Settler Mythology and the Construction of the Historical Memory of the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest

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B.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2003

Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of

The Requirements For The Degree Of

Master of Arts

in

History

The University of Northern British Columbia

July 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-48841-6
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-48841-6

Abstract

The historical memory of the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest was complicated by controversy almost immediately upon the commencement of hostilities. The struggle to construct and maintain the historical memory of the conflicts of 1855-56 in a way that would support the quest for Congressional funding continued throughout most of the nineteenth century. This struggle resulted in two vastly different accounts of the war, one account very supportive of the war, the other highly critical. The critical, minority, account was excluded from the developing historical memory of the conflict in the Pacific Northwest. This exclusion led to a fundamental lack of honesty in the mainstream historical memory, which shifted the responsibility for the Indian wars away from the settlers.

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Introduction

During the 1850s Indian Wars erupted in southern Oregon Territory when gold-seekers from California moved northward as prospects declined in California. Almost simultaneously with the final outbreak of hostilities in southern Oregon, war also broke out around Puget Sound and in eastern Washington Territory. Those same years were marked by conflict between the territorial officials of Oregon and Washington and an apparent majority of the settlers of those two territories on the one hand, and a small number of federal officials and a very few settlers on the other. Two key figures in the early stages of the controversy were the commander of the US Army's Department of the Pacific, Brevet Major General John E. Wool, and the Oregon Territory Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Joel Palmer. General Wool was in command of the US Army's Department of the Pacific from February 1854 until he was recalled at his own request for health reasons in February 1857.[1] Joel Palmer was Superintendent of Indian Affairs from May 1853 until he was removed in 1856 by a letter written by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in late June, but which Palmer did not receive until early August.[2] During their time in office, both Wool and Palmer received reports from their subordinates showing quite clearly that neither was motivated solely by maliciousness to take the positions they did, yet that is precisely how General Wool in particular has been portrayed by his detractors.

Washington Territory, created from the northern part of Oregon Territory in 1853, was only two years old when war started between the settlers and a number of aboriginal

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[1] Harwood Perry Hinton, "The Military Career of John Ellis Wool" (Ph D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1960), 238, 372.

[2] Stanley Sheldon Spaid, "Joel Palmer and Indian Affairs in Oregon" (PhD. diss., University of Oregon, 1950), 88, 215-216.

groups in three widely separated areas of the Pacific Northwest during autumn of 1855. By mid-October of that year there were open hostilities around Puget Sound, in the Yakima Valley in the upper Columbia River region, and in the Rogue River Valley of Southern Oregon. That the Columbia River was less important as a political boundary then than it is today can be readily seen from the way the Territorial Governor of Oregon, George L. Curry, raised a regiment of mounted volunteers specifically to operate in Washington Territory. General Wool, responsible for all federal troops west of the Rockies, was particularly troubled by developments in Oregon and Washington. Ostensibly, Joel Palmer was responsible for Indian Affairs only in Oregon Territory, but Indian groups normally resident in Oregon who spent part of their time in Washington Territory pursuing subsistence activities remained under Palmer's authority while they were in Washington Territory. Palmer also served as a Treaty Commissioner during the treaty negotiations conducted by the Governor and Indian Affairs Superintendent of Washington Territory, Isaac I. Stevens. Furthermore, although Palmer, Wool and a few others disagreed, most settlers and territorial officials in Oregon and Washington portrayed the nearly simultaneous outbreak of hostilities over such a widespread region as evidence of a conspiracy on the part of most Indians of the Pacific Northwest to eradicate the American settlers of the region. Therefore, the histories of the conflicts in the two territories are intertwined to such an extent that no useful distinction can be drawn using contemporary political boundaries.

However, an important difference between Oregon and Washington in the way that the historical memory developed can be found in the person of Isaac I. Stevens, the first Governor of Washington Territory, simultaneously *ex officio* the first Superintendent of Indian affairs for the territory. One historian writing during the 1970s noted that "Stevens is one of the most written-about personalities of Pacific Northwest history. He dominates the

historiographical landscape of the area the way Mount Rainier dominates Puget Sound."[3] This position is somewhat overstated in that Stevens does not dominate the historiography of the Rogue River Indian War.[4] That historians of that conflict do not have to labor under the enormous shadow cast by Stevens undoubtedly helps explain why recent histories of the conflicts in southern Oregon dealt in a straightforward manner with the position of Wool and Palmer and found it to be well-supported.[5]

At the core of both Wool and Palmer's critique was their shared belief that the settlers of southern Oregon were determined to exterminate the Indians and reap profits from the federal treasury for doing so. Wool and Palmer agreed that history would favor the Indians in this conflict. Writing to General Wool three weeks after the outbreak of "a war of extermination by our citizens against all Indians in southern Oregon," Palmer explained that

> [b]elieving, as I do, that the cause of the present difficulty in southern Oregon is wholly to be attributed to the acts of our own people, I cannot but feel that it is our duty to adapt such measures as will tend to secure the lives of these [friendly] Indians, and will maintain guaranties secured them by treaty stipulations. The future will prove that this war has been forced upon these Indians against their will, and that, too, by a set of reckless vagabonds, for pecuniary and political objects, and sanctioned by a numerous population who regard the treasury of the United States a legitimate subject of plunder. The Indians in that district have been driven to desperation by acts of cruelty against their people; treaties have been violated and acts of barbarity committed by those claiming to be citizens that would disgrace the most barbarous nations of the earth.[6]

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[3] Louis Leonard Tucker, "The Governor and the General: The Isaac Stevens – John Ellis Wool Controversy," in *Kansas and the West: Bicentennial Essays in Honor of Nyle H. Miller*, ed. Forrest R. Blackburn and others (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1976), 51.

[4] Of the three published academic treatments of the Rogue River Indian War, only Stephen Beckham fails to mention Stevens. Both E.A. Schwartz and Nathan Douthit briefly discuss Stevens' role in the formation of reservations, and both mention him briefly once more to make other points. Stephen Dow Beckham, *Requiem for a People: The Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1996 [Reprint, Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1971]); E.A. Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and its Aftermath, 1850-1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 83-84, 153; Nathan Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters: Indians and Whites at Peace and War in Southern Oregon 1820s to 1860s* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 94, 143.

[5] See particularly Schwartz, 44-147.

[6] Joel Palmer to Major General John E. Wool, November 1, 1855, in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 112-113.

General Wool best articulated his critique of the war and his faith in history in a letter to the editors of the *National Intelligencer* written May 30, 1856, after the controversy had become very heated. Wool argued that

> [t]hese inhuman and atrocious outrages, besides many of less notoriety, several of which were spread before the public as great volunteer victories, and which forever will disgrace the annals of our country, were the cause of laying waste the settlements and the murdering of many innocent and worthy citizens in Rogue River Valley. I do not doubt, if the massacres previously mentioned had not occurred and the volunteers had never entered the field, the war would have been closed long since in southern Oregon. But this would not have suited the political aspirants nor money speculators. With them it was a *war*, and a *long war*, under the pretence of enriching the country, no matter how many citizens might be sacrificed. The more the massacre by whites and Indians the greater surety that the war debt would be paid by Congress. With them every murder or atrocity, whether committed by white or red men, appears to be a source of rejoicing instead of regret, because of the tendency to prolong the war and raise the price of the Curry and Stevens' scrip. For example, as reported, one of the most active and prominent exterminators said, in reference to the massacre of the whites at the Cascades, "the people have suffered, but it will raise the price of scrip a million of dollars." .... Such are the men who advocate the war and proclaim it a "God-send to the people."[7]

But Palmer and Wool were wrong about the way the wars would be remembered, at least initially. It took historians many years to reveal how the pursuit of profit motivated the wars and that the war was forced upon at least some Indians; indeed, the annals of the country have never been disgraced by the actions of the volunteer Indian fighters enlisted by the territorial governors. This is because promulgators of a competing version of events succeeded in supplanting Palmer and Wool's interpretation. While the fighting was still going on, Oregon Delegate Joseph Lane articulated the competing account in Congress in an effort to convince Congress to pay the war debts. Lane described the settlers as "an honest,

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[7] John E. Wool, "The Indian War in Oregon, &c." *National Intelligencer*, July 1, 1856, in Elwood Evans, (compiler), "Campaign of Maj. Gen. John E. Wool, U. S. Army against the People and Authorities of Oregon and Washington, 1855-6." [Microfilm of collected newspaper clippings and pages of government publications, with handwritten annotations and commentary by Evans. Original in Beinecke Library, Yale University]. (New Haven, CN: Research Publications, 1975). [Western Americana: Frontier History of the Trans-Mississippi West, 1550-1900, reel 179, no. 1870], emphasis in original.

industrious people" and dismissed the claim "that they could be capable of making a war against the Indians for the sake of plunder" as "a slander upon chivalrous, high-spirited and gallant men who have periled their lives and bared their bosoms to the weapons of a skulking and treacherous foe in protecting the defenseless women and children who have been forced to fly from their beautiful dwellings, which have, in many instances, been fired by the torch of the savage before they were out of sight of their once peaceful homes."[8]

The struggle to construct and maintain the historical memory of the conflicts of 1855-56 in support of the quest for Congressional funding continued throughout most of the nineteenth century. In the preface to *History of the Pacific Northwest* (1889), Elwood Evans unblushingly supported the monetary claims of Indian War Veterans and made plain that his state-building history conflicted dramatically with Wool and Palmer's version of events. Evans wrote that history would

> establish that the people who settled in Oregon, and who Americanized it, were patriotic, patient and eminently considerate and kind to the aborigines; and that the conflicts between the natives and the settlers were not occasioned by any provocation given by the latter, beyond the isolated fact that their presence was an offense in the eye of the Indian, who, quick to observe, took advantage of the neglect of the government to protect the settler, and attempted to exterminate the American race in that region.
>
> History was required to supply the picture of the surroundings of the Oregon pioneer. And now, after a full generation, in which these country-savers, these state-builders, have been under a cloud, denounced as barbarians and robbers of the national treasury, their single offense being that, in the hour of desolation and doubt, they prevented the American settlements of Oregon from being wiped out forever, the great fact still remains that the government, which ignored their presence in the territory, which profited by their services in the field, still repudiates the full payment of the debt so justly their due. These men, these veterans, now deem it to be a simple act of justice, to themselves and to their children, to publish a history which may serve also to illustrate the value and importance of the region they fought to save to the country, humanity and the American occupants.[9]

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[8] Joseph Lane, Speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, May 7, 1856. *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, First Session, 1144.

[9] Elwood Evans, *History of the Pacific Northwest*, Volume One (Portland: North Pacific History Company, 1889), v.

During the quest to secure federal funding from Congress for war-related claims, which continued well into the 1890s, the image of General Wool as a settler hater with a particular dislike of volunteer Indian fighters solidified into a formidable consensus. Decades passed before Palmer and Wool's position on the validity of the justification of the wars began to receive serious consideration from historians. And it was not until the 1990s that a detailed academic study demonstrated that Wool and Palmer had accurately characterized the conflicts of 1855-56 as being motivated by economic gain.[10] Still, no similar work has been published for Washington.

General Wool's attitude toward civilians, at least those who settled in Indian Country, may have been negative, but his outlook was legitimately rooted in the reports that he received from his subordinate officers and a few civilians. Further, it appears that territorial officials deliberately kept Wool in the dark. In his letter to Governor Stevens of February 12, 1856, Wool stated that,

> your communication is the first that I have received in relation to yourself, or on any subject whatever, touching the Indian war, from any civil functionary, either in Washington or Oregon territories; and I have received but one from the [volunteer] military, and that was from Col. Nesmith [of the Oregon Mounted Volunteers], who requested me to furnish him with two howitzers, which I refused.[11]

The situation was comparable in Oregon, and Wool suggested the lack of information from territorial officials was deliberate. In his first letter to the *National Intelligencer* he explained that

> [m]y information is derived from citizens and regular officers under my command, and not from any of the civil or military functionaries of the Territory of Oregon. I

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[10] Schwartz, passim; See also: Earl Albert Schwartz, "Blood Money: The Rogue River Indian War and its Aftermath, 1850-1986" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri – Columbia, 1991. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1997).

