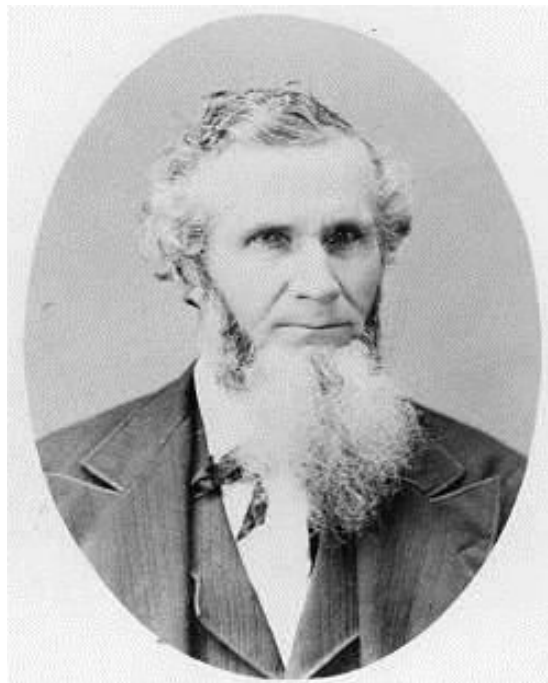


Joel Palmer (8.14)

The City of Dayton was founded in 1850 by General Joel Palmer with Andrew Smith, who married Palmer's daughter, Sarah, in 1848. Palmer donated and laid out much of the land for the town of Dayton, having purchased it from Andrew Smith's Donation Land Claim. The town was founded first and then developed rather than the other way around as is usual in the growth of villages.¹

Joel Palmer was born in Canada to American parents in 1810 and grew up in the Black River Valley in upstate New York. By 1836, his first wife has died and he had married Sarah Ann Derbyshire and moved to Laurel, Indiana. He worked as a contractor building a canal, and also served two terms in the Indiana legislature before traveling the Oregon Trail in 1845. He traveled to Oregon to determine "whether its advantages were sufficient to warrant me in in the effort to make it my future home", as he described in *Journal of Travels*, published in Cincinnati in 1847. His ascent of Mount Hood stood out as one of the most remarkable experiences of his adventure. When he reached an elevation of 9,500 feet, he was able to scout out a wagon route around the mountain that became the Barlow Road, a new route on the Oregon Trail that was passable by large wagon trains and significantly increased emigration to Oregon. He returned to Indiana in 1846 and moved his family back to Oregon via a large wagon train. The family settled in the Yamhill Valley in 1847.²



Palmer became a political leader during several years of conflict between Indian tribes and settlers and miners, serving as commissary general of volunteer militia in a campaign against Cayuse Indians in 1848 and gaining the nickname "General". He was Oregon Provisional government peace commissioner to the Cayuse, Territorial Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1848, and federal Superintendent for Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory from 1853 to 1856. He came in contact with many Native people and negotiated nine treaties between 1853 and 1855 and two others with Isaac Stevens in 1855. Unfortunately, his characterization of whites as provocateurs in many conflicts with Native people angered citizens and resulted in his resignation in 1856.²

Palmer came to Oregon a Democrat but became an active Unionist at the outbreak of the Civil War and was a Republican by 1862. He was elected to the Oregon Senate for four years in 1864. Republicans endorsed him for Oregon governor in 1870, an election he lost to Democrat Lafayette Grover by 671 votes. He returned to government service briefly in 1871 when he was appointed as Indian Agent at the Siletz Reservation, but resigned his post after less than two years due to his frustration with bureaucracy and the inability to aid the Siletz people.²

Joel Palmer lived the rest of his life in his home in Dayton. He died in 1881, leaving eight children and his wife Sarah, who died in 1891.² They are both interred in Brookside Cemetery, Marker 8.14.

¹ This information was obtained from <https://www.daytonoregon.org/explore-dayton/about-dayton/>

² William L. Lang, "Joel Palmer (1810-1881)", The Oregon Encyclopedia, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/palmer_joel_1810_1881/ / accessed July 30, 2024.