

Early Indian War History Graphically Told

The following is a copy of an old and interesting letter written by a soldier with the volunteer troops which went from the Willamette valley against the Whitman Massacre Indians in the early part of the year 1848. This letter was copied and furnished The Gazette-Times through the courtesy of Miss Pipes of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

Fort Wasco, (The Dalles), March 29, 1848.

Dear Father: I suppose you have the news up to the time that General Palmer left us at Wellapu. I will endeavor to give you some information with regard to our movements after he left us up to this time and our present situation.

The morning that the Commissioners left us Col. Gilliam left the Fort in search of the Indians with about two hundred men. Learning from the friendly Indians that they were encamped about thirty miles north of east of Wellapu we steered our course in that direction and on the second day we encamped near that place and found that the Indians had all deserted and gone. Some friendly Indians came into camp and informed us that the Indians had gone to the mouth of Canon River for the purpose of crossing the Snake River and getting out of our reach. The next morning the colonel called the regiment together and left it to the regiment to say whether he should follow the Indians or return to the Fort. The unanimous cry was follow the Indians and get these murderers if possible. He then ordered the cannon and a sufficient force to protect it, back to the Fort. We then proceeded with about one hundred and fifty men in search of the Indians. We traveled until about 2 o'clock p. m. and encamped. Several Indians came to us through the day; they all informed us that the murderers had gone to the mouth of the Toocanon. About sundown the orders were to saddle up and prepare for marching.

About dark we took up the line of march for the mouth of the said river. We struck the river about twelve miles above its mouth and steered our course cautiously down the same. After we had traveled about ten miles down said river one of our spies returned and informed us that the Indians were encamped but a short distance below us. The order was to prepare for battle. While we were preparing to surround them one of the spies that remained fool-like fired at what he thought to be an Indian. That they were everything in confusion. We succeeded though before a great while in surrounding what we thought to be a village and it proved to be a bunch of willows. The spy had shot at a horse. The colonel, after we had given up the search at that place ordered the men to camp and remain until morning. We arose early in the morning and discovered that the hills were literally covered with stock. We were in a short time in battle array marching towards their village. We had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile before we discovered their village situated about a half a mile below us. Everything was excitement. We found that they had completely surprised them. The Indians discovered us at about the same time that we discovered them. They were almost frightened out of their senses. We could see them running in every direction from their village making their escape. Some of the Indians came to us pretending to be friendly and desired us to talk with them, but this was only for the purpose of getting time for their families that they might leave and get out of our way. When we reached the village we could find no murderers, they had all gone. Knowing that there was a village on Snake River about a mile from this village we proceeded to that place. When we reached there we found the Indians busily engaged in crossing the river. The men were very much exasperated. All was excitement. The men were not allowed to fire on the Indians but they were so mad that one of them fired contrary to orders and killed an Indian. Finding no murderers the colonel ordered us to retrace our steps but drive in all the stock that we could conveniently get. We started back to the fort with about two hundred head of cattle and about the same number of horses. We had not traveled more than five miles before the Indians attacked us on almost all sides. We kept them off by having the men so situated as to fight them as we traveled. The Indians continued to annoy us. As sundown we thought best to encamp for the night knowing that we could not well fight Indians and drive stock after night. After we had encamped the Indians drew off and ceased firing but it was not a great while before they returned to the attack. The colonel called a council in order to know the feeling of the officers. The council decided on calling off the guard and letting the stock go, preferring to give up the stock rather than see their men killed in protecting them by these savages, and also knowing that their men had not more than forty rounds of ammunition with them and about fifty miles from the fort surrounded by Indians. They continued to annoy us on all sides the next morning we continued our journey fighting as we traveled until we reached the Tuzin (?), a small creek, here we found that we could not retreat any farther without losing some of our men; the Indians had got into the brush and rocks and it was necessary for the safety of the regiment to dislodge them. We succeeded in driving them from their position by killing and wounding a number of them. Here the engagement ceased after fighting about thirty hours. We killed and wounded a good many of them. Some were scalped by the boys. We lost none on our side but had nine or ten wounded, some of them badly. We reached the fort next day worn out with fatigue and hunger. We had not eaten for three days except a little horse flesh on the evening of the third day. If we had managed it properly we could of taken us and whipped the Indians without any difficulty, but it is too late to talk and write about that affair now. After resting ourselves and animals the colonel started for this place at the head of three companies leaving the remainder under the command of Lieut. Col. Waters to protect the place until he could return. On the evening of the 24th while in the act of camping Col. Gilliam was accidentally shot and killed instantly. He stepped in a wagon to get a rope to stake his horse with it being thrown with other things promiscuously in the wagon on some loaded guns. One

