

Fort Simcoe, 1856-59 By Olaf T. Hagen, Associate Research Technician,
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Fort Simcoe was established in the fall of 1856 "not for the immediate protection of the whites, but to keep the Indians in awe" and to learn their feelings and intentions and "to check these when they became inimical,"¹ When Major General Wool's conciliatory policy, bitterly opposed by many civilian officials and residents of the Washington Territory had been discredited as a result of the renewal of hostilities by the Indians in 1858, Fort Simcoe was abandoned by the military in the following spring. Conceived to police the Indians as it had been, it was a logical place for an Indian agency and was transferred to the Indian Service for that purpose. Until 1922, when the Yakima Agency was removed to Tonawanda, Fort Simcoe was the headquarters for the Agency which had attracted national attention under the able direction of "Father" James H. Wilbur. Contrary to the arguments of those who believed the race doomed to extermination because of natural or other causes the Indians of the Yakima Reservation were "not fading away before the breath of the white man." Instead a small increase in population was reported from year to year. The "splendid" results of agent Wilbur's labor fully demonstrated the truth of that generally doubted and scorned problem among western people, the capability of the Indian for permanent civilization and Christianization." During Wilbur's administration visitors to the reservation saw not only "finely cultivated farms, well-built houses, barns and other outbuildings, fences, ditches, etc," but also schools and churches.²

Most of the buildings existing at Fort Simcoe today were erected
----1-34 Cong, 3 Sess. H. Ex. Doc 76 (Ser.9060) 255-256.

2-Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, 22-23; 1868, 102; 1871, 283; 1872, 337.

during its more important days as an Indian agency. At least six buildings still standing, however, can be traced the earlier and more romantic period when Fort Simcoe was a military post. Their well preserved condition and attractive appearance is a credit to their builders.

The establishment of a military post in the Simcoe Valley was a direct result of the Yakima War of 1855-56. The occupation of the country by the troops was believed necessary to ~~000~~ prevent a recurrence of indiscretions by the whites or Indian depredations that might lead to a renewal of the war. It is interesting to note that the post was not merely to keep the Indians in awe, but was also to aid in the exclusion of white settlers from the region. Taking advantage of the natural barrier formed by the Cascade Mountains and guarding the Naches Pass with troops from Fort Simcoe, General Wool believed that the labors of the Army on that frontier might be reduced. Thus, economy, as well as the belief that the country was unfit for cultivation and settlement by the whites ~~00~~ and was required by the Indians, prompted the pursuance of a policy which helped make General Wool's name an anathema to many of the settlers and officials of the Washington Territory.

The decision to establish a permanent military post in the Yakima country is vaguely suggested by General Wool's instructions of Jan. 29, 1858. Col. George Wright who was placed in command of the operations of the regular troops against the Indians east of the Cascade Mountains, was directed to establish his headquarters at Fort Dalles where all the troops under his command were to be concentrated ³. As

3--Evans, Elwood, Comp. History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Wash. 2 vols, North Pacific History Company, Portland Oregon, 1889) 1, 586.

soon as the season permitted," that is, as soon as grass can be obtained," expeditions were ordered to be made to the Selah Fishery on the Yakima River and to the Walla Walla country, reported one hundred and forty-two miles respectively, from Fort Dalles⁴.

Wool's stress on the prior and permanent occupation of the Walla Walla country may be partially explained by complaints he received about the attacks on and the pillaging of peaceful Indians by the Oregon Volunteers whom Father E. Cherouse reported were "without discipline, without order, and similar to madmen."⁵ The Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon also reported occupation of that region essential to keep the peaceful tribes from joining the war.⁶ Regardless of Wool's intentions events in the Yakima country nearer to Fort Dalles placed this region in the forefront. On March 26, 1856, only two days after Wright's command had crossed the Columbia River near Fort Dalles, occurred the massacre of the settlements at the Cascades by Klickitat and Yakima Indians. Returning to the seat of the trouble, Wright had been preceded by Lieut P.H. Sheridan from Fort Vancouver. Wright's expedition into the Indian country proper, however, was delayed until communications had been secured and confidence restored.⁷

Wright was convinced that the Yakima country must be permanently occupied by the military.

Wool's plan as announced on January 29, 1856, contemplated the

 4-Ibid: Bancroft, Hubert Howe, The History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889 (Vol XXXI of Works, The History Company, San Francisco, California, 1889), 117.
 5-Letter from Father E. Cherous, Jan. 15, 1856 in Report of Comm'r of Ind. Affairs for 1856, 195.
 6--Letter by Joel Palmer, Jan. 28, 1856, Report of Commr...1856, 193 -94
 7-Evans, op Cit. 611.

use of the Selah Fishery as a base of operations in the Yakima country. An immediate post of one company between Fort Dalles and the Selah Fishery might be necessary "to prevent the Yakimas from taking fish on the tributaries of the Yakima and Columbia."⁸ The vicinity of Atahnam Mission, about seventy miles from The Dalles, was suggested as possible importance "as the intermediate post between The Dalles and the Fishery."⁹ It does not appear, however, that Wool, at first contemplated the permanent occupation of the Yakima country, at least the selection of a site was not stressed as was the case in the Walla Walla region where posts had previously been suggested by Wool and others.¹⁰ After the attack on the Cascades led to the prior emphasis that was placed on the Yakima country, Wright wrote that "a strong post must be established in the heart of that country. It will not do to march through an Indian country simply. We should make them understand that we are going to make a permanent settlement with them, break up their fisheries, and harass them constantly, in order that they shall have no time for laying in a supply of food. By this course I think they may be brought to terms, perhaps not until next winter. It is only a question of time. It must be accomplished in the end."¹¹

It was April 28 before Wright resumed his march into Yakima country. After the long delay Governor Curry of Oregon, to whom Wright had complained of the embarrassing attacks on friendly Indians by the Oregon volunteers, whose withdrawal from the country was requested, considered it "a matter of congratulation that the United States troops have at

8-Evans, op. cit., 1,596.

