

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

Thomas Milburne Reed (1825-1905)

From: "An Illustrated History of the State of Washington," 1893.

Thomas Melburne Reed, one of the California Argonauts of 1849, and a Washington pioneer of 1857, was born in Sharpsburg, Bath County, Kentucky, December 8, 1825. His parents, Garnett B. and Nancy B. (Workman) Reed, were natives of the same State, descended from English and Scotch-Irish ancestry, both branches settling in Kentucky about 1790. Garnett B. Reed was a manufacturer of boots and shoes at Sharpsburg, residing there or in that vicinity until his death in 1847, his wife preceding him by ten years. With no public-school system in Kentucky, the education of Thomas M. was acquired by self-application, and, being deprived of a mother's care at the age of twelve years, he was early thrown upon his own resources, and was taken by his uncle, James Workman, a farmer, with whom he remained seven years, at the monthly stipend of \$8 during the summer months. These amounts were saved by young Reed and expended upon his education during the winter months.

At the age of nineteen years he began teaching school in Fleming County, but after one season was offered increased wages as cleric in a general merchandise store in Bath county. With experience his salary and position improved by successive association with other mercantile houses, until he became manager of a store in Mason County, the center of a large hemp and tobacco section, where a large business was conducted.

Remaining until February, 1840, he then started for California by the Panama route. With limited transportation facilities he spent six weeks in Panama; then a company of about 200 individuals was organized and they proceeded to Callao, and chartered the ship Sylph, at \$150 each to take them to San Francisco. Encountering head winds, their progress was very slow, and seventy-eight days were consumed on the passage, the vessel entering through the Golden Gate July 26. Mr. Reed then proceeded to Sacramento, and being about stranded financially accepted a position as chain carrier in laying out the streets of the city. After raising a little money he proceeded to Mormon Island on the South fork of the American river and engaged in mining, which he continued very successfully until the rains began, then returned to Sacramento and performed such work as he could find during the winter months.

In the spring of 1850, with his ship companion, Hon. John Conness—late United States Senator from California—he returned to the mines and worked until the summer of 1851, where the two opened a general merchandise store at Georgetown, California. In 1853 our subject was elected Postmaster under President Pierce, which office he held one year, then was succeeded

because of his anti-slavery proclivities. He confirmed his mercantile business however, until 1855, when he sold out. In 1853 he began the study of law with Selucius Garfield; and during the same year was elected Supervisor of El Dorado County, and in 1855 was elected Treasurer of the same county.

At the expiration of his term, in 1857, he came to Olympia, Washington Territory. he was appointed agent for Wells-Fargo & Company, and in 1859 engaged in the merchandise business with H. A. Judson, continuing until 1861. He then sold his interest. Upon the breaking out of the civil war in 1861, Mr. Reed was among the first to help organize a company, and was elected Captain, but being so remote from the seat of war, the company was not called to the front and so disbanded. In 1862 he was appointed Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue under P. D. Moore, collector of Puget Sound and Idaho Districts, and during the same year was elected to the Territorial Legislature from Idaho County, and with the assembling of that body was elected Speaker of the House.

Having continued his legal studies he was admitted to the bar of Washington and Idaho in 1863, and in 1864, was appointed Prosecuting Attorney of Idaho, and was elected to the Idaho Legislature from Nez Perce County. The legal business in Idaho being largely criminal, Mr. Reed became tired of his practice, and in 1865 sold his library and returned to Olympia, where his family had continued to reside. Shortly after he was appointed chief clerk in the United States Surveyor General's office and held that position continuously for seven years, and then entered the field as practical surveyor, in which occupation he continued until 1877, when he was elected to the Territorial Council from Thurston and Lewis Counties, and was president of the Council during the session.

On the last day of the session he was appointed Territorial Auditor by the Governor and confirmed by the Council before adjournment, and continued in that office until January, 1888, when he was relieved by the Cleveland administration. In 1889 he was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention and assisted that body in framing the constitution of the new State. In the fall of 1889, at the first State election, he was elected State Auditor and completed his term in that capacity.

Since 1877 Mr. Reed has been interested in mining operations in Idaho, Washington and British Columbia, and his real-estate speculations in Olympia. He has been an extensive developer of residence property, and built the Post-office block, corner Sixth and Washington streets, in 1891. His present handsome residence, corner Main and Thirteenth streets, was erected in 1890.

Mr. Reed was married at Upper Blue Lake Springs, Fleming County, Kentucky, in 1853, to Miss Elizabeth H. Finlay, who died in 1866, leaving two children: Thomas M., Jr., now Register of the Land Office at Seattle; and Mark E. Mr. Reed was married in Olympia in 1867, to Miss Eliza C. Giddings, who died in 1871, leaving one child, Emma. He was again married, in 1873, to Miss Hattie Fox, the issue of this union being one child, Garnett Avery.

