

ATTITUDE OF THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY DURING THE INDIAN WAR OF 1855-1856

Most writers of the history of the Yakima or Indian War of 1855-1856 have deemed it necessary to discuss to some extent the alleged participation of the Hudson's Bay and Puget Sound Agricultural Companies in this event, to the discredit of both. The usual allegation, briefly stated, is that these Companies, by their acts of omission, if not actual commission, gave comfort to the enemy. One has to go no further than Governor Isaac I. Stevens to secure the typical attitude of most of the pioneers and territorial officials. In two reports—one a message to the Legislature, another a report to the Department of Indian Affairs—Governor Stevens summarizes the problem with the above Companies in a forceful light. In his message appears these words:

“The orders were accordingly given, and all the arrangements made to penetrate the fastnesses whence the Indians sallied forth to spread devastation and death, when a difficulty, which had been felt, acknowledged, and made great cause of complaint from the commencement of the war, assumed an aspect which called for the promptest action.

“I refer to the so-called neutrals in the war, who remained on their claims unmolested, when our patriotic citizens were compelled to live in block houses. There is no such thing, in my humble judgment, as neutrality in an Indian war, and whoever can remain on his claim unmolested, is an ally of the enemy, and must be dealt with as such. These men, I ordered into the towns, giving them their choice of residence at Olympia, Nisqually, or Steilacoom, and on their returning to their claims in violation of orders, I caused them to be put in close confinement at Steilacoom.

“Thereupon, exertions were made to procure their release, which I met by my proclamation placing Pierce County under martial law.

“The testimony of the military officers in the field that their exertions were fruitless to find the enemy till the decisive step had been taken of ordering and keeping in the suspected persons, and that afterwards they repeatedly struck them, and effectively prevented their rallying again, is the best evidence of the necessity of the course taken by the executive.”

In his report to the Indian Department under date of October 22, 1856, the Governor states:

"Again, what is the interest of the Hudson Bay Company? There are unquestionably large deposits of gold, both north and south of the 49th parallel, east of the Cascade Mountains. A road has been made connecting Fraser River with the British interior, and the Hudson Bay Company have established a post in connection therewith on the main Columbia, north of the 49th parallel. This post and Fort Colville were supplied over this road the present year.

"I ask again, what is the interest of the Hudson Bay Company? Most unquestionably to develop the British interior and its mines of gold, and to keep Americans out, which will be most effectually accomplished by yielding to the demands of the Indians east of the Cascades, and making peace by an abandonment of the country.

"I charge no man of that company with collusion with the Indians, but I know what human nature is; it will look out sharply for its own interests, and the interest of the Hudson Bay Company is the same as the Indian conceives to be his interest in that quarter." (Hazard Stevens, *Life of General Isaac I. Stevens*, ii, 229.)

It is quite possible and reasonably probable that some of the superannuated employees of the Hudson's Bay Company living with their Indian wives and half-blood children on claims, were in collusion with Indians on the warpath; but a verdict even unfavorable to the position of these ex-servants can in no way be an indictment of the Company. The Governor's further charge: "I charge no man of that Company with collusion with the Indians, but I know what human nature is; it will look out sharply for its own interests, and the interests of the Hudson Bay Company is the same as the Indian conceives to be his interest in that quarter," although a hypothetical statement, did, coming from a man of unblemished character, carry great weight with the pioneers who have gone the Governor one further and for his suspicions have substituted their convictions: they believed the Hudson's Bay Company actually abetted and comforted the Indians.

The whole truth will never be known.

It is the purpose of this document to place before the reader evidence, much of which has heretofore been unavailable, which will show that the Hudson's Bay Company actually rendered valuable and indispensable aid to the authorities, in many cases freely and without hope of recompense; that they kept the authorities at all times informed of the movements of hostiles within the limits of their observations; and that the fullest confidence was placed in them by the authorities (despite suspicions) and at no time was this confidence dispelled by an overt act.

Several of the letters are republished from a pamphlet entitled "Message of the Governor of Washington Territory," etc. (Olympia, Edward Furste, Public Printer, 1857); others have been printed from the originals or copies thereof which are now in my collection located at room 234 County-City Building, Seattle.

