

Priest Rapids.. (Walla Walla..Snake River. (Going upstream) 1811  
Alexander Ross, Adventures on the Oregon.

On the 12th (August 1811) ..which suddenly terminated in two huge bluffs  
one on each side of the river exactly opposite to each other. The river  
between these bluffs lies right south and north. The banks of the  
river then become low with sand and gravel and the plains open full to  
view, particularly on the east side.

Close under the right bluff issues the meandering Walla Walla  
a beautiful little river lined with weeping willows. It takes its  
rise in the blue mountains already noticed. At the mouth of the  
Walla Walla a large band of Indians were encamped....

...The men were generally tall, raw-boned and well-dressed having  
all buffalo robes, deerskin leggins, very white and most of them  
garnished with porcupine quills. Their shoes were also trimmed  
and painted red; altogether their appearance indicated wealth.  
Their voices were strong and masculine and their language differed  
from any we had heard before. The women wore garments of well dressed  
deerskin down to their heels, many of them richly garnished with beads  
(higuas) and other trinkets leggins and shoes similar to those of them  
men. Their faces were painted red. On the whole they differed widely in  
appearance from the piscatory tribes we had seen along the river.

The tribes assembled were the Walla Wallas, the Shaw  
Haptens and the Cajouses, forming altogether about fifteen hundred  
souls. The Shaw Haptens and Cajouses with part of the Walla  
Wallas were armed with guns and the others with bows and arrows.

The names of the principal chiefs (in order of the tribes)  
Tummatapam, Quill-Quills-Tuck-a-Pester and Allowcatt.

The plains were literally covered with horses of which there could not  
have been less than four thousand in sight of the camp.

On the 13th Tummatapam would not let us go till we had breakfasted  
on some fine fresh salmon. He told us he would be at



the forks before us.

....The Walla Walls ..are low and the country agreeable...After passing three islands we arrived at the forks late in the evening and there encamped for the night.

The crowd of Indians assembled at that place was immense and among the rest was our friend Tummatapam, the Indians smoked danced and chanted all night, as usual, while we kept watch in turn.

(The forks of the Columbia and Snake river)

On the 14th early in the morning what did we see waving triumphantly in the air at the confluence of the two great branches (Snake and Columbia) but a British flag hoisted in the middle of the Indian camp, planted there by Mr. Thompson as he passed with a written paper laying claim to the country north of the forks as British territory. This edict had interdicted the subjects of other state from trading north of that station; and the Indians at first seemed to hint that we could not proceed up the north branch and were rather disposed to prevent us by saying that Koo-Koo-Sint, meaning Mr. Thompson, had told them so, pointing at the same time to the south branch as if to intimate that we might trade there. The chiefs likewise stated that Koo-Koo-Sint had given them such and such things and among others the British flag and they should not see his commands respected; but that if Mr. Stuart would give them more than Koo-Koo-Sint had done then he would be the greater chief and might go where he pleased.

.....

#### Junction

At the junction of the two great branches of the Columbia the country around is open and very pleasant and seems to be a great resort or general rendezvous for the Indians on all important occasions. The southern branch is known as by the name of Lewis' river the north by that of Clarks in honor of the first adventurers (The Snake river was named in honor of Captain Lewis but Clark's name was applied not to the Columbia itself as Ross would here indicate but to the northern tributary which



is still known as Clark's Fork.)

At the junction of their waters Lewis River has a muddy or milk and water appearance and is warm; while Clark's River is bluish, clear and very cold. The difference of color like a dividing line between the two waters continues for miles below their junction. ... The most important fishing place on the Columbia after the Long Narrows is here, or rather a little below this, towards the Umatallow. Yet although the salmon are very fine and large weighing from 40 to 60 pounds, they are not taken in the immense quantities which some other countries boast of.

A Columbian fisherman considers it a good day's work to kill 100 salmon whereas at the Copper-Mine River a fisherman will kill 1,000 a day and a Kamchatkan, it is said, will kill with the same means 10,000 a day.; but if these countries can boast of numbers, the Columbia can boast of better quality and larger size.

