

THE INSANE IN WASHINGTON TERRITORY

To Mr. Clarence D. Bagley

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SEATTLE, WASH.

Insanity in the state of Washington dates back to the coming of the first white men, more than a century ago. In the first years of the last century, an American fur trader, named Henry, was operating in the region of the Rocky Mountains. In 1808 one of his houses was attacked by Indians who killed all the men connected therewith but one. This one escaped unperceived. In a destitute condition he wandered about for several weeks, suffering greatly. The massacre of his companions, added to his later troubles, affected his mind, the disorder, however, being of harmless character. While in this condition he fell in with other Indians, in the Snake River country, who took him into their care.

All over the continent the Indians regarded deranged persons with superstitious awe and would help and not harm them. Fennimore Cooper and other writers made record of this fact on the Atlantic seaboard long ago. So it was with these Indians and this unfortunate young man. They seemed to think that he was nearer to God than they; that God had specially visited him, and that they must be gentle and good to him. For three years they housed, fed and clothed him, giving him treatment as good as that they themselves enjoyed.

In 1810 John Jacob Astor, of New York, as the head of the Pacific Fur Company, sent in two parts an expedition to the Columbia River. One part came on the ship "Tonquin" and, arriving first, established itself at the mouth of the river, at the place since called Astoria, in honor of the patron, the New York merchant. The other part left St. Louis in August, 1810, and spent the following winter on the upper Missouri River. In 1811 they resumed

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their journey. They separated into two divisions, one headed by Wilson P. Hunt, the other by Donald McKenzie. The latter came upon the Indians who had the demented young white man. At times he had a mind wholly or partially clear and then he was able to tell his story. He was Archibald Pelton, from Connecticut. McKenzie took charge of him. The party had terrible experiences in completing their journey, but they finally arrived at Astoria on the 18th of January, 1812. These men of the Pacific Fur Company, and other men of the Northwest Fur Company who also came in 1811, were the first white people to make permanent settlement in Oregon and Washington.

The Indians on the Lower Columbia took notice of all the white men near and among them, and they were particularly impressed with Pelton. They heard him called by name, and they thought that the word indicated his mental condition. Having no word of their own of satisfactory character, they adopted the name of the unfortunate white man. He was "pelton"—insane or foolish. Another person, an Indian similarly affected, was "Kahkwa pelton," at first like Pelton, but later like one of disordered mind; "pelton Kloutchman" was a foolish woman. Other Coast Indians also adopted it. It was incorporated in the Chinook jargon, and it appears in every Chinook dictionary as the word signifying the various forms of mental affliction.

From that time on there were other cases of insanity in this state and in Oregon, a constantly increasing number that finally made public action necessary. About the end of 1854 or beginning of 1855 occurred the first of these cases in or near Seattle. Edward Moore, a sailor, was found on the beach a few miles north of town. He had been there for some days, living on raw mussels, and getting some assistance from Indians. It being winter and cold, he had been partially frozen; his wet feet suffered most.

He was brought to town. When the cloth wrappings were taken off his feet it was found that the toes were dead. In lieu of surgical implements, a sharp ax was used to cut them off. The hotel keepers of the day—David Maurer and S. B. Simons—kept him for several weeks, while Dr. Williamson did what he could for him in the hope of restoring him to a condition of mental health. All efforts failed to accomplish more than continue his life. An arrangement was finally made with Dr. M. P. Burns, of Steilacoom, to take him, the doctor and the people of King County to unite in a later effort to get the money to pay for his care from the Legislature of Washington Territory.