CLARENCE B. BAGLEY.

Fort Victoria

5th November 1852

William F. Tolmie Esq're

Dear Sir

I have barely a moment to inform you that one of our men was this day shot at the sheep station near the north dairy. The poor man was found there lifeless, near the hut, by his associate shepherd, who supposes the deed must have been committed by 2 Cowegen Indians, whom he left at the hut with poor Brown that morning when the sheep were driven out to pasture.

We have stopped the sale of powder.

(Signed)

Very truly yours,

James Douglas

Fort Victoria,

17th Nov. 1853

William F. Tolmie Esq.,

My dear Sir

I now despatch a canoe for the purpose of bringing on any letters for this place that may have accumulated at Nisqually, and I transmit by the same conveyance a letter for the Colonial Office, which I will now thank you to forward by earliest mail as I am anxious it should reach the hands of the Colonial Secretary as soon as possible.

All is quiet here at present, though much alarm is felt by the settlers, for which there is no cause; the murderers have fled to Nainimo, and we propose giving them chase as soon as the steamer arrives here, it being the intention to send a sufficient force to take them wherever they may be found.

The Cowegians appear to regret the untoward event very much, and have sent in word that they will not harbour nor screen the murderers, and will apprehend them if possible.

That is satisfactory provided they keep their promise, which I think they intend to do.

There is no word of the "Mary Dare" or "Recovery" from California, and we are rather anxious for intelligence from abroad.

Please send a few rams for Mr. Langford by the return canoe.

With best wishes,

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours truly,

James Douglas.

(Signed)

Fort Victoria

13th June 1854

William F. Tolmie Esq're

Nisqually, W. T.

My dear Sir

I was yesterday favored with your letter of the 4th June, and the packet, forwarded by Mr. Mason, which he kindly left at Bellevue with Mr. Griffin.

I am of course obliged to you for contradicting the foolish reports in circulation about arming the Stickine Indians to attack the people at Bellingham Bay, though I would not have taken the trouble of doing so myself.

No man in his right senses would ever suppose that the Governor of a British Province would be guilty of the monstrous outrage of arming a horde of savages and letting them loose upon the defenceless frontier of a neighboring and friendly state. The truth is the reverse of that, the Indians arrived here, from Nisqually, exasperated to the last degree about the loss of their chief, and under Providence would infallibly have fallen upon the defenceless American settlements, had they not been opposed in the most decided manner by this Government. I, moreover, sent a message by Mr. Crosbie, a gentleman from Nisqually, to the American settlements on the opposite side of the Straits, warning them to be upon their guard, as I feared the Indians meditated a treacherous attack.

I also last summer supplied those settlements with arms for their defense, which have not yet been returned.

In fact the agis of the British Government has been thrown over them, and to us more than to their own government are they indebted for their present security.

Nothing is known here about the Indian attack upon the inhabitants of Bellingham Bay or who were the assailants. Mr. Mason must look for that information elsewhere, my own anxieties are enough, without intermeddling with matters beyond the range of my duties.

The "Otter" lately returned from Fort Simpson where all was well. The ice ship had taken in a full cargo, and left for San Francisco. That is quite an achievement. "Kennedy" was himself again, and had recovered his vigour of body and mind.

I have since seen Governor Mason at this place and had a very pleasant interview with him.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
James Douglas.

(Signed)

Olympia, W. T.
Oct. 30th 1855

My dear Doctor,

The indian recommended by you to the Company of Capt Eaton, reports to Wm. Poe, that he was with Wm. McAllister & another man when they were attacked by a large party of Indians, & all killed except your guide,

I write to ask what credence you give to this story? do you think the Clickitats have crossed the mountains? & if so what is their probable force?

In a word, let me know your opinion of the matter and also what you would advise to be done, and oblige

Yours Truly
James Tilton
Adjt Gen W. T.

We are very scarce of arms if you can furnish 25 muskets we would be pleased to receive them, as there are about that number of men here without arms.—although 100 Rifles are on the way he from Fort Vancouver

(Signed)

J. Tilton

Office Adjt Gen W. T
Olympia W. T
Oct 31—1855

To Doct W. L. Tolmie
Chf Factor, etc.
Pugets Sound Agri Co.

