

WHITE SALMON AND THE OLD BLOCKHOUSE

Among the many objects of historic interest on both banks of the Columbia River, there once existed two famous relics which are but little known today. These were the White Salmon and Washougal blockhouses but as this article is specially devoted to the former, I will only speak of that.

The White Salmon blockhouse was built in 1856, soon after the war along the Columbia with the hostile Yakimas took place. Generally speaking, we might term the year of 1856 as being "blockhouse year" since so many of these structures were built at that time. There is an old saying: "when the horse is stolen, we always lock the barn" and there is indeed much truth in this rather crude quotation. In many instances the pioneer settlers were very careless regarding dangers at the hands of their hostile Indian foes and did not bother to erect for themselves any means of protection. Particularly was this true at the old Cascades settlement, one of the largest on the Columbia at the time, where later, one of the most terrible massacres took place on the banks of this great stream. With their great confidence in the friendship of the smaller tribes of Indians along the river, the settlers never realized the danger from any larger and more hostile tribes farther away but after the terrible tragedy of 1856, and the awful lesson learned from it, the whites realized their peril in this wild and savage land and at once sought means of protection from future attacks, hence blockhouses and stockades began to be built, not only at the Cascades, but at other settlements as well. One of these "after war" forts was the White Salmon blockhouse, and, while its existence was short lived, (having been taken down some few years afterwards, when final peace was made with the hostile Indian tribes), it was among the most famous historic monuments of its day, and, considering the general architecture of blockhouses, it was one of the largest and most handsome structures in that part of Washington.

It is certain that this building was never photographed but, while this is to be regretted, the loss is not entirely irreparable, as there still remains a most valuable record and detailed descriptive account of this fort, of which the writer was fortunate enough to secure a copy and which is now published for the first time.

For data, regarding this blockhouse, the writer is greatly indebted to three pioneers who have all seen this fort, namely; Mrs. Camilla Thomson Donnell, formerly of The Dalles, Oregon, who wrote a most interesting narrative before her death concerning old White Salmon and its fort, from which account the writer has taken several quotations; Mrs. Lulu D. Crandall of The Dalles and daughter of Mrs. Donnell; and Captain Henry C. Coe, now residing at Manhattan, California. Both Mrs. Crandall and Captain Coe, were among the early settlers along the Columbia and today both are among the most interested workers who are striving to preserve the history of the northwest.

It is the purpose of the writer to submit to all lovers of northwest history, with the help of the above pioneer friends, the following account of this old blockhouse which has almost entirely been forgotten.

In concluding this introduction I wish to express my thanks and deep appreciation to Mrs. Crandall for the following narrative which she has written specially for this article. Her entire story is submitted for the first time for publication, and is as follows:

Mrs. Crandall's Narrative

I saw the White Salmon blockhouse first in the summer of 1862. I was then just eight years old. I fix the date from this recollection of a trip by sail boat from Fort Dalles to White Salmon to visit Mr. and Mrs. E. S. Joslyn. They were warm friends of my father and mother. My family had lived, since coming to Wasco county in 1858, on a stock ranch on Ten Mile Creek, about 12 miles east of The Dalles. My father and mother and Mr. and Mrs. Joslyn had been charter members in organizing the Congregational Church here in 1859 and continued a lasting friendship as long as they lived.

Mr. and Mrs. Joslyn settled on the north bank of the Columbia River, on the east bank of the White Salmon River in 1853, soon after they had arrived, a young couple just married before they left their New England home to come to Oregon Territory by a sailing vessel seven months out of New York City, around Cape Horn, the southernmost point of the great continent of South America, for Portland, in a land where Uncle Sam had promised such couples 640 acres of land, 320 in fee simple to each, for the simple consideration that for at least

three years they should live on it and make a home. Theirs was the only settlement on the north bank of the Columbia River east of the Cascades. There was no settlement on the Oregon side in 1853. N. Coe did not come to Hood River until the next year.

Here the two young people laid up a log house near the immense oaks that still stand sentinel, near the present big house on the Birkett place—and planted fruit trees, and conducted, in an astonishingly short time, a real New England farm of house, barns, sheds and hay fields for milk cows, and made butter and cheese for Portland market. There was a little steamboat running from Fort Dalles to Upper Cascades once in a while on which they could send their products out, or to Fort Dalles to be sold to the government. Mr. Joslyn used a sail boat, called a skiff, and was quite independent of the little steamboat and became quite an expert small boatman. The prevailing winds and the choppy seas and a big sail that has to be used to tack back and forth before the Chinook gales that prevailed almost the year around—with his boat loaded down with freight going either way, up or down the river at flood stage or at dead low water, the skipper soon learned to be expert.

