

Indian Attack *(from page 3)*

Returning to Col. Moses for the purpose of making him more secure and comfortable, we took our coats and wrapped them around him and left him, having rendered him all the assistance in our power that we were able under the circumstances. On leaving him, his last words were: "Boys, if you escape, remember me."

We returned to the edge of the bluff, going down Finnell's creek and discovered a large body of Indians on the opposite side of the prairie, that lay close by, but our number being so few, we did not think it advisable to risk another attack. All of us, with the exception of Dr. M. P. Burns, took to the brush, but he kept straight on, declaring that "he would fight until he died." We considered it reckless, but it was utterly impossible to persuade him otherwise. We saw him enter the timber on the opposite of the prairie, and immediately heard the report of three guns and an Indian yell, and very naturally supposed that was the last of him.

We kept in the brush and traveled until dark, and then stopped and held quite a consultation as to which course to pursue. Some were for returning to Capt. Hays' camp, others for making the settlements, but we finally concluded to make for the settlements, believing that we could get assistance to Col. Moses sooner.

The weather was very disagreeable, rainy and dark in the fore part of the night and freezing in the after part. We all became so exhausted that we could not travel but a short distance at a time, sometimes up to our waists in water and at others entangled in the immense thickets of underbrush and fallen timber.

While we rested, two of us would lay down on the ground and the other two on top of them. When the underneath would get a little warm, we would change positions. At other times, when we would get to a hollow stump or tree, two of us would enter

and allow the other two to lean against our breasts and blow the warm breath in one another's face.

About daylight we crossed the immigrant road, but dare not travel it for fear of discovery. We took a course as near as we could for the crossing of the Puyallup river, and struck the river at noon, about three miles above the crossing, then traveled down the river until we supposed ourselves opposite the upper crossing and went to the river, but found ourselves too far down.

We undertook to cross a large deep swamp. This was about two hours before sundown. On reaching the opposite side we found ourselves on the edge of Lemon's prairie, consequently we were compelled to remain in the deep mud and water until long after dark, all the while shaking with cold so much that our cartridge-boxes rattled like cowbells.

About an hour from the time we first came there, we saw two Indians approach close by and secret themselves in a small willow thicket. We supposed them to be spies, and could have taken them prisoners or killed them, but to do so we were afraid that we would have to fire a gun, and to escape without observation required much care and anxiety, having to scrape a way the sticks and leaves from under our feet as we stepped until we were out of hearing.

We crossed the Nisqually and took the immigrant trail direct to Steilacoom, and arrived at Tallentire's on Friday morning at 3 o'clock, all very much exhausted, having been three days and nights without food. George Bright became so much fatigued that it was impossible for him to travel any further, laid down and went to sleep, the rest of us being so weak that we could not carry him. On reaching the house we dispatched Mr. Tallentire and a friendly Indian, who was with him, in search of Bright, but he slept so soundly that their hallooing would not arouse him, and the dark being so intense, he could not be found until morning.

After reaching Steilacoom we at once informed Lieut. Nugent of the above circumstances, who immediately detailed Capt. W. H. Wallace and command to relief of Col. Moses. Two days after the body of Col. Moses was found by Capt. Wallace at the spot where left by us. The body of Joseph Miles was found some fifteen paces from the spot where he had been seen alive with a bullet wound shot through his neck, a large knife wound in the back and one through the breast, likewise sixty small penknife stabs in different parts of the body, showing that he had been tortured most fearfully. Some might inquire: What of Dr. Burns. He was found by Capt. Wallace, hid in a barley stack at Mr. Lemon's place in Puyallup bottom, and the time he had is best described by the following letter written by himself to Gen. Tilton:

To Adjutant General Tilton – Sir: Please contradict the report that I was killed by the Indians on Wednesday last. I killed seven with my own hands. They hunted me through the brush for one mile with dogs and lighted sticks, and every one who carried the light I shot. The only wound I got was a skin wound in the forehead from a buckshot. I lived in the brush on leaves, and shot an Indian this morning, for his dried salmon and wheat at Mr. Lemon's. Give my respects to Bright and Rabbeson, and let them know I am safe—only I had to throw away my boots and my feet are badly hurt. I lost my horse, instruments and medicine case. My horse was shot in the kidneys in the swamp where we received that murderous discharge of balls and buckshot. Please let Mr. Wiley say I am all right. I remain respectfully.

