

## Indians-Milroy

The decisive manner in which Gen. R.H. Milroy superintendent of Indian affairs in the territory of Washington handled the situation when he learned while in the Kettle river valley in 1873 that Canadian cattle were grazing on the American side of the international border caused a considerable stir in British Columbia, R.B. Milroy, court commissioner recalls.

Gen. Milroy and associates on the trip left the camp on the bluffs of the Columbia river and followed a trail over mountains to the upper portion of Kettle river where Chief Tonasket had a ranch on which he raised cattle and grew wheat and potatoes.

As they came into the valley Gen. Milroy observed that the grass was cropped down close and on making inquiries learned that the Canadian custom officers at the boundary permitted his cattle to graze on the American side of the Kettle river valley and as a result Chief Tonasket and other Indians had to range their cattle farther to the south.

J.A. Sims, Indian agent at Colville had a fine black mare for his wife to ride. This mare had strayed away or had been stolen and Sims later learned that the custom officer had the animal. Sims sent word to the office and asked for the return of the pony but the latter asserted he had bought the mare and it belonged to him.

This incident was also related to Gen. Milroy.

Camp was made for the night at Chief Tonasket's ranch. A big log house for the chief was in the course of construction but the doors and windows were not in as yet. As it was raining the members of the group slept on the floor in the house during the night.

In one end of the room lumber was piled with strips between so it might season. They went to a straw stack and took straw and spread it on the floor and slept upon it. During the night Milroy heard noises in the lumber and concluded it was either rats or mice. When he questioned the herder in the morning he was told the noise was made by rattlesnakes

Sussaplicane was naked except for a breech cloth and a beautiful robe of fawn skin which he wore loosely over his shoulders. Although the weather was hot he wore an exceedingly heavy hat, made from cub bear skin and decorated with bear claws.

After a long talk with the government officials he was permitted to return.

The aparejo, the forerunner of the modern pack saddle was used on this trip. The aparejos when off the horses, stood on the ground like little A tents. A row of them stood between Milroy and Louie Landwall as they slept on the ground at the camp by the lake.

In the morning Milroy was awakened by the cook chopping wood. He was about to call to Landwall when he observed him acting in a peculiar manner. He was drawing his arm from under the blanket as cautiously and slowly as he possibly could.

This Milroy could observe by looking between the aparejos and becoming interested he watched him. When he had his arm outside the blankets he brought it over his head slowly and gathered the edges of the blankets into his hand.

Then quick as a flash he threw the covers off, jumped up and let out a yell. He hastily grabbed a stick and killed a <sup>snake</sup>~~stick~~ that was in the blankets.

Landwall related that in the night he felt something touching the side of his neck and surmising that it was a rattlesnake lay perfectly motionless. The snake crawled into the covers but luckily not next to his body but between the double blankets. The snake crawled into the blanket and coiled on his chest. Fearing to make a move and being sure the rattlesnake would lie there until morning, he lay still and even slept some. He figured to throw the blankets off and the snake with them hence the slow motion of getting his arm out from under the covers so as not to disturb the snake.

After breaking camp at the lake they proceeded down the Okanogan valley. After making a detour around the canyon through which the Okanogan river flowed the trail led down hill toward a flat.

Here they saw a pack horse running hard and coming in their direction. Tin pans and other utensils were flying loose as the horse came in its made run. They caught the horse and found it was loaded with a miner's outfit.

Soon they appeared a Chinaman. He explained that the animal had become frightened and ran away. The Chinaman related his troubles and said he had bought a squaw from Wapato John, an Indian, who lived on the Methow river and paid \$400 in gold for her. The squaw had remained with him as long as he prospected in the neighborhood but when he set out to go elsewhere, she deserted him in the night and went back to Wapato John.

The Chinaman wanted Gen. Milroy to compell Wapato John to give him back the squaw but the general replied that he was not furnishing squaws to anybody. Yakima Herald, January 17, 1837.

## Indians

Among the incidents on the trip through the Okanogan valley with his father in 1873 that stand out in the memory of R.B. Milroy, court commissioner, was the second meeting with Sussaplicane, the Indian sub-chief who was bound and brought to the camp of Osoyoos lake where he refused to come of his own accord.