It was on one of these trips to Fort Dalles with his sail boat that he invited my family to return with him in the skiff to their home at White Salmon for a visit. We were delighted. There were five in our family. I had two brothers, the elder was about two years younger! and a baby boy little more than one year old.

Beside our family, who were invited as passengers in Joslyn's sail boat, was the family of the Congregational pastor, the Rev. Thomas Condon, consisting of his wife and four children who were about our ages. This made twelve passengers in the boat, and not one of us had ever seen water before but the pastor and his wife, who came around the Horn, and were seven months on the ocean. I do not remember that any of us were afraid. Pioneers were never afraid.

My mother, in 1852, had shot the rapids at the Cascades in a Hudson's Bay batteaux manned by Indians, holding in her arms a sick child whose mother had died in the Black Hills. When asked if she was afraid, she always said, "Why should I be afraid? The Indians would not have taken me if there was danger." And with this loaded boat of seven young children, the

oldest only eight, and five grown-ups, only one of whom knew anything about tacking a sail, we started down the Columbia River at its flood stage, and drifted with the current, or "tacked" back and forth across the river, with the sail set to catch the breeze that made the propelling power. The river was at the spring freshet, flood-tide. The steamboat landing at The Dalles was, on account of the extreme high water, moved from "the incline" below the Umatilla House, up main street opposite Fitzgerald's store where there was quite a rocky ledge. Fitzgerald's store was on the south side of Main Street, at the southeast corner of Federal and Main Streets.

We cast off our head line by noon and rowed out into the current and we were all the rest of the day dropping down the twenty miles to White Salmon and it was a delightful summer evening when we passed the blockhouse, which was located at the upper steamer landing, while Joslyn landed his skiff of tired passengers at the lower landing, a mile below the upper, and only a short distance from the hospitable home, where Mrs. Joslyn had ready a fine supper for her hungry guests, adults as well as children. I locate the time of year, not only by the high water, but also by the delicious wild strawberries that Mrs. Joslyn served out to us while on this visit, which would indicate that May was the ideal time of year for our visit.

The Joslyns had no children of their own, but always had in their home some visiting girl or boy from The Dalles, who had the time of their lives in attention that all people love, old or young—their birthdays were always celebrated by a cake, a picnic, a ride, or some distinctive feature that was their own, and never-to-be-forgotten.

At the time of our visit at the Joslyns, we found the Rev. E. P. Roberts already there. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts were missionaries of the Congregational Church who had just returned from the South Sea Islands, where they had gone a few years before as a newly married couple. They served in Pon-a-pe, a city in the Marshall Islands. When they returned to the States they brought with them two children, a girl and a boy, Charlotte and William J., who were born on the Islands. They were about four and two years of age, and since coming to White Salmon, a second boy had been added to the family, about six weeks old at the time of our visit. He is now Hon. H. S. Roberts of The Dalles, now "serving time" in the Oregon Legislature. William

J. is a civil engineer, now of Tacoma, and is Washington State Engineer of highways.

These children made ten children in the Joslyn home. Mrs. Joslyn had the faculty of entertaining her guests by assigning each one a task. The older children had the strawberries to pick over and to hull. The Indian women picked the berries and brought them in to Mrs. Joslyn in great basketfulls. Each child was assigned a "stint" of the delectable berry, before him seated at the great dining room table, with instructions that he or she was to hull every berry, eating none, but with the promise that when the task was completed each child should have a saucer of berries with thick cream over it, and a piece of bread and butter as a reward for their labor.

Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, the missionaries, decided not to return to the south seas, but did decide to remain at White Salmon and become neighbors of their true friends, the Joslyns. The government blockhouse was the only other house in the neighborhood, occupied or unoccupied, and the Roberts family were glad to move into such a commodious house and were very comfortable in it. I have visited them in the blockhouse and have a very keen remembrance of the interior of the living rooms. Mrs. Roberts was a very beautiful and attractive young woman and loved children, and was very kind to girls of my age and I was very fond of her.

