

55 Years Ago On Coos Bay

A. G. Aiken Recalls Thrilling Experiences With the Indians in Southwestern Oregon in Early Days.

The following account of the rather thrilling experiences of the early settlers of Coos Bay and Southern Oregon was written for The Times by A. G. Aiken one of Coos county's earliest pioneers and who was himself a participant in the events of which he writes. Mr. Aiken has promised some further chronicles of those early times which will prove interesting reading to the present residents. People today think they are isolated and suffer inconveniences but those tales of the hardships and perils of the pioneers stand out in sharp contrast with the blessings of civilization enjoyed now.

The Times would be pleased to hear from others of the pioneers who have interesting stories to tell of early day struggles and experiences in the farthest frontier.

The following is Mr. Aiken's story: "Just 55 years ago this month, or to be exact, on February 22, 1856, a number of white settlers, 18 or 20, were killed at the mouth of Rogue river. The news reached Coos Bay a few days later. Capt. W. H. Harris, a Mexican war veteran, wanted some of us boys to go with him and help the Rogue river residents. We went as far as Port Orford. They had formed a camp of Minute Men at that place, under command of John Creyton. We started back next morning and organized a company, forty-three all told, elected W. H. Harris captain, built a fort at Empire City, where the old Court House now stands. We then held a council with the Indians. There were five chiefs present. We wanted to know if they were going to fight or be peaceable. They said they did not want to fight but if they did not the Rogue and Coquille River Indians would come and kill them. We told them if they would come and camp on the little flat below Empire and let us know when any strange Indians came in among them and any fighting was to be done to let us know, and we would help them and furnish them flour and meat. This they agreed to do and kept their word.

S. S. Man was appointed quartermaster. He employed Snell Dement and Jack Pense to kill elk and Patrick Flanagan had a pack train and he packed flour from the Umpqua. So the Indians had plenty of meat and flour. We then started out to find some renegade Indians that we knew to be bad. One Indian, Pete, was not to be found. We went to Coos City where Judge Watson lives now, took an Indian trail to Burton Prairie, almost parallel with the Coos Bay wagon road. We arrived at Burton Prairie as wet as rats, each man carrying a pair of blankets and 10 days grub. The next day I killed my first deer. That was a feast for the boys. Some of the boys went up the North Fork of the Coquille above Burton Prairie and found fresh signs of Indians. The next morning we took up the trail of the Indians and trailed them into the head of Catching Slough, found where they had a canoe cached and had gone. We then made haste to Empire City and next day had Pete in the guard house. We tried him, mostly on Indian evidence, found him guilty and sentenced him to be hung.

We got a small fir about 5 or 10 inches at the but end—trimmed it up and put it in the forks of a wild cherry tree. It was fixed something like the old fashioned well sweeps. We pulled down the top end and made it fast; tied the Indian to the top end; gave him about 6 ft. of rope. F. G. Lockhart was master of ceremonies. He told Pete if he had anything to say to do so, and "dela wa-wa"—that is, tell the truth. Pete then asked to see Tyee Jim who was the first chief of the Coos Bay Indians. Jim was called. Jim said "Nica wake tickey wa-wa copa oak-oak cultis siwash," meaning "I don't want to talk to that bad Indian." Then, Mr. Lockhart told Pete to tell us all about the killing of the two men at the mouth of Beaver Slough. Venerable and Burton. Mr. Lockhart impressed it on his mind if he told the truth that he would be all right in the next world, and if he lied "Sahhahle Tyle highue sulla"—meaning God would be very angry with him. Pete then told how he had helped to kill the white men at the mouth of Beaver slough.

An unusual incident of the hanging of Indian Pete was that it was witnessed by a large number of other Indians and for several days follow-

ing they practiced the new method of execution on their dogs. They fastened trees as we had done, tied the dogs to them and then cut the rope. Dogs could be seen hanging in all directions. Whether they did it in imitation of the white man's way or whether they wanted to send some dogs to the happy hunting grounds with Indian Pete we never learned.

Pete said: "I was helping two men to move some goods from the head of Isthmus slough to the mouth of Beaver slough. They were camping their goods on their backs across the Isthmus to Cavaledo and I was taking them down the Beaver slough in my canoe. The night of the killing, the men were tired. After supper they made their bed and went to sleep. I made my bed on the other side of the fire from them, when I was satisfied they were asleep I got up and went down to my canoe, got in and paddled down to the mouth of Beaver slough and helped to kill the two men. I killed one of the men myself. We threw the bodies into the river." One body was found below Beaver slough, the other was found at the mouth of Head Man's slough, now called Iowa slough.

Three Indians were hung at old Randolph for the crime which Pete confessed and Pete would have been hung then but those white men that Pete was working for, swore that Pete was with them the night of the murder. This crime was committed in 1854 and Pete was hung in 1856, before the war.

About one month later I helped hang Pete's brother on Battle Rock at Port Orford. Enos, a Canadian half breed was hung later on Battle Rock. He was executed for taking arms against the settlers and fighting with the Rogue river Indians."

CAPT. CLOUGH DEAD.

Navigator Well-Known Here Dies at Seattle.

SEATTLE, Wash., Feb. 1.—Captain W. H. Clough, well-known as a commander of steamers on the Great Lakes, Coos Bay, Or., Grays Harbor and Puget Sound, died Saturday at his home in this city, aged 80 years.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

Few men shape their lives so that their funeral eulogies can be matters of history.

To be really appropriate, monuments to departed aviators ought to be anchored several thousand feet in the air.

In Coquille a man has a spy driving horse which is named "Mawsez." He explains that he selected that name because what maw says goes.

It's up to a man to choose between two evils when he is asked to beat the carpet or take care of the baby while his wife does it.

North Bend News

Mrs. Alex Mattson is a Marshfield visitor today.

John Tellefsen of Eastside is making a short trip to San Pedro.

Will Emery, who has been quite ill is able to be around again.

John Hendrickson of Coos River made a business trip to our city today.

The W. C. T. U. will meet Thursday afternoon at 2:30 at the home of Mrs. Robert Kittson at Eastside.

Mrs. Beata Wittig and Mrs. J. B. Johnson of North Bend were in Marshfield today calling on friends.

The schooner Echo reached Valpa-

also January 10, but the report failed to reach here until yesterday, owing to the storm which prevailed along the coast.

ASTORIA LOSES OUT.

Oregon Senate Refuses \$100,000 For Celebration There.

SALEM, Ore., Feb. 1.—House bill No. 23, appropriating \$4,000 for the purchase of a burial plot in Riverside Cemetery for the Spanish-American war veterans passed the House by a vote of 38 to 15. The matter of the appropriation for the Astoria centennial came before the senate and went down to defeat by a vote of 11 to 14. Astoria hoped to get an appropriation of \$100,000 to aid in the exposition at that city, and now the delegation from the oldest town in Oregon are trying to get a reconsideration of the vote on the subject.

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