

CHAPTER 8

SECOND DAY OF THE BATTLE OF WALLA WALLA

(As of February 28, 2011)

December 8, 1855 (Saturday):

1: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “Early on the morning of the 8th, the Indians appeared with increased forces, amounting to fully six hundred (600) warriors. They were posted as usual in the thick brush by the river, among the *sage bushes and sand knolls*, and on the surrounding hills. This day Lieutenant (Charles) Pillow with Company A and Lieutenant Hannon (Archimedes Harmon) with Company H, were ordered to take and hold the brush skirting the river and the sage bushes on the plain. Later Lieutenant (A. M.) Fellows with Company F, was directed to take and keep the possession of the point at the foot of the hill. Lieutenant’s (John) Jeffries with Company B, and Lieutenant (Charles B.) Hand with Company I and Captain Cornoyer with Company K, were posted on three points on the hills with orders to maintain them and to assail the enemy on other points of the same hills. As usual, the Indians were driven from their positions, although they fought with skill and bravery.”

23 (H) and 34: Colonel James Kelly Official Report: “The loss of the Indians must be very great as their killed alone during the 2 days can not be less than 50 men. Among them Peopeomoxmox. He was taken prisoner by my command on the 5th near his camp on the Touchet (River) and during the battle yesterday made an attempt to escape and in doing so was killed together with **four (4) others** who were made prisoners. Tomorrow we will renew the battle and I regret to say that we are not in a situation to repel the attack of the Indians with that vigor which is desired. This arises from our scarcity of ammunition and the broken down condition of our horses. The animals have become so poor and jaded that it’s impossible to make a successful charge against the Indians who are mounted on fleet horses.”

“We are therefore compelled in a measure, to act on the defense of our present position which we are fortifying by making a stockade fort. Our ammunition will be exhausted, I fear, with another day’s fighting and unless we can procure a supply from Fort Henrietta, our position will be critical indeed. Our provisions, we only have enough for about 3 days. I must insist on supplies of all kinds being sent forward at once as I do not intend to abandon the position until the last extreme. At another time I will be more detailed.”

4: Captain A. V. Wilson (Company A) Account: “At daylight on the 8th we saw the enemy within four hundred (400) yards of our camp in large force. An engagement commenced immediately and continued during the day. The enemy were driven back a mile from their position, but they fought with desperation. Darkness closed over the battlefield, and our brave troops fell back to camp. Our loss was in wounded, Jesse Fleming, Company A (dying on December 13, 1855); Sturtevant (John Sturdevant), Company B; Jasper Snooks (Casper Snook), (Nathan) Fry and Bluford Miller, Company H.”

NOTE: *Bluford Miller was a member of Company F (Marion County).*

37: Sergeant A. B. Roberts (Company A) Account: “As dawn...broke over the eastern horizon, hundreds of the Red Skins were seen in long lines heading out and taking possession of the most favorable positions...for a renewal of the conflict.”

“We, Company A, (and some of Company H) soon pushed out and charged upon a strong position occupied by us the previous day but now occupied by the Indians (near the river). After a severe struggle regaining the position in this projecting point or bit of timber, we lost two men by serious wounds and one death.”

“(While this, the above, was going on to the right, the Indians left, in the timber near the river) The other important position gained by the enemy in their morning move was the fortified bluff (to the left, the Indians right, in the hill region) where Company B and detachments from others had made open rifle pits in its face on our side while the Indians occupied the level plain beyond. This position the enemy seemed to think was impregnable judging from the many and unsuccessful charges they had made upon that point the day previous. And so they were prompt in taking possession in the early morning and with great caution they secured quantities of bunchgrass and laid it in the face of the rifle pits. After awhile, Company B charged upon the Indians in the pits and many Indians fell dead. After a few hours, the Indians again charged the volunteers on horse-back but as before, were driven back. The conflict slowed down about 10 o'clock AM.”

“About 1 o'clock, while I, Sergeant A. B. Roberts, Company A, was enjoying some “beans”, a messenger came with the startling report that the Indians had rushed on Companies A and H (who were on the right in the timber near the river) and had driven them from their position.”

“Companies A and some of H were in a strip or point of timber running out from the river timber for some distance and opposite to it at a distance of 50-100 yards across a grass flat was other timber in which the Indians held position. A large body of Indians had accumulated there and making a charge across this open

flat had driven our men out of the timber to shelter in the **greasewood and rye grass bunches.**”

“As reinforcements of 40-50 men reached or neared our old position, we took in the situation at once and I ordered or led our bunch of boys past this point of timber and made a drive across the open toward the timber where the Indians had been in position. While Company A was close at their front, this daring crowd was closing down on their rear. This they could not stand and the Indians ran back across the open field to regain their old position, which was now partly occupied, and they were also followed by our company who now with us held equal positions with the enemy in this timber, and a match of sharp shooting continued the balance of the day.”

