

## The Washington Historical Quarterly

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### A PIONEER OF THE SPOKANE COUNTRY\*

I was born at Newark, New Jersey, on June 8th, 1835. My parents were both Scotch; my mother was Margaret Easton; my father, John Smith. As a small boy I was often on the boats about Newark and Passaic, New Jersey. In 1849, when I was a lad of fourteen years, I sailed from New York for California as cabin boy on the *Mary and Adeline*, a government transport that brought out some troops to California. If I recall correctly, these were two companies of the 2nd Infantry. We went around the Horn. This was my first experience at sea,

In California I shipped on the steamboat *McKinnon*, carrying freight and passengers from San Francisco to Sacramento. Later I went from Sacramento to the North Fork of American River, where I placer mined. From there I went to Colma, on the South Fork, where Sutter had his saw mill, and in the mill race of which the first gold had been discovered.

In 1852, I went by boat from Humboldt Bay, California, to a mining town called Trinidad; then from there to Salmon River; from there to Scott's River; from there to Yreka, California; and from there overland to Jacksonville, Jackson County, Oregon. At Jacksonville, I freighted from Crescent City, on the coast near the California line, to Jacksonville. In 1854, I joined a company made up at Jacksonville and organized by Captain Jackson—the 2nd Oregon Militia—if I remember correctly. The company was used as an escort to go out on the plains and meet settlers coming to Oregon by the Southern route. In 1853, or 1856, the Rogue River war broke out

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\* This relation was made by John E. Smith of Reardon, Washington, to William S. Lewis, Corresponding Secretary of the Spokane Historical Society. The text is given in the words of Mr. Smith and signed with his name. The footnotes are by Mr. Lewis, to whom the Quarterly is indebted for the article.—Editor.

and many settlers were killed by the Indians. I joined the Oregon Volunteer Militia and worked in the Quartermaster's Department and had charge of the freight outfit under Captain Jesse Walker. We did everything then with pack animals. I have my discharge papers yet. I had served in the Rogue River Indian War of 1853-55.

In 1857, I was working on the Silets Reservation, in Oregon. I went from there on horseback to Vancouver, Wash., where I was hired by the government to help drive some cattle to Fort Walla Walla—I have forgotten the name of the Lieutenant in charge.

Arriving at Fort Walla Walla, I worked around the post for a year, looking after cattle and horses and packing, in the capacity of an assistant pack or wagon master. When Col. Wright left Fort Walla Walla in 1858, I accompanied his force. If I remember correctly, there were 404 men under his command at that time; four companies of dragoons; two or three companies of artillery; and two or three companies of infantry.<sup>1</sup> I worked under Ben Drew as assistant pack master of one of the pack trains. There were about 100 mules in our train, and probably 200 or more mules in all the pack trains.<sup>2</sup> Each company had a pack train to carry the company baggage, rations and supplies.

In marching, our formation was a couple of companies of dragoons ahead; then the artillery, all the artillery men being afoot and equipped as infantry; then the pack trains composed of 200 or more animals; and a rear guard of a couple of companies of dragoons. In marching, we were strung out over the country for probably a mile. Leaving Fort Walla Walla, we went down Two Canyon<sup>3</sup> where we crossed the Snake River. From the Snake River we struck north to the Palouse River, then across to Cow Creek. From Cow Creek our next camp was at Lagoon Springs; then we moved on to a lake; I think this lake is now known as Fish Trap Lake; this was our next camp. Here we had a brush with the Indians, the first we had seen

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<sup>1</sup> The expedition consisted of companies C, E, H and I, First Dragoons; companies A, B, G, K and M, Third Artillery; companies B and E, Ninth Infantry; and thirty Nez Perce Indians and three chiefs to act as guides. The latter were under the command of Lieutenant Mullan. The dragoons numbered 190, the artillery 400 and the infantry 90—a total of 680 soldiers. Besides these, there were 200 attaches, distributed as packers, wagon masters, herders, etc. Joe Craig, a son of Colonel William Craig; Donald McKay, son of the Astor partner of that name; and Cut Mouth John, a Umatilla Indian, were also taken along as interpreters. See Lawrence Kip, *Army Life on the Pacific*, (N. Y., Redfield, 1859), pp. 31, 44, 45, and 143.

