this period that the bank was incorporated. The fifth decade brought the death of its founder, December 23, 1913.[2]

It is now in its eighth decade and still stands as

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1. Ladd and Bush Seventieth Anniversary Publication (1939) "Today investments are 7000 times the total of the first day."

2. Ibid., Mr. Bush lived to see the remodling of the building in July, 1912. "Under the eye of the foremost Pacific Coast architect of the day, colorful Italian marble had replaced the wooden fixtures of old. This Breccia Pavanazza marble, with its delicate natural designs carefully matched to form figures such as that of the Spanish Lady to be seen near the main entrance, is a work of Beauty that still attracts the eye of all visitors."

a bulwark in the community, having weathered every financial crisis. It has never closed its doors except according to law. Changes have occurred in its size but it is essentially the bank that the pioneer citizen founded.[1]

Because of Bush's success as a banker, his opinion was sought for new undertakings. It is said that it was a catch phrase in local commercial circles, "Ask Mr. Bush what he thinks of it."[2]

When he died, his will showed that he had bequeathed property that was estimated to be worth two million dollars. This was divided between his son Asahel and his daughter Sally. The state of Oregon received $20,000 as an inheritance tax.[3]

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1. Capitol Journal, March 29, 1929; also conversation with Mr. A. N. Bush, 1939. Several things of historical interest are found in the bank: 1. The original safe, long replaced by one of the best vaults in the Pacific northwest, is seen in the niche in the south wall. 2. On the same wall hangs a painting of one of Tilton's ships that plied between Oregon and China. 3. The outside designs are from the same moulds that were used for the Ladd and Tilton bank in Portland. 4. On the east wall is seen a large picture of George Washington that has an interesting history. Tilton bought it from a second hand store in New York that claimed it had been taken from New Orleans by one of General Butler's lieutenants during the time of martial law. It bears the mark of Kernan, White Guilders, No. 106, Custom Street, New Orleans. 5. The desk of the pioneer is preserved in the fireplace room and in the directors' room is found some of the furniture installed seventy years ago.

2. Portrait and Biographical Record of Willamette Valley, Oregon, (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), p. 29.

3. Oregonian, January 3, 1914.

CHAPTER V

ASAHEL BUSH, THE MAN

Like all politicians, during the years that he was the voice of the "Clique" he was sometimes inconsistent. Opportunism and other factors entered in the politician's stand. The editor of the Oregonian took great delight in pointing out this weakness. The outstanding examples, of course, were his stand on the Indian war situation and Lane.

As a father and husband he seemed to be above reproach. He married Eugenia Zieber in 1854.[1] She was born in Princess Anne, Maryland, in 1833.[2] Her father, with whom she crossed the plains in 1851, was later surveyor general of Oregon for several years.[3] Mrs. Bush was a cultured woman, having been educated in the Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She died September 11, 1863, leav-

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1. The Ziebers were Pennsylvania Dutch, who had originally come from Austria. Conversation with A. N. Bush, 1939.

2. Joseph Gaston, op. cit., p. 268.

3. (a) Diary of John Zieber, Oregon Pioneer Association Transactions, (July 1920), p. 335. (b) Spectator, October 21, 1851. An article about the arrival of the Ziebers appeared.

ing four children: Estelle, Asahel, Sally and Eugenia. Bush's correspondence shows his solicitude for his wife's health and grief over her death.

His interest in his children was evident in so many ways. In fact, his anxiety over the babies furnished a good laugh for Nesmith and Deady.[1] When he was left with his four motherless children, he made their welfare his first claim. Evenings had to be spent at home because they were lonesome without him. The matter of their education became his prime concern. His character is brought by his solicitude for the homesick daughter, Estelle, near whom he remained for several weeks in Pennsylvania until she became settled in the school life.[2]

He was greatly provoked when people insinuated that his wealth had put him in a distinct class. Deady, who seemed to feel wealth did make a difference, brought forth several rebukes from Bush:

> "I feel inclined to resent the accusation that I am 'drawn to men' who have accumulated wealth. If I thought I held man in higher esteem because of wealth and in less because of lack of it I should despise myself.... If I like a wealthy man or dislike a pore man it

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1. J. W. Nesmith to M. P. Deady, March 2, 1856.

