

"HALLER'S DEFEAT"

A Day in the History of our Valley

After the slaying of Indian sub-Agent Andrew J. Bolon by a group of Yakimas, Major Granville Owen Haller, then stationed at the fort in The Dalles, Oregon, was ordered to take two companies (including many recruits) and three officers into the Yakima country. On October 3rd, 1854, Major Haller and his men crossed the Columbia River and headed north. As they came down from the Simcoe Mountains into the Yakima Valley and approached Toppenish Creek (on October 6th), they suddenly encountered a large band of Indians. Soon a full-scale battle was raging. During the night Haller was able to move his troops to a more defensible position. He sent an Indian scout to Fort Dalles for reinforcements.

Fighting went on all day on the 7th, and the Indians increased in number until over 700 were present. Most of the soldiers were using the old "smooth-bore" rifles, but a few had the newer long ranged guns which fired Minie balls. These rifles fouled easily and were difficult to load. Haller's troop also had a howitzer. As usual, at nightfall, the fighting broke off. The Indians by this time were estimated at over 1000. It was obvious to Major Haller that there was no longer any chance for a parley with the Yakima Chief Kamiakin, and the only hope for the hungry, thirsty and weary soldiers to escape with their lives was to attempt to flee during the night. Packs and supplies were burned and unneeded horses were turned loose before the command crept away under cover of darkness. Along the way they took time to bury the Howitzer. The next morning a number of Indians caught up with the retreating soldiers, and a running fight went on for most of the day. The battered and humiliated command got back to Fort Dalles on the 10th. Casualties included five men killed and 17 wounded.

This mural, which depicts the battle, was originally painted on the actual site of the conflict by Fred Oldfield, one of the leading Western painters of the USA. He has recreated the battle on this wall to record a moment of the actual history of the Yakima Valley. For an in depth report of the life of Major Haller, and this specific battle, see the magazine "Columbia", dated Summer, 1988, and published by the Washington State Historical Society. More information may also be found in your public library.

The Toppenish Mural Society is extremely proud to bring you this painting in all its scope, color and authenticity. It is one of a series of historic events of our Valley. The Society wishes to thank Fred Oldfield, the artist, and all the members who contributed so generously toward the completion of our goals.

The Toppenish Mural Society