After catching the Chinaman's runaway pack horse, Gen. R. H. Milroy and the group with him camped on a small stream. An Indian wearing a soldier's coat and cap appeared at camp and was quiet friendly. Milroy thought he discerned something familiar about his features and being curious asked the interpreter, George Harris, who he was. He learned that the Indian was Sussaplicane.

Unlike his actions at Osoyoos lake, the sub chief wished to make friends, not only with the white men but with Tonasket, the chief, Milroy said. He asked to see my father. He had brought his young son with him and after shaking hands with father asked him to take the Indian boy and bring him up with me. Father of course told him he couldn't do that.

Sussaplicane was most friendly and gave me a bow and arrow and a quiver of beaver skin. He showed me his own bow which was so strong I could hardly bend it. Once the sub chief said he shot an arrow through a deer and picked up the arrow 100 feet beyond. Although the Indians had firearms they still hunted with bow and arrow to some extent.

Sussaplicane accompanied us and Tonasket with his followers for several days.

The next camp was in a canyon leading down to Omak lake and as it was cloudy a tent was put up. Indians were around their camp fires after we had gone to bed and were asleep. In the night we were awakened by a rumbling noise in the ground. It was an earthquake.

Indian agent Sims who was slightly deaf woke up and called out, "what's that gene al, what's that?" Then the ground began to shake.

and he said excitedly earthquake general, earthquake, and rushed out of his tent although he was in his July bed clothes and ran past some Indian camps.

The Indians knew what it was as they had felt one in 1872, the year before, but the squaws were scared. The Indians laughed when they saw Sims running. When he heard them he stopped and came back. This was my first earthquake experience.

In going around Omak lake the trail on one side of it led over a hill and down a steep grade. As this was too steep for the pack horses they were taken around by another route while Milroy, his father and others took the trail over the hill. On this hill they amused themselves by rolling rocks over the cliffs.

A large balanced rock resting on three other rocks was known as the devil's teakettle. Milroy persuaded the men to push it over which they did. It raised a good deal of smoke and dust as it first slid and then bounded down the steep incline and landed with a huge splash in the lake.

The camp was made a mile below the lake, Milroy noticed an Indian coming down the steep trail and observed that he made a detour. When the Indian reached camp Milroy asked him why he did not follow the trail and he was told that he went around because a rattlesnake was in the path.

Milroy thereupon ran to the spot, although he already had a double handful of rattles taken from snakes killed on the trip. He carried with him a long knife given him by the post trade at Kettle falls. He found a snake which on his approach crawled into low brush. He got out his knife, crawled in after the rattler and struck at it when it coiled, but the brush was so thick he could not get at the snake nor could it strike.

At a pause the rattlesnake made a quick move and disappeared into the thicket. On returning to the camp the Indian told him he shouldn't fight the snake with so short a weapon as a knife. He had to promise his father not to do that again.

He learned from this incident that Indians do not kill rattlesnakes.

## Indians

They say: "Leave them alone. They will leave you alone."

Several days were spent at the camp. Sussaplicane made arrows for Milroy by taking green shoots of bushes. After skinning off the bark the Indians straightened them by heating them in hot ashes. Some were pointed with tips made from metal hoops of barrels and others were pointed by charring the points of the shafts. Feathers were put on the other end with sinew.

While at this camp Milroy observed how the Okanogan Indians worship. They were Catholics and Chief Tonasket had a crucifix at the far end of his tent. He saw 50 or more of them come to the chief's tent, kneel in a circle and say prayers as translated by the Catholic priests. These prayers included the Lord's prayer.

Gen. Milroy had heard that a dreamer, a member of the San Poll tribe had much power over the Indians and so arranged for a meeting with him. He learned the history of the first dreamer and how he gained power over his followers:

The dreamer was well along in years at the time. The Indians were dancing one night, probably fortified with whiskey when the Great dreamer appeared and told them the Great Spirit was angry with them because they were wicked and commanded they should stop their wild dance and be good. This had been revealed to him in a dream he said. The Indians laughed at him and kept on dancing, more wildly.

