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Head Quarters, Fort Dalles, O. T.
Oct. 16, 1855

G. O. Haller
Capt. 4th Inf. & Vt. Maj.

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Enclosures

Report of the Operations of the
Troops of the Yakima Expedition

Received: Oct. 17th 1855
Recd. (Vancouver) Nov. 16, 1855

1st Sheet

Head Quarters Fort Dalles, O. T.

Oct. 16th 1855

Sir:

I have the honor to submit a detailed report of the operations of the troops under my command, since leaving Fort Dalles, giving an account of the reception of the troops by the Indians in the Sim-poo-ah Valley, and the causes which induced me to hasten back to this post.

The Command marched from the north bank of the Columbia River on Wednesday the 3rd inst. The accompanying paper marked A gives a tabular statement of the force which accompanied me.

Lieut. Dearing, 4th Inf., found after marching, that he had received an injury, and reluctantly returned to the fort on the recommendation of the doctor. On Saturday afternoon the 6th the troops crossed the mountain range and descended into the valley of the Sim-poo-ah without (sic) having seen an Indian.

On advancing to the stream in view, we met a very fresh trail of a large band of horses, which came into ours and conducted us, perhaps designedly, to the point selected by the Indians to give us battle. The stream, I understand, is known among the Indians as the Top-pin-ish and corresponds in position very nearly with the Pisco of Gov. Stevens "Preliminary Sketch of the Northern Pacific Railroad," distant from this post about 56 miles. At the stream, our trail led down an exceedingly long hill stopping (sloping?) towards the north with alternately steep then gentle descents until we enter the river bottom, but on the right and left of our trail the sides were almost perpendicular. This hill is called (As-sim?). The stream came from the west and bending northward, passed near our hill, while on the other side of it and near it, the bluffs rose above us and afforded a fine view of the action to the lookers

on. On our right stood a ridge shaped like a wedge, sufficiently elevated and near to enable the Indians to pick off our soldiers. Beyond the ridge, the land was elevated and presented a bluff edge for a long distance along the stream. About a mile to the north on the west side of the Top-pin-ish, the land sinks into a level plain which extends to the north perhaps eight or ten miles.

As the advance guard were about to enter the bottom land from the last terrace of the As-sim an Indian chief suddenly appeared on the left bluff, and harangued his warriors who replied from the brush with the war whoop. The advance guard was drawn in and the troops deployed as skirmishers. When the rear closed up, the action began. The great mass of warriors were seen moving about in the brush; a few crept up on the small ridge to our right. Lieut. Gracie's howitzers threw a few spherical case shot into the brush and alarmed the supports to the attacking party of Indians. Sergt. Roper of "C" Compy. with a small party in our front descended the trail to skirmish with the Indians, but his party failed to support him and he received two wounds in his arm. Capt. Russell on the left sent some of his men down the brow of the hill, under Sergt. Lohasty, to drive them from the brush. At this point he met with a spirited fire, when the Indians fell back, and his men gained the bushes. On my right Corpl. McGervey of "C" Compy. led a small party of skirmishers over the ridge to drive the Indians off, which he did successfully, having killed one Indian while in the act of shooting a soldier. The enemy, ~~was then seen~~ ~~to be assembling~~ ~~in great numbers~~ ~~from the~~ ~~plain before us~~ ~~and clouds of dust in the distance showed more were coming.~~

~~That was the time~~ during this time assembling in great numbers from the plain before us, and clouds of dust in the distance showed more were coming. The ridges on our right and left were now full of warriors, who were slowly gaining our rear, which induced me to strengthen the rear guard, at all points the enemy were kept at bay, when I directed Capt. Russell to take his company into the brush and drive the Indians before him. This he did in gallant style. The warriors retreated and after a sharp fire from the bluffs, the enemy gave up the field. Our loss were one killed and seven wounded.

