

AMONG the pioneers who settled at an early date in the region directly east of Albany were the families of John and Alfred Powell. These men were brothers, who with other members of the Powell family came to Oregon from Illinois in the year 1851. Noah Powell, a third brother, arrived the same year and settled in Marion county. The three brothers were pioneer preachers, all members of the Church of Christ, or Christian demomination.

From various sources I have gleaned considerable information about the pioneer

members of the Powell clan. A great amount of data and fact is embodied in the volume "Powell Family History," by Dr. J. M. Powell, of Mommoth. The author of this interesting and valuable book is a grandson of John A. Powell.

According to the family tree in the "History" and the text, the Powells trace their ancestry back to a James Powell, who was a Revolutionary war soldier of the state of Virginia. He or his people are believed to have come to this country from Wales. His sons, Joseph and Samuel, emigrated to Ohio and later to Illinois. The former took part in the war of 1812. It is from Joseph that the Powells who came to Oregon and Linn county trace their lineage.

Joseph Powell married Sarah Alkire. Fifteen children were born to them. Among these John, Alfred and Noah and a sister, Lucinda, were born in Ohio. With their parents they removed to the state of Tennessee in 1825. This is comes about that John and Alfred were in the Black Hawk war along with Abraham Lincoln. Alfred was a member of the burying party which interred the dead after Stillman's retreat. Black Hawk was beaten and chased out of the state.

The Sacs, Fox and Winnebago Indians claimed the Illinois country in spite of the

fact that settlers dispossessed them, and so in 1830 Chief Black Hawk led some of his warriors from Wisconsin into Illinois and began to make trouble. In 1832 the war began in earnest. Lincoln raised and commanded a company of men. The United States government sent other troops and Black Hawk was soon subdued. He was sent to certain lands west of the Mississippi.

It seems that the Powells knew Lincoln well, and recognized his greatness. According to the Powell History, Lincoln surveyed the Powell farm in Menard county, Alfred Powell carried the chain. At one time, it is related, Lincoln stopped to tell a funny rabbit story and the chairman forgot to keep count, so that the line had to be rechaind.

From Dr. Powell's book we learn that the following members of the family came to Oregon in 1851: John, Alfred, Noah, Franklin, Smith, Powell, Stephen, James Henry and Jimima Powell. They were ac-

companied by their families. Others in the train were George Alkire, William Shirr, S. Hamilton, Ann Shirr, Joseph Williams, John Davis, James Turner, J. M. Jacks, Jack Engle, Bob Brown, Press and Sam Black and Bob Estle.

In the following year other members of the family came to Oregon. It was in that year that Anthony Propst and wife, Lucinda Powell Propst, their five children and a cousin, started for the Willamette valley. Anthony and his wife died upon the trail after they had reached Oregon. The children came on and were raised in the homes of relatives.

One of the best accounts of pioneer life and pioneering conditions in Linn county that I have ever read is a letter written by Lucinda Jane (Powell) Davis and published in the "History." I here quote a large part of it:

"The 16th day of September we reached a suitable stopping place near the Santiam river, and after looking around, located on the prairie about seven miles east of Albany. Each man and wife were allowed a half section of land, a quarter section each. The valley was soon dotted with log houses.

"Our house was sixteen feet square. It was built of hewn logs covered with three foot boards rived out with a fro, with similar boards nailed over the cracks in the walls. There were two doors; one in the south and the other in the north, opening into a porch without a floor.

"The house had a rough floor made of boards split out of fir timber. There was no window, but we could usually keep one door open for light. In the east side were the fireplace and hearth, made of rock. The chimney was built of sticks and mud, and was run up on the outside of the wall. Our fire shovel was a board until Pa made one from a piece of iron from an old wagon. Our furniture consisted of trestle

benches for a bedstead, home-made stools, tables and one chair which we brought with us.

"We kept house over a year without a cookstove or fireplace, iron or shovel. Our livestock was a cow until Pa traded his gun for an Indian pony. We commenced keeping house in December, 1851. Our cooking utensils were: a teakettle, coffee pot, frying pan, stew kettle, two pans and a deep skillet with a lid, to bake bread in.

"Grandpa bought wheat and had enough of it ground to do all of us through the winter. Pa and Uncle Stueben and Stephen worked to pay for it. William Earl had a large band of fat cattle to sell cheap for work. Pa and McPadden and Grandpa and Uncle Alfred would buy one, butcher it and divide it, so we had plenty.

"Grandma and I did sewing and quilting for soap and potatoes. Dried apples was all the fruit we had until wild strawberries and blackberries, which were plentiful and

handy, were ripe.

