

Voyage of Discovery

On the Lewis and Clark Trail – Kennewick, Washington, to Portland, Oregon

15 July 2021



HISTORIC OREGON TRAIL MEACHAM

FIRST KNOWN AS LEE'S ENCAMPMENT,
FROM ESTABLISHMENT OF A TROOP
CAMP BY MAJOR H.A.G. LEE IN 1844.
A.B. AND HARVEY MEACHAM OPERATED
FAMOUS "MOUNTAIN HOUSE" HERE WHICH
GAVE THE TOWN IT'S PRESENT NAME.
IN LATER YEARS A FAMOUS RAILROAD
EATING HOUSE "THE LOG CABIN" BE-
CAME NATIONALLY KNOWN UNDER THE
SUPERVISION OF GRANDMA MUNRA, A
WELL-KNOWN PIONEER FIGURE. ON JULY
3, 1923, REPORTERS NOTED MEACHAM
WAS CAPITOL OF THE U.S. FOR A DAY
WHEN PRESIDENT HARDING STOPPED
AND PARTICIPATED IN THE EXCER-
PT COMMEMORATING THE EIGHTIETH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE COVERED WAG-
GONNERS' EMIGRATION 1843.



Eiffel Tower
Mount Rushmore
Meacham, Oregon



Downtown Meacham, Oregon: the Oregon Trail Store & Deli and whatever the brown-sided building was. As you head south on Interstate 84 from Pendleton, it's two exits past Poverty Flat Road, just over Deadman's Pass in the Blue Mountains.



Covid took severely depressed the fire department's business.



Meacham itself is in the woods, but if you look to the northwest over Deadman's Pass, you get this view.

Alfred B. Meacham

Had I not seen a tiny dot called “Meacham” in the northeast corner of Oregon when I was mapping out this trip, there’s no way Julie and I would have come to this place.

But when I did see it, there was no way I wasn’t going to take the extra couple of hours’ driving time between Kennewick, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, so we could visit Meacham, humble though its dot is.



*Yours Truly
A. B. Meacham*

*Opening page,
Wigwam And War-Path; or the Royal Chief In Chains*

The Meacham it’s named for, Alfred Benjamin Meacham, died in 1882, I learned within two quick Wikipedia hits.¹ But not before he was named U.S. Superintendent for Indian Affairs for Oregon by President Ulysses. S. Grant in 1869, getting shot a half-dozen times during an attempt to negotiate an end to the Modoc War between that tribe and the U.S. Army, being rescued by the Modoc woman he’d asked to serve as interpreter and then writing two books and a play about it all.

In 1923, President Warren G. Harding’s train stopped in Meacham on July 3 long enough for the place to be declared capital of the United States for the day.² Then Harding rode a bit farther down the line to give a speech in Pendleton on the Fourth of July commemorating the Oregon Trail, which runs between the two towns.

So, to answer your first question, I don’t know. But I’d be honored if I were. We look like twins.

Alfred’s parents, Anderson Anton Meacham (1800-1882), a Methodist clergyman, and Lucinda Wasson (1805-1847) were from Chatham County, North Carolina. My Meacham ancestors were from one county east, Wake County (Raleigh), but I haven’t found a link between the two. A lot of records weren’t kept in the 1700s.

By the time Alfred was born in 1826, his parents had moved to Orange County, Indiana, because of “their abhorrence of slavery, and their desire to raise their children under the influence of free institutions.”³ His father was serving in the Indiana legislature. The family moved to Iowa when Alfred was 15.

A few years later, as white farmers were pouring into Iowa, the federal government hired Meacham to help with the “removal” of the Sauk and Fox (also known as the Sac and Fox) Tribe from their land along the Mississippi River to a new reservation 100 miles farther west.

He recalled that work, leading an ox team pulling a wagon load of family possessions, in his 1875 book Wigwam And War-Path; or the Royal Chief In Chains.⁴ “I do not know that, in this instance, any advantage was taken of these Indians, except that advantage which the powerful always have over the weak,” he

wrote. “But I do know that if they had been allowed a choice, they never would have consented to leave the graves of their fathers.”

Meacham went to the California Gold Rush in 1850, returned to Iowa two years later to marry Orpha Caroline Ferree, and then returned to Solano County, California, less than two hours from where I now live. Brother Harvey, who ran a stagecoach stop on the Oregon Trail in what was originally called Lee’s Encampment, asked Alfred in 1863 to join him there.