M. P. Burns,
Surgeon Capt. Hays's Command

Fort Steilacoom

Vol. 36, No. 2

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Summer - Autumn 2019

Indian Attack on Connell's Prairie

by A. B. Rabbeson¹

A. B. Rabbeson was an express courier who witnessed the attack on Connell's Prairie in 1855 when A. B. Moses and Joseph Miles were killed. He later testified that Leschi had been there, leading to Leschi's conviction of murder. Leschi, at his hanging near Fort Steilacoom, forgave all except Rabbeson.

On October 30 [1855], Col. A. B. Moses, Dr. M. P. Burns, George Bright, Joseph Miles and myself, in company with the express messengers, left camp at the first crossing of the Naches river, and traveled unmolested until we arrived at Connell prairie, in the White river valley, at 3 o'clock Wednesday evening. Here we met with a party of Klickitat and Nisqually Indians, numbering about 150 warriors.

Having there discovered that Mr. Connell's house had recently been burned, we inquired of the Indians (they at that time showed no signs of molestation) who had burned the house, or if they knew how it came to be burned. They denied all knowledge of the cause, and declared themselves entirely peaceable, saying that their *tum-tums* were *hyas close copa Boston*, i.e., that their hearts were right towards the Americans. We talked with them a long time, asking many questions why they were there, and endeavored, as much as words would do, to draw them out and make them show their true position, they all the while



Connell's Prairie was the site of the ambush where A. B. Moses and Joseph Miles were killed in October 1855.

making declarations of friendship. We then went to the place where we supposed they intended to camp and endeavored to purchase some moccasins from their squaws, and while there, we saw and conversed a while with their main chief, Leschi. In the meantime all the first Indians were gradually dispersing, but we did not know at that time where. We then mounted our horses again and proceeded on our route, about a half a mile, to a deep muddy swamp.

There we received a murderous fire from these very same Indians, who had secreted themselves in ambush behind us. Col. A. Benton

Moses received a ball, entering the left side of the back and passing immediately under the heart and came out through the right breast, going through the center of a letter in the breast pocket of his overcoat. Joseph Miles, of Olympia, received a wound in the neck which unhorsed him. He fell deep in mud, and was unable to regain his horse or get out without assistance. We directed him to take hold of his stirrup-leather, while we gathered his horse's bridle, and then putting spurs to our horses

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¹ A. B. Rabbeson, from Old Settlers Contest of 1892.

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Publication funded in part by City of Lakewood Lodging Tax Grant.

President's Message



As we race into the Fall Season, I am not going to bore you with a recap of all of the exciting things Historic Fort Steilacoom has been able to accomplish this year, as the majority of these are featured on our new and vastly improved website and Facebook page.

If you haven't peeked in for a while, expect to be absolutely blown away by the new format and all of the excellent featured pictures. Instead I would like to turn your attention to a brief article in this newsletter regarding our Isaac Stevens exhibit, the increased slate of new officers which the association membership will confirm in just a couple weeks, and the remainder of this year's events.

Your Historic Fort Steilacoom Board of Directors has been hard at work this year. We have updated and revamped the Association by-laws, which hopefully will be approved by the general membership at October's annual meeting. We have added five new positions to the Board of Directors, which will greatly reduce the individual workload for the

members of the Board. We have a brand-new display in the Interpretive Center of Quarters #4, which showcases the load of equipment that the typical US soldier had to carry with him on campaigns. And finally, we have a really large Living History Swap Meet coming up on November 16th. This is just in time for your Christmas shopping! We haven't hosted a swap meet of this kind for a couple of years. This one is promising some real unique items, and a bunch of bargains. Come for the shopping, stay for the history! Last, but certainly not least, we will be winding up 2019 with our premiere Living History event, Christmas at the Fort on the 14th of December. Come tour the candle-lit fort, appearing as close as we can possibly make it, to a winter's evening of 1859.

This is the last HFSA newsletter for this year, so on behalf of all the Association officers and Board members of Historic Fort Steilacoom, let me wish you all the best for the coming year of 2020. Don't forget to always use those Amazon and Fred Meyer Awards to benefit HFSA when you go shopping at those locations. For information or help on how to sign up with these good programs, send off an email to info@historicfortsteilacoom.org.

Thank you all for another good year in bringing this old Army post to life.

