

# Mr. Beaver Objects...

**T**HE Reverend Herbert Beaver (believe it or not) was appointed as Church of England Chaplain and Missionary to Fort Vancouver in 1836. George Simpson personally chose him on a visit to England that winter. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver sailed from London in February, and the highlights of the voyage are described in the following letter.

*His stay at the headquarters of the Columbia Department was short and anything but sweet. Opposed to Chief Factor McLoughlin in both religious tenets and temperament, he found most of his efforts thwarted, and he did not hesitate to complain at length to the Governor and Committee in faraway London. A copy of his correspondence on the subject—extracts from which are printed below—was sent to The Beaver by E. E. Rich, general editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, the fourth publication of which will deal with McLoughlin's correspondence of that period with London.*

To the Governor and Committee H.H. B.C.  
Fort Vancouver Novr. 10th 1836  
Gentlemen,

The kind interest you were pleased to express, and the numerous attentions you paid towards Mrs. Beaver and myself, previous to our departure from England, leave us without a doubt, that you will learn with satisfaction our arrival on the 6th of September at your Establishment here in health and safety, after a very favorable passage, and stay of a few agreeable days at Oaho, where in consequence of an introduction with Mr. Pelly [see article on H B C in Hawaii] for whose solicitude for our comfort we beg to state our sincere obligations we were most hospitably received at the house of the Revd. John Diell, Chaplain in the American Seamen's friend Society, and his amiable Lady. During the Voyage I was enabled to perform divine service to the Crew of the *Nereide* every Sunday, except four, when from various circumstances it could not take place; and on one of these occasions our Men attended me at Mr. Diell's Chapel, where I performed for the first time in the Sandwich [Hawaiian] Islands, the full Morning Service of the Church of England. Nor must we omit the expression of our thanks to Captain Royal for his civilities to us on Board, and of our Sorrow at witnessing his very great Sufferings, which at one time led us to fear that he was dangerously ill. The behaviour also of our Sailors was exemplary, and as I understand that such is not always the case, I trust you will forgive my recording it while we sailed together.

Of this place I would gladly have refrained from speaking, or have confined my observations to bearing testimony to the richness of the Soil, fineness of the Climate, and beauty of the Country, which Nature, or rather Nature's God, appears to have endowed with every capability of promoting the Convenience, Comfort, and even luxury of his human creatures.

