

**An account of the Yakima Indian War & Fort Henrietta by one of the
volunteers, TJ Small**

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An Interesting Letter

Jefferson City, Mo., Jan. 15, 1899. - T.A. Wood, Grand Commander Indian War Veterans - Mr. Dear Sir: I never desired a biography of myself to be written. The world and mankind are not interested in my adventures, struggles, afflictions, sad bereavements and tender affections. The pen of no true friend, or myself, can at this time furnish thought to illuminate my very dark pathway this far in life. It seems to me now that there was never a sound reason, or necessity, for my having to breathe, but, as I did breathe, it has always seemed to me that I should have breathed the sweetest, brightest and balmiest air on earth. I am now convinced that the world never wanted me, as no important place was created for me to fill. Lieutenant Thomas J. Small was born in Mount Pleasant, Maury county, Tennessee, December 9, 1834, and spent his boyhood days there, in attending school and in learning a trade with his father. He came of steady Scotch-Irish stock. He moved to Missouri with his father in 1852, and settled in Otterville, Cooper county, in May. In the spring of 1853 he spread his wings, left his home nest and started across the plains for Oregon, to build for himself, if possible, a home nest on the Pacific slope. He was six months and eleven days crossing the plains, and settled in the town of Champoeg, Marion county, in the fall of 1853. Champoeg was a small, old town, built on the bank of the beautiful Willamette river, at the head of steamboat navigation in summer, 25 miles from Salem or Oregon City. Much history of Oregon springs from this place. It was here Lieutenant Small formed the acquaintance of Robert Newell, J. D. Crawford, David Weston, John Howard, Ed Dupuise, John Mull, Hiram Simpkins, Reese, John and Mark Stephens, and Green Arnold, American pioneers and history-makers. Also with hundreds of French pioneers, among whom were N.A. Connoyer, Antoin Revais, Chamberlains, Joseph Despard and many others. It was here he first met O. Hummason of The Dalles, Victor Trevitt, of Salem, and John Smith, from across the river near Butteville. In the summer of 1854 he was in the Rogue river country with Mr. Hyde, a government surveyor, who had a contract to survey and plat 76 townships in that part of the territory.

An Indian war broke out in Eastern Oregon and Washington in 1855, and, under a proclamation of Governor George L. Curry, Connoyer, Revais and Small recruited a company at Champoeg, of French, French half-breeds and four or five Americans, most all of whom were from French prairie. Narcisse A. Connoyer was elected captain, A. Revais first lieutenant and T.J. Small second lieutenant. The organization was known as company K, was mustered in at Portland, October 30, 1855, and immediately started for The Dalles, by way of Fort Vancouver and the Cascades. With the beginning of this march the company commenced to make

history for itself and Oregon. The greatest mistake possible for any man to make is to endeavor to correct errors of early historians from memory. It is well known that a great majority of men are born into this world without a good thinking apparatus on their shoulders, but, if I differ from some of your early historians, I hope they will not accuse me of thinking wrong.

I was quietly puffing at my meerschaum - a Missouri cob - when "The History of Indian Wars in Oregon" came to hand. I drew a meditative whiff and gave a low whistle, as I opened it at "The Yakima War" and then commenced to devour its contents. After reading the part devoted to the Oregon troops, the thought came to me, If this is true history, Lieutenant T.J. Small was not in any Indian war, company K was never enlisted, Governor Curry never issued a proclamation calling for volunteers, and such men as J.W. Nesmith, James K. Kelly, Mark A. Chinn and Narcisse A. Connoyer never existed, except in the prolific imagination of myself, and all my day dreams, for forty-odd years, of being engaged in an Indian war in Eastern Oregon, must be a myth. So all my visions of those days vanished in smoke. All historians and makers of history should remember that character and reputation for fairness, truth and honor, is the most enduring of riches. No one expects a historian to be generous, but he is expected to be truthful and just.

