

**A REPLY TO PROFESSOR  
BOURNE'S "THE  
WHITMAN LEGEND"**

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A Reply to Professor Bourne's "The Whitman Legend" by Myron Eells

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**MYRON EELLS**

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Pub. O.

A REPLY

Edward G.  
To Professor Bourne's

<sup>1892-47</sup>  
"The Whitman Legend"

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BY

MYRON EELLS, D. D.

25 cents a Copy

WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON  
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## PREFATORY

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S. W. Moss, of Oregon City, author of the *Prairie Flower*, was one of the immigrants of 1842. He was a man who cared at that time but little for religion, and less for missions. In fact he hardly cared to become acquainted with a missionary, for he thought that anybody who was foolish enough to become a missionary, especially to the Indians, was not the kind of man with whom he wished to have anything to do. Hence when he arrived near Dr. Whitman's station in 1842, he went rather past it, without going to it. But it was found that his party needed some provisions or things which could be obtained at the Doctor's, and he was detailed to go and procure them. When he met the Doctor however he found him a very different man from what he expected a missionary to the Indians to be, was much pleased with him and their acquaintance ripened into real friendship, so that when the Doctor was at Oregon City he made the house of Mr. Moss his home. When Mr. Moss in advanced years, bent with age, was asked what he thought of Dr. Whitman as an American, he straightened up his bent form, his eyes brightened much, so that they spoke as well as his lips, and he said with emphasis and life, "He was an American of Americans."

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## A Reply to Professor Bourne's "THE WHITMAN LEGEND"

By MYRON EELLS, D. D.

Member of the Washington State Historical Society; Honorary Member of the Oregon Historical Society; Author of Indian Missions on the Pacific Coast, Ten Years at Skokomish, Father Eells, Life of S. H. Marsh, D. D., History of the Congregational Association of Oregon and Washington, The Twana, Clallam and Chemakum Indians, and various pamphlets.

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**I**N THE American Historical Review for January, 1901, is a paper by Prof. E. G. Bourne, of Yale University, entitled, "The Legend of Marcus Whitman," read by him the previous December at the meeting of the American Historical Association. In the Annual Report of the Historical Association for 1900, Vol. 1, pages 219-236, is a discussion of the above paper by Prof. W. I. Marshall, of Chicago. In September, 1901, Prof. Bourne published a volume entitled "Essays in Historical Criticism."\* In this his paper is revised and enlarged so as to cover 107 pages. These gentlemen attempt to prove that the story that Dr. Whitman saved Oregon or any part of

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\*This is one of a series of volumes published by the Professors and instructors of Yale University, "as a partial indication of the character of the studies in which the University teachers are engaged."

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it to the United States, or even dispelled any ignorance about it, or that he went east in the winter of 1842-3 for this purpose, or that he did anything worth mentioning to stimulate the emigration of 1843 is without foundation. It is perfectly proper that the other side of the question be heard.

In this pamphlet the writer will discuss mainly the later essay of Prof. Bourne, it being evidently the result of his mature study, together with Prof. Marshall's paper. The figures in parentheses refer to the pages in their publications.

In 1883 the writer published a pamphlet entitled "Marcus Whitman, M. D. Proofs of his work in saving Oregon to the United States and in promoting the immigration of 1843." This will be referred to as "Eells' Whitman Pamphlet."

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A short statement of Dr. Whitman's work from 1842 to 1843 is that an order from the American Board to discontinue his station and that of Mr. Spalding had been received by him in the fall of 1842; there was need felt by the missionaries in Oregon of Christian families to settle near the Indians so as to set them a good example and take from the missionaries most of the secular work; that Dr. Whitman also learned that influences were at work in the east, especially at Washington, which might cause the United States to lose Oregon, because (according to these representations) it was of very little value, and it was impossible to take emigrant wagons to the Columbia;



that hence the Doctor went east during the winter 1842-3, in company with A. L. Lovejoy most of the way; went to Washington where he found real danger, and where he gave such information to President Tyler, Daniel Webster, secretary of state, and others that he obtained the promise that these negotiations should be suspended until he should prove that he could lead an emigration of wagons through; that he did all he could to stimulate people to join the emigration already forming and that in this line he accomplished much; that he went to Boston and attended to the missionary business, and then that he led the emigration through, thus saving Oregon or an important part of it to the United States. But it is stated that the national object was the chief one which induced the Doctor to go when he did, and that had he gone solely for the other reasons, it would have not been until the next spring.

