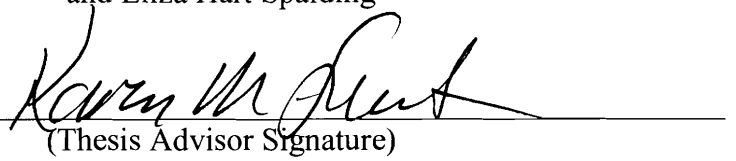
An Abstract of the Thesis of
Kristin J. Williams for the Master of Arts in History

Title:
Women and Missions in the West: A Comparative Study of Narcissa Prentiss Whitman and Eliza Hart Spalding

Abstract Approved: 
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In 1836 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spalding to the Pacific Northwest to convert the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians who lived there. As the first white women to travel to this "foreign" territory, Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were pioneers, opening the way for thousands of other women to travel west on the Oregon Trail.

Whitman and Spalding were also true believers: they were convinced of the superiority of their own culture and certain that all Christians should think, act, and look like they did. They wanted the Native Americans they worked with to adopt Christianity and Euro-American agricultural practices, to wear western style clothing, and to respect western views about property, marriage, and child rearing.

Notwithstanding their shared cultural assumptions, the two women had markedly different personalities. In time, their personal styles helped to create profound differences between the missions at Waiilatpu and Lapwai and very different outcomes when the two missions found themselves at the center of a clash between white culture and tribal culture in 1847. An attack by the Cayuse left Narcissa and ten other residents of the Waiilatpu mission dead but the Nez Perce did not attack Lapwai, which remained open for many years.

In the 19th century, middle class women were expected to have a domesticating influence on the men in their lives, and to provide a kind of redemption for their husbands who worked in the sinful world. In the same way, the ABCFM hoped that Narcissa and Eliza, by modeling Christian family life and the appropriate role of women, would domesticate the West and the Indians who lived there. As it turned out, rather than convert the Native Americans, the Oregon Missionaries found themselves providing encouragement and supplies for the thousands of white Americans immigrating to the area. In this way, Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were more influential in furthering the expansion of the United States than spreading the Gospel.

Women and Missions in the West:
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Narcissa Prentiss Whitman and Eliza Hart Spalding

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States has often been the site of religious revivals. One of the earliest, The Great Awakening, occurred during the mid-eighteenth century and birthed a spirit of evangelicalism and helped the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists grow into the largest Protestant denominations in the United States. The early 1800s were another era of religious awakening in the United States. This era, known as the Second Great Awakening, had an important impact on the lives of women of the time. Church membership records show that "women...comprised about two-thirds of those joining...evangelical churches during the Second Awakening."[1] The lives of Eliza Hart Spalding and Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, the first white women to settle in the Pacific Northwest, were drastically changed because of the Great Awakening. Both Eliza and Narcissa began planning missionary lives from the moment they converted to Christianity, Narcissa at age 11 and Eliza at 19. The way each experienced her ambition, however, was different. Narcissa sat back and "awaited the leadings of providence" while Eliza "seriously and actively prepared" by studying and attending lectures on theology.[2] Ultimately, both Narcissa and Eliza saw their missionary goals come to fruition.

As Narcissa and Eliza were entering missionary service, America was also entering a time of changing relations with Native American tribes. The 19th century was a time of expansion for the country, displacement for many Native American tribes. Thomas Jefferson, throughout the early 1800s, dedicated "time and energy to the

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[1] Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, "Women and Revivalism," in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller, ed. *Women and Religion in American, Vol 1* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981): 1.
[2] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman,* (Norma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 71.

conversion of the Indians into yeoman farmers and republicans."[3] Because this goal was not accomplished as rapidly as he would have liked, Jefferson saw the newly purchased Louisiana Territory as a place where "Indians could hunt undisturbed and adopt civilized ways as slowly as they wished."[4] Thus, the policy of pushing tribes ever further west was implemented. The rest of the expansionist century would see both the territory marked out for Native Americans and Native American populations shrink. This shrinking of territory and population also happened in the Pacific Northwest. The tribes of the Pacific Northwest had been interacting with traders for many years and their numbers were already being thinned: "by the time missionaries and settlers came to the Pacific Northwest...disease had reduced the region's Indian population to a fragment of its former size."[5] Narcissa and Eliza entered the Pacific Northwest at a time when Native American populations were on the cusp, just beginning to realize that their way of life was coming to an end.

Eliza and Narcissa settled in the Pacific Northwest along with their husbands, Henry Harmon Spalding and Dr. Marcus Whitman, the Spaldings near present-day Lewiston, Idaho and the Whitmans near present-day Walla Walla, Washington. They arrived in the area with the goal of establishing missions to bring the Gospel to the Cayuse and Nez Perce tribes. Although the couples had similar religious beliefs, similar backgrounds, and worked with similar tribes, the results of their missions were very different, much of this due to the differences between the two women. The Nez Perce

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[3]Harold Hellenbrand, "Not "To Destroy But to Fulfill": Jefferson, Indians, and Republican Dispensation," *Eighteenth Century Studies,* Vol 18, no 4 (autumn 1985): 524.
[4] Hellenbrand, 548.
[5] Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996): 39.

tribe honors Mrs. Spalding to this day while members of the Cayuse tribe killed Mrs. Whitman, along with her husband and others. Spalding helped cultivate a warm atmosphere at Lapwai by learning the Nez Perce language and opening a school for Nez Perce children and, eventually, adults. Whitman, on the other hand, contributed to a culture of distrust and fear at Waillatpu by holding herself apart from members of the Cayuse tribe. While, certainly, their husbands were different and had very different approaches when working with the tribes, and a measles outbreak damaged the already shaky relations at the Whitman Mission, some of the differences at the two missions are a direct result of differences between the two women.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Historical writing about Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding, and female missionaries in general, has evolved from narrative studies that emphasize the heroic sacrifices of these women to critical studies that place more emphasis on the motives and successes of the missionaries. In some cases, modern day historians are guilty of some of the same mistakes that Narcissa and Eliza were. To judge Narcissa and Eliza based on the mores of our modern culture is just as offensive as Narcissa and Eliza's judgment of the Native American cultures they worked with based on their own culture. It seems that there must be some happy medium between the too-critical studies and the too-accepting studies.

Clifford M. Drury is the best known and most published historian to study the Whitmans and Spaldings. Drury notes that both the Spaldings and the Whitmans "were convinced that the natives had to be civilized before they could be evangelized" and, therefore, "saw the necessity of inducing the Indians to take up farming and be settled."[6] Drury claims that the "troubles" at the Whitman mission were mainly a result of its location as an outpost on the Oregon Trail and Dr. Whitman's involvement in Oregon's political future. Drury also notes the successes of the Spalding Mission. Lapwai was not located on a route highly traveled by white men and the Spaldings were enthusiastically welcomed by the Nez Perce.[7] Geography, according to Drury, was one of the fateful differences between the Whitmans' Waiilatpu and the Spaldings' Lapwai.

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[6] Clifford M. Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* (Glendale, Ca: The Arthur Clark Company, 1973): 17.
[7] Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* 227.

Drury also notes some important differences between Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding. Narcissa is presented as somewhat idealistic. Drury notes that she "had little opportunity to know what such a career [missions] entailed" and that she was "rather sentimental in her religious beliefs."[8] Eliza, on the other hand, is portrayed as being well educated, deeply religious and serious.[9] She is also described as being industrious and a fast learner, the first in the mission to learn the Nez Perce language. Drury's portrayals seem to paint Narcissa as a woman who loved the *idea* of being a missionary while Eliza loved the *work* of missions. This important difference would play a large part in the fate of their respective missions.

Julie Roy Jeffrey is another historian who has written fairly extensively about this topic, mainly Mrs. Whitman. Jeffrey acknowledges the fact that the Whitmans have been honored as Protestant martyrs for years. She claims that studying the missionary movement is important, not so that the missionaries can be honored, but because these missionaries were the first real group of white Americans to live with Native American peoples. Previous interactions between white and Native Americans had been transitory, Lewis and Clark passing through or fur traders doing business, the Spaldings and Whitmans were the first white American families to live with Native Americans on a day to day basis. Understanding this cultural interaction can help us understand our present day missions, economic or religious. Studying the lives of women like Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding can help bring insight into cultural interactions while providing new understandings of the nineteenth century and women's experiences during the nineteenth century. Jeffrey claims that it was the influence of the Second Great

[8] Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* 108.
[9] Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* 152-153.

Awakening that caused Narcissa to want to "do something important, useful, and different."[10]

Jeffrey also supports some of Clifford Drury's claims. She says that Narcissa arrived at Waiilatpu "without any training for her work or any real knowledge of what it would entail."[11] Although she desired to do something new and different, Narcissa did not find missionary work liberating; she found Native American lifestyles shocking and disgusting and her attitude and distance exacerbated tensions between the missionaries and those to whom they ministered.[12] Finally, Jeffrey notes that Narcissa was not a complete failure. In the midst of a failed mission, Narcissa was a very successful mother. This success, according to Jeffrey, points to the flexibility of nineteenth century women who, in spite of seemingly few options, made life bearable and rewarding for themselves.[13] This analysis is a glimmer of hope in a fairly bleak landscape.

Eliza Hart Spalding has not been widely studied, mainly because she did not leave behind the quantity of documents that Narcissa Whitman did. Nevertheless, Deborah Lynn Dawson did write a fairly extensive account of Eliza's life in *Laboring in My Savior's Vineyard.* Dawson's main analysis of Eliza's life is that she "worked next to her husband as a partner," not merely as an assistant or helpmeet.[14] She also notes that education and religion were a significant part of Eliza's life. It was "the influence of these two institutions, school and church, which would profoundly affect the decisions

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[10] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): xiv.
[11] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* xv.
[12] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* xv.
[13] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* xv.
[14] Deborah L. Dawson, "Laboring in my savior's vineyard: the mission of Eliza Hart Spalding," (Ph. D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 1988). 9

Eliza Hart made relatively early in life, which in turn determined its course."[15] Dawson's claims about these primary institutions are well-founded and can be applied to the life of Narcissa Whitman as well.

Tony Horowitz included a short study of Eliza Spalding's life in his book, *The Devil May Care: Fifty Intrepid Americans and Their Quest for the Unknown.* He claims that Eliza "was an example of the indomitable spirit of faith and determination that characterized...territorial expansion during the 1840s, known as Manifest Destiny."[16] Although the term "Manifest Destiny" was not coined until 1845, the philosophy has always existed in American history. Americans believed they had a divine right to expand into the western half of their continent and that such expansion was almost inevitable. It is interesting, though, that Horowitz would connect Eliza to the concept of Manifest Destiny. Did Eliza go to Oregon out of a desire to expand the United States or out of a desire to expand Christianity?

Also of importance to this study, is the role of women missionaries. Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman entered the mission field at a time when women were generally barred from doing so. Neither Narcissa nor Eliza was actually considered a missionary by their contemporaries; they were the wives of missionaries. Ann White claims that female missionaries struggled with the conflict between two basic ideas, "equality of all persons before God and the ideology of the women's sphere."[17] Women who chose to become missionaries had to compromise by "accepting second class status

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[15] Dawson, 11.
[16] Tony Horowitz, *The Devil May Care: Fifty Intrepid Americans and Their Quest for the Unknown,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 112-113.
[17] Ann White, "Counting the Cost of Faith: America's Early Female Missionaries" *Church History* Vol 57, no 1 (March 1988): 19.

and protective restrictions."[18] The conflict between their Christian beliefs and societal restrictions weighed heavily on the mind of all female missionaries.

Barbara Welter claims that women were allowed to become missionaries for three main reasons. First, "there was a need to place women in areas where men were physically or socially barred." Second, interest from men was diminishing because of the increasing rewards of money and status in other professions, and third, there was a desire to "change the rhetoric of certain institutions without any concomitant wish to bother with the substance."[19] In other words, women were allowed to become missionaries in an attempt to make Protestantism *seem* more open to women in leadership roles. Welter claims that women sought missionary assignments because of a "zeal for progress...faith in manifest destiny [and] ideals of love and service."[20] Women were expected to fill an "important, self-denying, and subordinate" role on the mission field, a role not unlike the role they were expected to fill at home.[21]

Finally, Robert Burns contributes an important study of the missions of the Pacific Northwest in particular. Burns compares the Pacific Northwest to crusader Spain saying "in both situations an arrogantly expansive society moved in...while a disoriented subject society retreated and diminished."[22] His thesis is that the missionaries entered the Pacific Northwest with the goal of expanding the United States, not with the intention of converting Native peoples to Christianity. This idea, while similar to some of the early interpretations of Marcus Whitman's intentions, seems to overlook the genuine religious

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[18] White, 19.
[19] Barbara Welter, "She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth Century America," *American Quarterly* Vol 30 no 5 (Winter, 1978): 624.
[20] Welter, 625.
[21] Welter, 626.
[22] Robert Burns, "The Missionary Syndrome: Crusader and Pacific Northwest Religious Expansionism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol 30 No 2 (April 1988): 275.

intentions of the missionaries.[23] Whatever their mistakes, it seems inaccurate to completely ignore the sincerity of feeling of missionaries like Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding.

[23] See Chapter 10 of this thesis for further discussion of Marcus Whitman's intentions.

Chapter 3: The Time Period

Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding were greatly influenced by the era into which they were born. The early 1800s were a time of growth and change in the new United States and in the institutions that shaped it. Changes in religion, America's views of the environment, the Presidency and government helped mold Eliza and Narcissa into the missionary women they would become.

The Second Great Awakening

The revival that has come to be known as the Second Great Awakening began at Yale College in the late 1790s. Camp meetings, emotional preaching sessions, and folk-style music with a Christian message became important tools of conversion during this era. The revival had a broad impact within the church, with increased membership and church growth, but also in society as a whole. Foreign mission societies (like the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), educational efforts, and social reform societies were formed as a direct result of the revival.[24]

The best known of the revivalist circuit preachers, Charles Finney, and his influence on religious institutions of the day, had an important effect on the lives of both Narcissa and Eliza. Many Christians of the time held to a hyper-Calvinist doctrine that essentially taught that certain people were already chosen to enter heaven. These chosen people, the "elect," could do nothing to keep themselves out of heaven and those who weren't chosen could do nothing to get in to heaven. Obviously, this did not encourage people to be more pious. Charles Finney thought this was wrong. He believed that "God offered Himself to everyone and, most importantly, that one could be saved only through

[24] Joseph M. Tewinkel, *Built upon the Cornerstone: A Brief History of the Christian Church,* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980): 123.

an active acceptance of God's invitation to grace. The sinner chooses to sin just as the penitent chooses to repent."[25] Finney believed that revival was the best way to encourage this kind of active acceptance. Revival produced "an excitement of counter feeling and desire which will break the power of carnal and worldly desire and leave the will free to obey God."[26] Revivals in Finney's style offered an emotional outlet as well as an intellectual acceptance of God. Eliza Spalding became a Christian during the same year that Finney held a large revival in Utica, New York. It is not known if Eliza attended Finney's revival but it is likely that, living only 15 miles away from the event, she was affected in some way.