<sup>2</sup> The pack trains numbered about 400 animals consisting of C. P. Higgins' train of 90 mules, Dan Rathborn's 90 mules, Tom Buell's 90 mules, and those of Ben Drew.

<sup>3</sup> The Tucannon. Colonel Wright established a camp at the Snake River crossing at the mouth of the Tucannon river which he called Camp Taylor. Here he left a guard consisting of Company D, Third Artillery.

since leaving the Snake River.<sup>4</sup> The country thereabouts is rocky and scabby, and some of the Indians got on the high rocks and shot into camp several times; a company of dragoons was sent after them, but as far as I know, no one was hurt on either side. Our camp at the lake was then called Poison Camp.<sup>5</sup> One of the soldiers gathered a mess of wild parsnips, and ate them; they killed him. He was buried there, hence the name. From this camp we moved on to the Four Lakes Country; we camped at the southwest end of the East Lake, which, I believe, is known as Clear Lake.<sup>6</sup> From Poison Camp we saw Indians in bunches of two or three on the hills all day until we reached Clear Lake.

At Clear Lake there is quite a hill on the East which sloped towards our camp. We camped there four or five days, nearly a week. While there the Indians would collect on this hill during the day in bunches of 50 or 60; occasionally some would make a feint of riding down towards our camp. At last Colonel Wright started four companies of dragoons out after them. They lit out. It was reported that the dragoons killed about 20 indians.<sup>7</sup> This was the battle of Four Lakes.

From Clear Lake we came east across white bluff plains to what was later known as Head's ranch. Coming from Clear Lake we had another brush with the Indians.<sup>8</sup> The Indians set fire to the prairie grass ahead of the soldiers. The fight was about where Head's place is. I saw one dead Indian. It was reported that several were killed.<sup>9</sup> I was, of course, with the pack trains, and was not doing any of the fighting. If I remember aright, we struck and crossed Hangman's Creek, near Greenwood Cemetery, at its mouth. We proceeded on east, across the rocky ground between Liberty Park and the Spokane River, and camped on the prairie, at the bend of the river, near the ford, which was located at the head of the bend, near the present Spokane & Inland Bridge.

Colonel Wright camped here a couple of days. Several Indians crossed the ford and came into camp; among these was Spokane Garry.

<sup>4</sup> "Aug. 30. Today we first saw the Indians in any force. Shots were exchanged between the enemy and our advanced pickets."—Kip, *Army Life*, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Kip, *Army Life*, p. 52, states that the camp was called "Camp Pedrial," and that two of the artillery men died from eating poisonous roots.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Smith is mistaken; the lake is Silver Lake.

<sup>7</sup> For an account of the battle, official reports, and the statement that 17 Indians were killed and between 40 and 50 wounded, see Kip, *Army Life*, pp. 53-60, 133, 142.

<sup>8</sup> This was the battle of Spokane Plains. See Kip, *Army Life*, pp. 63-68.

<sup>9</sup> The reports state that two chiefs, two brothers of Chief Garry, and many Indians of lesser note were either killed or wounded. Kip, *Army Life*, pp. 138, 143.

Garry was dressed in whiteman's clothes. It was reported among the men that he hadn't taken any part in the fighting against the soldiers. He always had free access to the camp whenever he came to it. One of the Indians that came into our camp here was seized and held under guard.

At this time there was a large Indian camp about 16 miles up the river. Colonel Wright held some consultations with the Indians. The men in the command understood that Colonel Wright gave it out that he was going up to Colville, and that he hired some Indian guides to take him there. After being in camp a couple of days, he broke camp and sent part of his pack train across the river by the ford; then he started two companies of dragoons up the river. He left the rest of his command in the camp for several hours; then he recalled the pack train from the north side of the river and we all set out up the river. We followed the river most of the way, and camped just north of what now is Seaton Station, on the Spokane & Inland Electric road. About a mile and a half before coming to camp we passed the large Indian camp on the South bank of the Spokane River. The Indians had deserted it leaving many of their lodges and considerable of their property. Near here Captain Ord with some 12 men saw some Indians on the opposite side of the river and shot at them and killed some of their horses. I don't think that any of the Indians were hurt.<sup>10</sup> Ord, I believe, afterwards became a general in the Civil War. A short distance about our camp ground there was a ford across the river.