[11] Major General John E. Wool to Isaac I. Stevens, February 12, 1856, in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Exec. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 47.

> have never been informed by anyone, not even by the Governor, of the military wants of the Territory. He has never called on me to defend it or to protect the inhabitants from savage barbarity, although he has, as it would appear, purposely avoided all communications with me on the subject.[12]

Framed against this backdrop, this study examines the creation and maintenance of this fundamentally flawed and dishonest memory of the mid-nineteenth century Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest. Chapter One centers on the conflict between General Wool and Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who simultaneously held three federal patronage positions. He was the first Governor of Washington Territory, the first Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory, and led the Northern Route survey of the proposed trans-continental railroad. The obvious conflicts of interest in which his various duties placed him failed to attract any concerns at the time.

The second chapter argues that a distorted image of Wool was deliberately crafted and used in Oregon to obscure the origins of and motivations for the war in Southern Oregon. The aspersions cast upon Wool's personality served to keep the discussion centered on personality, not substance. The quest for funding from Congress for war claims continued into the 1890s, during which time the negative image of General Wool solidified. Also, the memory of the events of the 1850s was firmly rooted in first and second-hand accounts of those who profited from the wars, with assistance from those who idealized the settlement of the Pacific Northwest and justified the conquest with rhetoric of racial superiority. Additionally, it will be demonstrated that there were those who deliberately manipulated the historical record for personal financial gain.

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[12] Major General John E. Wool, "To the Editors of the National Intelligencer," reprinted in *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, First Session (May 7, 1856), 1135.

The final chapter looks at the extent of societal responsibility for the start of the war in southern Oregon. The attitudes of Euro-Americans towards the Indians of the region are examined in some detail, as are some of the various techniques used by writers to shift responsibility for the Indian wars away from the settlers. These techniques result in two vastly different accounts of the war, one account very supportive of the war, the other highly critical. The critical account was excluded from the developing historical memory of the conflict in Southern Oregon, sometimes by threat of violence. This exclusion led to a fundamental lack of honesty in the mainstream historical memory, which had the effect of shifting responsibility for the Indian wars away from the settlers. The voice of a dissenting settler, the only resident of the Rogue River Valley with the courage to speak up in spite of much opposition from his neighbors to toe the community line, greatly complicated this shift of responsibility. In short, then, the third chapter continues the effort to demonstrate the fundamental dishonesty and highly flawed nature of the social and historical memory of the Indian wars of the Pacific Northwest.

This study is not intended to be an aboriginal history. There are no Aboriginal voices here, but their absence should not be interpreted as implying anything about the validity of Aboriginal narratives of the conquest of the Pacific Northwest. The reason aboriginal voices have not been included in this study is that this is a history of memory construction, a cultural history of the way the settlers of the Pacific Northwest remembered the Indian wars of the 1850s. Neither is this study intended to be a straightforward historiography. It is not an attempt to fit the historical writing of the Pacific Northwest into the broader scope of the historiography of the Western US. The historiography of the Pacific Northwest is discussed as an aspect of memory construction.

One of the central arguments of this study is that there were a significant number of settlers who advocated the extermination of the Indians of the region. Other things that this study will not attempt to do are rank in importance the various motivations that may have factored into the desire to see the Indians exterminated or try to quantify just how many settlers supported the extermination of the Indians of the region. In the light of the controversy over the war and the long-term effort to collect as much money as possible from Congress, it would seem that published sources, the main focus of this study, are inadequate for determining whether the extermination of the Indians of the region was the primary goal of advocates of this policy, or whether extermination was more accurately seen as a means to other ends, such as financial gain, control of land, or security from aboriginal retaliation for perceived injustices. It would seem more likely that a re-examination of the vast store of unpublished sources on the history of the settlement of the Pacific Northwest would be a far more fruitful place to look for evidence that might help us understand why some settlers advocated the extermination of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest and some did not.

Chapter One
"Governor Stevens' War"

The public controversy with General Wool, based upon his letters to various newspapers as well as his official reports, played a key role in shaping the way that the wars were remembered in the Pacific Northwest. This chapter examines the controversy between General Wool and Governor Isaac I. Stevens of Washington Territory. This very public dispute between two prominent federal officials was accompanied by vigorous ad hominem attacks upon General Wool by editorial writers on both sides of the Columbia River, who emphatically argued that Wool had gone senile in the field. Eventually, politicians from both territories petitioned Congress and the executive branch for Wool's prompt removal. This dispute also attracted the attention of later writers. A proper understanding of this dispute requires an understanding not only of what General Wool claimed and did that caused Isaac Stevens' attack, but also an understanding of the positions adopted by Stevens' supporters and the small but vocal group of Stevens' critics. The evidence shows that the prevailing image of General Wool was a misrepresentation, which also distorted the historical memories of the Indian Wars, and of Isaac Stevens.

Brevet Major General John Ellis Wool commanded the US Army's Department of the Pacific from February 1854 to February 1857. Born in 1784, Wool was nearly seventy years old when assigned to the Department of the Pacific. Wool's military career began with the War of 1812 and ended after his command of federal troops in New York during the anti-draft riots of 1863, after which he was ordered into retirement at age seventy-nine. Serving as Zachary Taylor's second in command during the war in Mexico, Wool was praised by

many, including Taylor, for his role in the Battle of Buena Vista.[1] Thanks to the public acclaim and favorable publicity after the Mexican War, Wool was mentioned as a potential Democratic presidential candidate before the elections of 1852 and 1856.[2] However, not all the public attention Wool received was positive.

During the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest in 1855 and 1856, Wool earned the ire of newspaper editors, legislators, and territorial officials in both Oregon and Washington. After journeying north from his California headquarters in December of 1855, Wool became the target of several highly critical newspaper editorials in Oregon and Washington newspapers for refusing to pay inflated local prices for supplies. The situation worsened when, during an unusually cold period, the lower Columbia River froze before the supplies ordered from California arrived. The ice kept the federal troops at Fort Vancouver while the volunteers were in the field. As Wool stated in a letter written to army headquarters on December 25, 1855,

> Since my communication to the headquarters of the army, dated the 13th instant, winter has fairly set in, the ground is covered with snow, and the Columbia river is frozen over as low down as the mouth of the Willamette, six miles below this place. This cuts off all communication with the Dalles, until the river is cleared of ice....
>
> I mentioned in my communication of the 13th [of December, 1855] that I was actively engaged in preparing an expedition for the Indian country. I soon found it would be impracticable to execute my intentions as soon as I desired. I could obtain in this country neither the means of transportation nor forage without paying enormously for them, and which the state of war in this region does not call for. This state of things has been caused by the extraordinary course pursued by Governor Curry, who is making war against the Indians on his own account, and without the slightest reference to myself, not having received any communication whatever from him on the subject.[3]

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[1] Hinton, 206-217.

[2] "Political Portraits with Pen and Pencil. Major General John E. Wool, United States Army," *The United States Democratic Review* 29, no. 161 (November 1851), passim; Nancy J. Emmick, "The Washington Territory Indian Wars: Stevens versus Wool" (MA thesis, San Jose State University, 1978), 115-116.

[3] Major General John E. Wool to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, Assistant Adjutant General, U.S. Army, December 25, 1855, in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 25.

The dispatch of volunteers into Washington Territory by the Governor of Oregon Territory was particularly irksome. Writing to headquarters in New York, Wool referred to "the Crusade of Governor Curry, of Oregon, against all the Indians inhabiting Washington Territory," arguing that "[b]y sending his volunteers against the Walla Wallas, who had not made open war against the whites, he [Curry] has added several tribes to the ranks of the enemies."[4]

Although Wool would be blamed, the delay was actually the result of Governor Curry's dispatch of four companies of mounted volunteers into Washington Territory, and the subsequent effect on local prices. As Wool described the situation,

> The quantity of the supplies required for the volunteers, and the enormous prices paid in scrip, by those authorized by the governor to make purchases for them, has rendered it necessary for me to resort to Benicia [California] for horses and mules, and for forage to San Francisco. In this section of the country no danger existed which required either the services of the volunteers or the extravagant prices which have been paid in scrip for the horses and forage, as well as everything else required for the volunteers....
> It is reported that Governor Curry purchased a thousand horses, varying from $150 to $700 each; that he ordered to be purchased 250,000 bushels of oats at one dollar per bushel; and the transportation to the Dalles would be another dollar per bushel. Everything purchased, as I am informed, is in the same ratio, and, as the volunteers themselves say, there is no system in furnishing rations, and every man helps himself.[5]

Support for General Wool's concerns about profiteering can be found in at least one frank memoir of volunteer activities during the Yakima and Clickitat Indian Wars.

According to Urban East Hicks, an officer of Washington volunteers, the profiteering started immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities in Washington Territory. Hicks wrote that

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[4] Wool to Thomas, January 19, 1856, in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 32-33.

[5] Wool to Thomas, December 25, 1855, in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 25-28.

> I purchased a little Kentucky rifle, the best I could get, paying $40 for it, which did not originally cost much above $6.00, and afterwards bought a second-hand Colt's revolver for $24.00, which could now [in 1886] be had at any shop for $3. Powder immediately advanced to $2 and $3 a pound, and lead from 75 c. to $1 a pound; provisions and supplies of all kinds almost thribbled in price.[6]

Further, Hicks description of discipline among Washington volunteers strongly supports Wool's opinion of volunteers. Hicks wrote that volunteers "had to be kept constantly in motion, however, to keep down insubordination and rows amongst themselves, and if we camped at night anywhere within twelve or fifteen miles of a barrel of whiskey or box of tobacco, more than half of it would be in camp the next morning."[7] It seems that this lack of discipline worked its way down the command structure. Hicks explained that upon "[l]earning that some of my company had been wounded, and that the Captain had jumped into a hollow stump and was still there, I procured assistance, and by running directly in front of the enemy's fire, we succeeded in getting the wounded into camp.... At camp great confusion prevailed; no one seemed to be in command, but everyone ready to fight on his own hook."[8]

But Wool's argument was not widely accepted among the public of the Pacific Northwest, and attacks upon him in newspapers of the region began shortly after he decided it was not feasible to mount a winter campaign into Yakima Country. Editor Thomas J. Dryer of the *Oregonian* boasted that he was the first to attack Wool in the press. On February 2, 1856, Dryer took exception to a San Francisco *Daily Evening News* report of January 19, which referred to "some of the editors" in Oregon "blaming Gen. Wool and the regulars for not sharing in the exposure of a winter campaign with part of Governor Curry's

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[6] Urban E. Hicks, *Yakima and Clickitat Indian Wars, 1855 and 1856. Personal Recollections of Capt. U.E. Hicks* (Portland: [George] Himes the Printer, n.d. [1886]), 6.

[7] Ibid, 7.