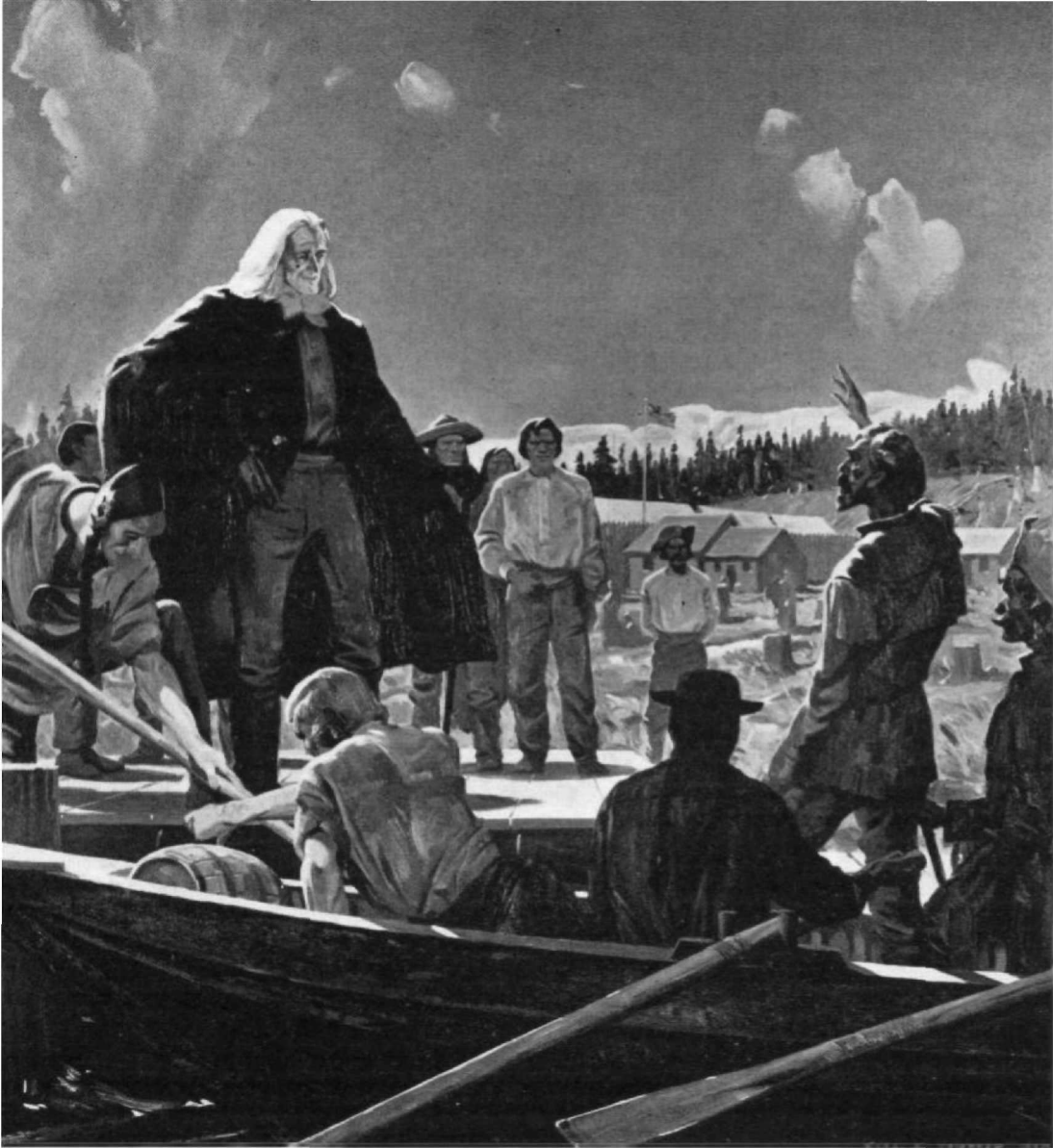
... The Method, which I have hitherto pursued, is the performance every Sunday, in the Messroom, of a full service at ten o'clock in the Morning, which from eighty to an hundred persons attend, and another at three in the evening, when about half those numbers form the Congregation. The place of worship is, however, exceedingly inconvenient, not only on account of the interruption arising from the occupancy of part of the Same building by Several families, who do not attend me, but as it would be impossible to administer in it, with decency, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; Neither is it Sufficiently large to admit the attendance of all the School Children. . . .

On my arrival I found a School consisting of about sixty Scholars, one third being Girls, of various ages, from five to fourteen years, which having been under different teachers for sometime past, had lately been placed under the management of Mr. John Fisher Robinson. The first and second Classes, amounting to fourteen, read well, write tolerably and begin to Cypher, but have received little religious education, the singing of hymns, as I understand, forming nearly the whole. The other Classes are in different Stages of progress. To this School I was in the habit of devoting much daily attention, and Mrs. Beaver received the Girls in her own apartment every morning from nine till twelve, except on Saturdays and Sundays, the former being a holiday, and on the latter I was accustomed to catechise both sexes together.

... Of the Master I have much pleasure in speaking favorably, and recommending him to your Notice. It is true he came out in one of your vessels before the mast, but he formerly filled an officer's situation; and, as far as I have been able to learn, his character is irreproachable. His period of service expires in two years, but he is desirous of continuing afterwards as Schoolmaster, provided his Salary could be raised to £50 per ann. it being at present £2 per month. I should be sorry to be left without a person to fill his Situation, and Should you be pleased to accede to this proposition, I trust you will forgive the liberty I take in requesting your favorable Consideration of him, during the remaining term of his engagement, especially as he officiates as my Clerk.

Through your liberality I have been enabled to supply all persons, who want them, with Bibles, prayer Books, and testaments, including the Hospital, which I visit several times in the week, and the School with spelling cards and other elementary Books.

Relative to the instructions to be imparted to the neighbouring Indians, I can of course at present say but little. Their numbers have been of late years much thinned by disease. Their tribes are numerous, much scattered, and Speak different languages. There is, however, one language, the Chinook, which is partially understood by nearly the whole; but I much fear, were I even to become Master of this language, which



McLoughlin welcomes the American Methodist missionary, Rev. Jason Lee, at Fort Vancouver, 1834. From the painting by Charles Comfort for this year's H B C calendar.

would be no very difficult task, as far at least as foreigners usually understand it, that it is too defective for the conveyance of Christian ideas. It appears, then, that the good to be done amongst them, must be chiefly, if not wholly, confined to the Children: but even these could not attend a School, for the purpose of learning English, unless they were entirely maintained at our expense, the mode of life of the Parents being too Migratory and erratic to permit the constant attendance of a Stationary Clergyman.

