

Fort Simcoe

From P.I. July 7, 1907.

North Yakima, July 4- One of the prettiest spots in the state of Washington and certainly one of the richest in historical interest is Fort Simcoe, seat of the Indian agency of the Yakima reservation.

The old fort still stands weatherworn and somewhat dilapidated but full of memories for the early history of the territory.

It is associated not only with the history of the Indians wars but also with that of the civil war.

Among the first troops stationed there was a detachment of Virginia (4 Co's) 8th Infy (Army) cavalry under the command of Maj. Garnett and at the outbreak of the civil war these soldiers with their commander at their head marched overland and joined the confederate army. Garnett and many of his men fell fighting before the army of Gen. Milroy. The major's body fell into the hands of the federal troops but was returned to his people under a flag of truce. Not long after this Gen. Milroy was appointed Indian agent at Simcoe. 1882

The fort was established as a military post in 1856 and was constructed under the direction of Maj. Garnett but in 1860 ~~1860~~ 1859 it was turned over by the war department to the Indian department.

The first agent of whom there is any record was A. J. Bolen who in 1855 was agent for the Yakima Indians and stationed at Vancouver Wash. Just prior to the establishment of the fort Bolen (BoLond) heard that there was trouble and dissatisfaction among the Indian and determined to make a personal investigation, with a view to remedying any just cause for dissatisfaction that might exist. Bolen traveled alone by way of the Dalles across Indian trails and held a council with the Indians of the valley at the place where Fort Simcoe now stands. Unfortunately for Bolen and for the historians, what passed at this council never will be known for Bolen was murdered

by Indians on his way back to The Dalles.

The murder of Bolen was followed by other crimes. Several miners and prospectors were killed in the Yakima valley and the news of ~~Bolen~~ these murders reached the governor of the territory who made a demand on Chief Kamaikum and the chiefs of other tribes supposed to be harboring the murderers that the guilty men should be delivered up and similar outrages stopped. The demands and continued robbings and murders of whites with the result that the Indian war the Indian war of 1856 followed (missing The Indians refused to comply with these demands.)

The visitor to Fort Simcoe today who notes the beautiful old oak trees--transplanted from ^{England} England, garnled but rich in foliage--the handsome residence of the Indian agent the bit Indian school and other buildings finds it hard to believe that fifty years ago the country was the scene of savave crimes and bloodshed. Now the Indians are prosperous and happy. They have valuable allotments which they either farm themselves or lease at good rentals to whit⁴farmers and savage warfare is as far from theminds of the Yakima Indians of today as it is from the minds of the white settlers in their midst.

Few of the Indians who took part in the troubles of the early days are living although several of them who are friendly to the whites and acted as scouts and guides for the American soldiers are still to be found on the reservation. Old Chief Spencer, who acted as guide and scout for "right", Sheridan and others is alive and in fairly good health. He has a comfortable home on the reservation. Poor Spencer's services to the whites were ill repaid for his first wife and her children were thought to belong to the hostiles by a party of volunteers and were murdered by their captors. Later Spencer married again and has several sons, one of whom is to have charge of the Indian sports at the state fair this year.

The material for the construction of the best of the old buildings and for the fort itself was brought around the Horn and up the Columbia river

to the Dalles from which point it was brought along the trail over the Simcoe mountains by pack horses and mules. The records of the office show that during the 50's and 60's there often was a very limited supply of provisions especially in the winter time. and a good deal of hardship resulted to the officers and men stationed at Fort Simcoe. It cost \$5 a day for each cayouse (copy*Packing stuff from the Dalles to the Fort and not only were provisions short but money also was scarce, people in the service often obliged to wait months for their pay.

The first mill constructed in Washington territory, this side of the mountains, was a grist mill erected at Simcoe, which together with a sawmill constituted the first industry of the place. The mill was condemned and torn down in 1892.

R.H. Lansdale was the first Indian agent permanently located at Fort Simcoe, but he was suspended ~~for~~ or dismissed in 1860 for reasons unknown. He was succeeded by W.B. Gosnell, Indian agent for the territory of Washington who remained in charge for several months until A.A. Bancroft was appointed in 1861.

A.H. Wilbur (copy) was superintendent of instruction under Bancroft and became agent at the expiration of Bancroft's term in 1864. He was known as Father Wilbur, being a minister of the Methodist persuasion. According to the records at Simcoe Wilbur got into trouble in 1869 and was dismissed and Lt. James A.M. Smith, United States army was detailed to take charge. The lieutenant remained as acting agent until January 1, 1871, when Wilbur was reinstated and continued as agent until 1882. (Army policy change)

Just what was the trouble with Father Wilbur does not appear on the records but it is evident that he was eventually exonerated, and otherwise he would not have been reinstated.

After the expiration of Father Wilbur's long term R.H. Milroy was appointed

to the agency and shortly afterwards was succeeded by Mr . Burns . Agent Burns was dismissed after a few months service and Special Agent Charles D. Jackson took charge until the appointment of Thomas Priestly of Wisconsin who held the post until July 1, 1887 . Following Priestly was W.L. Stabler who served a few months in 1890 then resigned and was succeeded by Jay Lynch, the present agent to the end of the unexpired term of four years .

Maj. Lynch was succeeded by L.T. Erwin now a police magistrate in Alaska and who continued in office until 1897 when Maj. Lynch was again appointed in 1902 the agency was placed under superintendence under the civil service and Maj. Lynch was appointed superintendent without being required to pass the examination . Maj. Lynch has had no serious trouble with the Indians during the administration although he has had to face considerable opposition in regard to the allotment of land and opening of the reservations ^{customs}

During the major's administration the old tribal ~~questions~~ customs have been broken up . The medicine men have ceased to be a power among the Indians and the introduction of irrigation systems has made the Indians self supporting .

