

## OSCAR CANFIELD'S PIONEER REMINISCENCES\*

I was born in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, on March 8, 1838, and am now in my seventy-ninth year. My father was William D. Canfield and my mother Sarah Ann Lee from Arlington, Bennington County, Vermont. The family moved to Iowa in 1842 and in the spring of 1847 started for Oregon, and arrived at the Whitman Mission that fall. Father concluded to settle there and was engaged as a blacksmith by the missionaries. There were five children then in the family: Ellen, aged sixteen years, who died in California in 1858; myself (Oscar), aged ten years; Clara, aged seven, who died at Sebastipol, California, in 1914; Sylvia Ann, aged five, who died at Blucher, California, in 1854; and baby brother Albert, who died on the Spokane prairie in 1879.

There is little that I can add at this late day to the oft-told story of the Whitman tragedy, though these events of nearly seventy years ago made such an impression on my mind as a boy of ten, that I can recall them vividly. It may be interesting to know the manner in which we first met the half-breed, Joe Lewis, who participated in the massacre and who shot Frank Seger.

At Fort Hall a bunch of trappers came into our camp looking for this man, Joe Lewis, saying that they wanted him for horse stealing, and that they would hang him when found. After they had gone away Lewis, who had hid in the willows close to our camp, crept out from his hiding-place and camp into our camp. He protested that he had not stolen any horses and said that the trappers had just gotten down on him, and had accused him on account of their dislike for him. He said that he wanted to go to Oregon with us and pleaded with the leaders of the party to permit him to accompany them. Winslow, one of our teamsters, was sick, and father asked Lewis if he could drive an ox-team. Lewis said he could, and he was accordingly taken into our party and came through with us from Fort Hall to the Whitman Mission.

At the time of the massacre, everyone about the Mission was busy. Sister Ellen was in the schoolroom; mother and the rest of us children were in the blacksmith shop. We had then been at the Mission about three weeks, living in our wagons and cooking in the blacksmith shop until suitable quarters could be prepared for us.

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\*Oscar Canfield of Clarkston, Washington, a pioneer and one of the few survivors of the Whitman massacre, related these reminiscences to William S. Lewis, Corresponding Secretary of the Spokane Historical Society, who has forwarded the article to the Quarterly.

Father, Jacob Hoffman and Nathan Kimball were butchering a beef; Isaac Gill [iland], the tailor, was sewing; Peter Hall was at the flour mill; and Mr. Saunders was teaching the school.

The massacre occurred about 2 o'clock in the afternoon—a short time after noon. I was outside the blacksmith shop watching the men at the butchering just before the shooting commenced. I had been sick with camp fever and father said, "You had better go back into the blacksmith shop." Six Indian bucks sat on a pile of fence rails close to the men butchering. Kimball and dad each held a hind leg of the slaughtered beef, while Hoffman was splitting it with an axe. Just as I went into the blacksmith shop the shooting commenced.

The bucks on the pile of rails suddenly took guns from under their blankets and commenced to shoot. Father was shot in the back. Mr. Kimball's arm was broken. Mr. Hoffman was crippled, and although he fought off the Indians with an axe he was soon killed.

I ran out of the blacksmith shop just as father came running in. He told mother that the Indians had attacked the missionaries. The first gun fired had been the signal for a general attack. The Indians had stationed themselves around wherever the men were working. None of the men were killed on the first firing. We—father, mother and we children—now all ran from the blacksmith shop to the "Old Mansion House," an old adobe building. Father and I looked out the window. We saw Mr. Saunders come out of the schoolhouse fighting the Indians with a piece of fence rail; he was killed in a few minutes. Mr. Gill [iland] was shot through the lungs while at his bench and had no chance to escape or defend himself. Dr. Whitman was attacked while reading by the fireplace.

About forty Indians engaged in the massacre. After this first attack they held a council. Towards night they withdrew to their teepees in a camp about one-half or three-quarters of a mile up the river from the Mission. Father told mother that he did not think the Indians would kill the women and children, and that he would try to escape to Oregon. Though wounded, he slipped from the house during the night and hid all night and the next day in some brush along the creek. During this time he heard no further firing at the Mission. He finally decided that he would head for Mr. Spaulding's Mission at Lapwai, as the Indians would not be likely to hunt for him in that direction. He reached there in safety some four days later.