“As evening closed upon us, we returned to camp carrying one dead comrade and three wounded. In our counter charge, Mr. (Jessie) Fleming, a nice middle aged farmer who lived a few miles out from Portland lost his life.”

NOTE: *Private Jessie Fleming, who was mortally wounded in this conflict, died December 13, 1855.*

“This night, I Sergeant A. B. Roberts, Company A, was ordered to take 7 men and guard the river crossing all night which we did.”

5: Private Plympton Kelly (Company A) Account: “The Indians made their appearance early in the morning. There was some hot fighting today. Jesse Flemming was mortally wounded in the evening. Nothing has been done today in the way of driving the Indians from their positions. The Colonel commenced to fortify our camp by pickets and ditches. There has been found deposits of potatoes, corn and wheat at this place.”

33: Sergeant William G. Haley (Company H) Account: “By sunrise on the 8th, the battle was resumed. The yells of the proud savage was to be heard ringing through the valley. All ready, we waited. The thundering sound made by the rushing of their furious steeds (horses), mixed with the war whoop of the approaching red skins, summoned us speedily to places fortified by nature, where we could meet and check them and warned us that a desperate battle was before us. All day long the keen crack of the rifle, and the coarser discharge of the muskets and yaugers (Model 1855 Mississippi Rifles) was to be heard; and it was not till dark that the red man gave up the chase for the day, or the pale faces found leisure to return to quarters. Today there must have been 500 or 600 Indians in actual contest, while our forces engaged could not have exceeded 200, as a good many were attending to the sick and wounded, and several were working on the fort.”

3: Private George Washington Miller (Company H) Account: “Early on the morning of the 8th, a hasty meal was prepared and partly eaten when the Indians came with increased forces, retaking all the positions they were driven from the day before. Lieutenant Charles Pillow with Company A, and **Lieutenant Adolphus Brice Hannah**, with Company H, were ordered to charge upon and drive them from the brush on the plain and the timber skirting the river, and to hold these positions if possible. Lieutenant (A. M.) Fellows with Company F, Lieutenant John T. Jeffreys with Company B, Lieutenant (Charles B.) Hand with Company I, and Captain Cornoyer with Company K, were ordered to take possession of the most available points on the hills, and assail the enemy at other places if practicable.”

“The Indians fought for their positions with all the skill and bravery of the previous day, especially in the brush, where they fought like demons. Three of Company H and one of Company A were wounded, but they were driven from their stronghold, where they shot with the skill and precision of a marksman.”

“I saw Lieutenant Hanan (Hand), while in a low place, pull off his coat, hang it on the end of a pole, then place his hat on top and raise it above the brush. In an instant the brush was mowed around the object by bullets from the enemies’ guns. But a few shots were exchanged after darkness came on, and the war hoop ceased as the Indians withdrew from the field. That night, a courier was sent with a dispatch to Fort Henrietta for Companies D (Washington County, 1st Reg., OMV) and E (Yamhill County, 1st Reg., OMV) to come in haste to the battlefield.”

35: Private George Hunter (Company I) Account: “(That morning) the Indians had already got into some of our **rifle pits**, and seemed disposed to remain there, but they changed their minds and took a back seat when our boys came up. Then the guns and revolvers were soon emptied, and so were the rifle pits. Then the scenes and routine of the day before were reenacted with slight diversification. We could drive them a short distance, when they would flank us, and we would have to fall back to our **rifle pits** and point of brush to protect our camp. We kept 20 or 30 mounted skirmishers on our extreme left (near the hills) to prevent their flanking us, our right being protected by the river and the timber. (The Indians) also kept skirmishers on their right, as their left was on the river.”

“In the afternoon, I (George Hunter) was in the timber with several others of our company. The command was scattered out, 10 or 12 in a place clear across the flat, and when the Indians would advance on any one point the others would rally to help. While in the timber we were under a heavy fire, but could only see the smoke from their guns, and they were shooting close. (It) was soon discovered that the Indians had grass on their heads and back. It was but a short time until the grass caps commenced flying (from the volunteers shooting at them); then the Indians made a rush for the point I (George Hunter) was at and the men, in accordance with orders, started to fall back to the next squad.”

12: Colonel James Kelly's Letter to Adjutant W. H. Farrar: Colonel Kelly informed Adjutant W. H. Farrar about the past two days of battle and the condition of the troops in a dispatch from Fort Bennett, and also informing the troops at Fort Henrietta to come with more supplies."

"Yesterday morning (December 7, 1855) as my command was on the line of march from the mouth of the Deschutes River to Whitman's valley, were attacked by 400 Indians, with whom we kept up a running fight all day, and for a distance of about **ten miles** along the Walla Walla River. At dark on yesterday (December 7, 1855), the battle was suspended, by the Indians withdrawing. We drove them from every position which they took, both in the **brushwood** along the river bank and on the adjacent hills."

