

War Dept. Letters Rec'd.

Ft. Simcoe, W.T. September 18, 1856. Joseph B. Brown, asst. surgeon
Details the circumstances attending the loss and death of Capt.
Francis L. Bowman, 9th Infy.
503 13'AC0) Oct. 29, 1856.

Fort Simcoe September 15, 1856

Sir:

In obedience to instructions from the commanding officer of the post I have prepared the following narration of the loss of Captain F.L. Bowman.

On the afternoon of the 4th inst. I was directed by Major R.S. Garnett commanding the post to conduct Capt. Bowman, who was in a state of lunacy, to the Dalles. We started on the morning of the 5th about 4 a.m. accompanied by two men of Co. G who were detailed as escort. The Capt. had to be lifted upon his horse as he was suffering considerable from the effects of a severe sprain of the right ankle which he received the night before in pursuing a man ^{whom} ~~when~~ he fancied to be guilty of riotous conduct toward him. Upon leaving camp he immediately pushed through the oak timber instead of taking the proper trail. I followed him directing the escort to proceed on in advance upon the trail. After some difficulty we succeeded in effecting a passage through the oaks and soon found the road. The captain took the lead at a fast gallop for a quarter of a mile when he leaped from his horse saying that he was tired. After waiting for a few moments he mounted again. He would not receive any assistance in mounting from us as he said that his ankle was well now. He proceeded in this way alternately putting his horse to a gallop and then suddenly dismounting for a few moments, till we reached the Thopinish. There he rested some twenty minutes when we proceeded again, after mounting the captain turned directly back and was returning to camp when I recalled him to the proper direction. He had already diverged from the trail many times but always returned immediately when I called him. He went up the steep hill without dismounting, sometimes urging his horse to a trot.

Of course when I reached the top of the hill he was considerably in advance of me. It was now getting light enough to see the trail quiet distinctly and I found that the escort which I had supposed to be in advance had not passed. I accordingly pushed on rapidly and overtook the captain after going about half a mile. I endeavored to induce him to wait for the men but ~~on~~ without avail, his whole mind being absorbed by the idea of reaching the Dalles without delay. I finally succeeded in persuading him to go slowly for the purpose of favoring his horse which was much heated. We proceeded for several miles at a moderate pace the captain occasionally urging his horse to gallop, but always at my remonstrance checking him and begging my pardon for forgetting his promise. He had been hitherto silent and indisposed to converse, but he now told me that he had arranged everything properly, that he had made a signal to his wife, who was now expecting him. He said he had been praying for two hours, and advised me to pray so that I might be able to let my wife know that I was coming. He now commenced to tell me the circumstances of his conversion and call to preach the Gospel to the Indians. He said that he was the Messiah and had received his instructions from Heaven which he had visited in person; he gave me a description of what he saw. He now appeared remarkably well. His eye was gleaming with brilliancy and his countenance was lighted up with an expression so much that he scarcely seemed like the same individual that we had known. He sat erect in his saddle and ~~exulted~~ declaimed or preached at the top of his voice of the glories he had witnessed and of the results ~~of~~ to be accomplished by his mission. Part of his conversation was exceedingly humorous and he laughed very heartily at some of the funny conceits which crossed his fancy. As we were crossing the Top of the Skow mountain he began to urge his horse again from a trot to a gallop. I told him that we were going fast enough to reach the Dalles before dusk and that greater speed would

surely break down our horses. He replied that I did not know; that he must get there by 12 o'clock at noon for the purpose of taking the boat to Portland in order to see and compare notes with the bishop there. But he finally consented to go slow and at last consented to stop; saying he was very tired. I told him ~~xxxx~~ we would stop and rest at the first water which was only about a mile in distance. Accordingly when we reached the little stream just before entering the long woods which extend near the naked knob ~~sf~~ on the Show (or Skow or Snow) mountain to Hamiltons valley I told him that we would rest here and dismounted. He said let us rest for three or four hours. He rode on some thirty yards and dismounted proceeding at a fast walk at once towards the ravine on the right. I caught his horse, dropped the picket rope and loosened the girth so that he might graze and then started after the Captain whom I supposed had gone after a drink of water, or to obey a call of nature. It was certainly not five minutes from the time he went into the ravine until I reached the spot where he had disappeared, but when I reached the creek he was not to be seen. I called to him but received no answer, I continued calling more loudly when still receiving no reply and knowing that he could not possibly be beyond the reach of my voice, I began to feel some alarm that some accident had befallen him. I searched the jungle in the ravine up and down continually calling his name. At last ~~xx~~ thinking that he might have crossed the ravine and gone up the other side I looked for him in that direction. I mounted my horse and crossed the hill on the other side. I rode down the ravine for a mile or more on that side and finally returned and searched the jungle again on foot still fearing that some fit or convulsion had seized him and that he was unable to answer my calls. It was about eleven o'clock a.m. when he left me. I continued the search till nearly 2 p.m. when the men being still behind I left a note directing them to remain there till I

