

# TRIBAL HISTORY

## A Piece of Siletz History

by Robert Kentta, Cultural Resources Director

*This article is the sixth in a series of brief articles, each focusing on a specific time period in our history. The last article was about the early treaty-making period of 1851, under Anson Dart. He was the first superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory, an office that was established by Congress. Before that office was set up, "Indian Affairs" was an extra duty of the territorial governor. As was related in the last article, Dart's treaties were ineffective because the U.S. Senate refused to ratify them. Settlers in Oregon Territory also strongly opposed the ratification of those treaties. Dart, unable to keep any of the promises he had made, lost all credibility with both Indians and whites, and eventually resigned.*

### Part VI – The Western Oregon Treaties of 1853-1855

Joel Palmer was appointed as the new superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon Territory just as mining activity was bringing Indian/white relations to the breaking point. Palmer, an early arrival in the Oregon country, seems to have had an unusual amount of compassion and understanding of our people's situation, at least for a man of his time. He soon became known and respected among our people by a name that translates as "knows in his head."

During the late summer months of 1853, the Rogue Valley near Jacksonville and what is now Medford was the scene of open warfare and brutality. Our people, seeing their lands and resources overrun and their rights invaded in every way, had resorted to open conflict. Palmer was able to effect a cease-fire and hold a meeting on Evans Creek to discuss potential treaty negotiations. The headmen wanted time to gather the people, who were scattered from the Rogue/Umpqua divide to the summits of the Siskiyou.

On Sept. 10, 1853, treaty negotiations were held at the base of the cliff at Lower Table Rock. They nearly came to a halt when a tribal member ran into camp, sweat streaming from his body, and threw himself upon the ground. After getting his breath, he announced that a headman from down river had been tortured and hanged by some miners. Good sense and calm eventually prevailed, with promises that the men responsible would be properly punished.

We would like to thank everyone on behalf of our mother, Madge Mason. You were all so kind and thoughtful! Our friends and relatives really come through in a time of crisis. Thank you to:

- + Chinook Winds blackjack dealers for the beautiful plant arrangement and donation. You really made mom's face light up!
- + Chinook Winds and Gordon Dickie for the wonderful flower arrangement. It was the first arrangement mom received and it meant a lot!
- + Gladys Bolton for the gorgeous flower plant. It's still blooming! You're a good friend to our mother and we thank you for being there for her.
- + Siletz elders for the meaningful card and donation. You are all wonderful! Mom misses all of you!
- + Uncle Mike for working sooo hard at contacting Uncle Joe and bringing him over to see mom. It really made her day!
- + Uncle Bill for making the long drive to go see mom while she stayed with Diane and Ed. You always keep her on her toes.
- + To SIHA staff for the awesome flower arrangement done by tribal member Linda Rilatos, Posey Peddler. The vase will forever be cherished!
- + To Aunt Pat who helped to reserve the Good Samaritan House for family members to stay in while in Portland

This treaty is called the "Treaty with the Rogue River" although it represented three distinct language groups, the Takelma, Shasta and Applegate River peoples. Under the 1853 Rogue River Treaty, our ancestors agreed to cede (relinquish to the United States) title to the entire upper Rogue Valley. Our people reserved, however, the right to remain on a temporary reservation within that ceded area until a permanent reservation was selected and made "by the direction of the president."

A few days later, another treaty was signed with relatives of the Rogue River Takelmas who lived in the Cow Creek drainage of the South Umpqua. They also ceded all their territory and reserved the right to stay on a temporary reservation within their home territory until the president selected a permanent reservation.

These first two of Palmer's treaties moved together through the full process of ratification. They were sent to the commissioner of Indian Affairs, who forwarded them to the president, who in turn forwarded them to the U.S. Senate for ratification, after which they were proclaimed law by the president.

Over the next two years, our ancestors were forced to sign a total of seven treaties, which ceded the entire area between the Columbia River and the summits of the Siskiyou, and the summit of the Cascades to the summit of the Coast Range (approximately 15 million acres). Six treaties were for actual cession of lands and reserving temporary reservations; one was for the specific purpose of permitting the U.S. government to confederate other tribal groups with the original Rogue River Treaty tribes.

The only treaty signed in Western Oregon during this period that did not receive the same recognition and become passed into law was the summer of 1855 treaty with the coastal tribes of Oregon. This treaty, though signed in good faith by our ancestors, was supposedly lost in the D.C. shuffle (52 treaties were negotiated between the United States and various Indian tribes in the period of 1853-1856). Although our coastal tribes were forced into abiding by the terms of the 1855 Coast Treaty, the United States did not hold up its end of the deal at all.

The next article will be about creating a "permanent reservation" for all of our ancestral tribes of Western Oregon, and will begin to explain some of the myths and confusion surrounding the history of the Coast (or Siletz) Reservation.

- + To Terry and Wanda for the marvelous flower arrangement and moral support.
- + Tina Retasket for visiting mom at her home. Family means a lot to her and you were a welcome sight. Thanks.
- + If we have forgotten anyone, please accept our apologies. It was not done intentionally. We truly are thankful and blessed to have such an inspiring community. Everyone really steps up in the time of need and we really did need each and every one of you and for that we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. God Bless! Tamara Morrow

Happy 18th Birthday on April 4, Eddie! We all miss you and love you lots. We can't believe our baby brother is finally 18.

Shannon, Steve, and Cheney; Selina and Leroy; Carrie, Scott, and Emily

Happy Birthday to my Sister Wormlips on April 12. Can you believe we are both over 30 now?

Love, your sister - GLW

To our friends and relatives: You are invited to the wedding and potluck reception of Joel Mark Strong and Candace Elaine Tabbert on May 17, 2000, at 5 p.m. at the Eagles Club in Newport.