The most vicious of all was Joe Lewis. He was aligned with Mormons who had moved to the Great Salt Lake. They encouraged Lewis to antagonize Cayuse and get them to work against Christian missionaries.

The sequence of events in 1847 swirled around in the eye of a brewing storm of impending violence. In late August the Cayuse were falling ill. They broke out in spots over their bodies. It was measles. The Cayuse began dying off despite Dr. Whitman's visits to them and his treatments. Mixed-bloods spread the rumor that emigrants had brought the measles.

This disease was devastating for the anxious Cayuse. It is estimated that three bands of Cayuse, prior to the measles epidemic of 1847, numbered some five hundred individuals, and that two-fifths of them expired from the disease.

The mixed-bloods spread the news that Dr. Whitman had a bottle containing measles to be released. All Indians understood what that meant. The fear went back to several decades earlier when fur merchants controlled Indians by holding up a bottle, claiming it to be filled with smallpox, and threatening to open the cork and release the disease if the Indians did not do as ordered. They knew the ravages of smallpox that had reduced Pacific Northwest tribes, some as much as 90%.

The fearful Cayuse were believers in the misinformation the mixed-bloods spread. They also spread word that Whitman was using poison, rather than medicine, to kill the Cayuse.

The mixed-bloods cranked up the rumors until the terrorized Cayuse were in a frenzy. They were told that the Whites were silent insurgents, not with violent gunpowder, but with usurpation of ownership and plowing of Cayuse land. The mixed-bloods promoted the idea that the Whitmans were practicing genocide of the Cayuse.

Joe Lewis met with the Cayuse leaders on the night of November 28, 1847, and brought them to make the first strike the next day in a preemptive fight against the Whites.

It was well known at the time that Lewis was responsible for bringing the Cayuse to violence. Colonel Cornelius Gilliam, leading an expedition of Oregon volunteers to get the guilty Cayuse, changed his goal to capturing Lewis. Too late. Lewis, with some alleged Cayuse killers, headed for the Mormon camps.

This case belongs in a special category, as it is part of the Cayuse war. It was the mixed-bloods who knowingly falsified stories, bringing the illiterate Cayuse into believing they were being terrorized by the Whites. Today we can see how the Cayuse, being surrounded by multi-thousands of outsiders grabbing land would feel. We can imagine what it would be like if forced to follow unfamiliar laws of a strange government and to belong to a tribe reduced in a couple of months by forty percent of its population. The Cayuse, with the help of the Nez Perce, were pressured to turn over five of their own to be punished for the Whitman Massacre.

The Five should be absolved of murder because they were not murders; because descendants of the Five suffer the injustice; because the stigma is unfair to the families; because the portrayal of the Five is incorrect; because the public should be privy to the facts leading to the massacre and to set the history straight.

The case of the five Cayuse should be retried without the highly fueled emotions of 1850. It is Congress' responsibility to scrutinize the 1847 Whitman Massacre and the trial of the Five indicted for murder in Indian country, because Congress established the Oregon Territory Supreme Court that tried the case. It was the preceding year that members of Congress voted to support an emigrant government in what is today Washington, Oregon and Idaho, and to provide military protection for the white settlers without notice or negotiations with Indians who had inhabited the country for centuries.

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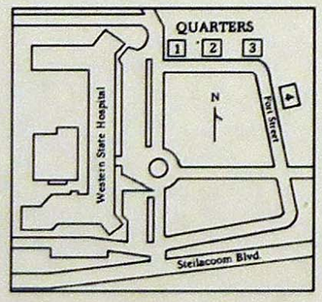

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The Cayuse, the Whitmans, and the Courts

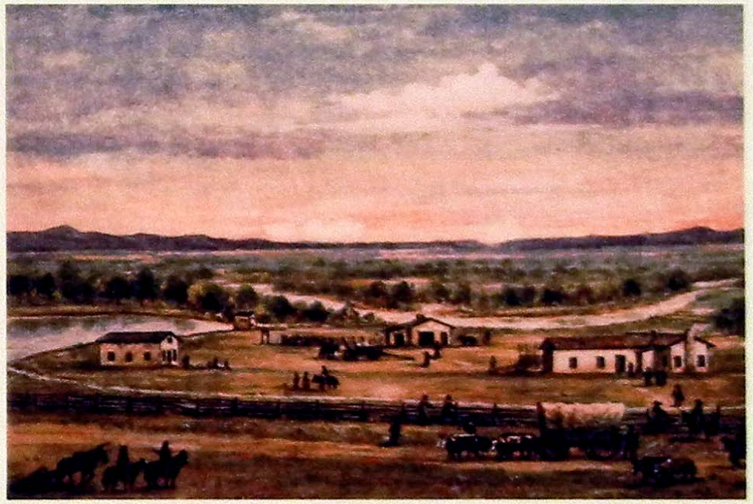
by Dr. Robert Ruby

The November 29, 1847, Whitman Massacre is a dark spot on the history of Indian country in the Pacific Northwest. It is appropriate to revisit the 1850 trial and hanging of five Cayuse Indians accused of that terrible tragedy.

