CHAPTER 7
FIRST DAY OF THE BATTLE OF WALLA WALLA
(THE DEATH OF CHIEF PEPEOMOXMOX)
(As of April 22, 2011)

December 7, 1855 (Friday):

From the Touchet River to the Larocque cabin before crossing the Touchet River

2: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “At daylight on the morning of the 7th, they (the Indian prisoners) were all untied, and I then told Piu-piu-mox-mox that I considered he had acted in bad faith towards me; that we had refrained from making an attack upon his people when we had them in our power, solely upon the condition that he and his companions remain with us until his promises were fulfilled, and that now his people refused to fulfill them, and that he and his men wished to escape. I informed him that the next time either one of them should attempt to run away, he would be slain.”

“Early this morning the Indians appeared in considerable force on the hills about a half mile from our camp, all armed and mounted. I then had no apprehensions of an attack, and leisurely prepared to march to Whitman’s station.”

7: Assistant Surgeon J. R. Bates Official Report: “The next morning (December 7, 1855), there were about sixty (60) or seventy (70) Indians on the hill near by, hallooing for their chief. Colonel Kelly sent a messenger to them as before, requesting them to come in and surrender their arms, if the did not wish to fight. They would not do it, but threatened us if we attempted to pass that way. The command then moved in route up the Walla Walla River, where the Colonel told Pee-pee-mox-mox he expected to travel until he found a good camping place, where he expected to stop some time, and then they could talk about a treaty; and he could send for his people to come in and talk, requesting him at the same time, to instruct his men not to fire upon us, if they did not wish to fight. He said he had so instructed them, and they would mind him.”

6: Lieutenant Charles B. Pillow (Company A) Official Report: “On the morning of the 7th, the Indians were on the hills opposite our camp in large numbers. The white flag was sent and returned time and time again, until the patience of Lieutenant Colonel Kelly was exhausted, and he gave an order for the command to move across the Touchet into the Walla Walla valley, where he intended to make his headquarters for the winter.”
5: Private Plympton Kelly (Company A) Account: “This morning the Indians appeared on the high ground on the opposite side of the river. They said that they did not want us to advance any further into their country for they said that their young men would hurt us if we advanced further into their country.”

41, 45: Corporal Amos Underwood (Company B) Account: “Next morning when we started on the march, myself and guards were kept in charge of the prisoners. Before we left camp I could hear the rifles popping around the bend. The advance guard were in action.”

9: Captain Davis Layton (Company H) Official Report: “On the morning of the 7th a party of Indians made their appearance on the hills in front of our camp. Here Colonel Kelly sent another messenger to them asking them to come in and give up their arms. They refused to do so, but demanded of us their chief, and ordered us to pass no further up the river, or they would fight us.”

33: Sergeant William G. Haley (Company H) Account: “Early in the morning, the Indians sent in a white flag to us requesting a talk. Nothing could be agreed on.”
From the Touchet River to the Larocque cabin after crossing the Touchet River

1: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “On the morning of the 7th, Companies H (Linn County) and K (Marion County) crossed the Touchet, leading the column on the route to Whitman’s valley, and when formed on the plain were joined by Company B (Wasco County). A few persons in front were driving our cattle, and a few were on the flanks of the companies and near the foot of the hills that extend along the river. These persons, as well as I can ascertain, were fired on by the Indians. Immediately all the companies, except A (Multnomah County) and F (Marion County) (who were ordered to remain with the baggage) commenced an eager chase of the Indians in sight. A running fight was the consequence, the force of the Indians increasing every mile.”

“Several of the enemy were killed in the chase before reaching the farm of La Royne (Larocque), which is about ten (10) miles from the mouth of the Touchet. At this point they made a stand, their left resting on the river, covered with trees and underbrush, their center occupying the flat at this place covered with clumps of sage brushes and small sand knolls; their right on the high ridge of hills which skirt the river bottom.”

2: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “The advance guard and one or two companies had moved out on the plain, when the Indians commenced firing on some of the men engaged in driving up some beef cattle. The fire was returned, and a general fight ensued. The enemy were rapidly driven before us for about ten (10) miles, along the Walla Walla River, until we reached the farm-house of La Rogue (Larocque), when they were reinforced, and made a stand.”

7: Assistant Surgeon J. R. Bates Official Report: “The command had traveled but a short distance, when the Indians fired upon two young men, who were driving loose cattle. The men were ordered a charge on them, which resulted in a running fight of about ten (10) miles. About 2 o’clock PM we encamped at a place now known as Fort Bennett (Larocque Cabin), finding it impossible to travel further, as the Indians were coming thick in almost every direction, and a number of our men were killed and wounded already.”

4: Captain A. V. Wilson (Company A) Account: “On the morning of the 7th we started for Whitman’s station to establish headquarters for winter operations. Before the rear guard had left camp, an engagement commenced at the head of our column. We continued our march resolutely fighting our way, and were obstinately resisted by the enemy. On arriving within two (2) miles of Whitman’s station, we were compelled by our number killed and wounded to halt our train, place guards over the wounded and baggage, and every disposable man to take the field at dark.”
6: Lieutenant Charles B. Pillow (Company A) Official Report: “As soon as the advance of the command crossed the Touchet River, the fight commenced, and the command had a running fight for ten (10) miles, when the Indians made a stand and fought us most desperately.”

37: Sergeant A. B. Roberts (Company A) Account: “Early in the morning our command was ready to move to the Walla Walla Valley to select our proposed winter quarters, and as proved to be our course was directly towards the new camp of the Indians. From our camp on the Touchet (River), the road went over a low range of hills for two (2) miles. Our company (Company A) was this morning the rear guard, and as we reached the summit of the hills, the Walla Walla Valley lay in plain view before us for nearly ?? miles, bordered on our right by the (Walla Walla) river with its strip of large cottonwood timber.”