The surrounding heights rendered this stream an unsafe camp, hence the Command advanced down (north) the stream until it passed out of the brush and ascended the heights on the left bank. While advancing on the hill we distinguished the voices of Indians talking, and heard their horses neighing near us, therefore we halted to avoid an ambush, but posted each soldier to guard against a night attack. Two Indians rode into our camp, supposing it to be their own and were only detected by their headdress, when fired upon. Next morning one of their horses lay in the camp killed by our fire. The Indians kept up their parley to a late hour but finally withdrew from their position. The Command lay on their arms all night and obtained little rest or sleep.

#At daylight I perceived the ground on which we lay was most capable of defence, although destitute of water, wood or grass, and apprehending a severe struggle made the necessary arrangements for it.

The key to our position was some small knolls on the summit of our hill. These extended from a point in the northwest towards the north, also from that point towards the east. In the east a bluff used by the Indians as a grave yard, afforded shelter to a small party who guarded that side. Our ground sloped gradually towards the north, until it met the prairie, or plain. a few of these knolls fortunately afforded shelter to a party guarding the north. Our lines extended over a circle of about 400 yards diameter.

The Indians were in motion at an early hour and poured out in swarms. The point of rendezvous seemed to be a wood fire near our lines,

Pencil note: Oct. 7

in front of Captain Russell's position which was on the west side. As the numbers assembling became very great, Lieut. Gracie advanced his howitzer and threw a spherical case shot among them, which created considerable consternation. The enemy then scattered and took up their respective positions, surrounding us on all sides. There were then 600 or 700 Indians in view, occupying the heights beyond and overlooking us, or in the plain in the north or in the brush in the east. These are the supporting parties who in case the enemy falls back, charge them in the retreat. During the entire day fresh parties were seen approaching from the hills on the north side. Clouds of moving dust could be discerned far to the north and squadron after squadron poured into the plain before us, until sundown. The numbers probably had doubled.

As soon as the Indians had reconnoitered our position after surrounding us early in the morning their skirmishers advanced stealthily from cover to cover. They were armed with good rifles, had plenty of ammunition, and fired accurately.

The soldiers were ordered to conceal themselves until the enemy arrived sufficiently near to give the musket shot effect. This enabled me to economize our ammunition and in a measure make our shooting more certain. The enemy opened their fire on Captain Russell's front, but the men being covered, they produced no impression. When another party approaching the skirmishers on the south side advanced so near as to disable some of them, a charge of the bayonet conducted by Acting Master Sergeant James Mulholland of H Company and Corpl. H. Ganuy of I Company drove off these, and during the remainder of the day, they contented themselves with a fire at a distance. The enemy then approached on the north side, and here during the day they kept up a continual attack, relieving their skirmishers frequently. In the early part of the attack Lance Corpl McIntosh and Private Wilson of I Company with small parties charged and drew the Indians from their position, which during the day made them extremely cautious in their approaches, still they kept up their fire at this point until the close of the

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action. As evening approached it was observed that great numbers of the enemy occupied the bluffs on the opposite side of the stream, as if resolved to keep us during the night from the water. As night came on, the arrangements were made to descend to the water, the advance and rear were marched on foot, ready for action. It was necessary too that my command get some rest and the force before them was entirely too great and too active to relax in the strict watch that has thus far been kept up. Retreat seemed to be the only means left us to save the little band from entire destruction, accordingly after reaching the water without opposition the command turned for the mountain pass and advanced with caution. Unfortunately the guide who accompanied us was not qualified for the duty and lost the road. This caused the rear guard who kept the old trail by which we entered the valley, to separate from us. As soon as we found the main trail, I ordered the guide to proceed after the rear guard and bring them to us. Having at 2 o'clock in the morning reached a grove of fir and built two fires as beacon lights for those in the rear and as cook fires for the hungry soldiers. I learnt here that the howitzer carriage had become unserviceable and could not be pulled further, so had been abandoned, but the piece itself was packed and brought up. We rested here until the dawn of day. As soon as it was light we perceived the roads in the valley filled with Indians hastening after us. On packing up and mustering our force, we found that more than thirty of our men were absent and a large number of animals had not come up. With the glass, I scanned the valley in all directions in hopes of seeing signs of our absentees, but everywhere