Alfred became involved in Oregon politics as an Indian rights advocate, and that eventually led to his being named chair of the Modoc Peace Commission in 1873 to negotiate an end to the Modoc War.

The Modoc lived principally in Northern California (Modoc County is in the northeastern corner of the state), which the federal government placed on the same Oregon reservation as the Klamath Tribe, their historic enemies. Because of the intertribal friction and the government’s failure to provide supplies to the Modoc promised in the reservation treaty, some of the tribe, under their leader, Kintpuash – known to whites as Captain Jack – began harassing white settlers occupying their previous land, demanding and obtaining rent.⁵



Winema¹²

A series of Indian raids and battles with soldiers followed over a period of about six years until the peace commission under Meacham arranged a meeting with Captain Jack in a rugged area of jagged lava flows and caves near present day Klamath Falls, Oregon. There, Captain Jack and his Modoc negotiators suddenly opened fire, killing General Edward Canby, the army’s lead negotiator, and the Rev. Eleazer Thomas.⁶ The site is now part of Lava Beds National Monument⁷ near Tulelake, California.

Meacham was seriously wounded and about to be scalped when Winema, the Modoc woman working as his interpreter, scared the warriors away by saying soldiers were approaching.

In the preface to his 1876 book *Wi-ne-ma (the Woman Chief) and Her People*,⁸ Meacham wrote that, “This book is written in the interest of justice and humanity, with the hope that its perusal may have a salutary effect upon the minds of its readers, and enable them to better understand a subject involving the honor of the American people, by one saved from a horrible death under the scalping knife. It is written with the avowed purpose of doing honor to the heroic Wi-ne-ma, who at the peril of her life sought to save the ill-fated Peace Commission to the Modoc Indians in 1873; the woman to whom the writer is indebted, under God, for his escape from death.” (He wrote long sentences, too.)

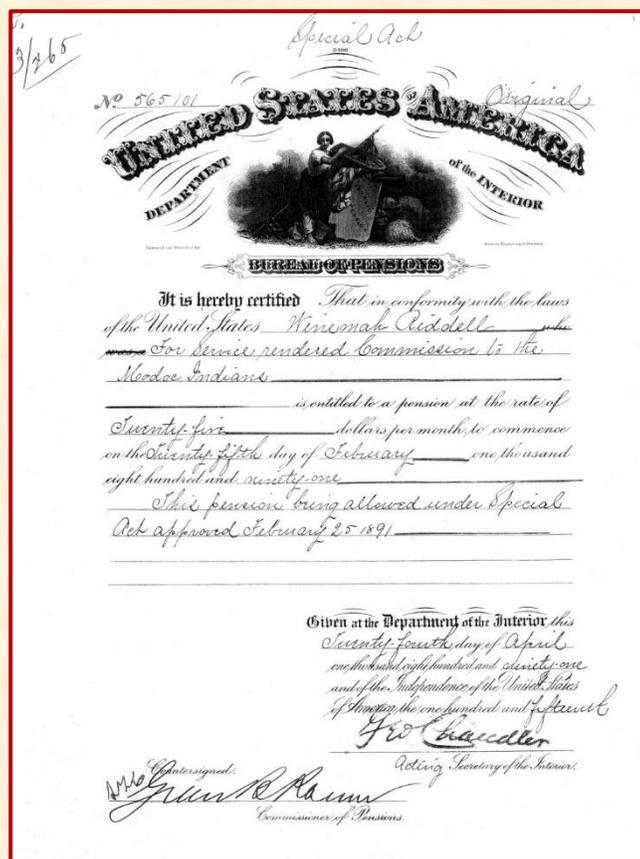
Winema’s story, including the events at the Lava Beds, is told in a 2005 story in *Prologue Magazine*,⁹ a publication of the National Archives, written by Rebecca Bales, then a history professor at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, California, and now on the faculty of California State University, Monterey Bay.

Winema was also the subject of a 17-minute “History Detectives” PBS video produced in 2010 tracing the history of a woven basket owned by a New Mexico woman.¹⁰

After his recovery, Meacham wrote a “lecture-play” called *The Tragedy of the Lava Beds*, which he, Winema, her white husband Frank Riddle and other Modoc Tribe members presented during an East Coast tour to promote Native American rights. The play was hosted in several cities by organizations such as the Universal Peace Union, whose officers included American Red Cross founder Clara Barton and Nobel Peace Prize winner Frédéric Passy, and the U.S. Indian Commission.

