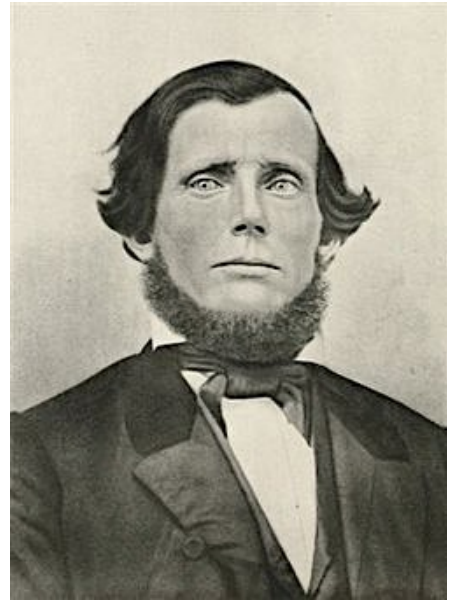


Portrait and biographical record of the Willamette valley, Oregon, containing original sketches of many well known citizens of the past and present .. (1903)
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PAUL DARST. For the history of Paul Darst, one of the most interesting and worthy of the early Oregon pioneers, we herewith acknowledge indebtedness to the able article prepared by his brother, William, at the request of members of the Oregon Pioneer Association. As the sole survivor of a little party of three who traversed the plains comparatively alone in 1847, and as the later associate of his brother in many of his worthy undertakings, Mr. Darst is qualified to speak disinterestedly and to the point, and he is probably the only one of whom absolutely reliable information could be obtained at the present time.



Paul Darst was born in Gallia county, Ohio, September 28, 1819, and when eight years of age removed with his father, David, to Hocking county, of the same state, going in the fall of 1838 to Vermilion county, Ill. In the fall of 1840 they took up their residence in Henry county, Iowa, and when Paul was twenty-one years of age he started out to make his own living at farm work, continuing thus until the spring of 1847. During a portion of this time he worked on farms in Dade county, Mo., returning then to Iowa, where, in the spring of 1847, he prepared to cross the plains, accompanied by his brother William and John Morley. This small party, with their one wagon and team of oxen, started away from home and kindred April 7, 1847, and, continuing their way westward to within a few miles of St. Joseph, Mo., there camped on a river called One Hundred and Two. The 7th of May they crossed the Missouri river into the Indian country, and after traveling for a few days joined what was known as the Davidson party, of whom Albert Davidson was the capable guide, he having been to Oregon on a previous occasion. In the company were about forty-seven wagons, and Paul Darst and his friends joined them, traveling as far as Ash Hollow. There the company divided into three parts, Mr. Darst and his two companions and wagon becoming a part of the Louisa company, consisting of seventeen wagons. Arriving at the Powder river, the Louisa party also divided, and the Darst party became members of a small company of four wagons. Crossing over the Cascade mountains, they came to the new Barlow road, which had but recently been opened to the public, the toll on this thoroughfare being \$5 for a wagon and team, and ten cents a head for stock. This little party arrived on the Clackamas river, a short distance below Oregon City, September 7, 1847, just four months from the time of leaving St. Joseph, on the Missouri river, and five months from the time of leaving Mount Pleasant. Henry county, Iowa.

After resting on the Clackamas river for two or three days, the four wagons proceeded up the Willamette valley on the east side, and along what might be called the mountain road. They passed the present site of Silverton, in the eastern part of Marion county, and on to the Waldo Hills country near the town of Sublimity. Here the party broke up, and as there was plenty of vacant land all around in this section nearly every man availed himself of the opportunity and became an independent landowner. Mr. Darst located on the claim which he afterward sold to George W. Hunt for \$100, and the same became famous for its fine stock, and was later the site of the Whiteaker postoffice. This early settler took part in the Abiqua river war, which contest has often been questioned, but which, according to an eye witness, William Darst, was quite a momentous struggle. In February or March, 1848, in the eastern part of Marion county, and on the Abiqua river, the Indians became very troublesome, and Paul Darst and some of his companions went forth to meet them in mortal combat. William Darst and his friends arrived at the home of John Warnock too late to engage in the conflict, and were unable to follow because the deep snow covered up their tracks. When the party returned

