



**THE REV. DAVID E. BLAINE: FROM SEATTLE PIONEER  
PREACHER TO OREGON CIRCUIT RIDER<sup>1</sup>**

**Laura Arksey**

Among the treasures in the archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church in Salem, Oregon, is a small diary kept in 1862 in the Willamette Valley of western Oregon. The diarist was obviously a circuit rider, but his identity was unknown. The small, light-weight book, measuring 8 inches high by 3 ½ wide and 3/8 inches thick, is typical of the pocket diaries produced during the period, its compact size making it ideal for the saddle bags of a circuit rider. The wrap-around soft leather binding is held shut by a flap that inserts into a slot on the front cover. There are three dates per page, allowing for only very short entries.<sup>2</sup> In a fruitful collaboration between the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference Archives and Willamette University, the diary has now been scanned onto the University Archives website and is accessible online.<sup>3</sup>

The diary seemed well worth transcribing, with the hope that in the pro-

---

<sup>1</sup>Image of David E. Blaine from *An Album of Methodist History* by Elmer Clark (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952),

<sup>2</sup>Two other items attributable to David E. Blaine (then spelled Blain) are held in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference Archives. One is an accounting record for his circuits in the Upper Willamette District. The other is a record book for Santiam Academy at Lebanon, Oregon, where he was principal briefly, then trustee. It contains names of students, subjects studied, textbooks used and fees paid, as well as a list of the adult members of the Methodist class at Lebanon.

<sup>3</sup>Willamette University, first called the Oregon Institute, was founded in 1842 by Jason Lee and the other early Methodist Episcopal missionaries to Oregon. It is the oldest university west of the Mississippi.

cess, the diarist's identity would emerge. It did. The first clue was a reference to taking "Mrs. B" in the buggy. As all the other Methodists are referred to in the diary as "Brother" or "Sister," it seemed likely that Mrs. B would be the wife of the diarist. Then a definitive clue leaped out on April 27, 1862, when the diarist "Got up about 5 o'clock AM & in about an hour Blain *minimus natura* was introduced to the light of this world."<sup>4</sup> This terse note recording the birth of a baby provides the first appearance in the diary of the name "Blain." The 1862 *Minutes of the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* list a "D. E. Blain," who had been ordained deacon in the East Genesee Conference of New York State in 1853, as currently residing in Lebanon, Oregon, and serving as a preacher and presiding elder in the Upper Willamette District.<sup>5</sup>

As serendipity would have it, the volunteer transcribing the diary had recently moved to Salem, Oregon, from Washington State, where she had long been interested in regional history. Immediately she began to wonder if D. E. Blain could be the same person as the Rev. David E. Blaine, a renowned pioneer of early Seattle who arrived in 1853, two years after the founders. This proved to be the case. Yet even without this positive identification, the diary would be important for the glimpse it provides of a Methodist circuit rider's life and ministry in Oregon. In fact, some of its brief entries suggest tantalizing possibilities for further research.

That the circuit-riding D. E. Blain of the Oregon diary was the pioneer preacher David E. Blaine of Seattle is confirmed by numerous sources. The 1860 Census of Linn County, Oregon, shows a David E. Blain, Methodist clergyman, with a wife "Catherine" [*sic*] and son John, who was born in Washington Territory. These names all match documentation of the family of David E. Blaine of Seattle. The couple eventually had two sons, John and Edward, whose names match the "Johnny" and "Eddie" in the diary. Two days after Eddie's birth in Lebanon, Oregon, the diarist mentions writing a letter to "Mother Paine." Catharine Blaine's maiden name was Paine. Furthermore, the time and place of D. E. Blain's ordination, as listed in the *Oregon Conference Minutes*, match documentation relating to David E. Blaine of Seattle.

For obscure reasons the spelling of the name later changed from Blain to Blaine. This essay will use the spelling "Blaine" except when quoting from the diary. Furthermore, there is confusion over Catharine's name, which is spelled "Catherine" in some sources. The spelling on the Blaine headstone in Seattle's Mount Pleasant Cemetery is "Catharine." She signed her letters as Kate, the name that David used for her in the diary.

David Edwards Blaine was born March 5, 1824, in Varick, Seneca County, New York. He attended local schools, then Seneca Falls and Waterloo acad-

---

<sup>4</sup> David E. Blaine, Diary, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>5</sup> For Blaine's appointments during the Oregon period, see *Minutes of the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* for the years 1856 through 1862.

emies. He was converted at the age of 18, stating in a brief autobiography:

During a brief season of revival in the church on the corner opposite my father's farm, I was the first one of about 20 of my associates to go to the altar to seek religion, the others following in rapid succession. Soon after I united with the M. E. Church of which I still continue a member, loving her doctrines and valuing highly her blessings.<sup>6</sup>

He earned an undergraduate degree at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, and a seminary degree at Auburn Theological Seminary, originally founded by Presbyterians in Auburn, New York.<sup>7</sup>

Catharine Paine Blaine was born on December 14, 1829, in Amenia, New York, to a family of ardent abolitionists. As a young woman, she also adopted the cause of women's rights, signing the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, the product of the historic 1848 Women's Rights and Suffrage Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. She brought these commitments with her to the Northwest.<sup>8</sup>

