

## Mr. and Mrs. Simeon G. Reed

By DOROTHY JOHANSEN

*Reed College is preparing a comprehensive biography of the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Simeon G. Reed. Because of their broad and varied interests, a properly completed work must be a considerable history of the economic and social development of the Northwest for a period of fifty years. The following account, written by the editor of the collection of Reed papers now in the possession of the college,\* is in the nature of a synopsis of the detailed biographical study to be published later.*

In 1888, when Simeon Reed was retiring from active participation in business, he was asked to contribute a sketch of his life to a genealogy of the Reed family. This article is based upon his own statement supplemented by materials gathered from letters and private papers of Mr. and Mrs. Reed in the possession of the college, and from personal reminiscences of those who knew them.

*I, Simeon Gannett Reed was born at East Abington (now called Rockland) Mass April 23 1830. Married Oct. 17th 1850 with Amanda Wood who was born at Quincy Mass Augt 26th 1832. Her fathers name was Henry Wood who was born at Hollis N.H. Her mothers maiden name was Sarah Adams who was born at Quincy Mass.*

*My fathers name was Simeon Gannett who was born at Abington Mass Sepr. 29th 1793. . . .*

*I received a good New England education and after leaving school at about the age of 15 years I spent a year as a boy in a wholesale Dry Goods Store in Boston. My wages were \$75.00 the first year and I had to board and clothe myself with a prospect of an increase in salary of \$25.00 each year for the next two years. The outlook didn't seem very encouraging, and boy-like I felt like making a change, so I gave up the Dry goods business and went back to East Abington and learned the shoe cutters trade at Jenkins Lanes. I soon got the hang of this, and as the work was "piece work" I was more or less master of my own time and yet I felt like getting into some business for myself. An opportunity finally presented itself and I embarked in the Grain & flour business at Quincy Mass when about 18 years of age, and while there married my wife.*

Little is known of his venture into the grain and flour business, but it is evident that he was successful as he was able to marry two years after arriving at Quincy. His bride was the daughter of one of the wealthiest and most prominent families of Quincy.

Amanda Wood was descended on the maternal side from Henry Adams, stone cutter of Quincy and founder of that line of famous Americans. During the days of the Revolution, Thomas Reed, a great-uncle of Simeon, was associated with John Adams as a member of the Committees of Correspondence which fostered the revolutionary spirit and held together the diverse interests of the colonies. This same Reed fought in the Revolution. Thus both Simeon and Amanda Reed were eligible to membership in the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution.

*Left Quincy for California in the spring of 1852. Remained in San Fran<sup>o</sup> until after the big Sacramento fire of that year, when I came to Oregon with the expectation of buying Lumber, but as I could buy no Lumber, I bought a lot of Flour and shipped it by steamer to San Fran<sup>o</sup> where I sold it to good advantage. Not succeeding in establishing myself in any permanent business in California and thinking all the time that Oregon was a good country for a young man to start in and grow up with I returned to Oregon in the spring of 1853 where I have resided ever since. I first started a small business at Rainier on the Columbia River opposite the mouth of the Cowlitz. . . .*

The small business was a general merchandise store. He bought onions, flour, butter and eggs and shipped them to California; in the store he sold black mitts, cambric cloth, prints and parasols, bobinette lace, bonnet trimmings, razor strops, blue mugs, whiskey, cod-fish and general groceries. In the fall of that first year in his new location we find him able to lend eighteen hundred dollars, a large sum for a young man twenty-two years of age and only recently in business for himself. On November 7, 1855, he went to work as a clerk for W. S. Ladd and Company, a general merchandise firm of Portland; and in April, 1859, when Mr. Ladd went into the banking business, Mr. Reed and Mr. Ladd's two brothers bought the business and formed the Ladd, Reed and Company which operated successfully for a number of years.

In 1858 the enterprising nature of Simeon Reed is shown by an entry in his note-book stating he had bought a quarter interest in the Columbia River Navigation Company, which

\*For detailed description of the SIMEON G. REED COLLECTION OF LETTERS AND PRIVATE PAPERS see THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST QUARTERLY, (January 1936) xxvii, 54-65.

ran the steamers *Senorita*, *Belle* and *Multnomah* as far as the Cascades. The six thousand dollars invested in this enterprise may be considered the foundation of the Reed fortune, for shortly thereafter the Columbia River Navigation Company merged in the Oregon Steam and Navigation Company, incorporated in 1860 in Washington Territory, by Simeon Reed, Captain J. C. Ainsworth, and Mr. Robert R. Thompson with capital stock of \$175,000. In 1862 the company was chartered in Oregon under the new laws with capital stock of \$2,000,000. The phenomenal growth of the company during these years was due to the discovery of gold in Eastern Oregon and Idaho, and to the acquisition of the Bradford portage road on the north side of the Cascades. The interests of Ruckel and Olmstead on the Oregon side were purchased at approximately the same time.

