

DOCUMENTS

Diary of Colonel and Mrs. I. N. Ebey

INTRODUCTION

Whidby Island has always figured in the history of the Puget Sound country. It was known to the Spanish explorers prior to 1792, who set it down on their maps as a part of the mainland. It was named by Captain George Vancouver of the British navy, June 10, 1792, in honor of Joseph Whidbey, master of the *Discovery*, who in a small boat discovered Deception Pass and proved the existence there of a large island. Port Townsend, New Dungeness, Port Orca, Point Wilson, Deception Passage, Bellingham Bay, Port Gardner, Possession Sound, Vashon Island, Mounts Rainier and Baker, and many other names, were introduced at this time. Between the years 1792 and 1824 very little historical activity took place in these waters. In the latter year the Hudson's Bay Company sent out an expedition from Fort Vancouver to seek a likely site for a new post, with the result that Fort Langley on the Fraser river was erected in 1827. Fort Nisqually, a post midway between Forts Langley and Vancouver, was erected in 1833. These forts were intended solely as fur-trading posts, but as fur-bearing animals in this region proved not numerous, the Company decided to embark upon an agricultural form of enterprise as a side line, which the growing markets of Russian America and Hawaii made profitable. Whidbey island is possessed of some 6,000 acres of rich prairie land adjacent to what is now the town of Coupeville, and upon this land the Company as early as 1834 had their eyes, as a probable site for an extensive farm. One event after another delayed them and the project was abandoned. The forties witnessed the coming of many immigrants, and one of them, Thomas Glasgow, in 1848, selected a claim on this prairie, built a cabin, planted potatoes, and is said to have gone so far as to locate a mill site, probably at the head of Penn Cove, at Coveland where a natural pocket reservoir makes possible the storage of tidewater. About this time Patkanim, chief of the Snoqualmie Indians, was making preparations to drive out the whites and Glasgow was forced to give up his intended home and return to Tumwater. There is a tradition that the Hudson's Bay Company played some part in Glasgow's ejection, but this is not definitely known. No further attempt at settlement was made until the arrival of Isaac N. Ebey, in 1850.

Isaac Neff Ebey was born in Franklin county, Ohio, January 21, 1818, son of Jacob and Sarah (Blue) Ebey. The father, Jacob Ebey, was born in Pennsylvania, October 22, 1793. He served in the war of 1812 under General William Henry Harrison and later commanded a company in the Black Hawk war in the same battalion with Abraham Lincoln. He had already migrated to Illinois (1832), and later went to Adair (now Schuyler) county, Missouri. There were at least five children: Isaac Neff, Winfield Scott, Mary, Ruth, and Jacob, Jr., who became a missionary and died in some bleak country from privations about 1848.

Isaac Neff Ebey appears to have been educated for the law—a profession easier to qualify for in his day than in ours—but it is doubtful if he practiced much. The wife of his choice was Rebecca Whitby Davis, born in Washington county, Virginia, December 28, 1822, daughter of James and Harriet (?) Davis, whom he married October 3, 1843. In Missouri two sons were born to them: Eason Benton, July 22, 1844, and Jacob Ellison, October 17, 1846.

In a letter to Winfield he says that his marriage was the means of his settling down, but just how much "settling down" he did before his removal to Whidbey island is not known, but it could not have been much, for in less than four years after his marriage we find him in an emigrant train bound across the plains for Oregon where he hoped to carve out a home for the Ebeys and the Davises. By the time he had reached Oregon gold was being discovered in California, and thither he directed his steps, being lured on by the prospect of gaining a competence by a sudden turn of fortune. He is said to have been moderately successful there, but not sufficiently so to warrant a long stay. In the fall of 1849 he made his way to San Francisco, and there, in company with B. F. Shaw, Edmund Sylvester, S. Jackson and a man named Moore, he purchased the brig *Orbit* as a means of transporting himself and party to the Sound country, of which he had heard so much. The vessel arrived at Tumwater or New Market, in January, 1850, and was sold to Michael T. Simmons. A new settlement was in the process of formation on Budd inlet and Mr. Ebey is said to have been the one who suggested its name—Olympia. He acquired some property there, probably more as an investment than for a permanent home. During the following spring and summer he made a tour of exploration about the Sound for the purpose of securing an ideal farm site. He made extensive examination of the Duwamish, White and Puyallup river valleys. He introduced the name Duwamish river, spelled by him