David and Catharine Blaine were married on August 11, 1853, in Seneca Falls, New York. David was ordained on August 24. On October 5, they set forth on the arduous journey to Seattle by ship and overland via the Isthmus of Panama, arriving on November 26, 1852.<sup>9</sup> In 1855, Blaine organized the town's first church of any denomination, and his wife Catharine became Seattle's first teacher. In their honor, a street, a school, and a church bear the name "Blaine."<sup>10</sup> Their voluminous and articulate letters (later published)<sup>11</sup> to family in New York recount the journey and their years in Seattle and Oregon. These letters would become a major source for the study of pioneer Seattle. The letters written from Oregon greatly expand the brief entries of the diary, which is mainly a record of religious work and travels, weather, farming chores, expenditures, clergy colleagues, local people, and a few family matters.

---

<sup>6</sup> David Blaine and Catharine Blaine, *Letters and Papers of Rev. David E. Blaine and His Wife Catharine: Seattle 1853-1856, Oregon 1856-1862* (Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Methodist Church, 1963), 207. This collection is based on a 1932 copy of the letters made by Edward Linn Blaine, second son of David and Catharine Blaine, who then donated the originals to the University of Washington Library Special Collections. Ms Collection No. 4611. Blaine's autobiography is appended to the letters.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, 1963, 207-208. See also the Richard Seiber, "David E. Blain: The Methodist Church in Washington, 1853-1861," *Methodist History* (April, 1963): 1-17. This article, based on the letters, also contains biographical information.

<sup>8</sup> Shanna Stevenson, *Catharine Paine Blaine*. This well-researched online PDF essay contains information on both of the Blaines. <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/files/library/blaine-narrative.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters*, 20-37, recount this journey.

<sup>10</sup> Junius Rochester, "Blaine, David and Catharine Paine Blaine," *Historylink: The Free Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History*. [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=1447](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=1447).

<sup>11</sup> Quotations in this essay are from the 1963 version of the letters cited above. See also a later published version, David Blaine and Catherine [*sic*] Blaine, *Memoirs of Puget Sound*, edited by Richard A. Seiber (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1978). This title is misleading, as the book also contains letters from New York State and Oregon.



Photograph of “First Methodist Church, the pioneer church in Seattle. Image from *An Album of Methodist History* by Elmer Clark (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952),

In keeping with the Methodist Episcopal policy of moving clergy roughly every two years, in March of 1856, David Blaine was transferred from Seattle to Portland. The Oregon in which he arrived was far different from the wilderness that greeted the Rev. Jason Lee and his small team of Methodist Episcopal missionaries in 1834. This effort was largely in response to the account published on March 1, 1833, in the popular and influential Methodist magazine, *Christian Advocate and Journal*, telling of four Indians (at least one Flathead, the others probably Nez Perce) who had walked to St. Louis in 1831 to express their desire for the “white man’s book” to General William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame who, by then, was Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Missouri River Country.<sup>12</sup>

The inspiring story gained traction as it was reprinted in other religious journals in the United States and Europe, and the Methodist Episcopal Mission Board had no trouble raising money to support an Indian mission.<sup>13</sup> After initial efforts to minister to the Indians, Lee and his successors (Lee died in 1845) soon realized the need to refocus the mission on the settlers coming into the region. There were two major reasons: the Indian population had been greatly reduced by illnesses brought by the earlier fur traders and other whites, and those who survived showed little enthusiasm for the missionaries’ religion, civilization and agriculture.<sup>14</sup> The opening of the

<sup>12</sup> *Christian Advocate and Journal* 7.27 (March 1, 1833): 105.

<sup>13</sup> Although the original intent was to work among the Flatheads, who proved to be located in Western Montana near an area of the Great Plains often rife with intertribal warfare, the missionaries settled instead in the Willamette Valley of present Oregon.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Yarnes, *A History of Oregon Methodism* (Printed by the Parthenon Press for the Oregon Methodist Conference Historical Society, 1957). For a concise, very informative account of the mission endeavor, see Nancie Peacocke Fadeley, “The Methodist Mission in Oregon,” *Oregon Humanities* (Summer, 1994): 9-15.

Oregon Trail in the 1840s and the availability of homesteads through the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 brought floods of pioneers, many of them Methodist, to the fertile Willamette Valley. By David Blaine's time, it was a prosperous agricultural area.

In a letter of March 19, 1856, Blaine expressed enthusiasm for what he found in Portland:

Here is a large society, which is continually increasing by accessions from the country. Here we have a house as comfortable as our own was . . . . We are in a place of safety and where we are not subject to anxiety. We have enough to employ both head and heart and many advantages of society and privileges of which we were deprived in Seattle . . . .<sup>15</sup>

They obviously found Portland to be a safer, larger and more "civilized" town than the newer Seattle, whose settlers Catharine sometimes disparaged in her letters.