The major is assisted in his work by Mrs. Lynch who is an enthusiast on the subject of Indian life and history and who is one of the best ~~authorities~~ authorities in the state on these subjects .

Fort Simcoe

Indian agency

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The citizens of Wapato propose to make an effort to have the city chosen for the future site of the office arguing that Wapato being the center of the reservation is the most logical place for it.

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Extracts taken from an old letter. The ancient fort. Personal mention.

Fort Simcoe was built during the trouble with the Indians and is therefore interesting and historic.

Block houses with their loop-holes where the soldiers were occasionally called upon to do shooting. The mansion for the agent and his family was built in 1857 and cost \$60,000. Most of the materials used in its construction were brought around Cape Horn.

It was originally planned and used by the general commander of the forces and I strongly suspect by the generous number of closets and cupboards that he must have had feminine assistance.

It is large and room (copy) and in old colonial style with semi-gothic front has latticed doors and windows and spacious veranda. The entrance from gate to portal is embowered with grapevines which are very old and heavily weighted with fruit.

They make a very pleasing and delightful outlook and furnish a refreshing shade as do also the fine old oaks which form the grove surrounding the fort.

The business office, council room and postoffice are in one building. Here the assiduous agent (our wellknown Jay Lynch) and Mr. Chas. Lombard his capable clerk hold forth.

It has been the custom to name the Indian children just what the parents or any powerful influential person thought fitting consequently in some families there is no family name and Abe Lincoln, Stick Joe and Calvin Hale might be brothers which is decidedly confusing and the government desires to abandon it if possible.

^Very nice farms are seen in all directions with heavily laden orchards and plenty of horses and cattle; some of the fences are both ingenious and ludicrous.

Though the area of the reservation is quite large 40 by 60 miles and containing 800,000 acres there is not more than 50,000 acres of arable land.

Much of the country is mountainous and lack of irrigating facilities renders other parts untillable--The Yakima Herald, September 13, 1911.

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—THE YAKIMA HERALD
September 13, 1911

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An acetylene gas plant of three hundred lamp capacity is to be installed at Fort Simcoe to light the agency buildings there.

Bids are now being called for by the department.

There has just been completed at Fort Simcoe, at the agency, a mess cottage which cost close to \$9,000 and which is a very fine and comfortable building.

The installation of the gas plant is the next big piece of work to be undertaken. The selection of the method of illumination was made at Washington and provision is made for future growth in the agency demands, the plant to be installed to be sufficiently strong to furnish the light which will be needed for some years to come.—The Yakima Herald, November 11, 1911.

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Old Burials

(Mystery-t. Simcoe)

Old routes.

The skeleton of a man was gathered together Monday by Coroner Fred Shaw and is now nicely disposed of at his office.

It was found on a hillside on the Harvey Young ranch in the Wide Hollow, 14 miles from the city.

It is evidently the body of a man who was duly buried there. The spot was marked with stones. The skeleton was three feet beneath the surface and was placed with the feet toward the west,

which Coroner Shaw says is unusual in such matters as bodies usually are interred with the feet toward the east. The discovery was made by Messrs W.J. Davis, Harold White and J.P. Rush who are leveling land for Mr. Young.

The body was evidently that of a young man for the teeth were perfect. The man in life had been large.

Coroner Shaw thinks he might have been a soldier who was buried a half century ago as the location was on the old trail from Simcoe to Wenatchee--Yakima Herald, April 3, 1912.

for 150 children. During the last term only about half that number attended. It is the ambition of the present agent and his energetic wife, with assistance of capable superintendent and teachers, to materially increase that number next term. The success of this work, as everywhere, depends entire upon the abilities of their instructors. The government liberally supplies the children with good clothing, which the girls help to make. They are also taught and alternately assist in all culinary and domestic work of the buildings; the boys likewise learn agriculture, the care of horses and cattle, etc. under the superintendence of the industrial teacher. To the right of the agency are situated the carpenter's, blacksmith's and wheelright's shops which are ably conducted by Indians to their respective tastes.

There are two large commissary buildings, one for the school and the other under the control of the agent for helping the poor and helpless. The office, council room and postoffice are in one building. Here the assiduous agent, our well known friend and fellow townsman, Jay Lynch, and Mr. Charles Lombard, his capable clerk, are generally to be found.

Incessant demands on their time and patience are constantly being made by the agent's very large family, for indeed they seem like big children, and he their father, to whom they all come for advice and assistance. He is doing very efficient and good work and is greatly appreciated by his community.

It has been the custom to name Indian children at their birth just what the parents or any influential person thought fit, consequently in some families there is no family name and Abe Lincoln, ~~Old Joe~~ Stick Joe, and Calvin Hale might be brothers and of the same parents.

It is decidedly confusing and the government desires to abandon

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Supt. J. C. Roth of the construction of the Fort Simcoe branch of the Northern Pacific advises that it is his intention to have the work rushed along rapidly. Any rumors to the effect that only enough construction is to be carried out to hold the franchise are unfounded.

"We are now working 25 men and a number of teams," said Mr. Roth, "and the work will not stop until we reach White Swan, in any event and it may possibly go further. We are proceeding with the purpose in view of having the road in operation in time to move the crops from the section it will serve with this coming fall. I have no doubt that this plan will be carried out to the letter."

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Railroads

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