"Dwams," and paddled for several hours on Lake Washington, which he christened "Lake Geneva." He appears to have been favorably impressed with the country where Seattle and Tacoma were later established, but decided that the land on Whidbey island offered the greatest immediate returns, and, accordingly, took up a claim under the Oregon Donation Land Law on the same land which the Hudson's Bay Company had once coveted and from which Glasgow had been ejected, filing on the same, October 15, 1850. Here he built a cabin, "batched it," put in some crops without the aid of horses or cattle, and made preparations to bring his wife, children, and the Davis and Ebey families to the new home. His letters, addressed to his brother Winfield, under whose special care his family were, indicate him to be a man of much sentiment and tenderness. In one letter bearing the date of April 25, 1851, he writes: "I scarcely know how I shall write or what I shall write. When I think of home, of father, and mother, sisters and brother, wife, children, and friends, my heart sinks within me; I can scarce find words to clothe my ideas, it seems so like writing to the dead, like addressing language to those who have passed the pale of mortality and gone to that 'bourne from whence no traveler returns.'"

Mrs. Ebey, with Eason and Ellison, in company with the Crockett family, had joined an emigrant train of 1851, and arrived in Olympia during the winter of 1851-52. Possibly Thomas Davis, a brother of Mrs. Ebey, came with them. At any rate, he is on the island with them in June, 1852. In March, 1852, the new arrivals were transported in a scow to the island where we find them at the time the diary commences. Between the settlement by Mr. Ebey and the arrival of his family there were already several other families securely settled. On February 10, 1851, Dr. Richard H. Lansdale took his first claim at Oak Harbor, and during that following summer assisted William Wallace to bring his family to a claim on Crescent Harbor, a name bestowed by Dr. Lansdale because of its shape. It is likely that Dr. Lansdale introduced the name Oak Harbor as well, because of the oak groves in the vicinity. Dr. Lansdale was joined during this year, 1851, by Martin Taftson, Clement W. Sumner and Ulric Friend.

From the time of his arrival on Puget Sound until his death Mr. Ebey was engaged in some form of public service, in which capacity he had the confidence of both those he represented and his superiors. He served as representative from Lewis (which then included Island) county, and drafted the memorial petitioning Congress to create a

new territory north of the Columbia river; became deputy collector of customs and later collector for the Puget Sound district; participated in the libelling of the Hudson's Bay Company's ships *Beaver* and *Mary Dare* for evading the customs laws; took an active part in the San Juan dispute; raised a company of volunteers for service in the Indian war which he commanded, in recognition of which service he was brevetted colonel. All this is a matter of public record, though only casual mention of these services can be made here.

The happy reunion of the families was hardly effected when a cruel fate commenced dissolution. Mrs. Harriet Davis, mother of Mrs. Rebecca Ebey, died on the plains during the migration of 1852-53. Mrs. Rebecca Ebey gave birth to a daughter, Sarah Harriet, May 26, 1853, and her health, never robust, gave way after this event, and she died, September 29, 1853. The young child was taken into the home of Mrs. Doyle, and died on February 21, 1861. Mr. Ebey married as his second wife a Mrs. Sconce, with one child. Thomas Davis, brother of Mrs. Rebecca Ebey, took up a claim, but never married. James was demented. George W. Ebey, a cousin of Isaac N. Ebey, and other cousins named Royal, came out in 1853. In 1854 seven Ebeys came to the island, including Isaac N. Ebey's father, Jacob, who died in February, 1862; his mother, Sarah Blue Ebey, who died in 1859; his brother, Winfield Scott Ebey, a refined but delicate man, who took up a claim and became a farmer; he kept an extensive diary until his death (of consumption) on February 21, 1865, at Petaluma, Cal., the remains being brought for burial in the cemetery near Coupeville. His sister, Ruth Ebey, who was deaf and dumb, and who met death by accident, falling from a bluff near San de Fuca, whither she had gone to gather berries; his sister, Mary Ebey, who had married a Mr. Wright, and her two children, Polk and Almira. Polk grew to manhood on the island and left for California. Almira married (1) George Beam, who came out with their party and who died on May 5, 1866; (2) a Mr. Enos. She came into possession of the extensive Ebey manuscripts. At her death the manuscripts and several cabinets filled with historical relics passed into the possession of her daughter, Mrs. John Allan Park, Hayward, California. Mrs. Wright had married as her second husband Urban E. Bozarth, who died on February 4, 1870. Mrs. Bozarth died on June 2, 1879.