Women everywhere were greatly affected by revivals. Since they were often unable to leave their homes without male supervision, religious revivals offered much needed social interaction for women.[27] Revivalistic religion also allowed for "greater outlets for self-expression and innovation" than more established churches.[28] A few of the circuit preachers, in particular Charles Finney, began to allow women to participate in non-traditional roles. The church traditionally did not allow women to speak in public. Finney and other preachers began making some exceptions to this rule, especially in cases where it was evident that God had called the woman to speak. Even in these special cases, women were generally allowed to speak only in groups of women. Nonetheless, this departure from tradition made an important impact on the role of women in the church.

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[25] University of Virginia, "Charles Grandison Finney and the Revival," n.d. retrieved from http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/religion/revival.html, July 28, 2005.
[26] Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion,* (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Co, 1835):
[27] Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1987): 246.
[28] Tucker, *Daughters of the Church,* 245.

The formulation of foreign mission societies was another important impact of the Second Great Awakening. Newly converted Christians were extremely interested in proclaiming their new faith and going into foreign countries gave people there the opportunity to convert. For women, foreign mission work sometimes promised a further relaxation of traditional rules. Women "preaching to mixed or all-male groups were not seriously breaching any...injunctions anyway, since their hearers were only natives."[29] Foreign mission experiences occasionally let women escape from the bounds of their traditional wife and mother roles and experience greater independence. However, often women in the mission field were dismayed to see that their responsibilities were much the same as they would have been anyway. The duties of a wife on the foreign mission field were not far from the duties of a wife in the United States.

Women's Education

One of the most important changes of Eliza and Narcissa's time period, one that would impact their lives strongly, was the change in educational opportunities for women. In the late 18th and early 19th century, education for women was very limited. Women were commonly perceived as less intelligent than men and were often educated haphazardly, if at all.[30] Very few women had the opportunity for education beyond the district school. Those who did receive "advanced" education went to finishing schools or female academies that focused on domestic skills, social abilities, and "parlor savvy" rather than academics.[31] All this began to change in the 1820s and by 1850 women were

[29] Tucker, *Daughters of the Church,* 291.
[30] Leonard Sweet, "The Female Seminary Movement and Woman's Mission in Antebellum America" *Church History* Vol 54, no 1 (March 1985): 41.
[31] Sweet, 41.

seen as "possessing equal rights to a liberal education," at least at an elementary level.[32] These changes had a significant impact on the lives of Eliza and Narcissa.

At the end of the 18th century, people had begun looking at women's education in different ways. Noah Webster claimed that women should be educated because, with their primary responsibility for educating their children, they were "entrusted with forming the manners and morals of the nation."[33] In other words, educated women would make America greater. While education for women was encouraged, the ultimate goal of that education was "to make them good daughters, good wives, good mistresses, good members of society, and good Christians."[34] In other words, an academically rigorous curriculum was not to interfere with a woman's femininity.

The new emphasis on women's education had a focus on training teachers. Teaching was seen as an expansion of traditional women's roles; mothers were responsible for forming the minds and morals of their children and unmarried women could engage in the same occupation by working as schoolteachers. The idea was that education should help a woman "prepare for life," whether that life included marriage and motherhood or teaching.[35] The belief was that education was part of the road to moral perfection and teachers helped shape the nation's morality.[36] Both Narcissa and Eliza benefited from the emphasis on teacher training: Narcissa at the Troy, New York Female Seminary and Eliza at the Female Seminary in Clinton, New York. They would also both go on to use their education as teachers, Narcissa in teaching her own children

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[32] Sweet, 41.
[33] Jane Navarre, *The Female Teacher: The Beginnings of Teaching as a Women's Profession,* (Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 1977): 29.
[34] Navarre, 9-10.
[35] Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Daughter of Democracy*, (Washington D.C.: Zenger Publishing, 1929): 89.
[36] Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973): 173.

and the children of other missionaries and Eliza in teaching the Nez Perce people with whom she worked.

American Exceptionalism and Expansion

Eliza and Narcissa were born into an America that was experiencing rapid expansion. Between 1790 and 1820, ten new states were added to the union: Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Ohio, Rhode Island and Tennessee. With this expansion came a new freedom of movement. Americans had a "confidence in the future and their desire to share in the general improvement outweighed their local and familial attachments."[37] Inspired by Thomas Jefferson's belief that the yeoman farmer made America great and his claim that "all people have a right to America's bountiful landscape," Americans were willing to move to claim the land and prosperity that was "rightfully" theirs.

Both Eliza and Narcissa's families represent this new willingness to move. Eliza's father moved his family from Berlin, Connecticut to Holland Patent, New York when Eliza was 13 years old. This move, 230 miles to the west, was a big step for the family and allowed them to acquire a 144 acre farm. It did, however, mean that the Harts were rarely able to visit their extended family, which remained in Connecticut. Narcissa's father, Stephen, moved before he started his family. Stephen left his parents in New Hampshire because he believed that things would be more promising "out west."[38] He moved to Onondaga County, New York, remained there long enough to meet and marry Clarissa Ward, and then moved further southwest to Prattsburg. This

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[37]John Opie, *Nature's Nation: An Environmental History of the United States,* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998): 119.
[38]Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991):3.

move was, again, very beneficial for the Prentiss family and aided in Stephen's transformation into a highly respected member of society. The success of these moves must have impacted Eliza and Narcissa and enhanced their willingness to immigrate to Oregon.

America's rapid expansion was partly motivated by a desire for a better country but was enhanced by confidence and exuberance. A product of American Romanticism, this confidence led Americans to believe that there were no limits to what an individual, society, and the nation itself could achieve. This boundlessness can also be seen in the growing reform spirit of the nation. The country was expanding and people were eager to make things better; the lives of Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman seem to be only an example of things happening in the nation as a whole.

Chapter 4: The Cayuse and Nez Perce

The main, and most obvious, difference between the missions at Lapwai and Waiilatpu were the people involved. The inhabitants of Lapwai were members of the Nez Perce tribe and the Spalding family while the inhabitants of Waiilatpu were members of the Cayuse tribe and the Whitman family. A secondary, but equally important, difference was location. Waiilatpu's location was right along what would become known as the Oregon Trail while Lapwai was much more isolated. With the combination of personality differences and distinct differences in location and outside influence, it is not surprising that the missions ended in such opposite ways.

The Cayuse

The Cayuse people were a tribe of horsemen. They originally lived at the mouth of the John Day River but pushed into the Blue Mountains by the end of the 1700s. Although they were a relatively small tribe, only 200 to 300 when the Whitmans arrived, the Cayuse subjugated the Walla Walla and Umatilla tribes to gain a territory of their own. Their territorial expansion likely ended because of the Nez Perce and the two tribes developed a close relationship. The Cayuse even adopted the Nez Perce language which was less complex than their own. They did, however, continue using their own language for higher functions like religious ceremonies or political gatherings. They used the Nez Perce language mainly for trade purposes. The Cayuse acted as a kind of intermediary between the Nez Perce and Columbia River tribes. They were the center of their world and were used to being treated with some importance.[39]

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[39] Robert Ruby, *The Cayuse Indians: Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972): 56.

Cayuse social status was linked to possessions and rooted in individual and family groups rather than the tribe's status as a whole. Tribe members "fought less for territory than for booty and glory."[40] Some tribesmen signified their wealth and status by marrying twice, although polygamy was not a standard practice. Despite their individuality, Cayuse hospitality was very open. Cayuse homes were open to everyone and doors were never shut, this caused many misunderstandings when Narcissa tried to keep certain sections of her home for family only.

The root of the Whitman's difficulties with the Cayuse was the change in tribal status the arrival of the Whitmans signified. They had been at the center of their region, a part of every important happening and they felt that power slipping away. The Cayuse believed that the Whitmans were trying to steal their power. In 1842, when Marcus went East to convince the ABCFM that the Oregon missions should stay open, the Cayuse believed he was coming back with a band of men to destroy them.[41] Finally, the Cayuse saw the ever increasing stream of immigrants passing through Waiilatpu, between four and five thousand in 1847, and recognized that they would soon be outnumbered by white settlers. The measles outbreak of 1847 only added to the disgruntlement of some tribe members. There had long been rumors that Marcus was poisoning people with his medicine and this troubled time helped the rumors gain credence. Eager to force the missionaries to leave, a small group of Cayuse warriors attacked the mission house.

The attack, which came to be known as the Whitman Massacre, only hastened the destruction of the Cayuse tribe. A small force of American volunteer troops arrived in the region near the end of January, 1848 and engaged in a number of battles with the

[40] Ruby, *The Cayuse Indians*, 12.
[41] Ruby, *The Cayuse Indians,* 59.

Cayuse. The troops stole Cayuse horses and burned down lodges. They did not immediately succeed in capturing those responsible for the attack but the first Territorial Governor of Oregon, Joseph Lane, was determined to bring those responsible to justice. Nearly two years after the attack, five Cayuse were tried and put to death for their roles in the attack at Waiilatpu. In 1855, the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla tribes signed a treaty with the United States. As part of that treaty the tribes ceded "to the United States all their right, title, and claim to all and every part of the country claimed by them," more than 6.4 million acres, in return for a reservation now consisting of fewer than 172,000 acres, more than half of which are owned by non-Indians.[42] The majority of the remaining Cayuse people, now part of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, still live on the Reservation today.

The Nez Perce

Like the Cayuse, the Nez Perce, called Nimiipuu in their own language, were a tribe of horsemen. In fact, Nez Perce tribal tradition says that the tribe first became aware of horses among the Cayuse and then sent an expedition to trade with the Shoshoni for horses of their own. However the first horses came to be in Nez Perce hands, horses became a very important part of Nez Perce culture. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Nez Perce had built up some of the largest horse herds in North America.[43] The Nez Perce were also the only known tribe in North America to practice selective breeding. This practice resulted in highly prized horses. These horses added to the mystique of the

[42] U.S. Department of State, "Treaty with the Walla Walla, Cayuse, etc." June 9, 1855. retrieved from http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/treaty.PDF, September 27, 2005.
[43] Alvin Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of Old Oregon*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965): 28.

Nez Perce and helped make the tribe one of the most read about in the United States in the early nineteenth century.

At the time of Lewis and Clark's visit in the early 1800s, the Nez Perce tribe was one of the most powerful in the Northwest. Numbering between four and six thousand, the Nez Perce were hunter gatherers who had a set migration route that always led to the same wintering grounds. The Nez Perce were excellent hunters and became known among other Native American tribes for their distinctive bow. Although the Nez Perce did not practice any traditional agriculture, one of their main food staples, especially during the lean winter months, was camas, a root they dug up with sharp sticks and boiled into a mush or cooked into cakes. The Nez Perce had a close relationship with most of the other Northwestern people and many of those people groups spoke languages that were closely related to the Nez Perce language. The main enemies of the Nez Perce were the Snake Indians who lived in present day Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon. The Nez Perce fought with those people almost continually but established a truce period each summer for trade purposes. The social structure among the various tribes was well established long before white people entered the picture.

The Nez Perce identified themselves closely with the earth. According to Nez Perce beliefs, the earth was their mother who nourished them, the animals and trees were their brothers; they saw everything as interconnected. When the Spaldings first tried to introduce agriculture, the Nez Perce were resistant. To them, it did not make sense to "force" their mother to feed them; they were used to nature simply supplying their needs. The Nez Perce belief that the earth was their mother also meant that they did not believe that land could be owned. They were very hospitable, ready to share everything because

their mother shared everything with them. These cultural differences were some of the many points of conflict between Henry Spalding and the Nez Perce.

In 1831, four Nez Perce men arrived in St. Louis and stirred American interest in sending missionaries to the Northwest. These four men were sent by a larger group of Nez Perce chiefs in search of a "teacher with a copy of the white men's book."[44] This request seems to have been precipitated by the education of Spokane Garry and Kootenai Kelly. These two men were the sons of the chiefs of northern tribes. They had been sent as young boys to the Church of England's Red River school near present day Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the mission school the boys were taught to read, to plant and tend crops and to speak English, in addition to receiving religious instruction. When they left the school they were given copies of the King James Bible and were dressed in white men's clothes. They created a sensation when they returned to their tribes and visited other tribes. Many tribes, the Nez Perce included, believed that the understanding of white ways and language gave the boys new power.

The arrival of the Nez Perce men in St. Louis created significant interest throughout the United States. An account of their arrival was published in the *Christian Advocate* with an encouragement to "Let the Church awake from her slumbers and go forth...to the salvation of these wandering sons of our native forests."[45] This article was reprinted in other religious magazines and read in pulpits and church circles along with a plea begging mission minded people to respond to the call. It was this call that first encouraged the ABCFM to send a group of missionaries to the Oregon Country.

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[44] Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians,* 95.
[45] Joesphy, *The Nez Perce Indians,* 101.

Chapter 5: Eliza Spalding: Early Life

Very little is known about Eliza Hart's life before the Oregon Mission. She did not write as widely as Narcissa Whitman or many of the other women whose trail journals have become such important resources for historians. What little is known about Eliza's life, however, portrays an industrious woman eager to do good.

Eliza Hart was born on August 11, 1807 in Berlin, Connecticut to Levi and Martha. Her father was a "plain substantial farmer" who worked diligently to provide for his family which included three sons and two daughters born after Eliza.[46] In 1820, when Eliza was 13 years old, Levi Hart purchased 144 acres in Holland Patent, New York. Mr. and Mrs. Hart, and most of their children, lived on that land for the rest of their lives.

As a young girl, Eliza attended the district school. This school, like most public schools of the time, probably emphasized memorization of facts and encouraged older students to help teach younger students. This education style had significant impact on Eliza's future teaching style while living with the Nez Perce. After completing her district education, Eliza was fortunate to attend a Female Seminary in Clinton, New York. Seminary education for females was designed to train young women to be good Christians, good wives and mothers, and good teachers. According to her biographer, Eliza left the seminary with a "sense of obligation to spread the word of Christ to foreign lands."[47]

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[46] William Henry Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849, drawn from personal observation and authentic information,* (Portland, OR: Harris and Holman, 1870): 110.
[47] Deborah L. Dawson, *Laboring in My Savior's Vineyard: The Mission of Eliza Hart Spalding,* (Ph.D. diss., Bowling Green State University, 1988): 19.

Eliza's family was not particularly religious. Levi, her father, never understood Eliza's piety and did not ever fully accept her decision to leave the family for the west. The rest of his children stayed close to home, establishing their own homes on lots of Levi's land. One of his daughters never married and stayed at home, caring for Levi until his death. Eliza's decision to leave and live among the "savages" was a kind of betrayal for Levi. Martha, Eliza's mother, was somewhat more understanding of Eliza's decisions but, still, never had the depth of religious feelings that her daughter had.

Eliza was 19 when she made a confession of faith and joined the Holland Patent Presbyterian Church on August 20, 1826. For the next six years she studied on her own, taught school, was active in her church, and waited for the opportunity to serve God as a missionary. In 1830 she received a letter from Mrs. Orman Jackson, a friend in Prattsburg, New York. Mrs. Jackson informed Eliza of a 27 year old student who was looking to correspond with "a pious young lady."[48] That student was Henry Harmon Spalding.