Mr. Reed joined the Masonic order in Kentucky in 1847, and is one of its most distinguished members, having taken all the Scottish-rite degrees, including the Thirty-third, and all the York-rite degrees, including Royal Arch, Council R. & S. Masters, and Knights Templar. He has served as Grand High Priest and for one term as Grand Master of York rite three terms. For thirty-two years he has been Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge, has served four years as Grand Secretary of Grand Chapter; two years as Grand Recorder of Grand Commandery, and is the present Grand Treasurer of the Grand Commandery, having served as committee on correspondence for the Grand Lodge continuously, and, until the past two years, fore Grand Chapter and Grand Commander.

From: "Washington, West of the Cascades, Volume 3,"ⁱ 1917.

With "Life's battles well won, Life's work well done," Thomas Milburne Reed passed on to the life beyond on the 7th of October, 1905. He was then in the eightieth year of his age. Venerable in years but young in spirit, he had kept in touch with the interests of life and was to the last an



Figure 1. Thomas M. Reed

inspiration to all with whom he came in contact, while his memory will ever remain as a blessed benediction to those who knew him. He was known throughout Washington as "Honest Tom Reed." What more splendid eulogy can any man have, for it has been justly said that "An honest man is the noblest work of God." His honesty was not merely that of the spoken word but of thought and of action, manifest in carefully considered judgments and in appreciation of the other's viewpoint. Advanced years never meant to him idleness nor want of occupation. His was an old age that gave out of its rich stores of wisdom and experience for the benefit of others and grew stronger and broader mentally and spiritually as the years went on.

A native of Kentucky, Thomas M. Reed was born at Sharpsburg, in Bath county, December 8, 1825, and was descended from that north Irish Presbyterian stock that in colonial days did much to colonize the new world, for business activity was hampered in Ireland by the arbitrary will of the British government, which destroyed in wholesale manner the extensive

manufactories of Ireland because of their feared rivalry to England's factories and commerce. With natural hostility in their hearts toward England these Irish emigrants sought the new world, expecting to find here the opportunities which were denied them in their native land, but again parliament ruled against them. These colonists became intensely American in their love of their adopted country nor did their hatred of England abate. In this connection a biographer of Mr. Reed's said: "It is well known that he cherished to the last all those send rents of sturdy,

independent, uncompromising Americanism which their (his ancestors) self-reliant religion, their democratic church polity, their racial antipathies, their sore political grievances and the heavy financial losses to which they had been subjected by the cruel policy of national selfishness, all made it so easy for them to imbibe and to perpetuate. Kentucky being, as Henry Clay said, a transplanted Ireland in which Presbyterianism was the dominant religion, those sentiments were from the outset sedulously cultivated and carefully bequeathed from sire to son. These circumstances of heredity and environment had their large part in molding the character and influencing the mind of Mr. Reed. All through his life he clung with unfaltering tenacity to the doctrines and the principles which had become an integral portion of his inheritance."

Reared in his native state, there were many hardships which fell to the lot of Thomas M. Reed during the period of his boyhood. He was but twelve years of age at the time of his mother's death and the father, suffering financial reverses, removed from Sharpsburg to another part of the state. His son Thomas, then a youth of fourteen, went to live with his maternal uncle, James Workman, working on his farm for a wage of eight dollars per month and his board. Ambitious to acquire an education, he attended school through the winter seasons, meeting his expenses from the seventy-two dollars earned in the working season and from that sum also paying for his clothing. He remained for some time in his uncle's employ, during which period he qualified for school teaching and accepted a position as teacher of a country school. The elemental strength of his character was shown during that period. He realized his own lack of training but he resolved that his pupils should never know of it and by unremitting study in every available moment managed to keep ahead of his classes. The same thoroughness characterized his entire life and he became a quick-minded, clear-headed thinker, every mental faculty alert, and to the last he "retained the precious prize of keen mentality." In young manhood he turned to the study of law and while he devoted but a brief period to active practice before the bar members of the profession recognized the fact that he possessed a fine logical mind and correctly and readily applied the principles of jurisprudence. He had taught school through a summer season when he secured a position in a country store and the succeeding five years were devoted to clerking, during which time he won various promotions and ultimately was made general manager of business enterprises of that character. The conditions of his life, however, did not satisfy his restless ambition, which continually spurred him on to something higher and better and he utilized every available opportunity that promised progress and advance. When the news of the discovery of gold in California reached Kentucky he felt that perhaps his opportunity lay upon the Pacific coast and with a companion he started from Maysville, Kentucky, on the 23d of February 1849, as one of the American Argonauts in search of the golden fleece, traveling by way of the Isthmus route and reaching San Francisco on the 26th July, 1849, thus completing a journey which covered five months and three days.