"Teachers were scarce then, so I engaged to teach a term school the following summer. There were no townships, districts of school funds and this was the first school taught in this section of country. People were glad to have a school, and it was a great help to us, as it was hard to make a living and improve a farm at the same time. I taught a summer school on the basis of four dollars a scholar for twelve weeks.

"We built an addition to the house with slabs from a mill for a schoolhouse. We left a hole for a window, and used it without a floor. I had nearly twenty pupils by keeping two from a distance. I taught spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and grammar. The baby occupied the cradle in one corner. All the patrons as well as the pupils seemed to be well pleased. I had no trouble and never heard a complaint.

"For several years wheat was used as legal tender, rated at one dollar a bushel. Wheat soon became very plentiful and was the main dependence for an income. Our first crop of wheat was seven acres put in and threshed out with oxen. The threshing floors were made by smoothing off the ground and pouring water on it, then pounding it with a heavy maul until it was hard.

"Wheat for bread was flailed out and separated in the wind by pouring it on to a wagon sheet. Neighbors worked together but progress was slow. It was several years before we got the first team of horses, which Pa helped pay for by walking three miles to the timber and making rails.

"Two families living near each other would exchange things. One would buy a tub, another a churn, and so on. The men did the same way; one would buy an augur, another a saw, and so on until, each was able to have an outfit of his own.

"Grandpa built a sawmill (on the creek where Manley Wilds lived) about the year 1854. It was run day and night through the winter season. There was not enough water to run it in the summer. We all soon had frame houses, and the log houses were used for storage purposes."

To the north of the Powell settlement in Linn county were the farms of the Earl family. William Earl was the oldest of a number of brothers and sisters who, with their mother, came to Oregon in 1845, and to Linn county the following year. With the Earls came the Umphletts. Jimima Powell, daughter of John A. Powell, was married to Joseph Earl in 1851, this being one of the first marriages, if not the first marriage in Linn county.

Lourana Powell, another daughter of John A. Powell was united in marriage

to Robert Earl. He was "well fixed" by reason of his success in the California mines previous to his marriage. The family resided for a time in Linn county, near Knox Butte, then in California, and later in the Big Bend country, Washington.

Stephen Dodridge Powell married Margaret Umphlette, a daughter of Stanley Umphlette and wife. Reminiscences of her parents' trip across the plain in 1845 are contained in the Powell history.

John Powell was the oldest of the three brothers who came to Oregon and he was born in 1807. He was a logical and persuasive speaker and of magnetic personality. He was a very large man, being six feet in height and weighing 220 pounds. He spent his latter days in Albany and died there. Of him the "History" says:

"His education was a practical one. He studied by himself and became an independent thinker. He was a great student of the Bible, theology and historical literature. The Powells in Ohio were United Brethren, but he was attracted to the movement, then in its infancy, which had for its object the discarding of human creeds and the restoration of New Testament Christianity. He became a member of the Christian church in 1832 and soon thereafter began his ministry. During the 19 years of his ministry in Illinois, he spent much of his time in the churches of Springfield, Athens, Sugar Grove, and other places.

"After coming to Oregon in 1851—before the days of the church houses—he preached in groves, school houses and residences all over western Oregon. In 1852 he became the first missionary of the Christian church in Oregon, and traveled horseback the length of the state, establishing churches, and sowing the seed for future religious work. He was one of the early advocates of higher education, and was a trustee of Christian College from its beginning until his death."

Alfred Powell is characterized as a more fiery speaker than his brother, John, but it is said that they complimented each other in their ministerial work. Alfred was born in Ohio in the year 1810 and was the youngest of the three brothers. Besides preaching at the Central church, east of Albany, he also spoke at Halsey, Scio, Albany and Sodaville, in this county, and in Pleasant Hill and Mohawk, in Lane county.

Noah Powell took his donation land claim on Howell's Prairie, Marion county. However, he frequently came into Linn county to preach. With his brothers he often spoke at Central church. We quote again from the "History":

"Although he had much to do on his large stock ranch he never neglected his regular trips on horseback to preach at Howell's Prairie and other places, for he was a very devout Christian and a faithful minister of the church of Christ. In addition to preaching, he led the singing, first lining out the song as was the custom in those days, owing to the scarcity of

nymn books. Many times the three brothers met at Central church and took turns in preaching."

Sometimes this family of pioneers is confused with the Joab Powell family, and it is somewhat curious that each family settled on or near the Santiam in Linn county and that each has its annual reunion in the country east of Albany. The Joab Powell descendants meet at Providence church, whereas the other Powells assemble at the Copeland Grove, east of Albany. This grove is on the donation land claim of the late John A. Powell.

The first meeting of the Powells in this grove took place in the year 1919, but the initial meeting of the family occurred in 1916, in Polk county. After the 1919 assemblage, the affair was made a permanent annual event, and the Powell Memorial Society was organized.