NOTE: This is correct! After crossing the Touchet River at the site of the ford, there is a flat then a low range of hills to the east. From this point, and for two more miles, the road “went over a low range of hills” until it dropped down to the valley floor 1-1/2 miles east of Touchet, Washington on Highway 12. From here, the “wagon road”, for the most part, followed present day Highway 12 to Lowden, Washington and on to and through to where the Battle of Walla Walla was later fought that day. (40)

“Just beyond, and in front of us, was raging the greatest conflict between Whites and Indians that was ever fought on the Pacific Coast. Whites and Indian warriors and the various companies of our command were being met and repulsed by the steady firing of volleys from the Oregon Mounted Volunteers…the smoke of (the Indians) volleys rising at times to obscure a view of the deadly conflict. At the same time other hundreds of the enemy were nearby in the adjoining timber (to the south of the command).”

“About that time a conflict was observed in the timber to the right of us (south, along the Walla Walla River). Our captain, Captain Alfred Wilson, ordered (myself) with 10 men to the support at that point. We lost no time and upon arrival found Captain Charles Bennett, Company F, with a detachment of his company engaged with a body of Indians who were soon driven across the (Walla Walla River) into the open country and were followed by my detachment, pursuing them rapidly.”

NOTE: Here, there is a missing section of Sergeant Alvin Roberts account.
“We were unable to find an opening in the timber where we could recross (the Walla Walla River) to our command for several miles and were compelled to fight our way along and at one time the Indians made a determined stand at a protecting ridge where we had to compel them to leave some hair behind. Finally we came to a trail across the river and pushed our fat cattle (about 25 head) through and turned them over to Captain (W. H. Fountleroy??) the Quartermaster, and soon joined (our) Captain Wilson (Company A) at the front and in the thickest of the fight.”

“Some companies (while fighting Eastward towards the Larocque cabin) pushed the enemy along the foot of the hills or the edge of the bench land, others met charging hosts on the level greasewood flats, while others moved steadily through the brush and timber driving the Redskins from tree to tree at the point of the bayonet. This was work assigned to our Company A, as many of the company were armed with Government muskets with bayonets and was of course considered best for this close and lively work.”

“Linn County’s Company H, was close to the border of the timber (river) and at one time had a very stubborn engagement with a large force of the enemy at a point just above the mouth of Dry Creek where a strip of large willows extended out some distance from the timber and afforded a shelter or hiding for the Indians.”

“But as they were gradually forced to retreat as the Whites advanced, one Indian remained hidden behind the last outward clump of willows, and as Lieutenant Burrows, Company H, came charging up in the lead of his detachment at the distance of only 10-12 yards, received a bullet from the Indian which felled him dead from his horse and as the Indian raised and attempted to escape, he was literally riddled with bullets from the Lieutenants comrades.”

“Soon we came to the old French settlement known as French Town. There were 5 or 6 log cabins about which was a few acres enclosed with a rail fence. Behind these fences and in these cabins were shelters for the enemy, and these positions were attacked and the stubborn resistance of the Indians (were) overcome by force. Captain Wilson (Company A) and Captain Bennett (Company H) (and their companies of men) were jointly at the lead of these engagements.”

“About the 2nd or 3rd of those cabins was quite a large one and belonged to a Mr. Tarock (Larocque). Having 3-4 dead and several wounded, we took possession of this cabin and made our camp.”
5: Private Plympton Kelly (Company A) Account: “As soon as we got ready, we crossed the Touchet. The Indians fell back and as Companies B, H and I (?) advanced to the high ground, the Indians fired on them. The companies halted for a short time then they charged the enemy and the fled up the Walla Walla Valley, the volunteers pursuing them several miles when the Indians made a stand at the French Farms below Whitman’s station. They took to the brush and fought obstinately but were driven out of the brush with great loss on their part and the Volunteers had killed Captain Bennet, Lieutenant Burris and E. B. Kelso and others were wounded at the same time. The Indians made several resolute charges upon us on the hills but were successfully repulsed.”

“The Indians took possession of a farm house (Tellier Cabin to the east) and stock yard from which they could not be easily driven. Captain Wilson got a small howitzer that we brought from Fort Walla Walla and fired on them 3 times at the fourth fire the gun burst and seriously injured the Captain. The firing had no other effect on them. The Indians would not come nearer to us than 3 or 4 hundred yards in the open prairie.”

“At night we fell back to a farm house (Larocque cabin) in our rear where the wounded and dead had been collected and where the pack train had stopped. The 5 prisoners were killed at this place as they refused to be tied. After a couple of shots were fired into the camp at which the fires were put out and the men paraded and posted in the fence line for the night. The Indians were encamped at the upper farm house. They set fire to the oats and straw stack.”

41, 45: Corporal Amos Underwood (Company B) Account: “As we marched up the road our position with the prisoners (Corporal Underwood was in charge of the Indian prisoners) was about the center of the column, then followed the wagon train, and last the rear guard.”

“All day long we could see the boys running along the hillsides (to the north of the trail) and hear them shooting and I did want to be with them. Next, I saw a dead Indian lying on the hillside. I pointed him out to old Pepe, who shook his head.”

“Then Lieutenant Ben Hardin (Harding) (Company A) came riding back on a big iron gray horse. The horse had been shot in the withers and the blood streaming down on the white horse looked badly. Old Pepe shook his head again. Nathan Olney came along, going to the front. He said things were getting hot on ahead.”

“As we rode along one of the Indians told (Warren) Keith and me that he was Nez Perce, 15 years old; and that he had come down after some horses, but the Cayuses would not let him return home.”
17: Private A. P. Woodward (Company B) Account: “A. P. Woodward, who was a member of Company B, asserted to the writer (Frank Gilbert) his knowledge that a member of his company called “Jont” (Indian Jont) fired the first shot, which was promptly returned by the Indians.”

NOTE: Who fired the first shot? There seems to be some conflicting thought between Indian Agent Nathan Olney and Colonel James Kelly about just who fired the first shot, the Indians or the Volunteers, after the Volunteers crossed the Touchet River. In (16) “Indian Agent Nathan Olney, who was all the while with this expedition, reports ‘that soon after they (the Oregon Mounted Volunteers) arrived here, a party of Indians were seen on the hills, when a detachment of Volunteers commenced a fire upon them’.” Colonel Kelly on the other hand says after the command had gone about ¾ of a mile “when the Indians fired at two men who were driving up some loose beef cattle and the fire was returned and a general fight ensued.”