Henry Spalding seems to have been wife shopping. Henry had entered the Franklin Academy in Prattsburg in 1825 and was "well known for his burning desire to enter the mission field."[49] Henry was a member of the same church as Narcissa Prentiss and Narcissa also attended Franklin Academy for a short time. Through this interaction, Henry learned of Narcissa's interest in the mission field and proposed to her. He was promptly rejected, a fact that appears to have caused some friction later in life. Henry then became engaged to Miss Levina Linsley who was also of a missionary mind. Miss

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[48] Dawson, 25.
[49] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Where wagons could go: Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding,* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1997): 30.

Linsley, unfortunately, came down with tuberculosis and let Henry out of the engagement so he could find a wife more physically able to accompany him. It was then that he began corresponding with Eliza Spalding.

The correspondence must have been proceeding satisfactorily because Eliza moved to Hudson, Ohio where Henry was attending Western Reserve College. She attended a women's school and Henry tutored her in algebra and astronomy in his spare time. On October 13, 1833 Henry and Eliza Spalding were married, a year earlier than they expected to so that Eliza could move with Henry to Cincinnati. In Cincinnati Henry attended Lane Theological Seminary in further preparation for the mission field. Eliza was not officially enrolled in the Seminary because of her gender but she was able to attend all of Henry's classes with him. To make ends meet while at the Seminary, Henry worked for a printer while Eliza tutored students in their home. These occupations would come in handy in Oregon when Henry set up the first printing press west of the Rocky Mountains and Eliza opened a school for the Nez Perce. It seems as though every step of Eliza's life was preparing her for her missionary future.

Henry finished studying at Lane Theological Seminary in the spring of 1835. His reasons for ending his program were probably twofold, he had just celebrated his 31st birthday and likely felt compelled to begin his life's work and he had recently learned that Eliza was pregnant. That spring Henry and Eliza went back to Holland Patent, Eliza's first visit to her parent's home in three years. From Holland Patent Henry wrote to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) requesting a placement for himself and his wife "to any Indian tribe or on any other heathen

ground."[50] It seems that his application's acceptance was aided by the reputation of his wife. In a letter of recommendation the Reverend Artemas Bullard of Cincinnati wrote, "his wife is very highly respected...she is one of the best women for a missionary's wife with whom I am acquainted."[51] The Spaldings were offered a placement among the Osage tribe in western Missouri.

Although Henry received word of this placement near the end of August, he wrote back to the Board saying that, because of the lateness of the year and Eliza's advanced pregnancy, they would be unable to make the trip to their new position before the following spring. Eliza gave birth to a stillborn baby girl at the end of October, 1835. In February Henry and Eliza began their trip to Missouri to work among the Osage. At the same time, Marcus Whitman decided to ask Henry and Eliza to accompany him and his wife Narcissa to serve in the Oregon country. Henry was excited at the possibility but concerned about his wife's ability to make the long trip over the mountains, her health had never really recovered from the difficult pregnancy and stillbirth. Henry left the decision to Eliza. Eliza, resolute in her decision, said "I like the command just as it stands, 'Go ye into all the world' and no exceptions for poor health."[52] Thus, Eliza Spalding became one of the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains.

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[50] Henry Harmon Spalding to the ABCFM, August 7, 1835 in Clifford Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1936): 179.
[51] Reverend Artemas Bullard to the ABCFM, August 3, 1835 in Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* 179.
[52] Nard Jones, *The Great Command,* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959):68.

Chapter 6: Eliza Spalding: Lapwai Mission Life

Henry and Eliza left Holland Patent on February 1, 1836 and on that day Eliza began keeping a journal. Her entries describe the trip, the people they met along the way, and a few of the hardships of the voyage. She is remarkably silent, however, about her own personal trials. Eliza's health remained poor and she was sick for the majority of the trip. Narcissa made fairly frequent mention of Eliza's poor health in her letters home. In one letter she comments on the food of the trip, mainly buffalo meat, and says that she enjoys it rather well. Eliza, she says, "is affected by it considerably, had been quite sick."[53] Eliza never mentions this sickness in her own journal; she never makes a complaint of any kind.

Eliza worked very diligently during the long trip. As soon as she was able, she began studying the Nez Perce language so that she would be able to understand the people she would be working with. Her sickness on the trip helped her learn the language; during a stay at a fur trading rendezvous Eliza was ill and remained in her tent most of the time. The Native American women surrounded Eliza, caring for her and examining her things. Eliza made the most of this attention, creating a small dictionary of native languages that helped her communicate with the women in their own language.[54] She was aided in this endeavor by her facility with language and her language background; she had studied Greek and Hebrew with Henry during his years at Lane Theological Seminary. Even so, communication with the Nez Perce at the mission would prove difficult. The communication barriers between the Spaldings and the Nez Perce

[53] Narcissa Whitman letter to Brother and Sister Whitman, June 27, 1836 in Clifford Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963): 57

[54] Laurie Winn Carlson, *On Sidesaddles to Heaven: The Women of the Rocky Mountain Mission,* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1998): 69.

would turn out to be greater than simply language barriers; the cultural and lifestyle differences would need to be considered as well.

The Spalding's overland journey was extremely difficult. Physically punishing, the journey required many sacrifices. They ate buffalo meat almost exclusively and the lack of fruits and vegetables must have been difficult to bear. The days were long and challenging, requiring endurance and strength. The dangers were obvious, at least one woman in the party, Martha Satterlee, who was scheduled to work at the Pawnee mission with her husband, died of tuberculosis after only a month on the trail. The journey was also marred by some personality conflicts. Although neither Narcissa nor Eliza ever mention it, Henry Gray, who accompanied the Whitmans and Spaldings to Oregon, told the ABCFM that "the two men [Henry and Marcus] had serious quarrels during the journey."[55] These conflicts were caused by a number of factors but can mainly be counted as a kind of power struggle; Henry Spalding and Marcus Whitman each believed himself to be the true leader of the group.

The group of travelers arrived at Fort Walla Walla, a Hudson's Bay Company trading center on the Columbia River, on September 1, 1836. Pierre Pambrun, the clerk in charge of the Fort, welcomed the travelers into his home as guests. The taste of civilization, after so long, must have been welcome. The party was fed an "ample breakfast of fresh salmon, potatoes, tea, bread, and butter."[56] This rest was very short lived; the party left Fort Walla Walla for Fort Vancouver on September 5.

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[55] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Where wagons could go: Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding,* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1997): 87.
[56] Jeffrey, *Where Wagons Could Go,* 89.

Henry and Eliza arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 14. Marcus and Narcissa had already arrived; they had taken a river boat to the Fort while Henry and Eliza had taken an overland trail with the animals. Eliza seemed pleased to be at the Fort. She wrote that they were "met with the warmest expressions of friendship" and noticed that "the luxuries of life seem to abound."[57] Fort Vancouver was the main supply depot for the Hudson's Bay Company and the center of all activity in the Pacific Northwest. Narcissa described the Fort as "the New York of the Pacific Ocean" and the women were greeted with some enthusiasm by John McLoughlin, the chief factor at the Fort.[58] Henry and Marcus left on September 22 to select a location to establish the mission. The ABCFM had intended for Marcus and Henry to work together at one mission location. When they returned to Fort Vancouver on October 29, Henry had decided to settle among the Nez Perce at Lapwai and Marcus chose to live at Waiilatpu with the Cayuse. Despite the establishment of two mission locations, the ABCFM always treated the two as one mission, the Oregon Mission. John McLoughlin invited the women to stay at Fort Vancouver through the winter while their husbands built appropriate shelters but both women were eager to be with their husbands. Eliza wrote that she was anxious to bring "the light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and...a more comfortable subsistence for this life" to the "wretched natives."[59] Setting up the Lapwai mission was the first step toward that goal.

The Spaldings arrived at Lapwai, which means the place of the butterflies, on December 23, 1836. They arrived very late in the year with few provisions for surviving

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[57] Eliza Hart Spalding Diary, September 14, 1836, Whitman College Archives.
[58] Jeffrey, *Where Wagons Could Go,* 92.
[59] Eliza Hart Spalding Diary, September 14, 1836, Whitman College Archives

the winter. The Nez Perce provided all their food for the winter, not only out of tribal hospitality but also because they were very pleased that the Spaldings had finally arrived. The Nez Perce also provided a lodge made of buffalo skins for the Spaldings to live in until their log cabin was completed. With the help of many Nez Perce men, one part of the Spalding's home was completed enough for them to move in on January 3, 1837. The transition from life on the trail to life among the Nez Perce was fairly easy for the Spaldings and they were able to begin their mission work almost immediately.

Henry and Eliza believed, like most missionaries of the time, that "before the Indians could become Christian, they must become civilized."[60] To accomplish this civilizing, one of the first things Eliza did was open a school. Intended to be for just the children, Eliza's school attracted many more students than she expected; a five year average of more than 200 students. Eliza's own schooling was integral to the success of the school at Lapwai. Eliza had to modify her teaching methods because of the size of her class. She would teach a small group of students and have them split up to teach other groups, leaving her available to provide extra help as needed. This teaching technique was popular in many schools of the time period and was particularly useful in a class the size of Eliza's.

Eliza employed a variety of teaching methods in the Lapwai School. The first method, memorization, was one used in many schools of the time period. Using the Bible as her main textbook, Eliza would read individual verses to her students until the verse was memorized. Then she would progress to the next verse. Eliza taught these verses in English so, especially at the beginning, it is unlikely that her pupils clearly

[60] William Henry Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849, drawn from personal observation and authentic information,* (Portland, OR: Harris and Holman, 1870): 67.

understood what they were repeating. Another teaching method that was popular with Eliza's pupils was music. According to her biographer, "Eliza's students rapidly learned any songs they were taught and enjoyed singing them over and over."[61] The Nez Perce learned a number of Protestant hymns before they really learned anything else and, over time, Eliza translated many of these hymns into their native tongue. Nez Perce churches still sing hymns translated by Eliza in their services. Finally, Eliza's most successful teaching method was storytelling. The Nez Perce culture was rooted in an oral tradition so the natives were familiar with this teaching style and enjoyed it. Eliza told and retold Bible stories accomplishing a dual goal of introducing the Nez Perce to Christianity and teaching English.

Eliza taught a variety of subjects in her school, both academic subjects and life lessons. Eliza opened the school with the intention of teaching the English language and then reading and writing. After little success with English-only teaching, Eliza began teaching in both languages and taught the Nez Perce to read and write in the Nez Perce language. Other subjects taught at the school were hygiene, weaving, spinning and sewing for the women and tilling and livestock care for the men. Henry and Eliza attempted to tie every school lesson back to their ultimate goal of introducing the Nez Perce to Christianity. Eliza's goal was to teach the Nez Perce to read the "word of God in their own language to peruse, and embrace the truth to become a people, civilize, Christianized and saved."[62]

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[61] Deborah Dawson Bonde, "Missionary Ways in the Wilderness: Eliza Hart Spalding, Maternal Associations, and the Nez Perce Indians," *American Presbyterians* vol 69 no 4 (Winter 1991): 279.
[62] Eliza Hart Spalding Diary, March 20, 1837, Whitman College Archives

Henry also had an important role in the 'civilizing' of the Nez Perce. One of Henry's main efforts was the establishment of a mission press. In the spring of 1838 Henry requested a press so that textbooks and other school materials could be printed easily. An ABCFM mission in the Sandwich Islands offered a small press that they were no longer using. Nearly a year later, in April 1839, the press arrived at Fort Vancouver where Henry picked it up. The press was set up at Lapwai and began running on May 16, 1839. It was the first printing press on the West Coast. Almost immediately Henry printed 400 copies of an eight page book of Bible stories for Nez Perce children, the first book printed in the Oregon country. Henry's press introduced written language to the Nez Perce. Traditionally an oral culture, Henry developed an alphabet for the Nez Perce language and Eliza taught the Nez Perce to read in their native language using books printed by Henry's press.

Henry was active in introducing the Nez Perce to other 'civilized' practices as well. Henry believed that the Nez Perce must adopt agricultural practices because buffalo and beaver were disappearing and hunger and disease was a growing problem among the tribe. Henry's observations of the changing environment were correct but his methods for teaching farming were foreign to the Nez Perce. Henry believed that the Nez Perce men were lazily looking on while the women did all the work. In Nez Perce culture, working the land was considered women's work. Henry attempted to separate the spheres of work in the way he understood it but Nez Perce men were very reluctant to take on farm work and gardening. This is another example of Henry and Eliza not fully understanding the culture they were working with. In the Nez Perce culture traditionally,

men and women had a very equal relationship. Henry and Eliza believed they were "raising the status of family life [but] actually depressed the status of women."[63]

Life on the mission was also full of important family events for Henry and Eliza. Their first living child, a daughter named Eliza, was born on November 13, 1837. The Nez Perce doted on the child and Eliza often allowed them to take her baby around. Little Eliza grew up speaking Nez Perce almost better than she spoke English. The Spaldings went on to have three more children, a son, Henry Hart, and two more daughters, Martha Jane and Amelia Lorene. Eliza took her role as mother very seriously. She believed that her main responsibility as a mother was to "bring them early into the fold of Christ and fit them for usefulness here and glory hereafter."[64] At the same time, she believed her responsibilities to the Nez Perce were very similar and did not think that her children should detract from her work as missionary. She never lost sight of the reason she had come to Oregon. For that reason, the three older children were sent to Waiilatpu to be taught by Narcissa and Eliza was able to continue teaching the Nez Perce without interruption.

Another important event for Eliza was one that occurred at Waiilatpu. On June 23, 1839, Alice Clarissa, the only daughter of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, fell into the river and drowned. When Henry and Eliza heard the news of the drowning, they immediately rushed to Waiilatpu to comfort the Whitmans. Henry performed Alice Clarissa's funeral service and then helped Marcus bury the child. After the funeral, Marcus and Narcissa went to Lapwai with Henry and Eliza. Eliza hoped that the time

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[63]Deborah L. Dawson, *Laboring in my savior's vineyard : the mission of Eliza Hart Spalding,* Thesis (Ph.D.), Bowling Green State University, 1988: 98.
[64] Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* 209.

away from Waiilatpu would help Narcissa deal with her grief. In fact, Narcissa was never the same after Alice Clarissa's death and, perhaps, the trip to Lapwai only delayed Narcissa's reaction to what life at Waiilatpu would be like without her daughter. Eliza was also greatly affected by Alice Clarissa's death. Her death seemed to bring home the reality of the dangers of life on the mission and ever after Eliza recognized that she was lucky that her children were healthy and well. The memory of Alice Clarissa's death stayed with Eliza and she never took her children's health for granted. In a letter to Mrs. C. Allen in August 1943, four years after Alice Clarissa's death, Eliza refers to her daughter saying she, "if spared, will be six years old."[65] It was Alice Clarissa's death that finally showed Eliza how far she was from her family and the world she had grown up in.

