

United States, Army, Washington Territorial Volunteers records

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First frames of roll 1.

Microcopies of Records in the Washington State Library

and

Washington State Archives

WASHINGTON TERRITORY VOLUNTEER RECORDS, 1854-1858

Roll 1

Contents and General Introduction

Governor's Correspondence, Incoming, Undated;
December 15, 1854 - April 30, 1856.

WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY

WASHINGTON STATE ARCHIVES

Olympia: 1976

INTRODUCTION

On the fifty rolls of this microcopy are reproduced the records of the Washington Territory Volunteers during the Indian War of 1855-1856. The records include documents relating to the Governor in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers; documents relating to the Adjutant General; correspondence of the Second Regiment of Volunteers; and documents relating to Quartermaster and Commissary Divisions. There are also thirty-nine rolls of accounting records, arranged by geographic location.

The role of Isaac I. Stevens as Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers is well documented on Rolls 1-4. These rolls also include the correspondence of Territorial Secretary Charles H. Mason, who served as Acting-Governor during most of 1855 while Stevens was on a treaty-making expedition east of the Cascade Mountains.

Some of the more important correspondents in this collection are:

Alden, James. Captain of the survey steamer Active.

Curry, George L. Governor of Oregon.

Davis, Jefferson. Secretary of War.

Douglas, James. Governor of Vancouver Island.

Ebey, Isaac N. Whidbey Island settler.

Gansevoort, Guert. Commander U.S. Sloop-of-War Decatur. Assumed command December 10, 1855.

Gibbs, George. Brigadier General, Washington Territorial Militia. Had previously served as a linguist with Governor Stevens' treaty parties.

Lander, Edward. Chief Justice, Washington Territory.

Lancaster, Columbia. Delegate to Congress from Washington Territory.

Mactavish, Dugald. Chief Factor, Hudson's Bay Co., Vancouver, W.T.

Rains, Gabriel J. Major U.S. Army, in command at Fort Vancouver in October 1855. Later appointed Brigadier General of Washington Territorial Militia.

Shaw, Benjamin F. Lieutenant Colonel Washington Volunteers.

Simmons, Michael T. Indian agent; one of the first settlers in Tumwater.

Sterrett, Isaac S. Commander U.S. Sloop-of-War Decatur. Preceded Guert Gansevoort.

Tolmie, William Fraser. Hudson's Bay Co. executive at Fort Nisqually.

Wright, George. Colonel U.S. Army; commanded 9th Infantry during Indian Wars.

The proceedings of three military commissions are of special interest. These commissions were convened to try Indian prisoners. The proceedings that are on this film are: at Camp Montgomery in November 1855; in Seattle in May 1856; and at The Dalles in June 1856. The records can be found on Roll 10.

Also on Roll 10 are the proceedings of the general court martial convened at Camp Montgomery on May 20, 1856 and reconvened on May 26, 1856. Two

cases were heard. On May 20, three prisoners were charged with giving aid to and harboring the enemy. On May 26, two Volunteers were tried for the murder of the Indian Mowitch.

A brief chronology of the Indian War would include:

September, 1855: Sporadic Indian attacks on miners travelling to the Colville mines.

Late September, 1855: A. J. Bolon, special Indian agent to the Yakimas, is killed by Owhi, nephew of Yakima chief Kamiakin.

October 6, 1855: U.S. Army Major Granville Haller, in the Klickitat Mountains with an expedition of 84 men, is attacked by 1500 Indians and forced to pull back to The Dalles.

October 14, 1855: Acting Governor C. H. Mason issues first call for Volunteers to augment the force operating against the Yakima tribe.

October 27, 1855: Lieutenant James McAllister and M. Connell killed by Indians while on a reconnaissance mission in the Puget Sound area.

October 28, 1855: Three families of settlers living in the White River area are killed. (Commonly called the White River Massacre.)

October 30, 1855: U.S. Army Major G. J. Raines leads an enlarged force into Yakima country.

December 4, 1855: Lieutenant W. A. Slaughter is killed while camped at Brannan's prairie.

January 18, 1856: Governor Isaac I. Stevens returns to Olympia from Blackfoot country.

January 26, 1856: Indians attack Seattle and are dispersed by the Sloop-of-War Decatur.

March 8, 1856: Battle of Connell's Prairie in the White River area. Two companies of Volunteers meet 150 Indians.

March 26, 1856: Siege at The Cascades on the Columbia River.

October 30, 1856: Volunteers of Washington Territory disbanded.

This is only a partial listing of important events. The dates listed here are intended as an aid to users of the film not as an interpretation of the Indian Wars.

Some of the correspondence and many of the proclamations, orders, muster rolls, and other documents have been published in the following works: Message of the Governor of Washington Territory (Olympia, 1857); Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of Washington for the Years 1891 and 1892 (Olympia, 1893); Official History of the Washington National Guard (Camp Murray, Office of the Adjutant General, 1961); and Hazard Stevens, Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1900).

Sources containing a general history of the Indian Wars in Washington include: Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, 1845-1889 (San Francisco, History Company, 1890); Elwood Evans, History of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon and Washington (Portland, North Pacific History Company, 1889); Ray Hoard Glassley, Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest (Portland, Binforde and Mort, 1953); and Clinton A. Snowden, History of Washington: The Rise and Progress of an American State (New York, Century History Co., 1909).

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