Colonel Isaac N. Ebey was killed by northern Indians on one of their incursions into the Sound region to avenge the death of a chief who the year before was shot by the whites at Port Gamble.

According to their religion, a white chief must propitiate for the death of their chief. Colonel Ebey answered very nicely their conception of a white chief and became a marked man. On the day previous to his death the colonel, in company with Major Corliss, was out hunting and had stopped to take supper at the home of Mrs. Kineth near Sneightlem or Watsak point. At the time of the tragedy Major and Mrs. Corliss were guests at the Ebey home. During the day the Indians were encamped upon the beach at Ebey's Landing and made several visits to the house, ostensibly to borrow articles, but probably to acquaint themselves with the lay of the ground, plan of the house, etc. On one of these visits they inquired of Thomas Pier Hastie, who was working in the harvest field, for Mr. Ebey, if the colonel were a "tyee" or chief, and upon being answered in the affirmative, retired to the beach, well satisfied. Mrs. Corliss suspected evil intentions on the part of the Indians, and confided her views to the colonel, but he paid little attention to her, and said that all Indians were alike to him. The inmates retired rather late that evening. During the night a sharp pounding upon the door was commenced and the colonel arose, stepped out, and inquired what was wanted. Receiving no answer, he ventured further, when a shot was fired, which struck him in the head, leaving him in a dazed condition, so that he was unable to regain the entrance. In this dazed condition he wandered around the house. His wife heard him fall heavily against a window, which she unfastened, and shouted for him to climb in, but he was evidently too severely wounded to understand. The Indians pounced upon him and severed the head from the body in a manner indicating the expert work of head-hunters. The adult inmates of the house made for the Hill home, but the children in the excitement separated from them, ran to the woods nearby, where they were found with difficulty. Mrs. Corliss was severely hurt in climbing a fence during her flight. Mrs. Ebey's little girl suffered much from fright, and some say she never fully recovered. After the colonel's death Mrs. Ebey left the island.

Eason Benton Ebey attended the Territorial University of Washington. He married Annie Louise Judson, daughter of Holden A. and Phoebe (Newton) Judson, February 19, 1867, and took his wife to the Ebey farm and there lived until his death. Their children are: Effie Bell, now Mrs. Victor A. Roeder of Bellingham; Henrietta M., now Mrs. J. K. Robinson of Bellingham; Allan Ellison of San Francisco; and Roy L. of San Francisco. Jacob Ellison Ebey, never very robust, spent most of his adult years as a clerk in Major

Haller's store at Coupeville. He married a widow, Mrs. Mary Farker Van Wermer; their one child, Harold Ebey, lives in Oakland, California.

Allan Ellison Ebey loaned the original manuscript of his grandparents' diary long enough to have it copied and from that copy the document is here reproduced. In editing the diary, original sources have been used such as manuscripts by and personal interviews with Mrs. Phoebe N. Judson, Mrs. Jane Kineth, Thomas Pier Hastie, Samuel D. Crockett, Charles T. Terry, Mrs. Flora A. P. Engle and others. Those mentioned are pioneers familiar with early Whidby Island history. The manuscripts mentioned are in the Meany Collection, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

VICTOR J. FARRAR.

Towanacos June 1st 1852.

Morning very pleasant and calm, a Schooner seen this morning coming down on the tide. Suposed to be the H. B. C.¹ vessel from Nesqually— Sawing and Spliting board and paleing timber. Capt Hathaway² called to day on his way to Capt Bells.³ Vessel still in sight this evening— very calm and a little cloudy—

¹The Hudson's Bay Company.

²Captain Eli Hathaway was a widower from New England. He had two twin daughters, Josephine and Imogen, but they did not settle on the island. Josephine married a man named Brown of Olympia, and Imogen a man named Simonson of Seattle. Both are now dead, and neither left any heirs. Captain Hathaway took up a claim near Oak Harbor, where he lived with an Indian woman and by her had one son, George, who now resides on the island. The Captain became well known as sheriff and assessor. He was buried on his own claim.