Dear Sir,

I beg to offer my thanks for your kind letters, and we are exceedingly obliged for the prompt transmission of the gratifying intelligence of Capt Eaton's safety.

Also for your valuable suggestions in regard to a cantonment at Porters & the Snoqualmie pass, which I will take especial care to urge upon Gov. Mason & Gen Wool.

With regard to your sentiments of affinity of blood & interests in cooperating with the British authorities at Vancouver's Island I cordially sympathise; & will avail myself of it, as an element in the formation of plans for the prosecution of the war upon the savage.

Do me the further favor to send the enclosed note to Lt. Nugen, as all the Horses in Olympia are *out*

I am Sir

With the highest respect & esteem

Your Obt Srvt

(Signed)

James Tilton

Adjt Gen W. T.

Head Quarters, Fort Steilacoom,
November 1st, 1855.

James Tilton

Adj't. Gen. W. T. Volunteers, Olympia:

Sir:—I have detained Capt. Wallace's company of volunteers to assist in protecting this port in case an attack should be made. Dr. Tolmie, just in from Nisqually, informs me that one of his shepherds saw a band of some twenty Klickitats just in rear of Nisqually last night.

I have nearly all the women and children in the county at the post, and will of course protect them.

I would respectfully request that all the men in this section of the country be called out, as I am firmly of the belief that we are to have a general Indian war in this vicinity.

Send me down cartridges at the earliest moment, as it is reported the Indians are to make an attempt at taking our fort to-night. This is only a report, but I wish to have plenty of ammunition, and I am rather short just at this time.

With great respect, I have the honor to be,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

John Nugen,

2d Lieut. 4th Inf. Com. Post,

Executive Office, Ter. Wash.,
Olympia, Nov. 1st, 1856. [1855]

Hon. James Douglass,

H. B. M. Governor:—

Sir:—It having been made apparent to us that the Indians inhabiting both sides of the Cascades have a determined combination among their various tribes to make war upon us, and as they have been sufficiently bold to attack us within a short distance of our settlements, I deem it as we are in great need of arms and ammunition, to request from you, sir, what assistance is in your power to afford.

Your known courtesy to Americans generally, and the feeling our people know you entertain towards us, leads me to make this request with the less hesitation. I do it also that it may be made apparent to the savages upon the Sound that the affinities of blood and interest existing between our nations, are always sufficiently strong to bring forth from the one to the other, support when threatened with danger.

If it could be done without serious injury to the affairs of your Hon. H. B. Co., I would deem it an additional service that the arms should be sent here by one of your steamers, as you are aware our settlements are so isolated, the presence of steamers such as yours, may deter attacks which I have reason to think may be made upon one or more of them in a few days.

The presence of a steamer in this part of the Sound will be of great advantage.

The Active and Massachusetts are expected in the Sound in a few days, and the arrival of one of these vessels will relieve us from trespassing further upon your kindness. . .

Such services as you may render, sir, will, I beg to assure you, be most warmly appreciated by the government of the United States, as well as the inhabitants of this territory.

With assurances of my highest respect,

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

Your most ob't servant,

(Signed)

James Tilton,

Ad't Gen. W. T.

Victoria, Vancouver's Island,

November 6th, 1855.

Hon. James Tilton

Adj't Gen. W. T. V., Washington Territory:—

Sir:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from you, dated, "Olympia, November 1st," representing the danger

to which the settlements on Puget Sound were exposed from the inroads of savages, and soliciting aid in arms and munitions for the purpose of defending the country, and repelling the threatened invasion of the Indian tribes.

I most cordially acknowledge the moral obligation which binds christian and civilized nations to exert their utmost power and influence in checking the inroads of the merciless savage, and it is a cause of sincere regret on my part that our means of rendering you assistance comes infinitely short of our wishes.

We are, I confess with sorrow, badly prepared for the exigencies of a state of warfare—there being, at this moment, only one hundred stand of arms in this colony, and those are in the stores of the Hudson's Bay Company.

