



c.1900

Willamette Heritage Center | Salem, Oregon  
WHC 2004.004.0053

## Reuben P. Boise (1819-1907)

Reuben Boise was born in Massachusetts. His family owned a farm and his grandfather and uncle were both lawyers with political interests. Asahel Bush and Boise studied law in Westfield, Massachusetts under his uncle, Patrick Boise, and he was admitted to the bar in 1847. Boise traveled to Oregon via Panama and in 1851 he was elected the prosecuting attorney of the first and second districts. Boise was chosen to compile the first Code of Laws for the Oregon Territory in 1853. He was named a delegate to the 1857 Constitutional Convention, and in 1857 was appointed by President Buchanan as a Territorial Supreme Court Judge along with Matthew Deady. After Oregon became a state, Boise was elected a Supreme Court Judge and later served as Chief Justice.

Once in Oregon, Boise eventually moved to Salem and owned extensive farmland. He was Master of the Grange for five terms and was active in promoting the interests of farmers. Boise owned the Ellendale Woolen Mill. He was once a Douglas Democrat, but later changed to the Republican Party. Boise was on the board of trustees at Willamette University and Pacific University.<sup>1</sup> He was a member of the Salem Clique.<sup>2</sup>

Boise died in Salem, Oregon in 1907. In describing Boise, Oregon Supreme Court Justice Frank A. Moore said, *“Judge Boise has probably done more than any other man to systematize the practice of law in this state and to raise it to a high standard. He was a man whose ability and integrity were recognized by everyone who knew him. His work speaks louder than words and stands as a monument to his glory.”*<sup>3</sup>

### **Letters to Bush from 1851 to 1855**

Boise writes about getting the *Oregon Statesman* more circulation in Portland and comments on *Oregonian* editor, Thomas Dryer, who Bush feuded with in the editorial pages. He also warned Bush about Dryer’s possible “revolver threat.” He writes about general gossip and happenings in Portland.

Boise had aspirations to becoming a commissioner in order to revise current laws. He mentions Delazon Smith and the possibility of holding a Constitutional Convention.

<sup>1</sup> *Portrait and Biographical Record of the Willamette Valley, Oregon* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1903), 209-10.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Cogswell, Jr., *Capitol Names: Individuals Woven into Oregon's History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1977), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Colmer, Montagu, and [C.E.S. Wood](#), *History of the Bench and Bar of Oregon*. (Portland: Historical Publishing Co, 1910), 259-261.