³Captain George Bell was a romantic sea captain without family or connections and remained only a short time on the island. He built a cabin near the head of the cove, but took no claim, and spent most of his time in the employ of the Ebey family. He left shortly for the sea. See *post*, note 32.

⁴In the fall of 1851 the mate of the sloop Georgia exhibited gold nuggets procured by him from Queen Charlotte's island, and due to the excitement which followed the Georgia was chartered to take a Puget Sound party thither. Before reaching her destination she was wrecked and her party taken captive and held for ransom by Haidah Indians. To expedite the payment of the ransom the Indians permitted a small party to proceed to Fort Simpson, but small relief was there afforded, for Captain McNeil, in charge, looked askance on a party of Americans who had the temerity to invade Hudson's Bay Company's territory. Fortunately for the gold-seekers, Captain Lafayette Balch, of the Demaris Cove, had boarded the Georgia while on her voyage north, and had promised to follow as soon as he could meet the collector of customs, Simpson P. Moses, who was on the George Emory, nearby. This done, Balch sailed to Queen Charlotte island, but hearing from other Indians of the fate of the Georgia, hastened to notify Collector Moses of that fact. Moses failed to get the required aid at Nisqually, another Hudson's Bay Company's post, and as the lives of the captives were in danger, he decided to perform a daring act. He chartered the Demaris Cove in the name of the government, fitted her out as a relief ship with soldiers from Fort Stellacoom, and issued a letter of credit on Victoria and Fort Simpson for the purpose of the necessary ransom presents. The expedition was successful, although the government failed to sanction the act and congress had to be memorialized to secure an appropriation for the expense. Two persons mentioned in the diary—Daniel Show and Samuel D. Howe—were among the captured.

June 2

Morneing cloudy, calm and warm a vessel in sight this morneing off the Straits Received intelligence this morning, of the arrival of the Schooner Damescore⁴ at Port Townsend last evening in carage of Capt. Hathaway. Evening clear and pleasant The vessel which we saw in the Straits this morning has passed on up the Sound to day. All hands very tired; Work at board timber & other employments.—Hired some Indians to day to day to weed our onions the second time which are very foul. Afternoon light wind west.

3

Morning very pleasant and clear light wind west— examined a road to my cedar timber and weeding onions a brig in the Straits comeing on up with a fare wind, droped anchor at Port Townsend She provved to be the Sch "Mary Taylor,"⁵ Mr Dray⁶ comes over this Evening on his way to Port Townsend Mr Howe⁷ and Holbrooks⁸ called in

4th

Morneing very foggy Mr Crockett⁹ raised his house to day day

⁴The schooner Mary Taylor was the first pilot boat on the Columbia river, but had been sold to Hastings, January 16, 1852, and placed on the run between Puget Sound and Portland.

⁵Identity not ascertained. He left for San Francisco soon after his arrival on the island. All portions of the Sound were being visited by hundreds of persons who were looking for homes. Some were content, but the majority left for other parts of the country. Whidbey island, despite its rich prairie land, failed to attract some persons because they did not care to locate on an island.

⁷Samuel D. Howe was one of the survivors of the ill-fated Georgia (see *ante*, note 4) and had just come to the island, where he took a claim. He held offices as county commissioner and territorial legislator, and in the Indian war became captain of Company I of the Northern Battalion. At its conclusion he with others made a treaty with several bands of Nez Perce Indians. He married a daughter of Captain Henry Swift.

⁸Richard Blackmer Holbrook was born at Plymouth, Mass., August 7, 1821, son of Richard and Nancy (?) Holbrook. He came to California during the gold rush of 1849, but remained only a short time, when he made for Puget Sound, where he took a donation land claim. While in the east he had made the acquaintance of Harriet P. Low, of Deer Island, Maine, born June 12, 1839, daughter of Nathan and Harriet (Tyler) Low. She came across the isthms of Panama to Puget Sound to become his bride. Five children were born to them: Nathan, Josephine, Horace, Mary Frances, and Richard B. Mr. Holbrook served two terms in the territorial legislature in the early sixties. He died in 1893. Mrs. Holbrook is still living at Coupeville.