“Colonel Kelly accuses the Indians with firing first this morning (December 7, 1855), but Mr. Olney reports: “I am forced to believe the firing was first commenced by the Volunteers, as it was evident the Indians did not meditate an attack, for they were at the same time preparing the morning meal; in several places the volunteers dismounted and partook of the roast beef found at the fires where the Indians were encamped.”

43: ‘55ER (Company F) Account: “Next morning (December 7, 1855), we started across (the Touchet River), to the Walla Walla River, a distance of about 9 miles, where there were a lot of corn cribs, and “caches” of potatoes, expecting to stop there until after the treaty.”

“Our command was scattered a distance of perhaps one mile this morning and the Indian hostages were somewhere near the middle.”

“All morning we could see Indians more and more coming in sight on top of high ridges, scurrying around under great apparent excitement. A few minutes after this, we could see a small band of perhaps 75 riding towards us at the point where our prisoners were. After getting within 100 yards, they raised the most unearthly yell and rode right across the lines, firing at us and we at them. The order was given to close up, the prisoners were closely surrounded and we moved on up the Walla Walla River to the point we had started for. The Indians were now pressing us from all points.”

“The whole command was here divided, a part sent out as a strong picket guard, to keep the Indians away while the workingmen were making a stockade of cottonwood timber split in long slabs and set up endwise in a trench about two feet deep, the timber reaching up about seven feet above the ground. The corral was finished in an inconceivable short time. Men, who were never known to work before, worked now. But when the stockade was partly finished, the
Indians came in strong numbers to make a charge to rescue their chief, but the picket guard stood them off valiantly.”

9: Captain Davis Layton (Company H) Official Report: “About 8 o’clock AM we left camp on our way up the Walla Walla River. Had not moved more than three-quarters of a mile when the Indians fired at two men who were driving some loose cattle. Orders were then given to charge them, which were immediately obeyed. Here commenced a running fight of ten (10) miles, in which a few of our men were wounded. After chasing in pursuit of them ten (10) miles, our horses began to fail, and the Indians began to increase in number. By this time the command was all up to a place now called Fort Bennett (Larocque Cabin).”

33: Sergeant William G. Haley (Company H) Account: “The command took up their line of march and had gone but a mile when we discovered the smoke of Indian fires ahead, and the Indians scampering over the hills, and soon firing commenced. Company H, commanded by Captain Layton, and the Wasco Company (B), rushed ahead, following up fighting for ten (10) miles; the remainder of the command hastened on within about a mile of the engagement, when finding that assistance must be furnished those ahead. The fighting continued till in the night. Soon after we had repaired to camp, a few stray shots alarmed the camp. The fires we immediately extinguished, and all the men who could be spared from camp, we put on guard, while one half slept, the other guarded.”

3: Private George Washington Miller (Company H) Account: “On the morning of the 7th of December, 1855, commenced the Battle of Walla Walla. Companies B (Wasco County) and H (Linn County) crossed the Touchet and formed a line on the plain; Companies I (Benton County) and K (Marion County) soon fell into line, Companies A (Multnomah County) and F (Marion County) being ordered to take charge of the baggage train and prisoners. The Indians had been gathering in considerable numbers on our left and front, and before any movements were made, the report of a gun was heard on our left. This seemed to be the signal to charge, as the companies formed in line and dashed forth, opening a heavy fire on the enemy as they ran. A running fight ensued across the hills eastward to the Walla Walla River, the volunteers pursuing the Indians at the top of their speed, shooting whenever an opportunity presented itself. Those having the fastest horses sped away, leaving others behind, until they became widely scattered. The horse I rode was a small, heavy-set Cayuse, which seemed, when jumping over the sagebrush, to be going up one side and down the other. The consequences were, I didn’t get along as fast as some, but I soon found I was nearing the front from the sound of musketry and the deafening yells of the Indians.”
NOTE: Here exists, between Colonel Kelly’s report and Private G. W. Washington’s memory, a difference of opinion on just what Companies crossed the Touchet River first to form “a line on the plain”. Kelly says “Companies H (Linn County) and K (Marion County) crossed the Touchet, leading the column on the route to Whitman’s valley, and when formed on the plain were joined by Company B (Wasco County).” Private G. W. Washington says “Companies B (Wasco County) and H (Linn County) crossed the Touchet and formed a line on the plain; Companies I (Benton County) and K (Marion County) soon fell into line.”

“The forces of the enemy kept increasing in numbers from the time the skirmish commenced until we reached the La Roche (Larocque) cabin, on the Walla Walla River, while the forces of the volunteers were growing less. Here the enemy became more stubborn and slow to move along. This gave the volunteers who had been left behind an opportunity to come to the front. The Indians were driven almost at the point of the bayonet only a short distance above the La Roche (Larocque) cabin, two (2) miles below Whitman’s station, and eight (8) miles from the place where the fight commenced.”

35: Private George Hunter (Company I) Account: “The next morning as we moved up the river toward Whitman’s station, our Company I, in ascending a bank of the stream (the east side of the Touchet River), (we) were greeted by 200-300 Indians mounted on fleet ponies. They formed a circle, were riding at their utmost speed yelling and shooting at us as they approached, careening over on the sides of their horses for shelter from our squirrel guns, yagers (1855 Mississippi Rifles), revised flint locks and shotguns...we had a running fight (up the Walla Walla River Valley).”

“At the mouth of Dry Creek the Indians made a stand on a high knoll, and were setting the grass on fire (???, In December???), when some of the boys dashed through the bushes and into their midst, while others had gone around the knoll, thus forcing them to still further retreat, which they continued to Frenchtown (and Larocque’s cabin).”

NOTE: The “high knoll” for which Private George Hunter mentions above, is still there today just south of Highway 12 going east just before entering Lowden, Washington.

17: Historic Sketches: “As the Indians fell back, their numbers increased, and they fired a few shots at the volunteers from the brush on Dry Creek just below where the railroad now crosses that stream.”
17: Packer (for packtrain) Louis McMorris:

From an interview given to Frank Gilbert by Packer Louis McMorris and confirmed by Private G. W. Miller (Company H) and Private William Nixon (Company I):

“The hospital supplies were packed on mules in charge of McMorris, and had just reached the La Rocque (Larocque) cabin where the first engagement had taken place. The surgeon in charge had decided to use it as a hospital in which to place those wounded in the battle, and McMorris was unpacking the mules.”