The march to the relief of Major Haller, through snow and extreme cold, by the First regiment, O.M.V., and the incidents connected with it, is hardly noticed. All who made that march, through snow, sometimes three feet deep, and a bitter cold wind, will remember it through life. The command found Major Haller, and returned with him in safety to The Dalles, from which point Captain Connoyer was ordered to march immediately to Fort Henrietta, to reinforce Major Mark A. Chinn, which he did. Captain Connoyer, with company K, arrived at Fort Henrietta November 27, and went into camp outside the fort. With it arrived Lieutenant-Colonel James K. Kelly. I know not with whom he left The Dalles, but I am sure he arrived at Fort Henrietta under escort of company K. Here I met for the first time the brave, noble, warm-hearted and generous Major Mark A. Chinn, who built the fort and named it, but for this work he was secretly charged with cowardice by some of his small under-officers. At the battle of Laroque's farm these same men learned who the cowards were, and Major Chinn was not one of them. A braver, truer and kinder man I never met in the army. Sweet to me, even now, is the memory of this noble man.

Upon arriving at Fort Henrietta, Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly took command. He called a council of war, at which it was decided to move at one for Fort Walla Walla. Orders were given to prepare rations and be ready to move at sun-down, December 2, which was done. It rained most of the night and was very dark, still our little force moved on silently. I know not when other companies arrived at Fort Walla Walla, but ours got there with both feet, a little after sunrise. We found the fort robbed and plundered, the interior badly defaced, and the Indian devils gone. We went into

camp a short distance from the fort on the morning of the 3d. On the 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th we skirmished with Indians. Company K marched alone into Indian valley, into a deep ravine on the Touchet river, and scouted all that country, returning to Meina camp, at the mouth of the Touchet, on the night of the 6th. Peu Peu Mox Mox, or Yellow Serpent, and those with him were killed, and the body of Peu Peu Mox Mox mutilated, ears cut off, scalped and other indignities, on the night of December 6, in camp at mouth of Touchet river, and not during the battle of Laroque's farm. On the morning of the 7th, the Indians came down from the hills across the Touchet, under a flag of truce, and demanded the release of their chief and the other prisoners. After exchanging flags a few times, Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly ordered Captain N.A. Connoyer and Captain O. Hummason, with their companies, to cross the Touchet and take position to defend camp. Company K moved across. Hummason, with the Wasco boys, followed, and one other company, not now remembered, and soon the four days' fight was on, known as the battle of Laroque's farm. We had fun chasing the red-skinned beauties seven miles, but, when the entire force of Indians met us at Laroque's farm, the fun was over, and business of vital importance was on hand, for it kept us all busy to retain scalps on our heads. For four days this bitter and hard-contested battle raged, no one knowing what the result might be. Every inch of ground was fought over, and the contending forces camped in sight of each other. To the music of the tom-tom Indians danced the scalp dance every night. Stubborn pluck of the whites at last scattered the Indians, with a loss to them of about 180. If any of the First regiment, O.M.V.'s, had bayonets on their guns I failed to see them, and my eyes were wide open, so those bayonet charges are pure fiction. The howitzer that exploded did so from being loaded with trind balls and sand, the balls having been poured out on the sand. I, with company K, was near when it happened.

On December 9, 1855, Lieutenant T.J. Small was 21 years old, and in battle with Indians in Walla Walla valley. Have never celebrated my birthday in the same way. After the battle of Laroque's farm the command moved to Howlish Wampool camp, where he had built a fort to protect himself, friendly Indians and settlers from bad Indians. Found them all safe and winter coming on. The Indians and settlers were moved on to the Walla Walla river, and Lieutenant T.J. Small, with a part of company K, detailed to guard them and their property. Remained with them until spring. The main camp was in winter quarters, 14 miles away. Colonel Cornelius will, or should, know this statement true, as he was in my camp, after cattle - but, will close this. May some day finish my rambling story. Respectfully yours,

T.J. Small