After further useless remonstrance the dreamer said in leaving that the moon would be blotted out and they would fall dead if they did not heed the great spirit. He told them he would not come back to warn them again and they would have to come to him and so returned to his tent.

He had foreknowledge of the occurrence of an eclipse that night and could watch the moon through the hole in the top of the tepee.

When the eclipse began the Indians noticed it and came to the dreamer. They begged him on their knees to have the great spirit

bring the moon back.

The terrified Indians were willing to promise everything and begged and prayed to him to have the moon come back and save them.

It was a full eclipse. The dreamer watched the moon and when the eclipse was complete he told the Indians that the great spirit had heeded his entreaty and the moon would soon appear. After that he had great power over the San Poil Indians.

Near Omak lake the present dreamer and his followers had started to build a church. The walls were up and done but the roof was not on. The meeting with the dreamer was to be held in this building and the dreamer one side of it covered with brush for shade where his followers were to sit.

When the Okanogan Indians observed this they covered the other side so that would be shielded from the sun. When all were assembled Gen. Milroy addressed the dreamer and said he heard he had five wives and therefore was not as good as he professed to be. The dreamer then spoke, saying he had one wife and wanted to be friendly and dilated on his goodness, but denied he had more than one wife.

Gen. Milroy then turned and told him if he was as good as he professed to be he was all right and would be a good leader of the people. At the next camp Gen. Milroy was shown a squaw that the dreamer had beaten. She was one of the Indian's five wives.

Elias Nelson, Yakima Morning Herald, January 24, 1937.

At the next camp after leaving the place where the council was with the Indian dreamer, the men with Gen. R.H. Milroy on a trip through the Okanogan country in 1873 experienced some tense moments when 200 Indians in war paint came to his camp early in the morning raising a din with their hi-yking.

In going to the camp at which this occurred the group passed down the Nespelem river where a Frenchman who had married a squaw had a farm and a vegetable garden. The general and his men were glad to get the vegetables which the Frenchman gave them.

R.B. Milroy and his father arrived at the place a little ahead of the pack train. He noticed a young deer which the Frenchman's daughter had raised and petted the animal while his father talked with the squawman.

Suddenly the deer threw up its head and listened for it heard the noise made by the packtrain coming downhill far away. Almost instantly the deer bounded away, cleared fences and that was the last he saw of it.

The next night they camped on a small stream on a bench above the Columbia river. A runner was sent to the chief of the San Poil Indians asking him to come to the Columbia river for a conference. The courier brought back word from the chief that if Gen. Milroy wanted to see him he should come to his camp for he could not step out of the lodge to meet him.

Gen. Milroy then dispatched a courier to tell the chief that if he did not come he would have Gen. Davis send a force of soldiers to bring him. The runner returned bringing word from the chief that he was too old to come himself but would, the next morning, send his talker and some of his warriors to meet him.

When the general and his men were at breakfast the next morning mounted Indians were heard yelling war whoops as they approached. After stopping

for a few minutes on the other side of the stream and continuing to ky-yi they came dashing up to the camp and halted abruptly every one of them armed with a rifle.

The white man and the two Indians took in the menacing looks of the 200 Indians who carried rifles and had war paint on their faces. One of them dismounted and Gen. Milroy went to meet him.

"Things do not look good for me for Gen. Canby and some of his men had been murdered by the Modoc Indians in Southern Oregon the year before and some of the San Poil Indians were in the Modoc war which had closed but a short time before," Milroy said. "The herder, who was a Canadian Indian, George Harris, the interpreter Louie Landwall, the packer and the Indian cook thought we were in for trouble.

"We had only two guns with us, The herder had a Hudson Bay gun and Sherwood the former agent had an army musket which he had cut off to the length of a carbine so he could carry it across the saddle when mounted on his horse.

"Sherwood saddled his horse when he saw the band of Indians approaching, tied it up in the brush back of the camp and sat down with rifle in hand in readiness to mount his horse and escape if a fight should ensue.

"The cook got out the biggest knife in the cooking outfit. Father advanced with the interpreter and Landwall beside him. Both these men had knives in their belts and shifted them forward so they could grasp them easily.