*I was one of the original incorporators of the Oregon Steam Navigation Co. in 1860. Was elected Vice Prest of the O.S.N. Co. in 1864 and retained that position until July 1879 when the Company was sold out to Henry Villard and merged into the Oregon Railway & Navigation Co. of which latter Co. I was Vice Prest & Manager until I resigned in 1880.*

The Oregon Steam and Navigation Company was one of the most progressive institutions of the Northwest. Under the management of Simeon Reed it encouraged agricultural development of the inland country and installed telegraph service to Boise, Idaho, and way points. Some idea of the magnitude of the company's operations might be gained from the following figures.

In 1867 the O.S.N. Co. paid taxes in Washington on property valued at \$361,400; in Oregon, on property valued at \$5,400,800. Between 1867 and 1879 it paid out in regular monthly dividends of one-half percent, \$2,702,500, and had the exceptional record of never having made a single assessment on stock. During this same period of time over \$2,000,000 was invested in construction and purchase, thus showing a profit during the twelve years of close to \$5,000,000. In Portland, the O.S.N. Co. built warehouses extending some nine hundred feet along the waterfront. At Cascades, The Dalles, Umatilla, Wallula and stops along the Columbia large warehouses, docks and machine shops were constructed.

In the sketch of his life Mr. Reed slips by the exciting days of 1864-79 when he was a leader in the fight to bring the railways to Portland. The O. S. N. Co. recognized the inevitability of the coming of the railway and, instead of fighting to maintain its monopoly of Columbia River traffic, invited the railways to follow their routes of trade for the purpose of bringing inland commerce to Portland as a distribution center.

*Was also interested with A. Onderdonk and D. O. Mills in the contract for building the "Canadian Pacific Railway" in British Columbia. The contract was from Port Moody (on Burrards Inlet) to Kamloops Lake: the work was very heavy and amounted to several million dollars.*

Captain J. C. Ainsworth, friend and business associate of Simeon Reed, was also heavily interested in this contract. It was just fifty years ago that the first complete train of the

Canadian Pacific passed over that portion of the line to Port Moody which was built by Portland capital and enterprise. In the latter part of the seventies Mr. Reed became interested in the development of electric railways and organized a company to subsidize such inventions of Stephen D. Field and Thomas Edison as could be applied to transportation. The Electric Railways of the United States, of which Simeon Reed was president, was succeeded by the Edison Electric Light Company when Mr. Reed withdrew from active participation in railway affairs.

Mr. Reed's transportation interests may be summed the following list of companies with which he was intimately connected:

Oregon Steam and Navigation Company, vice-president.  
Oregon Rail and Navigation Company, vice-president. Oregon Central Military Road Company, vice-president. Oregon Central Railroad Company, president. Willamette Transportation and Locks Company, vice-president.  
Electric Railways of the United States, president. Northern Pacific Railroad Company, heavy stock-owner. Frazier River Construction Company of the Canadian Pacific.  
Elevated Railway of New York. Oregon-California Railroad Company.

*Have also been more or less identified with the mining interests of the Northwest. First in building a water ditch for placer mining some 30 miles long in Baker County, Oregon, and afterwards in the purchase and development of free gold bearing Quartz mine on Connor Creek. . . . This mine has a 35 stamp mill run by water power and has been in success full operation a number of years. . .*

*In 1887 I purchased the celebrated "Bunker Hill & Sullivan Mines", located near the town of Wardner in the Coeur D'Alene district of Idaho Territory. They are Silver Lead Mines and are the largest producers in the district, having produced in 23 months & 26 days from the time the Concentrator started up, 15,255.96/100 tons of Concentrates of the gross value of \$1,353,008.21 ...*

Because of failing health and a desire to devote more time to his livestock farms, Mr. Reed sold the Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mines in the early nineties. These mines are still the largest producers in the Northwest and have netted over \$48,000,000 to their owners since then. It is interesting to note that in his mining ventures, Mr. Reed employed the greatest mining engineers of his day, and those whose names are famous now: John Hays Hammond, Vincent Clement, and S. J. Serebrennikoff.

Mr. Reed's vision of Portland as a great industrial center was a little premature. He invested heavily in the Oregon Iron and Steel Company at Oswego and purchased iron and coal mines in Washington and Mexico to supply the Oregon plant. The company never paid, and today practically all that remains of the plant is the original blast furnace in 1866, which stands, a solitary tower, on the bank where Oswego Creek enters the Willamette River.

