

## The Washington Historical Quarterly

---

### THE FIRST MILITIA COMPANIES IN EASTERN WASHINGTON TERRITORY

On October 28, 1855, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, Indian Commissioner and first Governor of Washington Territory, then embracing Idaho and Western Montana, left Fort Benton on the Missouri River, where he had concluded a treaty of peace with the Blackfoot Indians, at the noted Blackfoot Council, on his return to the territorial capital at Olympia. That very evening a pony express reached his camp from the west bringing the startling intelligence that the Yakima Indians under Kam-i-a-kin had broken out into open warfare, murdered their agent A. J. Bolon and several other white men who were on their way to the newly discovered placer mines near Fort Colville, and had declared a war of extermination against the whites.

The Governor's party consisted of only twenty-five men, deficient in arms and poorly mounted, and he was advised not to return across the mountains, but to descend the Missouri River. This advice he ignored. The Governor, apprehensive lest other tribes might join the Yakimas, immediately despatched his secretary, Mr. Doty, to Forts Benton and Campbell for additional arms, ammunition and fresh horses, while he, himself, pushed on ahead to the Bitter Root Valley—a distance of 230 miles—to make arrangements for thoroughly equipping his train on arriving at that point.

Before reaching the Bitter Root Valley Governor Stevens was fortunate enough to overtake the delegation of Nez Perce chiefs who had attended the Blackfoot council, and in a conference held with them at Hell Gate requested some of their number to accompany him. The whole party numbering fourteen men—among whom were Spotted Eagle, Looking Glass and Three Feathers,

principal chiefs among the Nez Percés—at once expressed their willingness to accompany the Governor's party and share in any dangers encountered.

On November 14, 1855, having replenished his train with all the animals to be had, Governor Stevens proceeded to the Rocky Mountains, crossing the summit on November 20th in about three feet of snow over a trail broken a couple weeks previous by a large party of Coeur d'Alene Indians. Fortunately little snow had fallen since the Indian hunting party had passed and the trail was good, but the sufferings of the Indian buffalo hunters who had preceded and broken the trail was evidenced by no less than ten dead horses seen along the trail within a distance of eight miles.

Governor Stevens' party reached the Coeur d'Alene Mission, near what is now Cataldo, Idaho, on November 25th, 1855, and found the Indians there much excited over the arising of the Yakimas. Reports were also received that several other tribes in the lower country were in arms, blocking the trails and threatening to cut off the Governor and his party. Information was also received that four men of Indian Agent Bolon's party with goods, horses and cattle belonging to the Indian Department were at Antoine Plante's place (near Trent) on the Spokane River, and that some fifteen white miners on their way from the Colville Country to the lower settlements had been camping at Plante's place for several weeks waiting relief, and fearing to go below on account of the hostile Indians in the Walla Walla Valley.

Governor Stevens at once determined to proceed to the Spokane Valley to relieve these men and preserve the public property, and on the 28th. at sundown, accompanied by the Nez Perce chiefs, reached Antoine Plante's, on the Spokane River nine miles above the site of the present city of Spokane. Here the Governor found the four government employes and the Indian goods safe. He at once arranged for a council with the local Indians. On Saturday, December 1st., 1855, the American miners at Antoine Plante's organized themselves into a volunteer company by election of officers, with Judge B. F. Yantis in command as Captain, and Governor Stevens immediately issued an order to mount guard in the camp. On Sunday morning Governor Stevens issued a proclamation mustering this volunteer company of miners into the service of the Territory of Washington and the United States under the name of the "Spokane Invincibles," with a strength of fourteen officers and men. The next day four more miners brought down from Colville by Angus McDonald joined the company.

The personnel of Captain Benjamin F. Yantis' Company (Spokane Invincibles) First Regiment Washington Territory Mounted Volunteers, Army of the United States, was as follows:

Benj. F. Yantis, Captain.....farmer  
 John Crawford, First Lieutenant.....packer  
 Aaron Webster, Second Lieutenant.....millwright  
 Amasa S. Miller, Third Lieutenant.....surveyor  
 Thomas Pettigrew, First Sergeant.....miner  
 William C. Pratt, Second Sergeant.....engineer  
 William Scott, Third Sergeant.....farmer  
 Jonathan S. Jacquewith, Fourth Sergeant.....joiner  
 Edward S. Ulte, First Corporal.....miller  
 Samuel K. Renwick, Second Corporal....manufacturer  
 Jeremiah D. Farnham, Third Corporal....manufacturer  
 Henry C. Barrett, Fourth Corporal.....manufacturer

Privates:

John Calderwood .....sailor  
 Simon Geil .....  
 Barney Pendred .....sailor  
 Asa Sanshoses .....

