

MAC WALLER

own its own building. For many years, Waller was active in gospel preaching in the entire Willamette Valley. His name shows up regularly being present at camp meetings and other activities among the churches.

Seven years before Mr. Waller's passing, R. M. Messick lauded his ministry in Oregon in a report to the *Christian Standard* of 1885. At the end of a report on the Turner Convention, he wrote:

We missed, at our convention, Bro. H. M. Waller who resides at Monmouth. He was kept at home by serious illness of himself. Probably no man in Oregon has done more preaching and baptized more penitent believers than this faithful man of God, who is now nearing his three score and ten years.

Mac and Mary are buried side-by-side at *Hilltop Cemetery* in Polk County. The marker is a prominent one in the south section.

Learn More —

A more extended story of Mac Waller is on the Internet at: NCBible.org/nwh/ProWaller.html

Mr. Waller's Memoirs are the only extended story ever published by an Oregon pioneer preacher. They appeared in the *Christian Standard* of 1893. They are in condensed form beginning at: NCBible.org/nwh/Waller00.html

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

Mr. Waller's sister was Emily Brunk and her home on Highway 22, six miles west of Salem, is open for tours by appointment. 503-623-2669. It is listed on the National Registry of Historic Sites.

PIONEER PREACHERS

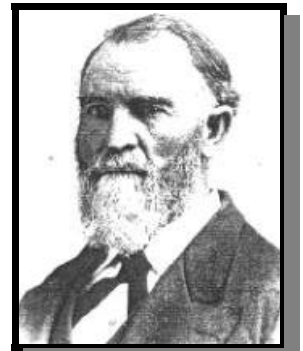
PAGES FROM OUR PAST — A SERIES

by Charles Dailey

MAC WALLER

Any story about the overland gospel preachers must include Mac Waller.¹ Hugh McNary Waller was probably the oldest in a family of at least seven children.

Mac Waller, from Pittsfield, Pike County, Illinois, had been successful in preaching in Illinois and Missouri during his 20s. One writer says "he converted thousands." When asked how he explained such results, Waller said, "Because the contrast between the Bible plea and the sectarian pleas was so great that it seemed a new light shining in dark places." Mac Waller has a message for this generation of preachers who prefer to look and sound like sectarian preachers.



However, at thirty years of age his health had broken and he was sickly at the time he left for Oregon. He was carried in a chair to the pulpit for his final sermon at Pittsfield and then carried to the wagon as the wagon

¹ Mac Waller is not to be confused with the Methodist preacher Alvin Waller who also figured prominently in Oregon's pioneer history. Waller Hall on the campus of *Willamette University* is named for Alvin Waller.

train left for the new land. The small caravan from Pittsfield was made up mainly of Church of Christ families. As he traveled, he regained his strength. We can imagine that he was treated royally by his brethren even though the journey was difficult.

It was 1847 and Thomas Crawford McBride was riding his horse over the trail, coming from Missouri and settling in Yamhill County. Mac, his widowed mother, Jane McNary Waller, and his brother George Townsend Waller were overlanding with their brethren from Illinois. During the next several years, most of Macs brothers and sisters came to the land of Eden and settled in Polk County.

While Mac was regaining his health on the overland journey, he may have seen Mary, the young daughter of Hezekiah and Melissa Davidson somewhere on the journey. Three years later, at age 33, he married Mary, 15 years his junior. Mac baptized her parents into Christ in 1851. It was impressive to stand by the grave of the Davidsons at Buena Vista and realize the history represented by their marker. Mac and Mary Waller had stood there more than 120 years ago thinking about eternity. Mac was 58 the year Hezekiah died.

Historian Dr. Clarence Swander says of Waller:

He was from Illinois. Timid and retiring by nature on ordinary occasions, when he stood before an audience and exhorted sinners to repent, his timidity fled and he was a veritable giant. It was said of him that he made more converts than any other preacher this country ever had.

Mac Waller quickly became a circuit riding preacher par excellence. Still single when he arrived, he joined Glen

Burnett and Dr. James McBride in planting and strengthening churches. His first project was the *Jefferson Institute* school building near present-day Rickreall, a few miles west of Salem. In the spring after he arrived, he organized believers there for Sunday meetings. The building served as a school in the mornings, court in the afternoons and a church on Sundays.

For the next few years the three circuit riders — Burnett, McBride and Waller — preached and planted churches in Polk, Marion, and Yamhill Counties. It was a great day for the undenominational cause of our Lord Jesus.

In 1856, Waller was one of several circuit riders that established the *Dallas Christian Church*. A few years later, he was leading a new group at Salem. We can find traces of his work in Independence, McMinnville and Hillsboro.

It is estimated that Mac Waller baptized more than **7,000** people into Christ, most of them in Oregon. Waller established a church at Eola.² In 1863 it reported 73 members. It was among the first churches in Oregon to

² The once thriving community of Eola, to the west of present Salem, was incorporated in 1856. It was an important town in the 1850s and once vied with Salem to be the state capital. An important dock city, the main part of town was washed away by a flood on the Willamette River and never rebuilt. It was once a steamboat stop and had a post office, a tan yard, a blacksmith, grist mill, a sawmill and, of course, a church. The name has been preserved in a street name, a county park and by several businesses spread along that section of Highway 22.