[8] Ibid, 10-11.

volunteers." Dryer responded that, "[t]he one truth in the above extract is that one paper, viz.: the *Oregonion* [sic], did 'blame' Gen. Wool for not sharing the exposure of a winter campaign. No other 'papers' in Oregon have dared to express an opinion as to Gen. Wool or anybody else."[9] It seems that Wool's relationship with the people of the Pacific Northwest was decided as soon as the Columbia River froze. An editorial published in the *Oregonian* before Wool began to be scapegoated in that publication demonstrated how dissent would be characterized. Editor Dryer declared that

> [t]he Indians have declared a war of extermination. They have notified us that there shall be no peace, as long as they have a warrior left, or that there is a white man occupying the country. – Therefore we have no other recourse left, but to go into the contest, and fight until we are conquered, or the Indians are exterminated. – Under these circumstances, we hold all men, whether saint or sinner, Jew or gentile, a traitor to his country and an enemy to his race, to talk peace, or who will for any purpose whatever, oppose the progress of the present war.[10]

Lest such rhetoric be taken as empty, it should be made clear that Dryer was a force to be reckoned with in Oregon Territory. In his *History of Oregon Newspapers*, University of Oregon journalism professor George Turnbull described the Whig *Oregonian* and its main competitor the Democratic *Statesman* of Oregon City as "highly political." Specifically, "these political papers, appearing often with a minimum of other matter and scarcely any local news in the early years, were the most successful and influential papers."[11] Dryer's association with the *Oregonian* ended many years before it published his obituary in 1879, so perhaps the statement in the *Oregonian's* editorial column describing Dryer's influence can

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[9] T. J. Dryer, "Gen. Wool and the Indian War in Oregon," *The Oregonian*, February 2, 1856 (reprinted in the *Pioneer and Democrat*, February 22, 1856), in Evans, "Campaign."

[10] T. J. Dryer, "How Goes the War," *The Oregonian*, November 24, 1855, in Elwood Evans (compiler), "The Indian War, 1855-56. Newspaper Details 'in Weekly Installments.' The Incidents Reported Chronologically 'En Passant': Its Commencement, Progress, Spirit of the Press, etc., etc." [Microfilm of collected newspaper clippings and pages of government publications, with handwritten annotations and commentary by Evans. Original in Beinecke Library, Yale University]. (New Haven, CN: Research Publications, 1975). [Western Americana: Frontier History of the Trans-Mississippi West, 1550-1900, reel 179, no. 1872].

[11] George S. Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers* (Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1939), 15.

be taken at something close to face value. The author of Dryer's obituary claimed that "[d]uring the years of his active participation in affairs, no man in Oregon commanded a larger share of public attention."[12]

In addition to the topic of the Indian Wars, the pages of the *Oregonian* in early 1856 contained Dryer's rhetoric on Oregon Statehood. Reflecting on Dryer's position on this issue, Turnbull wrote that

> [e]ven the issue of statehood appears to have been settled largely on the ground of partisan political expediency. The *Oregonian* first opposed the measure, fearing that the Democrats would control the government of the new commonwealth; then later, as the anti-slavery strength grew, the paper became more fearful of the Buchanan administration than of any possible Democratic majorities in Oregon itself.[13]

Perhaps Turnbull was referring to editorials published during the campaign for the other, earlier or later statehood referendums, but Dryer's 1856 editorials on the third referendum contain no references to slavery. Instead, the issue of war debts is front and center. Dryer suggested, "Let the people vote now for State government, and the war scrip issued to pay the expenses of the Indian war will be worth just about as much as 'continental money' was at the close of the revolutionary war."[14]

Indeed, before the statehood referendum or the Wool/Stevens controversy, Dryer was offering suggestions to readers about what he believed needed to be done to see that the war debts were paid as quickly as possible. This concern is evident in an editorial written less than a month after the outbreak of war in the region,

> If this war is conducted properly, there can be no reasonable doubt but that the government will promptly step forward, assume its responsibility, and pay its expenses. If, on the contrary, schisms and contentions, or party and personal strife, should creep in to the extent to convince the general government that it is a mere speculation of dollars and cents, on the part of those who stand aloof from an active

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[12] *Oregonian* (March 30, 1879), quoted in Ibid, 57.
[13] Ibid, 68-69.
[14] T.J. Dryer, "State Government," *The Oregonian* (March 8, 1856), 2.

> and personal participation in it, then it may be a question of doubt whether the general government will sanction it.[15]

The payment of war debts was often mentioned on the *Oregonian's* editorial page before Dryer's attacks on Wool began, beginning less than a month after the outbreak of war in southern Oregon.

Not surprisingly, soon after Dryer began attacking Wool, others did too. In response to Wool's public statements the Oregon Legislature sent a unanimous memorial to President Pierce in January 1856 asking for Wool's removal from his command. This explicit plea for Presidential intervention stated

> that early in October last the people of Oregon and Washington territories were startled by a general outbreak among nearly all the Indian tribes in the western and middle sections of these territories. These hostilities, unprovoked on the part of the whites, were characterized by the usual mode of Indian warfare – an indiscriminate slaughter of all our citizens who fell into their hands without regard to age, sex or condition, and by the pillaging and burning of dwellings and the destruction of property.
>
> Instead of offering aid and encouragement to our people he [Wool] has shown a disgraceful activity in his endeavors to persuade our merchants and those of California not to furnish ammunition and supplies for our volunteers in this trying time of their need. Instead of attending to the duties of his high office he has become an intermeddler between the people of Oregon and the government of the United States, and publicly declared that his influence will be exerted to prevent the payment by the United States, of the just claims, incurred in the prosecution of the War.
>
> Therefore inasmuch as your memorialists as well as the people of Oregon have lost all confidence in the willingness of General Wool to assist and defend them in their present Indian difficulties they most respectfully ask that he may be recalled from the command of the military department of the Pacific.[16]

The wording of this memorial suggests that the legislators of Oregon were at least as concerned with Wool's negative impact on business and his ability to interfere with the payment of claims as they were with the danger to citizens.

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[15] T.J. Dryer, "The Indian War," *The Oregonian* (November 3, 1855), 2.
[16] Oregon Territorial Papers, Document no. 7392, quoted in Hinton, 351-352.

The Washington Territory legislature eventually followed suit with their own memorial asking for Wool's removal. But this took until April of 1857, over two months after Wool's reassignment, because the legislators sitting during the hostilities were unable to come to the desired unanimity. It took an election and the cessation of hostilities before the Washington legislature reached a unanimous condemnation of Wool.[17] This delay suggests that the possibility of being short-changed in any pending reimbursement from Congress quieted legislative disagreement in Washington Territory. The version of events expressed in Dryer's editorials and these two legislative resolutions became central to the historical memory of the Indian Wars of Oregon Territory.

Isaac Stevens and General Wool disliked each other before the Indian Wars started. Wool and Stevens were both in San Francisco in the fall of 1854 when Stevens took exception to comments made by Wool about the war in Mexico. Both men were veterans of that war. Stevens believed that their 1854 confrontation motivated Wool's later position on the Indian Wars in the Pacific Northwest. Wool allegedly spoiled an evening of gentlemanly talk amongst "a number of officers and other gentleman" at a San Francisco hotel where the Stevens family was staying on their way from Washington, DC. According to Stevens' son Hazard,

> [t]he talk turned to the battle of Buena Vista, and General Wool loudly claimed for himself all the credit for that battle, disparaging in an offensive manner General Taylor and the part he took in it. At length Governor Stevens, whose strong sense of justice was outraged by the boastful and unfair tirade, spoke up and said: "General Wool, we all know the brilliant part you bore in the battle, but we all know and history will record that General Taylor fought and won the Battle of Buena Vista." Wool, although visibly offended, made no reply to this rebuke, but it rankled and

[17] US Congress, "Resolutions of the Legislature of the Territory of Washington relative to the Reports Made by General Wool concerning the Late Indian War in that Territory." 35th Congress, 1st Session, House Misc. Doc. No. 116 (1858), 1.

> caused a bitter animosity, which subsequently found vent in hostile speech and action.[18]

From Hazard's description of the incident, it can be seen that the Stevens believed that Wool's actions and words dealing with Indian hostilities in Washington Territory were motivated by personal pique directed at Isaac.

However, Hazard Stevens did not include some important background information. This is not surprising since Hazard Stevens was not his father's impartial biographer. Hazard stated he wrote the biography of his father,

> not only in justice to General Stevens's memory, but also as an act of duty to the young men of the country, that the example of his noble and patriotic career might not be lost to posterity. An only son, closely associated from boyhood with him, his chief of staff in the Civil War, and always the recipient of his counsel and confidence, the opportunities thus given to me to know his sentiments and characteristics, and to witness so many of his actions, plainly augment the duty of making his record more widely known. In these pages, setting aside, as far as possible, the bias of filial respect and affection, I seek to simply narrate the actual facts of his life.[19]

Further, in spite of Hazard Stevens claims of impartiality, it is difficult to see this weighty two-volume set, which Hazard began to write in 1877 and finally published in 1900, as anything other than a collection of the reminiscences of an adoring son who idealized his father. The image presented in these volumes obviously conforms to how Isaac Stevens would have wished to be remembered. A more hagiographical presentation is difficult to imagine.

The background information that Hazard left out, and may not have been aware of, was that Mexican War must have been very frustrating for Isaac Stevens. Plagued by an old hernia that returned after an eighteen-year respite, he watched many of his fellow officers be in the right place at the right time to perform deeds that resulted in acclaim. Stevens

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[18] Hazard Stevens, *The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), Vol. 1, 437.

[19] Ibid, v.

persistently missed that fortune and was seriously wounded in the foot on the last day of the fighting. The wound became badly infected, amputation was barely avoided, and the foot became one of a number of physical problems that plagued Stevens for the rest of his life.[20]

General Wool's luck was better than Stevens'. A November 1851 article about General Wool in *The United States Democratic Review* includes a letter of glowing praises. Written by Joseph Lane, who served as a Brigadier General of Volunteers under Wool in Mexico and had recently been Territorial Governor of Oregon, 1849-50, the letter assured Wool that

> [y]our exertions as second in command, at the great and glorious battle of Buena Vista, moving to and fro in every part of the field, watching the movements of the enemy, exposed to danger almost every moment of the day, ordering and disposing of our forces in the best manner, to meet and repulse the enemy – by your exertions, coolness, and courage in gaining this victory, you have won laurels and a fame that will endure as long as the traces of American history shall exist.[21]

The same *Democratic Review* article also contained excerpts from General Taylor's reports of the battle of Buena Vista. Taylor's first report acknowledged "my great obligations to Brigadier General Wool" noting that he was "particularly indebted for his services on this occasion." His second report stated that, "To Brigadier General Wool my obligations are especially due."[22] Of course, Taylor did not give Wool "all the credit" for the battle, but the thanks expressed ring sincere.

Wool later passed up an excellent chance to vent any bad feelings he may have harbored toward Taylor. In 1860 Wool wrote two memoranda to an author who had sent him galley proofs from a chapter of *Battles of the United States*. Wool's account of the Battle of Buena Vista written thirteen years after the battle certainly presented himself in a positive

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[20] Kent D. Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979), 66-67, 70-71.

[21] Quoted in "Political Portraits with Pen and Pencil", 456.

[22] Quoted in Ibid, 455.

light, but it said nothing negative about Taylor.[23] However, another secondary account does criticize Taylor's conduct at Buena Vista. In his *History of the United States Army*, which had two editions and a reprint between 1924 and 1964, Colonel William Addleman Ganoe critiqued Taylor's return to the battlefield at Buena Vista by stating that "Taylor then appeared on the scene. Though his brave attitude gave confidence, he uttered few directions, which were poor. The initiatives of his trained subordinates came into play in spite of the absence of orders."[24] Given this evidence, it appears that Isaac Stevens, perhaps somewhat intoxicated, may have overreacted to Wool's comments. Indeed, as events developed, Stevens' associates made a number of comments about Stevens' supposed drinking problem.

At the same time, Stevens' reaction may have been rooted in insecurity. John Wool was a very small man, but it seems that he was probably taller than Isaac Stevens. According to Stevens' other, more impartial biographer, Kent D. Richards, Isaac Stevens had a "large head and short, stumpy legs [that] indicated a malfunction of the pituitary gland which allowed the cartilage to calcify and create a mild form of dwarfism."[25] An earlier writer noted that Stevens never permitted a full length picture to be taken of himself with men of normal height.[26] Such evidence suggests that perhaps Stevens may simply have been jealous of the attention received by another extremely short man, one without his own various physical problems.