Eliza's health was another aspect of her life that greatly affected her work at the mission. Eliza was never very strong and the long overland trip had been especially difficult for her. She never really recovered from that trip. Henry often referred to Eliza as having a "feeble constitution" and on more than one occasion he had reason to be genuinely concerned for her life.[66] Eliza was also weakened during her seven pregnancies, including one that ended in stillbirth before the move to Oregon and two that ended in miscarriage. On one occasion, in August of 1843, Eliza believed her condition was so bad that she began saying goodbye to her family. Henry sent word to Waiilatpu that Marcus and Narcissa should come attend Eliza's funeral. When the Whitmans arrived, Dr. Whitman discovered that the whole family was suffering from scarlet fever. Eliza did not die then but her health was, again, worsened by that illness.

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[65] Eliza Spalding, Letter to Mrs. C. Allen, August 1943, Houghton Library, Harvard.
[66] Drury, Clifford, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* 218.

The work of the Spaldings at the Lapwai Mission came to an abrupt end in 1847. On November 29, 1847 a small band of Cayuse Indians attacked the mission house at Waiilatpu killing thirteen people, including Marcus and Narcissa. The 47 other people living at the mission, many of them Oregon Trail immigrants just passing through, were held captive by the attackers for a month. One of these captives was the eldest daughter of the Spaldings, a fact that frightened Henry and Eliza greatly. The survivors were finally released but things did not return to the way they had been. The ABCFM immediately closed the Oregon missions and ordered Henry and Eliza to leave the area.

The Spalding family moved to Brownsville in the Willamette Valley of Oregon near the settlements of many Oregon Trail immigrants. Henry began to focus his efforts and attention on the new white settlers rather than on Native Americans. He opened a school in Brownsville and was named school commissioner and, later, postmaster. Henry became very politically active during this time, working with the movement to make Oregon a state. Henry also became rabidly anti-Catholic, blaming Catholic missions for the attack at Waiilatpu, which became known as the "Whitman Massacre."

Eliza, on the other hand, experienced the culture shock of rejoining white society. Surrounded by white women and traditional family structures, Eliza was suddenly expected to return to a more traditional female role. Her health continued to be poor but because unmarried women were rare in Brownsville, she was unable to hire anyone to help with household work. Eliza found her days full of drudgery, she missed teaching and sharing the gospel, she missed the Native women she had become familiar with and she was surprised by the return to life among white people. After a few years in Brownsville Eliza was recognized by the territorial Governor as the oldest woman in

Oregon territory. Soon after that recognition she contracted tuberculosis and died on January 7, 1851.

Henry stayed in the Brownsville area until 1863 when he returned to Lapwai, which had become part of the Nez Perce Reservation in 1855. He taught at the school there but never again enjoyed the kind of relationship with the Nez Perce that he and Eliza had had earlier. The Bureau of Indian Affairs made Lapwai the site of the Nez Perce Agency in 1863 and Henry was seen as connected with the Indian Agent. The Nez Perce never really trusted him after that. Henry died at Lapwai in 1874 and was buried in the mission cemetery. In 1911, Sixty years after her death, Eliza's remains were moved from Brownsville, Oregon to a place beside her husband in Lapwai, Idaho.

Eliza's role at the Lapwai Mission was very important. Even her contemporaries realized that her contribution to the efforts there were crucial to their success. William Gray, who had traveled with the Whitmans and Spaldings and often worked at Waiilatpu, said that Eliza "deserves a great deal of credit...were it not for her, Mr. Spalding would not be so prosperous."[67] Eliza is also often described as having a calming influence on her husband. Henry had a quick temper and Eliza often stepped in to calm him during misunderstandings with the Nez Perce. Certainly, life at Lapwai would have been much different without the influence of Eliza Spalding.

[67] Drury, Clifford, *Henry Harmon Spalding,* 294.

Chapter 7: Narcissa Whitman: Early Life

The third child of Clarissa and Stephen Prentiss was born March 14, 1808 in Prattsburg, New York. The child, their first daughter, was born only a few days after Clarissa's own birthday and was given the name Narcissa. The rest of her siblings, there were eventually nine, were named after relatives and friends, Narcissa, with her exotic name, stood out and had a special relationship with her mother. From the beginning it seemed obvious that she would not have a conventional life.

The Prentiss home, although small by today's standards, was substantial for the time. There was space and possibility for comfort. This was the middle class existence of Narcissa's youth. The "rhythms of work and leisure [learned in that house]...shaped her notions of proper family life and the material circumstances that supported it."[68] Stephen Prentiss's social status was an important part of Narcissa's life. Narcissa's father served at least one term as County Supervisor in Steuben County, New York. He was made an Associate Judge for the County and was known from that point on as Judge Prentiss.[69] Clarissa Prentiss, Narcissa's mother was also well regarded in Prattsburg. Clifford Drury described Clarissa as being "queenly in her deportment...intelligent, gifted in conversation, and possessed [of]...Christian character."[70] Narcissa was accustomed to being a member of a highly esteemed family.

Another important aspect of Narcissa's young life was religion. Narcissa was just four months old when she was baptized and hers was the first baptism recorded in the

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[68] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 9.
[69] Clifford Drury, Marcus *Whitman, MD: Pioneer and Martyr,* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1937): 75.
[70] Drury, *Marcus Whitman, MD,* 76.

newly organized Prattsburg church's record of baptisms.[71] In February of 1819, when Narcissa was just eleven years old, there was a revival held at the Prattsburg church. Narcissa made a public confession of faith at this revival and became a member of the church. Narcissa cherished the memory of this and other revivals during her years in the Oregon country. She later referred to these as "melting times when sinners wept openly for their sins" and said that she yearned for times like those during the dry years of mission work.[72] It was the fervent, emotional religion of the Second Great Awakening that initially drew Narcissa to seek the mission field but, unfortunately, the work did not yield the glorious conversions that she had imagined.

During her adolescence Narcissa benefited from changing attitudes about female education. Narcissa attended the public school in Prattsburg and, in 1827, was a member of the first class of young women admitted to the Franklin Academy. Similar to a high school, the Franklin Academy had been opened for boys in 1824 and was sponsored by the local church. After a year at the Academy, Narcissa went to Troy, New York and enrolled in Mrs. Emma Willard's Female Seminary.

The Troy Female Seminary was the country's first academic school for young women. Founded by Mrs. Emma Willard, the school had rigorous academic standards. Mrs. Willard never claimed that women were "the political equals of men or should assume roles independent of men" but believed that education should "seek to bring its

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[71] Clifford Drury, *First White Women Over the Rockies: Diaries, Letters and Biographical Sketches of the Six Women of the Oregon Mission Who Made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838*, (Glendale CA: AH Clark Co, 1963): 27

[72] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Where wagons could go: Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding,* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1997): 25.

subject to the perfection of their moral, intellectual, and physical nature."[73] Mrs. Willard's school was special because girls of varying social positions and family situations were encouraged to attend there.[74] The Troy Female Seminary focused on training teachers and preparing young women to be able helpmates for their future husbands. Mrs. Willard believed that an educated woman was the best kind of wife because she was meeting her full potential.[75]

Narcissa's youth was marked by her outgoing personality. Her parent's home became a center of social activities as a result of Narcissa's popularity. Narcissa was a very beautiful young woman with a lovely singing voice and her peers seemed to gravitate to her side. A very social person, Narcissa greatly enjoyed having so many people around. One of the many people attracted to Narcissa was Henry Spalding. Henry and Narcissa met while they were both attending school at the Franklin Academy. Henry, like Narcissa, felt a burning desire to enter the mission field and was looking for a wife with similar desires. Thinking Narcissa was perfect for him, he proposed marriage. Narcissa, however, was not willing to accept any man just to fulfill her missionary goals. She rejected Henry's proposal; according to Narcissa's biographer, Henry's "missionary zeal could not overcome...his illegitimate birth, inferior social position, and lack of polish and grace."[76] This rejection would cause tension between the Spaldings and Whitmans later in life when they entered the mission field together. In fact, Henry, before agreeing to join the Oregon Mission, was heard by a number of different people saying

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[73] Stephen Phelps, "The Indomitable Emma Willard." *The Conservationist*, 33, no. 5 (March/April 1979),17-19.
[74] Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Daughter of Democracy,* (Washington: Zenger Publishing Co, 1929): 75.
[75] Lutz, *Emma Willard,* 90 and 97.
[76] Jeffrey, *Where Wagons Could Go,* 30.

that "I do not want to go into the same mission with Narcissa Prentiss, as I question her judgment."[77] Most of the future tensions between Narcissa and Eliza or Marcus and Henry can be traced back to this proposal and rejection.

After studying at the Troy Female Seminary, Narcissa became a school teacher. She taught in various district schools and showed particular interest in teaching science. After some time teaching, she began to focus her attention on responsibilities at home.[78] This period in Narcissa's life is marked by restlessness. She spent some time teaching, then returned to her parent's home to help her mother keep house. She and her sister Jane then went to Bath, NY and boarded with a family that ran an infant school. Jane remembered that Narcissa greatly enjoyed helping with that school.[79] In 1834 the Prentiss family moved to Amity, NY, 50 miles from Prattsburg. Narcissa moved with her parents and focused all of her time helping with Sunday school and various other ministries at the newly organized church.[80] She seemed to be keeping herself occupied while waiting for something bigger.

During this time Narcissa seemed to get tired of waiting. After she moved to Amity, she began inquiring of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions as to whether there was a place for an unmarried woman on the mission field. The ABCFM's response was quick and decisive, "I don't think that we have missions

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[77] Reverend A.B. Smith to Reverend David Greene, September 3, 1840 and W.H. Gray to Reverend David Green, October 14, 1840 in Clifford Merrill Drury, *Marcus Whitman, MD: Pioneer and Martyr,* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1937): 119.
[78] Clifford Merrill Drury, *Marcus Whitman, MD: Pioneer and Martyr* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1937): 86.
[79] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 33.
[80] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 34.

among the Indians where unmarried females are valuable just now."[81] At that time, the ABCFM believed that the most important missionary work a woman could accomplish was to "demonstrate the merits of Christian family life [and] domestic virtue and happiness."[82] In addition to that, the ABCFM believed that single women in pagan countries were too difficult to protect and susceptible to attacks on their virtue. As a single woman, Narcissa was unlikely to receive a missionary appointment from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

The Reverend Samuel Parker, an ABCFM missionary recruiter who had become acquainted with Narcissa at a revival meeting at the Amity church, began talking to Dr. Marcus Whitman about going over the Rocky Mountains to work with Indians in the Oregon country. Parker knew of Narcissa's similar interest and told Marcus about her. Marcus was officially appointed a missionary on January 14, 1835. He spent the weekend of February 22 in Amity visiting with Reverend Powell at the church there. During this visit, Marcus proposed to Narcissa and was accepted. Narcissa was subsequently appointed to the Oregon mission on March 18, 1835. Marcus left Amity after that weekend for St. Louis and further exploration of the travel route they would be taking on the trip to Oregon.

Marcus and Narcissa's engagement was not a typical arrangement. Although both of them were prolific letter writers and diary keepers, neither of them made any mention of their first meeting or impressions of the other. There was no pretense of romantic

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[81] Reverend David Greene to Reverend Samuel Parker, December 24, 1835, in Drury, *Marcus Whitman, MD,* 87.
[82] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 36.

love; they both saw marriage as a way of fulfilling their missionary dreams."[83] For Narcissa, marriage was a requirement if she wanted to accomplish her missionary goals. For Marcus, marriage was not a requirement but it was highly recommended. The ABCFM was becoming more and more interested in sending families onto the mission field and the board would often act as a matchmaking service for potential missionary couples. Bringing Marcus Whitman and Narcissa Prentiss together must have seemed providential to all involved.

Ten months after the proposal, Marcus returned to Amity to share his travel impressions with Narcissa. Marcus also began to arrange a group of other missionaries to join them in Oregon. Marcus and Narcissa had spent barely a week together since their engagement and now they were planning to set off together with only a few other people for a life of mission work. The couple was married on February 18, 1836. Narcissa sang a song at the end of the ceremony, the last line of which was "Let me hasten, let me hasten, far in heathen lands to dwell."[84] Even during her wedding ceremony, Narcissa did not let anyone forget that she was bound for the mission field. The couple spent the next few weeks visiting family and churches, raising money for their missionary voyage. Narcissa spent her 28th birthday, March 14, 1836, in Pittsburg, PA visiting the East Liberty Presbyterian Church. The next day, Marcus and Narcissa began their honeymoon trip, the long journey to the Oregon country.

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[83] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 53.
[84] "Yes, My Native Land! I Love Thee" by Reverend Samuel Smith in Clifford Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* (Glendale, CA: AH Clark Co, 1973): 162.

Chapter 8: Narcissa Whitman: Waiilatpu Mission Life

The trip to Oregon was Narcissa's first extended time away from her family. It was also her initiation into interacting with people from a culture different from her own. In a letter to her sister, Jane, Narcissa commented about the language of "the western people...I can scarcely understand them."[85] These were people speaking her native language and, already, she was having difficulty understanding them. According to her biographer, Narcissa was so "tightly enmeshed in her own culture...that she was ill prepared for the realities of working in another with very different values and mores."[86] Her shock at the differences of Western Americans was only the first indication of the differences that were to come.

It was at this point, perhaps, that she realized that life on the mission field was not going to be as romantic as she had imagined. Back in New York and on the route to St. Louis, Marcus and Narcissa had made a number of stops to visit with church groups and other supporters of their mission. Narcissa had relished the attention paid to missionaries, especially female ones. Now that they were actually on the road, Narcissa was beginning to realize that she was going to be all alone in Oregon.

While the overland journey was difficult and often life threatening for Eliza Spalding, it was one of the happiest times of Narcissa Whitman's life. The travel itself was almost easy for Narcissa, she was very physically fit and even the rough diet did not seem to bother her. Her main complaint was homesickness. Family was extremely important to Narcissa and even during the times when she had lived apart from her family

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[85]Narcissa Whitman letter to Jane Prentiss, July 15, 1836 in Lawrence Dodd, *Narcissa Whitman on the Oregon Trail*, Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1985: 12.
[86]Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 64.

she had kept in close touch with them. Now, as they moved outside of the boundaries of the U.S. Postal Service, Narcissa began to realize that contact with her family would be limited. In her diary she often referred to the things she missed, her mother's Sunday dinners, news of home and the opportunity to whisper in her mother's year. Especially for a young woman just recently married, the absence of her mother's guidance must have been difficult.

The happiest part of the overland trip for Narcissa was the opportunity to get to know her husband. Narcissa thoroughly enjoyed the beginning of the trip, especially the time spent on the steamboats *Siam,* from Pittsburg to Cincinnati, and *Junius,* from Cincinnati to St. Louis. On this part of the journey, Narcissa began to realize that "I have one of the kindest Husbands and the very best every way."[87] She also began relying on Marcus, letting him take on the role of leader. In a letter to her sister Narcissa wrote, "I have such a good place to shelter, under my husband's wings. I love to confide in his judgment and act under him. He is just like mother in telling me my failings...for it gives me a chance to improve."[88] Unlike Eliza Spalding, who sought an equal partnership with her husband, Narcissa was content to place her fate in the hands of her husband.