At this camp we hung the Indian we had brought along with us from our last camp. We hung him from one of the poplar trees growing along the river bank near our camp. They used my lasso rope to hang him. Tom Buell,<sup>11</sup> who now lives near Lewiston, Idaho, and who had been in Colonel Steptoe's command, acted as hangman. Lieutenant Mullan, of Mullan Road fame, had joined our party, and he had a light wagon—the only wagon in the outfit—in which he carried his surveying tools and instruments.<sup>12</sup> Some of the soldiers got in this, stood the Indian up on a box, and held him while the noose was put about his neck, then drove the wagon out from under him.

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<sup>10</sup> Neither the official report nor any other statement of the expedition mentions a ruse of this kind on the part of Colonel Wright. On September 7th "Hearing that the enemy was in force above on the Spokane, we broke camp and moved up the river about seven miles."—Kip, *Army Life*. This was the camp Mr. Smith refers to.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Buell, now living at Lewiston, Idaho, was in charge of one of the pack trains; he states that he was selected as hangman because he could tie a "Hangman's noose."

<sup>12</sup> Kip, *Army Life*, p. 44, mentions the fact that Lieutenant Mullan took along a light vehicle for his surveying instruments.

While at this camp the dragoons drove into camp a big lot of Indian horses which they had captured at Saltese Lake. The Indians from the big camp had tried to drive them off out of the country.<sup>13</sup> The Indians abandoned their camp and tried to run the horses off through the hills by the trails leading south by Saltese Lake, but Colonel Wright fooled them. If I remember aright, there was 804 horses.<sup>14</sup> They were rounded up in a little bend of the river, about a mile below where the rocky point juts out towards the river from the south, a short distance above where we were camped. There was a sort of a bar there, overgrown with quaking asp and bushes. The horses were crowded together here. The old horses were shot, the colts were clubbed in the head. Many of the civilians smuggled out horses for themselves.

When we broke camp, to go to the Coeur d'Alene Mission, many of these Indian horses were in our outfit, being led by the men. When we got near the Little Falls—Post Falls—I noticed a bunch of horses being collected beside the line of march ahead of me. One of the men had given me one of the Indian ponies to lead. I was riding a mule, so I got off the mule and mounted the pony. When I got up to the bunch of horses I found that the quartermaster was stopping everyone who was leading an extra horse. The officers thought these horses would take up too much time, require too much attention, so they gathered them all, and killed them there. They let me by, riding the pony and leading the mule.

Between Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene Lake, near where the town of Coeur d'Alene is, I noticed some small enclosed fields cultivated by the Indians, the first, I believe, I had seen on the expedition.

Our next camp was at the north end of Coeur d'Alene Lake, about where the present town site is. From there we made a short camp at Wolf Lodge. Our next camp was the Mission. We stayed there two or three days. There were only a few of the Indians about.

From the Mission we went down the Coeur d'Alene River five or six miles, and camped; then crossed the river. It took us a day to cross. Colonel Wright had canvas boats with him. We, also, had some Indian boats to hold us. We camped one night on the other side, then proceeded to the mouth of the St. Joe, camped there two nights, one camp on each side of the river. From the mouth of the St. Joe, I think that our next camp was on Latah or Hangman Creek,

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<sup>13</sup> For an account of the capture of these horses, see Kip, *Army Life*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>14</sup> The number is given as 900; for an account of their destruction see Kip, *Army Life*, pp. 70-71.

though my recollection is not quite clear whether we made this in one march or not.