Other descriptions of the 1854 encounter between Isaac Stevens and John Wool further muddy the waters and call into question the accuracy of their authors. Drawing upon an 1868 letter to an Olympia newspaper, Hubert Bancroft's *History of Washington, Idaho*

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[23] K. Jack Bauer, ed. "General John E. Wool's Memoranda of the Battle of Buena Vista." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (July 1973) : 115-123.

[24] William Addleman Ganoe, *The History of the United States Army*, Revised Edition (New York: C. Appleton-Century, 1942. Reprinted. Ashton, Maryland: Eric Lundberg, 1964), 218.

[25] Richards, *Young Man in a Hurry*, 6.

[26] Keith Murray, "A Governor's Place in History," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 44 (April 1953), 59.

and Montana dates the encounter between Wool and Isaac Stevens as 1854, the same year given by Hazard Stevens.[27] However, J.G. Swan, the author of the letter in *The Olympia Transcript*, who claims to have heard about the incident personally from Isaac Stevens, stated that the encounter occurred just before Wool came to the Columbia River.[28] The well known fact that Stevens was then off in what is now Montana negotiating a treaty with the Blackfeet brings Swan's reliability into serious question. If this acrimonious encounter between Wool and Stevens happened, it can only have been in the autumn of 1854, because only then were they both in San Francisco with Stevens' family also present. Bancroft, or an associate, obviously realized this and corrected Swan's error, hence the discrepancy of dates.

However, there is another, potentially more serious discrepancy to be found between Swan's account and that of Hazard Stevens. Hazard Stevens, who was in San Francisco with the rest of the family, wrote that the incident occurred at the Oriental Hotel.[29] Swan, however, stated that the encounter occurred at the Rassette House (spelled "Rasette" in the Bancroft volume).[30] To further the confusion, the prominent Washington historian Edmond S. Meany attached his own date to this incident. Meany was Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Washington from 1897 until his death in 1935 and also editor of the *Washington Historical Quarterly* from 1906 to 1935, the same year the journal was renamed the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*.[31] In a 1909 textbook, Meany said the San Francisco encounter occurred in April 1854.[32] Isaac Stevens was in San Francisco in April

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[27] Hubert Howe Bancroft [Frances Fuller Victor], *The Works, Vol. XXXI, History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana 1845-1889* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), n. 14, 117.

[28] J.G. Swan, "Gen. Wool and Gov. Stevens," *The Olympia Transcript* (May 9, 1868) 2.

[29] Hazard Stevens, Vol. 1, 437.

[30] Swan, 2; Bancroft, Vol. XXXI, n.14, 117.

[31] George A. Frykman, "Development of the *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 1906-1935." *Pacific Northwest Historical Quarterly* 70 (3) (1979), 121.

[32] Edmond S. Meany, *History of the State of Washington* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 187.

1854, and General Wool likely was too, but Stevens' family was not, since they stayed in the East during Stevens' first trip to Washington Territory.[33]

These numerous errors cause concern, especially in Meany's case because he strongly sided with Stevens. In describing the "peppery correspondence [that] passed between the governor and the general," Meany stated that "[t]he direct, forceful letters of Governor Stevens, the weak, evasive, and transparent letters of General Wool make a most pitiful spectacle of a man holding high military command."[34] Of Stevens' character, Meany said that "he was governed by a singleness of unselfish purpose and that he possessed an unsullied character, the brightest adornment of which was a lofty and steadfast patriotism."[35] Unfortunately, in *Young Man in a Hurry*, Kent Richards did not resolve the confusion. He offered few details of the Stevens' stay in San Francisco in the fall of 1854 and made no mention of any such encounter between Isaac Stevens and General Wool.[36]

The published correspondence between Wool and Stevens about the hostilities in Washington suggests that communication between them started off civilly but soon became hostile and public. On December 28, 1855 Stevens wrote a long letter to Wool from the Walla Walla Valley laying out information on the region and presenting a detailed plan for action against the Indians of that region.[37] However, before Wool received the letter, Stevens wrote another to the General on January 29, 1856 from Olympia declaring his intention to make an official complaint against Wool for disbanding volunteer units raised to come to Stevens' aid in Blackfeet country, aid which Stevens readily admitted he did not need

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[33] Hazard Stevens, Vol. 1, 425.
[34] Meany, 187.
[35] Ibid, 188.
[36] Richards, *Young Man in a Hurry*, 182.
[37] Stevens to Wool, December 28, 1855, in *Message of the Governor of Washington Territory. Also; The Correspondence with the Secretary of War, Major Gen. Wool, the officers of the Regular Army, and of the Volunteer Service of Washington Territory* (Olympia: Edward Furste, Public Printer, 1857), 133-138.

because of ample support from one hundred fifty well-armed Nez Perce allies.[38] Wool responded from California on February 12, 1856. Wool rather critically noted that

> [i]n presenting, however, your plan of campaign, which is a very extended one, you should have recollected that I have neither the resources of a territory, nor the treasury of the United States, at my command. Still you may be assured that the war against the Indians will be prosecuted with all the vigor, promptness and efficiency I am master of, at the same time *without wasting unnecessarily, the means and resources at my disposal, by untimely and unproductive expeditions.*[39]

After describing reports of atrocities committed by volunteers in Oregon and Washington, Wool denied receiving any communications about Indian hostilities from the civil authorities of either territory previous to Stevens' letters. Wool stated the only communication he had received before Stevens' letter from a territorial official was a request by Colonel Nesmith of the Oregon Mounted Volunteers for two howitzers, which Wool refused. Wool closed by emphatically denying he had disbanded any volunteer units or that he even knew that any were raised for the purpose of providing an escort to Stevens.[40] Stevens responded with a long, rambling letter that alternated between hoping Wool now knew he had been misled and accusing the General of incompetence.[41] Wool had the letter returned without a response.[42]

This controversy quickly became public. Newspaper editors received copies of official correspondence and printed it, usually with comments attacking Wool. Upon reading Wool's letter to Stevens of February 12 in an unnamed newspaper, Governor Curry of Oregon decided to join those demanding Wool's removal by writing a letter to Secretary of War Davis, which was then printed in local papers. Curry felt that Wool had maligned both himself and the people of Oregon. Curry wrote that "my official conduct and the patriotic

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[38] Stevens to Wool, January 29, 1856, in Ibid, 138-139.

[39] Wool to Stevens, February 12, 1856, in Ibid, 140 [the same letter is also reprinted in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 45-47], emphasis in originals.

[40] Ibid, 142.

[41] Stevens to Wool, March 20, 1856, in Ibid, 143-150.

[42] Stevens to Wool, May 12, 1856, in Ibid, 150-151.

and self-sacrificing efforts of my fellow-citizens, are alluded to with such perversion of facts as to impose upon me a necessity that because of the distinguished public service of Gen. Wool, in the past, I would most gladly have been spared."[43]

Curry, apparently more politically astute than the authors of the Oregon legislature's resolution requesting Wool's removal, which discussed Wool's negative impact on business and future payment of claims, agreed with that resolution without mentioning financial issues. Curry's letter concentrated on public safety and requested that Wool "be withdrawn from a position which his prejudices and indifferences to the dangers which threaten to desolate our settlements have rendered him incompetent to hold.[44]

In response, Wool published a series of letters in newspapers in San Francisco and Baltimore defending himself and blaming the Indian Wars of the Northwest on the whites. Wool maintained that the settlers of the Pacific Northwest were determined to exterminate the Indians, that the wars were simply a way to get money from the federal treasury, and that both of these practices were being encouraged by territorial officials. As Wool expressed in a letter to the *National Intelligencer*,

> I have not doubt but for the indiscriminate warfare carried on against them, and the massacre of several parties of friendly Indians by the troops of Governor Curry, the war would have long since been brought to a close in Oregon.... I think, if the volunteers, who expect to be paid largely for their services, were withdrawn, and private war prevented, I could soon end the war in the Rogue river valley, and indeed throughout Oregon and Washington; but the determination of the Oregonians to exterminate the Indians, which I am wholly opposed to, if not discountenanced by the United States Government, may prolong the war almost indefinitely.... Yet, by a proper and judicious course, the war may be brought to a close, when, by establishing posts at proper points, a recurrence of the past might be prevented; but to do this, I repeat, the extermination of the Indians should be abandoned. No doubt they could

[43] George L. Curry, "Letter of Gov. Curry to the Secretary of War," *Pioneer and Democrat* (June 20, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign."
[44] Ibid.

> be exterminated, but it would cost fifty to one hundred millions of dollars, besides thousands of innocent and valuable lives.[45]

Wool's letter heated up the controversy by seriously endangering the payment of the war debts, an effort that brought a response as immediate as technology of the time allowed.

Upon receipt of the newspaper containing Wool's letter, editor Dryer of the *Oregonian* retorted that "[i]t is hard to conceive how any man of common intelligence could devise a more gross and positive slander upon a people, or invent a more glaring set of misrepresentations, and gross falsehoods than will be found stated in this letter." Dryer was certain that Wool would pay a heavy price in the way he was remembered historically. Dryer described the letter as carrying "upon its face unmistakable evidence of the design of the writer, and will in the end consign the author to the position of a designing and revengeful demagogue." Dryer went on to call Wool's letter "*a lie* from beginning to end" and "a libel upon the history of the present Indian war, and a gross slander upon the people of Oregon and Washington Territories."[46]

But not all *Oregonian* readers agreed with Dryer. A week later Dryer published a letter by a Dr. Newell, who was obviously acquainted with Dryer, and who took exception to Dryer's contention that Wool's entire letter was a lie. Newell pointed out several things in Wool's letter that were common knowledge and widely believed. Newell's first point dealt with an episode recounted by Wool of the killing of a Walla Walla chief who approached a volunteer group under a flag of truce while professing peace. According to Wool, the chief was scalped, and the volunteers "cut off his ears and hands, and sent them to their friends in

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[45] John E. Wool, "To the Editors of the National Intelligencer, "April 2, 1856, *National Intelligencer* (May 2, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign." [Also reprinted in *Congressional Globe*, 34 Congress, 1st Session (May 7, 1856), 1135-1136].

[46] T. J. Dryer, "Gen. Wool's Last Letter," *The Oregonian* (June 21, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign.", emphasis in original.