This pamphlet will be divided into four parts:

(1) A discussion of some points in the publications of Messrs. Bourne and Marshall which affect their reliability and that of their arguments; (2) points in which the writer agrees with them; (3) points in which he differs from them, (4) the evidence to prove that Dr. Whitman's intent was to save Oregon or a part of it; that he did do it; that there was danger of its being traded to England; that the story was known long previous to its publication in the Sacramento Union in 1864; that Dr. Whitman did much to promote the emigration of 1843; and that his leading that emigration through was a most important event in saving Oregon.

I. A discussion of some points in the publications of these writers which affect their reliability and that of their arguments.

(a) A criticism of some of the expressions which they use as arguments. Prof. Bourne uses the following: "deceptive confirmation," referring to Dr. C. Eells' letter of 1866 (p 26); "fictitious interviews" with Webster and Tyler (26); "frenzied statement" (27), and "hodge podge" (30) referring to Mr. Spalding's pamphlet; "rehash of Spalding and Gray overladen with much irrelevant disquisition" (41); "such turbid sources" as Spalding and Gray (40); "intermingling inextricably perversions of fact with pure fictions, and enormously distorting the history" of Oregon, referring to Barrows's Oregon (40); "specious apologetics" and his "superficial and disingenuous method," referring to Dr. Craighead's book (45-46); "untrustworthy as history," referring to Dr. Nixon's book (47); "the advocate and not the historian," referring to Dr. Mowry (50); "fimsy evidence" (50); "constantly garbles and interpolates his quotations," referring to Mr. Spalding (61); "vindictiveness" of Mr. Spalding (64); "Spalding's fauxpas" (65); "Dr. Craighead has the hardihood to write" (78); "stamp or hall mark" of Spalding's invention (82); "fallaciously summarized" by Myron Eells (96); "imaginative perversion" of Barrows (195).

Similarly Prof. Marshall writes "totally worthless book" and "throwing together his Oregon," "never in any proper sense written," referring to Dr. Barrows's book (222); the "fool friends of Dr.

Whitman," referring to Messrs. Barrows, Nixon, Craighead, M. Eells, Laurie, Mowry and Edwards (291); "small souled and narrow minded folly" (291); "not above a third or fourth rate man," referring to Dr. Whitman (232); "fabrications of alleged authorities" (234). Was it strange that Professor Fiske wrote him, "I think the force of your arguments would be enhanced if your style of expression were now and then a little less vehement?" (230).

But in this they only follow the man whom they so much admire and quote, Hon. Elwood Evans, who in 1885 used these expressions "false claim," "falsehood," "unmitigated falsehood," "glaringly false statement," "venerable gentlemen . . . . who for the nonce doffed their saintly calling," "so called reverends," "doughty champions," "melange of absurdity, nonsense, fiction and falsehood," "reverend champions of a fable," "baseless fabrications," "interject his extravaganza," "wriggling policy of the Eells," "slanders of the dead," "Gulliver, Munchausen and Quixote."\*

Another person whom Prof. Bourne quotes, P. W. Gillette (106-110), calls the statements that have been used to convince people that Dr. Whitman saved Oregon, "fuisome stuff and stupid lies."\*

Bancroft also uses similar language, calling W. H. Gray, "the Great untruthful and whilom mission builder."\*

Now every time that these writers use the word fiction, fable, legend, fictitious, and the like in

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\*Oregonian of March 20 and May 21, 1885.

\*Oregonian, February 26, 1900.

\*Bancroft, Hist. Northwest Coast, Vol. 2., p. 537.