Our camp on the creek was at a place where there is quite a prairie on the creek bottom—15 or 20 acres—at a point where there is not much of a canyon, and not much water in the creek—a point near where the old “Kentuck” trail afterwards crossed the creek; if I recall, this is about 18 or 20 miles south from the present city of Spokane.<sup>15</sup> Here a council was held by Colonel Wright with some of the Indians. While we were here Qualchien, the Yakima chief, came riding into camp one morning on a gray horse. His squaw and another Indian were with him. He had a paper which he gave to Colonel Wright. I heard that on this paper was written in English: “Here is your man, catch him.” It was the talk among the soldiers that either Chief Garry or the priests at the Coeur d’Alene Mission had written the note and given it to Qualchien and sent him into Wright’s camp with it. I think that it was Chief Garry who gave Qualchien away with the paper.<sup>16</sup>

There was a big pine tree on the hillside near Colonel Wright’s tent which was pitched near the mouth of a gulch. Behind Wright’s tent, the tree leaned out over the hill. They wouldn’t allow civilians about headquarters, but several of the men and myself, got in back of Wright’s tent and saw what was going on. They put a rope around a limb of the tree, and pulled Qualchien up. He seemed a much surprised Indian. Tom Buell acted as hangman. It was reported about camp that he got \$20 for each hanging. When we moved from this camp<sup>17</sup> we took along an old Indian chief, Owyi, Qualchien’s father. On our way back at Two Canyon creek, he was shot while trying to escape.

On my return to Fort Walla Walla with Colonel Wright’s command, in the fall of 1858, I hired out to Messrs. Greanleaf & Allen, of San Francisco, who ran sutlers’ stores at the various western army posts, and at Walla Walla. I worked at this mill until 1861. In 1859, I went out to the Boundary Survey with two companies of infantry soldiers who came from The Dalles; we met Captain McClellan at Okanogan Lake. I stayed there several weeks, until September or October, and wintered at Walla Walla. In my work for the sutler

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<sup>15</sup> There is a bridge across the stream at this point at the present time. The place is known as Smith’s ford.

<sup>16</sup> The incident of the note is not mentioned in any other account of Qualchien’s capture and execution.

<sup>17</sup> Before leaving this camp a detail was sent out to the Steptoe battlefield to bring in the remains of the officers and men killed there, and some government property buried and abandoned in the retreat.

department, I was frequently in and out of Fort Colville while they were building the post. A road was made from Walla Walla, following the old traveled Indian trails. There was a camp on this road on Cow Creek, three or four miles below the lower end of Sprague Lake, named after Major Pickney Lougenbeel and called the Lougenbeel Camp, or Lougenbeel Springs.

Fort Colville was the supply point for the boundry survey, and I was back and forth frequently taking supplies to the Okanogan Country. They were just starting to build the army post then. The town of Pinckney City<sup>18</sup>—now Colville—was not yet started when I was first there. At the crossing of the Spokane River, Bill Nix had established a ferry, Nix had come up from The Dalles with Lougenbeel's command for the purpose of establishing the ferry; the troops helped him put it in. I first met Jim Monaghan at this ferry, I think in 1859; he afterwards bought out the ferry this was afterwards known as LaPray bridge. This was known in early days as the "winding ford." At the Hudson Bay trading post on Marcus Flats and about Fort Colville, in 1859, I frequently met old Angus McDonald, who was in charge of the trading post.

I recall one family in the Colville Valley in the fifties named Pelliseers; they were Canadian-French. I also knew some of the Finlays. I don't recall the names of many of the whites and half-breeds then settled in the Colville Valley. Most everybody was called by their first name in those days—Bill, John, or by a nickname, as Slim. I don't remember many of the surnames. I think that there was a half-breed or Frenchman living in the Valley by the name of John Brown.<sup>19</sup>

In 1861, I went over to the Flathead Reservation in Montana and worked for John Owens, the Indian Agent. In the fifties there were no settlers in the Spokane Country except LePlant and Peone. In fact, I don't remember any other settlers north of the Snake River in 1858, except about Colville. Antone LePlant in 1862 and 1863 was on the north side of the Spokane River, near what is now Trent, a little ways back from the river. In 1861 I was at Peone's place—stopped there one or two nights, when on my way back and forth from the Flathead Indian Agency. The headquarters for the Indian department of the Territory of Washington were then at Salem, Ore—

<sup>18</sup> Northeast from the present town of Colville.

