

CHAPTER 3

THE VOLUNTEER'S ARRIVAL IN THE WALLA WALLA VALLEY

(As of April 22, 2011)

December 3, 1855 (Monday):

1: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: "On the morning of the 3rd we encamped on the bank of the Walla Walla River about **four (4) miles** from the fort and proceeding to the latter place, I found it had been pillaged by the Indians, the buildings much defaced and the furniture destroyed."

4: Captain A. V. Wilson (Company A) Account: "We encamped **three (3) miles** above the fort on the 4th (December 3rd), at 11 o'clock A.M. and in the afternoon we ascertained that neither the fort or the canyon were in possession of the enemy."

NOTE: *The wrong date is given in data (4) as December 4...this should be December 3!*

6: Lieutenant Charles Pillow (Company A) Official Report: "Arrived after a tedious nights march, with sever rain and wind, in sight of the fort at or about 11 (o'clock) AM of (December 3rd), and camped on the Walla Walla River, about **three (3) miles** from the fort. At evening of the same day, scouting parties started for the fort."

37: Sergeant A. B. Roberts (Company A) Account: "It was not until day had fully opened upon us that we could tell where we were at. But when the Blue Mountains loomed up in the South (East) we headed our course to the North and just at 11 o'clock AM we came out on the edge of the great plain and could see the Old Fort and the Walla Walla River before us."

"As we gazed over the vast plains and the country below and before us, not a living being was to be seen. Moving down, we went into camp on the river **one (1) mile above** the Fort at 12 o'clock noon."

5: Private Plympton Kelly (Company A) Account: "About sunrise December 3rd it commenced snowing then turned to rain. I have not often endured more suffering than I have on this march. About 10 o'clock (AM) we came to the Walla Walla River and **forded it**. We camped half mile below the ford our animals had been saddled for 18 hours. We have not seen or heard of any Indians during our march. We got our breakfast and all who wished to started for the fort which was said to be a mile and a half distant from our camp but when it came to travel it is proved to be **three (3)** (miles). Those who got there first advanced with some

caution till they saw the Crows flying and alighting on the buildings. We entered the Fort and found it had been robed of everything that was of any importance to the Indians. The floors of the buildings had been broken up to see if there was not deposits of goods under them. This Fort was built by the Hudson's Bay Company but is now the property of Mr. Sinclair. He estimates loss at twenty thousand dollars one item of this loss is a thousand pairs of blankets. Mr. Sinclair left his Fort at the first outbreak of the Indians. He came back with us. The fort and all the buildings are made of adobe or unburnt brick the roofs of the buildings are first a layer of split timber the mortar into which straw has been well worked. There has been something done in the way of farming the soil looks well."

NOTE: *This puts the Oregon Mounted Volunteers on the North side of the Walla Walla River as Plympton Kelly says that they "forded it"! In accordance with the 1861 US Geological Survey maps showing "Road to Walla Walla" from "Old Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Walla Walla", this distance in 1855 would have been about 3-1/2 miles from the mouth of the Walla Walla River. The "crossing" today, for which the command took, is located about 2-1/4 miles east of present day Wallula Junction on Highway 12. One must remember that the backwaters of McNary Dam have covered up most of these sites today. (40)*

43: '55ER (Company F) Account: "We hade a guide, but he got lost. Then we were all guides. The first that got on top of the hill overlooking Fort Walla Walla were there about 9:20 A. M. and we lay over the rest of the day for the rest of the guides to get in."

33: Sergeant William G. Haley (Company H) Account: "When we reached there (Fort Walla Walla) it was abandoned."

NOTE: *The march from Fort Henrietta (near Echo, Oregon), overland, to the Walla Walla River was about 23-30 miles.*

4: Captain A. V. Wilson (Company A) Account: "In the evening (of December 3rd), Col. Kelly, Major Chinn, Surgeon Nicholson and myself accepted an invitation from Mr. Sinclair to accompany him and pass the night in the fort (Old Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River)."

37: Sergeant A. B. Roberts (Company A) Account: "After dinner, some of the officers and a few men went down to the Fort and we found a scene of perfect desolation. Everything of value to an Indian was carried off, even the sacks having contained green coffee of which there seemed to have been large quantities, were ripped open and carried off and the contents scattered on the floor. But one thing of value to an Indian was not found. A large quantity of powder and ounce balls and a Brass Howitzer which the managers before leaving with Colonel Olney, had securely hidden by carefully taking up some floor

and burying those things under dirt beneath. We raised this “cache” and secured all of these stores and later on made good use of them.”

DOCUMENTS USED

1. The Oregonian, January 5, 1856, "**Official Report of Col. Kelly Of The Battle Between The Oregon Mounted Volunteers And The Indians**" from Fort Bennett, December 14, 1855, To Wm. H. Farrar, (Adjutant 1st Regt. O. V.) from Lieut. Col. James K. Kelly (December 14, 1855: Kelly to Farrar: **Official Report**);
4. The Weekly Oregonian, December 29, 1855 "**Particulars of the Fight at Walla Walla**" from Fort Bennett, December 14, 1855, To T. J. Dryer from Unknown (Captain A. V. Wilson, Company A, a daily account) (December 14, 1855: Wilson to Dryer);
5. "**We Were Not Just Summer Soldiers**" a daily account (in diary form) by Plympton Kelly, Oregon Mounted Volunteers, Company A; (Plympton Kelly Daily Diary);
6. #906 HED 3rd Sess., 34th Cong., Vol. 9, Ex. Doc. #76, Indian Affairs On the Pacific, 1856-1857: (Report of Battle of Walla Walla) To W. H. Farrar (Adjutant First Regiment Oregon Mounted Volunteers) from Charles B. Pillow (2nd Lieut., Company A, First Regiment, O.M.V), June 18, 1856, page 201-203 (June 18, 1856: Pillow to Farrar: **Official Report**);
33. The Oregon Statesman, January 1, 1856: December 15, 1855 W. G. H. (1st Sergeant William G. Haley, Company H, Linn County) to Bush (Editor of the Oregon Statesman);
37. "**The Yakima War of 1855: The Campaign to Walla Walla: The Capture of the Most Noted War Chief of the Pacific Coast**" by (Sergeant) Alvin Brown (A. B.) Roberts (Oregon Mounted Volunteers, Company A, Multnomah County), Clark County History, 1967, (FHA);
40. "**1861 US Geological Survey Maps**". Thanks to Paul Tomkins of USKH Inc. (Land Surveyors), Walla Walla, Washington;
43. "**The Cayuse War**" by '55ER (Company F), The Morning Oregonian, March 1, 1897 (Also 23-B) (FHA);