"Father carried a heavy cane for he had been injured in the hip in the civil war. The Indian who dismounted was the official talker who did the talking for the San Poil and for the chief. On a previous occasion when Sherwood the Indian agent held a council with the San Poil tribe he had talked at great and glowing length of the valor of his warriors.

"Sherwood, becoming alarmed, had leaned back with his elbow on the ground and rested his head against his hand, so the Indians said the talker had talked the white man down. This Gen. Milroy knew. The talker wore a beautiful robe and had beady, black eyes.

"When coming up to the talker, father extended his hand but the Indian folded his arms, brought his robe close around his neck and shook his head.

"Father then began to speak with both hands not uttered more than half a dozen words when the talker extended his arm upward and said "You Stop. I talk."

"With startling quickness father grabbed his robe and robe at the throat, getting some flesh as well, shook him and at the same time shifted his hold on the heavy cane to the middle and raised it ready to strike with the head if the Indian said anything more.

"Error came into the beady eyes of the talker and just then we could hear the click of the hammers of the rifles as the Indians cocked their guns and crowded forward, waiting for the command to shoot. An Indian in the line shouted, 'You stop, Go away. Don't frighten my Indians. He was the dreamer in the San Poll tribe.

"When the interpreter told father what the dreamer said he told him through the interpreter that if he did not keep still he would knock him off his horse, tie him up like a sack of wheat, take him to Walla Walla and put him in irons.

"Father then proceeded to talk and was not interrupted. He talked for an hour, telling the talker that his band of warriors could do nothing against the white men who were as numerous as the sand while the Indians were as the leaves that had dropped to the ground from the sage brush. He said 'Gen. Davis as Portland could send

thousands of soldiers if the San Poils made trouble. Then he told them the policy of the government with the Indians. At the end of the talk the Indians left, crestfallen and without any show of bravado."

After the Indians had left Gen. Milroy broke camp and went to the Columbia river where there was a ferry, nown as the Three Sisters, somewhere between the mouths of the Nespelem and San Poil rivers.

The ferry was built years before by miners but no one was in charge. They found Chinamen miners had butchered a steer, jerked the meat and hung it on the ferry boat to dry. Chinamen had to gather up their meat and the ferry boat was pried into the river, for it was partly up on the bank.

While they were at the river the talker appeared, accompanied by five Indians. He was friendly and shook hands with Gen. Milroy. He said he was ashamed of his actions at the camp in the morning that his tongue was tied and he could not speak them, but promised to come to Olympia and bring the chief with him.

While at the river Sherwood shot with his Springfield rifle across the river. The first shot was a little wide of the clay pillars because he had not gauged the wind right, but the other shots hit the pillars and the flying dust could be seen. This impressed the Indians who admitted that their rifles could not shoot that far.

As a result of Gen. Milroy's visit to the Colville Indian reservation additional territory was taken in to the west of the Okanogan river for Chief Moses and his followers. He recommended that the agency be established at Nesplem but as the position of superintendent of Indian affairs was abolished then within two years this was not done. However the agency at Ft Colville was enlarged. Many years later the agency was established at Nespelem--Yakima Rep Herald, January 31, 1937. Elias Nelson.

To meet up with a rattlesnake was almost a daily occurrence for R. B. Milroy, court commissioner, when as a boy he was on a trip through Eastern Washington with his father, Gen. R.H. Milroy in 1873, and the first two days journey after crossing the Columbia river on the Three Sister ferry were not wanting in such experience.

The ferry had dried out somewhat while partly up on the bank and so leaked when shoved into the stream, thus requiring some calking. Two trips were made to convey the party across the river.

After climbing to the plateau above the river, the trail divided. Sherwood, the herder, the cook and Landwall went back to Ft Colville while Gen. Milroy, Sims, Harris and young Milroy headed southward across the Big Bend country toward Wenatchee and Kittitas valleys. For this trip, an Indian guide was engaged.

Considerable time had been consumed in breaking camp where the talker and his 200 warriors had made an early morning call and in crossing the Columbia river, so the group did not get far on the plateau that day.

At day they camped at a spring and as they stopped a snake was heard as it crawled into a patch of brush. The sky appeared threatening so they put up a tent close to the brush, but no guy ropes were used and the sides were merely pegged down.