“Near it the unfortunate Lieutenant J. M. Burrows (Co. H) lay dead, and several wounded were being attended to. The combatants had passed on up the valley, and the distant detonation of their guns could be heard.”

17: Historic Sketches: “Their (the Indians) line extended from the hills at the north, across the flat to the river (at the Larocque cabin site).”

NOTE: The Larocque cabin...There were a few other names in reference to the “cabin” for which the 1st Regiment, Oregon Mounted Volunteers and other original sources referred to, such as: “LaRoyer, LaRogue and LaRoche”...the true French name is “Larocque”. It was also referred to as Fort Bennett in honor of Captain Charles Bennett, Company F (Marion County) who was killed on the first day of the battle, December 7, 1855.
The fight at the Larocque cabin and the death of Chief Peopeomoxmox

1: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “When the volunteers reached this point (Larocque cabin), there were not more than forty (40) or fifty (50) men, being those mounted upon the fastest horses. Upon these, the Indians poured a murderous fire from the brushwood and willows along the river, and from the sage bushes along the plain, wounding a number of the volunteers. The men fell back. The moment was critical. They were commanded to cross the fence which surrounds LaRoque’s (Larocque) field and charge upon the Indians in the brush. In executing this movement, Lieutenant Burrows of Company H was killed, and Captain Munson of Company I, Sergeant-Major Isaac Miller, and G. W. Smith of Company B, were wounded.”

NOTE: Colonel James Kelly has Lieutenant John Burrows, Company H, killed AFTER the command reached the Larocque cabin where as Sergeant Alvin Roberts, Company A, has him killed BEFORE reaching the cabin.

“A dispatch having been sent to Captain Wilson of Company A, to come forward, he and his company came up on a gallop, dismounted at a slough, and with fixed bayonets, pushed on through the brush. In the course of a half an hour, Captain Bennett was on the ground with Company F, and with this accession the enemy were steadily driven forward for two miles, when they took possession of a farm house (Tellier cabin located south of Whitman’s station on the north side of the Walla Walla River) and close fence, in attempting to carry which Captain Bennett of Company F, and private Kelso of Company A, were killed.”

“A howitzer found at Fort Walla Walla, under charge of Captain Wilson, by this time, was brought to bear upon the enemy. Four rounds were fired when the piece bursted, wounding Captain Wilson. The Indians then gave way at all points, and the house and fence were seized and held by the volunteers and the bodies of our men recovered. These positions were held by us until nightfall when the volunteers fell slowly back and returned unmolested to camp (at Larocque’s cabin site).”

2. Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “Peopeomoxmox and his companions were in the mean time closely guarded and bought up to our camp at La Rogue’s (Larocque’s). All this time they were exceedingly restless and uneasy. At the latter place, as I was passing from the right to the left wing of the regiment, I went by where the prisoners were. The sergeant of the guard said to me that they were greatly excited while the battle was raging, and that he feared they would escape while the men were out in the field. I told him to tie all, and if they resisted or attempted to escape, to kill them.”
“I then rode on, when about two hundred yards distant heard the report of firearms at the place where the prisoners were. I did not stop, but passed on to where the left wing was engaged with the enemy, and was shortly afterwards informed that when my order to tie the prisoners was about being carried into effect, they resisted, one of them having drawn a concealed knife from his coat sleeve, with which he wounded Sergeant Major Isaac Miller in the arm. Pee-pee-mox-mox attempted to wrest a gun from the hands of one of our men, when he was knocked down with the butt of the rifle and put to death, as were also all the other prisoners who attempted to escape, except one, a Nez Perce youth who made no resistance, and who was tied.”

7: Assistant Surgeon J. R. Bates Official Report: “The officer of the guard was ordered by Colonel Kelly to tie the prisoners, as it would take more men to guard them than was to spare at the time, if not tied. They refused to be tied, Pee-pee-mox-mox and one other drawing their knives (which they had concealed about their persons), and endeavored to make their escape; but before they could make their escape, or do much injury with their knives, they were killed by the guard there, and then they were all killed except one Nez Perce boy, who did not show fight, consequently was saved.”

6: Lieutenant Charles B. Pillow (Company A) Official Report: “The cause of Pee-pee-mox-mox’s death and his comrades was that they refused to be confined and showed fight.”

37: Sergeant A. B. Roberts (Company A) Account: “(At the Larocque cabin) we still held our prisoners, Pee-peo-mox-mox and his comrades. The prisoners, who were under Corporal (Jacob) Fell, Company A, and a detail of 20 men, were becoming very restless, giving the guard much trouble to hold them.”

“Colonel Kelly was seen riding by and Corporal Fell sent to him the condition of the prisoners and asked what he should do with them? The Colonel sent word to “tie them and if they won’t be tied…kill them.”

“Ropes were brought to the circle. The prisoners evidently thought now was the last chance to escape. They began grabbing knives and pistols and struggling with the guard for their guns, all was a mass of deadly strife and confusion, but in less than minutes all was still and the chief and his followers lay still in death. Many of the guard were wounded by knife cuts or gunshot but none were killed.”

“Sergeant-Major Miller, who was Officer-of-the-day was wounded in the arm; Corporal Fell received a bad slash across the breast; and Private Adam Stump, Company A, was saved from death…One after another they were stricken down the instant they succeeded in obtaining or were struggling to obtain the possession of some deadly weapon.”
NOTE: It is not clear just where Sergeant A. B. Roberts places the death of Chief Peopeomoxmox in the fight, but the following is his account of the Tellier Cabin skirmish:

“The advance had pushed on some distance (up the valley). (Captain Orlando Humason's) Company B had taken possession of the bluff of a nearby plain (to the OMV's left) where they had hurriedly excavated rifle pits where they were receiving and vigorously repulsing the charging of some 200 Indians, which was again and again repeated with serious loss of life to the Indians at each charge.”