9--Ibid; Bancroft, Works XXXI, 117.

10-35 Con., 1 Sess. H. Ex. Doc. 88(Ser. 956). 151

11-Evans, op. cit. 1,610-611.

length made a forward movement, and I trust nothing will occur to render you ~~unprofitable~~ ^{12.} nugatory your proposed campaign into Yakima Country."

Wright proceeded to the Naches River where he was faced with large numbers of Indians, but due to the high stage of the river he did not cross his troops in pursuit of the Indians. Instead he began negotiating with them. He was confident that he would soon make peace--with or without fighting.¹³ He did "not despair of ultimately reducing these Indians to sue for peace. I believe they really desire it and must find out what outside influence is operating them from coming in."¹⁴ Finally crossing the Naches he left a part of his command under Colonel E.J. Steptoe at the encampment where Fort Naches, sometimes known as the "basket fort" had been established.¹⁵ Although the Indians failed to come in for conferences at the points and dates agreed upon,¹⁶ Wright continued his negotiations and on July 18, declared that "the war in this country is closed...we have penetrated the most remote hiding places of the enemy, and forced him to ask for mercy. Deserted by their chiefs, and perseveringly pursued by our troops, the Indians had no other course left to them, but to surrender, I have about five hundred men, women and children at this place; with a much larger number of horses and cattle--these Indians, of their own accord, brought in, and delivered up, all the horses and mules in their possession, belonging to the government

12-Ibid, I 611; 34 Cong., 3 Sess. H. Ex. Doc. 76 (906) 215-216.

13--Major General John E. Wool, commanding the Department of the Pacific to Lt. Col. L. Thomas, Asst. Adjt. Gen'l. U.S. Army June 3, 1858; in 34 Cong. 3 Sess. H. Ex. Doc 76 (ser. 906) 164

14--Evans op. cit. I, 611.

15-Ibid: Fuller, George W. The Inland Empire; A History of the Pacific Northwest '3 vols H.G. Linderman, Spokane, Wash, 1928. II, 247.

16-Evans Op. Cit. o., 611.

about twenty in number... they are fully impressed with the folly of their continuing the war...~~so~~ long as the troops simply moved through their country and retired, it had but little effect; the Indians were generally the gainers by it." A steady advance over their whole country and "the understanding that the country is to be permanently occupied," had¹⁷ had a different effect, according to Wright.

After "having examined this country pretty thoroughly" Wright was "some what at a loss as to fix upon a position for a permanent military post.¹⁸ The whole country should be given to the Indians; they require it. The most eligible position he had found by July 18, was "a short distance beyond the "Toponish" where there is good timber for building, grass and water in abundance--this point is on the south boundary of the Simcoe Valley, and at the point of the intersection of the trails from Fort Dalles, and the Kamash prairies..the habitation of the Klickitat³. ...The point above referred to has the advantage also, of commanding both routes to the Columbia and holding in check the Klickitats; who would not be likely to commit any hostile acts with a military force ~~opposed~~ in their rear. The season is rapidly wearing away, and arrangements for the winter must be made as soon as practicable...I suggest that one military post of four companies, would¹⁹ be ample until next spring."

After making this preliminary report on the advantages of the

17--Colonel George Wright, Commanding the Northern District to Major W.W. Mackall Asst. Adjt. Gen'l. Dept of the Pacific, July 18, 1856. MS in Records of War Dept. Adjt. Genl's Office, Dept of the Pacific National Archives. Hereafter referred to as AGO, National Archives.

18-Ibid.

19-Ibid.

Simcoe Valley for a military post, Colonel Wright again ~~examined~~ examined other regions of the country further north. From camp on the Atahnam Creek on July 25, he reported that he had explored that creek to its junction with the Yakima River, twelve miles distant, and the Yakima to the mouth of the Naches, ten miles from the mouth of the Atahnam. Cottonwood and willow were found in abundance,²⁰ but no building materials.

Finding the country to the north unsatisfactory for the purposes of a military post, Colonel Wright returned to the Simcoe Valley and on August 3, reported that this position of the Toppenish Creek was the "most desirable one for a station for the winter."²¹ The situation was in an oak studded ravine that opened to the east on a plain that extended to the Yakima River, along which led trails to the Selah and Kittitas Valleys, and to the Walla Walla country. On the Toppenish were both oak and cottonwood and a few miles to the west was an "abundant supply of the best pine timber accessible with wagons."²² The valley was said to be warmer than those further north and it was reported that the Indians at the Kittitas, Naches and along the Yakima would all winter here, "for it is a central point. The roads from The Dalles, Oregon, Kamash Lake and from Walla Walla all unite here." Moreover the Simcoe Valley was extensive, affording grass for the animals and sufficient good land for gardening.

The site selected lay between Simcoe and Toppenish Creeks in an oak grove that the Indians called "mul mul", or "Mool Mool," said to

20-"right to Mackall, July 25, 1856. MS A90 AGo National Archives.

21-Splawn, Andrew Jackson Hamiakin The Last Hero of the Yakimas (Kilham Publishing Company, Portland Or. 1917), 63 (Wright's report of August 3, 1856).