I found Indians hastening towards us. Before

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leaving, the guide joined us and reported that he had failed to find the guard. We then had about forty men to protect the wounded and our remaining animals, and with these we proceed on our march, having burned up everything about to be abandoned. We had not proceeded far when found the enemy in considerable numbers had already gotten to our rear to oppose our march. As soon as the firing commenced, the rear guard deployed as skirmishers, and I availed myself of this moment while the enemy watched the guard, to dispatch the Indian, John, to Fort Dalles, on my private horse, as most likely to take him through. The letter however had been written the morning before, as the date indicates, and before the vast numbers, which poured in from the north, on Sunday, had made their appearance. For six or eight miles the enemy attacked us with great spirit and a running fire was kept up. On the march, the mule carrying the howitzer was much distressed from want of food and its heavy weight, and gave signs of failing. The saddle too turned and it was with great difficulty brought on. Seeing a cluster of bushes near at hand, I gave the order to cache it.

The men behaved with great gallantry and energy, and kept the Indians so far off as to do but little damage, only wounding two men. Having found a narrow strip of timber making out into the prairie, which left a comparatively small piece of wood to be guarded, I moved the command into it, and allowed my weary soldiers a halt. The Indians after carefully reconnoitering on all sides, tried to burn us out, by firing the grass in the prairie and wood, but our counter fires gave them little hope of success. They then approached us in the woods and endeavored to pick off our men. By four o'clock p. m. they had obtained good positions and were doing some execution.

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Capt. Russell who commanded this flank proposed another charge, and getting a few more men, I hastened to join him, when the charge was made and the Indians were driven completely and thoroughly out of the woods.

They did not return to molest us, but contented themselves by starting a dozen or more of large fires in the woods beyond the prairie in various directions around us, as if to impede our progress through the woods, by fires, or to expose us to their aim in passing through. During the halt, the animals were fed upon flour and the men supplied with as much bread and sugar as they could (carry?) thus consuming as far as practicable the few rations. The camp was too much exposed to the view of the enemy to destroy the provisions by day, and thus expose the extremity of our distress. Nor would it do to burn them at night, yet on marching it was found necessary to mount as many men as possible as their strength was gradually failing and during the night another separation might thereby take place. Accordingly the animals were taken for the use of the troops, and a few sacks, principally of pork was abandoned. After getting beyond the fire of the enemy, the troops were all mounted and soon after daylight in the morning we reached our second night's camp where we found our rear guard in safety, and halted to rest. The accompanying paper marked B, will show the list of the killed and wounded during these three days fighting, viz: 5 killed and 17 wounded. It has been found that some of our men were twice wounded, although they are reported as simply wounded.

About sundown the troops resumed their march to Fort Dalles. On the way, Lieut. Day's Comp L, 3rd Artillery, which had promptly

responded to my call, was found encamped, and, there being no occasion for his advancing farther at the time he returned with his company. The whole command returned on the 10th instants.

It is painful to reflect, that after my little command has fought successfully, in the three days, against great odds, and brought off all its wounded, buried the dead, and preserved its ammunition, it will still suffer the imputation of a defeat. The losses of public property are considerable, and I feel that I am answerable for it. There may be and doubtless will be, doubts in the minds of many whether I have taken sufficient pains to preserve the public property, and particularly the howitzer, and for this reason I respectfully request that a court of inquiry may be convened by the general commanding the Dept. of the Pacific to examine into the facts and report their opinion.

I cannot speak too highly of the officers, including Dr. Hammond, who accompanied me. I feel very much indebted to them for their cordial cooperation. There being but two with me, besides the Doctor, and being engaged constantly, I found it necessary to rely on Capt. Russell and his company in the more critical position and keep Lieut. Gracie with his howitzer, thus leaving many parts of the defense to non-com officers. Capt. Russell gallantly maintained his trust on all occasions. Lieut. Gracie had several opportunities to fire his howitzer with effect and produced much consternation, after which they watched the howitzer and retired from the point to which it advanced.

