

W. L. ADAMS

President Abraham Lincoln was a regular reader of the *Argus*. Politically, Adams was passionately anti-slavery from his *Knox College* days. During these years he was also a powerful spokesman for the cause of Christ.

Among their several children Helen married John Wesley Johnson. He became the first President of the *University of Oregon* at Eugene. One son was a charter of Portland's *First Christian Church* and another son was influential in establishing the *Church of Christ* in Pateros, Washington Territory.

President Lincoln appointed W. L. Adams as the Collector of Customs at the Port of Astoria in the 1860s. He went to Philadelphia in 1873 and took a course in medicine. He also studied law and received the Doctor of Laws degree from the *American University of Pennsylvania*.

At Hood River, where most of the medical part of his life belongs, he engaged in farming and medical practice. He bought a home and said that he was "as happy as a clam thirty feet under water." He married Mary Sue Mosier in 1881 and they had five children.

W. L. Adams is buried in Hood River's *Idlewild Cemetery*.

Learn More —

A more extended story of W. L. Adams is on the Internet at: NCBible.org/nwh/ProAdamsWL.html

Mr. Adams is discussed in *Christians on the Oregon Trail* by Dr. Jerry Rushford, available in many libraries.

🌲 PIONEER PREACHERS 🌲

PAGES FROM OUR PAST — A SERIES

by Charles Dailey

W. L. ADAMS

The McBride preachers, father and son, settled west of Carlton Oregon, north of McMinnville. Arriving in 1848 was William Lysander Adams.

W. L. Adams was a young Presbyterian student who spent his first two years at *Knox College* in Galesburg, Illinois. Adams was won to the message of being a Christian only. He decided to study at Alexander Campbell's *Bethany College* in the panhandle of West Virginia. Adams arrived in Bethany with 25¢ in his pocket and was welcomed into Campbell's own home where he boarded while attending school.



W. L. Adams in his mature years.

During his time at Bethany, one who knew him said he studied on an average of seventeen hours a day. His incessant studies broke down his health and affected his eyesight. He was not able to finish the last month of school, the faculty having advised him to stop to protect his health.

In the fall of 1844, he married Frances Olivia Goodell, a school teacher. By 1847 Adams had assembled eight yoke of cattle, two wagons, three guns and other items necessary for the trip west. During this time he declined a five year contract to head a college, preferring to move to Oregon. Even Alexander Campbell wrote to dissuade the talented young Adams from going west. But he persisted.

The tenacious Adams started the trip in March, heading first to St. Joseph, Missouri where they joined forty other wagons headed for Oregon. He painted a sign on his wagon: "HIC TRANSIT!"

The family consisted of Will, Frances, two-year-old Inez and four-month-old Helen Elizabeth. Mud was sometimes knee-deep on the five month trek. They traveled the Barlow Toll Road past Mt. Hood and arrived at Philip Foster's home at Eagle Creek broke, but undaunted.

Mr. Foster gave the hungry family a peck of potatoes and the offer of a teaching job. However, with Yamhill County as the goal, the wagon pushed on to Oregon City, where Mr. Adams borrowed the money for the ferry to cross the Willamette. Upon reaching his destination, he traded his wagon for ten wild Spanish cows. This kept the family in beef for several years.

At the age of twenty-eight, W. L. Adams took a job teaching school. Mahala McBride agreed to let William and Frances stay in one of their buildings if he would teach their children. His worldview was strongly influenced by that of Alexander Campbell. The McBride's worldview had been shaped by that of Barton W. Stone and John Mulkey with an elevated emphasis on evangelism.

An amusing sign over the door of this one-room school read "Yamhill University." Adams had brought his

library west. There were about 250 volumes of choice books containing the best literature of the day. When Will Adams headed south to the gold fields in 1849, Frances, an experienced teacher, taught school for one year. Both teacher and some of his students went to pan gold and were successful. There were very few men left in Oregon during the summer of 1849.

It was Will Adams, more than any other preacher of record, that presented the gospel to the Klickitat Indians who had migrated into Yamhill County. He was their friend and he went to great effort to present the Gospel of our Lord to them at his home. His house was a free resort for the poor, sick, lazy and infirm for more than forty years.

School met on the property of James Fulton before it moved to a room in James McBride's house. Among the students were eight McBrides, seven Sheltons, two Woods (all cousins) and five or six others, including Levi Lindsay Rowland.

By means of his school, W. L. Adams influenced the men and women who would build the Oregon Territory into a state. One of his students became a state governor. Mr. Adams was the first of at least 11 *Bethany College* men that would leave a lasting mark for the Lord in the great Northwest.

Will Adam's name appears as a special speaker on many occasions, such as the establishing of *Pleasant Hill Church* near Eugene in 1850. He was one of the speakers on the day the *Bethel College* building was erected in 1855. He was one of the golden-tongued orators of his time.

Mr. Adams was elected probate judge of Yamhill County and established the *Oregon Argus* newspaper at Oregon City early in 1855. He edited the *Argus* for five years.