22-Ibid.

mean "any springs." 23 It was about sixty five miles north of the Dalles
 on the Columbia, in latitude 46 14' north and longitude 120
 40' west. (Selden)^c

The task of establishing Fort Simcoe was entrusted to Major Robert Seldo
 Garnett of the Ninth Infantry. He had come to Department of the Pacific
 with companies of his regiment only shortly before he reported to Colonel
 Silas Casey, in command in the Puget Sound region, in March, 1856. 24 After
 three companies under his command had secured the country along the Green
 and Cedar rivers in May, Colonel Casey had reported that as far as the
 Indian west of the Cascade Mountains were concerned, "the contest is about
 ended." 25 On May 21, Major Garnett with his two companies was ordered
 to proceed by way of the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers and join Wright
 east of the mountains. Early in June he was en route for that destination. 2
 by way of the longer route, the use of which has been criticized since some
 of the Washington Volunteers crossed to the Yakima Valley by way of the
 Naches Pass not long after Garnett set out for that country. 27

When Wright set out for his exploration of the Atahnam on July 21,
 Garnett had been left in command of the troops at the "Kittitas." 28 and

Ibid: McWhorter, Lucullus Virgil, Tragedy of the Wahk-shum, Prelude to
 the Yakima War (L.V. McWhorter, Yakima, Wash., 1937) 18 N.5.
 McWhorter translated the words, "Bubbling Water." Dr. A. Heger who was
 stationed at Fort Simcoe as Assistant Surgeon, 1857-59 calls it "mul-mul"
 36 Con. 1 Sess. Sen. ex. Doc 52 (ser. 906) 260

24-Evans op. cit. I, 595.

25-Wool to Thomas, June 3, 1856- in 24 Con 1 sess H. ex. Doc. 76
 (ser. 906) 163.

26-Ibid-Evans op. cit. 595.

27-Stevens, Hazard, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (2 vols. Houghton
 Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York, 1900) II, 195.

28-Wright to Mackall, July 25, 1856, MS AGO National Archives.

apparently remained in that vicinity until ordered to the Simcoe Valley to take charge of establishing Fort Simcoe, early in August. The exact date of his removal there and of the establishment of the post are not entirely clear. One writer states that the post was established August 29 pursuant to orders No. 10, Northern District, Department of the Pacific.

On August 17, Col. Wright reported that two companies of the Ninth Infantry under Major Barnett were "erecting temporary quarters for the accommodation of four companies."³⁰ Having found the country on the Atahnam and to the north lacking in building materials and "as most of the Indians would winter in the warm valley of the Sim-co-e," he planned but one post in the country. If necessary when Major Haller's camp in the "Kittitas" valley on the Yakima was broken up that fall, one company could halt at the Atahnam and hut-in for the winter.³¹

An immediate problem in connection with the establishment of Fort Simcoe was the opening of improved communications with Fort Dalles, the nearest military post, and from the vicinity of which supplies had to be forwarded to the new post. As early as August 17,³² Captain and Lieutenant of his company "B" of the ninth Infantry were at work on a wagon road, a reconnaissance of the country having first been made to determine its feasibility.³³ Before the last of September the "Army's six mule wagons, with an ordinary load, were enabled to pass over the

29-Splawn, op. cit. 63

30-Ibid.

31-Ibid

32-Ibid

33-Wright to Mackall, May 15, 1857, MS AGo, National Archives.

whole distance.³⁴ It was pointed out, however, that the road would be open to wagons for about only seven months of the year, being closed by the snows about November first. For the remaining five months supplies would have to be forwarded by packtrains.

Because of the lack of transportation other than by pack-train until about October 1,³⁵ during the month or so the road was open to wagons, most transportation facilities necessarily had to be used for hauling provisions for the supply of the four companies that were to garrison the post. What building materials were received at Fort Simcoe is not evident but it is every probable that except for hardware and glass, that Gannett was dependant upon his own resources and materials of the country for most of the construction work. The mule-power sawmill reported to be available in the spring of 1857 had probably been brought to the post in the fall of 1856.³⁶ Obviously here, as at other frontier posts the buildings were put up from the materials nearest at hand.

Pine timber conveniently accessible to wagons, reported abundant within two miles of the fort, had been a determining factor in selecting the site decided upon.³⁷ Although building reports are regrettably brief we know that first buildings put up were of "hewed pine logs." 38

34-Ibid. Splawn doubts that the road could have been finished between approximately August 13 and Sept. 15 when Dent's company appeared to have been absent working on it. Splawn op. cit. 63.

35--Wright to Mackall, May 15, 1857, MS AGO, National Archives.

36"Plan of the Post of Fort Simcoe, Yakima Country, Washington Territory." Photostat copy from original in National Archives. Although the plan is undated it was obviously submitted in the spring of 1857. It shows the building put up last fall and those that are proposed.

37-Ibid

38-Ibid.

Work on these were pushed vigorously, but nevertheless ~~w~~³⁹ the troops were said to have been exposed in tents during the severest part of the winter before they could be overcrowded into the unfinished quarters.

The 1857 Fort Simcoe plan indicates that at least five major structures of the proposed post had been erected during the first winter. These included two company barracks and two officers quarters, apparently of at least two apartments each, and a guardhouse. Since the dimensions of the barracks are ~~indicated~~^{indicated} as 25 or 28 by 60 feet they would certainly have been "overcrowded" if a command of about 250 men were squeezed into them.