Oregon."[47] Newell wrote that "Gen. Wool states that Pee-pee-mox-mox came to the volunteer camp and was killed &c. Do you remember Mr. Dryer, that you and I went into Mr. Smith's apothecary shop and saw a bottle sitting on a table by the stove with ears in it, and don't you remember they told us they were the ears of Pee-pee-mox-mox? Of course you do."[48] But Newell's larger point dealt with the complicity of the press in the war. "Mr. Dryer," he wrote,

> I know it is dangerous to offer to enjoy those privileges we so much boast of, in Oregon; and the freedom of the press I know is only a name in Oregon. I do not think there is one press in all Oregon, who will or does publish the news as it is received from the battle field, or from the people at large. Could all have been heard without reserve, I verily believe we would not have had this war on hand at this time.[49]

Newell also had a point about how the public battle with Wool started. Newell argued that "if we had let Gen. Wool alone, and not made any charge against him, (which we did first,) he never would have said a word about us, but we have charged, and charged, Governors and Editors, but all to no purpose. It would appear that we want to crush Wool (who *is* Uncle Sam) that we may rise."[50]

Editor Dryer published Newell's letter with a response in order to clarify that in his editorial a week earlier he was referring to the "gist" of the letter, or its "*material* and *important points*."[51] The way that Dryer sidestepped Newell's point about the death of the Walla Walla chief implies that he considered the brutal torture and dismemberment of an important Indian leader who professed peaceful intentions neither material nor important. Dryer also ignored Newell's comments about the complicity of the press in the war and how the controversy with General Wool started. Dryer closed his response to Newell with a

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[47] Wool, "To the Editors," in Evans, "Campaign."
[48] Robert Newell, "Letter to the editor," *The Oregonian* (June 28, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign."
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, emphasis in original.
[51] T. J. Dryer, Untitled, *The Oregonian* (June 28, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign." emphasis in original.

paragraph of Chinook preceded by the statement that "[i]f Dr. Newell can't make out our language, we will address him in a language which he does understand."[52] Dryer must have done this to draw questions about Newell's loyalties. Newell was a former mountain man who earned the title "doctor" through his knowledge of healing herbs and his ability to perform emergency surgeries. Newell married a Nez Percé woman before settling in Oregon and was appointed an Indian Agent by President Polk in 1849.[53]

The killing of the Walla Walla Chief Peu-peu-mox-mox seems to have been one of the very few atrocities committed by settlers to cause any outrage at the time.[54] Of course, the five volunteer officers involved all wrote reports denying any wrong doing, and consistently sticking to their killed-while-trying-to-escape story. One striking thing about these reports is that two of them, the Assistant Regimental Surgeon and the Company Commander of the volunteers involved, are so vague as to not even specify what type of injuries or wounds were inflicted upon the Walla Walla chieftain. The other three reports vary somewhat, but all agree that Peu-peu-mox-mox was beaten with a rifle butt and then shot after one of his companions drew a concealed knife rather than be tied up.[55] The statement of Lieutenant Colonel James Kelly, the commander of the First Regiment Oregon Mounted Volunteers is similar to the other two accounts, except it lacks some of the names of the volunteers involved, which vary between the other two accounts. Kelly reported that

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[52] Ibid.

[53] T.C. Elliott, "'Doctor' Robert Newell: Pioneer," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 9 (June 1908) : 104-111.

[54] This Chief was also known as Serpent Jaune, Yellow Serpent, and Yellow Bird, which apparently was the most accurate translation, and, other than the spelling I have used, the English transliteration was most commonly spelled Pio-pio-mox-mox, Pe-pe-mox-mox or Pee-pee-mux-mux, but there seem to have been nearly as many variations as there were writers who used the name.

[55] *Indian Affairs on the Pacific* in US Congress, 34th Congress, 3rd Session, House Ex. Doc. 76 (1857), 196-206.

Indians fired upon his men who were "engaged in driving up some beef cattle," cattle which belonged to the Indians. Kelly continued,

> The fire was returned, and a general fight ensued. The enemy were rapidly driven before us for about ten miles, along the Walla Walla river, until we reached the farmhouse of La Rogue, when they were reinforced and made a stand. Piu-piu-mox-mox and his companions were in the meantime closely guarded and brought up to our camp at La Rogue'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 he feared they would escape while the men were out in the field. I told him to tie them all, and if they resisted or attempted to escape, to kill them. I then rode on, and 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 Miller in the arm. Piu-piu-mox-mox attempted to wrest a gun from the hands of one of our men, when he was knocked down with a rifle and put to death, as were all the other prisoners who attempted to escape, except one, a Nez Percé youth, who made no resistance, and who was tied.[56]

At very best, this incident represented a haphazard and unprofessional manner of dealing with an important prisoner of war. At worst it was outright murder and the mutilation of this Chief's body certainly suggests that. Another factor that may have contributed to the death and mutilation of the Walla Walla Chief was mentioned over two years earlier in a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Isaac Stevens. Stevens described gossip circulating in the settlements about "Pu-Pu-Mux-Mux, who is not only a chief of influence but of substance, owning a thousand horses and cattle, and, as is said, several thousand dollars in gold."[57] One wonders if perhaps the mutilation of Peu-peu-mox-mox began as torture for information on the location of the rumored gold.

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[56] Lieut. Col. James K. Kelly to Governor George L. Curry, January 15, 1856, in Ibid, 200-201.

[57] Isaac I. Stevens, "No. 86" (September 16, 1854) *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* in US Congress, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, House Ex. Doc. Serial Set #777 (1855), 431.

By the first few decades of the twentieth century some of those responsible for maintaining Oregon's historical memory appear to have conceded there was no justification for the killing of Peu-peu-mox-mox.[58] This may have been a bitter pill for some to swallow. The same issue of the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* that carried Thomas W. Prosch's Annual Address to the 1914 General Meeting of the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) also carried notice of Prosch's death. This means that Prosch never received much if any feedback from outside the OHS. Prosch's address is significant because it appears to be the first time that points were raised in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* questioning some of the standard myths of the wars. One point concerned the death of Peu-peu-mox-mox. Prosch admitted that

> [i]t is not always agreeable to say good things of the Indians, and not always grateful to say bad things of the whites, in contrasting them, but it is none the less true, be it said to our shame, that the most atrocious, fiendish and barbarous acts of the struggle herein briefly treated were those of our own people – the cruel, cold-blooded killing of the wife and six children of the Chief Spencer, the killing and mutilation of Chief Peu-peu-mox-mox, and other deeds of similar character that we all know of but shrink from mentioning.[59]

Although Prosch conceded a few of General Wool's more striking but actually secondary points, such as the deaths of Peu-peu-mox-mox and Spencer's family, he maintained the party line on General Wool himself. Prosch referred to "the petulant fault-finding of General John E. Wool," and argued that Wool

> early assumed that the white people were more to blame than the Indians, and he did not hesitate to say so again and again on every available occasion. Of course his charges were disputed by the newspapers and citizens of both Oregon and Washington, as also by Governors Curry and Stevens. Wool maintained that the war was encouraged and continued for the purpose of employing unnecessary volunteer

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[58] Thomas W. Prosch, "The Indian War in Washington Territory," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 16 (March 1915), 9, 23; T.C. Elliott, "The Murder of Peu-Peu-Mox-Mox," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35 (2) (June 1934): passim; Joseph F. Santee, "The Slaying of Peo-Peo-Mox-Mox," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 25 (April 1934): passim.

[59] Prosch, 23.

> soldiery, supplying them with horses, foods, equipment and other necessaries at high rates of compensation, all to be charged against and collected from the general government. He charged them specifically and generally with cruelties and acts of outrageous violence and murder, and made official report of their mishaps, misfortunes and alleged misconduct on numerous occasions.[60]

What Prosch leaves out of this analysis is that Wool's specific charges of "outrageous violence and murder" were directed at the killings of Spencer's family, the death and mutilation of Peu-peu-mox-mox, "and other deeds of similar character."

Wool's problems with the settlers of the Pacific Northwest should not have surprised anyone. By March 1854, less than three months after taking charge of the Department of the Pacific, Wool wrote requests for more troops to protect the Indians from the settlers. As Wool wrote to the Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis,

> The number [of troops] is wholly inadequate to give protection to either whites or Indians. The difficulties with the latter are frequently produced by the cupidity of the whites. Indeed, if I am correctly informed, most of the difficulties with the Indians have been caused by outrages committed by men who have no regard for law or justice. I will do all I can, with such limited means, to prevent the continuance of these outrages.[61]

Davis refused Wool's request for more troops. Wool's belief that Indians had to be protected from settlers was reminiscent of an earlier episode in Wool's career.

In the summer of 1836 Secretary of War Lewis Cass sent Wool to keep the peace in and around the Cherokee Nation as preparations were made for removal of the divided Cherokees under the terms of the Treaty of New Echota that many considered fraudulent. During this assignment, Wool became embroiled in such heated controversy, not only with settlers but also with state and federal officials, that he twice requested transfer and a Court

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[60] Ibid, 18-19.

[61] Major General John E. Wool to Lieutenant Colonel L. Thomas, Assistant Adjutant General, U.S. Army, February 28, 1854, in "Message of the President of the United States communicating, In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, the instructions and correspondence between the government and Major General Wool in regard to his operations on the coast of the Pacific," US Congress, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 16 (1855), 11-12.

of Inquiry into his overall performance in Cherokee Country. After Wool's second request was granted, a Court of Inquiry convened, but only with a narrow mandate to hear a complaint from the state of Alabama that Wool's actions in Cherokee Country contravened states' rights and ignored individual liberties. When the session opened the State of Alabama's case fell apart due to lack of witnesses and evidence. Wool defended himself by contending that the charges were laid because he had listened to the Cherokees, not because he had violated the Constitution. He argued that "[m]y crime has been not in using the language here supposed, but in listening to his [the Cherokee's] complaints and redressing his wrongs."[62]

Another episode in Wool's career also foreshadowed his problems in the Pacific Northwest. After Wool was exonerated by the court of inquiry, he returned for a few months to his previous post as Inspector General of the Army.[63] In January of 1838 Wool went north to prevent filibustering expeditions from crossing the border from New York and Vermont into Canada.[64] Wool used volunteers mustered into service through trusted contacts because he did not trust the local militia, many of whom supported, or in some cases were involved in, the incursions into Canada.[65] Wool not only had to contend with militiamen who allowed filibusterers to regain their confiscated arms, he had to deal with outraged public meetings and irate newspaper editorials all denouncing him.[66] Historians have paid little attention to this episode in Wool's life. Outside of Hinton, who described Wool as "disgusted with

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[62] Quoted in Hinton, 133.
[63] Ibid, 134-135.
[64] Ibid, 136-142.
[65] Ibid, 150-152.
[66] Ibid, 156-161.

volunteers"[67] after an episode of militia men returning confiscated munitions to filibusterers, none seem to have mentioned it.

Historians have, however, examined Wool's activities in Cherokee Country and their take on Wool's role in events leading up to the removal of the Cherokees from their traditional territory has evolved over the years. In 1960 Hinton characterized the assignment as "difficult if not impossible. Ordered to preserve peace among the Cherokees, he [Wool] found that every action provoked criticism."[68] During the late 1970s Wool was represented as very close to pro-Cherokee, and the tense relations with President Jackson and state authorities that led Wool to request reassignment and an official investigation were emphasized.[69] In the late 1980s Wool was "a humane man and an excellent administrator .... but nonetheless firm in discharging his duty to execute the treaty and remove [the Cherokees] to the West."[70] More recently, however, Laurence Hauptman argued that Wool's correspondence from the 1830s, largely in the possession of Wool's relatives until the 1960s, shows a significant bias toward the pro-removal faction of the Cherokees. Hauptman concluded that "[h]ardly benevolent in his approach, Wool presented himself as an unbending, vindictive military officer willing to carry forth with swift retribution."[71] Hauptman argued that it was only through the efforts of Wool's friends and colleagues on the court of inquiry that his later image was "mistakenly transformed into the very image of a humanitarian general."[72] Hauptman cited an October 1856 letter from Wool to a Senator

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[67] Ibid, 159.
[68] Ibid, 134.
[69] James F. Corn, "Conscience or Duty: General John E. Wool's Dilemma with Cherokee Removal," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 3, no. 1 (1978) : passim.
[70] Carl J. Vipperman, "The Bungled Treaty of New Echota: The Failure of Cherokee Removal, 1836-1838," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1989) : 542.
[71] Laurence M. Hauptman, "General John E. Wool in Cherokee Country, 1836-1837: A Reinterpretation." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85, no.1 (2001) : 14.
[72] Ibid, 23.

from California to support his contention that Wool was not a humanitarian. Wool's position that California was not Indian Country and therefore state law took precedence led Hauptman to the conclusion that "the septuagenarian general was no longer willing to become embroiled in opposing state officials' actions in regard to American Indians."[73] However, Hauptman made no mention of the controversy over Wool's performance in the Pacific Northwest that was still going on when Wool wrote the letter to the California Senator.

