Socrates Tryon (1816-1855)

Socrates Hotchkiss Tryon lived in Vermont, Iowa, and Hawaii before coming to Oregon in 1849. He settled on land located between Portland and Oregon City, and in 1975, his claim became the Tryon Creek State Natural Area.

Tryon was born in Pawlet, Vermont, on January 24, 1816, to Jesse Tryon and Laura Hotchkiss. After graduating from Castleton Medical College, he married Frances Safely. The couple moved to Linn County, Iowa, in 1838, where Tryon was the county's first doctor. In 1840, he became clerk of Iowa's Third Judicial District.

In the early 1840s, Tryon left his family in Iowa to travel to the Hawaiian Islands, where he practiced medicine, and returned to Iowa in 1844. He served as a delegate to Iowa's second constitutional convention in 1846; his first child, Socrates Jr., was born the same year.

Tryon sold his land three years later and traveled to Oregon with his father and two brothers. Frances Tryon and Socrates Jr. sailed to San Francisco, where Frances operated a boarding house and waited for word on whether or not Tryon wanted to stay in Oregon.

In Oregon, Tryon took out a Donation Land Claim of 645 acres bordering the west side of the Willamette River south of Portland. The claim contained most of a canyon forested with virgin cedar and Douglas-fir, as well as the creek that ran through it. Tryon built a house and sawmill and established a small farm on the land. His father died in 1850. Frances and their son joined Socrates in 1851 after the Great Fire swept through San Francisco. Their second child, Sallie, was born in late 1851.

Tryon reportedly died of sciatic rheumatism in 1855. He had set aside $4,000 for the children's education, but Frances's second husband, a Mr. Young, stole the inheritance. Frances managed to put her children through school by working the farm herself and doing laundry for the girls' school in Lake Oswego. The children sold the land to the Oregon Iron Company for $7,000 in 1874.

The creek running on the property continued to be called Tryon Creek, and Tryon's house, built in the Greek revival style, stood at 250 Stampher Road until it was torn down in the 1990s.

Written by Lachlan Johnson

Further Reading:

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Cleveland, Helen, and Sally Boyd. "The Socrates Tryon Family Story." *Oswego Heritage Journal* 3 (1994), 2.

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