I have made a purchase of fifty of those (all that can be spared) for your service, and now forward them by Captain Hunt, under consignment to Dr. Tolmie, who will arrange with you about their delivery. I have also secured ten barrels of gunpowder and a supply of hall, a part of which will also be now forwarded by the steamer, "Traveller."

Her Majesty's ship, "President," sailed about a week ago, from this colony, for the port of San Francisco, or I might have procured efficient aid from her commander.

The Hudson's Bay Company's steam vessels are also both absent at this time, or I would instantly have despatched one of them to Nisqually, not of course in the character of a belligerent, but with orders to aid and assist in protecting your settlements against the attacks of savages.

We are hourly expecting the arrival of the steam vessel Beaver, and it is my intention to send her on to Nisqually, with as little delay as possible at this place, and by that conveyance, I will cause the remainder of the ammunition, which the steamer Traveller cannot take, to be forwarded.

The moral effect of the steamer "Beaver's" visit to the Sound will be powerfully felt by the native Indian tribes, and may contribute in some measure, to confirm their wavering loyalty, and to detach them from the general Indian confederacy.

I trust in God, that such may be the event, and have again to express my deep regret, that we have not a more efficient force to send to your relief.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

James Douglass,

Governor V. Islands.

Government House, Victoria, V. I.,
19th November, 1855.

Major James Tilton,

Or office administering the government of Washington Territory:—

Sir:—The Honorable Hudson's Bay Company's steamer, "Otter," having arrived at this fort, and discharged part of her cargo, I have decided on despatching her for the sake of greater expedition, with the remnant of her cargo on board, to Nisqually, and to proceed, should it be of advantage to your cause, as far as Olympia, with the supply of ammunition promised in my letter to you of the 6th inst. Her presence in the Sound will, I trust, convince the native tribes that our warmest sympathies are enlisted in your favor, and that they have to expect neither countenance nor support from Her Majesty's authorities in this quarter.

I much regret that it is not in my power to afford you more efficient assistance, and that the unprotected state of our own settlements, renders it peculiarly unadvisable to dispense with the services of the "Otter" for more than a few days. The natives in this quarter continue quiet and friendly, though evidently powerfully moved in favor of their race, a feeling which may exercise a mischievous influence on their excitable minds, while it constrains us to maintain a vigilant control over their movements.

I have no fears as to the result of the struggle at Nisqually. If the Indians leave their fastnesses, and venture to meet your forces in the open country, they will soon be made to yield the palm of victory, and in any case, destitute as they are of resources, they cannot protract the war beyond a very few months.

Begging to refer you for further information to Captain Hunt, to whom I have fully explained my views,

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your obedient humble servant,

(Signed)

James Douglass,
Governor Vancouver's Island.

Executive Office, Washington Territory,
Olympia, Nov. 23, 1855.

His Excellency, James Douglass,
Governor Vancouver's Island:—

Sir:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 19th inst., with the additional supply of ammunition.

The steamer "Otter" arrived here on the evening of the 21st inst.

I fully concur with you as to the influence her presence here will have upon the tribes within our waters, who may be considered as wavering. The results, however, which have been accomplished by our troops since application was first made to you, have, I think, been sufficient to prevent at least for the present, any hostile movements on their part.

The present emergency is not such as to render the presence of the "Otter" here indispensable, otherwise I should avail myself of any assistance she might be able to render. I am daily expecting the arrival of a steamer at Steilacoom, with additional forces and munitions of war, which must of themselves have an intimidating effect upon the Indians of the Sound.

Permit me again to tender to you my acknowledgments of your cordial co-operation in the present excited state of affairs

I have the honor to be, sir

Very respectfully, your ob't serv't,

(Signed)

C. H. Mason

Acting Governor Washington Territory.

Head Quarters, Puget Sound District,
Fort Steilacoom, Dec. 4th, 1855.

Acting Governor C. H. Mason,
Olympia, W. T.

Sir:—In order that I may be able to acquaint myself more intimately with Indian affairs in this part of the territory, I take the liberty to request that you will forward to me a list of the sub-Indian agents on this side of the mountains, their several stations, and the number of Indians they each have in charge. It will also be of service to me if those agents could be instructed to report to me all changes that may occur at their several posts.