The day after she arrived in St. Louis, Narcissa had another encounter with a different culture. The Whitmans and Spaldings spent some time exploring the city. St. Louis in 1836 was beginning to develop into a large, thriving city. Barely 1000 people lived in St. Louis when Lewis and Clark left the city in 1804 to explore the uncharted Louisiana Territory. When they returned two years later, St. Louis became known as the last stop for people heading into the frontier. The city remained an important part of the

[87] Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, letter to Clarissa Prentiss, March 30, 1836.
[88] Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, letter to Jane Prentiss, March 31, 1836.

fur trade and, later, the gateway to the Oregon Trail. With the arrival of steamboat service in 1817, St. Louis became the center of commerce and travel along the Mississippi river. When Narcissa was there, the Basilica of St. Louis, King, the first Catholic Cathedral west of the Mississippi, was only two years old. The Whitmans and Spaldings decided to visit the new Cathedral. The visitors arrived at the Cathedral when the Archbishop was conducting High Mass. Narcissa wrote to her sister that the service left her with a strange feeling, "while sitting there and beholding this idolatry, I thot of the whited sepulcher which...was full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."[89] This was probably the first time Narcissa had witnessed a Catholic service and her response, typical of Protestant anti-Catholicism of the time, is not too surprising. However, given that Catholic rituals were much closer to Native American religious ceremonies than austere Protestant practices, Narcissa's reaction was a foreshadowing of the discomfort that she would experience in the years to come.

Sometime on the trip, probably during the month of June, Narcissa became pregnant. Although she never mentioned her condition in her letters or diary, Narcissa must have been overjoyed when she realized she was to be a mother. Narcissa, like most women of that era, believed her most important role was that of mother. It was in raising her children, especially sons, that a woman had a voice in politics, religion, and society.[90] The increasing recognition of the influence mothers had on their children, termed Republican Motherhood by later historians, led to greater access to education for women. For Narcissa, motherhood was also an important part of her Christian duties. She

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[89] Narcissa Whitman, letter to Jane Prentiss, March 31, 1836 in Clifford Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,*(Glendale, CA: AH Clark Co, 1973): 167.
[90] Catherine Beecher, *Treatise on Domestic Economy, For the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School,* (Boston: TH Webb, 1842): 26-34.

believed, as did the ABCFM, that raising a godly family was one of the best ways to witness to the Native Americans. In later years, Narcissa and Eliza would form a Maternal Association "for the purpose of adopting such methods as are best calculated to assist us in the right performance of our maternal duties."[91] Motherhood would become Narcissa's main joy when missionary life proved to be more difficult than she imagined.

On July 6, 1836, shortly after crossing the South Pass on the Continental Divide, the traveling party arrived at a rendezvous location along the Green River in what is now Wyoming. A mass of people connected with the fur trade was assembled at this location, some Nez Perce and other Native American tribes, some white trappers from the American Fur Company, and some Hudson's Bay Company deserters. These were the first new people Narcissa had seen since leaving St. Louis and she enjoyed the attention she was receiving because of her gender and the color of her skin. The white men at the rendezvous, fur trappers who had probably been out of contact with white women for decades, stared adoringly at Narcissa. She passed out missionary tracts and bibles so freely that Henry Spalding had to ask her to save some for the Native Americans they were going to work with. Narcissa's behavior at the rendezvous caused some friction among members of the traveling band. William Gray, an assistant traveling with the missionaries, said that Narcissa was "too busy flirting with dazzled and savage mountain men to pay much attention to her charges."[92] While Eliza spent the rendezvous in her

[91] Columbia Maternal Association Charter, September 3, 1839 in Deborah Dawson Bonde, "Missionary Ways in the Wilderness: Eliza Hart Spalding, Maternal Associations, and the Nez Perce Indians" *American Presbyterian* vol 69 no 4 (1991): 276.
[92] W.H. Gray in Laurie Winn Carlson, *On Sidesaddles to Heaven: The Women of the Rocky Mountain Mission* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1998): 70.

tent learning to communicate with Native American women, Narcissa spent her time soaking up the attention that would be missing during the lonely years at Waiilatpu.

After a few weeks rest on the Green River, the party left the rendezvous and traveled on to Fort Vancouver. Narcissa greatly enjoyed the time she spent at Fort Vancouver. After a long trip without the comforts they were used to, Fort Vancouver seemed like a cosmopolitan city and when the suggestion was made that Narcissa and Eliza should remain at the Fort while their husbands scouted an appropriate location for the mission, Narcissa readily agreed. Eliza and Narcissa worked in the Fort's school, teaching the more than fifty children of Hudson's Bay employees and Native American women enrolled there to sing.[93] This was yet another occasion where Narcissa's lovely singing voice put her in the center of attention. Narcissa reveled in the variety of foods to eat and the hospitality offered by John McLoughlin, the Chief Factor at the Fort. Even so, Narcissa missed Marcus and was pleased when he returned with a plan for settlement. McLoughlin invited Narcissa and Eliza to spend the winter at the Fort while their husbands built appropriate housing but both women were eager to begin their mission work and declined McLoughlin's offer.

It was the intent of the ABCFM that the Whitmans and Spaldings would work together to establish one mission in the Oregon country. The ABCFM believed that the combination of Marcus's skills as a physician and Henry's bible training would create a strong mission and that larger numbers would mean greater safety. This plan began to change on the long trip. The couples found it difficult to get along; Narcissa fought feelings of inadequacy when compared with Eliza; Henry thought Narcissa was flighty

[93] Carlson, *On Sidesaddles to Heaven,* 96.

and ill-equipped for mission work; Henry and Marcus were often at odds in decision-making because each believed himself to be the leader of the expedition; and Marcus cherished the idea of having his own mission, not being the physician at Henry's mission. It is likely that Henry and Marcus decided to establish two missions when they were at the rendezvous.[94] Members of both the Cayuse and Nez Perce tribes were at the rendezvous and both tribes wanted the missionaries to settle with them. With all of these factors combined, the decision to establish two missions must have come easily. Marcus and Narcissa decided to set up their mission among the Cayuse near Fort Walla Walla, at Waiilatpu, "the place of the rye grass," while Henry and Eliza continued on approximately 120 miles further east to settle with the Nez Perce at Lapwai, "the place of the butterflies."

Waiilatpu was located on a lovely high spot on the Walla Walla River. Waiilatpu was also located on a highly traveled trade route, members of the Hudson's Bay Company, Native Americans from various tribes, and, eventually, travelers on the Oregon Trail would pass right by the new mission. The mission itself included approximately 300 acres which lay in a triangular shape bordered on one side by the Walla Walla River and on another by a small creek, now known as Mill Creek. Marcus believed the soil was of excellent quality and the location between two water sources would make future irrigation projects successful. Finally, Waiilatpu was ideal because it was the Cayuse's tribal wintering location. Marcus believed that because they were

[94]Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* 224.

already familiar with the location and the soil there was of such excellent quality, it would be easy to encourage the Cayuse to adopt a more "civilized," settled lifestyle.[95]

The first winter at Waiilatpu was extremely difficult. Narcissa stayed at Fort Walla Walla for the first three weeks while Marcus completed a small log house for them to live in. They used blankets to cover the windows and doors and made furniture out of green cottonwood boards. The house was very small, approximately 12 feet wide by 36 feet long, but Narcissa was cheered to be settled finally. On December 26, she wrote to her mother, saying "My heart truly leaped for joy as I alighted from my horse, entered and seated myself before a pleasant fire. It occurred to me that my dear parents had made a similar beginning and perhaps more difficult one than ours."[96] She comforted herself by remembering that many married couples, including her own parents, start life out with very little. This was only a beginning and, surely, circumstances would improve.

Although Narcissa began living in the little mission house at the beginning of December, 1836, she did not actually visit the Cayuse village until January 2, 1837. This visit received barely a mention in her journal, just a brief comment that the Cayuse seemed pleased to meet her. Narcissa visited the people she had traveled across a continent to work with and made no mention of their lifestyle or habits. Plus, it had taken her nearly a month to make an initial visit. Certainly, there was a lot involved in setting up her new household and she was not able to get any assistance from the Cayuse women. As a matter of fact, Narcissa's domestic helpers were always members of the

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[95]Robert Ruby and John Brown, *The Cayuse Indians: Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972): 12.

[96] Narcissa Whitman, letter to Clarissa Prentiss, December 26, 1835 in *The Coming of the White Women, 1836: as told in the letters and journal of Narcissa Prentiss Whitman*, (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1937): 56.

nearby Walla Walla tribe. Perhaps the lack of help from the Cayuse made Narcissa feel slighted. It is also true that Narcissa was nearly six months pregnant when she and Marcus first arrived at Waiilatpu. It is possible that her advanced pregnancy made her somewhat reluctant to introduce herself to the Cayuse. The most likely reason for her hesitancy, however, is her discomfort with different cultures. If her reaction to Catholics in St. Louis and Western Americans are any indication, Narcissa was uncomfortable with the new and different. It is this discomfort that probably accounts for the time between arrival and the first visit.

Another change came to the Whitman family on March 14, 1837. It was Narcissa's 29th birthday, just a few weeks after the couple's first wedding anniversary. On that day their daughter, Alice Clarissa Whitman, was born. Remembering their far away families in this moment, they named her Alice after Marcus's mother and Clarissa after Narcissa's. In that time period, childbirth was a strictly female event. A laboring woman would generally be surrounded by her mother and other female relatives, the father-to-be kept out of the room to wait. Narcissa was cared for by Catherine Pambrun, the Native American wife of the head of Fort Walla Walla, and Marcus. In writing to her mother about the birth Narcissa said, "Thus you see how the missionary does in heathen lands. No mother, no sister, to relieve me of a single care."[97]

The birth of Alice Clarissa gave Narcissa a focus for her attentions and offered her an opening for conversation with the Cayuse. Alice Clarissa, called "the little stranger" by her mother, was the center of attention at Waiilatpu. She was "visited daily by the chiefs and principal men in camp" and the house was thronged by Cayuse women

[97] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Parents, March 30, 1837.

eager to see the new baby.[98] Cayuse baby girls underwent a head flattening process immediately after birth. This flattening, according to Narcissa, was considered "a peculiar mark of beauty, and it makes them more acceptable in the sight of the men as wives."[99] Narcissa did not carry Alice Clarissa in a board or flatten her head and this added to Cayuse interest in her. From the time she was born, the Cayuse called Alice Clarissa a Cayuse temi, a Cayuse girl. Throughout her life, Alice Clarissa would be a point of bonding between Marcus and Narcissa and the Cayuse people.

Alice Clarissa also represented an important truth about Narcissa. In the early years of Narcissa's life, all she could think about was her desire to enter the mission field, to share the gospel with the heathen. Throughout the overland trip, Narcissa's journal was full of talk about the hardships, what kinds of things they were eating and what she missed from home. Narcissa rarely mentioned her purpose in making the trip or her desire to spread the gospel. Once she arrived on the mission field, Narcissa's letters begin to show a different focus. Nearly every letter written after settling at Waiilatpu is concerned mainly with Alice Clarissa and motherhood. Narcissa rarely mentions the Cayuse people and when she does it is in relation to their interest in Alice Clarissa. Again and again Narcissa refers to Alice Clarissa as "my own little companion" and that "she is pleasant company for me here alone."[100] This is further evidence that life on the mission field was not what Narcissa had imagined back in New York. Narcissa focused her attention on Alice Clarissa, depending on Marcus to make mission decisions and develop relationships with the Cayuse.

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[98] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Parents, March 30, 1837.
[99] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Parents, March 30, 1837.
[100] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Parents, March 30, 1837.

Narcissa was involved in some aspects of the mission's work. Near the beginning of 1838, Marcus and Narcissa opened a school in the kitchen of the mission house at Waiilatpu. Marcus was the main teacher at the school on the Sabbath. Although he was a doctor and not a minister, Marcus believed evangelizing the Cayuse was an important part of his role. Narcissa's role on the Sabbath was to lead singing. Singing became an important means of communication because of language difficulties. Marcus and Narcissa seemed to have a particularly difficult time learning the Nez Perce language. Despite the language difficulties, Narcissa believe that the Cayuse were beginning to genuinely understand and accept Christianity.

During the week, Narcissa was the only teacher at the small mission school. Narcissa believed the Cayuse were very childlike people and that she was a kind of surrogate mother. Narcissa tried to mold the character of her students; she saw this as the main role of a teacher. She also placed significant emphasis on teaching her students to read; how else would they learn to study the Bible and other religious works? As in everything, teaching was simply an extension of her ultimate goal of spreading the gospel. Narcissa gave each of her students a new name, often the name of friends or family members back in New York. Narcissa saw this renaming as a way of giving her students a new identity and life. In the Bible, God often gave people new names as a way of signifying a change or emphasizing a covenant. For example, in the Old Testament God promised to make Abram the father of many nations so he gave him a new name, Abraham, meaning "father of many."[101] Narcissa saw her renaming in a similar way; her

[101] Genesis 17:5, New International Version.

students would no longer be known by their old, heathen names but, rather, by new, Christian names that represented the kind of people she hoped they would be.

In 1838 the ABCFM sent another group of missionaries into the Oregon Country. The new missionaries were William and Mary Gray, Asa and Sarah Smith, Elkanah and Mary Walker, and Cushing and Myra Eells. All of them rested for a time at Waiilaptu before establishing their own missions. Eventually the Walkers and Eells established a mission among the Spokanes, the Grays went to Lapwai to work with the Spaldings and the Smiths remained at Waiilaptu with the Whitmans. The addition of these new missionaries exacerbated the existing friction between the Spaldings and Whitmans but, at the same time, they were an encouragement because their arrival showed that the ABCFM believed the work they had begun was worth continuing.[102]

Narcissa found these new missionaries difficult to get along with. One of the causes of friction between Narcissa and the new missionaries was the question of women praying aloud in prayer meetings. Narcissa grew up in communities in western New York where a woman praying in public was common. The new missionary couples were from New England and had come from more puritanical religious communities that expected women to remain silent in church. Narcissa's public prayer encouraged one of the new missionary women, Mary Walker, to pray aloud. This caused Mary's husband, Elkanah, to consider Narcissa a trouble maker.[103] Narcissa believed that the unwillingness of the men to allow their wives to pray aloud was a sign that they lacked piety. This lack of piety was confirmed by Elkanah's use of chewing tobacco and at least

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[102] Thomas Jessett, "Christian Missions to the Indians of Oregon," *Church History* vol 28, no 2 (June 1959):152.
[103] Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,* 333.

one of the new men drank wine, something that was almost intolerable for the temperate Narcissa. The root of Narcissa's troubles with the new missionaries was the fact that none of them gave her and Marcus the deference she believed they should. While the ABCFM did not officially appoint a leader for the Oregon mission, Narcissa believed Marcus was the person in charge. This belief was the crux of her difficulties with the Spaldings and those difficulties only increased when the new missionaries arrived. Narcissa followed Marcus in everything and believed the rest of the missionaries should too.