Neither plan nor reports studied mention the date of construction of the four blockhouses shown on the plan. It seems reasonable to conjecture, however, that these were put up during the first fall, also. In view of the very common use of blockhouses of the region during the period, it is possible that they were constructed for the protection of the encampment while other buildings were in progress. The total absence of a stockade connecting them and the indication that they were later to be used as laundresses' quarters, and blacksmith and carpenter shops, supports this probability.⁴⁰ Such temporary uses might also account for door and window openings that seem inappropriate for structures intended purely for defensive purposes.

One of the old Fort Simcoe blockhouses is still in a fair state of preservation. Studied with old photographs of this and other

39-36 Cong 1 Sess Sen. Ex Doc 52 (ser. 1035), 265 Cap. Splawn op. cit. 63. Splawn states that the buildings had been finished before the first of the year." (1857)
40-Fort Simcoe Plan.

blockhouses of the period, details of construction can be detected. Pine logs were hewn to form practically square timbers. At each end these were notched, and matched in dove-tail fashion, to form the corners of the structure, as was common in log construction. The casing or frame of the door and window openings of the remaining building are simply made of single boards. The shingle roof, and possibly the roof rafters, are of modern origin. Clapboards or handmade shakes were undoubtedly used to cover the roof of the blockhouse when it was first constructed.

Recent investigations have revealed what has been identified as one of the original barracks. This building was long since covered with weather boarding that conceals its original log construction, which can be seen on closer examination. The thickness of the walls as shown in the door and window openings and also through holes cut in the siding by woodpeckers reveals that it is not an ordinary frame building. The exterior dimensions and the location of this structure identify it as one of the original barracks.⁴¹

The extent to which this barracks has been altered for later uses which it has served has not yet been determined. The double fireplace shown on the 1857 plan has been eliminated. From an old photograph that has been found it is evident that the porch has also been removed.⁴² With the aid of this photograph careful architectural investigations should reveal later alterations and make possible a

41--Further study is necessary to determine whether this barracks was one of those erected in 1856 or whether it was put up later.

42--A copy of the photograph is on file with Forest Supervisor Carter Takima Indian Agency, Toppenish Wash.

reconstructed plan of one of the Fort Simcoe barracks.

Of the other structures erected at Fort Simcoe during the fall of 1856 no surface remains are visible. In view of the subsequent erection of buildings on the site of the old ones it is questionable if archaeological investigations will yield much information about the other barracks, the officers' quarters or the guardhouse.

Existing structures and documentary evidence all indicate that the first buildings were of pine logs hewn square.⁴³ If the mule power sawmill was available, as believed, both it and whipsaws would have been kept busy in providing boards for floors, ceilings and interior walls. The use of boards for such purposes is definitely indicated by Garnett's statement of August 14, 1857: "All the flooring & all the board lining and ceiling which I put up ~~are~~ in the qrs. here last fall will have to be taken down this fall, as soon as I can get other buildings for the accommodation of the command, and replaned, rejoined, and put up tight again,"⁴⁴ Further investigation of the existing barracks may reveal original boards used for its flooring, ceiling and walls, for those were usually heavy enough to last a long time under heavy use.

Although the soil was said to make only an "indifferent" quality of brick those made locally were made to answer the purpose of chimnies, rock conveniently available being considered unsuitable for

43--Some of the floor joists of the existing barracks were not hewn entirely square but are partly rounded.

44--Major R.S. Garnett, Commanding Fort Simcoe to Lt. Col. Thomas Swords, Deput. Qr. M'r. Gen'l. U.S.A. San Francisco, August 14, 1857, MS AGo, National Archives. (See copy appended to this report). Splawn op. city 64

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45--Fort Simcoe Plan, 1857.

such purposes. Lime which also had to be imported was used sparingly and mortar made from it, for pointing and underpinning the buildings and for use in parts of the chimnies exposed to the weather or the fire, was of such proportions as to make it undesirably weak. For much the greater part "common mud only was used."⁴⁶ From existing structures it appears that the foundations of the first buildings were simply blocks of rock placed to support the buildings. No mention is made of shingles or a machhi for making them.

In the same letter in which he asked that the post in the Yakima country be named Fort Simcoe, Colonel Wright noted that Major Garnett was "vigorously pushing forward the erection of quarters and storehouses" for his command.⁴⁷ Progress made in the construction of the buildings did not come up to expectations, however. As has been stated the troops suffered from exposure in tents "during the greatest part of the severe winter until they were crowded into unfinished quarters."⁴⁸ As early as March 16, 1857, superiors had complained that the number of extra duty men ought to have finished the building of the post.⁴⁹ Major Garnett nevertheless contemplated the completion of a four company post on a more ambitious scale than his first year's accomplishments suggested.

The ground plan submitted in 1857 provides a good picture of Fort Simcoe as contemplated by Major Garnett. The arrangement of the

46--Garnett to Swords, August 14, 1857, MS AGO National Archives.

47--Wright to W.W. Mackall, Sept. 20, 1856, MS AGO National Archives.

48--36 Cong 1 Sess Sen. Ex. Doc 52 (ser. 1035) 264

49--Garnett to W.W. Mackall, July 1857, MS AGO National Archives.

buildings was planned for form a quadrangle, enclosing a parade or hollow square, as was common at military posts. The upper portion of the square was enclosed by the officers' quarters and the lower half by company barracks, storehouses, guardhouse and other buildings. In addition to twenty buildings facing the parade, five on each side of the square, fourteen buildings designated as company kitchens and mess rooms, laundresses' and servants quarters were shown behind and parallel to the major buildings. The blockhouses, already mentioned, were placed so as to form the corners of a larger square. Had they been connected with a stockade it would have enclosed all the buildings shown on the plan. Stables and corrals were also erected, ^{but} ~~and~~ these were not shown on the plan, nor has any sketch of them been found.