The historiographical debate over Wool's activities in Cherokee country is striking because no similar debate has occurred in respect to Wool's problems in the Pacific Northwest. Historians of the West have tended to blame Wool's problems there on his personality. For example, in *The Legacy of Conquest*, Patricia Nelson Limerick called Wool "something of a prig" and said looking at pictures of Wool gave her the idea that "the symmetrical and carefully waxed curls at his temples suggest that he and the Oregon pioneers might have been at odds without the troubles of Indian policy."[74] Limerick's source for her observations on Wool, Robert Utley's *Frontiersmen in Blue*, also emphasized Wool's personality but offered a view of the bigger picture too. Utley described Wool as a "stiff-necked professional of forty-two years' service," before noting that

> the diminutive general possessed a contentious temperament that overshadowed a piety somewhat unusual in the Regular Army. He reposed great confidence in his own judgment and tended to regard anyone who differed with him as a scoundrel controlled by impure motives. In this category he placed the citizens of the Northwest and their political officials, who insisted on appropriating all the Indian's land and killing him if he objected. In the larger sense, of course, Wool was right, but in the context of his times his inability to understand the other point of view as well cost him needed civilian support and deepened the bitterness already engendered by

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[73] Ibid, 24.

[74] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 45.

> field commanders who now and then sided with the Indians. Intemperate public utterances insured wide circulation of the general's views.[75]

It seems Utley was either unaware or simply did not care that the controversy started with Dryer's attacks on Wool in the *Oregonian*, not with Wool's public utterances. The publication of Wool's letters to other federal officials by newspaper editors with an axe to grind hardly seems like "intemperate public utterances." But the most important point of Utley's position on Wool is that the later appearance of correctness inherent in Wool's stance on the wars of the Northwest was irrelevant because it ran counter to public opinion. From the viewpoint of those who constructed and maintained the historical memory of the settlement of the Pacific Northwest, the desire to maintain Wool's irrelevance is hardly surprising. From a prominent historian however, the position that being right is less important than being in line with public opinion seems an unusual interpretive stance; one that was perhaps only possible before opposition to the US involvement in Vietnam became widespread.

Utley seems to have maintained his stance that the correctness of Wool's position was irrelevant. In *The Indian Frontier*, Utley made no attempt to discuss the foundations of the problem, and simply referred to "[s]harp-tongued, combative little John E. Wool."[76] Other historians have made similar judgments. In a 1978 MA thesis Nancy Emmick blamed the dispute on a personality clash and characterized Wool as "an irascible old man" whose "difficulties stemmed from his misjudgment of the fears felt by the settlers during the first winter" of the war.[77] About Stevens, Emmick wrote that he had "an unbounded confidence

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[75] Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 178.

[76] Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984.), 53.

[77] Emmick, 119.

in himself [and] was a conceited and obstinate man .... who followed his own sense of right, wrong and justice."[78] Emmick placed the ultimate responsibility for the dispute on Congress for not separating the two adversaries like bickering children.[79] Three years later Robin Fisher, in his comparative study, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers," also referred to a "personality and policy clash" between Wool and Stevens.[80] Fisher said nothing about General Wool's personality, probably because he was dealing with differences in Indian policy between British Columbia and Washington Territory and how these differences potentially contributed to the relative lack of warfare in British Columbia. About Stevens' personality, Fisher simply said that Stevens "was politically ambitious and impatient to get things done."[81]

There would seem to be little room for doubt that Wool was arrogant, opinionated and stubborn, and that there was indeed a personality clash with Stevens, but to reduce Wool's objections to the violence perpetrated by miners and settlers to inconvenient aspects of his personality, while largely neglecting Stevens' part in the situation, is a gross over simplification. In fairness, not all historians have seen personality as the main factor at work here. In his "A Reexamination of General John. E. Wool's Role in the Stevens-Wool Controversy," John Simpson did not focus on personality but instead argued that the "Stevens-Wool controversy was triggered by General Wool's strong questioning of Governor Stevens' policies toward the Native Americans."[82] Like Utley in *Frontiersmen in Blue*, some historians have seen both personality and politics in the Wool-Stevens dispute. In his study

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[78] Ibid, 121.
[79] Ibid, 2-3.
[80] Robin Fisher, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers: A Comparison of British Columbia and Washington Territory During the Early Years of Settlement," *Pacific Historical Review* 50 (1) (1981), 47.
[81] Ibid, 40.
[82] John M. Simpson, "A Reexamination of General John E. Wool's Role in the Stevens-Wool Controversy" (MA thesis, Pacific Lutheran University, 1992), 60.

of Isaac Stevens, *Young Man in a Hurry*, Kent Richards also pointed to Wool's personality, but in addition to seeing Wool's good side, Richards demonstrated an ability to look beyond personality to the underlying political differences. Richards described Wool as

> a vigorous, capable officer – apparently the logical choice for the large, politically sensitive Department of the Pacific. He proved to be capable of running the huge department with as much efficiency as circumstances allowed, but he was less suited to handle political problems. Thoroughly professional, completely honest, and imbued with a sense of public service, Wool believed that the army was in the best position to deal with the various problems caused by American expansion. The general would brook no interference from outside sources – which included state, territorial, and local officials within his broadly defined sphere of influence. In addition he held a high opinion of his moral infallibility, which at times led him to ignore or question the motives of others. His critics (there were many) called him pompous and arrogant. But criticism did not deter Wool. He was not concerned with public relations; he would do his duty as he saw it, whatever the objections or ultimate consequences.[83]

Isaac Stevens also brooked no interference from outsiders in his own broadly defined sphere of influence, which was Washington Territory. According to Richards' apt description,

> Although Stevens would have disputed any charge that he was not a thoroughgoing democrat (as well as a Democratic party faithful) his temperament, training, and professional career best prepared him to operate as a monarch. He had always viewed his responsibilities broadly, and his overlapping duties and titles after 1853 led him to assume that he had absolute power. He defended his actions as a military necessity; he even portrayed himself as the territory's only hope for salvation.[84]

Stevens most controversial escapade demonstrates rather clearly his monarchial tendencies.

Besides engaging in a battle of words with Wool, Isaac Stevens provoked uproar from citizens and the bar of Washington territory in the late spring of 1856 by declaring martial law and twice imprisoning Chief Justice Lander of the Territorial Court, along with two different clerks. Prior to both arrests, Lander was about to issue a writ of *habeas corpus* to thwart Stevens' efforts to try seven settlers for treason before a panel of volunteer officers selected by Stevens. The proclamation of martial law provoked a bitter protest from legal

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[83] Richards, *Young Man in a Hurry*, 238.
[84] Ibid, 275.

professionals in the Territory.[85] As vindication of his action, Stevens stated that the accused were "mostly the retired servants of the foreign corporations in our midst, and they have a deadly antipathy to the dominant, that is, the American power here."[86] Stevens claimed that all of them had connections by marriage to hostile tribes and had been "the main original cause of the war."[87] However, in a letter written to the Secretary of State to update the report of the territorial bar association sent to President Pierce a few days earlier, two members of the bar of Washington Territory disputed Stevens' claims, pointing out that only three of the men had ever worked for the Hudson's Bay or Puget's Sound Companies and that some of the men were not married and the wives of the others were "half-breeds from the Red river country, and have no connexion with the Indians of this country."[88] As for Stevens' accusation that the seven accused caused the war, these writers described it as "a fiction that has found birth in Governor Stevens' own brain, and never, to our knowledge, was dreamed of by anyone else. These causes it is not now necessary to discuss; there are many who attribute them chiefly to Governor Stevens himself."[89]

In the opinion of these lawyers, the real crime of the accused was their returning to their farms in defiance of Stevens' evacuation order, and the real point of the declaration of martial law was to force these men to comply with Stevens' orders. In support of this position they noted the fact that the accused, "although awaiting their trials by a military

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[85] W. H. Wallace and others, *A Brief Notice of the Recent Outrages Committed by Isaac I. Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory. The Suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus – the Breaking up of Courts, and the Kidnapping of Judges and Clerks* (Olympia: n. p., May 17, 1856), passim.

[86] Isaac I. Stevens, "Vindication of Governor Stevens for proclaiming and enforcing martial law in Pierce county, Washington Territory," republished in "Message of the President of the United States, communicating, In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 1st ultimo, copies of the papers relating to the proclamation of martial law in Washington Territory," US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 98 (1856), 11.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Messrs. Gibbs and Goldsborough to Mr. Marcy, May 11, 1856 in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 98 (1856), 15.

[89] Ibid.

commission on a charge of *treason*, are at this moment on parole, and quietly walking about the towns without guard, with their usual arms."[90] Their letter further stated that the declaration of martial law "was without law, precedent, or palliation, and intended to subject them [the accused] to the despotic will and pleasure of an officer whose rage was excited, not by their crimes, but by their disobedience to his [Stevens'] orders."[91] The lawyers believed Stevens was out of control and pursuing a petty grudge. They maintained that "[t]he sole object of the proclamation was to get a half a dozen obscure individuals into his absolute control, and to demonstrate that he, Isaac I. Stevens, could, on the field offered by a small Territory, enact, at second hand, the part of Napoleon."[92] The letter concluded that,

> the immediate removal of Governor Stevens from office is absolutely requisite for the peace and safety of this community. Of a naturally arrogant and domineering character, of overweening ambition, and even unscrupulous as to the means requisite to effect his objects, he has been further inflamed by the immoderate use of ardent spirits, and in his fits of intoxication knows no bounds to his language or to his actions.[93]

This judgment of Stevens' "utter lack of restraint" is quite compatible with the assessment of Stevens' mental state that General Wool offered in a letter to headquarters just a couple of months later. Wool argued that "Governor Stevens is crazy and does not know what he is doing."[94]

This assessment of Stevens' mental state was not widely accepted, but through the Secretary of State, President Pierce censured Stevens for this incident. Secretary of State Marcy wrote that,

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[90] Ibid, 17, emphasis in original.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid, 18.
[93] Ibid, 19.
[94] Quoted in: Hinton, 370; Emmick, 103; Simpson, 81.

> While the President does not bring into question the motives by which you were actuated, he is induced, by an imperative sense of duty, to express his distinct disapproval of your conduct, so far as respects the proclamation of martial law.
>
> Were the President able to adopt the conclusion that martial law could, in any case, be established without express legislative authority, he could not find such a case in the state of things in Washington Territory as you have presented them. .... Martial law.... never can be excusable where the object of resorting to martial law was to act against the existing government of the country, or to supercede its functionaries in the discharge of their proper duties. The latter seems to have been the principal ground you had for proclaiming martial law. Your conduct in that respect does not meet with the favorable regard of the President.[95]

This reprimand seems rather mild and inconsequential considering that Stevens was a federal official and had clearly violated the US Constitution. Stevens seems to have had very strong support from President Pierce.

However, the approval of the citizens of Washington Territory is a different matter. Even discounting the harsh criticism of Stevens quoted above as nothing more than the protestations of a few lawyers offended by infringement upon their authority, there is room for doubt about the depth of Stevens' support. Kent Richards argued that Stevens' election as Congressional delegate in 1857 shows the majority of voters approved Stevens' handling of Territorial affairs as governor.[96] But as was pointed out in the press during the election campaign, failure to send Stevens to Congress would have delayed Congressional appropriations to pay the war debts.[97] And there was at least one newspaper, the *Puget Sound Courier*, published from May 1855 into 1857, which opposed Stevens, referred to the war as "Governor Stevens' War" and argued he was responsible for it. The *Courier* editorialist wrote that,

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[95] Mr. Marcy to Governor Stevens, September 12, 1856, in "Message of the President of the United States, communicating, In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 30th ultimo, information respecting the proclamation of martial law in Washington Territory," US Congress, 34th Congress, 3rd Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 41 (1857), 56.

