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Lincoln City, OR 97367
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May 5, 1999

C-SPAN
400 North Capitol St N.W.
Suite 650
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear C-SPAN

I have enjoyed immensely your series on Presidents, and am especially looking forward to the one on little-known James Knox Polk, because not many people know of his accomplishments -- particularly in acquiring and settling the western United States. Few know -- for instance that more land was added to the U.S. during Polk's four years than at any other time in our history, including Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase and even the original states and territories. And of course, there was Polk's 54-40 or fight, and the opening of the Oregon Trail and the U. S. Oregon Territory.

My father's four grandparents were among the early pioneers who came out the Oregon Trail, and settled in **Polk county, Oregon**, a county that played perhaps the most prominent role in this important part of early Oregon history, as the destination of most of those travelers. They were among the first of those who traveled on the 1845 Meek Cutoff, the 1846 Barlow Cutoff, and the 1846 Applegate Cutoff, which also originated in Polk county, during the administration of the president for whom it is named. (Dallas, the county seat is also named for Polk's vice president, so as you can see the Polk influence is very strong.)

The people of Polk county have been very generous in sharing information with me about my Trail ancestors, showing me where they settled, and where they are buried in Polk county. And I would like to do something in return. This is why I am writing, unofficially I must add, and without anyone else's knowledge at this point, as I'd like it to be a surprise. Maybe C-SPAN could present it.

The Polk County Historical Society (PCHS) will be opening their marvelous new museum on October 2 of this year, and it will be perhaps the most spectacular and informative of any museum in the state of Oregon. It will of course place a strong emphasis on the Oregon trail, and the trail emigrants who settled Polk county during Polk's administration.

I am wondering if I might persuade C-SPAN to give their permission to make your tape on President Polk available to the PCHS, for showing to their visitors, and perhaps even for sale under some royalty or donation arrangement? I have included my e-mail address above, and would be most appreciative if you could find some way to work this out and let me know.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

O. AmerPres

Encl: Chart of my Polk county ancestry and early Oregon Trail history for your information.

[REDACTED]

There were three efforts to find an overland route into Oregon to avoid the treacherous Columbia River rapids, and three of my father's grandparents' families were among the first to travel each of these early routes:

1. In 1845, [REDACTED] in the first really large migration to Oregon, led one of the companies to follow [REDACTED] on the first and only year this new route through the Central Oregon desert was attempted, as chronicled by their driver James Field, who almost did not survive the ordeal.
2. In 1846, [REDACTED] party narrowly avoided being diverted into California with the tragic Donner party, only to follow [REDACTED] on his unfortunate new Southern Route into Oregon, and not arrive until winter, having lost all their belongings and nearly their lives in the struggle.
3. In 1846, [REDACTED] were among those to follow Sam Barlow's new Northern Route the first year it was opened, traveling in a large party led by [REDACTED]. Of the three new cutoffs attempted in 1845 and 1846, only Barlow's toll road was successful.

[REDACTED] aged parents (who were among those counted in the very first U.S. census in 1790) followed their children out the Barlow Road in its second year of operation, in a large Smith party led by [REDACTED] who nearly went with Brigham Young and the first Mormons into Utah.

[REDACTED] did not migrate to Oregon until the Civil War, well after Sam Barlow's toll road around Mt. Hood had been established as *the* route into what was now the *state* of Oregon.

Although born in Polk County, my father's parents, [REDACTED] met and married in Whitman County, Washington, where both their Smith families had migrated in search of land. [REDACTED] was orphaned at age 9, and raised by his uncle [REDACTED] one of the men responsible for locating the Whitman County seat at Colfax, and W.S.U. at nearby Pullman.

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