<sup>19</sup> This John Brown has not been identified. Governor I. I. Stevens mentioned a Louis Brown, and John V. Campbell, to Spokane in 1854, in Washington Historical Quarterly, July, 1916, notes a Henry Brown. The latter had a son named John Brown, since deceased, who would appear to have been too young to be the person referred to by Mr. Smith.

gon. I remember once John Owens, the Flathead Agent, sent a lot of buffalo tongues by me to the agent at Salem. A dog got in the tent and ate them all up, on my way to Oregon. I think a nam named Nesbit was the Indian Agent at Salem in those days.

In 1863, I went back to Walla Walla and started to freight by pack mules from Walla Walla to Florence, Idaho. In the fall of that year, I went to the gold rush on the Caribou, on the headwaters of the Fraser River, in British Columbia. In 1864, I returned to Walla Walla and resumed freighting by pack mules. I freighted into Boise, Idaho; into Wild Horse Creek, in the Kootenai Country, in B. C. My route was north from Walla Walla, across the Snake River; I crossed the Spokane River at Cowley's bridge, crossed the Pend Oreille at Sinacquetene Ferry,<sup>20</sup> crossed the Kootenai at Bonners Ferry,<sup>21</sup> and thence on to the Wild Horse. I continued in the freighting business until I married, in 1868.

At Walla Walla, on February 8, 1868, I married Mandy Warren, a sister of Joe Warren. We had 12 children: Frank, Hugh, Fred, James, Eugene, Genevieve, Nettie, Flesha, Maud, Laura, Minnie and Madge. After my marriage I settled down to farming on the Touchet River for two years. In 1870 or 1871 we moved to Cow Creek at a point about 14 miles from the Snake River, and about eight miles from the falls of the Palouse. In the winter of '78 or '79 I saw these falls entirely frozen.

On Cow Creek my trading place was Walla Walla, 72 miles away. My nearest neighbors were George Lucus, two miles north on Cow Creek; Tom Turner, eight miles east; Al. Hooper, seven miles, and his brother, Ernest, southeast 10 miles, and a man named Korst, about 12 miles north. Cow Creek is the outlet of Sprague Lake. The Colville Road went up Cow Creek, north of my place. There was a camping place on the road south and east of Sprague Lake; another at Willow Springs; another west of Deep Creek on Coulee Creek, just below the forks; from there the road went to LaPray's bridge.

In the spring of 1879, I came to Spokane County and settled on a homestead in Coulee Precinct—about 18 miles west of the City of Spokane, Sec. 4, Twn. 26 N., R. 40, E. W. M. I lived there continuously for 36 years, until I sold out to Mr. S. S. Clark.

I helped organize the school district in that section—what is now known as the East Crescent School, District 81. Wm. Cit, a neighbor

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<sup>20</sup> Then operated by Guy Haines.

<sup>21</sup> Established and operated by Ed. Bonner.



of mine on Coluee Creek, had also been with Colonel Wright's command in the Spokane Country in 1858.

In 1879, Deep Creek, the site of the present town, was the principal town and trading place in the county. Mr. Eades kept the store; there was also a settlement at Medical Lake; there was a Frenchman there, La Fave, whom I had known in California; Pete LeBree was a nephew. Spokane was then a small place; I do not recall who kept the store at Spokane in 1879 and 1880.

I met and personally knew old Dr. John McLoughlin at Salem, Oregon, in the fifties. When I was sick down there he doctored me. I met his son, David McLoughlin, at Walla Walla in 1858 or 1859 when he was raising a company of men to go to the Caribou gold diggings on Fraser River. This David McLoughlin left a family at Port Hill, Idaho. A grandson, John McLoughlin, was named after the Doctor. I met the two Eells boys in Walla Walla in 1859 or 1860. My wife's sister married Henry Spaulding, who was born at the Lapwai Mission. I knew old man Pambrum, chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company at Walla Walla and his family.

In 1863 and 1864, when freighting to Wild Horse, I used to go over the old "Kentuck" trail. A cut-off on the Mullan road from near Rock Creek—north of Sprague—to what is now known as Spokane Bridge on the Spokane River, close to the Idaho state line. This went over Moran Prairie, and down on the west side of the Saltese Lake. I used to camp at the head of the lake. Old Saltese used to live there then; I knew him. The trail got its name "Kentuc Trail" and "Kentuck Cut-off," I think from a road house or eating house built on the trail, east of Hangman Creek.