“(Captain Alfred Wilson's) Company A and (Captain Charles Bennett's) Company F pushed on through the timber and captured two more of those cabins held by the enemy. Another cabin was in our way (the Tellier cabin). Captain Bennett of Company F suggested a charge on the place which was full of Indians with their guns sticking out of every window and cracks between the logs. Captain Bennett called to his men and Company A's to follow him up a little slough, bordered by small willow, until very nearly opposite the house and as he raised his head above the bush, a crack of a rifle was heard and the Captain received a bullet just below the eye ranging upward which fell him dead.”

“His followers began to retreat when Private Eleazer B. Kelso (Company A) received a rifle ball also just below the eye and he fell. Captain Wilson's company having now advanced on the right (side of the cabin), the Indians (then) retreated from the cabin and the bodies were recovered.”

“A large body of Indians had now gathered on a bluff (to the OMV's left) about a quarter of a mile away, which in the greasewood knolls intervening the Indians were thickly hidden. A “greasewood knoll” is a little hummock or bunch of earth usually about a rod in diameter and two feet high, rising from a level alkali flat, with one or two clumps of greasewood bushes growing on top. This shrub has growth in this locality of about 2 feet. This you will observe is a most ideal shelter for hostile forces to approach each other to a very close range.”

“Now to dislodge that large body of Indians on the bluff (to our left) or the edge of the plains, was not within the reach of our guns, so Captain Wilson sent me, Sergeant Alvin B. Roberts, Company A, to camp with orders to bring up that brass howitzer and ammunition we obtained hidden under the floor at old Fort Walla Walla. This gun was about three feet long with a bore of about 4 inches in diameter.”
“Upon returning with the gun, Captain Wilson called for 2 men to carry it as far out towards the Indians on the bluff as possible. Private Sam Holcomb, Company A, helped me. We lugged the heavy howitzer out towards the assembled crowd on the bluff for several hundred yards, when the bullets began coming so close and so fast that we dumped the old thing on to a **greasewood knoll** and dumped ourselves down behind and out of sight.”

“Captain Wilson with a small detachment was creeping cautiously along among the knolls, each or nearly all carrying some of the necessary supplies, balls, powder and wadding, while the Captain carried a stick of about 4 feet in length on which he could place some burning taper or match for firing the gun.”

“Crawling up to the howitzer, as it was thrown on the knoll, he very carefully pointed it toward the Indians on the bluff, and fired it off. No special effect upon the onlookers seemed to have been produced. Private Holcomb and I raised the gun on end and hurriedly poured down its (barrel) about two quarts of powder and then some old rags and then 10-15 pounds of ounce balls and some more rags and dropped it ready for the Captain and then dropped ourselves into shelters as the Indians were firing upon us. The Captain then leveled or pointed the gun towards the crowd of Indians on the bluff and “lit the fuse. The howitzer ran back about 20 feet, plowing a furrow 8-10 inches deep. On the hill or bluff, Indians were seen to fall from their horses and were seen cavorting around. Hastily reloading the gun, the same result followed at both ends.”

“Again it was reloaded, the bullets as usual whistling by us...hastening to place the gun in a position to bear directly on the enemy, the Captain again assumed his usual position, laying flat on the ground some 6 feet away, he reached out his fire brand and BANG went the gun. Captain Wilson drooped from somewhere, his head against my side, his face covered with blood and dirt...he recovered.”

“The howitzer!...Where was it?...The only evidence of it having been here was a hole in the top of the **greasewood knoll** about 18 inches deep and 2 feet across. 20 inches of the muzzle laid some 25 feet in one direction, and a short piece of the breach some distance in the opposite.”

**NOTE:**  *Has any of these artifacts ever been recovered? Interesting.*

“The evening was closing upon us...we gathered up our dead and withdrew to camp 1-1/2 mile in the rear. It is now dark and all were preparing supper as no one had (eaten) since early in the morning. Our campfires showed the busy throng of specters flitting about the dark when the enemy’s bullets (started) whistling through our camp. Coffee pots were upset and frying pans were kicked in every direction (as all the fires were put out). There was an apparent neglect of duty in not placing out a picket guard. Orders were given to proceed to the front and take positions to repel any further attack. About 20 acres surrounding our camp was enclosed by a rail fence and at this fence we were stationed each
man with his gun through a crack and there watching carefully towards the enemy we laid the long and chilly night.”

“In plain view and in our hearing, scenes were being enacted and acts being performed that would send a thrill of horror to those even who had spent half a lifetime amid scenes of danger and strife. Before us and just out of gunshot range they burned the next cabin to us and around it the Indians were holding the horrible war dance where several hundred Indians in war dress and pain circled around it in the most fantastic fashion of singing and howling at the top of their voices.”

**41, 45: Corporal Amos Underwood (Company B) Account:** “About 2 o'clock in the afternoon we stopped at a Frenchman's place by the name of Ramo. As we rode we saw five of our men lying on their backs in a row, all fine looking men. We recognized Henry Crow of Albany, Lieutenant Burroughs (Burrows) of Linn County and Captain Bennett.”

**NOTE:** Here Corporal Underwood mistakens the name of the Frenchman’s cabin plus they arrived with the Indian prisoners after the initial fighting took place and the deaths of several men occurred.

“(Private) Neal McFarland (Company B), was standing by the fence, and just as he raised his gun to shoot at an Indian down in the creek bottom, bang went the Indian’s gun, knocking off the tube and hammer of Mac's gun. The officers were all out in the fight. I saw (Nathan) Olney coming along and I said to him, 'What shall I do with these prisoners?’ He said ‘Tie them up and put them in the house’. I then ordered the men to take them off (their horses) and tie them.”

“The chief replied ‘No tie men; tie dogs and horses.’ The boys pulled them off their horses and commenced to tie them. Champoeg Jim resisted and cut old Ike Miller (Sergeant-Major Isaac Miller, Company B) in the arm. Then all began to fight and rear, some one grabbed a gun and shot old Jim, and soon there were 8 or 10 guns going bang, bang, bang. Down they all went except the 15 year old boy who was climbing up my stirrup leather.”