At the time of the massacre two families lived in the "Old Mansion House": Mrs. Saunders and Mrs. Kimball. Later Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Page (?) and Mrs. Hays came over with their children from

the Whitman house. The next morning the women and children all expected to be killed. A council was held by the murderers and the friendly Indians. Chief Telo-kite was there. The Indians finally decided not to kill the women and children, but to keep them prisoners until spring and then to send them down the Columbia River to the Willamette Valley.

On the morning after the massacre, mother saw Joe Lewis passing the house. She called him in and asked him why he took part in the killing. He told her he had to or the Indians would have killed him. I believe that he agitated the massacre. We all understood that he told the Indians that while he (Lewis) was sick at Dr. Whitman's he had heard the Doctor tell Mr. Spaulding that "his medicine had come, and he was going to poison all the Indians." The Indians themselves told this to the women.

On the evening of the day after the massacre a Catholic priest, Father Brouillet, came up from Umatilla to the Indian camp and baptized the children of these murderous Indians. He then came up to the adobe house where we were. The bodies of the murdered then lay around the yard and the Whitman house. The murderers said that they would leave them there for the dogs and crows to eat. My mother said to the father, "Mr. Gill [iland]'s body is here in the house! The Indians say they are going to leave the bodies unburied for the dogs and crows to eat. Can't you have them buried?"

The priest told her he would see what he could do. He then had a talk with the Chief. Later they took one of our wagons and the lead oxen, loaded all the bodies into the wagon, and hauled them off and buried them in one grave about four hundred feet from the adobe house. I went up to the grave with Mrs. Saunders, Mrs. Hays, Mrs. Kimball and two or three of the children. There were only a few Indians about. The priest then read from a book. I had never heard such reading before. I asked mother what it was and she told me that it was Latin. The priest then got on his horse and rode back to Umatilla.

During the time we were held prisoners by the Indians many of the women were abused by them. I do not recall the women pleading with Father Brouillet to protect them. Miss Lorinda Bewley was taken to Umatilla by Five Crows as his woman. She ran away from him, and the women said she asked the priest to protect her. Five Crows fetched her back. Five Crows was a half-brother of Chief Joseph.

Eight or nine days after the first massacre Amos Sales, a teamster, and Crockett Bewley, who were sick with camp fever and con-

fined to bed in the "Old Mansion House" with us, were killed. Camp fever is a sort of malaria fever contracted from camp life on the plains. I had it myself. It is a slow, debilitating fever. There is no particular pain. Mother had waited on these two sick men. Six Indians came into the room and went up to the bed, two or three on each side of the bed, and tomahawked them. Then they dragged the bodies through the room and threw them out the door. The bodies lay there for two days and we had to bring in our wood and water past them. Finally Timothy and Eagle, two Indians, came down from Lapwai to take Liza Spaulding home. She was a little girl about my age and had been at the mission at the time of the massacre. She is now living at Walla Walla—Mrs. Eliza Spalding Warren. When Timothy and Eagle saw these bodies lying there unburied, Timothy said to the Indians, "Is this the way you do things here?" The next morning the bodies were gone.

After the massacre a courier, either a French-Canadian or an Indian, was sent down from Walulla to Fort Vancouver with news of the massacre and Mr. Peter Skene Ogden of the Hudson's Bay Company came up to release us. He talked with the Indians for three days. He knew the Indians' ways and tried to secure the release of the women and children without a fight. The Indians finally agreed to sell us, and we were delivered over to the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Walulla (Walla Walla) and then taken down the river in Hudson's Bay Company batteaux to Fort Vancouver. From there we were taken to Oregon City and delivered to Governor Abernethy. We located at Oregon City. We were beggars; all that we had left father tied up in a blanket and carried up the hill.