Mr. Reed remained in California for about five years and then returned to his on a visit. There on the 20th of October, 1853, at Upper Blue Licks, he was first married, Miss Elizabeth Hannah Finley becoming his wife. This marriage was blessed with two sons: Hon. Thomas M. Reed, former judge of the superior court of Washington, sitting at Olympia, and afterward United States commissioner at Nome, Alaska; and Mark Edward Reed, who is manager of the Simpson Logging Company. Having lost his first wife, Mr. Reed wedded Eliza Carter Giddings, and they had a daughter, Emma

Eliza, now the wife of Dr. George W. Ingham, a leading physician of Olympia. Mr. Reed's third wife was in her maidenhood, Miss Hattie A. Fox, and the son of this marriage is Garnett Avery, connected with mercantile interests in Shelton, Washington. All of the children are married and occupy positions of prominence in the localities in which they reside.

After a two years' residence in California Mr. Reed ceased to engaged in mining, in which he had met with only a fair degree of success, and opened a general store in Georgetown, Eldorado county, forming a partnership with George Conness, who was afterward elected United States senator from California and later removed to Boston, Massachusetts. Mr. Conness was about five years the senior of Mr. Reed. The friendship which they formed in those early days remained unbroken to the last, being continued through correspondence until the death of the junior partner.

Success or failure connected with the development of the mining regions of California led to the upbuilding or decline of towns and cities and when in the turn of the wheel Georgetown lost its importance. Mr. Reed resolved to try his fortunes in the Sound country and in 1857 landed at Seattle, but at that time Olympia was a place of greater size and importance and he made his way to the capital. He had previously been agent for the Wells Fargo Express Company in California and was at once appointed agent at Olympia, where he also continued in active connection with merchandising. Later he became interested in the Florence gold mines at Idaho and while there was called upon for public service. He had previously filled a number of local posts in California, including those of postmaster, county treasurer, county supervisor and justice of the peace. That he might decide fairly and impartially the questions which came up for settlement before him in the justice court he took up the study of law and after becoming identified with Idaho his fellow citizens sought his services as prosecuting attorney and also elected him a member of the general assembly of the territory. He was in Idaho during the period of the Civil war when that state was regarded as a hotbed of secession sentiment. He was called upon to aid the internal revenue officers of the federal government who were unable to collect the taxes levied under congressional act. When it became known that Mr. Reed had undertaken the task the men at the hotel at which he was staying treated him with the utmost disdain. They would not sit at the table with him and heaped him with scorn and abuse. At length the leading stockraiser of the region addressed him in these words: "Reed, do you think you are going to get any money here for the support of your infernal Yankee government?" "Yes," came the quiet answer, "I do : and I expect you to pay me this day what you owe the government of the United States under the internal revenue law, for I am going to leave here today and am going to take that money with me." The answer was greeted with a scornful laugh but the determined look on the face of Mr. Reed told the cattleman there was to be no fooling with him. Years before, in California, after being repeatedly insulted by a bully, who was endeavoring to get him into a fight, Mr. Reed had taken the defensive and his antagonist was unable to be about for two weeks thereafter. The cattleman saw a wiry frame and guessed something of the power that might be behind that physical and mental makeup and the money was forthcoming that day. Mr. Reed on the whole was most kindly spoken, but when injustice, abuse or falsehood aroused him he spoke in terms of the strongest

indignation, standing as the exemplification of fairness in his exposure and condemnation of the wrong.

Although he was thus active in Idaho he never changed his residence from Olympia and in the latter city he attempted to enlist for service in the Union army soon after the outbreak of the Civil war. He was elected captain of a volunteer company but the expense of transporting the troops caused the government to decline their active aid at the front but in other connections Mr. Reed rendered valuable service. He had once before attempted to render military aid to his country, for at the time of the Mexican war he enlisted, but the quota was full and the company was accordingly disbanded. From 1865 until 1872 he served as chief clerk in the office of the surveyor general of the United States for Washington territory. On retiring from that position he gave much of his time to the survey of public lands in western Washington, sometimes in an official capacity and through other periods as a contractor, that business occupying his attention largely until 1880. In the meantime he was elected a member of the territorial council from Thurston and Lewis counties in 1877 and was chosen president of that body, which bore the same relation to the territorial government that the senate does to that of the state today. He was retained in public office at the close of his legislative experience, being made auditor of Washington territory, which position he filled until January, 1888. His public-spirited devotion to the general good led to his election as a member of the constitutional convention in 1889 and following the admission of the state into the Union he was elected the first state auditor, receiving the highest vote of any candidate on the republican ticket although the others were men of acknowledged popularity. He remained in that position until January, 1893, and made a most excellent record, having "regarded a public office as a public trust." In his official duties he ever placed the public welfare before personal aggrandizement and subordinated partisanship to the general welfare. No one ever questioned the integrity of his position and it was his fearlessness and honesty in support of his convictions and in the performance of his official duties that led him to become known throughout the state as "Honest Tom Reed."