. . . Accused by Chief Factor McLoughlin of offering a deliberate insult to the Honble. Company, and himself, Messieurs Douglas, Tolmie, Rae, Allen, and Joseph McLoughlin absenting themselves, in consequence, in a very marked manner, from my Church, and at the time of public worship holding a Conventicle in the office, it becomes a painful, but imperative duty for me, in conclusion, to transmit the Copies of a correspondence explanatory of a transaction, which induced Mrs. Beaver and myself to apply for, and obtain the promise of, a passage home in the *Columbia*, in case that vessel should sail before the arrival of Chief Factor Finlayson, when, we trust, that the unfortunate differences, which at present exist, may be adjusted.

. . . But this determination has for the present been suspended by the receipt of the accompanying petition, which was put into my hands Shortly before the departure of the Vessel, signed by *all* the poor Prot-

estants, and about two thirds of the Roman Catholics, (excepting Children of both persuasions) who were, at the time, residing in the immediate vicinity of the Fort. . . . After this flattering testimony . . . it is my bounden duty to remain . . .

I beg leave to subscribe myself,  
Gentlemen,

Most respectfully,  
Your most obedient,  
humble Servant,  
and Chaplain,

HERBERT BEAVER

Copy of the petition mentioned in the foregoing dispatch.

To the Revd. Mr. Beaver

We the undersigned having been informed that it is your intention to proceed home by the *Columbia*, we beg leave most earnestly to petition you to remain for the sake of us the Protestant community of this place, at least part of them. We beg of you most earnestly to consider the interest of the Church, and whether your present withdrawing yourself would not be fatal to the late revival of religion here under your auspices. Should circumstances however (which we hope will not be the case) forbid Mr. Beaver from granting this request, we hereby beg leave to return him our most sincere thanks for his uniform kindness and benevolent intentions, and likewise hereby state our most unqualified approbation of his conduct during his short stay amongst us.

Signed by thirty four Protestants.

We the undersigned of the Roman Catholic Community hereby testify our full concurrence in the foregoing petition, and moreover we are desirous that the Revd. Mr. Beaver should perform divine service in the French language for our benefit as few of us sufficiently understand the English.

Signed by twenty four Roman Catholics, and among them by "David Dompier," who officiates for them.

A true Copy, HERBERT BEAVER

*Following are the most interesting parts of the ten letters which were attached:*

To Chief Factor McLoughlin

September 30th 1836

. . . I take the liberty of requesting to be furnished with a Schoolmaster, Schoolroom, and other necessary appurtenances, for carrying into effect the instructions of the Company, which extend to the Neighbouring Indians, as well as to their more immediate Servants, and for giving gratuitous instructions to all, who may resort to me for the purpose.

To Mesdames Whitman and Spalding

Vancouver, October 1st 1836

Mr. Beaver presents his compliments to Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding, and, as he is aware that various customs prevail in different Countries, begs respectfully to inform them, that it is unusual in England for any person to take part, without his permission and request, in the parochial duties of the Minister, in which capacity Mr. Beaver is placed here by the Honble. Hudson's Bay Company.

He would, therefore, hope that after this explanation, the Ladies, whom he has thus presumed to address, will refrain from teaching, in any respect, the Children of the School at Vancouver, over which he has charge in virtue of his office.

To Revd. H. Beaver,

Monday morning 3d Oct. 1836

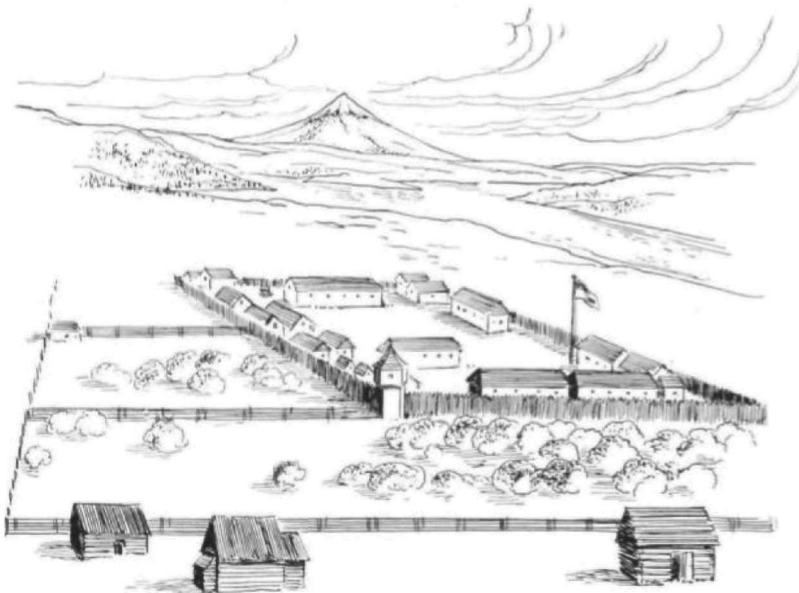
Mr. McLoughlin's compliments to the Revd. Mr. Beaver and requests to see him in the counting house as soon as convenient.