The principal buildings proposed were: One field officers' quarters for the commanding officer; four captain's quarters; four lieutenants' quarters each accommodating two families and two of which had been constructed during the first fall; four company barracks, two of which had already been put up; an officer's mess; two storehouses; the guardhouse, already erected, and several lesser buildings. Except for the lieutenants' ~~quarters~~ quarters and the barracks all of the proposed buildings were to be of frame construction.

The arrangement and the buildings of Fort Simcoe as completed was not entirely as shown on the 1857 plan. Indignant at the refusal of the Quartermaster's Department in cooperation by granting materials requisitioned, Arnett informed his superiors that the buildings would be put up according to his original plans" or according to plans still

more economical if it be satisfactory. ⁵⁰ When the post was turned over to the ^{Service} Indian Agent R.H. Lansdale reported only eight ⁵¹ officers' quarters instead of nine as shown on the plan. It appears ⁵² also that only three of the company barracks were completed.

Detailed plans of the individual buildings have not been found. Four of the officers' quarters are still standing, and although suffering from neglect resulting from years of abandonment, their good state of preservation is a credit to their builders. Even after more than half a century of use for agency purposes and over fifteen years of comparative neglect sagging floors appear to be the principal defect of these buildings. Most of those that have disappeared appear to have been destroyed by fire.

Records make no mention of the foundations of the buildings except that line was wanted for mortar to be used in underpinning the quarters, ⁵³ Existing foundations indicate that locally dressed rock was used for that purpose. Being refused firebrick, although rock suitable for chimnies was not available locally, fireplaces were lined with dressed ⁵⁴ stone quarried near the Dalles. The two fireplaces of the commandant's house lined with brick were probably completed after the Army had abandoned the post as Garnett indicates that two of the "attic" rooms ⁵⁵ would be left unfinished. Although the chimnies were

50-Garnett to Swords, Aug 14, 1857, MS AGO National Archives.

51-36 Cong. 1 sess. H Ex. Doc 188 (ser. 1023), 179

52-Ibid-Lansdale reported "Eight large officers' quarters, some of them elegant structures; three large barracks, for men, one large hospital; two large warehouses; one large corral and stable, besides many lesser buildings."

53-Garnett to Swords, Aug. 14, 1857. MS Ago. National Archives.

54-Ibid.

55-Ibid.

constructed of the "indifferent" brick, which the local soil was said to make, the have lasted well.⁵⁶

The exteriors of the four officers' quarters are all similar, being of board and batten construction. The battens employed to cover the joints of the wider boards, placed vertically as siding, vary in shape. The battens for some of the buildings are beveled at the edges, whereas, others were rounded and grooved near the outer edges.

Doors and windows, although sturdy and simple in construction, are graceful in details. Door panels are neatly beveled. Both door and window casings are simple, but effectively trimmed. Window sashes vary. Rectangular panes or French windows were used in most places, but in the Commandant's house diamond shaped panes are found in several windows. Mullions appear unusually deep and thin, being but slightly beveled.

The interior finishing of the buildings also varies. While some, if not all of the frame buildings were masonry lined,⁵⁸ interior walls and ceilings were finished in plaster or in boards. Garnett indicates that he had at first intended to use boards, sawed, planed and jointed, locally for the interiors of all the buildings. He soon found that "board warps, shrinks and cracks to such an extent that you cannot make a permanently tight wall of it."⁵⁹ Therefore in spite of the Quartermaster Department's Recommendations against the use of lime because of its excessive cost due to the distance it had to be transported

56--Ibid: Fort Simcoe Plan 1857

57-O'Neil, John P. Comp and Ed. Historic American Buildings, Survey Catalog... January 1, 1938 (Government Printing Office, Washington, 230 (Washington 25))

58-36 Cong 1 sess Sen. Ex Doc. 52 (ser. 1035), 265.

59-Garnett to Swords, Aug. 14, 1857, AGO, National Archives.

to Fort Simcoe Garnett insisted that the use of boards resulted in no economy. He apparently wrangled enough of the precious stuff to plaster some of the walls of the Commandant's house with a thick coat of mortar, weak in lime.⁶⁰ Other walls had to be covered with boards, which are still in place. Although some of the board walls are now covered with paper, it was Garnett's intention that they should have been painted. So insistent was he on this point that he appealed over the heads of Department officials to the Secretary of War requesting that the post be supplied with "a sufficiency of common paint to paint the quarters here, necessary for the shelter and occupancy of this command." The present condition of the board walls does not suggest that Garnett's original plea was heeded. Nor does it appear that he condescended to obey instructions to use white-wash on boards, a finish which he considered "unfit" for habitations of persons who desire to preserve those habits of neatness and cleanliness common among the class of people in civil life from whom the officers of our Army are supposed to come.⁶¹

It has already been noted that the post was completed on a scale less ambitious than first contemplated. The arrangement of some of the buildings was also changed. Instead of the Captain's quarters shown at the upper left hand corner of the quadrangle on the plan this building appears to have been completed as a lieutenant's quarters with

⁶⁰Swords to Allen, July 10, 1857--Ago, National Archives.

⁶¹Garnett to Col. SS. Cooper, Adj. Gen'l U.S. Army, Washington, D.C. Nov. 14, 1857, AGO National Archives.