The joy of Narcissa's life and her main distraction from the trials of mission life was her daughter, Alice Clarissa. In 1839, the precocious two-year-old was the life of the mission house. Narcissa described Alice Clarissa as a very smart child, conversant in both English and Nez Perce, and with a fondness for singing like her mother. The mission house was a few feet from the Walla Walla River and Alice Clarissa was very curious about the river. On Sunday afternoon, June 23, 1839, Narcissa was preparing the evening meal when she realized that Alice Clarissa was not in sight. The child was found in the river and none of Marcus's attempts to revive her succeeded. Of all the missionary families now a part of the Oregon mission, only Henry and Eliza came to Waiilatpu for the funeral.[104] Perhaps Henry and Eliza, also parents of a dead child, were the only ones who could understand the Whitmans' grief. Henry performed the ceremony and then convinced Marcus and Narcissa to return with them to Lapwai.

After two weeks at Lapwai, the Whitmans returned to Waiilatpu. Almost immediately Marcus received word of an illness in the area and rushed to assist. In a

[104] Carlson, *On Sidesaddles to Heaven,* 175.

letter to her mother Narcissa wrote "It was then that I fully realized the full reality of my bereavement."[105] Narcissa tormented herself with questions about the status of Alice Clarissa's soul. She had seen evidence of sin in Alice Clarissa but had also witnessed her earnest prayers and participation in family worship time. Narcissa believed that for a person to truly be saved they must make a confession of faith, be baptized and begin living an obviously changed life. Although Alice Clarissa had not done these things, Narcissa convinced herself that God would have mercy on her soul. A year before, one of Narcissa's servant girls had passed away after a long illness. Narcissa hadn't seen evidence of conversion and when the girl died Narcissa expressed her uncertainty that she had "escaped the fires of hell."[106] It is interesting that, in similar circumstances, Narcissa was certain that her own daughter was "at rest in the bosom of the blessed Jesus."[107]

Alice Clarissa's death changed everything for Narcissa and it was not something she recovered from easily. Although at first she continued to go through the motions of everyday life at the mission, Narcissa sank into a long depression that was often accompanied by illness, including a kidney infection that nearly killed her. Narcissa withdrew herself from all activities at the mission. She wrote to her mother, "I often look up to that place of rest where my dear babe has gone and feel that I shall soon follow her."[108] Narcissa had seen motherhood as her main occupation and a way of coping with missionary life. Alice Clarissa's death left a significant void in Narcissa's life.

Alice Clarissa's death occurred at a time when Narcissa was already developing hard feelings toward the Cayuse and her grief and sense of isolation only made those

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[105] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Mother, October 9, 1839.
[106] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Mrs. HKW Perkins, July 4, 1838, in Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 144.
[107] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Father, April 30, 1840.
[108] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Mother, October9, 1840.

feelings stronger. Narcissa believed the Cayuse were purposefully ignoring the good news of Christianity and were ungrateful for all the missionaries did for them. She hated that the Cayuse entered her house without permission and believed they did it with the intention of increasing her housework burden. In early 1841 Marcus finished the construction of a new, larger mission house. The new house included an "Indian room" that Narcissa hoped would keep the Cayuse from "making a highway of every part of our house."[109] The Cayuse saw the new house as a sign of prosperity and they deeply resented being kept out of the main section. This separation only deepened the tensions between Narcissa and the Cayuse.

From 1840 on, Waiilatpu became an important stopover on the Oregon Trail. The rate of immigrants gradually increased and, in tending to the needs of immigrants, Narcissa continued to widen the gap of understanding between herself and the Cayuse. The new immigration also changed the goals of the ABCFM. The Indian missions had not been as successful as the ABCFM had hoped and the Board began to think that God had been calling the missionaries on behalf of future settlers in Oregon instead. Despite this potential new focus, the ABCFM had heard about personality conflicts among the missionaries and, because of this, had significant concerns about some branches of the Oregon Mission. In response to these concerns, the ABCFM sent notice to the Oregon Mission that the mission at Waiilatpu should be closed and property there be sold to the Methodist mission, the Whitmans should transfer to the northern branch and continue their work among the Spokane, and the Spaldings, Smiths, and Grays should return to the United States immediately.

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[109] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 149.

The ABCFM's impression of the situation at the Oregon Mission was distorted by communication difficulties. It often took two years for letters to travel between the Oregon Mission and ABCFM headquarters in Boston. Often the ABCFM would receive a batch of letters describing a significant personality crisis and then would hear nothing, leaving the Board to believe that the Mission was in trouble. Marcus knew that the only way to really address the Board's concerns was to go to Boston and discuss the matter in person. Marcus left Waiilatpu for Boston on October 3, 1842. The Board, however, had decided that Mission closures and reassignments were not necessary after all and had sent a letter the previous April telling Marcus to ignore their earlier instructions. Marcus's trip, although unnecessary, allowed him to connect with his and Narcissa's families, clear up matters with the ABCFM, and even help guide a wagon train of emigrants over the Rocky Mountains. He arrived back at Waiilatpu on October 10, 1843.

Narcissa's relationship with the Cayuse experienced another setback during Marcus's year-long absence. Less than a week after Marcus left, Narcissa claimed that a Cayuse man had intended to rape her. The actual details of the incident are unclear, especially because Narcissa was the only witness, but Narcissa claimed that a Cayuse man tried to enter her bedroom while she was sleeping one night. Narcissa claimed that she realized what was happening before the man entirely opened the door and she was able to leap out of bed and throw herself against the door, securing it. When William Gray and Mr. Pambrun of Fort Walla Walla heard of the incident, they agreed with Narcissa's belief that she could have been raped and immediately took her to Fort Walla Walla to stay until Marcus returned from the east.

Depending on how the incident is interpreted, it can indicate very different things. If it is assumed that Narcissa imagined the incident or overreacted to a noise she did not understand, the incident is an indication of her fragile emotional state. Narcissa was becoming increasingly distrustful of the Cayuse and Marcus's absence brought those fears closer to the surface. The response of Mr. Gray and Pambrun also emphasizes a truth about the way Native Americans were viewed. At the time, Native Americans, like African Americans, were seen as hyper-sexual and it was thought that the very sight of a white woman could set them off. The incident can be interpreted in a near opposite way, though. Rape was a particularly serious offense among the Cayuse. If, indeed, a Cayuse man did intend to rape Narcissa, it indicates that Cayuse hostility toward Narcissa was growing. It could also have been an expression of the fear the Cayuse felt when they learned of Marcus's trip east. The Cayuse believed that Marcus was going east to gather an army of men to destroy them and they may have seen an attack against Narcissa as a way of fighting back.[110] Whether the incident was real or imagined, tensions between Narcissa and the Cayuse continued to increase.

Narcissa became a mother again, although not of a biological child, and this only increased the distance she put between herself and the Cayuse. After Alice Clarissa's death, Marcus and Narcissa began opening their home to orphaned children. Their first adopted child, Helen Mar Meek, was the daughter of a fur trapper named Joe and an unknown Native American woman. Helen came to live with the Whitmans at the end of 1840 at the age of two. Narcissa took in two other half Native American children, Mary Ann Bridger and David Malin, in 1841 and 1842. In 1843, Marcus's 13 year old nephew,

[110] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 176.

Perrin Whitman, came to live at Waiilatpu. The addition of these children into her life gave Narcissa purpose again and she wrote that she was "busy with the cares and instructions of my little family."[111]

Narcissa's most famous adoptees, and the children she referred to most in her letters, were the seven Sager children. The Sager children had started out in 1844 on the Oregon Trail from St. Louis with their parents, Henry and Naomi. Both Henry and Naomi became sick with "trail fever" and died somewhere along the road to Oregon. When their parents died the oldest of the seven Sagers was fourteen, the youngest five months old. Other members of the wagon train took care of the children until they reached Waiilatpu. Captain Shaw, the head of the wagon train, found Narcissa at the mission house and said "Your children have come, will you go out and see them?"[112] Narcissa went out to meet the children and, as Catherine Sager Pringle later remembered, "she was the prettiest woman we had ever seen."[113]

The Sager's arrival and Narcissa's total return to motherhood marked her complete withdrawal from all other mission activities. She had long been unsure of her abilities, even telling her parents that she believed herself "entirely unfitted for the work" and wishing for "one short hour of conversation, counsel and prayer" with them.[114] Narcissa had not seen the Cayuse immediately accept the Christian faith as she had thought they would and life as a missionary was not full of the highly emotional "melting times" that she had experienced back in New York. Narcissa wondered if she was really meant to be a missionary. Rather than focus on these uncertainties, Narcissa poured her

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[111] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Mrs. H.B. Brewer, October 12, 1841.
[112] Catherine Sager Pringle, *Across the Plains in 1844* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1989): 10.
[113] Pringle, *Across the Plains,* 12.
[114] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Parents, September 30, 1842.

energy and attention into her new family. Narcissa no longer had time to teach the Cayuse children but she did begin inviting the children of the other missionaries and some Hudson's Bay Company officials to come to Waiilatpu for school. Any white child who was at the mission, whether for a short term immigrant stopover or more permanently, was invited to attend school there. The Whitmans hired a school teacher to help Narcissa and to allow some separation of age levels. Both Marcus and Narcissa had dreams of someday establishing a college at Waiilatpu.[115] Narcissa relished her role as educator; this was one of her happiest times at the mission.

In the fall of 1847 this happiness began to fade. According to Henry Spalding, "For some time...the measles, followed by the dysentery, had been raging in the country."[116] Although recent studies have indicated that the source of the disease was probably a trip to California made by a group of Walla Walla and Cayuse tribesmen, the epidemic seemed to break out just as a new group of immigrants were coming to the mission. Several white people at the mission caught the disease but the Cayuse were affected at a much higher rate. It would have easy to associate the onslaught of the disease with the arrival of the new immigrants. Dr. Whitman attempted to treat the sick but his methods were not helping the sick nor were the sweathouse methods of the traditional medicine men.[117] Many Cayuse people died during the outbreak while most of the residents of the mission house and passing immigrants who had the disease recovered. This seemed to confirm Cayuse belief that the disease was an attack on their tribe. The disease, and Dr. Whitman's inability to treat it, also brought back the old rumors that the

[115] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 195.
[116] Henry Harmon Spalding, Letter to Stephen Prentiss, April 6, 1848.
[117] Jeffrey, *Converting the West,* 215.

Doctor was trying to poison the tribe. Memories of watermelons filled with emetics must have been high in the minds of the Cayuse.

The building tension came to a head on November 29, 1847. On that morning, a group of Cayuse men attacked the mission house. Marcus was in the kitchen and was hit twice from behind with a tomahawk. The eldest Sager boy, John, was also in the kitchen; he was shot and his throat slit. The attackers went through the mission house and outbuildings, killing a total of thirteen people, including Narcissa. The rest of the white people at the mission, 47 in total, were brought into the building used to house immigrant passersby. The survivors were held hostage there for a month before Peter Skene Ogden, a member of the Hudson's Bay Company from Fort Vancouver, negotiated for their release on December 29, 1847.

Chapter 9: Henry Spalding and Marcus Whitman

It would be both impossible and unfair to talk about the impact of Eliza and Narcissa without also discussing their husbands, Henry and Marcus. Henry and Marcus created the atmosphere at their respective missions by influencing the way the mission was perceived by the Native Americans they were working with and by establishing the rules of behavior and work at the mission. The men were also responsible for the way the missions were perceived by their supporters back in the United States because they were the main public face of the missions. Finally, the men essentially controlled the lives of their wives. Nineteenth century views on marriage, as embodied in the words of Jonathan Edwards, generally asserted that men were "made of a more robust nature, strong in body and mind, with more wisdom, strength and courage" and, therefore, women were expected to follow their husbands with "submission and resignation."[118] Notwithstanding the powerful personalities of Eliza and Narcissa, the influence of Henry and Marcus set the tone for their missions.

Henry Spalding

Henry Spalding was born in Prattsburg, New York in 1803. He was orphaned very early in life and was raised by foster parents. He received little education during his youth and really only began his formal education after his 21st birthday. On October 2, 1825 Henry was baptized and became a member of the Prattsburg Presbyterian Church. A few years later he decided to enter the ministry and began seeking education in pursuit of that goal. He entered Franklin Academy in 1828 and this is probably where he met Narcissa Prentiss for the first time. After leaving Franklin Academy, Henry attended the

[118] Jonathan Edwards, "When Marriage is According to the Nature and God's Designation" in Rosemary Ruther, *Women and Religion in America, vol 2* (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1983): 366.

Western Reserve College in Ohio and then Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. During this time Henry met and married Eliza Hart and the couple began seeking a missionary appointment from the ABCFM.

Henry had a volatile temper. When he first heard that the Whitmans were planning a mission in the Oregon country, he felt slighted that he and Eliza were not invited to go with them. To save face, Henry claimed that he never wanted to join the Whitman's party, saying he would not want to join them because he questioned Narcissa's judgment. In fact, the reason the Spaldings had not initially been included in the Oregon group was that Eliza was pregnant. When it became clear that she could travel, the Spaldings were added to the company. It is obvious that there were other misunderstandings between Henry and Marcus during the long trip to Oregon. When they finally arrived, they decided to establish separate missions to avoid working together.

Henry was also the cause of some difficulties among the members of the Oregon Mission. Although there were tensions between Henry and Marcus, the two men had essentially resolved those issues by agreeing to establish separate missions. However, in 1838 the ABCFM sent another group of missionaries and, although new missions were established, the group was forced to make decisions as a whole. The Oregon Mission, as the group was known, met together on an annual basis and made policies that were to apply to each of the missions. For example, the group decided that every effort should be made to teach in the native language of the people they were working with and that, as much as possible, supplies should be purchased together. The ABCFM hoped that

requiring the missionaries to work together would increase the success of the missions and reduce some of the expenses.

Henry became the center of the other missionaries' criticisms of the Oregon Mission's work. At the annual meeting of 1840, these criticisms came to a head. Henry was late in arriving and the rest of the missionaries made some important decisions, including the decision to establish another mission, without him. Henry thought it was inappropriate to make such a decision without the input of all members of the Oregon Mission. The group also had some important doctrinal differences. ABCFM missionaries were from Presbyterian and Congregationalist backgrounds. Henry, from a Presbyterian background, believed that a person could be baptized and made a member of the church with a confession of faith. Asa Smith, who was a Congregationalist, believed that a person had to more fully understand church doctrine to become a member and then only with a vote of the congregation. In response to these difficulties, Asa Smith and William Gray wrote letters to the ABCFM in Boston suggesting that Henry was indiscriminately admitting Indians to church membership and because of this he should be immediately recalled. These letters resulted in the ABCFM's letter calling for some mission closures and reassignments and Marcus's subsequent trip east.