The case of the five Cayuse must be reconsidered without fired-up emotions. We must present dormant, unused and once undiscovered evidence not presented in the trial which lasted only two days. It is time to reevaluate the negative responses by the presiding judge to the defense's pleas.

After the massacre, those accused of the killing moved from place to place to keep from being apprehended. Settlers made it difficult for both Cayuse and their close allies the Nez Perce people by not giving them peace until those responsible for the massacre were brought in. At the urging of Indians the five Cayuse gave themselves up in April 1850. They were taken to Oregon City and indicted on May 21. Court convened the next day.

The defense team of three filed a plea in bar of jurisdiction that the massacre, having taken place west of the Rockies, was at that time outside the "laws and (land) usage of the Cayuse nation." Their argument was that the court had no jurisdiction over the massacre since it occurred prior to the origin of the territory. Judge Pratt rejected the defense's plea. Counsel entered a plea of not guilty. Then they petitioned for change of venue because the Five were threatened with death if they were acquitted. The judge again refused.



The Whitman mission at Waiilatpu was in Cayuse territory and was a stopping place for white settlers on their way westward.

Twenty citizens were impaneled and sworn in as the jury. The prosecutor, district attorney Amory Holbrook, called for his witnesses. Several women testified they saw the Five kill the Whitmans and other mission people. Others testified that they had been upstairs in the Whitman's home and had heard gunfire below, loud, angry words, and Indian voices, and that they came downstairs afterwards and saw the dead. The testimony was accepted as incriminating. They also testified that Joe Lewis, a half-blood, was present with a gun.

Josiah Osborn, the millwright at the mission, told the court that Marcus Whitman gave Indians medicine that made them die. The prosecution then put on people with testimony that as far back as 1845 Dr. Whitman had knowledge that the Cayuse were angry with him and that as such he should have known he was not safe. Holbrook put others on the stand who supported this testimony and expressed that the doctor should have vacated Waiilatpu long before the massacre.

John McLoughlin, a retired Hudson's Bay Company factor, supported this belief, but for a different reason. When he was the company factor, the area was jointly occupied

(Continued on page 2)

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President's Message

Fort Steilacoom is alive and well. The lecture series and events have been attended by people who are enthusiastic and interested in history.

On Sunday of the Memorial Day weekend, reenactors took the Fort back to the 1850s as soldiers, officers and their wives went about their daily routines. In the afternoon Dr. Robert Ruby, author of several books on Indians of the Northwest, lectured on why the five Cayuse Indians found guilty of murder during the 1850 Whitman massacre should be absolved.

On June 26 Georgianna Kautz, Director of Nisqually Tribe Natural Resources, talked about growing up on the Nisqually Indian Reservation and her efforts to improve conditions for those living on the reservation. Georgianna and her husband Nugent answered many questions from the intently interested audience. Nugent is a direct descendant of General August V. Kautz, who was Quartermaster at Fort Steilacoom prior to the Civil War and supervised the construction of the fort buildings.

You are invited to attend the remaining lectures in the 2005 series, as noted in the following event calendar and on our web site.

A thank you to all who have organized, publicized, and participated in the programs. Kudos also to the volunteers who maintain the fort and support its activities. Special recognition goes the dedicated members of the Board who plan, guide and work to provide the events and keep the Fort doors open.

The Fort needs donations of period appropriate furnishings for additional displays. Recently, Beth Julian, daughter of Ellen Chapman Freckelton, donated eight bent-wood chairs, a room screen and a plant stand. These items will add to the furnishings in the quarters. If you want to donate period items, contact us at (253) 582-5838.

Dr. Robert Ruby, left, was presented with a blanket as a tribute for his work to bring justice to Indian history.

Coming Events

August 21 – Founders' Day pot luck picnic, 2 p.m. at Quarters 4.
September 25 – Robert Demorest, "Research and Construction of the Fort Steilacoom Diorama," 2 p.m., Quarters 2.
October 9 – Annual Meeting and talk by Kathleen Benoun, "History of Western State Hospital," 2 p.m., Quarters 2.
October 16 – Reenactors will portray "Ladies of the Fort," 2 p.m., Quarters 2.
December 10 – "Christmas at Fort Steilacoom," 4-8 p.m. Tickets Qtrs. 4.

Cayuse & Whitmans *(from p. 1)*

with many more Americans coming as settlers than British, who for the most part were retired employees married to Indian women. There was no evidence that the British had influenced Indians' fear of Americans. McLoughlin corroborated testimony that the Whitmans should have left the area because relatives of family members who had died after being treated by the doctor wanted him killed.