Dr. Hammond was attentive to the wounded and bestowed every care which our position would permit. He also found opportunities to shoot, and on four occasions there is little doubt but that he killed and wounded his mark.

The non-com officers behaved most gallantly. The list of wounded speaks well of them. Both of my non-com staff were wounded. Sergt. Rowland Cotton of K Company, acting sergt. major, was shot through the left hand, and though wounded, lent me every assistance in his power. Subsequently, he discovered an enemy's ball in his breast pocket, which had indented itself in one of his rifle balls and lodged there. Sergt. James Mulholland of H Company, the acting quartermaster sergeant, was wounded three times, the last was fatal and he fell at the final charge on the Indians, which drove them off for good. From the first meeting of the enemy this non-com officer's conduct was conspicuous and distinguished.

Both the 1st sergeants of the companies set an example of bravery which reflects the highest credit upon them. Both were wounded. Two lance corporals also were wounded. The men behaved with courage and energy, particularly after they had become accustomed to the war whoops and the crack of the rifle. In regard to the enemy before us, it is due to them to say that they fought with a courage far beyond my expectations, and continued their efforts with (without?) intermission for such a protracted period as to suggest most unpleasant ideas. It is proper perhaps to express my convictions that the conduct of the enemy was the result of frequent successes, and perhaps a part of those successes may have been the overthrow of Lieut. Slaughter's command.

I am sir, Very Respectfully,
Your Obt. Servant,
(Signed) G. O. Haller,
Capt. 4th Inf. & Bt. Maj.
Com. of Expedition.

Lieut. Henry C. Hodges, 4th Inf.
a a a G to Head Qrs. of Dist.
Fort Dalles, O. T.

Dalles of the Columbia, O.T.

November 19, 1855

War Dept. Letters Ev. '54-58

To His Excellency Gov. George G. Curry

Governor of Oregon Territory

Sir:

In obedience to your order I took up the line of march for the Yakima country on the 3d instant. On the evening of the 7th I arrived with my command in company with the U.S. troops under command of Maj. Rains on the southern edge of the Yakima valley and encamped on the Simcoe River. On the morning of the 8th I detailed Cap. Cornelius with twenty-fivemen from his company "C" and ten men from each of the other companies and directed the Capt. with his command consisting of about sixty-nine men to follow up the valley for the purpose of reconnoitering the enemy and to driven in their stock if found in that direction.

The remainder of the command proceeded over the valley in the direction of the main Yakima on which I encamped for the night with U.S. troops in advance. During the day the rear, comprising Capt. Hembree's Co E and Capt. Hayden's Co G found it necessary to encamp some four miles in the rear of the main body by reason of the inability of a sick man, who was carried on a litter, to proceed further.

Note:

(Hembree killed from ambush on small patrol following year about where Alfalfa is located)

My command was thus separated into three detachments. Shortly after I had formed my camp Maj Rains then about two miles in advance dispatched to me an express with information that he had discovered the Indians on the bank of the river opposite his command. I immediately ordered out Capt. Bennett with about forty of his company and about twenty four Co F under Lieut Conner and with them proceeded up the river to where I found the U.S. troops engaged in firing for the purpose