they reported that the Indians had been routed, some being killed, while the Indian wives and children were taken prisoners, as were also the horses and cattle. However, this wholesale capture was merely a ruse, and was used to induce the Indians to permanently abandon the county, whereupon their wives, children and cattle were turned over to them. To this day, in the estimation of William Darst, they have never since interfered with the peace of mind of any of the residents of Marion county. The whole party followed the red men to the Santiam river and saw them cross over, never to return.

Until 1849 Paul Darst worked on his original Oregon claim, and then went to the gold mines of California, making the journey on a sailing vessel, for passage upon which he paid \$60 in the steerage from Portland to San Francisco. On the Yuba river he worked in the mines until about October 1st, and then, owing to impaired health, he returned to Oregon with about \$1,500. Thereafter he worked on his claim until the passage of the donation law by congress, and he then sold his land, and in the vicinity purchased three hundred and twenty acres of deeded land. This was the eastern half of the claim of David Simpson and wife, about two and one-half miles north of Sublimity, in Marion county. Here he started in a second time to make his agricultural fortune, a task appreciated only by those who have cleared land in Oregon and assiduously worked for its cultivation. He was also a carpenter of much ability, and in connection with the management of his farm accomplished considerable building in his neighborhood and in California. For some years he was also engaged in teaching school in the neighborhood where he resided, in 1852 he was elected assessor of Marion county, and according to his brother William, assessed the whole of the county without any help whatsoever. This was an enormous task even in those early days, in order to make the return in the time required by law. In 1856 he volunteered in the Yakima Indian war, and of his service Col. George K. Shiel says: "Paul Darst enlisted about the 1st of January, 1856. in the second company raised by Marion county, E. J. Harding captain, for the recruited battalion of the First Regiment of Oregon Mounted Volunteers, in the Indian war of 1855-56. Col. Thomas Cornelius commanding." Mr. Darst remained with the command until it was mustered out of service some time in May, 1856, and, according to the colonel, had a very hard time of it. Their extremity may be imagined when it is known that for two or three weeks they were obliged to subsist solely upon horse meat and wild onions.

After the war Mr. Darst returned to his farm and combined farming and carpentering, and in 1857 was again elected assessor of Marion county. In the meantime the country had grown to such an extent and was so much more thickly settled that it was impossible for him to cover the whole county in the time required by law. Up to this time he had been a staunch Democrat but with the beginning of the Civil war he espoused the cause of the north. October 24, 1861, he married Cinderella Phillips, a young woman of about twenty, and together they commenced housekeeping on the donation claim. Mrs. Darst was not blessed with good health and in the fall of 1866 she went with her husband to California, remaining for about a year. Returning to the Oregon farm all went well until the 1st of April, 1874, when Mr. Darst was stricken with apoplexy. Following the custom of his time for all complaints the physician bled his patient in the arm and brought on paralysis of the right side. Gradually Mr. Darst grew worse, continually lost strength and at last failed to respond to remedies administered. April 23d his spirit left its earthly house, and he was buried not far distant from where he had come and gone and labored for so many years in the Downing settlement, about fourteen miles from Salem. A short time after his death a son was born to his wife, and thus three children were left fatherless, and a wife was left without her chief consoler and greatest strength. The son was called Charles Paul, and at present he is managing the home farm of five hundred and twenty acres for his mother. Of the daughters, Fidelia, is the postmistress of Whiteaker, and Parthenia is living at home. Mr. Darst was a man of force of character, of untiring industry and good business judgment, as evidenced by his possession of eight hundred acres of land. As reminders of a sterling pioneer, and as the possessors of abilities and admirable characteristics of their own, the household enjoys an enviable place in the community.