In 1879, Meacham accompanied Chief Joseph¹¹ of the Nez Perce, to Washington to meet with government officials. Chief Joseph is known for his declaration – which is disputed – “Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

Meacham also lobbied Congress for a federal pension for Winema. She was awarded \$25 a month in 1892, a decade after Meacham – and his father Anderson Meacham – died.



Winema’s pension certificate / Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 1

Notes

¹ **Meacham, Oregon**, Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meacham,_Oregon and **Alfred B. Meacham**, Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_B._Meacham

² **Ibid**

³ **Life of Alfred B. Meacham**, by T.A. Bland, T.A. & M.C. Bland Publishers, Washington, D.C., 1883, retrieved from the University of Minnesota Library via Google Books at <https://bit.ly/3AdC1kj> The quote is from page 5.

⁴ ***Wigwam and War-Path; or the Royal Chief In Chains***, by Alfred B. Meacham, J.P. Dale and Company, Boston, 1875. Book digitized by Google from the library of the University of Michigan

<https://archive.org/details/wigwamandwarpat00meacgoog/page/n2/mode/2up>

⁵ **Modoc War**, Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modoc_War

⁶ **Lava Beds, a brief history of the Modoc War**, National Park Service, Lava Beds National Monument

<https://www.nps.gov/labe/planyourvisit/upload/Modoc-War-FINAL.pdf>

⁷ **Lava Beds National Monument**, <https://www.nps.gov/labe/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

⁸ ***Wi-ne-ma (the Woman Chief) and Her People***, by Alfred B. Meacham, American Publishing Company, Hartford, Connecticut, 1876. Book digitized by Google from the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<https://archive.org/details/winemwomanchiefa00meacrich/page/n9/mode/2up>

⁹ **Winema and the Modoc War, One Woman's Struggle for Peace**, by Rebecca Bales, Prologue Magazine, Spring 2005, published by the National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2005/spring/winema.html>

¹⁰ **History Detectives: Modoc Basket**, Public Broadcasting System, 2010, archived on the website of KQED TV, San Francisco

<https://www.pbs.org/video/history-detectives-modoc-basket/>

¹¹ **Chief Joseph**, Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Joseph

¹² **Gill, De Lancey W.** (n.d.). Portrait (Front) of Kaitchkona Winema (Woman Sub-Chief), Called Toby Riddle, Wife of Frank Riddle, in Native Dress with Ornaments. Retrieved June 30, 2021, from <https://jstor.org/stable/community.12145272>

This chart will track the 78 counties in nine states that we're traveling through from St. Louis to the Pacific coast. The counties are listed in the order we enter them. Counties that the Corps of Discovery traveled through or had some other connection with have red explanation cells.

TOMORROW - County-by-county in Oregon

Start Day 10 at Portland, Oregon

Via U.S. 30, 101, WA 401, WA 4, I-5

County	Population	County seat	Source of name / significance to Lewis and Clark
70. Washington	601,592	Hillsboro	George Washington.
71. Clatsop	37,039	Astoria	Named for the local tribe. Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1805-06 in a fort they built named Fort Clatsop after reaching the Pacific Ocean. They headed back east on March 23 and reached St. Louis on Sept. 23.
72. Columbia	52,354	St. Helens	Named for the river, which Boston trader Robert Gray who named it for his ship in 1792. On the Columbia.

