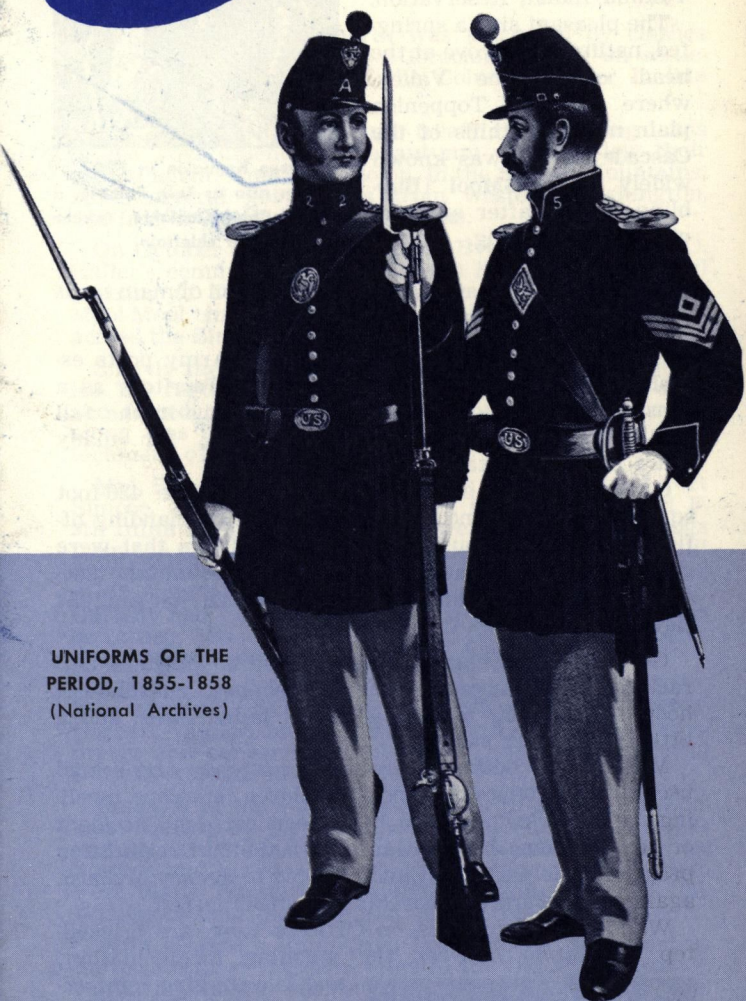


FORT

Simcoe



UNIFORMS OF THE
PERIOD, 1855-1858
(National Archives)

Frontier Army Post, 1856-59
Indian Agency and School, 1859-1923
Yakima Indian Reservation
South Central Washington

Published by
FORT SIMCOE AT MOOL-MOOL RESTORATION SOCIETY
Yakima, Washington

By H. Dean Guie
1965

FORT SIMCOE

Fort Simcoe, advance post of the Ninth Regiment, United States Infantry, 1856-59, and subsequently Indian agency and school, occupies an anciently important tribal gathering place on the Yakima Indian Reservation.

The pleasant site, a spring-fed, natural oak grove at the head of Simcoe Valley, where the long Toppenish plain meets foothills of the Cascade Range, was known widely as **Mool-Mool** (Bubbling Water) after an especially active spring.

The strategic location at the intersection of main trails commended selection by the military.

Fort Simcoe was one of two regular Army posts established in the interior of Washington Territory as a consequence of Indian hostilities beginning in the fall of 1855. The other was Fort Walla Walla, for many years now a hospital for war veterans.

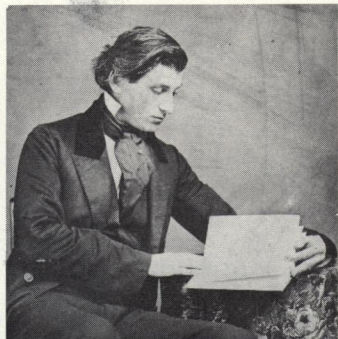
Of the military structures that framed the 420-foot square parade ground, five remain: the commanding officer's handsome house, three trim dwellings that were captains' quarters, and a squared-log blockhouse (several times reroofed and otherwise repaired) on a slight elevation at the southwest approach.

Gone with the years are the lieutenants' quarters, barracks, storehouse, subsistence warehouse, guardhouse, hospital, quarters for servants and laundresses, and a little mule-power sawmill.

Most of the buildings erected for agency and school use, as dormitories for Indian children, employe dwellings and workshops, also have been razed by accident or design—some in accordance with the fort restoration program. The parade ground, planted to agency orchard, again is in sward for marching or strolling feet.

Walls of the quarters on Officers Row are bricked, top to bottom, between the studding, for insulation, and like nogging reinforces partitions. The rooms were heated from fireplaces. Bricks were kiln-baked on the post. Wide-board fencing screened the backyards.

