

NARCISSA OCTOBER 1844

by Crystal Calhoun



Hon. Stephen Prentiss

Cuba, Allegheny Co., New York.

WAILLATPU

Oct. 9th, 1844.

Beloved and Honored Parents:

I have no unanswered letters on hand, either from dear father and mother or any of the family, yet I cannot refrain from writing every stated opportunity. The season has arrived when the emigrants are beginning to pass us on their way to the **Willamette**. Last season there were such a multitude of starving people passed us that quite drained us of all our provisions, except potatoes. Husband has been endeavoring this summer to cultivate so as to be able to impart without so much distressing ourselves. In addition to this, he has been obliged to build a mill, and to do it principally with his own hands, which has rendered it exceedingly laborious for him. In the meantime, I have endeavored to lighten his burden as much as possible in superintending the ingathering of the garden, etc. During this period, the Indians belonging to this station and the Nez Perces go to **Forts Hall** and Boise to meet the emigrants for the purpose of trading their wornout cattle for horses. Last week  Tuesday, several young men arrived, the first of the party that brought us any definite intelligence concerning them (having nothing but Indian reports previous), among whom was a youth from Rushville formerly, of the name of Gilbert, one of husband's scholars.

Last Friday a family of eight arrived, including the grandmother, an aged woman, probably as old, or older than my mother. Several such persons have passed, both men and women, and I often think when I gaze upon them, shall I ever be permitted to look upon the face of my dear parents in this land?

25th-When I commenced this letter I intended to write a little every day, so as to give you a picture of our situation at this time. But it has been impossible. Now I must write as briefly as possible and send off my letter, or lose the opportunity. The emigration is late in getting into the country. It is now the last of October and they have just begun to arrive with their wagons. The Blue mountains are covered with snow, and many families, if not half of the party, are back in or beyond the mountains, and what is still worse, destitute of provisions and some of them of clothing. Many are sick, several with children born on the way. One family arrived here night before last, and the next morn a child was born; another is expected in the same condition.

Here we are, one family alone, a way mark, as it were, or center post, about which multitudes will or must gather this winter. And these we must feed and warm to the extent of our powers. Blessed by God that He has given us so abundantly of the fruit of the earth that we may impart to those who are thus famishing. Two preachers with large families are here and wish to stay for the winter, both Methodist. With all this upon our hands, besides our duties and labors for the Indians, can any one think we lack employment or have any time to be idle?

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Mr. and Mrs. Littlejohn left us in September and have gone below to settle in the **Willamette**. We have been looking for associated this fall, but the Board could get none ready, but say, they will send next year. Am I ever to see any of my family among the tide of emigration that is flowing west?

Our mill is finished and grinds well. It is a mill out of doors or without a house; that we must build next year.

We have employed a young man of the party to teach school, so that we hope to have both an English school and one for the natives. My health has been improving remarkably through the summer, and one great means has been daily bathing in the river. I was very miserable one year ago now, and was brought very low and poor; now I am better than I have been for some time, and quite fleshly for me. I weigh one hundred and sixty-seven pounds; much higher than ever before in my life. This will make the girls laugh, I know. Mrs. Spaulding's health is better than last year. She expects an increase in her family soon.

This country is destined to be filled, and we desire greatly to have good people come, and ministers and Christians, that it may be saved from being a sink of wickedness and prostitution. We need many houses to accommodate the families that will be obliged to winter here. All the house room that we have to spare is filled already. It is expected that there are more than five hundred souls back in the snow and mountains. Among the number is an orphan family of seven children, the youngest an infant born on the way, whose parents have both died since they left the States. Application has been made for us to take them, as they have not a relative in the company. What we shall do I cannot say; we cannot see them suffer, if the Lord casts them upon us. He will give us His grace and strength to do our duty to them.

I cannot write any more, I am so thronged and employed that I feel sometimes like being crazy, and my poor husband, if he had a hundred strings tied to him pulling in every direction, could not be any worse off.

Dear parents, do pray earnestly for your children here, for their situation is one of great trial, as well as of responsibility.

Love from us both to you all. I am disappointed in not getting letters from some of the dear ones this fall, but so it must be and I submit.

Your affectionate daughter

NARCISSA

Unknown Date

My Dear Parents:

I have now a family of eleven children. This makes me feel as if I could not write a letter, not

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even to my dearest friends, much as I desire to . I get along very well with them; they have been to school most of the time; we have had an excellent teacher, a young man from **New York**. He became hopefully converted soon after entering our family, and mother, I wish you could see me now in the midst of such a group of little ones; there are two girls of nine years, one of seven, a girl and a boy of six, another girl of five, another of three and the baby, she is now ten months. I often think of mother when she had the care of **Henry Martin Curtis**.

It would make me indescribably happy to have father and mother and some of the children come to Oregon; but it is such a journey I fear Mother would be sorry she undertook it, if she should conclude to come, but if once here I think there would be no cause of regret. Families can come quite comfortable and easy in wagons all the way. But why should I wish thus? It cannot be possible that I shall see my beloved parents again-is it?-Until I meet them in heaven. The Lord only knows; I will leave it with Him to direct all these things. We have had some serious trials this spring with the Indians. Two important Indians have died and they have ventured to say and intimate that the doctor has killed them by his magical power, in the same way they accuse their own sorcerers and kill them for it. Also an important young man has been killed in California by Americans; he was the son of the Walla Walla chief and went there to get cattle, with a few others. This has produced much excitement also. We are in the midst of excitement and prejudice on all sides, both from Indians and passing immigrants, but the Lord has preserved us hitherto and will continue to, if we trust Him. Love to all, as ever and forever.

Your affectionate daughter,

NARCISSA.