

SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSED ARTICLE ON

JOSEPH L. MEEK (1810-1875)

MOUNTAIN MAN

Meek was the Davy Crockett of our Northwest, brave, adventurous, a great Injun-fighter, bear hunter, trapper, scout, and pioneer. He was the wittiest wag and humorist that ever wore moccasins in the Rocky Mountains -- a tall, happy-go-lucky Virginian who loved practical jokes and democracy.

For eleven years he ranged the plains and mountains, until he won the rating "up to beaver," as one of the best of the trappers. He killed many a bear and buffalo, and many a painted warrior. Once, lost in the snow, he blundered into Yellowstone Park. While a member of Jim Bridger's band, he was captured by the Crow Indians, but escaped by the use of his wits and with Bridger's help. He took part in the Battle of Pierre's Hole, struggled with the Hudson's Bay Company for the Indian fur trade, made a solitary journey to St. Louis from the Northwest, and was in a desperate battle with Kit Carson where six trappers held off 200 Comanches on the bare prairie.

Having made friends with Dr. Marcus Whitman, the missionary, Meek followed him to Oregon when the invention of the silk hat ruined the beaver trade. Meek was not much of a farmer, but made himself very useful politically in Americanizing the new territory and helping set up a provisional government. He was made sheriff of the territory, and became a member of the legislature. When the Indians murdered Dr. Whitman and Meek's own daughter Helen, he carried the appeal of the Oregon settlers overland through winter snows to the President at Washington. In his buckskins and blanket, he was a sensation in the capital city. President Polk appointed Meek United States Marshal for Oregon. But the next