

VOICES FROM THE PAST

Question 1. Who were the Yamhill Indians?

The Yamhill Indians were a division of the Callapooya tribe. Their homeland was in the present area of Grand Ronde and extended to Rickreall Creek to the South, and possibly as far East as the West bank of the Willamette River.

On April 24, 1851 at Champoeg a negotiating board met with the Yamhill Council to discuss cession of their land. The Board, representing the Oregon Territory were Governor John Gaines, Judge Alonzo Skinner, and Colonel Allen.

The three Chiefs representing only 54 men, women and children were all that survived the Epidemic of 1830-33. So, these were all that was left of a thriving band of Callapooya Indians whom had suffered an estimated loss of 90%.

The Yamhills ceded their land and was sent to the Grand Ronde reserve.

Question 2. Who was Joel Palmer?

In 1853 Joel Palmer was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. He negotiated treaties with many Indian tribes and made more promises than he intended to keep.

He, in February 1856 under the escort of 100 U.S. Army soldiers supervised the Rogue River Valley "trail of tears" to the Grand Ronde reservation.

Joel Palmer also selected the Siletz reservation site. He thought that the white settlers would not want to live there. But this later proved to be wrong, as the white settlers saw the value in the vast, rich timber stand at Siletz.

Question 3. Lt. Philip Sheridan:

Lt. Philip Henry Sheridan, a West Point graduate, came to Oregon in 1855. He took part in the Yakima Indian wars while stationed at Ft. Vancouver. He commanded Fort Yamhill April - July 1856 and Fort Hoskins July 1856 - May 1857. He returned to Fort Yamhill in May 1857 and stayed until he left because of the Civil war in Sept. 1861. During this time span he was promoted to the rank of Captain. By 1864 Sheridan had distinguished himself and had become commander of the Shenandoah. This man was rapidly promoted to general and had a brilliant war record.

Question 4. What was the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934?

The Wheeler-Howard Act, passed by Congress in 1934, permitted Indian tribes to become corporations, stopped allotment of lands, created loan funds for Indians, and proposed many changes in Indian policy; also known as the Indian Reorganization Act.

It seems to be too little too late. If it had been in place at the time of the Dawes Act of 1887 we Indians might not have lost our land base across the United States.

Question 5. What was the purpose of Fort Yamhill?

Lieutenant William B. Hazen, Commander of a detachment of Company B, Fourth Infantry, U.S. Army established Fort Yamhill March 25, 1856 on the South Fork of the Yamhill river overlooking the Grand Ronde Valley. It was garrisoned by as few as two officers and 75 enlisted men with as many as 128 enlisted men. Their purpose was to keep the Indians on the Grand Ronde Reserve and to capture any who left. The commanding officer at the Fort had the power of punishment by confinement and whipping. Fort Yamhill was closed in June 1866.

- - - - - Next month: Father Croquet and Father Felix - - - - -