

MY ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON IN 1852*

My maiden name was Margaret Windsor. I was born in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, in the early forties. My father moved to DeKalb County, Missouri, when I was about the age of eight or nine years. My mother, who was Martha Compton, had died and my father had married a second time to Mrs. Louisa Short, hence we had a stepmother who ruled over us. She was all but a kind mother to me, so I told father one day I was going to Oregon. He laughed at me and said, "You won't go when the time comes." There was a company of emigrants who were now getting ready to start west. I knew some of them and when they came by I went out and started on my long trip to the west. We were six months on the trip with ox-teams and it was a long and tiresome one too. On our trip, I think I am safe in saying, I carried a little motherless babe five hundred miles, whose mother had died, and when we would camp I would go from camp to camp in search of some good, kind, motherly woman to let it nurse and no one ever refused when I presented it to them.

We landed in The Dalles in the year 1852 and came down the river on a raft to what is known as Sheppard's Point, where Stevenson, the county seat of Skamania County, now stands. At the latter end of the trip I had come down with what was then called "Mountain fever;" became unconscious and did not know anything. I was then moved down to the head of Cascade Rapids near the supposed Bridge of the Gods. Mr. Isaac H. Bush had erected a hospital there for the benefit of the sick and I was soon an inmate of that institution and was placed under the care of Dr. Belford. He, being a good doctor, as well as a good, kind man, I was soon on my way to recovery. Mr. Bush also owned a hotel and when well I went to work for him waiting table; but while I lay sick in bed I heard the cries of an infant babe in some part of the building. I asked for it to be brought to me and my bidding was granted. I took it in my arms and tried to play with it, but was so weak and worn I could not. This was the first babe I had in my arms after landing at the Cascades in 1852. This little babe was C. M. Williams,

*Mrs. Iman, one of the older pioneers of the Columbia River settlements, wrote this article shortly before her death in 1923. The article was forwarded by D. A. Brown, Historian of the Skamania County Historical Society.—**ERROR.**

who was born at the Cascades and who was a half-brother to J. F. and J. W. Atwell, of Stevenson, Wash., and who was stopping at my house in later years when he died in Stevenson at the age of some sixty odd years. He always loved me as his mother. He rests in the little cemetery above Stevenson, on the bank of the lordly Columbia.

While I was still employed by Mr. Bush I formed the acquaintance of Felix G. Iman, who had been sent up from Portland to work on the construction of a steamboat called the *Cosmopolite*, to ply on the river between the Cascades and The Dalles. He, being a skilled workman, as well as a good man, I married him a little later. Portland at this time had but few houses and those were all on donation claims. We had in all, sixteen children; nine boys, of whom six are living: T. C. Iman of Napavine, Wash., A. C. Iman of Castle Rock, Wash., George Iman, L. F. Iman and C. N. Iman of Stevenson, Wash., and John W. Iman of Cascades, Wash.; seven girls, of whom four are dead and three living: Mrs. Flora Foster of Stevenson, Mrs. M. L. MacKinnon of Beaverton, Ore., and Mrs. Rosa A. Jones of Satsop, Wash. I have thirty-six grandchildren now living and thirty-seven great-grandchildren.

In 1854 my husband built the steamer *Wasco*, owned by him and Captain McFarland. She plied on the river between the Cascades and The Dalles. She was the third steamer that ran on these waters between the Cascades and The Dalles. The iron hull propellers *Allen*, the first, *Mary*, the second, and the steamer *Wasco*, the third.

Now the Indians were getting somewhat numerous and were much on the warpath, so my husband sold out his interest in the *Wasco* to Captain McFarland and put up a saloon at the boat landing. There were three saloons a little later on—one owned by Isaac H. Bush, one by Thomas McNatt and one by my husband. My husband did not like the saloon business so sold out to one, Flech Murphy. In those early fifties money was plentiful but clothing and provisions were high. The coins ranged from the silver half-dime to the fifty dollar slug and I will include the copper cent. I well recall an instance of the paper money, those days—the common greenback. My husband had fifteen hundred dollars worth of them and had to let them go at forty cents on the dollar and in ten days time they were full face value and, I want to tell you, he never loved a greenback afterwards.

Talk of people not knowing the war is over—well I guess some of them don't; but I will relate to you a fact regarding high prices. My husband and Mr. Sheppard, who owned the donation claim where this little town now stands, went in together to purchase a pound of onion seed, each to bear equally on the expense, and when the seed arrived they were "only" eight dollars for the pound, and a fifty pound sack of flour that my husband purchased at the Lower Cascades, as it was then called, or rather at the end of the little portage line, cost fifty dollars, and it was carried home in the snow, the distance of the line being six and seven-eighths miles long. No one would sell a pound of flour or other provisions to his neighbor, but would loan him a quantity of it, to be returned when he would be able to purchase.