Paper was being used for walls of Fort Simcoe Agency buildings as early as 1869. Whether it was used by the Army before 1859 has not been indicated--Miller, Amanda, "To Simcoe," The Overland Monthly, III, San Francisco, Aug, 1869, 175.

two double fireplaces, instead of the one shown on the plan.

The arrangement of the Commandant's house was also modified. Two of the upper story apartments or attick rooms, intended as guest rooms, were left unfinished. The finishing of these rooms as soon as present suggest⁶² their completion at a later date than the rest of the structure.

About the use of the buildings, little is known except what is shown on the 1857 plan. Garnett explained that the four lower apartments of the principal residence were for his personal use. Two of the attic⁶³ rooms were to serve as offices for himself and the assistant adjutant. Later this building was used as a residence by the Indian Agents of Fort⁶⁴ Simcoe.

The construction of the Fort Simcoe buildings was completed in the spring of 1858 after which the troops at the post were engaged to work on the road to Fort Dalles, wood-chopping and hay-cutting. Since the occupation of the site in the fall of 1856, menial tasks appear to have received more attention from the command than soldering did. In fact the post had been built largely by the "extra duty" labor of the troops, except for masons and other mechanics who were employed at four or five dollars per day. Garnett objected to the arrangement whereby the troops were left so little time for professional duties. The construction work, he thought properly belonged to the Quartermaster's⁶⁵ Department. Attention was also given to gardens. Although exposure, inferior subsistence and "intemperance from liquor procured clandestinely, and exposure in

62--Garnett to Swords, August 14, 1857. AGO National Archives.

63-Ibid.

64-Report of Commr; of Indian Affairs for 1860, 179.

65-Garnett to Swords, Aug. 14, 1859. AGO National Archives.

procuring it," were reported as causes of sickness, the change from salt to fresh provisions also contributed to the none too good health of the troops. The "total want of gardens" and the means of farming them during the first year made liberal issues of antiscorbutics necessary.⁶⁶

During the first spring at the post gardens were begun. The post fund for March, 1857 indicates the following purchases in that connection: fruit trees, ten dollars; garden seeds, sixty-six dollars and fifty cents; potatoes, eighty dollars.⁶⁷ Hereafter the post surgeon reported that he issued antiscorbutics only to the detachment working on the road to Fort Wallles.⁶⁸ In 1858 the diseases of the digestive organs were reported below the general average and consisted chiefly of "diarrhoea and colic." The principal cause of both of these ailments "was a very inferior and adulterated quality of whiskey, which, when indulged in to any extent, was invariably followed by disorders of the digestive system. This combined with the exposure necessary to obtain it, and also unconscious exposure after having obtained it, may be considered as the cause of one half of the above disorders."⁶⁹

In the summer of 1858 the more routine life at Fort Simcoe was interrupted by events that led to the renewal of the Indian war. In May of that year Col. E. J. Steptoe's command from Fort Walla Walla had narrowly escaped complete disaster.⁷⁰ In June, Garnett reported the attack on and the killing of one and wounding of five of a party of

66-36 Cong. 1 sess. Sen. Ex Doc. 52 (ser. 1035), 268

67-D. Woodruff, Capt. 9 Infy Commdg. Post to W. W. Mackall, May 4, 1857 AGO, National Archives.

68--36 Cong 1 Sess. Sen. Ex Doc. 52, (Ses. 1035) 268.

69-Ibid. 267

70-M. Fuller, George W. The Inland Empire: A History of the Pacific Northwest (3 vols, H. G. Linderman, Spokane, Wash, 1928) I III 1-14.

miners who has passed Fort Simcoe early that month. In operating against the Indians it was decided that the main column under Colonel George Wright should take the field against the Indians west of the Columbia using Fort Walla Walla as a base.⁷¹ A supporting expedition under Major.

Garnett was to operate north and west of the Columbia to capture Indians implicated in the recent attacks on the miners or in former hostilities, and to prevent those pursued by Wright from retreating into Yakima country. Garnett's expedition set out from Fort Simcoe on August 10, and returned on September 23. During their forty-five days' absence the column had marched 505 miles, an average of almost seventeen miles each day of actual marching time.⁷² At least ten Indians had been captured and executed.⁷³ Only one officer and one private of the command killed.⁷⁴

During the absence of Garnett's expedition the command of the post had been left with Captain H.M. Judah who was somewhat alarmed by the possibility of an attack on the post and the cutting off of its communications. Rumors suggesting this danger did not materialize.⁷⁵

After the return of the expedition to Fort Simcoe several scouting parties were sent out from the post. Either by Indians sent out for the purpose, or by small detachments of troops, Indians involved in punishable crimes were ferreted out and hung or shot, until orders were

71-Ibid, III, 18 Garnett to Mackall, June 26, 1858. Ago National Archives.

72-Garnett to Mackall, July 7, 17, 28, August 10, 15, 30, Sept. 23, 24, 1858. Ago National Archives.

73-Garnett to Mackall Sept. 24, 1858 National Archives.

75-Capt. J.J. Archer, Capt. 9 Infy Comdg. to Capt. A.A. Pleasanton, Capt. 2d Dragoons, A.A.A.G. Fort Vancouver, Nov. 10, Nov. 20, 1858, Jan 2, 1859. Same to Mackall, Oct. 30, 1858, MSS Copies in Letters Received, Department of Oregon, San Francisco Presidio Archives.

issued requiring that in all cases requiring execution,^{"76} the offender will be hung and not shot.

