

EARLY DAYS IN JACKSONVILLE HILLS EXCITING

Seven Killed, Seven Wounded in Surprise Ambush on Nearby Creek

Editor's Note—This article, a chapter lifted from "Reminiscences of An Old Timer," tells in true style one phase of Jacksonville's early life.

On our arrival at Humbug, we found the miners "up in arms" and organizing a company of volunteers to go to Jacksonville, in the Rogue River valley, Oregon, 75 miles north, a courier having brought in word that the Rogue River, Shasta and Klamath Indians had "broke out," and were killing, pillaging and burning everything before them; and it was believed that the Indians who had just escorted us had killed eight or 10 men at the mouth of Humbug a few days before.

I joined Captain Rhode's com-

pany of "Humbug boys" as also did John Scarbrough, one of my former partners; and we proceeded to Jacksonville, as did Captain Goodall's company of "Yreka boys" and seven or eight soldiers from Fort Jones, under Colonel Aldrich (if my memory don't fail me as regards the name). Reaching Jacksonville without adventure, we went into camp near Table Rock on Rogue river.

From here, 21 men, including Crosbie and myself, John Melvin (Greasy John), "Grizzly," and others, whose names I have forgotten, were sent out as scouts. We were each armed with a muzzle-loading rifle, a brace of Colt's navy revolvers and a knife—except Crosbie, who had a patent gun with two cylinders, which he could fire 16 times without reloading. We crossed the mountain to Evans creek, 20 miles distant, where we struck the trails of Indians.

We followed these trails up the creek some miles, until we were satisfied that the Indians had very recently passed up into the mountains.

We knew their fighting qualities, Old John's and Sam's bands of Rogue River being said to be the bravest Indians and the most stubborn fighters in the northwest. That the reader may form some idea of their bravery, I will here relate that when one of these renowned chiefs was being taken to the military prison at Alcatraz, near San Francisco, on an ocean steamer, he actually captured the vessel, having no other weapon than a capstan bar; and held the deck for some time before he was overpowered, then as he lay on the deck in irons, he said, grating his teeth, that if he had had one of his warroirs to assist him, he would have kept the "hy-as kanim" (big canoe). Then many of the brave (?) white men on board wanted to hang him, but the captain told them that an Indian who could do what that one had was too brave a man to suffer such an ignominious death. This is told as a fact, and I have no doubt of its truthfulness.

But to my story: we returned down the creek a few miles and being hungry made a stop, to let our horses graze awhile, and to partake of such provisions as we had with us.

Some of us picketed our horses and others "hobbled" theirs on the creek bottom, which was covered with luxuriant grass. We then fell to work in our own interest, and after satisfying our appetites,

stretched ourselves on the grass under a few pine trees that grew in the bend of the creek, to rest while our horses fed. The bottom here was three or four hundred yards wide and the creek running through it was fringed on each side with willows and other brush. From the willows to the foot of the hills, or mountain spurs, was level prairie. The foothills were studded with sugar and bull pine trees, and were clear of underbrush. The bend in the creek where we rested was in something the shape of a horse-shoe, and our shade trees stood near the ceter of this bend.

While resting here, some lying down, others sitting up talking, our horses quietly grazing, none of us suspecting any danger, or that there was an Indian within miles of us, we were suddenly assaulted with a volley, and the unearthly yells of hundreds of Indians from the bushes which almost surrounded us. Our horses stampeded, and scattered excepting one that was being held by one of the boys. This he immediately mounted, and struck out for our camp on Rogue river. The first glance showed us that we must retreat to the foothills; this we did as fast as we could, assisting our wounded along, leaving our dead as they lay.

Reaching the timber, we found that seven of our comrades had been killed and that seven more were so badly wounded that they could not stand up after we got them there.

The one on the horse we believed—and it was soon proved—had escaped and gone after the rest of the company. Our wounded had retained their arms and ammunition.

The Indians first proceeded to mutilate our dead after their most inhuman fashion, cutting, stabbing and gashing, all the while yelling in the most fiendish manner that the mind of man could conceive. Then, after securing our animals, they swung around on to the mountain above us, so as to work down on us from tree to tree. A few well-directed shots had convinced them that it would not be a healthy undertaking to follow us across the bottom. These movements on their part gave us sufficient time to select our fighting ground. This we made on the first high ground out of gunshot of the bushes along the creek. As good fortune would have it, a log lay across the narrow ridge. Behind this log we laid our wounded, among whom was Greasy John, severely wounded in the hip. Grizzly had fallen and was one of the dead; Crosbie fell by the log with the wounded, being, as I supposed at the time, more dangerously wounded than any of the others.

The Indians gave us but a short time to prepare for them. We all realized upon reaching the friendly trees that we must stop here and fight it out, or leave our wounded comrades to the tender mercies of these inhuman fiends, and even then, in all likelihood, be overtaken and killed in detail ourselves.

Our only thought was to stand by our comrades and fight for them and ourselves to the bitter end.

Those that were able to fight could command two rifles and four revolvers each, as we could use those of our wounded as well as our own. Some of our wounded comrades could load our revolvers when emptied, as a ball that fitted one, would fit all.

Our respite was short. The Indians, armed with guns, bows and arrows—few of them had revolvers at the time—soon came down on us, jumping from tree to tree for cover, all the time firing and making the mountains re-echo their blood-curdling war-whoop. They seemed determined to finish us up there and then, at all hazards. They charged down to within a few yards

of our log and trees, but here they met such a withering fire from our Colt's revolvers, that those who were able were only too anxious to retreat to a more respectful distance, and for awhile contented themselves with firing on us from trees behind which they had taken cover. On this first charge there were but five of us on our feet—Crosbie lying by the wounded as dead. Greasy John and one or two others would from time to time raise on their elbows or to a sitting position, and over their log fire a few well-aimed shots, then sink back faint and exhausted, soon revive, reload, struggle to a position and blaze away until their strength failed. This they repeated during the entire fight. The wounded would load our revolvers and pitch them to us as fast as we emptied them, when we were being pressed by these charges.

(To be continued)

ITEMIZING THE ELECTRIC LIGHT BILL FOR MONTH

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