of dislodging some Indians who occupied the brush bordering the other (sic) on the eastern side of the river. After a slight delay in finding a ford we succeeded in crossing, the Indians in the meantime retreating to a high hill. We pursued them charging up the hill, the Indians firing at us a few shots during the ascent and then deserting their positions. We gave them pursuit over very difficult grounds but were compelled to relinquish our efforts to come up with them as there fresh horses were much superior to our own. Lt. Sheridan of the U.S. Army with some ~~xxxxxx~~ twenty dragoons together with a few other persons promptly followed us over the river and up the hill. The enemy continued their retreat to the summit of a mountain, immediately to the northeast of the hill, while we retraced our course to the crossing of the river but found it too deep and rapid. In the attempt unfortunately two of the U.S. troops were drowned. We retired to our camp after dark where we were presently joined by Capt. Cornelius and his detachment. The capt. reported that he had been engaged by a superior force of the enemy for the last half of the afternoon that two of his party were severely wounded and one slightly and that several of his horses were injured during the engagement. The conduct of Capt. Cornelius and the men under his command was highly creditable to themselves. They doubtless inflicted considerable injury upon the enemy and brought into camp two head of cattle they had captured and retained during the fight.

On the morning of the 9th we moved in direction of the Gap in the range of hills through which the Yakima and are known as the "Two Buttes." Capt. Cornelius, Hembree and Bennett with their respective companies proceeded in advance and rapidly drove the Indians from the plains and brush which skirted the river to the position they had

3-¹wo Buttes, Expedition, correspondence, Volunteers

previously attempted to fortify on the buttes. A sergeant was sent back for the howitzers to dislodge them, as the main butte was too steep for horses to scale. Lieut Piper and Day of the artillery came promptly upon the ground and fired a few shots but such was the elevated position of the enemy that the shells could not be thrown to reach them. The whole command in due time having arrived an encampment was formed at the base of the buttes. Major Haller and Capt. Auger with their companies and a large detachment from the volunteers nobly charged up the hills. The enemy with their accustomed prudence expended a considerable amount of ammunition at a very respectable distance at this force, and quickly fled down the opposite side. At dark our fires were blazing upon the summit of the butte which the Indians had occupied but an hour before. The position of the enemy had selected was a strong one. They numbered about 300. With but little resolution they might have maintained their stronghold against our whole force, but it was wrested from them without the slightest injury to the assailants. During the night the enemy occupied the butte but with diminished strength. In the morning they were driven off. Capt. Embree of Co D and two companies of Infantry under Capt. Walling and Russell. (sic) This time however the enemy was less fortunate as two of their number were killed at the base of the hill. I had detailed Maj. Armstrong with the company of Capt. Hayden and a portion of Company C under Lt Hannas (? difficult to decipher) to pass through the gorge and deploy to the left under the butte so as to surround and cut off the retreat of the enemy. Owing to some inexplicable mistake this detachment did not follow the maj. but charged up the river, leaving a gap for the enemy to escape. During this day detached parties scoured the plains in various directions having slight skirmishes with Indians and at night drove into camp on the Atanham, considerable stock. This night our

4-Two Buttes Expedition, correspondence, Volunteers

encampment was two miles east of the mission. As the Indians had evidently abandoned that section of the country, Maj. Ains was apprehensive they had congregated in the neighborhood of Natches (crossed out and Nisches inserted) pass to attack Capt. Maloney's command which was believed to be approaching the Yakima country through that pass.

(additional concerns rest of expedition, burning of mission, burning of Kamiakin's house, references to, deep snow, difficulties of returning to the Valles and

"...I am satisfied that the resistance offered by their force at the pass of the Two Buttes was merely for the purpose of gaining a little more time to accomplish the remote removal from the Yakima country of small scattered portions of their stock...

"We have routed and dispersed them wherever they could be found. We have taken some of their stock, principally wild mares and colts about one hundred head of which were shot by my orders as they were ~~perfectly~~ perfectly useless to our men and could not be guarded at night without mounting guard with the whole company at once for that purpose

The few cattle which have been found were also ~~wild~~ wild and have been killed for the purpose of subsistence of the command.

..."We returned from the Yakima by the trail which Maj. Waller effected his retreat. I took some pains to examine the position which he had occupied in his defence and saw ample evidence of his having been surrounded by the enemy in very good force. The only matter of surprise is that he escaped with a single man

J.W. Nesmith, col. commanding O.M.V.