

# U.S. District Judge Matthew Deady

*By Unknown*

Matthew Deady was a founder of the Multnomah County Library, President of the Board of Regents of the University of Oregon, and presided over Oregon's Constitutional Convention in 1857. He was a gifted and dedicated jurist with a national reputation who, like many early Oregonians, practiced several professions during his lifetime. Among them were teacher, blacksmith, lawyer, gentleman farmer, and judge.

When he first came to Oregon, Deady practiced law and taught in Lafayette, Oregon. In 1851, he was elected to the legislature and then served as associate judge of the Territorial Supreme Court from 1853 to 1859. While presiding over the 1857 constitutional debates, he took a pro-slavery, anti-Black, anti-Chinese stance. He surprised many of his contemporaries, however, by denouncing anti-Chinese agitators in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1886, he went so far as to call a grand jury against anti-Chinese crowds seeking to expel the Chinese from Oregon.

Deady moved to Portland in 1859 after he was appointed U.S. District Judge for Oregon. In Portland, he worked diligently for the Library Association of Portland, spending countless hours trying to extract donations from the city's wealthy elite, in whose circles he often traveled. He sometimes despaired because they failed to respond to his entreaties.

In part, because his income as a judge was paid in depreciated currency during much of his career, Deady never matched his wealthy friends' monetary accomplishments. Instead, he was sometimes forced to accept financial assistance from them in order to maintain adequate appearances.

Deady was President of the University of Oregon, Board of Regents from 1873-1893, and wrote prolifically during the latter part of his career.

**Further Reading:** Applegate, Shannon and Terence O'Donnell, eds. *Talking on Paper: An Anthology of Oregon Letters and Diaries*. Corvallis, Ore., 1994.

Johnson, David A. *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890*. Berkeley, Calif., 1992.

Written by Trudy Flores, Sarah Griffith © Oregon Historical Society, 2002.

---

Oregon History Project

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/us-district-judge-matthew-deady/>