Mr. Roberts acquired a tract of land adjoining the Joslyn tract and the blockhouse was on the tract. The blockhouse stood on the rocky point at the Upper steamboat landing where were some giant pine trees and was in full view of the river boats coming from either direction. The Roberts's soon found that in the higher stages of the river freshet, the knoll on which the blockhouse stood, was an island; that the road back towards the hill was under water, and only a boat could negotiate the wide expanse of water between the blockhouse and the farm work adjoining so Mr. Roberts built and moved his family back from the encroaching waters of the Columbia River.

The Joslyn house, (the one they built when first filing on land at White Salmon,) was burned down by the Indians a few weeks before the taking of the Cascades in March of 1856. That story is well told by Mrs. Joslyn herself in a letter written years after they left White Salmon, from her home in Colorado Springs. The old cellar, from which their house was

burned, for years was still a hole in the ground, a short distance from the present big house on the place, down in the old orchard of cherry trees that were planted very early. Joslyn's fruit trees were among the first fruit trees planted in Eastern Washington.

About twenty years ago I visited the scene of the Yakimas' fury, saw the old cellar walls and the old trees, found a fine specimen of an Indian pestle laid up in a crotch of an old cherry tree, and visited an Indian shack, where we were told an old Indian lived alone, called "White Salmon Dave," and that he was the Yakima that fired Joslyns' house. He was a decrepit old man, living on the charity of one who gave him a "cultus potlach" of a coin. He was a wretched being.

The Joslyns had been the Indians' best friends; Joslyn could speak the Chinook fluently and could explain to the Indians what the Great Father at Washington expected them to do, and what he would do for them better than anyone. No doubt he averted many an overt act on the part of the discontented "Siwash." Not all of the Indians were ugly, they were friendly, and many of them were Christian.

The blockhouse was built soon after the Cascade affair, and was for the short time it was needed, used as a store house for government freight that was landed there from the boats and guarded until it could be "packed" over the trail that led over to Fort Sim-co-e. This was a new fort built on the Yakima Indian Reservation by Major Garnett. A man by the name of A. Townsend was the man in charge at the White Salmon blockhouse, while A. S. Cain and Dr. R. H. Lonsdale, were acting as Indian agents and were doubtless Townsends' superior officers.

After the wagon road to Fort Simcoe was completed, from The Dalles, crossing the Columbia River here, the freight was landed at Fort Dalles and the White Salmon trail fell into disuse.

Dr. R. H. Lonsdale was Indian agent of the Flatheads at Fort Owen on the Bitter Root, when he met Gov. I. I. Stevens in 1855. He was a medical doctor and for a while lived at The Dalles. They were identified with the Methodist Church here; Mrs. Lonsdale was a teacher in the Sunday School. I remember being in her class when I was a little girl. She belonged to the pioneer family of Popes in Oregon City. Her maiden name was Pope. She died early in life. Dr. Lonsdale

is first heard from as taking up a claim on Whidby Island where the town of Coveland was laid out, in about October 1850 and '52. The County seat was on Lonsdale claim. Island county was organized by the Legislature of 1852-3. Dr. Lonsdale lived at Coveland and practised medicine, until he was made Indian agent in December, 1854, when his duties took him east of the Cascade Mountains. Richard Hyatt Lonsdale was born in Maryland in 1812, was reared in Ohio, removed to Indiana, then to Illinois, and to Missouri in 1846. In 1849, he came to Oregon via California, entering the Columbia in October. He was first Auditor of Clarke county, and the first Postmaster north of the Columbia where he owned half of Short's town-site. He served as Probate Clerk for Island County.

A. S. Cain was in charge of the Indians of the north side of the Columbia River from Vancouver to opposite Fort Dalles, assisted by A. Townsend, local agent at White Salmon. This was about 1857. At a council held by Agent A. S. Cain with the Nez Perces, the chiefs declared themselves satisfied with the treaties. This was the council where Chief Joseph thought he got the lands over which, 20 years later, was war. About this time, 1859, Fort Simcoe, that cost \$60,000, was taken for the Indian Agency. Cain was Indian agent to the Nez Perces when gold was discovered on the Clearwater in the Indian Reservation about 1860, and arranged for the first party of miners to go in. A. S. Cain laid out Steptoe City, now Walla Walla, named for Col. Steptoe. Cain was born in Indiana, and came to Washington as one of Gov. I. I. Stevens' secretaries in 1853. He practised law at Walla Walla, and was prosecuting attorney for that district. He was connected with several newspapers, the *Umatilla Press*, the *Walla Walla Real Estate Gazette*, *Dayton News*. He died aged 50 years in July, 1879, at Walla Walla.