2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, May 11, 1871.

> is for reasons having no connection with their conditions in these respects.... Few of my old intimates are now on my list, but of them there is a full proportion not burdened with this (and for that matter of the next) world's good."[1]

At another time he voiced his disapproval of the way certain men were being selected for a biographical portion of an Oregon history. In his words "impecunious kings must be excluded while well provided pretenders may be crowned."[2]

People who knew Bush agreed that he had a modest nature. He was content to push others into the limelight even during the days of the "Clique".[3] He was never concerned with posterity as his friend M. P. Deady, who kept a diary and preserved his letters with the idea of students of history using the material in the future. As early as 1853, Deady told Bush to leave out vulgarity (as if Deady were any shining example at that time), "Think how your memory will suffer when the future Biographer will give your memories to the world, with your black guard letters to myself interspersed through the dog-eared volume."[4]

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1. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, November 7, 1870.
2. Asahel Bush to M. P. Deady, August 16, 1888.
3. Charles Moores, Oregon Journal, December 23, 1913.
4. M. P. Deady to Asahel Bush, January 19, 1853.

In 1876 he refused to push himself for the senate and when Grover promised him a post in one of the capitals of South America he did not seem to desire one.

To those who knew him as a friend especially in later years he was considered a charming, affable man, but to those who did not know him he seemed austere and even sometimes affected, but what traits he did possess of this nature were bred in him.[1] In the days of the "Clique" his friends were genuine in their admiration for him. In their correspondence no word of distrust was expressed of their leader, although they admitted that he was adamant and tenacious in his purpose. To judge from contemporary papers one would think he was the most detested man in Oregon, for it is true that he was cold, and ruthless, in his political tactics. Since he did seem to lead the "Clique" and was the voice of the Democratic organization attacks against Bush were really attacks against the party. One member of the Democratic party admitted that Bush was the scape goat for the group.[2] He had a wit which could be pleasant or biting as Boreas and this

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1. Frank E. Hodgkin and J. J. Galvin, Pen Pictures of Representative Men in Oregon, (Portland: Farmer and Dairyman Publishing House, 1882) p. 57.

2. W. W. Bristow to Asahel Bush, June 21, 1860.

has the lash that held men in the party. Even his friends spoke of his trenchant tongue and called him "persimmons".

He was no more profane than others who wrote in that day. His patience was tried to the breaking point by the vast amount of work that he tried to do. Those letters which contain the most swearing invariably are the ones written with the greatest haste.

His inability to bother with clerical details alone caused much confusion and made him much difficulty.[1] During the days he was editor of the Statesman he would lose receipts and charge for bills already paid—a fault which brought much wrath down on his head. His son, A. N. Bush, remarked that this trait is the reason his father did not keep a diary and why he did not preserve his records better.

Although in later years business prevented Asahel Bush from playing a prominent role in civic affairs, he served Oregon in a number of ways. He was a trustee of Willamette University.[2] To this school in 1904 he gave a gift of $2000 toward a medical building.[3] From 1882-1893 he was a

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1.(a)Nat Lane to Asahel Bush, March 14, 1860. "Don't be so ------ careless, hire a man to take charge of your books, if you haven't time to take care of it yourself." (b) S. Norris to Bush, February 3, 1860. "Why not employ someone to attend to the business department and not continually make those mistakes."

2. Original charter for Willamette University, Oregon Historical Library.

3. Oregonian, May 1, 1904.

regent of the University of Oregon.[1] He was a member of the board of directors for the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition. In 1897, Bush was the only representative from Oregon who attended the meeting of the national board of charities and corrections held in New York City. Governor Lord appointed him to this honored position.[2]

When his death occurred in 1913 the papers carried many tributes. Senator Harry Lane said:

> "He was one of the brainiest men who ever went to Oregon and was one of the best friends I ever had, the one I valued most highly of all. He became leader of the Democratic party through his strong personality. One of the most incisive writers in the United States, a man of strong opinions, he saw through all shams. He became one of the safest bankers in the country. He should have been in this senate long ago."