"This morning (December 8, 1855) the battle was renewed and raged all day, at dark this evening the Indians again withdrew. The number of Indians who fought us has been considerably greater than yesterday, and is supposed to exceed 600. Tomorrow morning we expect a renewal of the battle, which in all probability will last for some time to come."

"I regret to say that yesterday (December 7, 1855) and today (December 8, 1855) we have lost many brave and gallant men, who fell nobly fighting for their country. Subjoined to this dispatch, you will find a list of the killed and wounded. The loss of the Indians must be great, as their killed alone, during the two days cannot be less than fifty (50) men."

"Among their killed yesterday, was the noted chief of the Walla Walla Valley, the celebrated Peu-peu-mox-mox. He was taken prisoner by my command on the 5th inst, near his camp on the Touchet (River), and during the battle yesterday, made an effort to escape. On doing so, he was killed, together with four (4) others who were made prisoners at the same time and who attempted to get away."

"Tomorrow as I said, we expect a renewal of the battle, and I regret to say that we are not in a situation to repel the attack of the Indians, with the rigor that is desired. This arises from our scarcity of ammunition and the broken down condition of our horses."

"The animals have become so poor and jaded, that it is impossible to make a successful charge against the Indians, who are mounted on fleet horses, and can easily escape. We are therefore, in a measure, compelled to act on a defense of our present position, which we are now fortifying, by making a stockade fort. Our ammunition will be exhausted, I fear, with another day's hard fighting, and unless we can procure a supply from Fort Henrietta, our position will be critical indeed."

“Of provisions, we have only enough for three days, but we expect to get a supply in two or three days. I must insist upon supplies of all kinds being sent forward at once, as I do not intend to abandon the position until the last extremity. By doing so, the enemy would be greatly emboldened.”

“This dispatch is written in great haste, and is exceeding brief, and I know will be unsatisfactory, but I wish to send the messenger forward immediately, so that he can reach Fort Henrietta by day light.”

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.

ABOVE NARRATIVES	MUSTER ROLLS	CORRECT NAME
Narcisse Cornoyer (Co. K)	Narcipe Connoyer	
Pillow (Co. A)	Pillows	
Hanan (Co. I)	Hand	
Sturtevant (Co. B)	Sturdevant	
Jasper Snooks (Co. H)	Casper Snook	
Flemming (Co. A)	Fleming	
Hannon (Co. H)	Harmon	

Lieutenant Adolphus Brice Hannah (1822-1860) is not listed on the Muster Rolls.

The volunteers' loss for this day, December 8, 1855, was as follows **(11, 33)**:

Killed:

None

Wounded:

Private Jesse Fleming, Company A (Multnomah County) (Shot through the neck) (mortally wounded, died December 13, 1855);

NOTE: *May have been buried at either Fort Bennett or Camp Curry. Plympton Kelly Diary, December 13, 1855.*

Private Joseph Sturtevant/Sturdevant/Sturdivant, Company B (Wasco County) (mortally wounded but survives) (Shot through the right breast);

Private Casper Snooks/Snook, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the right breast);

Private Nathan Fry, Company H (Linn County) (Shot through the left leg, ball extracted);

Private Bluford (Isaac) Miller, Company F (Marion County) (Shot in the left thigh).

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);
3. Walla Walla Daily Union, December 7 and 8, 1905, and the Tacoma Tribune, October 28, 1892: 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);
11. The Oregonian, December 29, 1855, Letter to T. J. Dryer from B. F. Dowell;
23. "**OMV's Fort Henrietta: On Winter Duty, 1855-56**" by J. W. Reese, Oregon State Historical Society, No. 66 (1965) (FHA):
 - A. Major Chinn's Account: House Journal, 1855-56;
 - B. Letter of a "55'er": The Oregonian, March 1, 1897;
 - C. Unknown, from a Diary Account a Letter from "Y" in Portland Oregon Weekly Times, December 8, 1855;
 - D. "A Volunteer Account", Democratic Standard, December 6, 1855;
 - E. Olney to Palmer; (Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs (National Archives microfilm, M-2, Roll 5), Letter Books, Vol. D, 370-371);
 - F. B. F. Dowell Account, The Oregonian, December 29, 1855
 - G. Journal of the House of Representatives of the Territory of Oregon, 1855-56 (Salem, 1856, appendix, 61 (Referred to as the "House Journal, 1855-56"));
 - H. Colonel Kelly's Dispatch of December 8, 1855, "House Journal, 1855-56, appendix, 90" (Also data #12):
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);

34. The Oregon Statesman, December 18, 1855: December 8, 1855 letter from Colonel Kelly to W. H. Farrer, (FHA);
35. **“Reminiscences of an Old Timer”** by George Hunter, Company I (Benton County), First Regiment, Oregon Mounted Volunteers, 1887 (FHA);
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);