

It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.

James P. Stewart (1833-1893)

From: "Washington, West of the Cascades"ⁱ

There were but three families in the Puyallup valley when the Hon. J. P. Stewart took up his abode there and in the intervening years to the time of his death he was actively and prominently connected with the development and upbuilding of the district. The work of progress seemed scarcely begun in the northwest when in 1860 he arrived in Washington after a residence of five years in Oregon. He was born in Delaware County, New York, September 21, 1833, and his boyhood days were spent upon a farm there. After attending the public schools he was graduated from the Delaware Literary Institute with the class of 1851 and engaged in teaching school in the vicinity of his home until 1855. Attracted by the stories which he heard concerning the western coast, he made his way to San Francisco and thence to Portland, Oregon, to Salem and to Corvallis, finally settling in Corvallis where he remained until 1860.

In that year Mr. Stewart arrived at Steilacoom, Washington, but soon afterward removed to Puyallup, where he took a claim there being but three white families in the valley at that time. The days of chivalry and knighthood in Europe cannot furnish more interesting or romantic tales than our own western history. Into the wild mountain fastnesses of the unexplored west went brave men, whose courage was often called forth in encounters with hostile savages. The land was rich in all natural resources, in gold and silver, in agricultural and commercial possibilities, and awaited the demands of man to yield up its treasures, but its mountain heights were hard to climb, its forests difficult to penetrate, and the magnificent trees, the dense bushes or jagged rocks often sheltered the skulking foe, who resented the encroachment of the palefaces upon these "hunting grounds." The establishment of homes in this beautiful region therefore meant sacrifices, hardships and oftentimes death; but there were some men, however, brave enough to meet the red men in his own familiar haunts and undertake the task of reclaiming the district for purposes of civilization. The rich mineral stores of this vast region were thus added to the wealth of the nation; its magnificent forests contributed to the lumber industries and its fertile valleys added to the opportunities of the farmer and stock raiser, and today the northwest is one of the most productive sections of the entire country. That this is so is due to such men as J. P. Stewart, whose name is inseparably interwoven with the history of the region. No story of fiction contains more exciting chapters than may be found in his life record but space forbids an extended account of these.

Mr. Stewart became connected with educational work, being the first teacher in the old town of Tacoma. He also taught school in Spanaway and in Steilacoom and afterward was called to

public office, being probate judge from 1861 until 1865. In 1863 he accepted the position of bookkeeper in the old Tacoma mill and served in that capacity for a number of years. In 1871 he planted the first hops in the Puyallup valley and thus instituted an industry which has become an important source of wealth in that part of the state. He became identified with commercial interests in the city of Puyallup as a general merchant, conducting business alone for a time, while later his sons became associated with him as partners.

It was in the year 1864 that Mr. Stewart was united in marriage to Miss Margaret McMillan and they became the parents of three children. The death of Mr. Stewart occurred in February, 1893, when he was not yet sixty years of age. His worth as a citizen of the Puyallup valley can scarcely be overestimated. He was in many ways connected with its development and improvement and aided in planting the seeds of civilization in the far west. He was elected the first mayor of Puyallup and he served for eleven years as postmaster of the town without pay. Whatever tended to advance the interests and welfare of the community received his endorsement and support and the worth of his work is now widely acknowledged. His fellow citizens, appreciative of his worth, ability and public spirit, elected him to represent his district in the state senate in 1886 and by reason of his careful and wise consideration of public questions he left the impress of his individuality upon the legislative history of the state. Moreover, he justly won the proud American title of a self-made man, for without financial assistance he started in the business world and gradually worked his way upward, wisely utilizing his advantages and at length achieving success.