The operations of 1858-59 had confirmed the views held by those who believed Fort Simcoe relatively useless for military purpose. As long as white settlement was to be excluded from the country east of the Cascade Mountains in accordance with General Wool's orders, and upheld by his successor General Newton S. Clarke, Fort Simcoe might have some value--if not for the immediate protection of the whites, to police the Indians; to learn their feelings and check them when they became inimical. The abandonment of this policy was made final by the ratification of the disputed treaties in 1859. The policy had virtually been abandoned in the fall of 1858 by Brigadier General W.S. Harney who had succeeded to the command of the recently created Department of the Columbia or Oregon. In the massacre of the Indians at Ash Hollow in September, 1855, Harney had shown the stern measures which he pursued. He had not long been in Washington before he withdrew the prohibition on settlement east of the Cascades.⁷⁷ As early as November 5, 1858 he proposed measures which were to result in the abandonment of Fort Simcoe in the following spring.⁷⁸ He believed that the establishment of a post at Fort Colville, as he had suggested, would "dispense with the necessity of a command at Fort Simcoe, as the Indians now held in check by Simcoe are more easily reached from Colville, and the difficulties to be overcome in reaching the two posts are not comparable."

76-Pleasanton to Comdg. Officer at Fort Simcoe, Feb. 21, 1859, MS Letters Sent, Dept. of Oregon, San Francisco, Pre idio Archives.

77-Manring.

78-W.S. Harney to Asst. Adjt. Gen'l U.S. Army Nov. 5, 1858, in 36 Cong. 1 Sess H. Ex. Doc. 65, (1051) 92-93.

"from its peculiar position Fort Simcoe is cut off in the winter from communications with these headquarters except at great risk, while Colville is accessible all the year round. Supplies can be furnished Colville at nearly the same rates as Simcoe."

"It would be well therefore to throw the garrison at Simcoe to Colville, strengthen it by a company from Walla Walla, and to turn the buildings at Simcoe over to the Indian Department for an Agency."⁷⁹

Harney reported his views about the desirability of a post at Colville "to protect the interests of the citizens and serve as a check upon the Indian tribes who were so lately hostile."⁸⁰ Even the excuse of the Boundary Survey Commission's request for an increased escort favoring the arrangement he proposed, however, was not satisfactory to the War Department. Harney was informed that Secretary of War did not wish any new posts established within the Department at expense to the government and insisted that these instructions be adhered to.⁸¹ He nevertheless went on with his plans for the occupation of the country near Colville with a post. In December 1858 he had communicated with R.H. Lansdale, Indian Agent at the White Salmon Agency, W.T., but, regarding the transfer of Fort Simcoe to the Indian service he apparently could "not entertain propositions of the kind," Lansdale suggested, which in light of ~~0000~~ irregularities that later led to Lansdale's dismissal by

79--Same to same Jan 20, 1859, MS in Letters Sent Archives Presidio San Francisco.

80--Same to same Nov. 5, 1859, in 36 Cong. 1 Sess H Ex Doc. 65, 92-93.

81--S. Cooper, Adj't. Gen'l to U.S. Army to Harney Feb. 23, March 18, 1859, ~~0000~~ in 36 Cong. 1 Sess. H Ex. Doc. 65- 11, 115.

the Indian service , may have involved some questionable scheme.

Negotiations were carried on with Superintendent of Indian Affairs, J.W. Nesmith. In a letter of April 13 , his attention was called to the anticipated abandonment of Fort Simcoe where "the quarters are good and may be considered suitable for an agency of your Department." Should the proposal be acceptable the buildings would be turned over to the Indian Service upon the condition "they are relinquished again to the troops in case they are required to occupy them again, or as to such conditions as the War Department may prescribe." Since it was expedient for the troops to leave by May 15, possession could be transferred then. ⁸³ Nesmith's

favorable reply of April 15 was acknowledged on the 18th. On that date the commanding officer at Fort Simcoe was informed of this arrangement and instructed that property not otherwise disposed of should be forwarded to Fort Dalles by May 15. "At that date the buildings will be turned over to R.H. Lansdale, Esq. Indian Agent, who will be authorized to take possession of them by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. ⁸⁴ On April 19 Harney reported this arrangement to the War Department explaining its advantages. The necessity for a military post in the Yakima country would be removed, " by the troops posted in its front on duty with the Survey." Economies would be effected because "the maintenance of a garrison at Fort Simcoe has been and always will be at a heavy cost." However, " to secure the position in the event of its being wanted hereafter as a military station for any contingency I

82-Pleasanton to R.H. Lansdale, (Indian Agent, White Salmon Agency) Dec. 30, 1858 Letters Sent. Dept. of Ore. San Francisco, Presidio, Archives.

83--Pleasanton to Nesmith, April 13, 1858, Letters Sent, Dept. of Oreg. Presidio Archives.

84- Pleasanton to Comdg. Officer, Fort Simcoe, April 18, 1858, Ibid.

made the officer of the use of thhe buildings to the S₁perintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington and Oregon, with the condition that they be relinquished if needed for the troops. This offer has been accepted and an Agency will be established at that point, under the conditions imposed. ⁸⁵

In accordance with Special Orders Number 35 and 36 the troops were withdrawn and on May 26, the post buildings were turned over to R.H. Mansdale. A detachment of fifteen men under Lieutenant J.B.S. Alexander ⁸⁶ was left to guard the public property that had ~~not~~ not been removed, "The portable horse power sawmill" was ordered brought to Fort Dalles and fuel, bricks, bunks and other articles not worth the transportation, and that were not needed at Fort Dalles, were to be left in charge of the ⁸⁷ Ordnance Sergeant. It was August, however, before the detachment appears to have finally turned over the remaining property to the ⁸⁸ Ordnance Servant and returned to Fort Dalles.