Another fine tribute was paid by ex-Governor West, who said:

> "Mr. Bush was one of the biggest and brainiest men this country has ever produced. He was a real banker and would have succeeded equally well in any other business. I was employed by him for eleven years and each day's association only increased my admiration."[3]

The name of Bush has meant much to Salem, and will continue to do so in the future since the name has been

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1. O. C. Pratt to Asahel Bush, March 17, 1887. He used his influence to secure an honorary L.L.D. from the University of Oregon.

2. Secretary of State's Report for 1897, Biographical Appendix.

3. Oswald West, Oregon Journal, December 23, 1914.

perpetuated for future generations.

The most modern elementary school in Salem bears the name of Bush. This is located near the land where the pioneer lived for so many years. In the school hangs a portrait of Asahel Bush given by the family.

Soon after Asahel Bush's death, Miss Sally Bush gave to the city some sixty acres of the family estate between Mission and Lafelle Streets along High to become a city park at the time of her death. This will preserve the land known so long as "Bush's pasture." Bush obtained this land by trading his original property in Salem which was located north of the site on which the Catholic school now stands for David Leslie's claim of some one hundred acres.[1]

In the state capitol his name is inscribed among Oregon's foremost citizens. He appears in the mural which depicts the admission of Oregon to the Union.[2]

Some have called Judge Williams the "grand old man of Oregon"—Asahel Bush could be designated as the "neglected man of Oregon."[3] Many men who have done much less for

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1. Conversation with A. N. Bush, 1939.

2. Guide of the tours points him out as the third man on the right from the governor, who is on horseback.

3. O. Christensen, Grand Old Man of Oregon; the Life of George H. Williams, (Unpublished Thesis, 1937) University of Oregon.

the state have received more credit in publications. The name of the pioneer editor does not even appear in the Dictionary of American Biography.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Asahel Bush played an important part in the history of Oregon, 1851-1913, because of his activities as editor, politician, and banker.

The files of the Statesman (1851-1863) give an excellent idea of the political activities in the territory and of those in the early days of the state. Although the paper was highly partisan, the reading of the files helps the writer to understand the Democratic control during the Territorial period. In addition to matters of local concern, through the Statesman one learns that Oregon discussed questions which were issues in the states, e. g. prohibition, native-Americanism, and slavery. Bush, as editor, devoted much space to the discussion of these. Until the latter part of the fifties he succeeded in keeping the slavery question in the background, and in considering the three questions one may safely say his bitterest attacks were against the Know-Nothings. He was an ardent admirer of Stephen A. Douglas and it is interesting to see how nearly his ideas coincided with those of the national leader.

Although much of his influence came through his journalistic efforts, he built up a strong political organization, the leaders of which were designated as the "Salem Clique". This group had many enemies, but in spite of its ruthless policy toward securing the "spoils of office", it stood for honesty in office.

After Bush severed his connection with the Statesman, his political influence was less prominent, but still important. He was a member of the National Democratic Convention that nominated Cleveland in 1884, chairman of the State Democratic Central Committee in 1888, superintendent of the penitentiary for four years, and was offered a post by the national government during the Cleveland administration, secretary of the treasury.

Bush also played an important part in the business development of Oregon, especially in the history of banking. From the day of its opening, March 29, 1869, to the present the Ladd and Bush bank has been a stable influence, not only in Salem but in the Willamette valley and the state. The growth of the deposits from $1450, received the first day, to over $11,000,000 today speaks well for the careful and wise management of the institution.

Asahel Bush's active part in the development of Oregon is made more colorful and interesting by a knowledge of his forceful personality which was full of many contrasts.

While he was domineering, he was also modest; his humor though biting at times could be delightful; considerate of friends and children he was ruthless in dealing with political opponents.

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