There were reasons for the Blaines to feel more secure in Portland. Shortly after his arrival in Seattle, David had pronounced: "The Indians are at best but a poor degraded race, far inferior to even the lowest of those among us . . . . However, they are fast passing away and will soon disappear."<sup>16</sup> In December, 1854, Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens had begun negotiating coercive treaties for the removal of Indians to reservations. The delay in immediate results in the Seattle area had caused David to complain on February 5, 1855: ". . . [W]e are blest with the presence, dwelling, noise, filth, vileness and all manner of obscenity of more Indians than ever before."<sup>17</sup>

On January 24, 1856, the *Christian Advocate and Journal* published an article in which Blaine described casualties of Indian attacks that occurred south of Seattle in late 1855:

The Indians have committed in this vicinity some of the most barbarous murders ever recorded in the annals of Indian warfare. Peaceable and unoffending citizens have been shot down . . . their bodies stripped, and left most shockingly mangled . . . . Meanwhile, [the] government has been making extensive preparations for punishing the savage miscreants . . . .<sup>18</sup>

Catharine and her new baby were among the women and children who took shelter aboard the American sloop of war USS *Decatur* during the hostilities of January, 1856. There is no evidence that Blaine saw any connection be-

---

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, 122.

<sup>16</sup> The letter containing this quotation was written on December 20, 1853. It does not appear in either of the published versions of the letters. It is quoted here from Frederick A. Norwood, "Two Contrasting Views of the Indians: Methodist Involvement in the Indian Troubles in Oregon and Washington," *Church History* 49.2 (June, 1980): 180. Norwood was working from a typescript version at the Huntington Library prepared or instigated by Thomas W. Prosch, a Seattle newspaper man and historian who died in 1915. In this article, Norwood contrasts the views of David Blaine with those of Methodist layman John Beeson, an immigrant from England who championed the cause of the Indians.

<sup>17</sup> *Letters*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> D. E. Blain, "Washington Territory," *Christian Advocate and Journal* 31.4 (January 24, 1856): 13.

tween the removal treaties—and white incursion generally—and the ensuing violence.

There was another reason Blaine would find Oregon more congenial than Seattle. In spite of the help he received from the Denny family and a few others in founding a church there, he had discovered most of the Seattle settlers “far from yearning for the gospel, to be quite indifferent to it.”<sup>19</sup> As the diary and letters show, in Portland and the Willamette Valley, he would enjoy being part of a cadre of established and respected clergy ministering to settlers who were more responsive to Methodism.

After Portland, Blaine served in several other western Oregon locations. His last assignment before being appointed a circuit-riding presiding elder was a brief tenure as principal of Santiam Academy, a school in Lebanon, Linn County, founded in 1853. Patterned after academies in the East, it was one of several such private schools the Methodist pioneers of western Oregon established to educate their children.<sup>20</sup> Of his posting as principal, Catharine wrote to her parents on August 15, 1859:

I can scarcely express to you my regrets at the appointment. It is a good school, pleasantly located, but I know Mr. B's unfitness for such a situation. I can hardly consent to go. I know he cannot sustain himself, and to have the school run down will hurt me terribly. I find there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among the preachers' wives about the appointments.<sup>21</sup>

Blaine shared his wife's misgivings about his suitability for the position and tried unsuccessfully to decline. However, the attractive village of Lebanon appealed to him, plus, he wrote home: “It has no grog shops and the people are nearly all Methodists.”<sup>22</sup>

Santiam Academy students from outside the town of Lebanon boarded with local families, including the Blaines, who continued to board students after David was no longer principal. Although this arrangement was financially advantageous, it presented challenges for Catharine. On February 16, 1862, she wrote: “The income we receive from our boarders has enabled us to meet our expenses this winter but I think we shall not keep them much longer if we can help it. It makes me more work and care than I want, and the influence of the younger girls over Johnny is bad, they are so quarrelsome.”<sup>23</sup>

In mid-1861, Blaine was relieved of his position as principal of Santiam Academy but continued as trustee and performed many chores for the school, including hauling wood. At that point, he became the presiding elder for the “Upper Wallamet” District (“Willamette” was then spelled “Wallamet.” Since the Willamette River flows north into the Columbia, “Upper” meant the central and southern portions of the valley.) Blaine's district consisted of several circuits comprising eleven scattered charges with a membership

<sup>19</sup> Norwood, 179.

<sup>20</sup> Santiam Academy file, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>21</sup> *Letters*, 174.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters*, 175.

<sup>23</sup> *Letters*, 197.

of 873.<sup>24</sup> Few communities in the Willamette Valley were large enough to support a located minister, hence the need for a circuit-riding presiding elder such as Blaine. From his home base at Lebanon, he rode these circuits: preaching, holding love feasts,<sup>25</sup> administering communion, and conducting the Quarterly Conferences, for which his “allowance” was \$650. Although Blaine’s diary begins January 1, 1862, his itineracy had started roughly six months earlier, leading to speculation that he may have kept a diary for 1861 or possibly other years. Diary-keeping was, after all, part of the “method” of Methodism.

On November 7, 1861, Catharine wrote: “Next Sunday finishes his first quarter [as presiding elder] on the district. He will have traveled over 1,000 miles and preached 32 sermons . . . . He is not at home any time more than three days in the week, some weeks only two, and after the roads get bad, will stay away over two or three Sabbaths . . . .”<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to know the exact distances Blaine rode from village to village on his circuits. By today’s roads, the distance from his home at Lebanon to Salem is thirty-six miles and to Corvallis is nineteen miles. Beyond his district, from Lebanon to Oregon City or Portland, to which he often journeyed on conference business, the present distances are seventy-eight and eighty-two miles respectively. The diary shows him traveling mostly by horseback but occasionally by buggy. He kept meticulous records of purchases and travel expenses, including tolls, usually ranging from ten to twenty-five cents, for ferries on which he crossed the Willamette and its tributaries.