In the morning when they took the tent down the rattlesnake was found near the tent. It had lain during the night so close to the spot where Milroy had slept that he could have reached out and touched it. He killed it and added the rattles to his collection.

Resuming the journey Milroy rode ahead on the trail toward Grand Coulee. As he galloped along he heard a snake rattle and his pony jumped at the same time. He got off to kill the reptile. The snake crawled into a sage brush so he hacked away at the bush cutting pieces of it off until he finally cut the dead rattler in two with his long knife.

When this was done he noticed that his horse had its head down and on closer examination saw two blood spots close together on the animals legs where the horse had been bitten by the rattler.

The Indian guide was the first to come up and at once said it was a snake bite and told Milroy to take the saddle off and turn the horse loose for it would die.

"I was not going to let the pony die without some effort to save it but took the saddle off," Milroy said. "When the others came up they held up the horse's leg, built up a cone of black gunpowder on the spot where the fangs of the snake had cut into the flesh, put some wet powder around it and then burned the dry powder.

"They heated a frying pan and held it close to the wound to scorch it further. As they did so, green stuff oozed out. We had some goods along to give to the Indians, including tobacco, so the men chewed tobacco, made a poultice of it, put it over the wound and bandaged the horse's leg. We then went on and as I could not ride the pony I rode behind Harris.

"That night we camped in Grand Coulee. I knew Sims had a bottle of whisky with him for he had taken a nip from it each night before going to bed so I begged for some of it to drench my pony. He let me have a little and I poured that down the horse's throat. The pony was in great pain and would not eat.

"The next morning the horse's leg was swollen big. However, I rode the pony and as it could not go fast, I started ahead of the others. At one point the trail led through tall reeds that resembled a canebrake. There ahead across the trail I saw what appeared to be a piece of old white whitish limb of wood.

"As I looked I noticed it moved, so got off the pony quickly and ran ahead to see what it might be. The object was a rattlesnake

the biggest I have ever seen, but it crawled quickly into the reeds and I did not get it.

"We went out of Grand Coulee and soon dropped into Moses coulee. There we came upon an Indian camp at Moses lake and the interpreter told us it was Chief Moses and a part of his band that were breaking up camp to go to the Columbia river.

"We traveled along with the Indians and camped near them on the Columbia river. The place was opposite Wenatchee but a considerable distance below.

"That night as we sat about a camp fire Chief Moses came over to talk with us. He wore a beautiful tanned deerskin coat, the outside of which had been treated in some manner so it was white. It had a collar and cuffs of fluffy fur.

"Chief Moses was a big man, even bigger than my father who was more than six feet and he seemed like an English lord except for his Indian complexion.

"We asked him where the Indians came from. He said far from the north and in a great multitude, for that was the Indian legend. He said bands of them stopped and remained in valleys that pleased them and so the migration continued far to the south.

"Knowing that he had five wives I asked him how many children he had. He began to count on his fingers several times over on his two hands and then said: 'I do not know.'

"Chief Moses was an Okanogan Indian. His father made trips east of the Rocky mountains to hunt buffalo and get into fights with the Sioux and Blackfoot Indians. He and six sons were killed by those Indians but whether Moses was with them and escaped or was at home, I did not learn." --Yakima Herald, February 7, 1937.

Indians obtained their red war paint from an outcrop of cinnabar southeast of Wenatchee, R.B. Milroy learned when on a trip through eastern and central Washington with his father, Gen. R.H. Milroy in 1873.

As they came out of Moses coulee Milroy observed a red spot far up on a mountain side and wondered what it might be. On asking the Indians with Moses he was told Indians went there, scraped up the material and kept it to cover their faces when on the war path.

Milroy saw the deposit again 10 years later when passing through the region and described it as decayed or oxidized cinnabar, the ore of quick silver.

On the morning after the camp fire visit with Chief Moses the party crossed the Columbia above the mouth of the Wenatchee river. This was done in an Indian dugout canoe big enough for several persons with some baggage. The crossing required several trips.

The men and their luggage were taken across the stream readily but the horses had to swim the river. The party had already been out a month and both pack and saddle horses had become accustomed to following the bell mare.