When the Legislature convened, in December of 1855, it received a communication from the commissioners of King County, in which the Territory was asked to pay the bills incurred in keeping and caring for this "non-resident lunatic pauper." It was referred to the Committee on Claims of the House of Representatives, which after a few days reported as follows:

Mr. Speaker: The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred a communication from C. C. Lewis, Thomas Mercer and Alfred Savage, County Commissioners of King County, Washington Territory, to Messrs. Phillips, Strickler and others, members of the Council and House of Representatives from said county, calling their attention to the enactment of a special law for the relief of said county, for expenses and maintenance of a lunatic pauper named Edward Moore, by whom it was laid before the House, and referred to your committee, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report:

1st. That so far as we have been able to ascertain the said pauper was picked up by some person about twelve months ago on the beach below Seattle, in a state of lunacy and helplessness, being so badly frost bitten that the amputation of nearly all his toes was found to be necessary.

2nd. That at that time it was not known that

he was a citizen of King County, nor, so far as we are able to learn, was he ever a resident of Washington Territory.

3rd. That we are told by Dr. Burns, of Pierce County, that from all he can learn from said pauper he came from Worcester county, in the state of Massachusetts, and that he has a wife and children in the States.

4th. That he was kept under medical treatment at Seattle, in King county, for four months, partly sustained by voluntary contributions, when he was conveyed by some persons (whose names are unknown to us) to Steilacoom, in Pierce county, where he was placed under the medical treatment of Dr. M. P. Burns, by whom your committee is informed that it has been necessary to keep said pauper confined hand and foot, in order to keep him from certain habits into which he has fallen and supposed to be the original cause of his present deplorable condition.

5th. That your committee is of the opinion that, although this case is one that should touch all the finer feelings of our nature, yet, upon mature consideration, it is believed to be impolitic for this Legislature at this early date of our territorial existence, as well as under the present aspect of affairs, to pass a law for the relief of those interested, because it would be setting a precedent that would, if carried out, bring a heavy burden of taxation on the people of the Territory.

6th. That your committee is of the opinion that the sixth section of the law, as found on page 396, of the Statutes of this Territory, relating to the support of the poor, is sufficient to govern in all such cases without further enactment on the subject.

7th. That your committee will here give the bill of charges as laid before them for the information of the House, in case they should differ in opinion with your committee in the disposition of the same as here recommended, to-wit:

For medical attendance by Dr.

Williamson\$288.00

For nursing, etc., by David

Maurer 283.00

For boarding with Simons..... 50.00

\$ 621.00

To Dr. Burns for medical attendance	\$475.00
To Dr. Burns for board and lodging	285.00
To Dr. Burns for attendance of a man	255.00
To Dr. Burns for cash paid for clothing	23.00
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	\$1,038.00

Making in the aggregate.....\$1,659.00

8th. That your committee is of the opinion that the County Commissioners of King and Pierce counties should at their earliest convenience take some action in the premises.

WM. M. MORROW, Chairman.

As far as the Legislature and the Territory were concerned, the committee report ended the matter. The Legislature did this, however. It adopted the following preamble and resolution before ending the session:

WHEREAS, the commercial, lumbering and shipping interests of Washington Territory demand and necessarily require the service of a large number of seamen, among whom there are many cases of sickness and destitution, which are and have been a charge to the counties bordering on the navigable waters of the Territory, and

WHEREAS, this country, at present, is wholly unable to provide for such cases, therefore,

RESOLVED by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Washington, that our delegate in Congress be, and he is hereby instructed to exert his influence with Congress to procure an appropriation for the erection and maintenance of a marine hospital, a portion of which is to be set apart as an asylum for the insane, at some suitable point on Puget Sound.

Passed January 5, 1856.

A. A. DENNY,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

SETH CATLIN,
President of the Council.

This resolution, apparently, had effect, for provision was soon made for a marine hospital, in which

seamen, sick from any cause, were cared for at Port Townsend. About fifteen years after the foregoing recited event, Congress also appropriated twenty thousand dollars to assist the Territory in caring for its insane, and still later gave both land and buildings at Fort Steilacoom.

As soon as Dr. Burns learned of the action of the Legislature he put the insane sailor on a boat and sent him back to Seattle. The people here, then, had to care for him again. They arranged with the captain of a sailship to take him to San Francisco and from there to provide for his return to Boston. Before starting, Moore was cleaned up, and dressed in a suit of new garments from stockings up. What became of him is unknown, whether he was left in California by the shipmaster, or sent on to Massachusetts as agreed.

