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EVENING OBSERVER,LA GRANDE, OREGON SATURDAY, NOVENBER 6, 1990.

CHIEF JOSEPH'S HALF CENTURY CONTEST FOR THE VALLEY OF HIS FATHERS IS PAST FADING FROM MEMORY ALTHOUGH THE CLIMA CAME WITHIN THE PRESENT DECADE.

(By Caroline Wasson Thomason) counties are taken place so rapidly that epoch making events are whirled into history, and cease to receive attention while separated from the present by only a few years. Just ten years ago Cheif Joseph with a small following was in Enterprise negotiating, although in vain, for the possescounty. Nine years ago the famous Wallowa county controversy of fifty years' duration was closed, and the Indians were forever bereft of the fathers.

The conflict opened at a council between the Indians and the whites in May, 1855, at Walla Walla. At that council I. I. Stevans represented Washington and General Joel Palmer represented Oregon. Seventeen tribes of Indiana were present . The Nez Perce tribe, 2500 warriors, selected as their camping place, the spot where residence of President Penrose the " Whitman college now stands.

What a scene it must have been when the palefaced brethern gathered the pow wow with their red brothers to arbitrate the giant question of land settlement and general peace. The council progressed smoothly, the pipe of peace was smooked by all. It seemed that the council was to close satisfactorily, when, like a war-cry on a midnight stillness, came the report to Cheif Joseph the elder that without his knowledge the Nez Perces had signed away his ancestral home, his beloved Wallowa.

Joseph at once appealed to his fellow chieftians. Big Thunder, Three the land of his forefathers, and the ce-Feathers and other prominent war- casion for fighting came in 1876. riors promised to help him. Upon consultation I. I. Stevans and General Palmer decided to reconsider the treaty in order to prevent a general country into a violent excitement. The uprising among the Nez Perces who Indians demanded that might be alhad always been the professed and lowed to deal with Finley. Upon being seeming friends of the whites. A map refused by the courts in which Finley was furnished Chief Joseph. With a was acquitted on the ground of self

deal of discussion over the ownership Changes in Union and Wallowa of Wallowa county. It was determined here to send A. C. Smith and J. H. Stevens (father of "Jap" Stevens of this city.) to Lapwai to council with Joseph, "Eagle-of-the-Light," and other Nez Perce leaders.

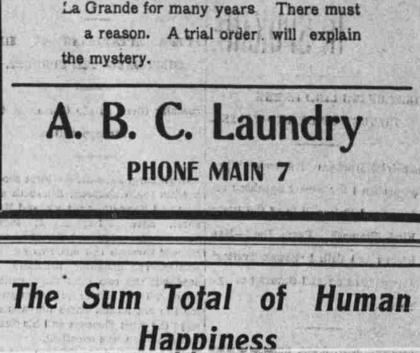
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Indians from Lapwai met the delegation from La Grande at Asotin, and in solomn procession conducted it to sion of a large portion of Wallowa the scene of the council. Perin Whitman, a nephew of Marcus Whitman. was the interpreter for the Nez Perces who said that they would resort to severe measures if the whites attempthope of regaining the lands of their ed to drive them from their homes. A C. Smith and J. H. Stevens had two documents, the treaties of 1855 and 1863, showing that the Waltowa country belonged to the whites legally. Search, as they would the Indian sympathizers could find no written statement of the agreement made with the Indians of 1855. So in gloom and discontent the Indians left the council tepee.

> In the fall of 1872 the settlers were badly scared by orders from the Indians to leave the valley within three days or a massacre would ensue. The consternation extended no further than to cause the erection of several forts and the collecting of all the available firearms. The brave ploneers had already sacrificed too much for their homes to vacate them without a struggle. The Indians thought better of their threat and the settlements rested in peace once more.

An attempt on the part of the Indian agents to establish a reservation inNortheast Oregon was frustrated by Governor Grover, in 1874. Joseph must now fight if he would dwell in

A quarrel over some range horse resulting in the death of an Indian at the hands of A. B. Finley threw the to Wallowa and look into the matter.



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is attained by the man who selects a place which is approved by his wife an ! adaptable for his entire f amily. '10 live amidst such conditions approximates about the keen est joy imaginable. "Where are such conditions to be found in the rapidly growing Northwest? ['1] you. Go to C. J. BLACK. He has a large amount of property listed to chose from, Fruit Farms, Stock Fa rms, Sugar Beet Farms, City Propertty, Grain Farms, Hay Farms, Timber Lands, With or Without improvements. Prices right. Let me show you. The second we for

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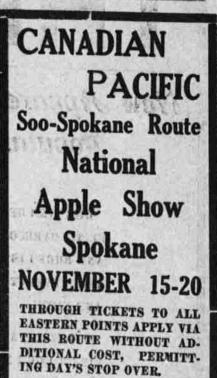
Wallowa river and Trout creek ex- not call his own. He must look for cept the towns of Enterprise and Jos- gladness in the Happy Hunting eph. cluded in the reservation. and the people were to have ample pay for their land. The people did not give their consent, as a matter of course. But Joseph had no idea of abandoning his hops so easily. So he hasened to Washington, D. C., where he interviewed the Indian agent and the secretary of the interior. The latter recommended that an inspector be appointed to accompany Joseph

Wallowa lake was to be in- Grounds, for in sadness and gloom he must resign forever the happy hunting grounds of the Wallowa.