On December 4th. privates John Hall, William Lucus, Jacob Swartz, Frederick Weis, and Jacob Wilson, who had come down from the Colville Country with Angus McDonald, joined the company, and on December 17th., privates George Taylor and Laomi Andrews enlisted in the company, at Red Wolf's crossing on the Snake River. This company of twenty-three officers and men mounted on horses and armed with guns furnished by the friendly Spokane Indians, was mustered out at the Dalles, Oregon, January 20, 1856.

On December 3, 1855 the Governor's own party was organized as a volunteer military company and mustered into service as the "Stevens Guards," First Regiment Washington Territory Mounted Volunteers, Army of the United States, with a strength of twenty-six officers and men, as follows:

Christopher P. Higgins, Captain.  
 Wm. H. Pearson, First Lieutenant.  
 A. H. Robie, Second Lieutenant.  
 Sydney S. Ford, Third Lieutenant.  
 Green McAfferty, First Sergeant.  
 Charles Hughes, Second Sergeant.  
 Joseph Lemiere, Third Sergeant.  
 Frank Jennet, Fourth Sergeant.

Paul C. Eubanks, First Corporal.  
 Wm. Simpson, Second Corporal.  
 Antonie Piller, Third Corporal.  
 John Dunn, Fourth Corporal.

The others of the company were enrolled as privates as follows:

John Canning, Lewis Fouche, Lewis Osaugh, John Lisott, Peter M. L. Fountain, Lawrence Lerongy, Charles Astor, Hazard Stevens, Captain John (Nez Perce), Owen McGarry, Patrick O'Neil, Norby Dupie, Maxy Short.

This company was also mustered out at the Dalles, January 20, 1856.

The first two military orders of Governor Stevens as Commander in Chief of the military forces of the Territory were those mustering in these two companies. The next orders published were: "Order No. 3. The Commander in Chief directs that in moving from this point, the baggage be reduced to two pairs of blankets and ten pounds of personal baggage, and ten days rations each man.

"The spare arms will be turned over to the Captain of the Spokane Invincibles, who will receipt for the same, and make the necessary issue to his command.

"The remaining baggage will be left in the possession of Antonie Plante.

"No animals will be taken along except for service. All animals not hardy and able to make forced marches, will be left behind.

"Dated at Camp in the Spokane near Antonie Plante's, Dec. 2nd., 1855. ISAAC I. STEVENS,  
 Gov. and Commander  
 in Chief."

"Order No. 4.

"James Doty, Esq. is appointed Aid de Camp and Adjutant with rank of Lieut. Colonel and his orders will be respected accordingly.

"W. H. Tappan is appointed Commissary and Quartermaster with rank of Captain.

"Dated at Camp on the Spokane near Antonie Plante's Dec. 2nd. 1855. ISAAC I. STEVENS."

On December 6th. 1855 having concluded a council with the local Indians, who offered to escort him to the Snake River, and procured by purchase and exchange with the Spokane Indians a number of fresh horses and rifles, Governor Stevens and the two companies took up their line of march for the Nez Perce country.

At each camping place a regular guard post was made and proper guards were posted at night. On December 11th., the command reached the Clearwater opposite the Lapwai, and crossed the river losing two horses in crossing. Proceeding seven miles further they came to Craig's place where 208 lodges of Nez Perce Indians, numbering over 2,000 men, women and children and mustering over 800 warriors, were encamped. Here a conference was had with the friendly Nez Percés. Word was also received that the Walla Walla Valley was filled with hostile Indians, and that a party of 100 Oregon Volunteers had been some weeks on the site of the old Agency on the Umatilla and that it was expected that they would soon be reinforced and march against the enemy.

On December 15, 1855 at Craigs in Nez Perce County, Washington Territory, (now Idaho) the Nez Perce Indian volunteers were mustered into service by Governor Stevens:

Spotted Eagle, Joseph—father of Joseph of Nez Perce war fame,—Looking Glass, Lone Bird, Three Chiefs, The Cold Bear, Real Grizzley, Red Crow, Red Eagle, Red Bird, Duck, Seven Days Whipping, Broken Arm, Bear's Claw, Hump Back and others, totaling chiefs, sub-chiefs and head men, sixty-five men. Chiefs and all furnished their own horses, arms and accoutrements complete without aid from the Governor. They were also mustered out of service at the Dalles, January 20, 1856.