To Chief Factor McLoughlin

Monday Morning Octr. 3d 1836

Mr. Beaver presents his Compliments to Mr. McLoughlin, and upon consideration, thinks it will be better that any communication which may take place between them, Should be committed to writing, in order that it may the more clearly be referred, if necessary, to Superior Authority.

**Fort Vancouver, with the Columbia River and snow-capped Mount Hood in the distance.**



(N.B. This was written in consequence of Mr. Beaver having returned a verbal message, with his compliments, by the bearer of Mr. McLoughlin's letter above, "That he would attend in the counting house, as soon as he could see Mr. Capendal, who was gone for a ride.")

To Revd. H. Beaver

Monday, 1 P.M. 3d Oct.

Mr. McLoughlin's compliments to the Reverend Mr. Beaver and begs to inform him that he (Mr. McL) has but one object in desiring a personal interview with Mr. Beaver—Which is to request an explanation of his (Mr. B.) letter addressed to Mesdames Whitman and Spalding as under present circumstances—Mr. McL. must view it in the light of a deliberate Insult to the Honble. Company and would feel much flattered by the removal of the impression being most anxious to avoid every cause of collision But at the same time decided in requiring from all persons in the Service under him—that necessary degree of deference to his wishes Which is equally demanded by the state of the Settlement and due through his office to the Honble. Company.

To Chief Factor McLoughlin

Monday Octr. 3d

(half past two)

Mr. Beaver presents his compliments to Mr. McLoughlin, and begs to say that a personal interview with Mr. McLoughlin would be quite unnecessary, as he could in it only state, what he now does, his extreme surprise that his (Mr. B's) letter, addressed to Mesdames Whitman and Spalding, could, under present circumstances, be viewed in the light of a deliberate insult to the Honble. Company, to that part of whom, under which he holds his appointment, he feels inclined to offer any explanation on the subject.

*The following extracts are all from letters written to Mr. Beaver by Dr. McLoughlin and his second-in-command, James Douglas:*

Fort Vancouver Wednesday morning

4th October 1836

I am directed to send, for your information, the Company's annual allowance of Liquors to Gentlemen in the service; and have, at the same time to observe, that the quantity therein specified, cannot in any case be exceeded, as our imports are always strictly regulated by this standard.

Yours very respectfully  
JAMES DOUGLAS

Thursday Morning 5th Octr. 1836

Enclosed is a second copy of the annual allowance, but I cannot devise any form more explicit than the one used.

The following is an extract from the terms which you accepted in England "and you will further be provided with lodging, Provisions, fire, Candles and male attendance." by which it does not clearly appear that wine is allowed, but Mr. McLoughlin attaching the most liberal Construction to the term Provisions has placed you on the same scale with the senior officers in the service.

Yours respectfully  
JAMES DOUGLAS

Fort Vancouver 9th Octr. 1836

Permit me to hope that there will be no departure from the established regulations of the place, which provide except at dinner against even the moderate use of Liquor in order to prevent the evils resulting from an irregular or intemperate mode of living. I am induced to offer this remark from two instances of partial inebriety having been observed here and after strict enquiry I have every reason to believe that the liquor was supplied neither from the stores or the shipping. . . .