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Chief Joseph passed to his fathers September 22, 1904. In the history of all noted chieftains, he stand out as the greatest general an' diplomat.





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pencil he traced the boundaries of defense Joseph declared that he would the reservation he desired. Needless drive out the whites if they did not to say he included the Wallowa. leave.

Joseph the elder was yet to encounter difficulties over the Wallowa for gan to pour into the Wallowa. Chief in a council eight years later, June 9, Joseph and his warriors drew up in 1863, the Nez Perce tribe in spite of fighting array about one mile from his violent oposition, signed away this Wallowa lake, the town of Joseph takpossession. Joseph never signed or ing its name from this act. General acknowledged the validity of the trea- Force from Fort Walia Walia made ty, he and his people being known as a forced march across the mountains the "non-treaty" Indians. The old and succeeded in making peace with chief continued to make annual visits Joseph.

to Wallowa accompanied by his people about five miles from the head of the Wallowa canyon.

At his death, Joseph, the elder was only because he was at a decided dissucceeded by his son, Chief Joseph, advantage and needed time to collect the Napoleon of the Nez Perces, the arms and troops. Thus Wallowa, the ablest general who ever led a band of golden apple of the following bloody hostile Indians. At this time Joseph was 30 years old. Although of unusual muscular courage of a tiger, Joseph fought for

ie was not as tall as he was commonally supposed to have been, being feet and 11 inches. He was thoroughly versed in the Wallowa controversy, his band to Bear Paw mountain, Monhaving been imbued with the love and |tana, where they were finally captured the lore of the beautiful valley from For 22 years this remarkable chieftain his earliest boyhood.

The early Wallowa valley pioneers came in all good faith as soon as the Territory, he was then removed to wonderful new country was opened. Colville reservation, which he occupi-But "Chief Joseph" and his non-treaty followers regarded the treaty of '63 as absolutely illegal as Joseph, the elder had never signed it. And even if the father should have signed away the lands they considered that the the days when he shed his blood for it. contract would have been in no way He resolved finally to make a last efbinding upon the children. Thus, fort, with their crudetheories of law, the In August, 1899, four Indians, dresmeasures to prevent the encroach- terprise. ment of the whites. The whole mis-

clan.

Volunteers from Union county be-

Although Joseph yielded without He died about 1865 and was buried staining his tomahawk his heart bled with bitter indignation. He diplomatically accepted the stipulation offered

war, lay at peace and quietude while with the cunning of a fox and the strength and weighed over 200 pounds it; Joseph the Napoleon of the Ner nerces.

> The war of 1877 followed, ending in the 1,500 mile retreat of Joseph and dropped out of Wallowa history. For

> eight years an exile in the Indian ed with Moses. This arrangement proved usatisfactory toJoseph for the vision of Wallowa never faded from his sight, and the desire to recover i burned as strongly in his heart as in

Josephs considered themselves justi- sed in citizens clothing and riding in fied in adopting the most extreme a double seated hack, drove into En-Without delay they pro ceeded to the city hall where an exinderstanding was due to the differ- pectant crowd was assembled. A. C. ace of opinion among the Nez Perch Smith introduced Chief Joseph, his ac-Indiana themselves respecting the quaintance of former council days. rights of the tribe as a whole to cede Through A. C. Smith, Joseph statet boldly, away the reservation of a particular the purpose of his visit. He desired

the consent of the Wallowa county At the council of "Old La Grande," people to the establishment of an Inaly 4, 1872, composed at ever 200 dian reservation in Wallowa county, all, even the sacred spot where rests

The inspector was requested to report as to the advisibility of granting Joseph 70,000 acres. Upon iuvestigation Inspector McLaughlin found that Joseph stood almost alone in his desire to leave Colville.

Having gathered all the data he desired on the Colville reservation, McLaughlin, accompanied by Chief Joseph, Peo-Peo-Tobet (Chief Joseph's nephew) Edward Raban, interperter, and Philip Andrews, camp tender, made a trip to Wallowa county, were he found a strong sentiment. against a reservation. Finding con dions here unfavorable for estblish ing a reservation, he so reported to the Secretary of the Interior. Thus the long controversy ended.

Joseph was confident that the raport of McLaughlin would crush his hopes, so his last visit to Wallowa was overshadowed with gloom. In a photograph taken of him and of A. C. Smith at this time his face is touched with a subtle pathos and sadness. On Sunday, June 17, 1900, he made his last trip to Wallowa lake. He was accompanied by the members of his. party, and A. C. Smith and J. S. Hodgins, a prominent attorney of La Grande at present.

Silently the grim old chieftian gazed at the crystal waters in which the lofty mountains were perfectly reflected. Who could know the savage longings of his heart! Only to breathe once more the breath of freedom! Only to scale the snowy summit of Eagle Cap and look out on the world unfettered! There would he behold a ridge where once his ponies fed on the tender grass, where once from its aerle in that stately pine an cagle

screamed at his arrow's touch; oft there is the Anerold lake with its perpetual ice; there is the huckloserry slope where once the sinemon bear snatched a sleeping papoose from its mother's arms: in the distance the Seven Dovils staun out

But now he would see from Faste Cup fields of growing grain and bu towns-the white man has taken it

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