

## COLUMBIA LANCASTER

Judge Lancaster, one of our earliest and most eminent judges, was born at New Milford, Litchfield county, Connecticut, on the 26th day of August, 1803. His father was of Quaker descent, and settled in Ohio at an early date. Columbia read law under Whittlesy & Newton in Ohio, and remained in their office a number of years. The Whittlesy of the firm was the Honorable Elisha who was a long time in Congress, and afterwards held office in the auditor's department under both Whig and Democratic administrations with no change of his political sentiments. He thought almost as much of his student Lancaster as of his own children. When the young man determined to go West, Mr. Whittlesy gave him letters of introduction, and commendation, to prominent men, among others to the governor of Michigan, Lewis Cass.

Having gone to Michigan (which was then out West) Mr. Lancaster was kindly received by General Cass and entertained by his family. The governor urged the young lawyer to remain in Michigan; but he, desiring to see Chicago before settling down, remained but two weeks, and then started for that embryo city. He was, however, suddenly taken sick near White Pigeon in St. Joseph county, and during the long sickness which followed there was treated with such kindness that he determined to locate himself there permanently. He accordingly established himself there in his profession at Centerville, which afterwards became the county-seat. There he became known as an active and successful lawyer.

His mind was clear, bright and strong. His constitution was powerful, and his friendship warm and enduring. His wit and sarcasm were wonderfully keen. He was a good neighbor and citizen, and honest and conscientious in all his dealings. His temperament was such that he required considerable active exercise. This he was wont to obtain by hunting and fishing, of which he became exceedingly fond. He served the people of St. Joseph county as a legislator, as prosecuting attorney and otherwise, and was active in securing statehood for Michigan.

His practice extended into other counties; and when he attended court in Branch county he boarded with the father of Anson Burlingame, afterwards of "Burlingame Treaty" fame. Mr. Lancaster liked the boy Anson, and frequently took him hunting, and finally persuaded the father to send him East and educate him. Anson accordingly received a liberal education in Mass., married an accomplished girl of considerable wealth, and was elected to Congress with the knowledge that he knew how to shoot and did not scare, facts which, as the world knows, came out with startling distinctness in connection with the unspeakable infamy of the Brooks assault on Sumner.

In 1836 Mr. Lancaster returned to Ohio and married Rosannah Jones, a charming girl whom in her childhood Mr. Whittlesy had often held in his lap and arms. On the 4th of March, 1841, Mr. Lancaster and wife and one child, Adam Van Dusen and wife, and A. E. Wait, left Centerville for Oregon. They crossed the Mississippi on the 4th of April, the

Missouri on the 4th of May, and Green river on the 4th of July. Nearly every river after leaving the Missouri was crossed by ferrying the wagonbeds over, and was accomplished without serious accident or sickness. The party arrived at Oregon City about the middle of September. Soon after his arrival Mr. Lancaster was made judge of the supreme court under the Provisional government, and performed his duties ably until the Provisional government was superseded by the organization of the territory.

Like many of the Oregonians, the judge went to California to take out some gold with his own hands. He was tolerably successful in the mines; and his good friend Peter H. Burnett, desired him to remain there and practice law; but he preferred to return to Oregon. In 1850 he settled on a land claim of six hundred and forty acres on Lewis river, which was then in Oregon, but is now in Washington. While securing the title to his land, he divided his time between law practice and farming and stock-raising.

Judge Lancaster was the first delegate to Congress from Washington Territory. At that time he accomplished more for the territory than has ever been accomplished before or since by any other delegate for any other territory in so short a time. But this is to be partly attributed to the good help he had. Generally, if he wanted help in some great undertaking, it came to him. His needed help came to him in Congress. His former friends, General Cass and Mr. Whittlesy, were glad to see him. His old friend Charles E. Stuart was in the Senate, and Ben Wade and Joshua R. Giddings were in the House and anxious to aid him. The President invited him to a dinner where he met a number of the Senators; and after the dinner he told them that delegate Lancaster would need much legislation for his territory, and as he had arrived in the middle of the term he would want all the aid he could to accomplish the necessary legislation; and so he asked their special assistance; and they gave it.

When Anson Burlingame heard that Judge Lancaster was in Washington as a delegate from Washington Territory, he hurried on to the Capitol and labored diligently and effectually in securing needful action for the distant territory. He was anxious to pay what he deemed a great debt; and he did so to the entire satisfaction of the judge. Before Judge Lancaster's bills had been finally acted on in the House, similar bills had been considered and passed by the Senate and sent to the House; and the House speedily concurred in them. Thus it was that Judge Lancaster was enabled to accomplish so much for the territory in so short a time. He worked hard and wisely, and with the efficient aid of his friends, succeeded beyond his most sanguine hopes, and was happy.

The first patent issued by the government under the Donation Land Act was issued to Judge Lancaster and his wife, and was presented to them by their friend, Honorable T. H. Hendricks, afterwards vice-president. The improved and best half of the claim was, with the approbation of the judge, set off to his wife. The married life of this

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couple was very happy -- a continued courtship. Owing to impaired health, they sold their lands and stock on Lewis river and settled at Vancouver, Washington Territory, where they had sufficient means to make them permanently comfortable and independent. They had three living children, Sarah, Hannah and Wait, and several grandchildren, all of whom resided in Oregon and Washington.

He died at Vancouver, Washington, September 14, 1893.