⁹Colonel Walter Crockett, the progenitor of the family, was born at Shawsville, Va., January 29, 1786, son of Colonel Hugh Crockett, who fought in the Revolutionary war, and Rebecca Larton, of Holland descent, born in Jersey City. Colonel Walter C. fought in the war of 1812 under Captain and afterwards Governor Floyd of Virginia, and earned the distinction which made possible his election to the Virginia legislature for three terms. He married Mrs. Mary Black Ross, daughter of John Black, founder of Blacksburg, Virginia. Despite his personal successes in Virginia, he decided that his family would have a better chance in a new country, and accordingly moved west in 1838. He made two attempts at settlement in Missouri—in Boone and Putnam counties—but was not satisfied, and decided to try Oregon. His family prior to the exodus to Oregon consisted of Samuel B., born February 14, 1820; Charles, born June 14, 1821; Susanna H., born December 27, 1823; John, born August 27, 1826 (who had married Ann Crockett, a distant relative and namesake, born near Monticello, Kentucky, April 3, 1831, and had a son, Samuel D., born at

pleasant Mr Dray returned this Evening from Port Townsend Maj. Show¹⁰ this Evening.

Saturday 5

Morneing Clear and pleasant working at my board timber day very hot with a light west breeze, I think the is a vessel in sight this evening in the Straits— Dr Lansdale¹¹ over to see me this Evening—

Sunday 6

Morneing very pleasant— continued at home all day wrote seevral letters. Square rigged Brig came up this evening— day very pleasant.

Monday 7"

Weeding onions in the forenoon afternoon went over to Dr Lansdale to the Election a vessel seen going on up to day— Mr White and two other gentlemen came over to day from Port Townsend

Tuesday 8th

Day to windy to raft timber, working in the gardin all day— Wind this evening blowing quite hard and cool—

Centerville, Iowa, June 23, 1850); Hugh, born September 21, 1829; and Walter, Jr., born September 26, 1833. Samuel had started across the plains in 1844 to find out what inducements the new country offered, and arrived just in time to join the first migration led to the Puget Sound country, and with Michael T. Simmons and others settled near Tumwater in October, 1845. He wrote to his father in glowing terms of the new country, and the colonel with the remainder of family, in a party with Mrs. Ebey, Eason and Ellison, and possibly Thomas Davis, crossed the plains and arrived at Olympia during the winter of 1851-52. They came to the island in March, 1852. Here the colonel, John, Sam, Hugh and Charles took claims. Colonel Crockett died November 25, 1864. Samuel B. Crockett married Matilda Loyd. He died at Kent, Washington, November 27, 1903. He had no children. Charles never married. He died December 12, 1893. Susana marrid Samuel Hancock. She died January 8, 1901. She had no children but adopted a child. John had ten children: Samuel, who came across the plains; William, Sarah Frances, Susan Mary, Georgia Ann, Emma, Elizabeth Ellen, Jane de Vane, John Harvey, and Margaret. Hugh married Mrs. R. J. Bond, formerly Rachael Gook, but had no children. Walter, Jr., did not marry. He died August 19, 1903.

¹⁰Daniel Show had been one of the gold seekers on the ill-fated Georgia and was now satisfied to take up a claim and lead a peaceful life. He was not a major, that soubriquet having been bestowed upon him because of his affections and "big talk." He gave advice on all subjects and pretended to practice medicine, but with all his shortcomings he was keen as a money getter, and the best horse trader on the Sound. He took up a claim which overlapped the claim of the Powers family and considerable litigation followed. He won the suit, but soon afterwards disposed of his interest to the Powers' and left for California, where he died. In the meantime he had married a lady from Steilacoom, sister of J. Harvick. He had a son by the name of George.

¹¹Richard Hyatt Lansdale was born in Maryland in 1812 and was educated for medicine. He was an enterprising man and made several migrations before he arrived on Whidbey island, going to Ohio, Illinois and Missouri. He went to California in 1849, then to Vancouver and finally to Whidbey island. In one of these migratory moves was he successful. He founded and named Oak Harbor, Crescent Harbor, Coveland; held many offices in the county and territory; and with others was an ardent advocate and promoter of roads. He left the island after the Indian war.

(Continued in the next issue.)