“The crowd made a rush at the boy, who held to me, and the excited men pointed their guns towards him. I told (Private Warren) Keith to not let them shoot the boy and he pushed their guns to one side; two or three of them were discharged at my side. Finally we got them quieted, and then I told them that the boy was a Nez Perce Indian with a Cayuse mother. When all was quiet and settled, I told the boy to stay here with the cooks and not try to run off, and he would be all right.”
“(Nathan) Olney had gone about 100 yards away when he heard the shooting. He came back and as he rode up he drew his revolver and fired a shot into Peopeomoxmox”

NOTE: Private Samuel Warfield, Company H, was asked in an interview by Clarence L. Andrews (42): “Then Mox-Mox was not shot?”… “No he was not. His body was examined all over after the battle and he had no bullet holes in him.”

43: ‘55ER (Company F) Account: “Just when the Indians were making their charge, the prisoners made a break to join those on the outside. The guards killed them…they could do nothing else.”

“After we halted, and had the picket guard placed, Burris (Captain John Burrows) and (Private Henry) Crow of Linn County, Company H, and Captain Bennett went up a little canebrake swale close to a large pile of rails and two or three corn cribs to try to get some good dead shots at close range, but they were killed before they could empty their guns. Bennett and Crow were lying across each other; Bennett beneath…their guns close to their hands.”

“The canebrake draw was about six feet lower than the level ground above and a perpendicular offset, dropping into this draw, and when they were killed they never struggled and sank down out of sight, the Indians were afraid venture for fear of danger.”

“The killed were buried in the stockade trench, by taking up the stakes, deepening the trench, placing the bodies in, rolled in blankets, then resetting the stakes above them.”

“We had nothing to eat from early morning until the Indians had apparently gone. This was after dark. We were then called in from picket duty inside the stockade, and had a row of camp fires, bread baking, meat frying, coffee boiling and were in a fair way to have a good supper in ten minutes more when we were startled by the screeching and yelling of apparently 100 Indians, accompanied by a flight of arrows and a discharge of guns. Then all was quiet until daylight. The fires were all put out, bread, meat and coffee wasted, and a general fast till next morning.”

9: Captain Davis Layton (Company H) Official Report: “Colonel Kelly was inquired of what should be done with the prisoners. His reply was to tie them. In attempting this, the Indians tried to make their escape; one drew a butcher knife and stabbed a man in the arm. Pee-pee-mox-mox undertook to seize a gun from Mr. (Samuel) Warfield, Company H, whereupon said Warfield struck him such a blow upon the back of the head he knocked him to the ground. He then raised to his knees, when a second blow from the same gun brought him to the ground again. Several guns were discharged at him and his life was soon
ended. All the others were killed except one, who did not resist or show fight. This was a Nez Perce Indian."

**33: Sergeant William G. Haley (Company H) Account:** “When finding that assistance must be furnished those ahead, the guard went to tie the prisoners, who (with the exception of one Nez Perce, who was saved), with knives gave a desperate resistance; but a few shots and strokes with guns, brought the brave chieftain, and his comrades to the earth. The fighting continued till in the night.”

**3: Private George Washington Miller (Company H) Account:** “By this time their (the Indians) whole force became engaged in the battle, and estimates were made by different ones, ranging from 600 up to 2000. My own estimate, put down in my diary at the time, was 1000. Colonel Kelly, in his official report, estimated the number of warriors engaged in the fight at 600.”

“From Governor Stevens’ report (1000 to 1200 warriors) my estimate is low; but this as it may, their numbers became so overwhelmingly in excess of ours that our forces were checked.”

“The hills were on our left and the Walla Walla River on our right. Here they formed a line across the plain, from the foothills to the river, it being partially covered with brush, while the hills were covered with mounted hostiles, who played an active part, commanded by leaders of matchless skill and daring. Their purpose was to leave no foes to rise behind them; their policy was the policy of extermination; their flags were the scalps of our people, murdered in cold blood, whose gray locks floated from poles raised on every prominent point on the hills to our left, with a squad of those bloody fiends dancing the war dance around them.”

“From the brush on the plain and the timber on the river, they poured a murderous fire on the volunteers, who were compelled to fall back. This was the hottest place anywhere during the engagement. Here Henry Crow (Private: 1827-1855) and S. S. Van Hagerman fell mortally wounded and several others were wounded.”

“At this critical moment, Lieutenant J. M. Burrows (John M. Burrows) with a small detachment was ordered to cross the fence that surrounded the La Roche (Larocque) field and charged upon the Indians in the brush, the writer (George Washington Miller) being one of the number who crossed, and when only a few steps beyond the fence, the brave Burrows fell dead and Captain Munson (Lyman B. Munson: 1826-1884) and several others were wounded. A dispatch having been sent to Captain Wilson (Alfred V. Wilson: 1826-1859) of Company A to come forward, he and his company came at full speed, dismounted, and with fixed bayonets pushed their way through the brush, driving the enemy before them. In a short time, Captain Bennett with Company F was on hand, and with these reinforcements the Indians were driven about one (1) mile farther up the
Walla Walla River, where they took possession of a house (Tellier cabin, located south of Whitman Station and on the north side of the Walla Walla River) with a close built fence around it. In an attempt to dislodge them, Captain Bennett of Company F and Private Kelso (E. B. Kelso: 1831-1855) of Company A were killed."

NOTE: As with Colonel James Kelly, Private George Washington Miller has Lieutenant John Burrows, Company H, killed AFTER the command reached the Larocque cabin where as Sergeant Alvin Roberts, Company A, has him killed BEFORE reaching the cabin.

“Soon after this, a howitzer, found at Fort Walla Walla, was brought to bear upon them by Captain Wilson, but having nothing but a sand hill to lay the piece on, when firing the fourth round, it burst, wounding Captain Wilson, but dispersing the enemy from their stronghold. This was immediately followed up by the volunteers, and the bodies of Bennett and Kelso were recovered.”

“The baggage train and the flag of truce prisoners had already arrived at the La Roche (Larocque) cabin, which was used as a hospital.”

“Peopeomoxmox, with his stentorian voice, began to cheer up his warriors and encourage them to be brave, receiving from them at short intervals. Colonel Kelly had just rode from the front back to the hospital, when Frank Crabtree (Co. H) came in with his shoulder shattered and his arm dangling by his side, and reported Captain Layton (Co. H) (David Layton: 1822-1862) wounded, and surrounded with five or six others on the hills at the front.”