Henry's rash nature would also cause some problems at Lapwai. Henry was eager to "civilize" the Nez Perce and he often ordered punishment by lash for "uncivilized" actions. Twice he mentions this form of punishment in his own diary; once a Nez Perce woman left her white husband because he was mistreating her. Henry ordered the woman found and "whiped, 70 lashes" as punishment for leaving. Later he "caused three

children to be whiped for stealing corn."[119] Henry generally ordered another man, a Nez Perce, to do the actual whipping; only once was it recorded that Henry used the lash himself and then only because a group of Nez Perce forced him to do it himself. This form of punishment did not increase Henry's popularity among the Nez Perce. As a matter of fact, most of Henry's successes at Lapwai can be attributed to Eliza. According to historian Alvin Josephy, the Nez Perce "saw her often trying to calm her husband's fierce temper, and...came to respect her as a human as well as a teacher."[120] The loyalty the Nez Perce showed to the Spaldings was a result of Eliza's good nature and ability to calm her husband.

Marcus Whitman

Marcus Whitman was born September 4, 1802 in Rushville, New York to Beza and Alice Whitman. Marcus was the couple's third son and was shortly followed by two more sons and a daughter. When Marcus was eight years old his father died and his mother, financially unable to care for all six children, was forced to send Marcus to live with his father's half-brother, Freedom Whitman. In Marcus's application to the ABCFM, he states that he received his "early education and religious instruction" from his uncle.[121] When Marcus was seventeen, he made a confession of faith and decided to enter the ministry. However, because he did not have the finances to pay for the seven years of college and seminary required of a minister, he decided to study medicine. Marcus began his medical studies by riding with a local doctor while he visited his

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[119] Clifford Drury, *Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and the Opening of Old Oregon,*(Glendale, CA: AH Clark Co, 1973): 276.
[120] Alvin Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965): 171.
[121] Marcus Whitman, American Board Application Letter, June 3, 1834, American Board, Boston.

patients. He did this for two years and then attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Fairfield, New York off and on before receiving his medical license on January 24, 1832. He intended to use his medical training for altruistic purposes since he could not afford a theological course of study.

From 1832 to 1835 Marcus practiced medicine in Wheeler, New York. After gaining experience during those three years, Marcus decided to apply to the ABCFM for a missionary appointment and gained that appointment on January 6, 1835. Deciding to go to the Oregon country and deciding who should accompany him was the easy part; actually establishing a mission would test Marcus's commitment. Marcus's personality contributed to some of the conflicts of the Oregon Mission. Although the ABCFM did not specify a leader of the group, other people were more inclined to follow Marcus and he became the unofficial leader. This was part of the reason for the tension between Marcus and Henry; Henry resented Marcus's position, after all, he was not a minister. Marcus's leadership role became more pronounced when the new missionaries arrived in 1838.

Although he acted as a kind of leader, Marcus was very non-confrontational. He often allowed Henry to sway his opinion in order to avoid argument and he took the side of Asa Smith and William Gray against Henry because it seemed to be the path of least resistance. Marcus's peacemaker tendencies helped the group of missionaries maintain surface cordiality with each other but they never addressed the deeper problems. If Marcus had been a more forceful leader the missionaries might have avoided the accusational letter writing that led to Marcus's 1843 trip to visit the ABCFM.

Marcus's non-confrontational nature also helps explain some of the problems at Waiilatpu. Marcus let Narcissa's animosity toward the Cayuse color his decision making. Although Narcissa thought she followed Marcus's lead in everything, it was she who wanted to keep the Cayuse out of the house and Marcus built the "Indian Room" of the mission house to keep her happy and that room became one of the Cayuse grievances against the Whitmans. Marcus also dealt with what were seen as problems with the Cayuse in very passive-aggressive ways. On one occasion, Marcus and Narcissa were having problems with the Cayuse stealing melons from their garden. Rather than talk with the Cayuse about it and, perhaps, learn that their views on property were very different from his own, Marcus injected the remaining melons with an emetic. This caused the Cayuse to become very sick when they ate the melons and also meant that the melons were unusable for Marcus and Narcissa. This trick also led to future Cayuse concerns that Marcus was poisoning them with his medicine. In the end, Marcus seemed to decide that converting the Cayuse was too difficult and he began to focus his attention on "helping make Oregon a Christian and enlightened country" and aiding the immigrants who flocked to settle there.[122]

The Cayuse and the Nez Perce seemed to view Marcus Whitman and Henry Spalding through the lenses of their wives. Marcus was essentially absent from daily Cayuse view. His main interaction with them was during the Sunday services that he led and through his occasional medical visits. He spent most of his time trying to establish agricultural practices at Waiilatpu and attending to mission business. His lack of connection to the Cayuse, and his later focus on immigrant needs, made it easy for them

[122] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman,* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 182.

to believe that he wanted to force them off their land. Narcissa was a more obvious presence at Waiilatpu and the Cayuse considered her to be haughty and proud. The more difficult relations with the Cayuse became, the more Narcissa withdrew and further exacerbated the problems. Narcissa's attitude toward the Cayuse determined the way they saw her, her husband and the mission in general.

In the same way, Eliza's behavior determined the way the Nez Perce viewed Henry. Henry treated the Nez Perce with disrespect, used a whip in discipline, and had an extremely bad temper. Eliza was able to calm her husband and shield the Nez Perce from some of his wrath. Because they loved and respected Eliza, they seemed to have more patience with Henry. While there were trials at Lapwai, Eliza's behavior and relationship with the Nez Perce helped keep the conflicts under control.

Chapter 10: Remembering the Whitmans and Spaldings

As long as historians have been writing about Narcissa Whitman they have been idealizing her. In 1915, Miles Cannon wrote *Waiilatpu: Its Rise and Fall* "featuring the journey of Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, the first American woman to cross the continent...her beautiful character...her missionary life with the Cayuse Indians [and] her dreadful massacre together with her husband."[123] Even present day historians get caught up in her mystique; Narcissa is well known as the first white woman over the Rockies while Eliza Spalding has been largely forgotten. Why is it that these two women, with such surface similarities, are remembered so differently? Narcissa's legacy was influenced by the legends that grew up around her death. That the "Whitman Massacre" was used to springboard Oregon to statehood immediately turned Marcus and Narcissa into martyrs and gave them places in the pantheon of pioneer heroes.

One of the reasons that Marcus and Narcissa are so well remembered is the legend surrounding Marcus's involvement in the creation of the Oregon Territory. Beginning in approximately 1870, with WH Gray's *History of Oregon*, historians began claiming that Marcus Whitman "saved" Oregon for the United States. The story was told that in 1842 Marcus had overheard news of a new colony of Canadians in the Oregon country while having dinner at Fort Walla Walla with members of the Hudson's Bay Company. This news came as a surprise to Marcus and caused him to realize that Oregon could become part of the United States by right of possession if a majority of settlers were American.[124] According to the story, it was this realization that caused Marcus to travel east in 1843

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[123] Miles Cannon, *Waiilatpu: Its Rise and Fall* (Boise: Capital News, 1915): front cover.
[124] Edward Gaylord Bourne, "The Legend of Marcus Whitman" *The American Historical Review* vol 6, no 2 (January 1901): 277.

and, while there, to organize and lead a large group of immigrants. Oregon Territory was created very soon after the Whitman Massacre, on August 14, 1838, a fact that added to the popularity of the story.

According to historian Edward Bourne, the story about Marcus's "saving" Oregon originated with Henry Spalding. At the time of the Whitman Massacre, Henry believed that the massacre had been caused by Catholic missionaries filling the minds of the Cayuse with lies about the Whitmans. In response to this claim, the Vicar General of Walla Walla, JBA Brouillet wrote a pamphlet entitled *Protestantism in Oregon: Account of the Murder of Dr. Whitman and the Ungrateful Calumnies of H. H. Spalding, Protestant Missionary.* Brouillet's pamphlet, which lays the blame for the massacre at the feet of the missionaries, inflamed Henry even further and caused him to claim that the massacre was brought about by "Jesuits...for the purpose of breaking up the American settlements and of regaining the territory."[125]

The truth of this story has been debated back and forth. In his 1901 article "The Whitman Legend," Edward Bourne claimed that the story of Marcus "saving" Oregon was a "perversion of history" and that "a figment of H. H. Spalding's invention."[126] Bourne also claimed that the story was so widely disseminated as a way of publicizing and collecting money for Whitman College, which evolved from a seminary to a four year college in 1883. Other historians have been less critical of Spalding's story. Myron Eells, son of the Reverend Cushing Eells who founded Whitman College, wrote "A Reply to Professor Bourne's 'The Whitman Legend'" in 1902. In his reply he claimed that, while Henry's story was probably exaggerated, "had not the missionaries been here

[125] Bourne, "The Legend of Marcus Whitman," 283.
[126] Bourne, "The Legend of Marcus Whitman," 296.

in those early days and advised the United States government of the value of the country, it would have passed under the British crown."[127] Whatever the veracity of the story of Marcus Whitman "saving" Oregon, it certainly added to the mystique already surrounding the murdered couple.

Another reason for the difference in the legacies of Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding is what Narcissa left behind. Narcissa was a prolific letter and journal writer and, more importantly, she was writing for an audience. Narcissa knew that her letters would be read by strangers and often published for the encouragement of others. Because of this she shaped her letters knowing, as she put it, that "what I say to one I say to all."[128] Narcissa's letters were full of descriptions of the every day; her travel journal described fording rivers and dusty days on the prairie. Her letters from Waiilatpu were also full of colorful descriptions and even included some of her apprehensions about her task. Eliza wrote letters and journal entries as well but her letters were full of meditations on religious subjects and were, somehow, less approachable. Narcissa began weaving herself into American consciousness with her letters.

All of this resulted in different ways of remembering the two women. Waiilatpu is now known as the Whitman Mission National Historic Site. According to the Park Service website, the site "commemorates the courage of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, the role the Whitmans played in establishing the Oregon Trail, and the challenges

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[127] Myron Eells, "A Reply to Professor Bourne's 'The Whitman Legend'" (Walla Walla: Statesman Printing Company, 1902): 100.
[128] Narcissa Whitman, Letter to Jane Prentiss, April 7, 1836 in Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West: A Biography of Narcissa Whitman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 63.

encountered when two different cultures meet."[129] Our National Park remembrance of Waiilatpu focuses on the Whitmans. The Spaldings are also remembered by the Park Service as part of Nez Perce National Historic Park. This park was designed to "commemorate the stories and history of the Nimiipuu and their interaction with explorers, fur traders, missionaries, soldiers, settlers, gold miners, and farmers who moved through or into the area."[130] While the Spaldings are remembered, they are remembered as part of the history of the Nez Perce tribe and their interactions with the Indian Agency. While neither of these approaches to history are necessarily wrong, they highlight the differences in the way the United States has chosen to remember two very similar pioneer couples.

[129] National Park Service, *Whitman Mission National Historic Site* retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/whmi/ on September 21, 2005.
[130] National Park Service, *Nez Perce National Historic Park* retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/nepe/ September 21, 2005.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

The early nineteenth century saw many changes in the kinds of possibilities open to women. Women of the time had access to greater educational opportunities than their mothers did. Women of the time were beginning to speak out against slavery. They were also beginning to fight for the right to vote and have their voices heard. Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman were both creators and beneficiaries of the changing situation for women. They were pioneers and were able to prove that women could survive the overland trip to the Oregon country. They were also making statements within their religious community because they believed that women must obey the call to spread the gospel in the same ways that men should. In many ways, Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman were trailblazers, seeking lives that included the traditional roles of wife and mother, but went far beyond them.

At the same time, they were very much products of their time. Like most white Americans, Narcissa and Eliza were convinced of their culture's superiority and neither of them took the time to really understand the Native American people they lived with. They believed that to be a Christian a person must act and dress and think like they did. This unwillingness to see value in other cultures led to conflicts at both Lapwai and Waiilatpu missions.

It is interesting to consider what motivated each of the players in this story. Certainly, the Whitmans and Spaldings were motivated to enter the mission field by their Christian faith. They believed strongly in the biblical commandment to "Go and make disciples of all nations."[131] It would be unfair to discount their faith. At the same time, it

[131] Matthew 28:19, New International Version.

is likely that each person or group involved in the Oregon mission had other reasons for their involvement. Perhaps Narcissa, who had grown up in the shadow of well-known and highly respected parents, was motivated by a desire to be something more than a daughter or wife. Perhaps Eliza was motivated by the possibility of being a true partner to her husband. Henry Spalding may have been looking for a way to escape the stigma of his illegitimate birth and Marcus Whitman may have been trying to fulfill his childhood dreams. Each of these people brought with them personal histories and life experiences that shaped the way they interacted with the Native Americans and with each other.

It is also interesting to consider the broader context. Historian Patricia Limerick argues that the whole history of the American West can be told in layers of overlapping interests: "Personal interests in the acquisition of property coincided with national interest in the acquisition of territory, and these interests overlapped in turn with the mission to extend the domain of Christian civilization."[132] The ABCFM was formed at the beginning of the Second Great Awakening as a way of increasing the Congregational and Presbyterian Church's societal influence and "preserve the Christian commonwealth."[133] Sending missionaries to India, China or the Pacific Northwest was one way of increasing the profile of the church in the United States. Well trained, culturally sensitive missionaries were not necessary to accomplish this goal; missionaries who captured the imagination of the people back home were. The ABCFM may also have seen some value in leaving Narcissa and Eliza untrained. Nineteenth century women were expected to manage their homes and provide a kind of redemption for their

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[132] Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West,* (New York: Norton, 1987): 36.
[133] Andrew, John, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists & foreign missions, 1800-1830,* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976): 9.

husbands who worked in the sinful world.[134] The ABCFM may have believed that Narcissa and Eliza simply needed to model this domesticity to bring the Native Americans to Christianity. In addition, the ABCFM may have believed that sending middle class American women onto the mission field was a way to prevent the men from "going native" by taking Native American wives and starting mixed blood families.[135] Many Americans of the time were concerned that white traders, merchants and missionaries would be attracted to Native American lifestyle and abandon their own culture. Sending women as a domesticating influence may have been one tactic for preventing that kind of influence. The Whitmans and the Spaldings may not have received adequate training in issues of culture, language, and cross-cultural interactions because that kind of training was not seen as necessary to accomplish the goals of the mission.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that even though the missionaries later aided American immigrants, the goal of the ABCFM was not to win the Pacific Northwest for the United States. The American Board of Commissioners for *Foreign* Missions thought of the Oregon Country as a foreign land – which, indeed, it was, and treated its Oregon missionaries the same as all the other foreign missionaries. The story of the Whitman Massacre was later used by Oregon's boosters to support the creation of Oregon Territory and Statehood but this was not the intention of the ABCFM. The use of the missions to support immigration efforts is just another example of overlapping interests in the Pacific Northwest.

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[134] Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity" *American Literature* vol 70, no 3 (September 1998): 583.
[135] Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in the Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Company,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996): 78.

Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman had no concept of the culture of the Native Americans they lived and worked with. Even Eliza, who at least made some effort to learn the Nez Perce language, did so with the sole purpose of "civilizing" and converting the tribe. Their lack of understanding of native culture was a direct result of the prevailing belief that Native Americans were inferior. Eliza Spalding and Narcissa Whitman, and the many other white settlers who came after them, did not believe they needed to understand Native American culture because Native Americans were expected to happily adopt the practices of white culture. The Waiilatpu and Lapwai missions ended in very different circumstances and those circumstances were greatly influenced by the personalities and styles of Eliza and Narcissa. The fate of Native American cultures was ultimately decided by a white culture convinced of its own superiority. The "first white women over the Rockies" were among the first to test the impact of religious and cultural missionary work in the west.

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Henry Harmon and Eliza Hart Spalding papers at Washington State University

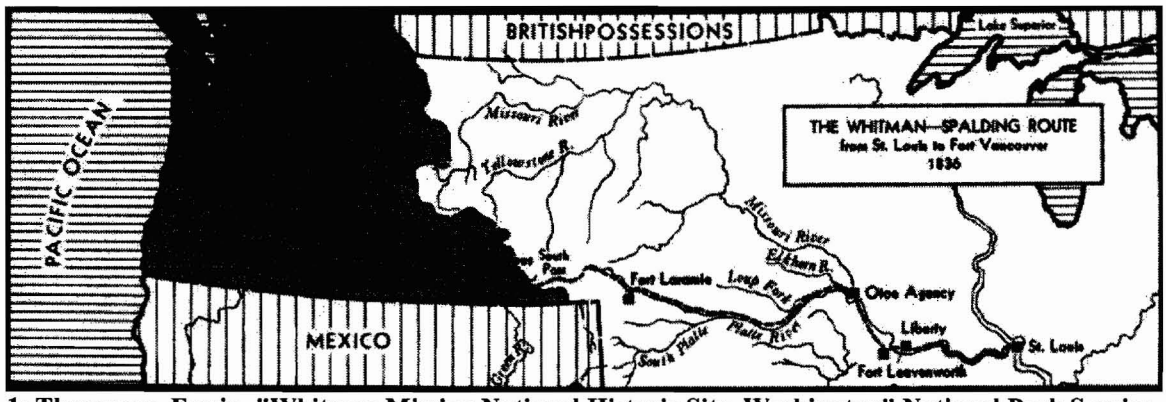
Marcus and Narcissa Whitman papers at The Oregon Historical Society.

Marcus and Narcissa Whitman papers at Washington State University

Narcissa Whitman papers at Whitman College

Appendix A:

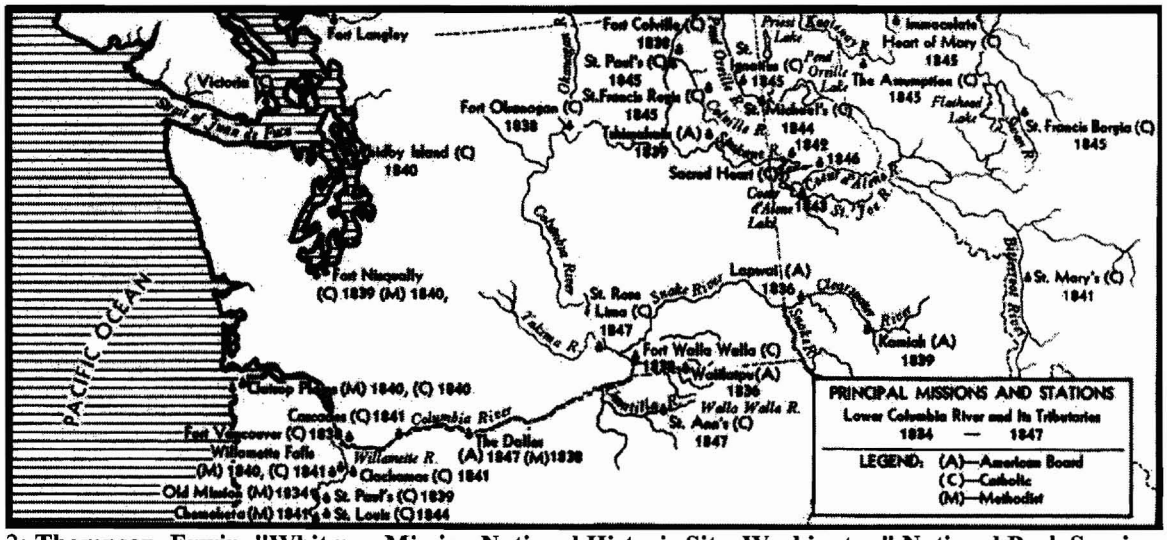
Map of the Whitman-Spalding Overland Trip



1: Thompson, Erwin, "Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, Historic Handbook Series number 37, Washington DC. 1964.

Appendix B:

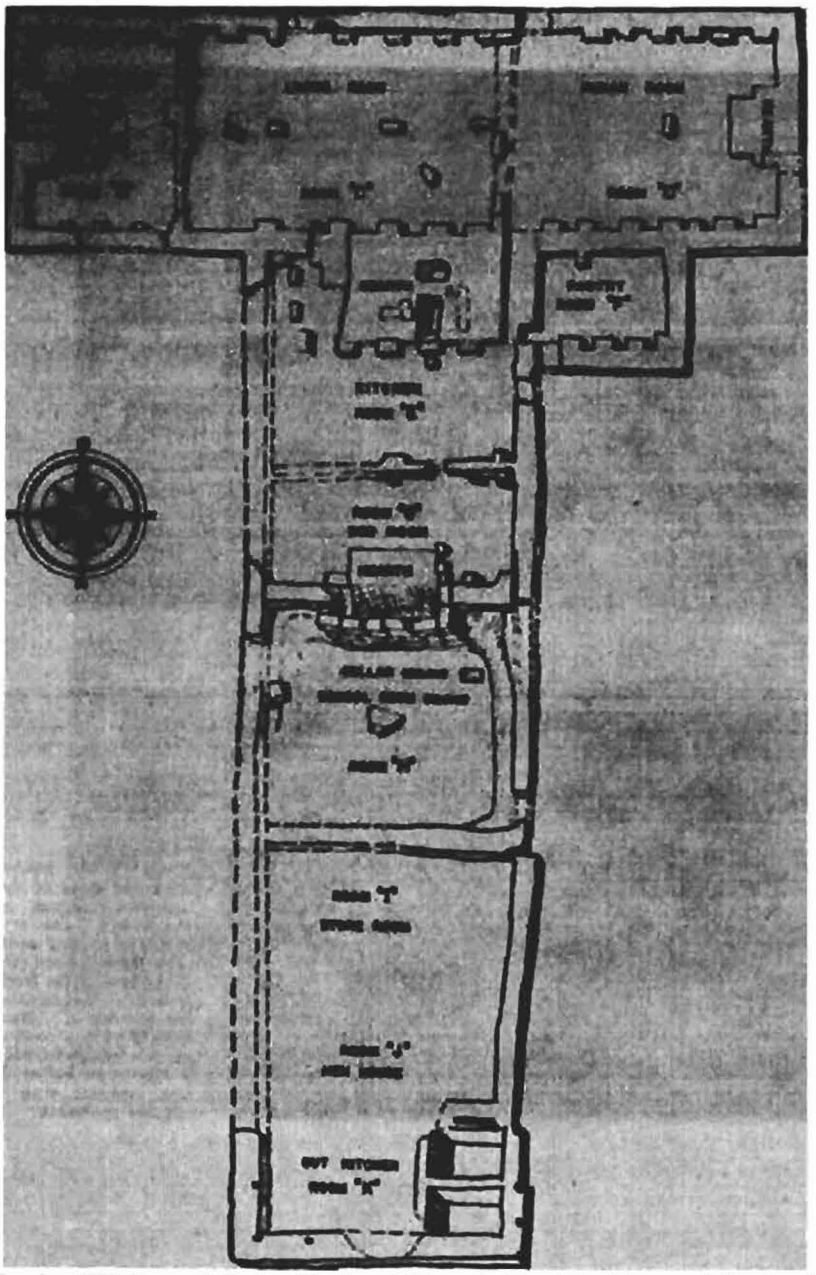
Missions in Oregon



2: **Thompson, Erwin, "Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, Historic Handbook Series number 37, Washington DC. 1964.**

Appendix C:

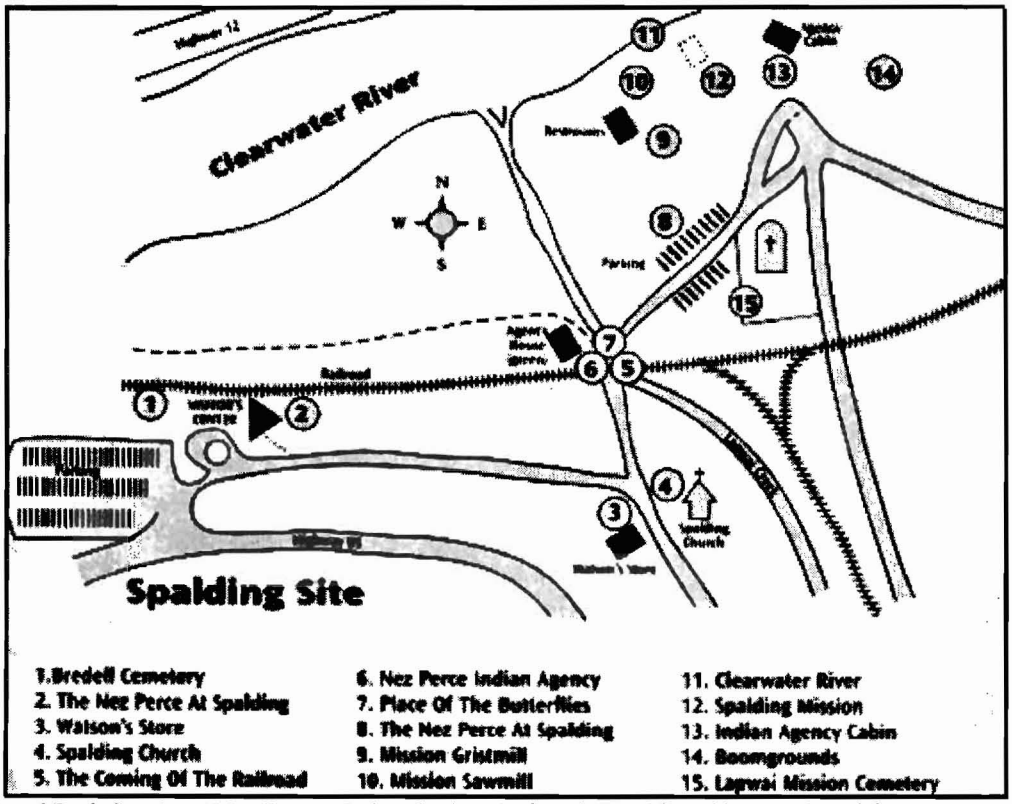
Waiilatpu Mission House Floor Plan



3: **Thompson, Erwin, "Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, Historic Handbook Series number 37, Washington DC. 1964.**

Appendix D:

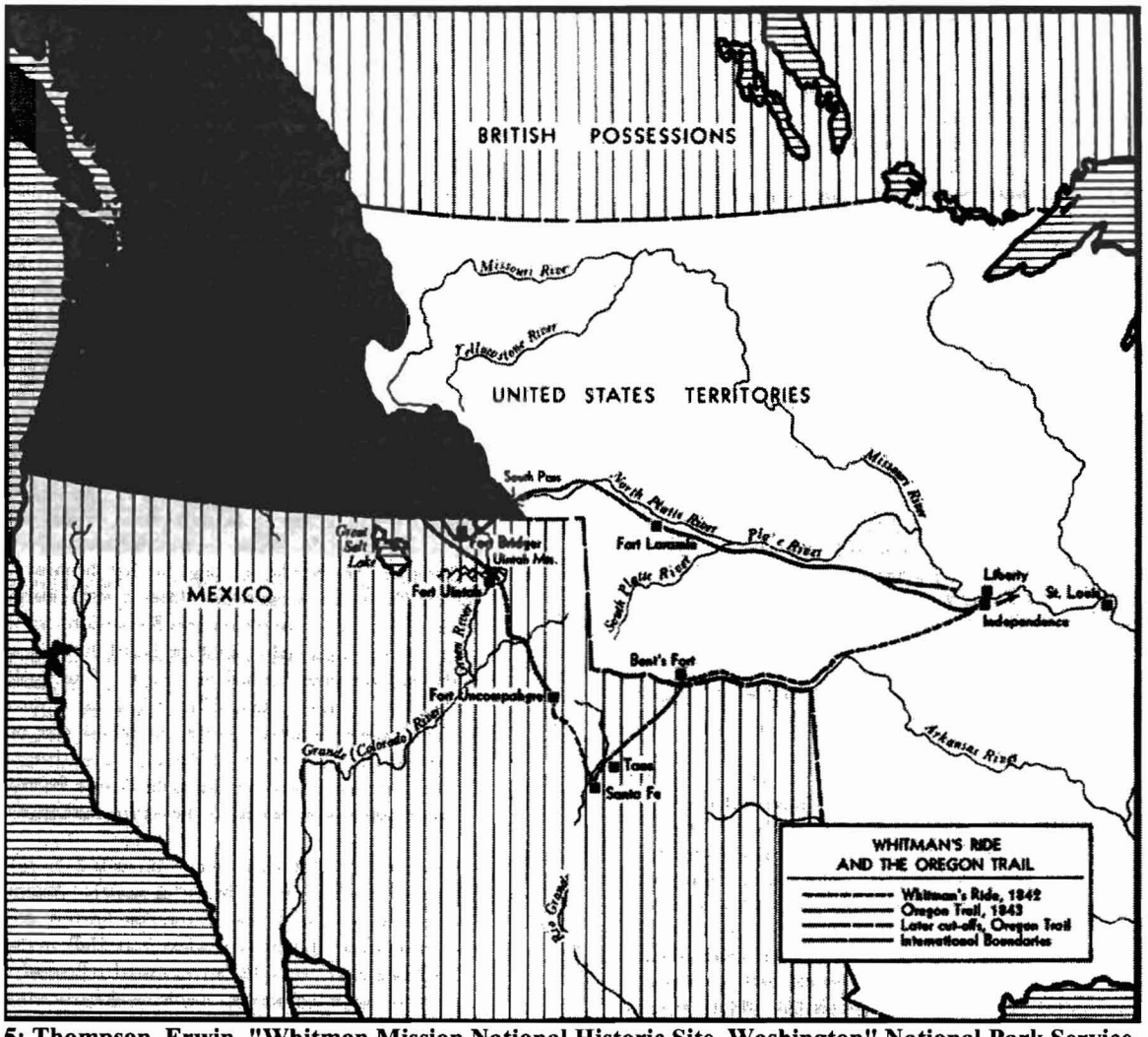
Lapwai Mission Map



4: National Park Service, "Nez Perce National Historical Park, Spalding Site" retrieved from **http://www.nps.gov/nepe/spalding1.htm**, November 9, 2005.

Appendix E:

Map of Oregon Trail Routes and Marcus's 1842 Trip East



5: Thompson, Erwin, "Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Washington" National Park Service, Historic Handbook Series number 37, Washington DC. 1964.

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