returned. I then rode down the ravine on this side for a mile and then crossed over to the trail, leading to the Dalles on which I almost immediately recognized the print of the heel of the Captain's India rubber overshoes. I followed this trail as rapidly as possible for about three miles when I lost it, he having apparently wandered from the road into the woods. I spent some time looking for the trail and calling for him. I went down to the creek near which it was afterwards found that he had slept that night, ~~xxxx~~ and called along it. Here again he must have been within hearing of my voice. Receiving no answer and seeing no indication of ~~xxxxxx~~ his trail I returned to the road and proceeded towards the Prairie hoping to see him as he emerged from the woods. Then within about a mile of the Prairie I met the expressman Mr. Price who said that the Capt. could not come into the Prairie unless he had left the road on the east. I judged it still advisable therefore to return again to the place where the Capt's track was last seen. With Mr. Price's assistance it was with some difficulty discovered that he had left the trail on the east and we succeeded in trailing him some distance into the woods. As it was becoming to dark to prosecute the search any farther with advantage I returned to the place where the men had been directed to remain. We arrived there about 7 1/2 p.m. and found the men waiting. I directed them to return to Ft. Simcoe in the morning with a note relating the escape of Capt. Bowman to Maj. Garnett. After resting about an hour, taking Mr. Price with me I proceeded to the Dalles for the purpose of procuring assistance from there as soon as possible. ~~xxx~~ The night was intensely dark and our horses fatigued so that our progress was slow but we reached the Dalles at about 8 a.m. A party was immediately sent out from there by Lt. Dissell. One also under Lt. Douglass left Fort Simcoe on the same evening. The party from the Dalles were conducted by Mr. Price to the place where ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the trail was last seen, and by the aid of some Indians they followed it to nearly the

the edge of the woods where they entirely lost it. One of the Capt's overshoes was found where he had slept the first night. The party from the Simcoe had already joined the other party and they together continued the search till their provisions were exhausted when the party from the Dalles under Mr. Lear returned, arriving on Wednesday. Lt. Douglass with his party struck across the Prairie from the Klickitat to the Columbia river above the Dalles and down the river to Fort Dalles arriving on Thursday. On that day another expedition consisting of twenty-six Indians was ~~one~~ organized by Mr. Gibson and on Friday they proceeded to the ground to renew the search. On Friday evening a trail was discovered by one of the Indians on the south side of the Klickitat and on the west of the Dalles road. This was taken up on Saturday morning and eventually ~~led~~ led to the spot where the skeleton of Capt. Cowman lay. The flesh had been entirely eaten off by wolves, tracks of which with signs of the dragging of ~~the~~ the body were very distinct. None of the captains' clothing was discovered although the backtrail was followed quite to the Klickitat. No tracks except those of wolves were discovered near the place where the skeleton was found. It was recognized as the remains of Capt. Cowman by known peculiarities of the teeth; from the cotton remaining in his ears; from the moustache that remained upon his lip, from portions of his hair found, and from the general correspondence of the skeleton ^{his} to ~~the~~ size of the figure. I thought that he had been dead from the condition of his remains, at least three days when he was found and should therefore think that he died not from starvation or exhaustion but from congestion of the brain or apoplexy.

The motives which led to his resolution to escape from me must ever remain a matter of conjecture. His anxiety to reach the Dalles in the shortest possible time, which was his absorbing idea, may have induced him to think that there was little premeditation about it

but that some sudden unaccountable delusion may have induced him to flee as soon as he found that I was not in sight. He had shown no disposition to escape from me before, but appeared to ~~only~~ rely greatly upon my guidance and assistance and therefore I am inclined to believe that his flight was only an instinct, indicating the hopeless character of his insanity.

Very respectfully your Obt. Servt.

Joseph B. Brown

Asst. Surgeon, USA

Lt. Henry Fouglass,

Post adjutant.