[96] Richards, *Young Man in a Hurry*, 285-288.

[97] Roy Lokken, "The Martial Law Controversy in Washington Territory, 1856," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 43 (1952), 118.

> As we have said before, *had the treaties here never been made*, no difficulties would now exist. If Governor Stevens and his underlings had never set foot in Washington Territory, the people would have been better off, for the Indians before this, have always been willing that the Americans should settle and live on their land and amongst them. They had then no fears of being driven from their home, under a pretext of purchase at a nominal price – a mere nothing. We have only one wish, and that is, that Governor Stevens himself, was here to receive a proper lesson from his unrighteous acts.
>
> Whether we shall be justified in all we advocate on this subject, by a majority of the people, we know not, but what we think right we say. Those who have been the first to *cause* these troubles, should receive condemnation, as well as the savages for the atrocities they have committed.[98]

As suggested by the editorialist's uncertainty as to whether the majority of the people would accept his position, this was a minority paper. A writer in an early edition of *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, described the *Courier* as "Whig in politics, and as the population was overwhelmingly Democratic it soon died for lack of sustenance."[99] Not surprisingly then, the *Pioneer and Democrat* from Olympia, a decidedly pro-Stevens paper, sneered at this article in the *Courier*, and characterized it as "a libellous, scurrilous and ill-timed attack upon Gov. Stevens."[100] However, the *Puget Sound Courier* endured through the entire period of hostilities in western Washington and for about a year afterward. Some people were obviously reading it. Those who wished to express dissent to the majority view of the war managed to create a local outlet to do so. As we shall see in chapter three, dissent was not treated so magnanimously in southern Oregon.

There were others who held Stevens responsible for starting the war in Washington Territory. They were a minority, but some recognized the treaties signed at the Walla Walla Council as the immediate cause of the war. One army officer present compared Stevens' behavior at Walla Walla to "the Highway man, who with his hand on your throat, and a pistol

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[98] "Governor Stevens' War," *Puget Sound Courier* (October 19, 1855), 1, emphasis in original.

[99] Clarence B. Bagley, "Pioneer Papers of Puget Sound." *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 4 (December 1903), 372.

[100] George B. Goudy, "'Governor Stevens' War,'" *Pioneer and Democrat* (October 26, 1855), 2.

at your head, requests your small change."[101] In a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Joel Palmer, a treaty commissioner at Walla Walla, described the causes of the Yakima War as stemming from

> the present state of disaffection among the Indians in Washington Territory, among which may be named the following: The Yakama Indians were represented in the Walla Walla council by four of their principal chiefs, accompanied by a number of their leading men, all evidently opposed at first to entering into any negotiations for the sale of their country. After more than two weeks had been spent in trying to convince them of the importance and necessity of such a course in open council, they gave a decided and peremptory answer in the negative. But during the next week, by interviews with the chiefs separately, Governor Stevens induced them to agree to the terms of the treaty. ....
>
> It is pretty evident that the signing of the treaty was adverse to the will of the nation, as expressed prior to the delegation's coming to the council, and that on the return of the chiefs they were beset by their people and denounced as traitors to their tribe. Two of the chiefs, Owhi and Skloo, evidently signed the treaty with great reluctance, and, after returning home and meeting with their friends, were easily induced to join in opposition to adhering to its provisions.[102]

Captain Thomas Jefferson Cram, the chief topographical engineer for the Department of the Pacific agreed with Palmer's assessment that the treaty council at Walla Walla had led directly to hostilities in the area. He criticized "[t]he hot haste and grasping disposition evinced by the senior commissioner [Stevens] in his speeches in council," concluding that "the superintendent for Washington left in his rear a vast extent of Indian country in which the proceedings of the council had stirred up little else than strong dissatisfaction in the Indian heart."[103] Stevens' reputation among his former comrades in arms sank to a very low

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[101] Quoted in Robert E. Ficken, "The Three party Conflict: The Army and the Indian on the Pacific Northwest Frontier," in *Military Influences on Washington History: Proceedings of a Conference March 29-31, 1984 Camp Murray, Tacoma, Washington*, ed. William Woodward (Camp Murray: Washington Army National Guard, 1984), 66.

[102] Palmer to Manypenny, October 9, 1855, in US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 58.

[103] Thomas Jefferson Cram, *Topographical Memoir* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1977 [reprint of US Congress, 35th Congress, 2d Session, House Exec. Doc no. 114 (1859)]), 85-86.

point. One officer described him to General Wool, as "the worst looking and the most drunken character that I have seen for many months."[104]

After the signing of the Treaty at the Walla Walla council Isaac Stevens was in such a rush to open the area for settlement that he did not wait for the US Senate to ratify the treaties. Seventeen days after the treaties were signed the same edition of the Olympia newspaper that announced the negotiations also carried, on another page, an announcement that much of the upper Columbia River region was now opened for settlement with a detailed description of the areas offered.[105] The same notice ran once a month, all through the war, continuing through August 1856.[106]

To add further injury, there was a gold rush in the area shortly after the Walla Walla Council. According to Captain Cram,

> The routes thither led directly through the Walla Walla and Yakama countries, and as the whites passed, some of them committed excesses and outrages of the grossest kinds upon the hitherto unoffending Indians of the very tribes the proceedings of the council had so much and so recently disturbed. The bare recital of some of the crimes committed by these Anglo-Saxon devils, in human shape, is sufficient to cause the blood of every virtuous man, whether of red or white skin, to boil with deep indignation. They were not satisfied with stealing the horses and cattle of the Indians, but they claimed the privilege of taking and ravishing Indian women and maidens *ad libitum*. What wonder, then, that the Indians who had been so grossly outraged should have retaliated, as they did, by killing some half dozen of these miscreants?[107]

It was not just army officers subordinate to General Wool who wrote about the inappropriate activities of gold seekers and the inevitable Indian responses. According to the editorial writer at the *Puget Sound Courier*,

> It will be noticed that they [the Indians] desire to kill none but Americans; for in all those companies [of would be miners traveling east of the Cascades] where

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[104] H.D. Wallen to General Wool, October 26, 1856, quoted in Ficken, 66.

[105] *Pioneer and Democrat* (June 29, 1855) 2, 3.

[106] An online archive of *The Pioneer and Democrat* from 1854 to 1861 is maintained by the Washington Secretary of State, accessed February 7, 2007: http://www.secstate.wa.gov/history/newspapers_detail.aspx?t=3

[107] Cram, 86.

> Americans have been killed, the Frenchmen have not been harmed, and in one or two instances they have saved it is supposed, the whole companies by *being* Frenchmen. "King George" men, we believe, are also left unharmed. For this distinction, there is a plenty of reasons. None but the Americans have used them wrongfully, and they, not all, but many, and those mostly whom the Indians denominate *tyees*, have done it with a vengeance; robbed them of their lands, treated them worse than slaves – as brutes – and in fact, been the cause of these difficulties.[108]

From these two reports it can be seen that just prior to the outbreak of the Yakima war there were both some army officers and some settlers who believed that the participants in the mining rush who had been slain were simply reaping the consequences of their own inappropriate actions and treatment of the Indians of the upper Columbia basin..

The fact that the Indians were commonly known to spare "King George men" and "Frenchmen," i.e. employees or former employees of the Hudson's Bay or Puget Sound Agricultural Companies, might account for some of Stevens' apparent antagonism to those groups. However, signs of this antagonism can be seen well before either the hostilities or the gold rush began in a report on Hudson's Bay Company property claims that Stevens made to the State Department. In June 1854 Stevens wrote that,

> It has been the policy of the [Hudson's Bay] company to discourage agricultural emigrants, and to keep the greater portion of the territory a mere wilderness, or a vast preserve for game. Vattel has observed that the cultivation of the soil is an obligation imposed by nature upon mankind, and he and other writers upon natural law place but little value upon the territorial rights of people sparsely inhabiting vast regions, and drawing their subsistence chiefly from the forest. In this view it would be difficult to distinguish the territorial rights of this company from those of the people fast disappearing before the steps of civilization on this continent.[109]

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[108] "Governor Stevens' War," *Puget Sound Courier* (October 19, 1855) : 1, emphasis in original.

[109] Isaac I. Stevens, "Report of Governor Stevens, of Washington Territory," in "Letter from the Secretary of State, to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, communicating the report of Governor Stevens, of Washington Territory, to the Department of State, of June 21, 1854, relative to the property of the Hudson's Bay and Puget's Sound Company in that Territory." 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Ex. Doc., no. 37 (1855), 4.

From Stevens' sentiments expressed in this report, one gets the impression that former associates of the Hudson's Bay Company might not have needed to do much to be considered enemies by Stevens.

The Walla Walla treaties were not the only ones negotiated by Stevens that were problematic. As Thomas Prosch noted in his address to the 1914 annual meeting of the Oregon Historical Society, "The first and last of the Stevens treaties were apparently the immediate cause of the war that followed, for the Indians affected by them were the ones that entered upon it, while the Indians affected by the other treaties generally abstained, though the terms of all treaties were substantially alike."[110] The Walla Walla treaties were the last. The first treaty that Stevens negotiated was the Medicine Creek Treaty, signed by Indians from southern Puget Sound in late December of 1854. Later historians have argued it was a prelude to the war in the Western part of Washington Territory.[111] However, the criticism started early. In 1857 George Gibbs, a surveyor involved in the negotiations who then surveyed the reservations that resulted from the negotiations, wrote a letter critical of Stevens' treaties. According to Gibbs, "the governor's treaties had a great deal to do in fomenting this war there is no doubt. Those on the Sound were too much hurried, and the reservations allowed them were insufficient; but his grand blunder was in bringing together the Nez Percés, Walla Wallas, Yakamas, and others into one council, and cramming a treaty

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[110] Prosch, 5.

[111] Drew W. Crooks, "Governor Stevens and the Medicine Creek Treaty: Prelude to War in Southern Puget Sound." *Pacific Northwest Forum* 10 (3 & 4) (1985) : 22-35; SuAnn M. Reddick and Cary C. Collins, "Medicine Creek to Fox Island: Cadastral Scams and Contested Domains," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106 (3) (Fall 2005), 374-397.

down their throats in a hurry."[112] Also in 1857, Gibbs wrote to the *Washington Republican* claiming that Isaac Stevens "appeared intoxicated ... at the treaties here on the sound."[113]

Intoxicated or not, it appears that Stevens did not want the Indians at Medicine Creek to understand the treaty they were to sign. In his extensive collection of oral history interviews done in the early twentieth century, early Washington settler Ezra Meeker had an interview with a settler who attended the Medicine Creek negotiations. According to Owen Bush, an early settler who could speak several native languages and who attended the Medicine Creek negotiations,

> Stevens did not seem to want anyone to interpret in their own tongue, and had that done in Chinook. Of course, it was utterly impossible to explain the treaties to them in Chinook. Stevens wanted me to go into the war, but I wouldn't do it. I knew it was his bad management that brought on the war, and I wouldn't raise a gun against those people who had always been so kind to us when we were so weak and needy. The Indians could have killed us all at any time during the eight years we were here before Governor Stevens came, but instead of molesting us in any way they helped us all they could.[114]

The interpreter at the Medicine Creek Council refused to talk to Meeker, but this individual, who had been previously interviewed in 1893 by another author, strongly denied deliberately deceiving the Indians during those negotiations. Still, he readily acknowledged that it was obvious to him that the Indians did not understand the treaties.[115] It would seem that this lack of understanding was probably not unintended on Stevens' part. Two months after the negotiation of the Medicine Creek Treaty, Margaret Stevens described her husband's

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[112] Quoted in James G. Swan, *The Northwest Coast; or, Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 428.