of the wagons, in the act of getting his rope for him and not seeing the gun, caught hold of some man that were lying on the guns to throw them out of the wagon, and in the act of doing so pulled the hammer back and it fired. The ramrod being in the gun, the bullet glanced and I do not think it touched him. The ramrod hit him in the head just above the eyes and caused instant death.

It is a horrid thing that our commander should lose his life in this manner. The regiment is in a bad situation at this time, destitute of everything that is necessary to carry on a war.

We left our fellow soldiers above in a bad condition, almost destitute of ammunition. They had not more than forty rounds of balls when we left them and it is our business down to this place to procure ammunition and return immediately to their relief, but when we came we found no ammunition here. We will have to wait until we can get some; it is useless to go back without it and what their situation is or may be before we can get to their relief I cannot tell. I cannot tell what the people of the Willamette valley are thinking about for they certainly do not know their own situation and they would send us men and means for carrying on the war. We must not abandon and give up the war under existing circumstances. If we do we may expect to fight at home. There is no danger in our staying as long as we can keep a sufficient force in this upper country but if they do not send us some men and means we must and are compelled to abandon the enterprise. We are not strong enough; if we are we are not the means otherwise. We have a formidable enemy to contend with. They must send us troops and ammunition if (illegible) us or we cannot get any in safety. Send us up men and we will soon lay the enemy and bring them to terms of peace.

(Signed) BENJAMIN F. BURCH.

Colonel Cornelius Gilliam, the officer who led the punitive expedition formed by the pioneers against the Indians who had perpetrated the Whitman Massacre, was a relative of Frank Gilliam of this city and the man for whom Gilliam county was named. The following sketch of his life is taken from an interview given by the Colonel's daughter, Mrs. Martha Gilliam Collins to Fred Lockley. It was published in Vol. xvii of the Oregon Historical Quarterly. Mrs. Collins died at her home in Dallas, Oregon, March 6 of this year.

Colonel Gilliam was a native of North Carolina, born in 1798. As a young man, he moved to Missouri. There he was married to Mary Crawford in 1820. Of this union three children are mentioned, Smith, Mark, and Martha. When the Black Hawk war broke out, Colonel Gilliam volunteered, fought through that war, also through the Florida Seminole Indian war, in which he rose to the rank of captain. Following the close of this war he returned to Missouri. In civil life, he held the office of sheriff, was twice sent to the legislature and twice to the senate.

(Continued next week.)

BOARDMAN

One of the pleasant social affairs of last week was the April Fool party given Thursday at the home of Mrs. J. B. Johnson. For the cast of the play "Miss Molly" which was given last October. The members of the cast, the musicians, the director and the bus drivers and their wives were the invited guests. The party was given at the J. B. Johnson home. A reception committee greeted the guests at the door with some novel hand shakes. The pictures on the walls were upside down. Motions of Merry Xmas, Happy New Year, Keep Off the Grass, Please do not Look at this Sign, etc. were observed on entering. Games of various kinds were played and numerous stunts were mirth-provoking. If laughter counted, everyone must have had a jolly time. Mr. and Mrs. Dillon, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Bleakman and Ople Wagner were unable to attend. Cakes, brick icecream, punch, sandwiches and coffee were served late in the evening. Guests present were Messrs. and Mrs. Lowell Spangle, J. O. Russell, N. A. Macomber, Howard Packard, Elmo Russell, Roy Gilbreth; the Misses Alice Aldrich, Barbara Hixon, Edna Broyles and Mrs. Joyce Willis.