“Just at this critical moment the question was asked…”What shall be done with the prisoners?”…Colonel Kelly took the situation at once and said “My men are all needed at the front. Tie or kill them, I don’t care a damn which”…and rode back to the front.”

“Ropes were procured to tie the prisoners, but they refused, except one, a young Nez Perce, who crossed his hands and said he wanted to be tied. One very large Indian, known by the name of Wolf-Skin, who was very talkative and who tried to escape from the guard the night before, drew a large knife concealed in his legging, uttering a demon-like yell, and began to cut his way through the guard, wounding Sergeant-Major Isaac Miller (Co. H) (Officer of the day) severely in the arm.”
NOTE AND CLUE TO THE TIMEING OF CHIEF PEOPEOMOXMOX’S DEATH:
Colonel Kelly states in his report that Sergeant Major Isaac Miller was wounded during the initial battle at Larocque’s cabin. Sergeant A. B. Roberts and Privates G. W. Miller and George Hunter all agree to the fact that Sergeant Major Isaac Miller was also wounded while fighting with the prisoners who were trying to escape and thus were killed. This event occurred before the charge to the Tellier cabin.

“The others, except the Nez Perce boy who had been tied, were trying to make their way through the guards and escape to the hills, but their efforts were futile. It was only the work of a moment, brought on by their own remorsefulness hands, when they fell to the ground weltering in their gore.”

“The contest lasted till after sundown when the Indians withdrew and the volunteers returned to the LaRoque’s (Larocque’s) cabin tired and hungry, having had nothing to eat since early morning. Camp fires were built, and camp kettles and coffee pots were hung over the blaze to prepare a scanty meal for the boys who had fought so nobly for us during the day. A guard of twenty were on their way up the hillside to be stationed on duty, when about 300 yards from camp a ball from the enemy’s gun came whizzing by. The wind from it was forcibly felt. Over went the camp kettles and coffee pots to extinguish the fires, and all hands were on guard till morning, the enemy firing a few shots into the camp during the night.”

42: Private Samuel Warfield (Company H) Account: “The fight was hot. The Indians felt confident. Mox-Mox shouted orders to his Indians and felt sure they could whip the soldiers. Orders were again made to tie the Indians in camp, and to put them in a cabin near by as every man was needed at the front. The Nez Perce crossed his hands to be tied….As the men went towards (the Indians), one struck a knife at an officer who was standing by with his arm in a sling, wounding him in the other arm. One of the guards shot him dead.”

“Almost at the same moment, Mox-Mox grabbed my gun and tried to take it away. He was strong and I had to trip him to get it away. As he fell, he let go of the gun and I jumped back and fired at him, but overshot him. He drew a knife from his legging and reached to catch hold of me as he rose, but before he could get up I struck him with my gun barrel and knocked him down and he lay there. The lick broke his skull.”

NOTE: Private Warfield was asked by his interviewer, Clarence Andrews (42), “Then Mox-Mox was not shot?”... “No, he was not. His body was examined all over after the battle and he had no bullet holes in him”... “Did the soldiers skin him and cut off his ears as I have heard they did.”... “No, but after the boys heard how they did with the guard at Fort Henrietta, they scalped every Indian they could, and I lifted old Mox-Mox’s hair.”... “I have heard that his scalp is in Salem in the Oregon Archives. Is that true?”...
“No. So many came to see it that I got tired of it and I buried it between my barn and a neighbor’s house, about half-way between. That is where it is still.”

NOTE: In a letter contained in (45) to Mr. (Private) John Hughes from Mr. (Private) H. F. Holden (both of Company F) dated April 18, 1903, Mr. Holden relates that “I also remember the incident of Dr. Shaw cutting off Peu-Peu-Mox-Mox’s ears. I was an eye witness of this, although I never said much about it.” They were “preserved in a jar…and were on exhibition in Salem for several years following the war (45).”

35: Private George Hunter (Company I) Account: “Here (Larocque’s cabin) they had arranged for the final struggle. 1000 or 1200 Indians were posted in the timber along the river and across the valley to the foothills. Coming up, we saw at once that the retreat had ended, and the fight must begin in earnest. A point of brush that extended out into the flat some distance, and a fence that a Frenchman (Larocque) had built around a cabin (Larocque’s cabin) and piece of bottom land, afforded the only shelter for our men; and behind these they took position as fast as they came up, dismounted and secured their horses.”

“Captain Munson, Company I, then came up, jerked up the Company flag and rushed forward shouting for his company to charge. When we got 30-40 yards from the bushes, the Indians raised from behind the sage-brush and opened fire upon us. About this time Sergeant-Major Miller came up and ordered a retreat. Captain Munson got shot in the arm and dropped the flag. Our men seeing the danger in leaving the point of brush, came back and met the Indians hand-to-hand, with knives, pistols and guns. There were 5-6 killed here (among them Lieutenant Burrows) and many wounded. About this time, the rest of the command came up with the supply-train and the Indian prisoners, and encamped at the (Larocque) cabin before mentioned…the cabin was used for a hospital.”

“While the guards were forming camp, they concluded to tie the (Indian) prisoners. One named Wolf-skin jerked out a knife he had concealed, and stabbed Sergeant-Major Miller in the arm…all but the (one) Nez Perces were killed (including Chief Peopeomoxmox).”

“Colonel Kelly soon came on the grounds and posted our men, had rifle pits dug across the flat and to the foot of the hill. During the rest of the first day, we fought from our rifle pots and behind trees and bushes. About half a mile above our hospital cabin (Larocque’s cabin) and camp was another cabin (Tellier cabin) which the Indians occupied. Along toward evening the Captain of one of the companies (Captain Wilson) brought up the cannon we had taken from Fort (Walla Walla), and trained it on this cabin, but after two or three shots were fired the gun burst, killing or wounding two three.”
“The night of the first day, the Indians fired into our camp, causing us to extinguish our fires.”

4: Captain A. V. Wilson (Company A) Account: “We had driven them within three-quarters of a mile of (Whitman’s) the station, when night compelled us to fall back to our train.”