I shall never forget the parting with Mr. Ogden at the River. Father and mother, in bidding him good-bye, both cried, and I wondered why, but I can see now that they were bidding good-bye to the man who had saved them, their children, their neighbors and their children from savage violence and a bloody and unknown grave. We went up the hill and he went back to his waiting boat.

Mother was confined a few days after we arrived. When she got about again Dr. McLaughlin said to father, "If you want to go back with the volunteers, I will take care of your family." While we were going up to Oregon City we had passed the volunteers at Portland, on their way up the Columbia to chastise the Cayuses: self-armed, self-uniformed and self-paid.—five hundred men. They fought the Warm Springs Indians at The Dalles. The next day they fought the Cayuses. Colonel Cornelius Gilliam, Grandfather of Lane Gilliam, was the commanding officer. He had previously distinguished himself

in the Seminole War. Father joined the volunteers and later brought back some of our cattle.

In April, 1848, we settled on Soap Creek about six miles from Corvallis, Oregon. We left there in March, 1849, and went to San Francisco.

I shall never forget Dr. McLaughlin, a fine old man with long white hair. When I would go down to the store he would say to me in his kindly way, "Little gentleman, what can I do for you to-day?" Dr. McLaughlin was truly the "Father of Oregon." He sacrificed a princely salary, said to be \$12,000 a year, to aid and abet American emigrants coming to Oregon. He was called back to London by the Hudson's Bay Company, which found fault with him for having sent his boats to The Dalles to save poor, naked and starving American emigrants. He instructed his men to supply goods to all needy families. Those who had money could pay; those who did not were sold to on credit, and he charged whatever they got to his own personal account with the Company. It is a regrettable fact that some of the Doctor's debtors, who afterwards came into better fortune, neglected to repay him.

In 1878, I came north from California, and became one of the first settlers in the vicinity of Coeur d'Alene City. Canfield Mountain is named after me. I arrived there the same winter that the troops under Colonel Merriam established the military post, and I took up some land in the vicinity of Fernan Lake. I was also one of the pioneer miners and prospectors in the Coeur d'Alene mining country. Pritchard, Bill Girard and myself went prospecting in the Coeur d'Alenes in 1882.

I had then known Pritchard some five or six years and Girard about the same length of time. Pritchard was a very enthusiastic believer in the theory of evolution, or rather in the doctrine that man evolved from a monkey ancestor. He called his camp on the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River, near Bill Osborne's home, "Evolution." During the season Girard and Tom Irving, who had been prospecting along the South Fork, crossed over the mountains and panned the first gold from Pritchard Creek. They got about \$1.75 from some twenty pans. They then came back to the South Fork. Later I came home. They stayed there and laid the foundation for the great Coeur d'Alene stampede of 1883-1884.

As confirming the earlier Robinson stampede from Walla Walla in the sixties, I might mention that Pete Davis, a miner now living at Republic, Washington, and whom I met to-day at the Halliday Hotel in Spokane, while working on Pritchard Creek below Eagle

City in 1884, found an old prospect hole, evidently dug many years before.

The first galena found in the Coeur d'Alene country was found by Bill Sutherland and Charlie Toole on Sunset Peak while on their way to St. Regis, Montana. The galena ledge had been stripped bare by the elements, so that the ore was exposed to view on the surface. I do not think that they made any location of the ground at that time. This was the first discovery of galena in the Coeur d'Alenes.

Pritchard died some ten or twelve years ago. His favorite reading matter was the "Truthseeker" and Tom Paine's "Age of Reason," and some Kansas newspapers of advanced thought. Billie Whistler was his step-son. The "Widow" claim on Pritchard Creek was so named after Pritchard's wife, Billie's mother. Some Montana and Black Hills men jumped it.

The oldest continuous quartz location in the Coeur d'Alene Country is the Evolution claim, and the Coeur d'Alene Crescent. The Sunset, located by Lake Wolford, was the first location made in the Coeur d'Alene mining country.

Girard died only a year or so ago. In those early days the only settlement between Pine Creek and Government Gulch was at the "Mud Prairie Ranch."

OSCAR CANFIELD.