The following clipping taken from a recent Portland Sunday paper will be of interest to Boardman friends: Mahara Kutzner, 12-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Kutzner and a pupil of Mrs. Emma Gillispie, gave several readings at the Patton Old Peoples' Home Wednesday afternoon at the great delight of all the members of the home. Mahara has recited since a very small child and has frequently delighted Boardman audiences with her humorous recitations.

Grandfather Warren is quite ill at the home of his son, Harry Warren. The oiling crew of the highway moved to Matilla and will work out from there.

Shearing will start on Monday. Mr. Kuntze and Mr. Montague have a 4-man plant and they will shear practically all of the sheep on the project.

Miss Barbara Hixon returned on Friday on legal business, where she was under the care of Dr. Halsey, having had a severe case of hives. Mrs. J. O. Russell substituted for her. Mr. and Mrs. Bert Bleakman attended the dance at Hardman Saturday.

Mrs. O. H. Warner returned Saturday from Pilot Rock where she visited Mr. and Mrs. Guy Lee for a few days.

Mrs. Nick Falter, who returned Saturday from Portland, where she attended the funeral of her brother, Thomas Luke, received a telephone call on Wednesday evening telling of the death of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Thomas Luke, who died just a week after the death of her husband. Henry Klages returned Saturday from Portland where he has been for several weeks.

CECIL

Miss Violet Hynd, teacher near here, accompanied by Miss Arleta Farrans of here, were the week end guests of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hynd at Butterby Flats.

Mr. and Mrs. L. Harman and infant daughter, who have been visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Krebs at the Last Camp for some time, left on Sunday for their home at Walla Walla.

Mrs. J. E. Porter, Gilliam county school superintendent, and Mrs. Ferguson, Gilliam county treasurer, were calling in Cecil on Thursday after spending some time at Rhea Siding school.

Krebs Brothers of the Last Camp were busy men on Sunday at Cecil depot superintending the loading of 1100 ewes and 1000 lambs which they were shipping to their ranches above Heppner.

H. V. Tyler and family were visiting at Killarney on Sunday and joining in the birthday festivities of J. J. McEntire's eldest son, Jackie.

Mrs. Geo. A. Miller and son Elvin of Highview were visiting with Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Streeter at Cecil on Sunday.

Congratulations are extended to

Answer to last week's puzzle.

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Emil Bolt of Butterby Flats, late of Ukiah, who carried off the first prize for best walker at here on Saturday. Name of partner not known to writer.

Miss Laura Chandler of Willow creek ranch spent Monday evening with her school chum, Miss Helen Streeter, at Cecil.

Elmer Williams and Harold Ahalt, government trappers, are busy looking over the trapping prospects on Willow creek for a few days.

Walter Pope of Hillside was visiting Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Crabtree at Cuckoo Flats on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Spillman and family from their ranch near the Willows, spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Karl Farnsworth at Rhea Siding.

W. V. Pedro and niece, Miss Josie of Ewing were calling in here on Thursday. W. V. is still making improvements and is now busy planting shrubs and trees around his residence and is also having all his outside painting done over for the second time.

W. G. Palmateer, accompanied by his wife and daughter, Miss Clea, left on Friday for Eugene where they intend to live for the summer. W. G. we understand, has left Windybrook in charge of a friend until he decides whether he will come "back to the farm" after he has seen the city.

Mrs. Claude Coats and small daughter Echo of Oregon City came Monday for a visit with her sister, Mrs. Jay Cox. Mrs. Coats has been visiting her mother at Heppner before coming to Boardman.

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Woodward of The Dalles come Sunday to take charge of the Highway Inn, having recently purchased it. Mr. Woodward is a brother of L. V. who lived at Messer for so many years and is known to every Boardman resident. The paper ventures that all success in their new venture, Mrs. Warner has built up a splendid reputation by the meals she has served and the Woodwards no doubt will keep up the high standard. Miss Mabel Wahl, who had leased the hotel until sold relinquished her post Monday morning.

