

An interview with Socrates Hotchkiss Tryon, Jr. (19 Aug 1848 - 18 Jan 1933)  
By Fred Lockley, 25 Aug 1928, Oregon Journal

"My father's name was Socrates Hotchkiss Tryon," said S.H. Tryon when I interviewed him recently. "Yes, I was named for my father and I live about a mile and half up river from Maygar. My father was born in Vermont and died in 1855, when he was 60 years old [1]. My mother, whose maiden name was Frances Safely, was born in Edinborough, Scotland. Six of the children in our family died before I was born. I was born in the first brick house built in Marion, Linn county, Iowa, on August 19, 1848. She lives at No. 1140 Hassaio street, Portland, with her niece, Mrs. Elmer. My sister's son, Charlie Cleveland, is principal of Benson Polytechnic. Another of her sons is a professor at Washington State College, at Pullman.

"My father, Socrates H. Tryon, built a sawmill on his donation land claim near Oswego in the fall of 1849. Later he was a partner of Captain Joseph Kellogg and Captain J.C. Ainsworth. Father died at Oswego 73 years ago. Mother and I came to San Francisco in 1850 by way of Panama. Father was uncertain whether he was going to stay in Oregon or come to California, so we lived in San Francisco about a year before we joined father at Oswego.

"I was always found of music, so when I heard somebody playing the fiddle in a saloon near the house where we were living I climbed over the fence and went into the saloon to listen to the music. They didn't want me underfoot there, so one of the men set me out in the street and told me to run along home. The big fire that almost wiped San Francisco off the map in 1851 started in a building near the saloon. Within a half hour after I had been put out of the saloon it was in ashes. My mother ran a lodging house in San Francisco and also took boarders, but when the town was burned we came up to Portland to join father. [2]

"I attended the Bishop Scott school at Oswego. Not long after my father's death my mother married Mr. Young. My father left a will in which he left \$4000 to be used to educate myself and my sister. My stepfather told mother that he had some business to attend to in the East and also that he thought the trip would be good for his health, so he got her to give him an order on the man in Oregon City that had this \$4000, so he could draw the interest, which was due. They paid high interest in those days - from 4 to 5 per cent a month. When mother went in to Oregon City a week or two after my stepfather had left she met the man who had the money. He told her that my stepfather had drawn the money as well as the interest. He had changed mother's order to include the principal as well as the interest. There were no telegraphs in those days, and while mother swore out a warrant for his arrest, by the time the warrant had got to San Francisco he had already sailed on a steamer for Panama, so we never heard of him again, and I had to go to work instead of getting an education, as my father had planned.

"Mother was a Scotswoman and was one of the hardest workers I ever saw. She took a man's place on the farm and in addition to that she did the washing for the girls' school. I went to work when I was 13. When I was 21, I went down to Oak Point and caught salmon. This was in 1869. I followed fishing for the next 10 years. When I was 31 I married Minnie Hudson. Hudson street, in Longview, is named for my wife's father. He had a donation land claim on Arkansas creek, and after he sold that he bought a place in Beaver valley, near Rainier. That was where I met my wife. From Oak Point I went down to Astoria, where I fished till 1881, when I went into a

logging camp at Maygar. Later I cut cordwood and sold to the steamboats at \$2 to \$2.50 a cord. For some years I was postmaster of Tryon post office. My wife died two years ago, and though I am 80 years old I am running the farm and batching."

Notes:

[1] Socrates was born 24 Jan 1816 in Pawlet, Rutland, VT, died 15 May 1855 in Oregon, age 39. Socrates Jr. was 6 at his father's death.

[2] This seems to align with the letters Socrates wrote to Fanny and with the documented fire history. Fanny was in CT in Nov 1849, waiting to begin her journey west. The fire was 3-4 May 1851. In the letter of 19 Jun 1851 Fanny appears to have left SF a few weeks earlier to go to Oregon. Socrates was staying in SF, working the lumber business. Most likely, Socrates had been primarily in Oregon setting up the mill and the lumber business in 1850 while Fanny was in transit. On her arrival he probably did not have good accommodations for the family yet in Oregon. He returned to SF after the fire to coordinate bringing in the lumber to rebuild the town and sent Fanny and little Socrates up to Oregon. His letters make it clear he was concerned about safety for them around the mill.