Captain Sidney S. Ford's Walla Walla mounted militia of the Second Regiment of Washington Territory Volunteers, Army of the United States, was mustered into service January 10, 1856 at the Dalles, Oregon by B. F. Shaw of Vancouver, Colonel commanding Washington Territory militia. This company consisted of twenty-nine officers and men, and included twenty-four early residents of Walla Walla Valley.

Sidney S. Ford, Jr., Captain.

Green McCafferty, First Lieutenant.

L. T. Andrews, Second Lieutenant.

N. Raymond, Third Lieutenant.

William McBean, First Sergeant.

William Scott, Second Sergeant.

Battiste Pierquette, Third Sergeant.

Charles Baker, First Corporal.

Oliver Deisbois, Second Corporal.

Ettienne Burness, Third Corporal.

The following were privates: Thomas Bruncheare, Joseph Barnaby, Edoured Beachimin, Taussaint Morrisette, Joseph Pairee,

Frank Chartill, Amable Lafourse, Battiste Ignace, Louis Danney, Joseph La Rogue, Antoine Plapie, Michel Thibault, Louis Tellier, John McBean, Pascal Pacquette, Donald McKay, Martin France and Pierre Mewatit.

These four organizations:

Spokane Invincibles .....Yantis, Captain

Steven's Guards .....Higgins, Captain

Nez Perce Volunteers.....Spotted Eagle, Head Chief

Ford's Walla Walla Mounted Militia.....Ford, Captain

Were thus the first State Military organizations of Eastern Washington.

The officers of the Spokane Invincibles were all civilians and served an average of forty-nine days each, prior to the mustering out of the company at the Dalles and it is a sad commentary on the gratitude of our government for the services of these volunteer Indian fighters, that payment of their claims was not only delayed for years, but through technicalities in the office of the auditor of the War Department, years later, their pay was greatly reduced in amount, the auditor holding that this company was entitled to no commissioned officers and to but one sergeant and one corporal. Captain Yantis' rank and pay on the payroll was therefore calculated at that of a sergeant—twenty dollars a month—and that of his First Lieutenant, John Crawford, calculated at that of a corporal only. The remaining commissioned and non-commissioned officers were all rated as privates, and paid for their services with the privates' pay, receiving each for their forty-nine days service a total of twenty-five dollars and thirty cents. A transcript of this payroll is in the possession of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society at Spokane.

Judge Benjamin Franklin Yantis the Captain of the Spokane Invincibles, was a typical pioneer character. He was born in Kentucky March 19, 1807, where he spent his early life, and moved to Missouri in 1835. There he became Superior Judge for Saline County. In 1852 he left Brownsville, Missouri for Washington (then a part of Oregon Territory), and, after six month's travel by ox team, arrived in Thurston County in October, 1852, with eight children. His wife died on the Snake River plains from black measles. He settled at Bush Prairie, near Olympia.

On the creation of the Territory, Judge Yantis became a member of the first and second territorial legislatures of Washington Territory, and was for two years Territorial Librarian. In 1853, he volunteered to help survey the territorial road across the Cas-

cares. He also for some time carried the mail from Olympia to Cowlitz Landing and acted as Justice of the Peace for Thurston County for many years.

After his participation in the "Colville gold rush," which terminated in his service with the Spokane Invincibles, he carried a set of mill-stones on mule back from Olympia to Selheim Springs on the Little Spokane River, seven miles north of the City of Spokane, where, in conjunction with Chief Garry of the Spokanes and Joseph Dissotelle de Gasper, he set up a small gristmill in 1859, under some arrangement with the Indian Department. Dissentions arising between the partners he afterwards removed the mill-stones to the Little Pend Oreille River where he set up another mill in connection with Joseph Dissotelle de Gasper. This mill was afterwards known as the Oppenheimer Mill.

On the organization of Idaho Territory he resided for some time at Lewiston, Idaho, and served in the early Idaho territorial Legislature. He thus witnessed the creation, and participated in the organization of both Washington and Idaho Territories out of "Old Oregon."

In politics Judge Yantis was a Whig, then a Democrat. He was a life long Presbyterian, and one of the founders of the first Presbyterian churches to be located west of the Rockies and north of the Columbia River. He died at Olympia in February, 1879, and left several children, one of whom, Mr. John V. Yantis, of Olympia, yet survives. He was the first practicing lawyer in Eastern Washington recording the donation claims of the Colville Valley settlers in 1855.

WILLIAM S. LEWIS