(Scheming) ..

The only European articles seen here with the Indians and with which they seemed perfectly contented were guns and here and there a kettle or knife; and indeed, the fewer the better. They require but little, and the more they get of our manufacture the more unhappy they will be as the possession of one article naturally creates a desire for another, so that they are never satisfied.

In the afternoon the chiefs held a council at which Mr. Stuart and myself were present. It was then finally settled that we might proceed up the north branch and that at all times we might count upon their friendship. This being done Tummatapam came to our tent, smoked a pipe and took supper with us; and as he was going off Mr. Stuart presented him with a suit of his own clothes which highly pleased the great man.

Tummatapam is a middle-aged man, well featured and of a very agreeable countenance and what is still better, he is, to all appearance a good man, was very kind to us and rendered us considerable service; but



the other two chiefs appeared to take precedence of him in all matters of importance.

On the 16th we left the forks and proceeded up the north branch which to the eye is as broad and deep here as below the forks..

About 12 miles up a small river entered on the west side called the Hyakema (The Yakima which joins the Columbia about ten miles above the forks.)

.....here three Walla Walla Indians overtook us on horseback and to our agreeable surprise delivered us a bag of shot which we had left by mistake at our encampment of last night,

a convincing proof that there is honesty among Indians.

..On the 17th we were paddling along at daylight. On putting on shore to breakfast, four Indians on horseback joined us. The moment they alighted we set about hobbling their horses, another to gather small sticks, a third to make a fire and the fourth to catch fish....

...Soon after passing the Hyakema a long range of marl hills interrupts the view on the east side of the river. Here two dead children were presented to us by their parents in order that we might restore them to life again and a horse was offered us as the reward. We pitied their ignorance and made them a small present and told them to bury their dead.

As we advanced along the marl hills, the river inclined gradually to the Northwest. After a good day's work we stopped for the night near a small camp of Indians who were very friendly to us. Here and there we were to be seen on small eminences burial places. The dead are interred and a few small sticks always point out the cemetery.

On the 18th we reached the end of the marl hills. Just at this place the river makes a bend right south for about 10 miles when a high and rugged hill confines it on our left. Here the increasing rapidity of the current gave us intimatio that we were not far from some obstruction ahead and as we advanced a little under the brow of the hill a strong and rocky rapid presented itself in the very bend of the



of the river. Having ascended it about half way we encamped for the night.

### Priest Rapids

Here a large concourse of Indians met us and after several friendly ~~harangues~~ harangues, commenced the usual ceremony of smoking the pipe of peace, after which they passed the night in dancing and singing.

The person who stood foremost in all these introductory ceremonies was a tall meager middle-aged Indian who attached himself very closely to us from the first moment we saw him.

He was called Haqui-laigh which signifies doctor, or rather priest.

And as this personage will be frequently mentioned in the sequel of our narrative we have been thus particular in describing him. We named the place Priest's Rapids after him. (It still goes by the name of Priest's Rapids.

The name of the tribe is Skamoynum-acks; they appear numerous and well affected towards the whites.

From the Priest's Rapids in a direct ~~line~~ line by land to the mouth of the Umataallow, the distance is very short, owing to the great bend of the river between the two places.

The Priest's Rapid is more than a mile in length and is a dangerous and intricate part of the navigation. The south side, although full of rocks and small channels, through which the water rushes with great violence, is the best to ascend.

On the 19th early in the morning we started but found the channel so frequently obstructed by rocks, whirlpools and eddies that we had much difficulty in making any headway. Crossing two small portages, we at length however reached the head of it and there encamped for the night, after a very hard day's labor under a burning sun. From the head of Priest's Rapids the river opens again due north.

The ground is here everywhere full, covered with flat stones and



indeed elsewhere, the rattlesnakes are very numerous. At times they may be heard hissing all around, so that we had to keep a sharp lookout to avoid treading on them, but the natives appear to have no dread of them. As soon as one appears the Indians fix its head on the ground with a small forked stick around the neck, then extracting the fang or poisonous part, they take the reptile into their hands and put it into their bosoms, play with it and let it go again. When anyone is bitten by them the Indians tie a ligature above the wounded part, scarify it and then apply a certain herb to the wound, which they say effectually cures it.