The Indians were now getting more hostile and far enough along to insure us of battle, so my husband decided he would move up on our donation claim, about a mile distant, where Mr. Fields now lives. We had hewn logs and put up a house on what is yet known as Powder Island slough. We had decided to stay and try to fight off the warriors. We had carried in lots of wood and water and cut port holes through the walls of our house, making it a kind of fort. We afterwards abandoned this idea as there was a large pile of shavings from the shingles that lay against the house under the shed and on account of the underbrush which was close to the house. This would have been an easy mark for them to have thrown firebrands into and have cremated us while sleeping. While we were pondering over the situation, two hostiles put in an appearance about one hundred and fifty yards distant. They were huge and looking fierce and wild. A man named Carter, who was stopping at our house, asked my husband if he had any guns and he said "yes" and went out and brought two. Mr. Carter took one and my husband the other—each one of the men to name the warrior he was to shoot and Mr. Carter gave the signal to fire after good aim had been taken, but when the word was given my husband's gun made long fire and he did not get his game, but Mr. Carter took his man square in the stomach. The other ran like an elk and, as far as we know, escaped unharmed. They had fox skins filled with arrows and as they stood with the bows on end they were almost as tall as the warriors, who were close to six feet. Mr. Carter got the huge bow and the arrows, so after shooting the man they decided to cross the river to the Oregon shore. I was

sick in bed at the time with a small babe the day of the massacre, which was sixty-six years ago today. It was March 26th, 1856 and today is March 26th 1922. In the excitement I was carried from my bed up the river about a mile to where was supposed to be a skiff, but the skiff had been taken over to the other side of the slough by a man named Herman, who died in The Dalles later; so Mr. Simeon Geil, who was at our place ran around the slough and brought the skiff over to where we were and as I was being carried into the boat, it was discovered that my little boy, two years old, had been left asleep in the bed. Mr. Geil, who was young and good on foot, ran back and got him. He was undisturbed as he entered the house and advanced toward the bed, and this babe is T. C. Iman, of Napavine, Wash., born August 23, 1854; so you can see a part only of what I went through in those early days. I can remember those tragic sights as well as if they were yesterday, although it was in March on the 26th day in 1856 and I am now climbing well on to ninety. I think that the day was the worst I ever witnessed on the old Columbia and there have been many, taking it all in all. I don't care to see any more of them—the roar of the small cannon at the blockhouse; the firing of guns; the dead and wounded; the war cries of the warriors in their war paint; the burning buildings, with my house among them; the fleeing of the people, and I being all but well; the splashing waters and bounding skiff did not add to a speedy recovery for me; but we landed on the Oregon shore safe and took the steamer *Mary* for The Dalles. Later, when we returned, I hardly knew the place. There were fourteen of the Indians captured and hanged on a tree about one mile from where we lived. Some of them, when asked to talk, shook their heads and put the noose on their own necks. Others laughed at those who were hanging. The device of the hanging was one end of a rope tied to a limb, the other to the neck. A whiskey barrel stood on end and one end of a rope about twenty feet in length, drawn through the bung hole of the barrel with a knot tied on the inner end, which served to jerk the barrel from under the condemned man. One among them was Jim Tassalo—he insisted that he had not been in the battle. My husband, some few days before their capture, while on his way to The Dalles, had met Jim and told him the Indians had already been killing the whites at the Cascades so he turned his skiff and sailed for the point from where he had come. He wanted those who held him in captivity, to hold him unharmed till Felix, my

husband, came from The Dalles and if he said he was in the battle, he was willing to be hanged. This they refused to do and so hanged him and asked Mr. Iman afterwards; hence a life was taken from one for the crime he had not committed, for my husband said, "Men, you have done wrong, for Jim, I know, was not in the battle."

There seemed to be two tribes of the Indians. Chenoweth was called the chief on the Washington side of the river and Bannaha on the Oregon side. They were not friendly—the two chiefs—as each wanted to rule both sides of the river. There is some dispute as to the hanging of Chief Chenoweth, but there need be none, for I know he was hanged among the fourteen on a balm tree. The other chief, Bannaha, died a natural death at what was called Greenleaf. Chenoweth told the executors they could not hang him; saying he would yell out for help and that five hundred Indians would come to his rescue in just a few moments; but his yelling did no good, for he hanged just as easy as did the rest of the savages. After the death of Bannaha, Alex Teio, who married the chief's daughter, called himself chief, but as far as I know, he was not recognized by any tribe as chief.

The horrors I went through during those early fifties was something that women these days can't endure. The Indian trail passed close enough to my house that the stirrups of the warriors would drag on the rough board wall all night long. The trail was pretty much hidden by the wild rose bushes and buck brush and other small vegetation as well. Many times I have witnessed this when all alone at night, while my husband would be out late on some kind of business and would be detained. I'll tell you it was all but pleasant during those olden days of the early fifties.