In order to reclaim the savage from his migratory and unsettled mode of life as well as to enable him to contribute to his support and enable him to live with the same independence in his progressive as in his savage state: I will furnish all the necessary farming implements and shall search out a favorable spot at a sufficient distance from the Fort to prevent interference with our agricultural operations . . . I have the honor to be

Yours truly  
JOHN McLOUGHLIN

Fort Vancouver 16th Decr. 1836

. . . In the first place I cannot discover how schism can be promoted by the course now pursued in the Canadian service, of reading a portion of scripture a plain practical discourse and uniting in prayer to God, or how division can possibly be produced among persons living, not merely in the open profession of the most opposite religious opinions, but also evincing in all their conduct a marked dislike to each others tenets—again I cannot perceive the impropriety of successively assembling our English and Canadian servants for public worship in the same apartment or by the sound of the same Bell—from your noticing the subject I must presume you have detected error in the practice, and I am therefore prepared to hear a more complete exposure of the question, embracing the points of greatest moment and which may prove most conducive to the proposed change in our mode of assembling on the Sabbath. A third remark and I will close my letter, I never suspected that the sound of the “Church going bell” could be considered as an interruption to the peace and rest of the holy sabbath bells being so generally used in all Christian countries and particularly in England, as to have become intimately associated with all our ideas of the Sabbath, however please to favor me with your views on this head also. I make these remarks to point out a few of the many causes which prevent me from coming to an immediate decision upon the subject contained in your very interesting letter—in such cases you are aware we must proceed with caution and act only upon the clearest and defensible principles, or we may expose ourselves to the suspicion of being influenced by an absurd and restless spirit of innovation.

Yours Truly  
JOHN McLOUGHLIN

Fort Vancouver 30th Decr. 1836

Mr. McLoughlin's compliments to the Revd. Mr. Beaver . . . If the Canadians continue to attend Mr. Beaver, we will then reduce the services to only two, one for the Europeans the other for the Canadians, though Mr. McL. thinks few of the Canadians will understand Mr. B. in French (and besides there are several errors in his translation) which they may urge as a plea for not attending Mr. B's service.

Fort Vancouver 16th January 1837

Mr. McLoughlin begs to decline any epistolary intercourse with the Revd. Mr. Beaver until Mr. B. gives a verbal explanation for refusing to perform divine service yesterday afternoon.

*Mrs. Beaver did her bit by complaining about the food and the following choice morsel of “epistolary intercourse” has been preserved for us:*

Mrs. Beaver having been informed by the cook this Morning that Dr. McLoughlin told him that the Salmon which she returned yesterday as being improperly dressed, was properly dressed, has to remark that if such be the case Dr. McLoughlin's Politeness in so contradicting her is only equalled by her knowledge of the mode of cooking as practiced by civilized beings and to request that as Mr. Beaver and herself have been accustomed to the later, the cook may be required to obey their orders with reference to the customs of uncivilized countries.

Mrs. Beaver would not have addressed Dr. McLoughlin so often on this subject but that Mr. Beaver and herself frequently rise from table unsatisfied in the midst of plenty through the badness of the Cooking which is only desired to be plain and clean, at the same time, this can scarcely be expected while the cook is upheld in the contrary habit.

August 10th 1837

*Matters came to a climax in March 1838, when the reverend gentleman was set upon by the Big Doctor in the courtyard of the fort. In one of his reports to London, Beaver had rashly referred to Mrs. McLoughlin, who had been married to the Chief Factor without benefit of clergy, as “a female of notoriously loose character,” and this and other clerical slurs on his wife's good name came to McLoughlin's ears. Beaver describes the result in a letter to the Church of England Protestant Magazine, which was reprinted in The Oregon Historical Quarterly for March 1938.*

I was walking across the Fort-yard to speak to my wife, who was standing at the door of our house, when this monster in human shape . . . advanced towards us, apparently in a violent passion, and upon my making way for him to pass, he came behind me, kicked me several times, and struck me repeatedly with his fists on the back of the neck. Unable to cope with him, from the immense disparity of our relative size and strength, I could not prevent him from wrenching out of my hands a stout stick, with which I was walking, and with which he next inflicted several severe blows on my shoulders. He then seized me from behind, round my waist, and attempted to dash me on the ground, exclaiming, “you scoundrel, I will have your life.” In the meantime, the stick had fallen to the ground; my wife, on the impulse of the moment, picked it up; he took it, to use the epithet of an eye-witness, “very viciously” out of her hands, and again struck me with it severely; we were then separated by the intervention of other persons.

*Shortly after this set-to, McLoughlin left by overland express for Canada. James Douglas took his place while he was gone, and thereafter the little chaplain found life much more pleasant. But anticipating the return of McLoughlin, he resigned from the Company's service, and with his faithful wife sailed for home in November, 1838, never to return to America.*