The blockhouses at the easterly approaches are restorations. The mast-type flagpole is a replica for displaying the 32-star style flag flown by the garrison. A log barracks is to be rebuilt and the



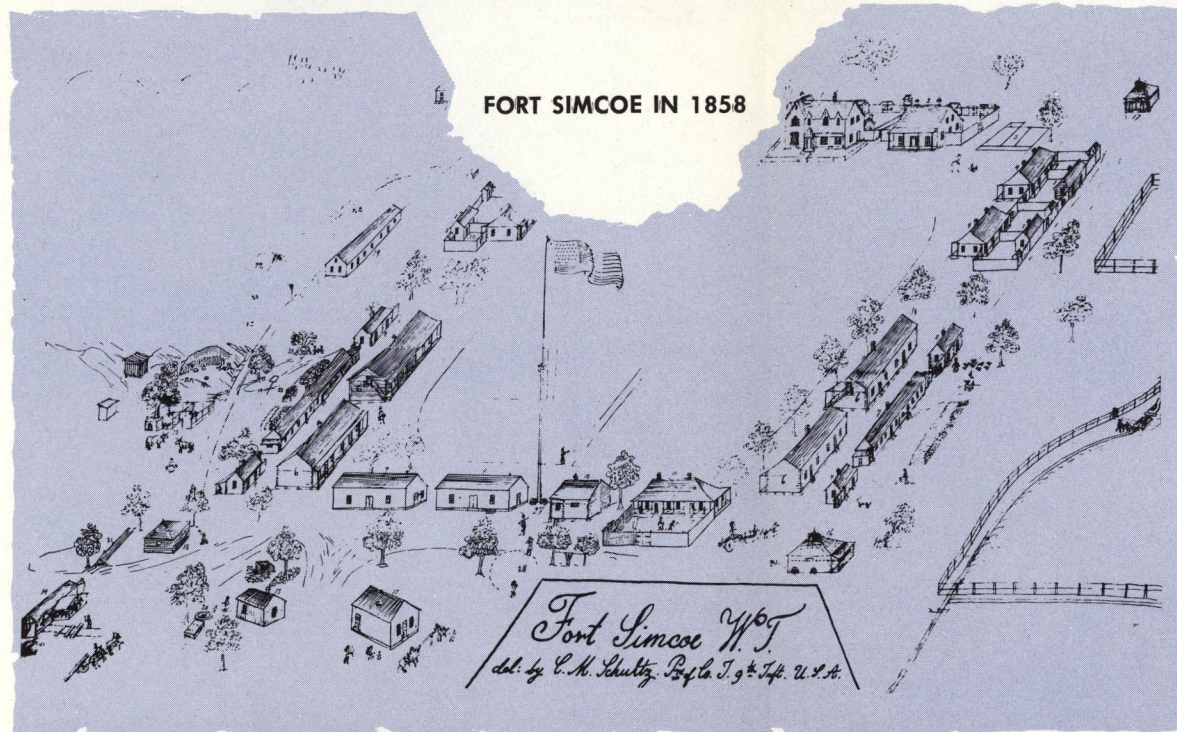
LOUIS SCHOLL
The Architect



Tomeo Kamiakin in 1907, known also as Tesh Palouse, a son of Chief Kamiakin, Yakima war chieftain.

HISTORICAL RESTORATION PROJECT

State Parks and Recreation Commission



Kitchen, Commandant's House

log guardhouse repaired and replaced on its original site near the flagpole.

Louis Scholl, talented German emigre of 1848, employed as clerk and draftsman by the quartermaster at Fort Dalles, Oregon, drew the working plans for Forts Dalles, Simcoe and Walla Walla, and in 1859 for Fort Colville.

"All doors, window sashes, mantels, bookcases, etc. for these far posts (Walla Walla and Simcoe) were transported some by pack mules but mostly by large six-mule wagon trains," he related. For two years, "a pack train of nearly 50 mules moved between Fort Dalles and Simcoe."



REV. JAMES H. WILBUR

The Rev. James Harvey Wilbur (1811-1877), Methodist Episcopal minister and missionary, exerted profound influence on the Yakima Reservation Indians for two decades. To the Indians, whom he ruled firmly, and to the white settlers, he was "Father Wilbur." Large-framed, powerful and fearless, he brooked no flouting of his authority. With his efficient helpmate, Mrs. Wilbur, he dominated the reservation scene. Native of New York, he resided in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, in the 1840's and '50's. In 1860, he organized a school at Simcoe and in 1864 he received his appointment as reservation superintendent from President Lincoln. Under his energetic guidance, the Indians began their progress from the old ways to the new.

* * * *

From rare, torn, contemporary sketch by C. M. Schultz, Pvt., Co. G, 9th Infantry. Missing here are two residences to the left of the Commandant's, part of blockhouse to extreme left, part of lieutenants' quarters. Mule-power sawmill at lower left.

Simcoe, from the Yakima Sim-ku-ee or Sim-kwee (accent second syllable), derives from a saddle in a long ridge north of the fort. Sim alludes to the female waist; ku-ee or kwee is spine, back. Capt. George B. McClellan mapped nearby Simcoe Creek as Simkwe in 1853. Across the Simcoe Mountains, to the south, Capt. Frederick T. Dent, brother-in-law of Ulysses S. Grant, pioneered the Fort Dalles-Fort Simcoe road (65 miles) in 1856.