In the summer of 1866, during the month of July, (I was then 12 years old,) I visited White Salmon, the Joslyns and the Robertses who were living still in the blockhouse. Mrs. Griswold was there at the Roberts home. She was a nurse and I had a message to her from J. B. Condon who lived at Hood River, but at this time, July, was at The Dalles with his wife. My message was to tell Mrs. Griswold that Mr. Condon would expect her to come up on the next Saturday's boat, and he would meet her. Some time after I learned that Mrs. Griswold

took care of Mrs. Condon when J. W. Condon, now of The Dalles, was born on July 24th 1866.

Dr. Lonsdale and A. J. Bolan, both Indian agents were sent to the Yakimas to arrange for a general council, and Walla Walla council on Mill Creek where Whitman College is now, was held in May of 1855. Ka-mi-ahkin said that spot was the place, where in ancient times, the Indians had always held their councils. Dr. R. H. Lonsdale was the first Indian agent at Fort Simcoe in 1860 after the fort was placed under the Indian Department. He was removed from office by Supt. E. R. Geary of Indian affairs for Washington Territory, for refusing to turn over certain books to the proper authorities.

The Roberts family left the White Salmon and came to The Dalles and his land was taken over by James R. Warner, who was a brother of Mrs. Joslyn. Her maiden name was Mary Warner. Mr. Warner had served in the Civil War and, with his wife, Cynthia, came to Washington Territory, attracted, no doubt, by the home of his sister, who had preceeded him from their home in Massachusetts, fifteen years before. In the course of time Mrs. Warner passed away and the veteran married Mrs. Susan Henderson of The Dalles. She was the widow of James A. Henderson, and had two children, a girl, Annie, and a boy, Ally. He was named for his father, James Alexander, but called "Ally."

Comrade Warner took down the blockhouse on account of the high water, referred to, that made an island of the blockhouse site so much of the year, that it was useless to him for barn purposes, and as he found, as Roberts did, that their home should be further back, away from the river and the flood, Warner took down the logs and moved them up to the rear of his house and barns and built a corral for his calves—and, I think it is safe to say that the corral and the logs are still there. Ally showed the corral to me a few years ago and told me this story. He now owns the land where the corral is. He inherited it from his mother, who in turn inherited it from the Civil War Veteran, as he had no children, and she out-lived him.

One of the massive doors that belonged to the White Salmon blockhouse is now lying on the lawn at the Historical building at The Dalles. It was placed with the Old Fort Dalles Historical Society by Mrs. Birkett of White Salmon. She sent word to me that the door was on the old place, (Joslyns'), and

she was leaving for California and would like to have the door taken care of and she put it on the boat and it is now safe. It is a heavy door, triple constructed, diagonal boards nailed on both sides of perpendicular boards.

When the Joslyns returned to White Salmon about 1858 or '59, after the blockhouse ceased to be used, Joslyn moved a "lean-to" or an addition from it down the half a mile to his place and used it for their home. The second Joslyn house burned down.

LULU D. CRANDALL.

Mrs. Donnell's Account.

The reader's attention is now turned to the narrative written by Mrs. Camilla Thomson Donnell. Soon after the Joslyns had settled on their White Salmon homestead the war with the Yakimas broke out and they were forced to leave everything and flee for their lives. Mrs. Donnell writes:

"This was in February, 1856. The Joslyns spent the years until 1859 in Portland. When they returned after the Indian excitement was quieted, the government had built a blockhouse, and Indian Agent Townsend was superintendent. He lived in the blockhouse until 1859. A. S. Cain, in charge of the Indians on the north side of the Columbia River from Vancouver to opposite The Dalles, assisted by A. H. Roby, in charge of the Yakimas, occupied the blockhouse until they could make improvements the second time."

Mrs. Donnell continues in another passage:

"Rev. E. P. Roberts and wife had been missionaries in the Ponapo, one the East India Islands. They landed at White Salmon March 29th, 1862. They lived in the house with the Joslyns until June of the same year, when they moved to the blockhouse, it not being in use at that time. The blockhouse was built by the general government, as a place of security for supplies needed at Fort Simcoe. Dr. Lonsdale was then the agent in charge of the Klickitat Indians."

In conclusion, Mrs. Donnell states that the Roberts family lived in the blockhouse for some months. She says it stood at the regular steamer landing above the highest stage of water.

Description of the Blockhouse.