Boardman friends were delighted to see Mr. Sylvester Attebury in town Monday. Only a few weeks since he was so seriously injured that his life was despaired of. He is unable to use one arm much as yet and has some difficulty in breathing as there is still some pressure from the broken ribs, but he is looking well and everyone on the project is happy over his miraculous recovery.

Ladies Aid are asked to remember the Food Sale on Saturday. Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Heroin entertained at their 8th anniversary dinner, Mr. and Mrs. N. Falter and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Gorham, who have been with them on this occasion for several years, and Miss Myrtle McNeil.

Elmer Westerfeldt finished baling the last of the hay on the project, that of A. P. Ayres. While moving the baler home a valve broke, or some similar catastrophe occurred. At any rate he had to park his baler by the road near John Bryces'. Better luck next time, Elmer.

Neils Kristensen is leveling a few acres for C. S. Calkins, the corner on which Mr. Larsen raised corn so successfully, but which has never been leveled for alfalfa.

Boardman is becoming better known each year. There have been many calls for real estate of late. Mr. Boardman and Mr. Cobb who returned recently from Ontario and Boise, state that much of the alfalfa is sold out and no green fields were in evidence until Herminston was reached. Some of the young alfalfa on the project was frozen but practically none of the old.

Chas. Dillon has a young band of sheep, having purchased 13 lambs from J. T. Healey. They are all growing finely.

Mrs. Ralph Humphrey leaves Wednesday for Penasqua, Wash. Mr. Ralph Davis and Mrs. Goodwin motored to Herminston and Umattilla Monday evening.

Clifford Olson returned Monday from St. Anthony's hospital at Pendleton where he has been for several weeks. He is getting along nicely.

Elvira Jenkins has the makings of a good financier. Last year she raised 6 lambs, 5 of them ewes. This year she sold them to Mike Mulligan for the sum of \$55.

Chas. Dillon is building his fourth chicken house, a large one. He has a great many white leghorns and a big shipment of baby chicks coming soon. Geo. Dillon of Portland is here assisting with the carpenter work.

T. H. Edmonds of Vancouver, Wn., is here looking after his ranch.

"Broadway" or not. Leon Logan of Four Mile was calling in Cecil during the week. Leon has one thousand acres of wheat sown and informs us that it is coming well, and that rain has visited his part of the county in heavy showers. On March 30 a heavy thunder storm hit Four Mile and the ground has become well soaked. Leon is now finishing up six hundred acres of summer fallow.

Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson of Ridgefield, Wash., arrived at Highview on Thursday and spent a day or two with their sister, Mrs. Geo. A. Miller.

M. W. Sherrard and son from their ranch near The Willows were calling in Cecil on Friday.

Mrs. B. E. Stender and daughter, Miss Gloria, of Seldomsen, spent Wednesday with Mrs. L. L. Funk at Curtis cottage near Cecil.

Mrs. W. H. Chandler of Willow creek ranch spent Wednesday with Mr. and Mrs. Oral Henriksen at the Moore ranch near Lexington.

Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Lundell of Rhea Siding were calling on friends in here on Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Karl Farnsworth, Jack

Hynd and daughter, Miss Annie, John Krebs, W. V. Pedro and R. E. Duncan were amongst the visitors to the county seat during the past week.

Medames Streeter, Sexton, Medlock, of Cecil were visiting with Mrs. Alf Medlock at the Poplars on Thursday.

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Below are the names of a few of his many satisfied patients in Oregon: Hedwick Wilson, Gold Beach, Ore., varicose ulcers.

Frank Koehler, The Dalles, Ore., stomach trouble.

Mrs. E. C. Hammond, Myrtle Point, Ore., goitre.

Mrs. John McCue, Lakeside, Ore., appendicitis.

Henry Westfall, Ontario, Ore., ulcer of stomach.

Mrs. E. C. Bates, Baker, Ore., eczema.

O. M. Richey, Boring, Ore., heart trouble.

Louis S. Steiber, 325 E. Buchanan, Portland, Ore., adenoids and tonsils.

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