Of course local Methodists always provided lodging and meals for the circuit rider and feed for his horse. The entry for March 27 is typical, although Blaine’s horse Fanny had to get along without her oats: “Started for Bro Millers [Blaine never used apostrophes] . . . . Took dinner at Bro Kirks . . . . Came on to Bro Wieggers—stayed all night. He had no feed but wheat & bran—hard wind & muddy. Left Wesleys sermons at Bro Wieggers for which he is to pay \$2.00.”<sup>27</sup>

David Blaine’s actual period of circuit riding was short and relatively easy compared to the heroics of earlier circuit riders. By the time of his diary, conditions of travel in western Oregon, with the proliferation of roads and ferries, had improved considerably. The Rev. William M. Roberts, who had arrived in 1847 to become Superintendent of the Oregon-California Conference, covered a vast wilderness terrain on foot or horseback and by

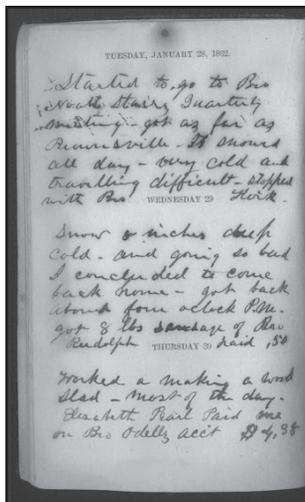
---

<sup>24</sup> David Blaine’s accounting record for the circuits within the Upper Willamette District. Accessed at the archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>25</sup> The love feast, introduced into English Methodism by John Wesley, was a gathering for personal and fervent sharing of religious experiences, sometimes involving the sacrament of communion. Eventually it became less frequent but was still practiced during David Blaine’s time in Washington and Oregon. For American context, see Richard O. Johnson, “The Development of the Love Feast in Early American Methodism,” *Methodist History* (January, 1981): 67-83.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters*, 195.

<sup>27</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.



David E. Blaine, Pocket Diary (January 28-30, 1862). Image courtesy of Willamette University Archives and Special Collections, Salem, Oregon.

canoe. His feats of circuit riding over many years eventually rivaled those of John Wesley in England and of Francis Asbury on the Eastern American frontier.<sup>28</sup> Another intrepid circuit rider was the Rev. Thomas Fletcher Royal, who rode circuits first in Illinois, then in Oregon, to which he was transferred in 1853. A photograph shows him at age ninety, “52 years an itinerant, packing his saddle bags for his last trip.”<sup>29</sup> David E. Blaine made no claims to being in that league.

Yet he experienced difficulties enough. It was Blaine’s bad luck that the period of his itineracy had the worst weather in decades. The autumn saw disastrous flooding of the Columbia and Willamette, followed by a winter during which even these mighty rivers froze. Both the floods and the severe winter resulted in much loss of livestock and even human life. Thomas H. Pearne, editor of the *Pacific Christian Advocate*, wrote to the *Christian Advocate and Journal* on January 14, 1862, (published March 20), describing the flood, which “has swept over this entire coast, causing great destruction of property and loss of life. The water was higher than was ever known before since Oregon was settled by the whites. . . . A million of dollars will not cover the damage wrought by this flood . . . . Fully one-fourth of the stock

<sup>28</sup> William Roberts, *Circuit Riding Superintendent of the Oregon-California Mission Conference, 1847-1853* (Compiled by the Commissions on Archives and History of the California-Nevada, Oregon-Idaho, and the Pacific Northwest Conferences of the United Methodist Church, 2004). See also Elizabeth M. Smith, “William Roberts, Circuit Rider of the Far West,” *Methodist History* 20.2 (January, 1982): 60-74.

<sup>29</sup> William Wallace Youngson, *Swinging Portals: An Historical Account of One Hundred Years of Religious Activity in Oregon and its Influence on the West* (Portland: by the author, 1948), 178.

was swept away by the flood . . .”<sup>30</sup> Such diary entries as January 16, 1862, show the winter conditions with which Blaine contended: “Met Marshall returning because the river was too frozen to cross . . .” and January 29, “Snow 8 inches deep—cold—and going so bad I concluded to come back home . . .” On March 7, “Left home for Corvallis. Rode through the most pitiless storm of the season.”<sup>31</sup>

References in the diary to family matters are understandably short. Fortunately, the letters fill in many gaps. An example is the letter David Blaine wrote to “Mother Paine” two days after the birth he had recorded in the diary on Sunday, April 27:

