

WARFIELD'S STORY OF PEO-PEO-MOX-MOX

As a boy I lived in Linn County, Oregon, four miles from the Boston, or Simmons's Mills, one of the early flouring mills of Oregon. Sam Warfield (Samuel Newton) lived in that village. I knew him and my stepfather, Alexander Brandon, a pioneer of 1852 to Oregon, was well acquainted with him.

In 1897, in Morrow County, Oregon, I again met Warfield, and knowing that he was in the battle of the Touchet, I asked him to tell me about it. I took the story down as he then told it, and it is as follows:

"We came to the Umatilla River at the old ford, and there heard that the Indians of the whole upper country were gathering at the Walla Walla Valley, and intended to wipe us out. Also we heard that they had captured Fort Wallula and robbed it.

"We stopped at the old ford, and built a stockade which stood on the west side of the river just at the left of the road and named it Fort Henrietta after Major Haller's wife.

(In 1883 remains of Fort Henrietta could be seen across the Umatilla River, just opposite the town of Echo.—C.L.A.)

"Then we (three companies) went by forced march to Wallula, intending to surprise the Indians, but through delays did not get there for several hours late. They had notice, so we did not catch them napping. Camp was made about half a mile from Fort Wallula, up the Walla Walla River, on the rolling ground at the side of the stream. When the horses were turned out under guard to graze, about sixty Indians came down to stampede them, waving blankets, shooting, and yelling. Maj. Sinclair and some other officers were at Fort Wallula, drinking some brandy which had been cached and so had been missed by the Indians. Captain (?) ordered sixty men out to drive them off. During the skirmish Peo-Peo-Mox-Mox came riding down to the camp accompanied by seven or eight Indians, carrying a white handkerchief in his hand. Nathan Olney, the Indian Agent, met him and told him that the volunteers came to make peace, not to have war unless they had to. The chief replied that he did not want war. Olney then told him to call his Indians off from stealing the horses and he sent and had them go away, but they had already failed to get the herd, which the volunteers had safely turned toward camp.

"Old Mox-Mox then looked around and sized up the camp and talked with the officers, telling them that if they would come up on

the Touchet a council would be held and he would either make peace and pay the damages of the war thus far or would 'give them a gentlemanly fight.'

"They went up the Touchet next day and Mox-Mox went along. He showed the trail to the river bottom where they were to camp. It was a very rocky pass, commanded by higher bluffs, and when the volunteers looked down at it they made objections, finally someone said to the Commanding Officer that, 'if they went down there none would come out alive.' So they went to a camp of their own selection.

"That evening the bluffs were full of Indians, as thick as black-birds. They (the Volunteers) held on to the old chief but let him send one of the other Indians as a messenger to the Indians to tell them that the soldiers were ready for the council.

The next morning no Indians came for council but back on the hills they were hurrying their stock and families back from the river and seemingly getting ready for a fight. After a while a party appeared on the bluffs, and a man was requested by the commanding officer to go to them with a message. He said, 'With all due regard to you, I can't go among them for I'd never come back. I will go and tell them but I am not going up there.' So he went out midway and shouted the message. That afternoon the battle began.

"During the fight a Nez Perce came into camp with news that Governor Stevens and eighteen men were in the Bitter Root Mountains and the Cayuses during the night yelled to the Volunteers that they were going to kill all of them, then go up and get Stevens and his party. The Nez Perce offered if he were given a letter to Stevens, to go out and bring him and his party in in five days, but they would not send him. That day orders came to tie the prisoners. Nez Perce Billy offered to be tied, but the rest refused. One, Klickitat Jim, broke away and ran, but was overtaken and brought back by the hair. Peo-Peo-Mox-Mox was very angry to be tied like a 'camoox' when he was 'Hyas Tyee' of seven nations.

"That night things looked pretty blue, for the ammunition was getting low. A courier was sent for reinforcements. The Indians outnumbered them. The two companies following had reached Echo and had put their horses out under guard. The Indians surprised them, killed the guard, and ran the horses away. They then set the bodies of the guard up as a target to shoot at, and scalped their hair and beards off. After the men heard that, the soldiers in the fight scalped every Indian they killed.

"The next day the fight was hot. The Indians felt confident. Mox-Mox shouted orders to his Indians and felt sure they could whip the soldiers. Orders were again made to tie the Indians in camp, and to put them in a cabin near by as every man was needed at the front. 'Tie 'em or kill 'em, I don't give a —— which,' ordered an officer. The Nez Perce crossed his hands to be tied. Klickitat Jim said, 'Jesus died for his people, I can die for mine.'

"'Jesus wake cooley clatiwa,' answered a soldier.

"As they went toward him, he struck with a knife at an officer who was standing by with his arm in a sling, wounding him in the other arm. One of the guards shot him dead.

"Almost at the same moment Mox-Mox grabbed my gun and tried to take it away. He was strong and I had to trip him to get it away. As he fell he let go of the gun and I jumped back and fired at him, but overshot him. He drew a knife from his legging and reached to catch hold of me as he rose, but before he could get up I struck him with my gun barrel and knocked him down and he lay there. The lick broke his skull.

"Some of the soldiers wanted to kill Billy, but I was cool and said 'No,' and Billy slipped around and got on my back to keep them from shooting him, all the time begging me to keep them from it. They let him go and sent him out after the Stevens party, and in five days he and 100 other Nez Perces brought Governor Stevens and his party into camp. After the reinforcements from Fort Henrietta came up the Indians gave up the battle."

"Then Mox-Mox was not shot?" I asked.

"No, he was not. His body was examined all over after the battle and he had no bullet holes in him."

"Did the soldiers skin him and cut off his ears as I have heard they did?" I questioned.

"No, but after the boys heard how they did with the guard at Fort Henrietta, they scalped every Indian they could, and I lifted old Mox-Mox's hair."

"I have heard that his scalp is in Salem in the Oregon Archives. Is that true?"

"No. So many came to see it that I got tired of it and I buried it between my barn and a neighbor's house, about half-way between. That is where it is still."