

WILLIAM CATESBY LAUGHLIN, deceased. (Born December 27, 1814; died September 7, 1864). The memory of no man is held in higher respect by the little band of pioneers now living, who took part in the early history making period of eastern Oregon, than that of County Judge William C. Laughlin. Coming to that part of Oregon, where now stands the thriving city of The Dalles, in 1850, preceded by only two or three settlers, he at once began carving out a home for himself and family. And there he resided until his death in 1864, taking a most prominent part in developing the country and building up the city of The Dalles. The few surviving neighbors of Judge Laughlin, those who were co-workers with him in the first fourteen years' history of The Dalles, never tire of telling of his sterling worth, of his kindness to his less fortunate neighbors, of his influence for good in the community. It is indeed a fitting tribute that his likeness should be a frontispiece of the history of Wasco county.

Judge Laughlin's ancestry can be traced only to early in the eighteenth century. At that time his grandfather, Thomas Laughlin, came to America from England. Tradition says that he was of scotch descent, if not a native of Scotland. No record of data can be found in Thomas Laughlin's genealogy earlier than his marriage on November 27, 1755, to Sarah Madison, a cousin of President James Madison. Eleven children were born to them, as follows: Richard (1757-1759), Joannah (1758-1758), Thomas (1759 - date of death unknown), Robert (1762-1788), James (1764 - date of death unknown), George (1766-1801), John (1769 - date of death unknown), Roger (1771-1845), Edmund (1773 - date of death unknown), Simon (1776 - date of death unknown), Hill (1782-1788). Thomas Laughlin died December 13, 1801. Sarah Laughlin died October 31, 1901.

The seventh son, Roger, was our subject's father. He was married to Elizabeth Woodford in 1800 and their children were Richard, Mary, Nancy, Sarah, George, Lucy, Simon, Elizabeth, William Catesby, Mark Woodford, Thomas Catesby. Roger Laughlin died January 5, 1845, and Elizabeth Laughlin died in April, 1853. Shortly after their marriage, which occurred in 1800, they moved to Kentucky, where they lived until 1832.

It was during his parents' residence in Kentucky that William Laughlin was born, the date of his birth being December 27, 1814. Here he spent his boyhood days, moving with his parents at the age of eighteen to Illinois, locating near Quincy. He worked on a farm until he gained his majority. On April 8, 1840, he was united in marriage to Mary Jane Yeargain, at the residence of her father, James Yeargain, in Illinois. This union was an exceptionally happy one, albeit the parties were destined to suffer, the hardships known only to the pioneers of a new country. William Laughlin and his bride at once took up their residence in a little log cabin on a ridge running down to Mill creek, in Gilmer township, about six miles from Quincy. It was their intention to remain in Illinois only until arrangements could be made for a trip to a new home. The place they selected was Scotland county, Missouri, and after only a short residence in their first home, they loaded all their possessions onto a two-wheeled cart drawn by a yoke of oxen, and set out to seek their fortune in the west. They were brave young hearts, but with little except hope and self-reliance. Arriving at their destination after a long and toilsome journey, they built themselves a modest little home and went to work with a will that they might accumulate enough to allow them to return to Illinois. The labors and struggles of the first few years in their Missouri home were those of pioneers to a new country. They worked hard and after the first few years the fruits of their labors were apparent. They become more prosperous and a fairly good house took the place of the little one. They were held in high esteem in the community in which they lived and Mr. Laughlin for a number of years served in the capacity of justice of the peace. During their residence in Missouri their three children were born: Elizabeth, on April 29, 1841, married to Wentworth Lord January 15, 1861, now living at The Dalles, Oregon; James born February 17, 1843, died May 14, 1864; Benjamin Franklin, born January 4, 1849, married to Sarah C. Adams, March 2, 1875, now living at The Dalles.