About 4 ½ o’clock in the morning wife wakened me from sweet slumber and said she thought I had better get up and milk and do my other chores, so that I might be ready to wait upon her. I made a fire and laid down till five; then milked, etc. and about 5 ½ stepped across the street and invited Dr. Ballard, our nearest neighbor, and wife if they would be so kind as to come over and stay with Mrs. Blain [the spelling used in both the diary and the letter] until I could run uptown and invite one or two of our neighbor ladies to come down . . . This done, I hastened home and had been back but a few minutes when I was presented with a handsome fat, lively, wide awake, bouncing boy, weighing 9 ½ pounds. Of course I was very thankful and some tickled. Johnny got up and could not believe the news about the baby, but was very much pleased with the idea. He went out of doors and came in very soon, exclaiming: “Pa, Fanny has got a little colt; come out, Pa, and see how nice it is.”<sup>32</sup>

To add to the excitement of the birth of Blaine’s son that previous busy Sunday, the diary had recorded the birth of a colt to his horse: “Fanny brought forth her first born about the same time. Both offspring and mothers remarkably smart and fine. No preaching at Lebanon.”<sup>33</sup> Six-year-old Johnny seems to have been unaware that either baby was coming. His new little brother was later named Edward Linn.

One of the strengths of the diary is its wealth of personal names: clergy colleagues, Methodist laymen, homesteaders, merchants, etc. of the Willamette Valley. It provides a roster of important ministers in the Oregon Conference. Appearing often in the diary are such stalwarts as William Roberts, Thomas H. Pearne, Alvan Waller, Calvin S. Kingsley, Harvey K. Hines, William Odell, Isaac D. Driver, and Josiah Parrish.<sup>34</sup> Even the renowned Bishop Matthew Simpson, who came out from the East to preside at the 1862 Oregon Conference, is mentioned.

---

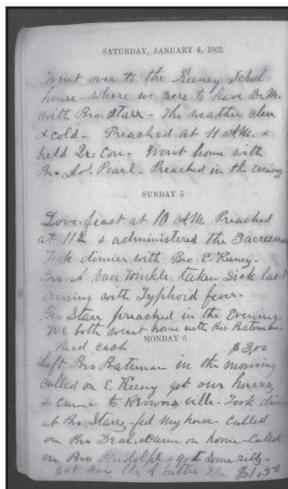
<sup>30</sup> Thomas H. Pearne, “Letter from Oregon,” *Christian Advocate and Journal* 38.12 (March 20, 1862): 90.

<sup>31</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>32</sup> *Letters*, 200.

<sup>33</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>34</sup> Identification of many people mentioned in the diary only by last name was made possible through such sources as Thomas Yarnes, *A History of Oregon Methodism* (Printed by the Parthenon Press for the Oregon Methodist Conference Historical Society, 1957). In addition, files on clergy at the Oregon Annual Conference Archives in Salem, as well as the resources of local libraries and historical societies were of great help in identifying names.



David E. Blaine, Pocket Diary (January 4-6, 1862). Image courtesy of Willamette University Archives and Special Collections, Salem, Oregon.

In addition to these distinguished ministers, the diary refers often to the licensed local lay preachers who lacked the educational and other qualifications to become fully ordained elders such as David Blaine. Many of the small communities in the Willamette Valley relied on them to conduct worship and classes, supplemented by periodic visits of the presiding elder. The local preacher at Lebanon, where the Blaines were based, was Morgan Rudolph. Of him, the ever forthright Catharine wrote: “Brother Rudolph, local preacher, preached, or tried to. It always tires me so to hear him, it is such hard work for him to get off what he wants to say.”<sup>35</sup>

Another typical local preacher mentioned often in the diary was Joseph Pearl, a prosperous farmer in the Brownsville area who had come from Missouri by covered wagon in 1852. He was licensed as a local preacher in 1860. Like many Willamette Valley Methodists, he was also a strong advocate of education and a zealous temperance worker. By the time David Blaine was staying with him off and on in 1862, he had seven children. One wonders where there was room to host the presiding elder (eventually there would be eleven). By 1878, Pearl was farming 730 acres at nearby Halsey and was partner in the Halsey Store and Warehouse Company. The hospitable and prosperous family was by then residing in “one of the best houses” in Halsey.<sup>36</sup>

The diary entry for Sunday, January 5, is typical in its variety of references: “Love feast at 10 AM. Preached at 11 & administered the Sacrament. Took dinner with Bro. E. Keeny. Bro Van Winkle taken sick last evening with typhoid fever. Bro Starr preached in the evening. We both went home

<sup>35</sup> *Letters*, 191.

<sup>36</sup> Edgar Williams & Co., *Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Marion and Linn Counties, Oregon* (San Francisco, 1878), 54.

with Bro Bateman. Recd cash \$3.00.”<sup>37</sup> In Oregon, the love feast was usually held on the Sunday following the Saturday quarterly conference. Methodist layman Elias Keeney was an especially enterprising pioneer: Indian fighter, California Gold Rush participant, wagon master, and successful stockman. Like many other young men who arrived in the Willamette Valley during the 1840s, he soon left for the California gold fields. He then returned home to Missouri and purchased cattle with his gold earnings. From there, in 1851, he captained a wagon train to Brownsville, bringing a herd of 300, the foundation of his future prosperity.<sup>38</sup> The diary often mentioned typhoid. Other diseases Blaine encountered in Oregon were dysentery, bilious fever, cholera, ague, whooping cough, and “consumption.” On April 23, Johnny was vaccinated.