*Am quite extensively interested in farming and fine stock. Have one farm of over 3000 acres in the Willamette Valley in high cultivation with over 15 miles of Osage Orange Hedge and well stocked with Imported Clydesdale Stallions and Mares, Cleaveland Bays, Shorthorn Cattle, Cotswold and Leicester Sheep and Berkshire Pigs.*

This is rather an off-hand statement of one of Mr. Reed's greatest personal interests—pure-bred live stock. In cooperation with William S. Ladd, under the firm name of Ladd and Reed Farm Company, organized in the seventies, Mr. Reed was part owner of seventeen farms in the Willamette and Tualatin Valleys. The two great farms were the ones mentioned, Broadmeads, chiefly devoted to cattle, and Reedville, near Hillsboro, where Mr. Reed indulged his hobby for race horses. He built there a covered mile track and housed some of the finest horses in the country in truly elaborate style. He bought horses in Canada, Eastern United States and England. On his last trip to England in 1892, he purchased a string of horses for his California ranch, the Carmelita Stud Farm. He brought into this country expert agriculturists and breeders; he experimented with grass seeds from all over the world, with the steam-plow, with modern methods of irrigation and land drainage, and sought to interest the whole region in better quality stock. He was actively interested in the Oregon Agricultural Society of which he was an officer, and he never missed a showing at the State Fair, if a trip across the country would get him here in time. Mr. Reed's own account closes with a brief notice of the Abington Building which for its day was a great addition to Portland's business district.

It is evident from his diaries and notebooks and from his business correspondence that he was a man of most meticulous care in detail, and the diversity of his interests was astounding. Neither the wages of the humblest wood-cutter on the place, the household accounts, the latest popular song, the track time of some far-distant trotter, the mileage between growing centers of commerce, the reminiscences of a pioneer concerning an early eruption of Mt. Hood, nor finding strawberries in November in Eastern Oregon were incidents too slight to merit his attention and space in the numerous note-books. He was noted for honesty in his business dealings, for generosity in philanthropic movements and for loyalty to his friends and to his State.

An instance of his generosity was recalled by the late Mrs. H. W. Corbett. The Ladies' Aid Society had deputized her to ask Mr. Reed for one hundred dollars for one of their charities. She met him one day near his home on First and Montgomery Streets and made her request. He went into the house and returned with a check for a thousand dollars.

Their home was well-known as a center of hospitality, laughter and brightness. Their progress in residences tells a story in itself. From Doland's boarding house on A street to the mansion on First and Montgomery, built by H. W. Cleaveland, an outstanding architect of the day, and then to the plans for the house at Carmelita, there is expansive movement toward realization of an establishment which would be a joy to themselves and to their friends.

Their mode of life changed with their changing financial condition, but it was never extravagant for the purpose of display. They made the "Grand Tour" in 1379 with Simeon's brother and his family, and satisfied their love of music by attendance at all the music festivals and operas. In the sixties, when they lived at Doland's, Mrs. Reed had sewed her own dresses; in 1892, on their last trip to England, Lillian Russell gave Mrs. Reed the address of her Parisian costumer.

Simeon Reed was known for his poise and ready wit. When the western railways needed able representation in the East, he was sent. He lunched with President Grant, interviewed congressmen, and consulted with financiers. At the Metropolitan Hotel and the Fifth Avenue in New York, Simeon Reed was a familiar figure in company with the famous persons of his day.

In 1892, the Reeds moved to Pasadena where they were planning to build again. Mr. Reed never saw the completion of the house there. On November 4, 1895, he had a paralytic stroke, and, in the last of his note-books in the hand-writing of his trusted friend and nephew, Martin Winch, appear these words written November 7: "Uncle Sim died at 12<sup>00</sup>."

Mrs. Reed carried out his plans for the great house at Carmelita. She died there in 1904, and her will carried out the last wishes of her husband. The major part of his fortune was left to found an institution to benefit the young people of Portland. The Reeds, childless themselves, loved and planned for the youth of the city which they had helped to build.

"Mr. Reed may be classed among those men who were bold and enterprising in their projects. He possessed rare courage, which added to his good judgment, became so necessary to success in the enterprises of great magnitude he became interested in. His plans were carefully laid and he was not a man to be easily turned aside from any project he ever undertook however serious the obstacles appeared to oppose his way. He was always hopeful, full of resources and strongly reliant, and when his judgment once approved a course, he was not afraid to stand alone."—(*Morning Oregonian*, Friday, Nov. 8, 1895.)