17: Packer (for packtrain) Louis McMorris Account:

_From an interview given to Frank Gilbert by packer Louis McMorris and confirmed by Private G. W. Miller (Company H) and Private William Nixon (Company I):

“The flag of truce prisoners were there under guard, and everyone seemed electrified with suppressed excitement. A wounded man (Private Frank Crabtree, Company H) came in with his shattered arm dangling at his side, and reported Captain Bennett killed at the front. This added to the excitement, and the attention of all was more or less attracted to the wounded man, when someone said “Look out, or the Indians (prisoners) will get away!” At this, seemingly, everyone yelled “Shoot’em! Shoot’em!” and on the instant there was a rattle of musketry on all sides.”

“It was over in a minute, and three (3) of the five (5) prisoners were dead; another was wounded, knocked senseless and supposed to be dead, who afterwards recovered consciousness, and was shot to put him out of misery, while the fifth was spared because he was Nez Perce.”

“The prisoner offering resistance was a powerful Willamette Indian called “Jim” or Wolf Skin, who having a knife secreted, upon his person, drew it and fought desperately.”

“I (McMorris) could hear that knife whistle in the air as he brandished it, or struck at the soldier with whom he was struggling. It lasted but a moment, when another soldier, approaching from behind, dealt him a blow on the heard with a gun that broke in his skull and stretched him apparently lifeless upon the ground.”

NOTE: Gilbert says “The question is a disputed one as to weather it was the Chief or the big Indian who drew a knife and fought so desperately. All those interviewed, who saw the transaction, except one, affirm positively that they know that it was not the Chief (Peopeomoxmox). The other gentlemen interviewed, who witnessed the affair, state that it was a refusal on the part of Peopeomoxmox to be tied that started the struggle, which was instantly followed by the massacre.” (17);

“All were scalped in a few minutes, and later the body of Yellow Bird, the great Walla Walla Chief (Peopeomoxmox), was mutilated.”
THE NEZ PERCE BOY

Just who was the Nez Perce boy for who was “captured” and held prisoner by the Oregon Mounted Volunteers?

A search was done by contacting three Indian Reservations namely the Colville, Nez Perce and Umatilla, to see if by chance there was any written history about this young Nez Perce boy who may have survived his later years and for who may have had a written history about him.

To date, no one from the three reservations has said anything about it.

NOTES

In reviewing the Muster Rolls for the 1st Regiment Oregon Mounted Volunteers, the spellings of certain participants may have been spelled wrong in the above narratives.

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The volunteers’ loss for this day, December 7, 1855, was as follows (11, 33):

**Killed:**
Captain Charles Bennett, Company F (Marion County) (Shot under the left eye and the ball came out at the back of the head) (was buried beneath Fort Bennett’s (Larocque’s cabin) stockade according to Colonel Kelly); **NOTE:** According to The Oregon Statesman dated January 5, 1856, Captain Bennett’s body was taken back to The Dalles and was to be taken to Salem, Oregon Territory, for reburial. Also according to the A. B. Roberts Account (37), Sergeant Roberts escorted the bodies of Captain Bennett, Lieutenant Burrows and Private Crow back to their homes at Salem and Albany in the Willamette Valley.

Lieutenant John M. Burrows/Barrow, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the breast);
Private Eleaazer B. “Andrew” Kelso, Company A (Multnomah County) (Shot in the face, Died December 8, 1855);
Private Henry Crow, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the lower part of the abdomen and died December 8, 1855);
Private Simon (S) L. Van Hagerman, Company I (Benton County) (Shot through the thigh, which cut the artery).

**Wounded:**
Captain Alfred V. Wilson, Company A (Multnomah County) (Right side of the face burned by the bursting of one of the howitzers);
Captain David (Davis) Layton, Company H (Linn County) (Shot in the left leg, below the knee);
Captain Lymon B. Munson/Monson, Company I (Benton County) (Shot through the right arm);
Sergeant-Major Isaac Miller, Company H (Linn County) (Shot in the right arm and out on the left with a knife, ball extracted December 12, 1855);
Private Frank (Francis) M. Duval, Company A (Multnomah County) (Shot in the wrist, ball extracted);
Private George W. Smith, Company B (Wasco County) (Shot in the right leg);
Private John B. Gervais, Company K (Marion County) (Shot through the right arm, bones broken all to pieces);
Private Thomas J. Payne, Company H (Linn County) (Shot in the right arm, ball extracted December 12, 1855);
Private Frank Crabtree, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the left shoulder);
Private A. M. Addington, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the a posteriori, and right thigh and was jabbed in the eye with an Indian gun).
DOCUMENTS USED


3. Walla Walla Daily Union, December 7 and 8, 1905, and the Tacoma Tribune, October 28, 1856: an account by George Washington Miller, Company H (Linn County, 1st Reg. Oregon Mounted Volunteers);

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);


Data 8 and 9 are almost identical reports!

11. The Oregonian, December 29, 1855, Letter to T. J. Dryer from B. F. Dowell;


17. “Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman and Garfield Counties” by Frank Gilbert, 1882 (Includes some first hand accounts as told by battle participants) (FHA/SA);

33. The Oregon Statesman, January 1, 1856: December 15, 1855 letter, W. G. H. (1st Sergeant William G. Haley, Company H, Linn County) to Bush (Editor of the Oregon Statesman), (FHA);

35. “Reminiscences of an Old Timer” by George Hunter, Company I (Benton County), First Regiment, Oregon Mounted Volunteers, 1887 (FHA);


41. “The Slaying of Pio-Pio-Mox-Mox (Excerpts Corporal Amos Underwood’s, Company B, Account, see #45)” by J. F. Santee, Washington Historical Quarterly, 1934, (FHA);

42. “Warfield’s Story of Peo-Peo-Mox-Mox (Private Samuel Warfield’s, Company H, Account” by Clarence Andrews, Washington Historical Quarterly, 1934, (FHA);

43. “The Cayuse War” by ‘55ER (Company F), The Morning Oregonian, March 1, 1897 (Also 23-B) (FHA);

45. “Mr. Amos Underwood’s Story of the Capture and Death of Peu-Peu-Mox-Mox” by Amos Underwood (Company B), Ladd and Bush Quarterly, 1914, pgs. 4-7 (Corporal Amos Underwood, Company B, Account (FHA);