Dr. Tolmie, of the Hudson's Bay Company, has applied to me for a guard of soldiers to protect his stores at Fort Nisqually. As our pack animals are small in number, and nearly broken down, and as the rivers are getting high that we cannot ford them with supplies, it may be necessary to withdraw the troops from the field in a short time, and to distribute them at such points as may most need, and such as have the best claims to protection. In view of such a state

things, and of the case in all its relations, do you think it advisable for me to send a guard to Fort Nisqually?

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed)

E. D. Keyes,
Capt. 3d Artillery, Commanding.

Office Adjt Gen W. T Vols
Olympia W. T
Feb. 19, 1856

Piers Esq
Agt P. S. Agri Co.

I am directed by Governor Stevens of this Territory, to request your aid in procuring men for a Lewis County Company to take the land with a detachment now *en route* for the White River Country. C. C. Pajett of Cowlitz Landing is the enrolling officer.

Knowing your influence with the people of your vicinity or with the Whites or half Breeds W. P. has been directed to confer with you.

In the hope of your assistance in this

I am Sir

Very Resp Yours

(Signed)

J. Tilton

Office Adjt. Genl. W. T.
Olympia W. T.
Mch 2d 1856.

for W. T. Tölmie
Chief Factor P. S. Agri. Co

By order of the Governor and Comdr in chief, I am instructed to inform you that certain settlers—with their families,—whose future continuance upon their farms are deemed incompatible with the public safety or interests.

The Governor desires you to cause these people to be detained at our Fort,— keeping an account of their expenses and making a report of your observations upon them, and any suggestions relative to them you may deem proper. As soon as possible arrangements will be made relative to these people, but in the meanwhile the Govern-

ment here depends upon your assistance in keeping them at Nesqually and seeing that they have no communication with the hostile Indians—

Very Respectfully,

Your Obedt Servt.

James Tilton Adj. Genl.

(Signed)

Nisqually March 3rd 1856

James Douglas Esquire

Dear Sir

I have received your letter by the "Active" with accompanying letter for the Columbia and England which will be duly passed.

I have received from Mr. Mackenzie an account of the silver money lately sent to Victoria. It does not belong to the Puget's Sound, but to the Hudson's Bay Company, as payments to the former body are almost invariably made in gold.

The war with the Indians has been resumed, and there are now about 500 soldiers, and volunteers in the field. Our guard of soldiers has been reduced to five, and I had some difficulty in prevailing on Coll. Casey to leave us any.

I mentioned to Capt. Keyes the charge proposed for the services of the "Beaver" which he seemed to consider reasonable enough. Next day however Lieut. Nugen called to say that the officers were of opinion that no charge should be made, in consideration of their having, at great inconvenience, furnished a guard for the place, the property of a private Company. He added that if we insisted on charging payment would be made, to which I replied that I had never supposed they would object, that I would represent the matter and doubted not, but that it would be as they desired.

The present mail is forwarded by a man named Robinson, who will be entitled to a payment of five Dollars for its safe delivery.

I am Dear Sir

Your very obedt. Servt.

W. F. Tolmie

(Signed)

Nisqually W. T.
15th March 1856

Dugal Mackintosh Esquire

Dear Sir

I have received yours dated Cowlitz 1st March, and shall attend to the instructions therein given as to the selection of articles to be sent across the portage by return of Peers' wagon.

On the Sunday following your departure from this, two white men were murdered by Indians on the south side of the Nisqually, and such has been the alarm since, that I do not at present look for the arrival of any wagon from Cowlitz.

We are all well here. By a recent order of the Governor's all the foreign born white residents on the south side of these plains have been ordered into this place, or Steilacoom, and by the Governor's written request, I am supplying such as are here, with necessaries. The P. S. Co.'s Shepherds having been excepted. Mr. Huggins still remains with his assistants at Muck where three thousand sheep pasture, but all the Indian women, wives of the men herding sheep there, have come to the Fort.

Genl. Wood is reported at Steilacoom with a re-inforcement of 150 Soldiers.

