

FAMILIAR LETTER ABOUT PIONEERS

Edward Huggins never dreamed that the following letter by him would ever be published. It is one of the friendly letters he loved to write touching on historical matters pertaining to the Pacific Northwest. In the twenty-one years since the letter was written most of the pioneers mentioned (including Mr. Huggins himself) have passed away.

When the Hudson's Bay Company and the Puget Sound Agricultural Company finally transferred to the United States in 1869, Fort Nisqually and other properties in the Pacific Northwest, Mr. Huggins became an American citizen and secured Fort Nisqually as a homestead. There he reared his family of interesting children.

Naturally enough, Mr. Huggins does not mention to Mrs. Shackelford the names of her father and brother about whom he expresses solicitude. It seems likely that the father was Henry D. Cock who was one of the witnesses signing the Indian treaties made by Governor Isaac I. Stevens with the Nisqually, Duwamish, Clallam and allied tribes in 1854 and 1855. The letter was obtained from Mrs. Shackelford by Mrs. Lulu D. Crandall of The Dalles. In forwarding a copy, Mrs. Crandall says that Mrs. Shackelford's maiden name was Roxa Cock.

The letter has in it items of historic value, but pioneers will appreciate it most as a belated message from one they held in high esteem during his lifetime.—EDITOR.

The Letter

Fort Nisqually, Wash., Feby. 3rd, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Shackelford:

Your favor of the 26th ulto. came to hand in due course of mail, and I'm making an effort now to write a few lines, acknowledging receipt of same. I'm just recovering from an attack of sickness which confined me to my bed several days, and I am still confined to the house, so I must ask you to pardon any inaccuracies you may find in this attempt at a letter, as I find writing to be rather arduous. I've often wondered what became of your Father and Brother Henry after they left Olympia. I think I was informed that your brother moved to the Gechima Valley, but I couldn't learn anything about your Father's where-

abouts. Please be kind enough to inform me about them at your convenience. Do you ever see the *Spokane Spokesman Review*. Colonel Bolton of the U.S.A. who was here in command of the troops, encamped at this place two years ago, sent me a copy. I sent the cutting to a friend, and he has not yet returned it.

The newspaper in question contained a communication from A. J. Woodcock in which he says that a man named Hank Peterson told him that his Father was in charge of Fort Nisqually in 1858! I was much surprised to read this as Dr. Wm. F. Tolmie (my brother-in-law) was then in charge of the Fort, and I was his chief clerk, there being three other clerks beside myself. He, Peterson, gives certain dates correctly.

Dr. Tolmie left Nisqually on July 29th, 1859, to become one of the Board of management of the Hudson Bay Comp'y's affairs at Fort Victoria (Western Department). He succeeded Mr. Jas. Douglas who resigned his position with the H.B.Co. to become Governor of the colony of Vancouver Island, and he (Douglas) was soon after knighted by Queen Victoria, and became Sir James Douglas. I succeeded Dr. Wm. F. Tolmie in the charge of the Puget Sound Agricultural Comp'y's business at Fort Nisqually, and remained in charge until the U. S. Gov'ment. became the owners, by purchase, of the claims made by the Company to lands in Washington Territory. I never heard of either Woodcock or Hank Peterson and am much surprised that such an assertion should be made as appears in the Spokane newspaper mentioned.

The article referred to is a verbatim copy from Theo. Winthrop's *Canoe and the Saddle*.

When poor Winthrop was cut off in his prime, the U. S. lost an able man, who, had he lived, would surely have made a great name in literature. He was rather a small man, well made and wiry looking, and was good looking, if not handsome.

He was brave almost to rashness, else he would not have made such a dangerous trip as he did in 1853, from Victoria to this place in a Canoe with a crew of nearly savage Clallam Indians, picked up at Port Townsend and I was surprised that they did not murder him on the lonely trip up, he being the only white man in the crowd. I think 'twas fear of the Revolver or Revolvers he had with him, and his expertness in handling them that kept them from murdering him. Revolvers (Colts) were about that time first introduced into this part of the country, and I think these half savage creatures thought there was magic in them. At all events, I know they greatly feared them. Winthrop

made the trip to Victoria a short time previous to his solitary trip up, with Dr. Tolmie and family, in a large Northern Indian Canoe, which was kept for the purpose of carrying the mail and passengers, to Vancouver Island. My wife (then Miss Work) was with Dr. Tolmie and family when they made this trip with Winthrop, and she has a vivid recollection of the gentlemanly, handsome rather small man. My wife, when Miss Work, often came up in Canoe to visit her sister Mrs. Tolmie, and says she made seven (7) trips in all! It was rather a risky trip to make, but altho' we made many trips before the advent of steamboats (1854) we never met with fatal accidents. The Canoe was very large and was always manned with a crew of skilled Indians. I made a couple of trips which I thought (one trip) would end disastrously, but my able Indians brought me through safely.