The diary and letters continue to reveal the Blaines’ attitudes toward the Northwest’s original inhabitants. On April 9, David wrote: “. . . Paid squaw for washing 1.00.”<sup>39</sup> While in Seattle, Catharine already had experimented unsuccessfully with using Indian women for domestic chores, reporting to her mother: “You talk about the stupidity and awkwardness of the Irish. You ought to have to do with our Indians and then you would know what these words mean.”<sup>40</sup> Yet the diary and letters show that Catharine continued to employ Indian women in Oregon, apparently with greater satisfaction than in Seattle. Given Blaine’s salary of \$650 per year, the payment of \$1.00 for a day of laundry seems fair, perhaps even generous.

Other attitudes are revealed in the diary and letters, especially regarding the pre-Civil War slavery question in Oregon. Both Blaines were ardent abolitionists and supporters of the Union. During the run-up to the Civil War, they feared the influx of Southerners would result in Oregon’s becoming a slave state. Factors leading up to the Civil War had been present in Oregon for some time.<sup>41</sup> Like several other large Protestant denominations, the Methodists had split over the issue of slavery. In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, organized as a separate body. Many of these Southern Methodists made their way to the Northwest, as did non-Methodist Southerners. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, officially entered Oregon in 1858 at the instigation of the Rev. James Stuart of the California Conference, brother of the famous Confederate general Jeb Stuart.<sup>42</sup>

The Blaines’s abolitionist views and fears are evident in the letters. David wrote from Portland on July 28, 1856:

---

<sup>37</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>38</sup> Mona Heiler Waibel, “The Pioneer Keeney Family.” <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/KeeneyFamily.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>40</sup> *Letters*, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Stacey L. Smith, “Oregon’s Civil War: The Troubled Legacy of Emancipation in the Pacific Northwest,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 115.2 (Summer, 2014): 154-173.

<sup>42</sup> H. S. Shangle, *Historical Sketch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Oregon* (Milton, Oregon, 1941).

I am very well assured that were the question of slavery or no slavery submitted to the people of Oregon today slavery would be admitted here. We have a large population from the southern states, the people here have large claims and cannot hire help to cultivate them, and a great many of them have had Indian slaves until now, and are too abominably lazy to work hard themselves. So you see they are just ripe for the introduction of slave labor.<sup>43</sup>

This mention of Indian slavery is interesting. The coastal Indians from farther north traditionally conducted raids by which they acquired slaves for their own use and to sell.<sup>44</sup> Blaine's statement that many of the farmers from the South "have had Indian slaves until now" would indicate that the practice had ceased, leaving a labor vacuum to be filled, he feared, by black slavery. Oregon's state constitutional convention in 1857 left the slavery question to a popular vote, with the result that approximately one third of the voters (white males) supported the right of slaveholders to bring their slaves into Oregon. Although the anti-slavery forces prevailed, the size of the pro-slavery vote shows the fears of the Blaines to have been quite justified.

Once the Civil War began, the only reference in the diary to Oregon's military involvement occurred on Sunday, July 20, when Blaine "Preached to Captain Drews company of volunteers at 5 PM."<sup>45</sup> This was the First Oregon Cavalry formed during the winter of 1861-1862 under command of Charles Stewart Drew.<sup>46</sup> The civilian pro-Union advocates held large rallies. On June 6, 1861, Catharine wrote:

I did not wash last week in consequence of our going to Albany to attend a Union Mass Meeting. These meetings are being held all through the country. We had one here two weeks ago. Sister Odell [Elizabeth Thurston Odell, teacher at Santiam Academy and wife of the principal, William Odell], in behalf of the ladies of Lebanon, presented the American flag, which was hoisted amid cheers. Speeches were made. The affair at Albany was grand, but would have been much more interesting if the weather had been more favorable. It rained & blew all day: notwithstanding that, the feeling was intense; about 3,000 people were in attendance, thus manifesting that their love for the Union was not merely fair weather sentiment.<sup>47</sup>

The diary shows farming as essential to supplying the needs of the Blaine family. David plowed, planted, weeded, cut wood, hauled manure, milked the cow, kept bees, and raised livestock to sell and butchered some for family use and sale. The list of produce he grew in the fertile Willamette Valley soil includes corn, parsnips, beets, squash, melons, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, apples, etc. On Friday, April 18, Blaine "Got oxen of Mr. Kees & hauled manure." On April 19, "Quarterly meeting at Lebanon. Preached at 11 AM & in the evening. Bro Lewis stayed with us over night. Sent Bro Odell \$5.00 paid next Friday." On Sunday, April 20, "Had a good love feast. Preached

---

<sup>43</sup> *Letters*, 133.

<sup>44</sup> Robert H. Ruby, *Indian Slavery in the Pacific Northwest* (Spokane, WA: A. H. Clark Co., 1993).

<sup>45</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>46</sup> Connie Hopkins Battaile, *The Oregon Book* (Newport, OR: Saddle Mountain Press, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> *Letters*, 186-187. In the 1963 publication, this letter is misdated 1860.

at 11 AM. Bro Lewis preached at 4 PM. Collection 9.82. Cash paid to collection. 25. Cash to misc (?) collection. 5.00. Amount of misc (?) collection 8.00." On Monday, April 21: "Hauled the rest of barn manure and the chip manure with Mr. Kees' oxen."<sup>48</sup> A weekend quarterly meeting and love feast, tucked between the two days of hauling manure, show the mixture of tasks Blaine performed with no apparent sense of incongruity.

