

Palmer's Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains

Excerpt 4: Sept 13 – Sept 15

September 13. This day we traveled about seven miles. From Grand Round the road ascends the Blue mountains, and for two miles is quite steep and precipitous; and to such an extent, as to require six yoke of oxen, or more, to be attached to a wagon; from the summit of these mountains is presented a rolling country for some four miles, alternately prairie and groves of yellow pine timber. In the prairie the grass is quite dry, but among the groves of timber it is green and flourishing. The road is very stony; at the end of four miles it takes down the mountain to Grand Round river, one mile in distance; it then crosses. Here is another bottom covered with grass and bushes, where we pitched our encampment. It is a remarkable circumstance that when individuals are engaged in conversation, their voices can be heard distinctly at a quarter of a mile distance; the discharge of a gun resembles that of a cannon, and is echoed from hill to hill, the reverberations continuing for some length of time.

September 14. This day we traveled about ten miles. The road ascended the mountain for one and a half or two miles, then wound along the ridge crossing many deep ravines, and pursuing its route over high craggy rocks; sometimes directing its course over an open plain, at others through thick groves of timber, winding among fallen trees and logs, by which the road was encumbered. The scenery is grand and beautiful, and cannot be surpassed; the country to a great distance is rough in the extreme. It may strictly be termed a timber country, although many small prairies are dotted over its surface. The valleys are beautiful and the soil presents a very rich appearance. We encamped in an opening, on the south side of a range of mountains running to the north, and found water in plenty in the bottom of the ravine, on our left, about one fourth of a mile from the road. The timber growing in this region is principally yellow pine, spruce, balsam fir, and hemlock; among the bushes I noticed laurel.

September 15. This day we traveled about nine miles, over the main ridge of the Blue Mountains. It is mostly a timbered country through which we passed; the scenery is delightful, resembling in grandeur that presented on yesterday's

travel. We had a fine view of the Cascade Mountains to the west. Mount Hood, the loftiest of these, was plain to the view. It was some one hundred and fifty miles distant, and being covered with snow, appeared as a white cloud rising above those surrounding it. To the north of Mount Hood, and north of the Columbia, is seen Mount Saint Helen. We halted for the night at Lee's encampment.⁹⁵

95 Lee's encampment was the place upon which Henry A. G. Lee had waited for the immigrants of 1844. Lee, who was a member of the train of 1843, was commissioned by Dr. Elijah White as Indian sub-agent to encounter the party of 1844 among the Cayuse and assist in the trading between Indians and immigrants, and thus protect both parties. The policy did not prove successful; see Lee's own letter on the subject in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, v, p. 300. Lee emigrated from the southwestern states, and immediately became a leader in Oregon politics. He was elected to the legislature of 1845, and was an officer in the Cayuse War of 1847-48, during which he was appointed Indian agent to succeed General Joel Palmer. The following year he resigned his office, and soon thereafter left for the California gold mines. He returned to Oregon to enter the mercantile business; but died on a voyage to New York in 1850.

[Source: Palmer's Journal of travels over the Rocky Mountains, 1845-1846. Pages 109-110, Sept 13 - Sept 15 Cleveland, Ohio: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906.

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