

WAR WHOOPS, continued

had each taken his wife and young children to the available town within reach. This required in many instances from two to four days with their wagons and teams through a country where bands of hostile Indians could be met at any moment. Although the trips were hazardous, it was the only choice they had. The families from Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and Wasco Counties were assembled at The Dalles. They camped outdoors under primitive conditions. The stay was usually for a number of weeks. The conduct of the women was heroic. There are no reports of any serious epidemic resulting from this concentration of what we would now call displaced persons. Every family had brought along its supply of food, and the mothers were equal to the occasion of cooking over camp fires and improvising beds and quarters for their children."

THE BATTLE AT WILLOW SPRINGS

A large force of Indians under Chief Egan of the Piutes moved north from John Day into the Blue Mountains. The settlers and townspeople of

Umatilla County kept track of their progress. On July 4 Egan had possession of Camas Prairie (Ukiah); on July 5, Sheriff John L. Sperry started for that area with a company from Weston. July 6 they marched from Pilot Rock to Willow Springs, about 15 miles south, where they were attacked by the Indians as they were stopped for dinner. William Lamar, a school teacher, was killed during the battle. (Remember that Morrow did not become a county until 1885—and was still part of the county of Umatilla where this action took place.) The volunteers being badly outnumbered began a retreat, and they were attacked four times in about six miles with the loss of one man, Harrison Hale. He is buried in the little cemetery on Butter Creek near the Currin Ranch beneath a marker showing that he died at Willow Springs in 1878. Battle Mountain State Park commemorates this battle.

A RIDE FOR LIFE

During the 1878 war a band of fifty hostile Indians in war paint rode up to the residence of John S. Vincent out along Butter Creek. Seeing a barrel in the yard close to the well, they jumped to the conclusion that it contained whiskey. Of course they demanded some

to drink, and while Mr. Vincent was getting cups for them they formed a ring around the barrel and danced in wild delight in anticipation of a glorious spree. Upon giving out the cups, Mr. Vincent took to the brush, grabbed a horse and began to ride for his life. When the Indians found that the barrel contained vinegar instead of whiskey, they got angry. They gave vent to their curses, and would have killed Mr. Vincent with pleasure if they could have caught him. He, however, was riding pell mell for Pendleton and although they gave chase for about 30 miles he reached safety.

On the same day on which this race took place another band of warriors fatally wounded Charles Jewell and killed a Mr. Nelson and a Mr. Skelley near Butter Creek. (Schiach, Pg. 246)



MEANWHILE, BACK IN HEPPNER

It was learned from a squaw known as Sarah Winnemucca, captured by General Howard, that the Indians in the largest group planned to come through Heppner. The town became very upset and excited. Many families fled, but those who remained determined to build a fort. The site was a lot belonging to A. S. Wells, back of the Palace Hotel (The Ford Motor Co. site). The fort was quite large, a cellar about five feet deep and a roofed structure covered with two feet of dirt. Rifle pits were also dug in commanding positions on the hillsides near town. A company was organized with Frank Maddock as captain, J. L. Morrow as first Lt. and A. S. Wells as Second Lt. The government sent a box of guns which were greatly needed. Thus protected, Heppner was considered a reasonably safe resort and people began flocking in from all the surrounding hills.

According to Mr. Schiach, "A fort had also been built by the people of Long Creek.

The residents of that town sent to Heppner for assistance and Captain Maddock set out to their relief with about thirty men. Indeed the danger seemed now to be that Heppner would be left without an efficient fighting force in case of an attack, as men were now going into all quarters in which Indians were reported to have been seen and taking the guns with them. **SOME INDIANS COME**

"A band of Indians did come into town, but made no hostile demonstrations; on the contrary, they professed great friendliness. They were, however, disarmed, assigned to an unoccupied flat in Heppner and placed under arrest. One of the squaws did not propose to remain a prisoner, and was able to mount her Cayuse and strike out over the hills on a gallop, applying her whip vigorously to the horse's flanks. Some of the whites wanted to shoot her rather than to permit her escape, but better councils prevailed. An Indian proposed to recapture and bring her back, and he was allowed to make the attempt, but returned shortly without having

overtaken her.

INDIANS WERE RELEASED

"So persistent were the captured Indians in their promises to go directly to the Columbia River and to refrain from all hostilities against the whites that it was finally decided to give them their liberty. They had not been gone long before Maddock and his company returned from Long Creek, reporting that they had found Nelson and Skelley dead on Butter Creek and Charles Jewell badly wounded. This added greatly to the excitement, and had these facts been known before the Indian prisoners were freed, it would doubtless have gone harder with them. But owing to some change in the plans of the confederated tribes, none of the warriors came near Heppner, so the war was fought out, the excitement subsided, and no citizen of Heppner was molested."

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A FAVORITE INDIAN

Mr. Ed Clark, Hermiston, has painted historic pictures on hides of life in the days of his grandfather, Oscar Clark for whom Clark's Canyon, is named. He has recounted incidents about those days and about his childhood experiences at the mouth of Clark's Canyon just northwest of Lexington. "Old Blind Jim, the chief of a small group of Columbia River Indians is especially remembered. He is supposed to have directed Oscar Clark to the spot where Oscar settled which the Indian said would be a fine place to raise cattle.

(Ed. Note: Since the article was written, Mr. Clark has passed away)

Josie Rhea Jones (Mrs. John Newton "Newt" Jones) who died in May 1970 at the age of 96 just one week after the death of her daughter, Mrs. Venice Jones Styles, told Mrs. Harnett about Indians she remembered from her childhood. Josie was a daughter of Columbus Rhea a first settler on Rhea Creek. She said her parents were always kind to the Indians who visited. She says Chief Joseph and some of his people visited them. One Indian she particularly remembered was "Old Blind Jim" who was always led by a squaw and who visited regularly. In 1878 the Indians didn't bother the Rheas.



EDITOR REDINGTON VISITS BLIND JIM

The Heppner Gazette's first editor J. W. Redington wrote of an evening visit with Blind Jim. "Blind Jim was the chief of a small tribe of Indians called Columbia River Renegades, who speared salmon on the river when they were running, and hunted berries, elk, bear, and other game in the Blue Mountains in the good old summer time. When I called on Jim one evening he was glad to see me, although he had not seen anything for 10 years. His other senses were strong, and he recognized most people when they told him who they were. "Jim was sitting in front of his teepee near Heppner and while we had our wa-wa or talk, we feasted on dried venison as a sort of between meal diversion. He was sitting on the ground, and the strip of meat he was eating was as long as your forearm, and while he held one end in his teeth he cut off an inch close to his mouth, chewing it up then coming back for more. The close-up wacks that he made on that meat looked as though on the next he would cut off his nose—but he did not. He could not see, but his strong sense of distance told him just how near he could come to his

War Whoops, continued in next section

AS ONE CENTENARIAN TO ANOTHER...

First National takes pleasure in saluting the lively community of Heppner on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

Your friends and neighbors at the Heppner branch of First National take great interest and pride in the growth and progress of the city. We participate in such events as the annual Morrow County Fair and Rodeo.

We know the community and are ready at all times to be of service for any financial need.

Your First National branch is not merely a place to go when you need money. It is a well-trained team of people, ready and able to assist you in any phase of home, farm or business financial management.

This is, in fact, the secret of First National's growth—people serving other Oregon people with every banking need... since 1865.



FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF OREGON

Heppner branch