Of particular interest are the camp meetings mentioned in the diary and letters. Annual camp meetings had long been a feature of eighteenth and nineteenth-century American Protestantism, serving a social as well as religious function. The Methodists who settled in the Willamette Valley brought this tradition from their home states. The diary does not give the exact location of the 1862 camp meeting, but it was probably not the historic Methodist campground founded in 1851 by the Belknap family and their neighbors who had formed a Methodist community called the Bellfountain Settlement in what is now Benton County. In fact, Catharine's letter of June 6, 1861, mentions that the camp meeting is "on this circuit, at Roberts Bridge, about 10 miles from here."<sup>49</sup> There is, in fact, a Roberts Road that crosses the Calapooya River in Linn County near Lebanon. The Belknap Camp Meeting was in Benton County.

Even though probably not the location mentioned in the diary and letters, the Bellknap Camp Meeting continued during and well beyond David Blaine's time in Oregon and is the best documented camp meeting in the Willamette Valley.<sup>50</sup> Descriptions of it are relevant to the Oregon camp meeting in general. The *Oregon Inventory of Historic Properties* describes it as follows:

From 1851 until the turn of the century, camp meetings were held in this location each year during the week between the last Sunday in June and the first Sunday in July [between haying and harvesting]. The wide, level space above the "amphitheater" slope provided a place to set up tents and room for the horses to be stabled.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, by 1863, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Oregon owned eight camp grounds valued at \$1750.<sup>52</sup>

On May 4, 1861, the then presiding elder of the Upper Willamette District, Harvey K. Hines, had announced in *Pacific Christian Advocate* that there would be a camp meeting for the central part of the district, encompassing

---

<sup>48</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>49</sup> *Letters*, 187.

<sup>50</sup> For a colorful, detailed account of the Belknap Camp Meetings over several years, see Ketturah Belknap, "Ketturah Belknap's Chronicle of the Bellfountain Settlement," edited by Robert Moulton Gatke, *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 38.3 (September, 1937): 265-299, also her *On Her Way Rejoicing: Keturah Belknap's Chronicles*, edited by Charlotte and John Hook (Salem, OR: Commission on Archives and History Oregon-Idaho Conference, United Methodist Church, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.co.benton.or.us/cd/historic\\_resources/documents/hrc474.pdf](http://www.co.benton.or.us/cd/historic_resources/documents/hrc474.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Robert Norton Peters, *From Sect to Church: A Study in the Permutation of Methodism on the Oregon Frontier* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1973) 191.

the towns of Albany, Lebanon, and Corvallis and surrounding countryside.<sup>53</sup> This is undoubtedly the camp meeting described in Catharine Blaine's letter of July 14, 1861:

The meeting lasted from Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, till Monday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, holding over two Sabbaths. It is said to have been the greatest meeting ever held in Oregon. The attendance on the Sabbaths was not far from 2,000 people; during the week there were from 100 to 500 on the grounds all the time. This may not seem large numbers to you, but when you remember how few people there are here compared to the number with you, it will seem large. It was 10 miles from any town, Corvallis and Albany being the nearest, and neither have over 500 inhabitants. There was the most perfect order and good behavior, nothing that would have excited remark in a church; about 75 of the number professed conversion.<sup>54</sup>

The comment about perfect order no doubt relates to camp meetings in Catharine's home state of New York, during which some participants ran around, jumped, shouted, or even fell into catatonic states. The more staid Methodists did not approve of such overt manifestations of religious fervor. As plans were being made for the big Sunday service at the original 1851 Belknap Camp Meeting, Ketturah Belknap reported concerns about possible disorder, ". . . [T]hen the suggestion was made that they pick their men to pray, not have the long-winded ones, nor them that were too full of the Holy Ghost, for they would start Aunt Liza and she would take the Campground and spoil it all."<sup>55</sup>

The *Journal of the Quarterly Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Calapooya-Brownsville Circuit, 1857-1881*, contains an interesting item in the minutes for the quarterly conference held on April 12, 1862 at Brownsville, D. E. Blain, Presiding: "The question of holding a camp meeting was taken up and moved that we have a camp meeting to commence on Thursday, June 26, motion carried, and that it be held on the claim of Elias Keeney or as near his place as ground can be secured: carried."<sup>56</sup> It is unclear if the plan was implemented. The Keeney claim was near Brownsville, and, as seen in the diary, the 1862 camp meeting was near Corvallis.

Blaine's diary contains brief but illuminating notes on the 1862 camp meeting, regardless of its location. On June 26, he ". . . Went on to Corvallis . . ." On June 27, Blaine "Came on to campground." On June 28: "Prayer meeting in the morning. Good. Bro Powell preached at 11 AM. Bro T. B. Sanderson at 3 PM. Bro Alvin [*sic*] Waller at 7 PM. Good meeting after sermons. Several forward soon converted Christians. Greatly blessed." On Sunday June 29: "Love feast in the morning. Bro Roberts preached at 11 AM" [This was the Rev. William Roberts, the renowned superintendent and circuit rider previously mentioned. The other preachers were also distin-

<sup>53</sup> Peters, 193.