The conversion of Fort Simcoe into an ~~Si~~ Indian Agency was a very logical arrangement for the post was well suited for agency purposes. The original location of the Agency established in the fall of 1856 for the Indians of the region had been near the mouth of the White Salmon River, at a place where Erastus and Mary Joslyn had come and settled in 1853 and lived until they were driven away, and their buildings destroyed,

85--Harney to A.A.G. U.S Army April 19, 1859. Letters Sent Dept. of Oregon, Presidio Archives.

86-Archer to Pleasanton, May 28, 1859, Letters Received Dept. of Oregon; Presidio Archives.

87- Pleasanton to Capt. Thos. Jordan, Comdg. Fort Dalles, July 30, 1859, Letters Sent, Dept. of Oregon, Presidio Archives.

88-Same to same August 4, 1858, Letters Xent. Dept. of Oregon Presidio Archives. Instructions of that date ordered the return of the detachment to Fort Dalles without delay.

during the Indian troubles in the fall of 1855.⁸⁹ An agency house that had been put up there was of "hewn logs;" its dimension twenty by thirty feet on the first story and twenty-four by thirtyfour on the second, ~~five~~⁹⁰ fifteen feet high, and finished inside with lumber. To that place were brought the Indis from the Cascades and also some from Fort Vancouver.⁹¹ When Fort Simcoe was turnedover to the Indian Service in May, 1859, the White Salmon Agency was removed there.

The Fort Simcoe buildings were found very suitable for agency purposes and according to the Agents, could "conveniently be used for shops, schools and hospitals, as well as for the agency and employes."⁹² The buildings were reported as of a "superior construction" and the agent who had taken up his residence in the Commandant's house was said to be "in the enjoyment of comforts and conveniences seldom found in Indian country."⁹³

During the following years the old military post buildings were generally reported as in a good state of preservation except for occasional maintenance and repairs. Painting was regarded as "essential to their preservation"⁹⁴ as early as 1862. In 1867 the buildings underwent quite a thorough repair "in underpinning, clapboarding, and painting."⁹⁵ On the whole the buildings were found to be admirably suited to their new use requiring but few alterations. New buildings, did, however, have

89--Donnell, Camilla Thomson, "Early Days at White Salmon and The Dalles," Washington Historical Quarterly IV 106-107 (April 1913), Report of Commr. of Ind. Affairs for 1856, 205

90-Report of Commr of Ind. Affairs for 1857, 348-349.

91-Wright to W.W. Mackall Aug 17, 24, 1856 AGO National Archives

Report of Commr of Ind Affairs for 1857, 345.

92-Report of Commr of Ind Affairs for 1858, 179 (ser. 1023)

93-Report of Commr of Ind Affairs for 1860, 179.

94-Report of Commr.....for 1862, 392.

95-Report of Comar...for 1867, 46.

to be erected, but those that were reported appear to have been at the mills the agency farm or for use as dwellings by the Indians and were therefore erected away from the agency proper. Here building needs arose rather as the result of fires which appear to have destroyed most of the Fort Simcoe buildings that have disappeared. In 1867 the destruction by fire of two dwellings and a store house were reported.⁹⁶ Incomplete reports show that "a good and comfortable dwelling house for agency employees⁹⁷" was erected in 1880 to replace one destroyed by fire during July of that year.

Churches, school buildings and utility structures erected after the establishment of the agency at Fort Simcoe were also enlarged as the needs arose. Two churches built in 1867 were five and seven miles away from the station respectively.⁹⁸ In 1879 a new church was needed and reports indicate that the agency was proud of the new one dedicated on January 11, 1880.⁹⁹ Schools were built and enlarged.

In 1881 two two-story buildings were being put up, an boarding house 50 by 26 feet and a school house 75 feet. The school buildings still standing at Fort Simcoe, however, are probably those erected about twenty years later. It is probable that many of ~~the~~ the agency buildings still standing will be found to have been erected during the period after 1880, and some of them only shortly before Fort Simcoe was abandoned as an agency in 1922. It is questionable, therefore, whether they have any associations with Father Wilbur, who with Major Garnett

96-Ibid 46

97-Press book of Letters Sent, 1878-1881 Yakima Indian Agency Archives, Toppenish Washington 584.

98-Report of Commr.....for 1867. 480 46.

99-Yakima Agency Press book of Letters Sent, 1878-1881, 223, 372, 378.

share the spotlight in events associated with Fort Simcoe. For more than twenty years Father Wilbur was in charge of the agency and it was his work that gained Fort Simcoe the distinction of being the model agency on the Pacific slope. During the greater part of his administration he was optimistic about his success. Combining to a ~~#000~~ "remarkable degree" the characteristics of a businessman and a Christian teacher he challenged the belief, then prevalent on the frontier, that the Indian was doomed to ~~dist0000dd~~ extermination. At Fort Simcoe the Indian did not fade away before the breath of the white man. Although augmented by the removal to the Yakima reservation of other tribes, the population also showed a natural increase. Later accomplishments among the Indians of the Yakima Reservation ~~can00~~ often can be traced to the stern and diplomatic management of the Fort Simcoe Agency by Father Wilbur. His work ~~for000000000000dd~~ gained for Fort Simcoe a favorite ranking among Indian Agencies and for himself an enviable reputation.