Harris took the bell off the mare and crossed to the west side of the river. He hid in the brush on the opposite side of the stream and the other men crowded the horses down to the water's edge. Harris began to ring the bell and although the mare was with them the horses were so accustomed to go where the bell was heard that they went into the water and swam across.

Having crossed the Columbia the party forded the Wenatchee river and proceeded to the present site of Wenatchee. Freer and Miller had a trading post there so the men stopped and talked with them.

"The wind was blowing from the east side of the river and I sensed an odor which seemed familiar, Milroy said. "I asked one of the traders

what it was and he said the ledge of rock on the far side of the river was full of rattlesnakes. The snake odor always came with the wind from that direction.

I learned years later that when the Great Northern railroad built its line through the snake infested rocks the contractor blasted out thousands of rattlesnakes.

We asked the traders if they felt the earthquake a few days previous and they began to tell us of the one in 1872 which was more severe. They said the earthquake of that year jarred off a part of a mountain, damming the Columbia river and leaving trees from the west side on the east side. This was near Entiat.

Heading for the Kittitas valley the party took the Naneum trail which led across the Peshastin mountains and came out east of Naneum creek which is joined by Wilson creek and flows into the Yakima river. This trail was situated far east of the present Blewett pass road and was much shorter. It was a direct route to the Kittitas valley. A camp was made in the mountains for the night and an early start in the morning soon brought them a full view of the Kittitas valley.

The Naneum trail was an old Indian trail and I have been over it several times since, Milroy said. When coming out of the timber we had a beautiful view of the Kittitas valley for it was a clear, bright morning.

We saw several houses on a ranch where Jack Splawn had a trading post called Robbers Roost. I talked with Jack Splawn in later years and he told me this was his post. It was east of the present site of Ellensburg, near where the town of Kittitas is now situated.

Over the west side of the Yakima river we saw three ranch houses near Manastash creek. We did not go near Splawn's trading post but took a course rather to the eastward to strike a wagon road which led along the

valley down the east side of the Yakima river. We saw the dust raised by a horseman in the distance but that was the only sign of people we observed.

As we came down into the valley thousands of prairie chickens rose and flew up the valley. Continuously as we crossed the valley the immense flocks of the birds rose and winged their way toward the upper part of the valley. I had never seen so many prairie chickens in all my life. There must have been a million of them for flocks were in the air as far as we could see.

The wagon road which was little more than a double track led to east of Moxee. In leaving the valley we met Kittitas winds which raised clouds of dust. Half way to Moxee we met a whiteman with a team and wagon but did not stop to talk with him for the wind was blowing hard and the dust was worse.

We reached the Mortimer Thorpe place in the lower Moxee near the river and camped there for the night. We had heard coyotes many nights on the trip but never such a full chorus as here. They gave us a good serenade that night.

Not more than three houses of settlers were in sight in the Moxee district as I remember and all were near the river. We talked with Thorpe who had settled there in 1861, 12 years previously. He later moved to the Kittitas valley/

Thorpe was massive, broad shouldered, big boned well muscled and six feet tall. He was formerly a sea captain and had a ship chest and made his own calendar. He had this calendar tacked on the inside of the lid of the chest.

He was a stern man and when he didn't like a person he didn't like him.

The next morning we forded Yakima river and passed through the old town then known as Yakima City, but now Union Gap. There were two mercantile stores, two or three saloons and a blacksmith shop. The

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The Barker grist mill was there and water to run it was taken out of the Antanum creek. The mill burned down later.

Yakima City was then a thriving village. There was no Ellensburg and no towns were in the lower valley. Settlers were in Moxee, Parker bottom and the Antanum and Wenas valleys and J.B. Nelson with others were in the Lower Naches. Cattle raising was everything with the first settlers and big stock raising companies had thousands of cattle on the open ranges.

We did not stop in the old town but proceeded to Ft Simcoe. Father Wilbur and his wife, who had been to a Methodist conference in the Willamette valley had persuaded my mother to come with them to meet us at Ft Simcoe so when we arrived we were greeted by mother and my younger brother who was with her. They had come to the fort just a few days before--Yakima Herald, Feb. 14, 1937.