How serious this affair was, from a money standpoint, may be inferred from the fact that the entire income of the Territory during the year was \$1,199.88, or \$459 less than the expenses connected with this one case. It cost the people of King county more than \$800, or an average of \$4 apiece for every man, woman and child in the community. A similar per capita charge today among the 350,000 inhabitants of King county would be \$1,400,000, and would be little or no more onerous than was the burden thrust upon the few people here in 1855-56 in the case of Edward Moore, the first so-called "lunatic pauper."

For seven years thereafter there was no public care of the insane in the Territory of Washington. If they had no friends or relatives they were allowed to come and go as they wished, and get along as best they could. I was acquainted with several demented individuals during that period. One of them was a stranger to everybody. He lived in the vicinity of Steilacoom—how, no one knew, or tried to know. Every few months he would come into town with a

pack on his back containing, it was supposed, all his personal possessions. He would stop at short intervals, and, looking up at the sun, would in loud tones make a speech in a language no one understood. After a few years he disappeared.

If only slightly deranged these people stayed and got along reasonably well. Sometimes they were shunned and sometimes not. In some cases they were taken to California, which had an asylum at Stockton. The same conditions prevailed in Oregon as here until two Portland physicians—Hawthorne and Loryea—established a private sanitarium, after which some of our people received care there.

The Legislature of 1862 took definite action looking to a proper and more humane course in connection with those belonging to this unfortunate class of people. In accordance with this action Governor Pickering and Auditor Walker solicited propositions from those willing to undertake the task of keeping and caring for the insane of the Territory. Hawthorne and Loryea offered to do so for \$12 a week for each patient, at their establishment in Portland; Dr. Henry A. Smith offered to do so in Seattle for \$9 a week, and the Sisters of Charity, at Vancouver, for \$8 a week. Contract was made with the Sisters for the period of three years. The Dr. Smith referred to lives yet in Seattle, to which he came in 1852, and of which he is one of the two adults of that period yet surviving. Smith's Cove, which his land fronted, was named after him.

Under the new arrangement the amount paid the Sisters the first year was \$2,600. There was soon financial disagreement. Payments were made in paper money, which was not worth its face, and for many years was from 20 to 50 per cent. below par. The Sisters claimed gold coin. Payments were deferred, and they demanded interest. Final settlement was delayed several years.

In 1866 a new contract was made with James

Huntington and W. W. Hays, of Monticello, in Cow-litz county. They were to get a dollar a day for each idiotic or insane patient, in paper money, and were to furnish land, house, board, clothing, medical treatment—everything. Eleven patients were received from the former keepers and during the year one other, a new patient. Five of the twelve were men and seven women. The contracting firm later became Huntington & Son. Their contract expired in 1871.

By the abandonment of Fort Steilacoom by the military in 1868, a mile square of land and houses sufficient for three hundred soldiers, were unused. Delegate Flanders at once introduced a bill in Congress to give the property to Washington Territory for an asylum for the insane. It did not then pass. In 1869, as Governor, he urged the Legislature to renew and further the idea, compliance being made by that body. In the meantime the War Department ordered the buildings sold and they were sold January 15, 1870, a commission appointed by the Legislature buying them for \$850—houses that cost \$200,000 in 1858. Subsequently Congress gave the land to the Territory.

In August of 1871 the patients were transferred from Monticello to the new place, and their care left with another contractor, Hill Harmon, who had their feeding, clothing and like necessities to supply for five years. The Territory furnished the place and buildings and, in addition, the physician, Dr. Stacy Hemenway. The patients in the beginning at Fort Steilacoom numbered twenty-one. The number has since gone up in the state into the thousands, increasing out of all proportion to the whole population. Upon the retirement of contractor Harmon, the Territory assumed, through its regular salaried agents, all the care and expense connected with these unfortunates among our people.