Mr. C. T. Graham's letter of the 28th ulto. has come to hand.

I am Dear Sir.

Your Very Obedt. Servt.

(Signed)

W. F. Tolmie

Nisqually W. T. March 26th 1856

To Colonel Casey U. S. A.

Com.ding Puget Sound District

Washington Terry.

Sir

I learnt yesterday evening that on sunday afternoon, one of the Company's shepherds' (Finlayson) saw and was spoken to by eight Indians on foot, at Muck, near the Cold Spring, a well known locality at the S. E. corner of the plains whence a trail leads through a timbered country to swamps and small prairies on the upper Nisqually.

These Indians are considered to be part of the gang seen at Muck by Smith, and others, soon after the murder of White and Northcraft.

They told Finlayson that last week a train of wagons had been attacked on the Puyallip and the drivers killed, and they warned him to keep at a distance from the woods as there were five hundred Klikatats concealed there.

I do not believe that any but small parties of Klikatats can have crossed the mountains recently, but think it probable that the Indians

from White and Green Rivers may be moving toward the headwaters of the Nisqually. I am Sir

Very Respectfully

Your obedient Sert.

(Signed)

W. F. Tolmie

Fort Nisqually, W. T. May 23d 1856

To Lieut. Colonel Silas Casey U. S. A.

Comang. Puget Sound District W. T.

Fort Steilacoom W. T.

Sir:

In compliance with your request communicated yesterday, that I should report to you particulars relative to the murder of a friendly Indian here on the afternoon of the 21st. Inst. I have to submit the following statement—

On Tuesday the 21st May 1856 at about 2 P. M. as the work people of Fort Nisqually were going out to resume labor after dinner, two young lads—volunteers—passed the Fort, and enquired the way to camp Montgomery of the Indian Bob, or “Saysilloh,” as he was proceeding out to work—about half past two, another volunteer, on foot, dressed in a red Shirt, corduroy trousers, and old felt hat, and armed with a rifle, came from the direction of Packwoods Ferry, and asked the way to camp Montgomery, and also, whether the two lads above mentioned had already passed—and loitering about the Fort a short time after obtaining the desired information he set out on the wagon road to Montgomerys and in a few minutes after, the report of a gun was heard in the direction he had taken, and where the Indian Bob was chopping firewood—

In about three quarters of an hour subsequent to the red shirted volunteer's leaving the Fort Bob was found on the slope of a bank in sight of the establishment, two hundred yards or so from the spot where he had been working, wounded in the back. He had fallen helpless there in his endeavor to reach assistance. In answer to questions he said that he had not been shot by either of the young men he had directed to Montgomery's but stated that he saw a man in a red shirt running across the road from beyond the fence, and within a few yards of him—

Bob, when shot, was chopping, a tree into lengths, inside an enclosed field, and in sight of about a cord and a half of billets of wood lying in three heaps one next the fence and two near the opposite side of the road, but all visible to anyone traveling that way. The spot where he must have been standing, as indicated by the position of the axe, found there by me yesterday morning, is distant from the

east gate of Fort Nisqually, 506 paces in a direct line, and, by the route the said volunteer followed—640 paces. From the fence, where the road adjoins the field, said spot is distant three yards or thereabouts, and in the fence there are spaces between the rails wide enough to admit of taking good aim with a firearm—

Bob it is supposed was wounded about 3 P. M. he died at eight P. M.

Between 5 and 6 o'clock by the sun on Wednesday two White men trading Sheep about 7 miles S. E. of Ft. Nisqually saw a man in a red shirt and hat running in the direction of Muck, but he was too far off for them to distinguish his features—at the P. S. Coys. Farm at Muck sometime before sunset on the same Wednesday a Sandwich Islander and halfbreed Canadian boy at work there, were accosted by a Volunteer dressed in a red shirt, cord. pants, and old felt hat and armed with a rifle, who wanted a horse to ride to camp Montgomery. After dark that night a volunteer named Aaron Lake or Leek dressed and accoutred as above described—reached Mr. Cronons at Thithlow 6 miles from Muck—On entering the house, he said that he was hungry and very tired—that he had lost his way coming from Olympia, and had “walked good 40 miles.” The distance by the road is about 22 or 23 miles. Lake lay down immediately after eating. On seeing his Rifle handled, he stated that it had been recently loaded—On Thursday morning he reached camp Montgomery, where he was placed under arrest for having killed an Indian Prisoner at Olympia—