One of the strongest forces in the life of Mr. Reed was his devotion to the high ideals inculcated by Masonry. In early youth he learned to study every phase of a question before making up his mind concerning it. He was in young manhood about the time when the Morgan excitement and the anti-Mason sentiment was at its height. With his naturally inquiring turn of mind he began investigating conditions and believed that the opponents of Masonry were in the wrong and that the lodge contained elements which would be of the greatest helpfulness to every individual in the development of his character and the shaping of his life. Accordingly, on the 30th of March, 1847, just four months after he attained his majority, he was made a Mason in Holloway Lodge, No 153 F. & A. M., in Bath county, Kentucky, and soon after joining the order he became secretary of his lodge. He afterward advanced to high rank in the order but never neglected the lodge. He felt that there was nothing so beautiful as the first three degrees. While in California he served as master of two lodges and he took the degrees of the council and of the commandery in that state. Following his removal to Washington he became grand high priest and grand secretary of the grand chapter and was grand recorder and grand treasurer of the grand commandery. In recognition of

the able and faithful service which he rendered to the organization the honorary thirty-third degree was conferred upon him. He was long a loved and honored member of Afifi Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S., of Tacoma and on the 8th of December, 1858, the thirty-third anniversary of his birth, he was installed as grand secretary of the grand lodge and occupied that position for nearly forty-seven years. Only once in all that time did he fail to attend a stated communication until that which was held just prior to his demise. Even then it was only by the strictest orders of his physician that he remained at home. Fifteen or twenty years before he passed away he and two other grand masters of Washington entered into a compact that the living should officiate at the last rites of the one who had passed away. These three were Colonel Granville O. Haller, U. S. A., of Seattle, Hon. Louis Zeigler, of Spokane, and Hon. Thomas M. Reed, of Olympia, and the second named lived to officiate at the interment of both of the others. At the death of Mr. Reed Masons gathered from all parts of Washington to do honor to his memory and he was laid to rest on such a day as he had wished for a glorious October day, the warmth and beauty of which rivaled midsummer. In a memorial address John Arthur, worshipful master, said : "What shall I say of the grace and sweetness with which Thomas Milburne Reed met and bore the fast-growing years? How shall I tell you of that glorious boyish spirit which even in his later seventies made him one of ourselves and not at all an old man? How neat and tasteful was he in his attire! How sympathetic was he with youth and inexperience! What a warm personal interest he took in the new members of the Grand Lodge, and how eager was he to help them along in every way! How he would encourage them to study and to foster Ancient Craft Masonry! And how the young men warmed to him! And if in the laudatory references to him at the lodge meetings, banquets and functions which he attended he was mentioned as 'our venerable grand secretary,' how pleasantly would he receive my repudiation of the adjective and my insistence that there was nothing 'venerable' about him, and that he was a ringleader among our younger set and generation! Brother Reed was an impressive personality. Tall, spare, straight as an arrow until recent years, with eyes of fire and force, a genial manner and a bearing of easy, natural dignity, he would attract attention in any concourse of men and would at once be acknowledged as a man to be reasoned with. He was by nature kindly, considerate and patient; but back of all this was the sleeping lion whom an underserved prod might awake to resistless fury. He was a stalwart in every phase of his life ; he was the outspoken enemy of all indirection; he was the soul of honor in all transactions with his fellowmen; his unselfish devotion to the public interest and needs of the community in which he lived brought him to the verge of financial ruin and cost him a fortune; his guiding star alike in public and private life was the strictest integrity; and

*Thus he bore, without abuse,
The grand old name of gentleman.'*

The passing away of such a man is a heavy loss to the state in which he lived, to the neighbors who looked upon him as their guide, philosopher and friend, to the great fraternal society of which he was the most distinguished member, and to the widow, children and grandchildren who loved him with all the ardor which such a lovable man inspires."

In Masonic circles he was the foremost "grand old man of Masonry," loved and honored by all of his brethren in the craft but also equally loved and honored in

other relations, for the same sterling traits won him the enduring friendship and regard of all with whom he was associated through business, social, political or church relations. In business he had worked his way upward from obscure poverty and attained a considerable measure of success. In politics he had borne unsullied a name synonymous with public-spirited devotion. In his social relations he was ever the considerate, helpful friend, and in the church a staunch advocate of Christianity. The sweetest traits of his character were reserved for his own household and his close associates may well say of him

*"He was a man ;
Take him for all in all
I shall not look upon his like again."*

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.