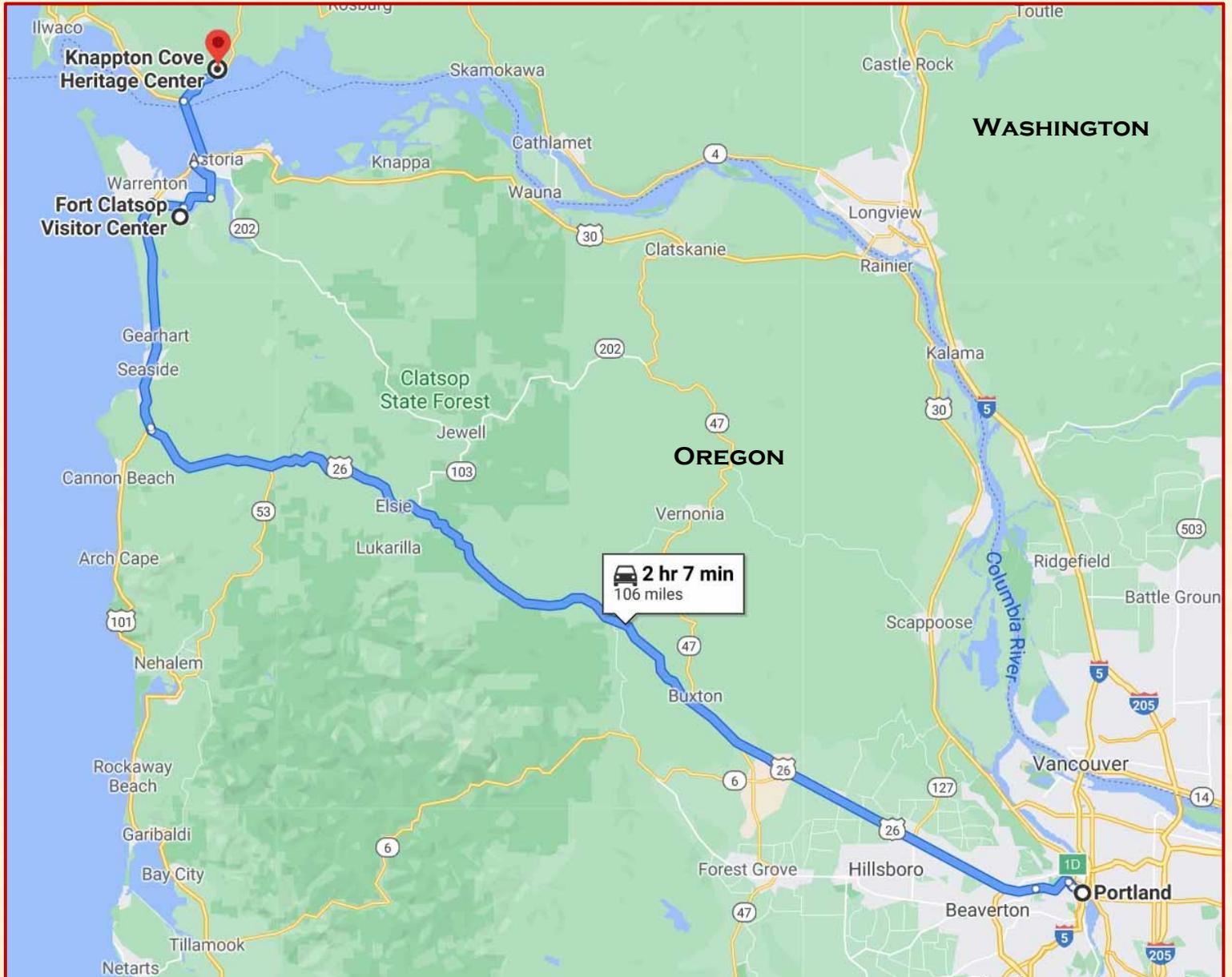
County-by-county in Washington

73. Pacific	22,984	South Bend	Expedition camped here in 1805, then voted to move its winter camp to the south bank of the river at Fort Clatsop. On the Columbia.
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End of Day 10 at Portland, Oregon

212 miles / 341 kilometers

3,108 / 5,002 kilometers



After Meacham ...



... the No.1 no-questions-asked, hands-down, top tourist trap in all of Oregon is Multnomah Falls.



Approaching Mount Hood – at 11,250 feet / 3,430 meters, Oregon’s tallest mountain and volcano – from the east, the view Lewis and Clark would have had paddling down the Columbia River on our right. The two visible glaciers, separated by the dark separating rock band, are Newton Clark on the left and Eliot on the right.

I dressed the Sores of the principal Chief gave Some Small things to his children and promised the Chief Some Medicine for to Cure his Sores. His wife who I found to be a Sulky Bitch and was Somewhat afflicted with pains in her back. This I thought a good applied to get her on my Side applied here Something for her back. I rubed a little Camphere on her temples and back, and applied worm flannel to her back which She thought had nearly restored her to her former feelings.

*Captain William Clark
Friday 18th April 1806*

Looking upstream from Crown Point at the eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge, which stretches 80 miles / 130 kilometers between cliffs up to 4,000 feet / 1,200 meters high. At this point, Lewis and Clark were about 100 miles / 180 kilometers from the ocean.