* * * *

Fort Simcoe Historical State Park—200 acres—at the western end of State Highway 220 was established in 1953 with the assistance of the Fort Simcoe At Mool-Mool Restoration Society. Under 99-year lease from the Yakima Indian Nation, the park is administered by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

There are picnicking facilities — piped water, stoves, tables, benches — in a grassy portion of the extensive oak grove and adjoining a commodious parking area. In another part of the grounds a brick museum contains displays of Indian craftwork and other exhibits depicting the story of Fort Simcoe and the region. The park is open daily the year around.



Commandant's House
Simcoe Photos—James Rayner

AS IT HAPPENED



Col. George Wright, 9th Infantry, chose the location for Fort Simcoe the first of August, 1856, as he was returning from a pacification march through the Yakima and Kittitas valleys to the Wenatchee River salmon fisheries, where many bands were concentrated. Chief Kamiakin, and several others of the war faction, avoided him, but the colonel felt that the Indians generally would remain at peace.

Wright's expedition north was prompted by clashes the previous year and by a ferocious attack on settlements at the Cascades of the Columbia River in late March of '56.

The Yakimas, disavowing a treaty relinquishing lands to the government, in the autumn of 1855 slew their special agent, Andrew J. Bolon, in the Simcoe Mountains, killed several goldseekers from western Washington, and fought Army punitive columns.

On October 6, '55, they tackled Bvt. Maj. Granville O. Haller's command of 104 rank and file at the main trail crossing of Toppenish Creek, a scant three miles from Mool-Mool, inflicted severe casualties and harried it across the Simcoe Mountains.

Shortly thereafter Maj. Gabriel J. Rains, 4th Infantry, led 700 regulars and volunteers up the Yakima Valley and forced the hostiles to abandon the region. Notably along was Second Lieut. Philp H. Sheridan with a detachment of dragoons.

Maj. Robert Selden Garnett began construction of Fort Simcoe on August 8, 1856, with Companies G and F, 9th Infantry. The first quarters were of hewed pine logs from the hills in back of the post. All lived in tents until completion of the first barracks in the cold December of 1856 under the direction of Capt. James J. Archer. Garnett had gone to New York in the fall to claim his betrothed, Miss Marianna Nelson, New York City belle. She returned with him to Simcoe, May 17, 1857.

Writing, April 29, 1858, to a friend in Lockport, N.Y., Mrs. Garnett told of their infant son, Arthur Nelson Garnett, "a nice, fat, happy and healthy child," the "very pretty and conveniently arranged" house and the wild flowers covering hills and fields.

Renewal of the war in the summer of 1858 in the Spokane country by the Spokanes, Couer d'Alenes, Palouses and some Yakimas, who defeated Maj. Edward Jevnor Steptoe and his small force, undertaking a march from Fort Walla Walla to the Colville region, provoked Col. Wright to take the field and smash the combination.

With a large column from Fort Simcoe, Maj. Garnett moved north at the same time to the Okanogan district, capturing, killing or scattering elements charged with molesting parties of miners. A lamented casualty was Second Lieut. Jesse K. Allen, fatally wounded by one of his detachment in a pre-dawn assault on an Indian camp.

Lieut. George Crook, Fourth Infantry, drawn with his Company D from Fort Ter-waw, California, for the campaign, and a veteran of many skirmishes, gives a lively account in his autobiography.

Garnett's column covered 550 miles in 31 marching days. Within a day of reaching Simcoe he received word that Mrs. Garnett and their son, age seven months, five days, had just died of "bilious fever."

The Major accompanied the bodies to New York. Capt. Archer moved into the Garnett quarters and continued in command until the post was transferred to the Indian Department, May 22, 1859.

MAJOR GARNETT

Robert Selden Garnett, Fort Simcoe commandant, was a Virginian and West Point graduate, 1841. In the War with Mexico he was breveted captain and major for gallant and meritorious conduct and was aide-de-camp to Maj. Gen. Zachary Taylor, whom he accompanied to Washington, D.C., for the general's inauguration as twelfth president of the United States. In 1852-54 he was commandant of cadets at the Academy and instructor of infantry tactics. On March 27, 1855, he was appointed major in the newly constituted Ninth Infantry.

Resigning, April 30, 1861, he joined in the rebellion against the United States. Brigadier general in the Confederate Army, he was killed, July 13, 1861, at the age of 41, in the combat of Carricks Ford, Cheat River, northwestern Virginia. Gen. McClellan, namer of Simkwe (Simcoe) Creek, commanded the Union troops. Col. (later Maj. Gen.) Robert H. Milroy, Indiana Volunteers, who saw Garnett fall, became Yakima Indian Agent in the early 1880's and occupied Garnett's old quarters at Fort Simcoe.



MAJOR ROBERT SELDEN GARNETT,
United States Army

