

DOCUMENTS

The Indian Chief Kitsap

Hon. Richard W. Condon has found among his papers relating to his native County of Kitsap a letter signed by Theodore O. Williams. Senator Condon thinks that Chief Kitsap was more of a Medicine Man than a war chief. The document will be followed by a citation on this phase. He is also in doubt as to the identity of the "Dear Nephew Albert" to whom the letter was addressed.

The identity of the writer of the letter, Theodore O. Williams, is well established. *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, page 493, gives a brief biography, saying he was born in New York City in 1827 and joined the gold rush to California in 1849. Soon after his dramatic experiences in the gold mine camps he became a mariner and finally a resident of the area that was to become Kitsap County. He died in Seattle on September 10, 1909, when the *Seattle Times* published a review of his career, saying among other things that he had served as sheriff from 1870 to 1880,—"during his long term of office he was a terror to evildoers and did much to make Kitsap a law-abiding county in territorial days." He had also served as a vigilante in the lawless days of California. He was undoubtedly sincere in his judgment of Chief Kitsap as set forth in the old letter here reproduced.—E. S. M.

The Letter About Chief Kitsap

Seattle, Wash., March 13, 1904.

Dear Nephew Albert—Yours of the 10th came to hand yesterday and as everything is quiet and serene today, I will proceed to answer your letter. I arrived at Port Orchard 4th of March 1855 on the Brig (afterwards Bark) *Leonesa*. That summer we were notified to turn out and work on a road running from Seattle to some part of White River. Well we did not go but we all said something that is not generally used in conversation in polite circles. They made Renton & Howard, owners of the Port Orchard mill, pay on their property tax, and Capt. Renton used some exceedingly bad language, and in 56 it was the same. Meanwhile Port Gamble was in Jefferson County. The mill companies concluded to send persons to the Legislature and have a new county made out of a portion of Jefferson and King Counties. Mr. Timothy Hinckley was sent from Port Madison and Mr. Henry Wilson, a son in law of Capt. Keller, a Superintendent of the Port Gamble Mills. The win-

ter of 56 & 57 a bill was passed organizing the County of Slaughter (named after Lieutenant Slaughter who was killed on White Fiver by the Indians) (1855). Mr. Hinckley had a clause put in the bill for the voters to settle the name at the following election in June. Many names were proposed but the name of Kitsap had a large majority.

Now who Kitsap was—He was, from 1790 to 1845, the most powerful chief that ever the Indians of Puget Sound saw. He was known as the Head Chief of all the Indians from Olympia to Frasier River. Dr. Tolmie, who for many years (that is from 1836 to 1857) had been head trader for the Hudson Bay Company stationed at Fort Nisqually, gave me an account of Kitsap in the Winter of 1858 & 59. He had been on a visit to Nisqually and was on his way back to Victoria in a big canoe with an Indian crew when he put into Port Madison in a heavy North East gale and was storm bound for three days. He was at my house during the time and told me many stories of old Chief Kitsap. Kitsap combined all the Indian Tribes of the Sound to go over to Vancouver Island and punish the Cowichan Indians who were continually making raids on the Sound Indians. Doctor set the date at about 1825. There were over two hundred canoes filled with Indians under Kitsap's command. They crossed over to Vancouver Island somewhere near where Victoria now is and cleaned out every camp they came across but could find nothing but old men and women and children. They killed all the old ones and made slaves of the young women and children. They then crossed to Dungeness spit—there was a thick fog. They heard Indians singing their war songs. In a little while the fog lifted and there in front of them was the Cowichans, loaded with slaves and plunder from a raid that they had made up Puget Sound. They first killed all of their prisoners, in sight of each other. They then closed in mortal combat. The Doctor told me that he thought from what the Indians told him who were in the fight that it lasted from midday until about six o'clock. Kitsap came back with only forty canoes and they told the Doctor that the Cowichans had about the same number. Quite a number of the Sound Indians had fled to the woods when the Cowichans were raiding the Sound but there was a large number of the women and children captured by them who all lost their lives. The Sound Indians one and all acknowledged Kitsap to be their Head Chief. Seattle was only a sub-chief while Kitsap lived, so you see that Kitsap County is named after the greatest

Indian warrior of the last century, that is the greatest clam eater in the Northwest. I believe that the great fight occurred, for many old Indians had been told by their fathers and the stories were similar to the one I heard from Dr. Tolmie.