The old Mullan road and the Colville road were the only roads in the Spokane Country in early days. There was a road house or stopping place on Cow Creek in the sixties, kept by a Frenchman. The Mullan road branched off from the Colville road near the crossing of Cow Creek; it crossed Hangman's Creek five or six miles south of where old man Jackson lived—Jackson was a Canadian-Frenchman and he had a grown half-breed son; in 1860 and 1861 they lived at what was then called French Prairie or Jackson's Prairie. From there the Mullan road came down across Moran Prairie and out on to the gravel prairie of the Spokane River, near what is now "Union Park" in the City of Spokane.

I first met Dan Drumheller in 1868 or 1869. He used to be around Touchet Creek when I lived there. I first met David M.

Coonce in 1871 or 1872. He was a caution. He used to freight with oxen from White Bluffs. The Indians stood in awe of him.

I knew Guy Haines of Walker's Prairie.<sup>22</sup> He settled there in 1853 or 1854, and lived there until he died. His son, Charlie Haines, still lives there. His postoffice address is Springdale, or Ford, Washington. Guy Haines had been a member of Governor I. I. Steven's party; he was with McClellan at Kettle Falls, and was at Camp Washington. I met Haines on the Boundary Line Survey and made the trip to the Caribou country with him in 1863. About June 1, 1908, Professor Gilstrap, O. B. Gilstrap and another man came to my farm and asked me if I knew anything about the old ruins of old Spokane House. I told them, no, and referred them to my neighbor, Wolleweber, and to my old friend, Guy Haines, of Walker's Prairie, telling them that the latter came through the country with Captain McClellan and Governor Stevens' parties in 1853.

On October 28th, I attended the ceremonies at the erection of the monument for Camp Washington, on Four Mound Prairie. In speaking, Mr. O. B. Gilstrap asserted that my old friend Francis Wolf<sup>23</sup> had been on that site with Stevens, and was the only living witness. In the presence of Professor McCormick, Wolleweber, myself and some others, Wolf emphatically stated that he had not been there with Stevens.

Guy Haines had previously told me that the site of Camp Washington was at the forks of Coulee Creek; the next day after the unveiling of the monument I went to visit my old friend Haines. He said that the Gilstraps had been to see him, but had not mentioned to him anything about the site of Camp Washington, or of their intention to erect a monument at the site. He said that all they had ever asked him about was concerning the ruins of old Spokane House, concerning which he could give them no information. Guy Haines told me that he told the Gilstraps concerning the movements of the Stevens party, substantially as follows:

"We left camp at Chamokane Mission, keeping the great Colville-Walla Walla trail over the hill and sand flats, down to the Spokane River; crossing at the winding ford (Island); up the other bluff

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<sup>22</sup> Haines settled on part of the old Walker-Eells' mission site and probably bought out the squatter's right of Solomon Pelitier mentioned by Governor Stevens as living on the mission site in 1853.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Wolfe had an adventurous life. Enlisting in the regular army in 1849, he came to the coast in 1852. In 1853, he was one of the command sent out to meet Governor Stevens at Fort Benton. For some time he was with Lieutenant Mullan east of the Rockies. He later became a noted pioneer settler of Stevens County, settling in the Colville Valley, where he died on June 24, 1909, after 50 years' residence in that section of the state.

on the south side and straight on to the forks of Coulee Creek, where they stopped and waited for the westbound Donaldson party, and celebrated."

Further, Haines stated that "We never came near Four Mound Prairie."

Guy Haines died a short time after my visit to him. He had told me, years before, that the old camping ground of the Stevens party was on the flat just east of the forks of Coluce Creek. This is about five and a half miles west of where the monument was placed. The old Colville road to Walla Walla crossed Coulee Creek at this point. The old Indian trail crossed Coulee Creek about half a mile east of this point, which was selected as a wagon road crossing on account of the better grade in and out of Coluce Canyon at the forks of the creek.

JOHN E. SMITH.