The deceased Indian “Bob” as is known to many citizens of this county, was a remarkably quiet and unoffensive man—a general favorite. He had been for years employed as man of all work, and occasionally cook by Mr. Thos. Dean—Bailiff for the P. S. A. Coy. at Tithlow about 7 miles from this. On the outbreak of Indian hostilities “Bob” moved to the reservation opposite Steilacoom. He left in course of the winter and returned to Ft. Nisqually through dread of an Indian to whom he had formerly been a slave, and who had recently leveled a gun at him, on failing to extort property. The Indian Agents Messrs. Mcaw (?) and previously, Swan were aware that “Bob” had come to reside here and so also were Colonels Hurd & Shaw of the volunteer service.

I have the honor to be Sir Very respectfully

Your Obdt. Servt.

(Signed)

Wm. Fraser Tolmie

Agent H B Co. & P. S. A. Co.

Fort Nisqually W. T.

Olympia, Washington, Territory,
August 27th, 1871.

Hon. Joseph Howe,
Secretary of State for the Provinces,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Sir:—Although a personal stranger to yourself and not a citizen of British Columbia, yet my residence and interests in Washington Territory make me an interested observer of the policy and progress of that neighboring Province. The relations between the Indians of British Columbia and this Territory are so interwoven that a judicious system of treatment to the British Indians becomes as important to mutual stability as the conducting our own Indian policy wisely and well. Hence it is quite natural that I should feel a lively interest as to who should receive the delicate and very important position of Indian Superintendent of British Columbia. I have been advised that Hon. Wm. F. Tolmie, formerly a long and valued resident of this vicinity, is being pressed by his numerous friends for that position.

To sum up his varied qualifications for that office would require more space than I am at liberty to trespass upon you. How truly it might be said, "He would be the right man in the right place." He came to Nisqually, on Puget Sound, in 1843, and continued there till 1859, when he took up his residence at Victoria. In 1850 he saved our American Puget Sound settlements from the horrors of a general Indian war. In our Indian war of 1855-6 he labored disinterestedly and successfully to avert the horrors of Indian warfare, and to his great influence with the Indians and his intimate knowledge of their character, are our people immeasurably indebted for saving life and property and hastening the restoration of peace. I came to Puget Sound in 1851, the first Federal appointee in what is now Washington Territory. I early made the acquaintance of Dr. Tolmie. In 1855-6 I held the position of Quartermaster-General, and speak the above from personal knowledge. I afterward held the position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs for this Territory, and I know how great had been his influence and how highly he was still regarded by our Indians, and to me he was then most useful as an adviser, to say nothing of the ease of official duty, based upon the healthful influence upon the Indians of Puget Sound by his efficient charge over them for some sixteen years.

Begging your pardon for this seeming trespass,

I am, with great respect,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

Wm. W. Miller.

Olympia, August 31st, 1871.

Dear Sir:—The friends of Dr. Wm. F. Tolmie, I am informed, are asking that he be appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia. Although an American, and strictly speaking without interest in the matter, I cannot refrain from bearing testimony to the truly remarkable qualifications which fit Dr. Tolmie for this position, and which I have had abundant opportunities to observe as an old resident of Washington Territory, as the son of its first U. S. Governor, and having served in the Indian war of 1855-6, and as U. S. Collector for several years. I need not dwell on these qualifications. They are universally known and recognized, and will doubtless be brought to your attention. His great control over the Indians, the respect and esteem with which he is regarded by our people, and his well known ability and firmness, prove him the best fitted to settle those vexatious disputes and difficulties which constantly spring up along a boundary line, and especially so in this instance from the migratory habits of the Indians.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,

Hazard Stevens.

(Signed)

The Hon. Joseph Howe,
Secretary for the Provinces, Ottawa.