On the twentieth we left Priest's Rapid and proceeded against a strong, ripply current and some small rapids for ten miles, when we reached two lofty and conspicuous bluffs, situate directly opposite to each other, like the piers of a gigantic gate, between which the river flowed smoothly. Here we stayed for the night on some rocks infested with innumerable rattlesnakes which caused us not a little uneasiness during the night.

From this place due east the distance in a direct line to the marl hills left on the 18th is very short. At the southern angle of this flat is situated the Priest's Rapid which we left this morning. Course north.

Early on the 21st we were again on the water.

....on the 23rd... Both sides of this place are rocky and in no part of the Columbia is the view more confined. A death-like gloom seems to hang over the glen.

This rapid which is called Kewaughtohen after the tribe of Indians inhabiting the place who call themselves Kewaughtohenemachs is about thirty miles distant from Priest's Rapid.

Having got clear of the rapid early in the day we proceeded on a smooth current for some little distance when the river makes a short bend nearly west. Here on the south side were observed two pillars on the



the top of an eminence standing erect side by side which we named the Two Sisters. (The two sisters according to the native legend were two wicked women dwelling here who were in the habit of killing passing voyageurs. In answer to the prayers of the Indians for relief the Great Spirit sent an immense bird to pick out their brains and in turn turn them into stone. The modern name of the place is Column Bluffs. )

They proved to be of limestone and at a very little distance very much ~~so~~ resembled two human figures. From the top the Two Sisters the river turns to the north again where once more we had a sight of the open country.

On the west the hill are clothed with woods but on the east side the plains are bleak and barren. On a beautiful green spot near a small Indian camp we put ashore and passed the night.

Priest..

Here the priest, for the reader must know he had still followed us, introduced us to a friendly Indian called Machykeuetsa or the "Walking Bear. This gray-headed little old man made us comprehend that he had seen eighty-four winters or snows as he expressed himself. He looked very old but was still active and walked well.

On the 24th we embarked early and soon reached the mouth of Piccow's River (Still known as the Pischou and also as Wenatchee river.) ..here the Indians met us in great numbers ..Sopa the chief made us a present of two horses and others offered some for sale We purchased four, giving for each one yard of print and two yards of red gartering which was so highly prized by them that horses from all quarters were brought to us but we declined to buy any more

Our six horses were now delivered over in charge of the priest who was to proceed with them by land.



On the 27th.... we passed a small but rapid stream

(Name)

with the Indians called Tsill-ane (modern Chelan river.) In meeting with some Indians we put ashore and the priest with his horses joining us, soon after, we passed the night together.

..... comet. O comet. great spirit...  
On the first of September, 1811

fort Okanogan..

We embarked and descending the Oakinacken again, landed on a level spot within a half mile of its mouth. Here we unloaded, took our canoes out of the water, and pitched our tents which operation concluded our long and irksome voyage of 42 days.

(Fort Okanogan whose founding is here described was the chief interior post of the Pacific Fur Company. When the North West company succeeded to the property of the Pacific Fur company Okanogan became its principal post of deposit for the entire region. The Hudson's Bay company, absorbing the North West company in 1821, maintained the post until 1859, when it sold out to the Americans and confined its activities to the Canadian side of the border.)

The mouth of the Oakinacken is situated 600 miles up the Columbia and enters it through a low, level plain a mile wide. This plain is surrounded on all sides by high hills, so that in no direction does the view extend far....

Priest...

Soon after the tent was pitched the priest arrived with his horses all safe. In the course of the day Mr. Stuart missed his timepiece which had been stolen out of the tent. A general search was made and the watch was found by hearing it strike, although concealed under the dry sand in the face of the bank. The theft was traced to the holy man, the priest, which circumstance greatly lessened the high opinion we had formed of him. On this discovery being made he was paid for his services and dismissed.....