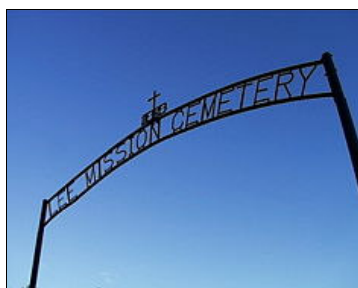


Jason Lee
1803-1845

Important Life Events of Jason Lee

- **June 28, 1803**
Jason Lee is born on a farm in Quebec, across Canada's border with Vermont.
- **1830**
After a religious conversion, Lee attends Wilbaham Academy, graduating in 1830.
- **1833**
Lee is chosen to head a church mission to the Flathead Indians.
- **1834**
Lee's party heads west, first departing New York in March and Independence, Missouri in April. By September, Lee arrives at Fort Vancouver, eventually relocating to what becomes known as the 'Willamette Mission' near the current Wheatland Ferry, north of modern-day Salem, Oregon.
- **July 16, 1837**
Jason Lee marries Anna Maria Pittman near modern-day Salem.
- **June 26, 1838**
Lee's wife Anna Maria Lee dies with their infant son after childbirth. Both are now buried in Salem's Lee Mission Cemetery.
- **1840**
Jason Lee marries his second wife, Lucy Thompson Lee.
- **March 20, 1842**
Death of Lucy Thompson Lee.
- **June 26, 1842**
Jason Lee founds the Oregon Institute, now known as Willamette University.
- **March 2, 1845**
Jason Lee passes away in southeastern Canada, where he is buried.
- **June 15, 1906**
Jason Lee's body is exhumed for travel to Salem, Oregon. Lee's remains are re-interred in connection with Willamette University's 62nd commencement.



Entrance at Salem's Lee Cemetery

Oregon's Jason Lee: The Untold Story

Local Legend's Legacy Includes International Cemetery Hopscotch

by Roy Widing, Contributing Writer

Many among us can recall grade school history lessons about Oregon pioneer Jason Lee. For those who can't, Lee was the gutsy man whose forays into a then-wild Oregon led him to historical fame, both as a minister and the founder of Willamette University. But while much has been remembered about Jason Lee, a few things you've never heard about him might surprise you.

Most historical accounts paint Jason Lee as an honorable and prayerful—if imperfect—Methodist minister. That's all true, but Lee was also brave. For when he traveled west to preach to the Native American tribe known as the Flathead Indians, Lee entered a largely uncharted Oregon territory. Wild animals and robbers were then very real dangers.

And while one of Lee's most important achievements was his founding of what would later become Willamette University, that single act was also part of his undoing. This is because Lee's superiors in New York were unhappy with what they considered Lee's shift of focus. For after many discouragements in his ministering to Native peoples, Lee had later proposed opening a school for white settlers called the Oregon Institute.

So although Lee persevered in successfully beginning the future Willamette University, one consequence was a battle with his own Methodist denomination. This saw Lee recalled back east to defend himself. Lee prevailed in being allowed to

keep his title 'Missionary to Oregon.' However he was offered no new position and before long, was replaced.

One interesting and little-known fact about Jason Lee doesn't involve his accomplishments in this life. Instead, it's about his travels afterward. Jason Lee was initially buried near his birthplace in the Quebec border town of Stanstead. But more than half a century later, the suggestion to re-bury Jason Lee where he'd dedicated so much of his life's work in Salem, Oregon soon gained momentum. It all started in 1904 when Mrs. Smith French of The Dalles, Oregon contacted Col. Frederick Butterfield of Derby Line, Vermont to discuss the possibility of moving Lee's remains to the Lee Mission Cemetery in Salem. Derby Line, Vermont is located just across the border from Stanstead, Canada. Through the combined and generous efforts of many people, it soon grew into a movement.

A Methodist church committee reviewed the request and in 1906, long after Lee's death, his body was disinterred from his original burial site in the far reaches of southeastern Canada and transferred to Lee Mission Cemetery in Salem, Oregon.

On Friday, June 15, 1906, church and gravesite services were held to celebrate the burial of Jason Lee's remains on Oregon soil. Distinguished speakers addressing Lee's re-interment included both the president and vice-president of the Oregon Historical Society, along with the editor of *The Oregonian* newspaper, plus a former Oregon Supreme Court Justice, one Northwest Governor and several former Northwest Governors or their representatives.



Lee Parsonage—1841 Home of Jason Lee. Mission Mill Museum, Salem, Oregon

As Jason Lee was remembered so long after his passing, his legacy remained solid. At one 1906 re-burial service, a speaker stated the following about Lee: 'The everlasting snows on Mt. Hood are not purer nor fairer than the unsullied personal character he left behind.'

Lee Buried In Salem

Those interested in paying a visit to monuments of local history can easily tour Lee Mission Cemetery where Jason Lee is buried. Next to Lee's grave are his infant son and both of his wives, who each died soon after childbirth.

In 2006, a centennial commemoration was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Jason Lee's re-burial on Oregon soil. It included a welcome from Salem's mayor and an enactment of selected eulogies from Jason Lee's 1906 service. Attending the rite were Willamette University's president, along with representatives of the Methodist Church, Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Governor's office.



Jason Lee Statue Oregon State Capitol