From: “History of the Pacific Northwest, Oregon and Washington”ⁱⁱ

HON. JAMES P. STEWART. - *In a notice of the Honorable James P. Stewart by the local press, when his name was presented for the suffrages of his fellow-citizens for a seat in the legislature of Washington Territory, it was most truthfully said: "he is a man of affairs, - a big, bronzed, broad-shouldered man, who moves about among his fellow-men with that quiet consciousness of strength that carries conviction and wins. He has been a winner all his life; and people applaud his winning. He has been as honest as he has been progressive.*

Mr. Stewart is a native of the State of New York, and was born in Delaware county September 21, 1833. He lived on the farm of his parents, enjoying the customary opportunities for acquiring knowledge or education afforded the farm lands of the Middle states one-half century ago. Young Stewart, full of energy, made the best use of his opportunities, and at the age of nineteen left the parental home and engaged in teaching school, working on the farm through the summer, and devoting the winter to teaching. He migrated to Oregon in 1855, and settled at Corvallis. He remained there until April, 1859, when he removed to the Puyallup valley on the last day of that month, which has since been his home. During his residence at Corvallis he

occupied his time in merchandising, teaching school, and served one official term as sheriff of Benton county.

In 1861 the people of Pierce county elected him judge of the probate court, which office he held for the term of four years, with great credit to himself and to the entire satisfaction of his fellow-citizens. He was unanimously nominated for re-election in 1864. But his business, which had become extensive, demanded his exclusive attention; and he declined. He was married that year to a daughter of Archibald McMillain, one of the most prominent of the old pioneer settlers, both of Thurston and Pierce counties.

In 1872 he accepted the unanimous nomination of the Republican conferees of Pierce and Mason counties for joint representative in the legislature; though the district was hopelessly Democratic, he made a vigorous canvass, and greatly reduced the usual party majority by his earnest efforts and personal popularity. As a recognition of his efficient service, unsolicited on his part, he was proffered the appointment of United States Indian agent at the Makah Reservation, with the salary of fourteen hundred dollars per annum. He would not abandon his private business nor his residence and declined the appointment. Without his seeking, President Lincoln's postmaster-general appointed him postmaster at Puyallup, which office he did accept, and served the public in that trying capacity-for which no adequate compensation was allowed-for eleven years.

In 1877-88 he served Pierce county in the house of representatives of the territory. His conservative course merited the hearty approval of his constituency, and made him prominent among the list of those from whom a nominee for delegate to Congress was selected in the election of 1888. It was conceded that, had it met Mr. Stewart's approval, he would have received a generous if not unanimous support of his county delegation for the nomination. The truth, however, is that he has never been an office-seeker, has failed to attend nominating conventions, and, when nominations have been tendered, persuasion has been required to induce him to abandon business and accept office.

It is, however, as a merchant, successful hop-raiser, agriculturist and banker, that James P. Stewart has acquired his high standing in the community. In every enterprise to which he contributes, and in everything he undertakes, he brings to bear admirable judgment and indomitable energy. As a business man or operator, he is enterprising and fearless, far-seeing and sagacious. In the culture of raspberries he demonstrated the capabilities of the valley, and the profits of such a specialty. He has one of the largest and most profitable fruit orchards in Pierce county. He was third in rank, acreage and product in that long list of hop-growers in Puyallup valley. He gave an estimate of the average return of his hop-raising experience for the period of fifteen years, commencing with 1871, the year he entered the business. He sold his crops for the fifteen years at an average of twenty-one cents - three mills per pound. The product was an average of eighteen hundred pounds to the acre, making a net profit of over two hundred dollars per acre per annum.

He was one of the founders of the Pacific National Bank in the city of Tacoma, and has continued as director since its existence. At present he is a partner of Charles P. Masterson, the able president of that institution, in a banking business at Puyallup, under the firm name of Stewart & Masterson, of which he is manager. The firm is a strong one; and it has secured the entire confidence of the community in the so-called Puyallup Bank.

Whether as financier, farmer, merchant, legislator, probate judge, school teacher or citizen, James P. Stewart has always been a success. That success gives evidence of the truth of the old adage "Nothing is denied to well-directed instantly." The man of purpose, self-reliant and consistent, must always succeed.

ⁱ Hunt, Herbert. **"Washington, West of the Cascades"**; historical and descriptive; the pioneers; by Herbert Hunt and Floyd C. Kaylor: Chicago, Seattle, The S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1917.

ⁱⁱ Evans, Elwood, **"History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington"**: Portland, OR.: North Pacific History Co. ; San Francisco : Press of H. S. Crocker & Co., 1889.