The writer is again greatly indebted to Mrs. Lulu D. Cran-

dall for the following detailed description of the White Salmon blockhouse. It is the only existing record of the building and was copied by Mrs. Crandall from notes made by Charlotte F. Roberts, from her mother's dictation—Mrs. E. P. Roberts. The text of the manuscript is as follows:

"Came to White Salmon March 29th 1862. Lived at Mr. Joslyn's until October when father bought land on which was located the old blockhouse. They moved into this blockhouse as the high water had washed away the only other dwelling. The part of Mr. Joslyn's house where they slept, was a board kitchen moved bodily from the blockhouse. The rest of the blockhouse was of logs. Mr. Joslyn's sitting room and a bed room were of an office belonging to the blockhouse and moved in the same way. The next year father gathered up the scattered boards and rebuilt the demolished cabin in a place high and dry, into which they moved in May before the June high water. The blockhouse was a comfortable building in comparison to this cabin, but it was separated from the rest of the farm.

"The blockhouse was eighteen by thirty feet, two stories high, standing broad side to the river. The logs of the lower part were squared ten inches while those of the upper story were only six inches. The front door was very heavy, about three inches thick, made either of two-ply boards one and one-half inches thick or of thinner boards with dead air between. The lock was very large and to make the door secure against battering rams, a catch was fastened to both door casing and a scantling fitted to rest on these catches. There were two windows on the south side of the building on each side of the front door overlooking the river, and one on the west side, nearer the south corner, looking down the river, and one in each end upstairs. Each sash had six panes six by eight inches. These windows were protected by wooden shutters made of double boards heavily hinged and hooked on the inside.

"As was the custom in building these blockhouses, the upper story extended three feet beyond the lower, making a large room thirty-six by twenty-four feet. In the walls of the upper story, about five feet from the floor were port holes at different distances, ingeniously arranged for permitting the muzzle of the gun at various angles and in different directions.

"Running through the middle of the house were two partitions making a room on either side, and a hall and stairway in

the center. The west room, having two windows in it, was used for the living room. Here was bed, stove and chairs. The east room was a store room. On the north side of this living room was a door made to open into the kitchen which Mr. Joslyn had moved over."

The writer is likewise very grateful to Captain Henry C. Coe for knowledge regarding the description of the roof of this blockhouse. Mr. Coe states that the roof was not sloped back or "hipped" at the ends but was straight. The roof only sloped the two ways, the logs at the ends of the top story continuing right up into the roof peak.

It is likewise interesting to learn the following information from Capt. Coe, who writes:

"While speaking of White Salmon, it may interest you to know that Joslyn was the man that gave this river its name, from the fact, that the salmon that came in the fall were a pinkish white in color, and also that he gave the resident Indians the name of "Klickitats" from the fact, that in early days, they had drifted down from the Klickitat river and claimed the Klickitats as relatives. All, however, were truly Yakimas, and acknowledged Kamiaken as their chief.

"The White Salmon blockhouse was built shortly after the Cascade massacre on what was known as Icehouse Point, the then steam boat landing. It was called Icehouse Point because ice was packed in from the Ice cave and stored in a little house, until the arrival of the boat for The Dalles.

"The government had the place four years, according to my memory, and my brother Charles was chief clerk for the Agency until it was given up. A man named A. H. Roby was agent until J. H. Wilbur took charge."

Mrs. Donnell states that the first mention we find of White Salmon and Hood River was by Lewis and Clark on October 29th 1805, when they were passing down the Columbia River. They gave the name of La-Biche to Hood River and White Salmon they called Canoe River, from the number of canoes lying there, their owners fishing in the stream.

In concluding this article, the writer will briefly mention the restoration work of the Skamania County Historical Society, which society is at present actively engaged in the rebuilding of the old blockhouse forts, which once stood at the old Cascades settlement. These new memorial buildings are to be converted

into public museums and will serve as interesting attractions to tourists and visitors who travel over the new North Bank Washington State Highway.

The Western Klickitat Pioneer Association of White Salmon is also greatly interested in this restoration movement, with their interest specially centered on the old White Salmon blockhouse and it is to be hoped they too will follow the example of the Skamania County Historical Society and rebuild their own blockhouse.

This work is indeed to be highly commended and helps us to not forget the hardships and sacrifices endured by our pioneer friends and ancestors who came before us to settle up a wild and savage land that we might live here today in peace, safety, and comfort and enjoy the same.

These memorial forts, therefore, when rebuilt will serve as most appropriate monuments to the names of the good pioneers, who first built them, and also as a source of great interest and education for us all, as well as for the men and women of tomorrow.

D. A. BROWN.