The discovery of gold in California and the subsequent rush to the land of promise, in 1849, affected Mr. Laughlin as it did so many others who had tasted pioneer life, and arrangements were made for the long trip overland. The farm was sold and most of the personal property was sold or traded for provisions and the necessary equipment. On April 20, 1850, the family started out on their long journey across the plains, their possessions loaded into one wagon, drawn by a team of oxen. Lack of space forbids an extended account of their trip across the continent. About three weeks were consumed in crossing the state of Missouri. After crossing the river at old Fort Kearney, they were joined by three other parties and the westward trip was resumed in company. A few days later, they overtook a large train, fully organized, which had a commander and which was divided into squads for guard duty. To this, the Laughlin party did not align itself, preferring to travel in a smaller company. Fort Kearney, a little over two hundred miles from the Missouri river, was reached about May 25, and about June 1, the Platte river was crossed. Early in July they reached South Pass and twenty miles further was reached the forks of the emigrant road, one branch leading to California, the other to Oregon. Mr. Laughlin had originally intended going to California but the immigration to that country was so heavy that he decided that Oregon would offer greater advantages. So when the main party took what was known as "Sublet's cutoff," he proceeded on the road to Oregon, and the decision was never afterward regretted. A few others were bound for the same place and there was company all the way. Fort Hall was reached about the middle of August. The Grand Ronde valley was traversed for a distance and then came the Blue Mountains, which were crossed and the Umatilla river reached. At Willow creek, a government wagon, drawn by a mule team, was met, sent out to relieve the suffering immigrants. Next came the John Day river, the Deschutes, and October 4, 1850, they arrived at the military post, where now stands The Dalles.

It had been the intention to proceed by flat boat down the Columbia river from this point to the Willamette valley, there to make their future home, but it was not to be. When it came time to load their possessions on the boat, Mr. Laughlin found that the boats were already overloaded and they were obliged to remain behind. It was then decided to make a home in the vicinity of the post. A cabin was partly constructed on Crate's Point, where it was found to be on the military reservation, and had to be abandoned. The family lived in tents while Mr. Laughlin worked in the mountains making shingles for the post. Late in December, their tent was pitched on Mill creek, where the Bennett place is now. A little money having been saved from his work, Mr. Laughlin purchased a few cows and yearlings. In the spring a house was secured at the post in which to live, and board was supplied a few of the army officers. Immigration again setting in that fall, some of the stock were butchered and quite a start was made by the sale of it to the half-famished new arrivals.

In 1852 the Laughlin family and the family of Dr. Farnsworth, old time friends in Missouri, decided to go to Hood River and engage in the stock business. Each family here built a cabin. This venture was a disastrous one. The severe winter of 1852-53 killed nearly all their stock. Provisions ran short, and, isolated as they were, they had a miserable time, part of the time living on venison and potatoes only. In the spring of 1853, they returned to The Dalles. In May the government reservation was cut down and Mr. Laughlin secured a donation claim, upon which they lived in tents until a house could be erected, which was not until August. The house was replaced by a much more pretentious one in 1857.

Mr. Laughlin at one took an active part in the building up of the little town which sprang up at The Dalles and later in the organization of Wasco county. When the county was organized, he was named as one of the county commissioners. In 1856 he was elected county judge, and in 1860 and 1862 county commissioner. He was a member of the first board of trustees for The Dalles and was elected president of that body in 1855. He also served as a member of the board in 1863.

Judge Laughlin died September 7, 1864, and his wife on January 17, 1898.

We know of nothing more appropriate with which to close this sketch than a eulogy by his daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Lord, in her *Reminiscence of Eastern Oregon*," recently published.

"His was a life untarnished, his honor unquestioned, truthful, honest, upright and just. A good son, a kind husband, a loving father, a generous neighbor and warm friend, naturally of an amiable and cheerful disposition, a quick temper, but unsuspecting, and slow to recognize insult; never seeking a quarrel, but once convinced that insult was meant, seldom forgiving. He embodied within himself a code of morals and high sense of right and courtesy which would stamp him in any position he might have been called to occupy as a fine type of gentleman. Rather reserved, unassuming, and yet with a dignified and gracious manner, he was always winning and attractive. His sense of humor was very keen: this, coupled with a talent for mimicry and ready wit, made him a very entertaining and amusing companion when he was in the mood to draw upon those resources."