Your affectionate Uncle

Theodore O. Williams.

The Other View of Chief Kitsap

Elwood Evans was the principal author of the two large volumes published in 1889 under the title of *History of the Pacific Northwest—Oregon and Washington*. There is to be found (Vol. I, pages 508-509) the most complete record of Chief Kitsap yet published. As the books are now relatively rare, and as Elwood Evans was a dependable historian, it is thought best to reproduce the entire reference here:

“A new county nominated Slaughter in the act creating it, in honor of the gallant Lieutenant William A. Salughter, was set off from the counties of King and Jefferson. A few days after its passage, a supplementary act authorized the legal voters of the county at the next general election to settle, by the highest number of votes, the name of such county. At that election the name Kitsap was adopted, such being the name of a war chief of the band whose haunts were upon the peninsula adjacent to Port Madison, the county seat of the new county. At the time of the passage of the act, he was one of the most prominent of the chiefs in the camps of hostile Indians, and was a *Medicine Man*. During the war he had received serious wounds on different occasions, which, unaided by others, he treated and successfully healed. He took occasion to boast that it was impossible for either white man or Indian to kill him; and he succeeded for years in creating in the minds of his people such a belief; and they had a superstitious dread of his surgical powers, or, as they called it, *tamanous*.

“On the 18th of June, 1856, Governor Stevens addressed a communication to Colonel George Wright, Ninth Infantry, U. S. Army, commanding the Columbia river district, offering, as superintendent, to take charge of such Indians ‘Who may be reported by yourself (Colonel Wright) as having changed their condition from hostility to peace.’ The governor excepted, however, from any amnesty, Leschi, Nelson, Kitsap and Quiemuth, from the Sound. From motives of prudence, considering the inflamed state of the

public mind, Colonel Wright thought it best not to act at once upon the governor's requisition. On October 4th, Governor Stevens renewed the demand, adding Stehi to the list, and asking that those five 'be sent to the Sound to be tried by civil authority,' giving reasons for insisting that those named should be tried.

"On the 16th of October, Colonel Wright directed Major Garnett, Ninth Infantry, U. S. Army, commanding at Fort Simcoe, to deliver them up. Each of those named had been indicted for several murders. Leschi was tried, convicted and executed. His brother Quiemuth voluntarily came to the executive office November 7, 1856, and surrendered himself to the governor to answer charges, and was to have been taken to the guardhouse at Steilacoom the next morning at daylight. He was murdered in cold blood, in the presence of a guard, during the night. A son-in-law of James McAllister, an early victim of the war, who had been treacherously killed by Quiemuth, shot him. The slayer rushed to the door, Quiemuth pursuing, where he was fatally stabbed and fell dead. Governor Stevens made the complaint and had the supposed murderer arrested; but there was insufficient evidence to hold the party. This was the case of murder referred to by the Governor in the paragraph quoted from his message.

"Kitsap, having escaped from the guardhouse at Fort Steilacoom, was subsequently arrested by a detachment of six United States troops under Sergeant Gardner on the 6th of January, 1859. He was tried shortly afterwards at Olympia and acquitted. He was killed by Indians of his own band, April 18, 1860. The circumstances connected with his death, published at the time, are as follows: 'While in the guardhouse at Fort Steilacoom awaiting his trial, Kitsap was taken ill; and a prescription composed of red liquid was administered. This had the effect of restoring him to health; whereupon Kitsap thought he had made a wonderful discovery. Shortly after his return to his people, three of his warriors became sick. Having previously informed them that during his captivity he had acquired a knowledge of the healing art, he officiated as the medicine man for the occasion; and, preparing a mixture of water and the red stuff used to paint their faces, he gave it to them to drink. Unfortunately for Kitsap, this didn't operate upon them as the medicine of like color had operated upon him at the garrison. The three invalids went the way of all flesh a few hours after swallowing it. To the relatives and friends of the deceased, this looked like wilful

murder, and they accordingly vowed to be avenged. A favorable opportunity occurring by Kitsap being drunk, he was induced in this state to accompany his executioners to a vacant cabin near Montgomery's, where two of them fired simultaneously at him, both shots taking mortal effect. With knives they afterward cut his throat from ear to ear, and severed the body from the lower extremities, leaving only the backbone connecting the two parts. In this condition his remains were found on the Sunday following.'"