After the war was over and the Indians were getting somewhat friendly with the whites, they would often congratulate my husband and tell him he was the Boston Chief and Bannaha the Indian Chief, and if a dispute arose among them they would call on him to settle it for them, and in nine cases out of ten, they were willing to abide by his decision. He had learned to understand their language and could speak it fairly well and I afterwards learned to speak it pretty well, but can't speak much of it now. It disappeared, as did the red man also.

I will relate a comical occurrence, as well as a painful one, that took place between my husband and the Jim I have mentioned, who was hanged. My husband owed him fifty cents and he lived on the Oregon side of the river, where my husband and

I had gone for a visit at the Chipman home. After I was there for a day or two I took sick and my husband had brought home for me a pint of whiskey to use as medicine. The Chipman house is the section house at Cascade Locks today, and was built in 1855, if my memory serves me right, and a pretty good house today. It happened that Jim heard we were there and came to get the money and as he entered the house he spied the pint of whiskey and my husband offered him the money. He said, "No, give me the whiskey and keep the money." My husband said, "No, Jim, I can't for it is unlawful to sell an Indian whiskey and I have got it for medicine." Whereupon the Indian became angry, saying, "I will go and get my gun and kill you if you don't give me the whiskey." My husband said "Go and get it if you like. I am not afraid and will take a chance with you." He ran out of the house and jumped on his cayuse; ran to Mr. Chipman's fence, threw it down and regardless of his field of oats, ran through it, threw the fence down on the other side and ran out. He had not been gone but a few minutes till Mrs. Chipman called Mr. Iman to dinner and it so happened that my husband was facing the door. They had no more than got seated when in ran the copper colored Jim, gun in hand and ready for action. He spoke in English, "I am going to kill you; I told you I would." But my husband, who was a fast man and afraid of nothing, sprang from the table, tore the gun from him, walked to the door facing the river and fired both barrels and threw it fifty feet away, breaking it so that it did not look much like a gun. He then grabbed the unlucky Jim, who towered above him and before anyone could pull him loose he had beat the copper colored man most unmercifully and threw him out of the house. At last he was able to drag himself to his wigwam. After two or three days had passed Jim sent for my husband to come and see him and continued to send for about ten days. So on Monday morning Jim sent for Mr. Iman and Mr. Chipman said, "Felix, I would go and see what he wants, but don't go without being armed." So my husband put Mr. Chipman's six-shooter in his pocket and went down. He entered the door saying, "Jim, I have word you want to see me; now, what do you want?" "I don't want any more trouble," said Jim, "but you have made me blind, and I don't think I will ever see again and I want you to pay me for it. If I am blind my wife and children will starve to death, so pay me." My husband said, "Jim, you made your own trouble and I will only pay you the same kind of pay, if

you care for it.”

Not long after Jim was up and around and the first place he hit for was our house. My husband gave him the fifty cents and they often talked about it and laughed. He worked for my husband, hoeing potatoes many times, and he would laugh and say he was all in the fault.

Another instance that took place between another Indian and my husband, was at the time he started to build the steamer *Wasco*, I have already mentioned in the beginning of my writing—he had gone one day in a skiff across to the Oregon shore near the Locks to get a large crook he had hewn out to be used as a bowstem for the steamer *Wasco*. It was pretty large and also heavy and its shape made it pretty long. Some way he got it into the small boat by the aid of Mr. Chipman, or perhaps someone else, and proceeded toward the Washington shore. He made his way to what is called the chute, where Mrs. Fields once lived. He then had to tumble it out of the skiff, as the boat had grounded on the bottom and he could not land. So he tugged at it and lifted every pound that was in him, but it stood upon the two points and he could not turn it over. Perhaps one more pound would have overbalanced it and turned it out on dry land. An Indian now appeared upon the scene and walked right up in front of the crook as my husband still held it upon the two ends. He was in arms length of it and my husband said “Pull it over” in the Indian’s own tongue. He replied to Mr. Iman “How much will you pay me?” My husband got angry at this—let the heavy missile fall back in the water and ran out after him down the river, past Mrs. Field’s place and down through the lowlands to the mouth of Blue Creek, a distance of about a mile and one-half. He gained all the time on the dark man till he came to the bank, which was perhaps twenty feet above the water and as the Indian sprang from the bank to the flat on the other side, my husband helped him to make the jump to the other shore by a good kick. This ended the race and the Indian won as my husband did not continue it and it so ended by both being pretty tired after the long chase. I am somewhat under the impression that it was lucky for the Indian that he was not caught.

MARGARET WINDSOR IMAN.