Gideon Pete

2019 Candidates for HFSA Board of Directors

Program Vice President (1st VP): Jessica Kidder

Membership Vice President (3rd VP): John McPherson

Treasurer: Michael J. McGuire

Director 1: Thomas A. Melberg

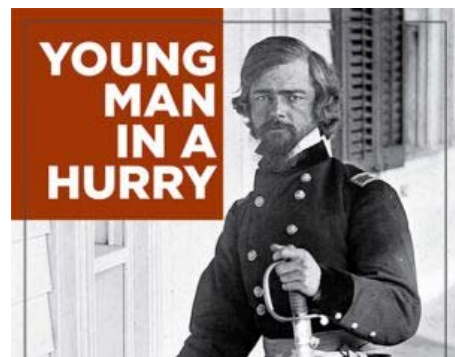
Director 3: Joe Miller

Director 5: Josiah Pollock

Director 7: Karen Meador

Director 8: John A. McCarthy

The election will take place at the Annual Meeting at 2 p.m., Oct. 20.



Stevens exhibit now on display in Quarters 4 until May 2020.

This summer Historic Fort Steilacoom has been pleased to present our first ever professional display, "Young Man in a Hurry: The Life of Isaac Stevens," sponsored by Legacy Washington. Legacy Washington is an education campaign for history. Its goal is to further the knowledge of the state's past and its continuing story. This collaborative venture, spearheaded by Secretary of State Kim Wyman, recognizes the immeasurable value of our state's history and our promise to preserve it. This exhibit will be on display at the Fort Steilacoom Museum until May 2020.

Isaac Ingalls Stevens was the first Governor of the Territory of Washington (1853-57), Washington Territory's delegate to Congress (1857-61) and a Union Colonel in the Civil War who was killed leading his command in Virginia at the Battle of Chantilly (September 1, 1862).

Isaac Stevens was a man whom people either loved or hated. There was no middle ground. Stevens was at his worst in his dealings, as Washington Territory's Governor, with the territory's many diverse Indian tribes. Stevens did not evince a particularly bloodthirsty attitude toward the region's Indians, but he had little interest in accommodating their traditional way of life. He sincerely believed that completely uprooting these First Nations peoples from their lands, and forcing them to live on reservations where government officials could "civilize" them with agricultural training, was truly in their best interest. He did not try

to understand the divisions, or the politics, between the various tribes, or even the traditions of these people as a whole. This caused some Indians to agree to make an alliance with the territorial government, and others to turn hostile toward their white invaders. This hostility eventually erupted in 1855 in what today is termed the Puget Sound Indian War.

After the war had ended in 1856, Governor Stevens set himself the task of punishing any Indians whom he believed to be guilty of crimes during that conflict. Stevens focused most of his attention on "Chief" Leschi of the Nisquallys. Defenders for Leschi, which included the military officers of Fort Steilacoom, argued that the chief's killing of a white man during the war was a combat related action, not to be confused in any way with an ordinary homicide. After two separate trials, Leschi eventually was executed not very far from Fort Steilacoom, on February 19, 1858.

Indian Attack (from page 1)

we succeeded in dragging him out of the mud. We found that he had become so faint that it was impossible for him to mount his horse. He then told us to leave him and make our escape if possible, as there was no hope for him.

All this time the Indians were pouring into us a continuous fire, not more than thirty yards distant, in which Maj. Tidd received three slugs on the head, which did not penetrate the skull. We were compelled to leave Miles, so we put spurs to our horses and rode about a mile and a half, when Col. Moses became so exhausted in consequence of his wounds that he could not remain on horseback any longer.

We dismounted and carried him some 200 yards and hid him in the brush. We remounted and rode at full speed to the first crossing of Fennell's creek. Here we discovered another ambushade, whereupon we dismounted and made a charge into the brush, three of us upon one side of the road and two upon the other.

THE TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR 1853-1857. Includes text about Isaac Stevens' arrival, his role as Governor, and a proclamation regarding the Puget Sound Indian War.

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS 1853-1857. Includes text about Stevens' role as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, his negotiations with tribes, and a collection of his papers.

Each of us discharging the full contents of our revolvers and then using our sabers, completely routing the Indians, they not firing a gun. We must have killed quite a number of them, as none of us had to shoot more than ten feet, and several times we placed our revolvers against their bodies. (Continued on page 4)