<sup>54</sup> *Letters*, 190.

<sup>55</sup> Belknap, *On Her Way*, 48.

<sup>56</sup> *Journal of the Quarterly Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Calapooya-Brownsville Circuit, 1857-1881*, unpagged. Accessed in the archives of the Oregon Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

guished members of the conference]. “Bro I. D. Driver at 3 PM; Bro W. S. Lewis at 7 PM. Congregation large. The meeting very good after sermons. Some converted. Bro Lewis lost his watch.” On July 1: “Love feast, sacrament & baptisms. Bro P. Starr preached at 3 PM . . . Having lost Fanny from the pasture I started to hunt her—went to Lebanon in search” [Fanny had wandered home, but Blaine found her the next day]. On July 3 he noted, “Rainy morning. Most of the tent folks went home . . .”<sup>57</sup>

The next major event for Blaine was the Oregon Annual Conference for 1862, held at Vancouver, Washington Territory, August 6-13, with Bishop Matthew Simpson presiding.<sup>58</sup> Washington Territory was still part of the Oregon Conference at that time, hence Blaine’s travel to Vancouver. The diary entries are disappointingly scant. However, some startling information appears on August 13: “Came to Portland on the Express. Paid over to Bro Kingsley conference Missionary Money \$880.00 including two drafts for Upper Will. Dist. Each 68.50.” The Conference *Minutes* list Blaine and four others, including C. S. Kingsley, who had presided at the 1861 conference, as being on the committee on missions. In the diary entry of August 25, Blaine identifies himself as missionary treasurer (“wrote up the missionary treasurers book”), which would account for his being the courier for all that cash.<sup>59</sup>

On Monday, August 11, at the Oregon Annual Conference, Blaine requested and was granted a leave of absence, yet he does not even mention it in his diary. In September, he made a trip to Seattle to check on property he had purchased and touch base there with his old friends, the founders of the city. The trip from Lebanon to Seattle and back was typically difficult, involving travel by horseback, on foot, by canoe and small steamboat, sometimes camping on the beach on the islands of Puget Sound. On Sunday, September 14: “Preached at Seattle—two sermons. Had a good time in our little church, the result of my labors years ago” [The Little White Church he had built in 1855]. The next day,” Stayed overnight with D. Denny. Took a walk around with Yesler—to my land got of Maynard.”<sup>60</sup> David Denny was a member of the Denny party that first set foot on what became downtown Seattle. The Methodist Denny family helped to found the Little White Church. Henry Yesler started the first sawmill in Seattle, and David (Doc) Maynard, was Seattle’s first physician, an entrepreneur, Indian agent, and one of the settlers who platted Seattle.

During the remaining months of 1862, the diary shows Blaine preach-

---

<sup>57</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>58</sup> *Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Tenth Session (Portland, OR: Advocate Press, 1862). Bishop Simpson reported on the Oregon Conference in *Christian Advocate and Journal* 37.38 (September 18, 1862): 297.

<sup>59</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

<sup>60</sup> David E. Blaine, *Diary*, Archives of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Salem, Oregon.

ing at Presbyterian and Congregational as well as Methodist churches in the Portland area and assisting in various capacities at the Portland Academy and Female Seminary. The diary entries for late fall are sporadic, with hastily scrawled notes and many dates left blank. Clearly his zeal for diary-keeping had waned.

In 1863, David and Catharine Blaine moved back to New York State, where David alternated farming with preaching. A daughter, Martha, was born there. David received brief appointments back in Oregon and Washington from late 1863 through 1865. In 1873, he made a visit to Seattle to sell products of the National Yeast Company of Seneca Falls.<sup>61</sup> During this time he added to his real estate holdings, buying lots in downtown Seattle. As Frederick Norwood pointed out, "Although ministers' salaries on the frontier were extremely low and rarely paid in full, the Blaines improved their worldly condition by acquiring choice Seattle real estate."<sup>62</sup>

In 1882 or 1883, the Blaines returned to Seattle and remained there for the rest of their lives. David did not resume active ministry. John J. Blaine was a steam engineer working for the Seattle City Water Department. Edward Linn Blaine became an affluent businessman and distinguished church and civic leader in Seattle. He was on the City Council for many years, a long-time board member of the University of Puget Sound, and board president of the Washington Children's Home Society. He was active in both Blaine Memorial Methodist and First Methodist churches. Martha Louise Blaine married a Methodist minister, Edward White, who eventually served churches near Seattle.<sup>63</sup>

The timely purchases of Seattle property enabled David and Catharine Blaine to live very comfortably. In fact, it might be fair to say that, like the missionaries to Hawaii, they and their progeny "came to do good and stayed to do well." David Blaine died in 1900 and Catharine in 1908. Both are buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill. They left a substantial estate to their heirs and to various mission and education agencies of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>64</sup> Their most significant legacy, though, at least for students of Methodist and Northwest history, can be found in the letters of David and Catharine Blaine and the diary of David Blaine.

---

<sup>61</sup> Stevenson, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Norwood, 180.

<sup>63</sup> Stevenson, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Stevenson, 21.