

JOAB POWELL

Born: July 16, 1799 in Claiborne County, Tennessee.



Married: In 1818 to a woman of German descent, Anna Beeler. She spoke very little English, and Joab spoke only a few words in German. But they must have been the right ones!

Confessed faith in Christ: When the great revival which began in the Cane Ridge section of Kentucky in 1800, eventually reach the Cumberland Gap region of Tennessee, Joab took serious interest. He left the Quaker church into which his father was born and in 1824 was baptized into the Baptist Church. His conversion completely absorbed all other interests and he became endowed with a boundless energy.

To Missouri: In 1830 they moved to Missouri, he was licensed to preach and ordained that year among the Missionary Baptists at Salem Baptist Church in Jackson County. He became an itinerant preacher and was well known all over the state for his evangelistic activities. He had more requests to come and preach than he could keep.

To Oregon: In 1852 there was a split in the Baptist church between those who were for and against missionary work. Joab's strong inclinations were to reach out and pull more in more souls and was part of the missionary group. He felt that his special calling was to preach to the "wicked and the profane" and he searched out the "hardest of sinners". His ready wit handled any crowd, no matter how tough or rough. It was at this point at the age of 52 he decided to come to Oregon with an ox train with his wife and 12 of their fourteen children. Many of his neighbors from Jackson County came at the same time to Oregon .

He named the creek running through their land the Jordan. Its waters saw many get baptized there, on a few occasions 200 in one day!. Many were also baptized in Crabtree Creek, often 30 at a time. He baptized 3000 people in his lifetime.

Founded Providence with two other ministers, J.G. Berkley and R. Cheadle, and a total of 19 members on April 9, 1853. They first met in homes, then at Shiloh School about a mile west of the future building site. The first real meeting house was made of logs during 1856-57. That log building burned down in 1892. The present building was built during 1893-1896. Providence's membership reached a peak of about 400 by the turn of the century. Obviously, they could not all fit into the church building every Sunday.

His Singing: He knew the hymns by heart. He would cut loose with his great, bellowing voice, with his eyes half closed, apparently oblivious to the others around him. It was said that his voice could be heard for a mile when he really got wound up.

His Circuit and Trips: He preached at Good Hope, Washington Butte, Scio, and Sublimity Churches, besides his many seasons of revivals. He preached up and down the Willamette Valley, in homes, schoolhouses, churches of various denominations, courthouses, and camp meetings. He started a number of other churches, including Scio Baptist.

Anna was a real source of strength to her husband. She was a small, quiet woman of German ancestry. She took care of her large family and tended the farm with the help of the children as Joab "went about the business of the Lord". Joab would return home each fall drained of confidence. He was barely able to read, so he memorized the Bible each night by the fireside during the winter as his wife read from the Book. She would rebuild his self assurance and send him out again in the Spring. Joab never recovered from the loss of his wife when she died in May, 1872. He died seven months later on Jan. 15, 1873.

Oregon Legislature: Joab made many trips to Salem and often looked in on the legislature. He had plenty to say about how they did things. On one occasion when the Oregon Senate was pursuing a policy that he did not approve of and he was invited to give the invocation, he prayed "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do".

Died: Jan.25, 1873