Quite a number of lives were lost, men I was well acquainted with, left Steilacoom in Canoe or a boat for points down Sound, where nothing more was heard of them, but it was a question whether they had not been killed by Northern Indians or drowned by the wrecking of their Canoe. In 1853, (I think 'twas) Major Larnard, then in command of Fort Steilacoom was ordered by the Government to make a tour of inspection down the Sound, and report as to the most advantageous points for Fortifications. He accordingly had the Whale boat belonging to the Fort fitted out, and with a crew of five or six stalwart soldiers, he left Steilacoom, called at Seattle on his way down Sound, bid good by to Seattle friends, and that was the last seen of the party. Nothing was ever found of the Major or party, and 'twas supposed that the Boat was capsized when crossing one of the wide reaches down the Sound.

Have you read Winthrop's book *The Canoe and the Saddle*? It is, I think very interesting, especially to old settlers, and the Chinook in it is good.

Are you acquainted with Ezra Meeker? and have you read his lately published book, *The Tragedy of Leschi*? It is well written, and interesting, especially to old settlers. He attacks the dead and gone Soldier-Governor, Isaac I. Stevens, in it very bitterly indeed. He sent a good portion of the book to me in manuscript form, to read aloud and criticize, and I was shocked at the manner he treated the dead Soldier-Governor, who had done so much for this part of the country. I tried all I could to get him to strike out the part attacking the Governor from his book, as did other friends (Bagley, Prosch & others) to whom

he had given the manuscript to read &c, but it had no effect on him. He was determined to publish to the world the dead Governor's great failing. He (Meeker) is on the eve of starting with oxen and wagon by the trail he travelled in 1852, and he intends writing another book, describing his journey &c &c. I think Meeker is making a great mistake in starting upon such a trip at his great age (75 or 76, I think) and no doubt he'll find that he can't stand the hardships of the trip as he did when coming across in 1852.

I suppose you have read Mrs. Dyes book, *McLoughlin and Old Oregon*. I think it is very interesting. She is about to publish another book, in which Fort Nisqually and its officers in charge will appear. Messrs. Douglas and Work will have a prominent place in it. It was to have been ready for sale this winter, and no doubt will soon appear. I suppose you are acquainted with C. B. Bagley, who is now Clerk to the Board of Public Works, Seattle, Wash. In the late fifties and early sixties he was employed in Garfield's office in Olympia. I think Garfield was Surveyor General, but p'raps I'm wrong in saying this. He might have been Collector of Internal Revenue. Bagley became a newspaper man of prominence, and at last an Editor, and for a time owned and published the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, and also the *Olympia Transcript*, the newspaper that nice little fellow Gunn published for such a length of time.

Bagley and myself corresponded for some length of time, and some very long letters passed between us, at least on my side were lengthy, because I had so much to write about and he wanted to know about old happenings to include in a book he intended to write. He is a good writer, and has published several newspaper articles during the last four or five years, and a pamphlet entitled, *In the Beginning*, published in the early 1905. It is principally about Fort Nisqually, and he makes me rather more conspicuous in it than is pleasing to me. Our correspondence has gradually become shorter and shorter, sickness having seriously interfered with it, and, now I find that I can't write the voluminous letters I used to. I think I'm making this effusion rather long, and I fear you'll find it disconnected and digressive. It's always the way when I write about old happenings. I never know when to leave off. Bagley's Father was a noted Methodist preacher, and his church was named the "Brown Church", Seattle. He died about a year ago, at an advanced age (about 80 years).

I suppose you know Chas. Prosch, the Senior Prosch, who

edited and published a Paper at Steilacoom, called the *Puget Sound Herald*. He published this paper many years, moved to Olympia, then to Tacoma, and finally to Seattle, where he is now living, having obtained comfortable competence by the fabulous increase in the value of his real estate. In 1904 C. Prosch wrote and published a 126 page pamphlet, entitled *Reminiscences of Washington Territory*. Only a few copies were published, which he presented to his friends. I have a copy and although it contains what I think are errors, it is interesting. His son Thomas Prosch became a prominent newspaper man, and for some time owned and published the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. That was before that paper became valuable. I must now conclude this long disconnected and I fear tiresome letter, and I again ask you to kindly overlook errors I feel assured you'll find, and trusting you are well in health, I remain

Most sincerely yours,

Edward Huggins.

P.S. If you have Winthrop's *Canoe and the Saddle* no doubt you've read the *Legend of the Dalles*, to be found on page 285. I received safely the picture of the Surgeons' quarters at Old Fort Dalles, and thank you for the same.

E.H.

Mrs. Roxa S. Shackelford,
410 W. Fourth St., The Dalles, O'n.