

= Joel Palmer =

General Joel Palmer (October 4 , 1810 ? June 9 , 1881) was an American pioneer of the Oregon Territory in the Pacific Northwest region of North America . He was born in Canada , and spent his early years in New York and Pennsylvania before serving as a member of the Indiana House of Representatives .

Palmer traveled to the Oregon Country in 1845 . He played a central role in blazing the last leg of the Oregon Trail , the Barlow Road , with Sam Barlow and others . Specifically , Palmer is noted for having climbed high on Mount Hood to observe the surrounding area when the party ran into difficulty . He wrote a popular immigrant guidebook , co @-@ founded Dayton , Oregon , and served as a controversial Indian Affairs administrator . After Oregon became a state , Palmer served in both branches of the Oregon Legislative Assembly . He was selected as Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives for one session in 1862 , and in 1870 lost a bid to become Governor of Oregon .

The Palmer House , his former home in Dayton , was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 .

= = Early life = =

Joel Palmer was born in Elizabethtown , Ontario , Canada , on October 4 , 1810 . His parents , Hannah Phelps and Ephraim Palmer , were American Quakers . When he was two years old , they moved to New York 's Catskill Mountains in response to the War of 1812 . He received only three months of formal education in elementary school . In 1822 , when Palmer was 12 , his parents indentured him to the Haworth family for a period of four years . When he gained his freedom , he moved to Bucks County , Pennsylvania , to work on canals and bridges .

He was married to Catherine Coffee from 1830 until her death after childbirth . On October 8 , 1832 , Palmer became a United States citizen . Palmer married his second wife , Sarah Ann Derbyshire , in 1836 , and bought land near Laurel , Indiana , in the Whitewater Valley , where he supervised a construction project for a canal . In 1843 , he was elected as a Democrat to the Indiana House of Representatives for a one @-@ year term . Representing Franklin County , he was re @-@ elected to the legislature in 1844 .

= = Oregon pioneer = =

In the spring of 1845 , Palmer traveled to Oregon without his family , as captain of a wagon train of 23 wagons . Stephen Meek served as the train 's paid guide . Meek left the group at Fort Hall to lead some of the members on the Meek Cutoff . The remaining parts of the wagon train reached the end of the overland Oregon Trail at the Columbia River , and unwilling to wait for transport down the dangerous Cascade Rapids , Palmer 's party joined Sam Barlow 's party in a quest for passage through the Cascade Range around the south side of Mount Hood . Palmer climbed to the 9 @,@ 000 @-@ foot level of Mount Hood on October 7 , 1845 ? with little food and the scant protection of moccasins ? to scout a route off the mountains . This was Mount Hood 's first recorded climb ; the Palmer Glacier on the mountain is named for him .

Because of the onset of winter , the Barlow , Rector , and Palmer parties were forced to leave their wagons on the mountain 's eastern foothills . Palmer left on horseback for Oregon City , while Barlow and Rector blazed a trail to Oregon City on foot . Sam Barlow later returned with partner Philip Foster to establish the Mount Hood Toll Road , which became known as the Barlow Road .

In 1846 , Palmer returned to his family in Indiana and in 1847 he published his diary as Palmer 's Journal of Travels Over the Rocky Mountains , 1845 ? 1846 . This book provided equipment guidance and comprehensive route information for those crossing the Oregon Trail . The publication also had a general description of the Oregon Country , a detailed description of the Willamette Valley , and included a copy of the Organic Laws of Oregon adopted by settlers at the Champoege Meetings . It was a popular guidebook for immigrants for the next ten years .

Also in 1847 , Palmer traveled with his family to Oregon as captain of that year 's major wagon train

. While passing through the Walla Walla Valley he met Marcus and Narcissa Whitman at their mission shortly before their deaths in the Whitman massacre ? the event that precipitated the Cayuse War . Perhaps motivated by meeting the Whitmans , Palmer later returned to serve as a peace commissioner to tribes considering joining the Cayuse . At the outset of the war he was appointed as commissary @-@ general of the Provisional Government ? s militia forces .

After the war , in 1848 , Palmer joined the California Gold Rush but returned in 1849 to co @-@ found Dayton , Oregon on the lower Yamhill River where he built a sawmill on his donation land claim .

= = Oregon politician = =

In 1853 , President Franklin Pierce appointed Palmer Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Oregon Territory . The debate of what to do with Native Americans ranged from full integration to total extermination . Palmer proved effective negotiating " Cessation of Hostility treaties " with the native tribes in 1854 and 1855 , brokering nine of fifteen treaties . He joined Isaac Stevens , his counterpart for the Washington Territory , in the successful Walla Walla Treaty Council of the Yakima Indian War . Approximately 5 @,@ 000 Indians attended deliberations from May 29 , 1855 to June 11 , 1855 .

Palmer gained an anti @-@ settler reputation among immigrants , newspapers and officials , who said he acted too favorably toward the Indians , even though he moved the tribes to reservations outside the Willamette Valley , seeking to avoid friction between settlers and natives by physical distance . In late 1855 , while moving the Rogue River tribes to the Grand Ronde Reservation , violent resistance was threatened by settlers who felt the land should not be given to the tribes . Palmer succeeded , but the territorial legislature petitioned for his removal from office , which became effective in 1857 .

After leaving office as Indian Affairs Superintendent , Palmer worked his farm on his land claim and operated his sawmill and several other enterprises . Between 1858 and 1861 he spent time in British Columbia as a merchant to prospectors in the gold rushes of the Thompson River , Similkameen Valley , and Fraser River . Palmer blazed a route to the gold fields of the Okanogan Valley and the upper portions of the Columbia River from Priest Rapids in 1860 . In 1862 , he was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives to represent Yamhill County . Now a member of the Republican Party , he was named Speaker of the House during that session .

That year Palmer also established the Columbia River Road Company to build a trail through the Columbia River Gorge on the Oregon side of the river . In 1864 , Palmer was elected to the State Senate and served in that chamber through 1866 . This included the 1865 special session of the legislature when Oregon adopted the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that abolished slavery throughout the United States . He ran for governor in the 1870 election as the Republican candidate , but was narrowly defeated by La Fayette Grover , largely for his Indian policies .

= = = Treaties negotiated by Palmer = = =

Treaty with the Rogue River , 1853

Treaty with the Umpqua ? Cow Creek Band , 1853

Treaty with the Rogue River , 1854

Treaty with the Chasta , etc . , 1854

Treaty with the Umpqua and Kalapuya , 1854

Treaty with the Kalapuya , etc . , 1855

Treaty with the Wallawalla , Cayuse , etc . , 1855

Treaty with the Middle Tribes of Oregon , 1855

Treaty with the Molala , 1855

= = Later years and legacy = =

Palmer 's brother , named Ephraim like their father , also immigrated to Oregon and served as a captain in the first regiment of the Oregon Infantry . In 1871 , Joel was the state 's Indian agent to the Siletz tribe , remaining in the office until 1873 . All eight of Palmer 's children completed higher education . Joel Palmer died in Dayton on June 9 , 1881 , at the age of 70 . His former home that he built in 1852 , Palmer House , was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 , and is now operating as a restaurant . Palmer 's name is one of 158 memorialized in the frieze of the two chambers of the Oregon Legislative Assembly at the Oregon State Capitol , with his located in the Senate chamber . During World War II the SS Joel Palmer Liberty ship was built and named in his honor .