Stickus, a Cayuse, testified that he had warned the Whitmans the day before the massacre that the Indians were planning to kill the doctor.

The last to testify for the prosecution was Reverend Henry H. Spalding, the missionary living among the Nez Perce. Spalding testified that Stickus did tell him he had warned Whitman of the impending disaster.

The trial ended May 23, the second day of the hearing after summary arguments beginning with Major Robert B. Reynolds' opening remarks. Counsel Thomas Claiborne was next. He implored the court to spare the Five, using loud, ranting and dramatic gestures, even sweeping his arm and smashing two tumblers of water. The third counsel, Knitzing Prichett, secretary of the territorial government, made a forty-five minute appeal for release of the Five. It all seemed sincere. Judge Pratt refused the defense plea.

The court reconvened the next day, Friday the 24th, for the report from the jury. The jurors found the Five guilty as charged. Pratt overruled a motion by the defense for arrest in judgment and a request for a new trial. Judge Pratt sentenced the five Cayuse to be hanged June 3 at 2 p.m. A small gathering was against hanging the Five; the mass of people were for a hanging.

Provisional Governor Joseph Lane left for California immediately after the verdict and sentencing. He appointed Knitzing Prichett as acting governor during his absence. Prichett was asked to pardon the Five he had represented in court, asking mercy for them. Prichett refused with the excuse that he did not know if the governor was yet out of the territory. He had over a week before the hanging to change his mind, which he did not do.

Let's back up with some history of this affair. When Marcus Whitman visited the Cayuse in 1835, they extended an invitation that he come live with them. Whitman returned to the East and made the move west the next year, bringing a wife and others to work with him at Waiilatpu. Whitman and company established permanent dwellings and cultivated the land, the latter of which the Indians disapproved. The welcome for the Protestants deteriorated, while for the itinerant Catholics, who did not establish permanent settlements in the area, it did not. Besides, the Catholics had mesmerizing rituals and attractive garments, along with fascinating, mysterious icons.

As the friction and erosion of faith with the Whitmans increased, the Catholics fueled the situation by telling the Cayuse that Whitman's preaching was wrong. They made it easy for the Cayuse to disbelieve Whitman by saying that they, the

Marcus Whitman

Cayuse, would enter into hell if they continued to believe in him. It was done with the use of a powerful graphic, a sketch on paper called a ladder, depicting the road to heaven and the road to hell.

There were other factors bringing the Cayuse to become distraught over their situation. Following Lewis and Clark's 1805-6 visit to the Pacific Northwest, the United States sent explorers to assess possibilities for settling the country. One great concern the government had was how to deal with the Indian tribes. In 1842 the government sent Elizah White to put down the Indians. He came with the title Subagent of Indian Relations and was accompanied by 130 Americans to settle the area. White also brought a message to Marcus Whitman from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Whitman's sponsors, to return to the East. Dr. Whitman left that fall and spent the winter in the East.

When Whitman returned to Waiilatpu the next year, he brought along nearly a thousand Americans to settle the Pacific Northwest—to the displeasure of the Cayuse. The next year some 700 new settlers found their way out West. And in 1845 three thousand Americans came to live in Indian territory. There were fewer the next year, some 1,300, but in 1847 after the British relinquished their joint occupation with the United States below the 49th parallel, over four thousand settlers swarmed the area. The land grab was obvious to the Cayuse. As the settlers passed across Cayuse land on their way to the Willamette Valley, there were confrontations and trouble.

At this point a new element to the situation was the retired mixed-bloods who sharpened the Cayuse's resentment of the Whites. They pressured the Cayuse with untruths about the missionaries to cause them to rise up against the religious teachers and their assistants. Some of the mixed-bloods were married to Cayuse women. They had greater influence, spreading trouble. Having worked for the fur merchants, the mixed-bloods could operate in both cultures. They forced themselves on the Cayuse, fomenting trouble by misleading and lying about the Whites. They put fear into the Cayuse, telling them the United States was sending troops to the area. They were prepping the Cayuse to rise up against the Whites. This harassment inflamed their existing dislike for the Whitmans.

Among the mischievous mixed-bloods was Joe Gray, who as early as 1841 urged the Cayuse to extract payment from Dr. Whitman for the land the doctor lived on. They warned the Cayuse that Whites were stealing their land. The annual emigrant wagon trains brought more and more Americans who squatted in the Pacific Northwest without negotiations or purchase of Indian property.

Gray and others' efforts brought the Cayuse to strike Whitman in the chest one day, pull his ears, tear off his hat, and throw it in the mud.

Nicholas Finley, a mixed-blood married to a Cayuse woman, during the 1847 measles epidemic invited other itinerant mixed-bloods to stay in his lodge when in the area. Those other conspirators, Joseph Tanfield and Tom Hill, spread rumors that robbed the Cayuse of their remaining trust in the Whitmans.

(Continued on page 4)