[113] Quoted in Crooks, 28.

[114] Ezra Meeker, *Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound The Tragedy of Leschi An Account of the Coming of the First Americans and the Establishment of Their Institutions; The First Treaties with the Indians and the War that Followed; Seven Years of the Life of Isaac I. Stevens in Washington Territory; Cruise of the Author on Puget Sound Fifty Years ago; Nisqually House and the Hudson Bay Company. From Personal Observation during Fifty Years Residence, Contemporary Pioneer Reminiscence and Other Authentic Sources.* (Seattle: Lowman and Hanford, 1905), 208.

[115] Ibid, 250-251.

negotiating tactics in a letter to her sister. Margaret Stevens noted that her husband "has them right under his thumb – they are afraid as death of him and do just as he tells them."[116] The Indians kept doing as Isaac Stevens told them for a few more months, before some Indians began to do otherwise in a dramatic fashion.

The tendency of historians to parallel the ad hominem arguments against Wool such as those of the highly polemical Thomas Dryer, and other editorialists of his ilk, and focus on Wool's personality has kept most of them from dealing adequately with the politics underlying the Wool-Stevens dispute, and more importantly with the substance of General Wool's allegations. Further, as we have seen, Stevens' personality would appear to be a potentially fruitful source for the mining of raw material to conduct attacks similar to those waged upon Wool. But, as we have also seen, Stevens has been exempt from such attacks by later writers. Even Ezra Meeker, although highly critical of Stevens whenever the opportunity arose, treated Stevens with a modicum of respect, a practice that appears to have been lacking in the early twentieth century writers who dealt with General Wool.

The prevailing image of General Wool thus formed distorts the memory of Wool and more generally the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest, originally by denying the validity of Wool's criticism and later by a generalized but not quite universal reluctance among historians to deal head on with Wool's critique of the motivations behind the wars. Some historians have confronted the settler myths, but not in a manner that has reached the public. For example, as Robert Ficken noted in 1985 at an obscure conference organized by the Washington National Guard, "The military experience in the Pacific Northwest offers evidence contrary to that in the myriad letters and diaries of settlers and enables a more

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[116] Margaret Stevens to her sister Nancy, February 17, 1855, quoted in Kent Richards, "Isaac I. Stevens and Federal Military Power in Washington Territory," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 63 (3) (1972), 82.

objective assessment of the responsibility for the numerous nineteenth century Indian conflicts in the region."[117] One of the other presentations at this conference was published in a regional historical journal, but Ficken's was not.[118] Even now little historical writing on the Pacific Northwest questions settler mythology. I suggest that it is time to completely rehabilitate General Wool from the negative aspersions cast upon him by those who, through motivations of profit or behind the shield of patriotism, concealed the true nature of some of the more abhorrent episodes that occurred in the Pacific Northwest during the 1850s.

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[117] Ficken, 70-71.

[118] Drew W. Crooks, "Governor Stevens and the Medicine Creek Treaty: Prelude to War in Southern Puget Sound," in *Military Influences on Washington History: Proceedings of a Conference March 29-31, 1984 Camp Murray, Tacoma, Washington*, ed. William Woodward (Camp Murray: Washington Army National Guard, 1984), 47-58 ; Drew W. Crooks, "Governor Stevens and the Medicine Creek Treaty: Prelude to War in Southern Puget Sound." *Pacific Northwest Forum* 10 (3&4) (1985), 22-35.

Chapter Two:
"A serial fictionist""

Brevet Major General John Ellis Wool was as controversial in the Indian Wars of Oregon as he was in Washington, and the evidence shows that there too, people who stood to gain from a certain portrayal of events deliberately crafted a distorted image of General Wool in order to obscure the history of the hostilities in Southern Oregon. These people cast aspersions upon Wool's personality to hide the fact that events of the 1850s and the few decades following the wars demonstrate that Wool's allegations were well founded. The quest to secure Congressional funding for war related claims continued into the 1890s, even as the image of General Wool as a settler hater with a particular disdain for volunteer Indian fighters solidified into a formidable monolith. The memory of the events of the 1850s became firmly rooted in first- and second-hand accounts of those who profited from the wars, with assistance from those who valorized the settlers of the Pacific Northwest and justified the conquest with rhetoric of racial superiority. Some even set out to manipulate the historical record for personal financial gain.

The costs of putting volunteer fighters into the field were met by the issue of scrip by the Territorial Government. However, under the federal legislation forming the Oregon Territorial Government, all acts of the Territorial Government had to be approved by Congress, and therefore the Territorial Legislature had no independent financial authority.[1] Consequently, the provision of goods or services solely upon the issuance of semi-legal Territorial scrip was a risky proposition. It took several years for the federal government to

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[1] F.G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon: Finances of the Territorial Period, 1849-1859," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 8 (2) (1907): n. 10, 137. The situation was the same in Washington Territory. See: Thomas W. Prosch, "The Indian War in Washington Territory," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 16 (March 1915), 15-17.

honor the scrip issued for Oregon's first Indian war, the Cayuse War of 1847-48, but in the end the federal government paid for the war, which was fought by volunteers because there were no regular troops in the Northwest at the time.[2] Therefore, the people of the Pacific Northwest had some reason to expect that the federal government would pick up the bill for the costs of fighting Indians in the 1850s, however, a significant barrier to the payment of the debt arose. According to Hubert Bancroft's second volume of Oregon history,

> the allegations made by the highest military authority on the Pacific coast that the people of Oregon were an army of organized Indian-murderers and government robbers, in support of which assertion was the enormous account against the nation, of nearly six million dollars, the payment of which was opposed by almost the entire press of the union.[3]

In his financial history of Oregon during the territorial period, Frederick Young described the settlement of the war claims as "a part of national finances," and thus outside the parameters of his study. Nonetheless, he argued that "the realization that the Oregon community was under this stress during this period is necessary for a true appreciation of the territorial finances proper."[4] Young, editor of the Oregon Historical Society's Quarterly for its first twenty-nine years, and a professor at the University of Oregon, attributed Oregon's difficulties in securing reparations primarily to Wool. Young argued that Wool's attitude "had no doubt most to do towards developing opposition in Congress to prompt and liberal reimbursement for losses and costs connected with the suppression of Indian hostilities in the Pacific Northwest."[5] In 1860, after over four years of wrangling, Congress approved

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[2] F.G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 7 (4) (December 1906), 429.

[3] Hubert Howe Bancroft [Frances Fuller Victor], *The Works, Vol XXX, History of Oregon, Vol. II 1848-1888* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), n. 43, 439.

[4] F.G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon, Part Two: Finances of the Territorial Period, 1849-1859," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 8 (2) (1907), 133.

[5] Ibid, 185.

payments of $2,714, 808.58 out of the original claims of $6, 011,497.36.[6] From the popular viewpoint, then, General Wool's statements delayed all reparations for nearly five years and effectively reduced the payment by over three million dollars. Money trickled in for years afterward. According to Young,

> By November 27, 1871, overlooked claims on account of services, supplies, etc., during these Indian hostilities of 1855-6, to the amount of $52,019.78, had been filed at Washington. Items, generally small, but once as large as $33,976.71 for one Congress, were included in the appropriation bills almost regularly down to the nineties [1890s], for the payment of such unsettled claims.[7]

The fact that the Oregon state legislature appropriated $100,000 and $45,000 as late as 1903 and 1905 respectively to bring volunteer's pay up to the rate specified in the original resolutions of the territorial legislature in 1856, shows that these claims remained a political issue for some years after payments from Congress finally stopped in the 1890s.[8]

Things were similar in Washington, except the expenses there were substantially less. Claims in Washington for expenses directly related to putting the volunteers into the field were $1,481,975.45, or less than one-third that of Oregon.[9] But Washington's claims were paid just as slowly as Oregon's. According to Thomas Prosch,

> Nothing was paid until 1861, and then slowly and cautiously for a long term of years. The Treasury Department gave twenty year bonds, bearing six per cent interest to pay these accounts, delayed for years, reduced in amount about one-half, and the bonds themselves being worth less than their face. Some of these Indian war accounts were unpaid in the 1870's. It is safe to say, taking all things into account, the people did not get one-fourth of the money they should have got, and that the service rendered the United States was more illy paid than any other of the nineteenth century in the history of the nation. In order to justify this course on the part of the government the territorial authorities and people were loudly and frequently slandered as plunderers, instigating and keeping up the war for the purpose of robbing the Indians and Federal Government.[10]

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[6] Ibid, 187.
[7] Ibid, 190.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Thomas W. Prosch, "The Indian War in Washington Territory," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 16 (March 1915), 16.
[10] Ibid, 16-17.

With such a reservoir of potential clients, careers were made by those who worked to get money out of Congress for debts claimed with respect to the Indian Wars of the 1850s. Political and legal efforts to collect payment of war related claims continued into the 1890s. It seems quite reasonable to expect the quest for funds to exert an influence upon the historical interpretation of the wars. Of course, there are a multitude of possible motivations other than profit to valorize the pioneers; however, when efforts to influence the historical memory come from someone who was in the business of collecting war debts, as were many lawyers in the Pacific Northwest, it seems quite reasonable to infer that profit is amongst the author's motivations.

Frances Fuller Victor has cast a long shadow on the historiography of the Pacific Northwest, especially of Oregon. Before she died, some in the press referred to her as the "Mother of Oregon History."[11] Her obituary published in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* described Victor as "the Clio of the Northwest."[12] The tone became less adulatory over the next eight decades, but these assessments remained relatively intact for quite some time. In a 1981 article on the historiography of Oregon and Washington, Kent D. Richards wrote that "[d]espite errors of fact and omission, the Victor volumes on Oregon and Washington must be considered by all historians of the region, and in some aspects (particularly details on personalities) they have not yet been superceded."[13] Victor's treatment of General Wool followed the established tendency of emphasizing personality in

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[11] Hazel Emery Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor – Historian," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 62 (4) (1961), 309; Jim Martin, *A Bit of a Blue: The Life and Work of Frances Fuller Victor* (Salem: Deep Well Publishing, 1992), 198.

[12] William A. Morris, "Historian of the Northwest. A Woman Who Loved Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 3 (4) (December 1902), 434.

[13] Kent D. Richards, "In Search of the Pacific Northwest: The Historiography of Oregon and Washington." *Pacific Historical Review* 50 (4) (1981), 421.

pointing to Wool's "prejudiced and arbitrary sentiment towards civilians."[14] Further, Wool "behaved with a degree of hauteur towards civil authorities which had gained him the dislike of every governor."[15] Victor went on to dismiss all reports made by Wool and his subordinates as tainted by bias. Victor argued that

> [w]hoever has read his correspondence with Adjutant-General Thomas must have perceived his strong bias against the people as distinguished from the army, from governor's [sic] down to the humblest citizen, and his especial dislike of volunteer organizations. The reports of the officers in command of posts in Oregon, California, and Washington, were colored by this feeling exhibited by the general of division, and their correspondence was too often distorted by their sense of what was expected of them by their chief.[16]

With this simple statement, Victor historically disempowered General Wool, his subordinate officers and all of their civilian informants.

Victor did not arrive in Oregon until 1865. She wrote her first book-length historical work, *River of the West*, in 1870. Ostensibly an account of the life of Joe Meek, a former fur trader who became an early settler and was prominent in Oregon politics during the 1840s and 50s, *River of the West* dealt with more than Meek's colorful life. It contained an account of General Wool's difficulties in Oregon that differed significantly from Victor's later comments on Wool. At the beginning of her historical career, Victor wrote that

> [w]hen General Wool, at the head of the Department in San Francisco, was consulted, he also was without authority to employ or receive the volunteers; and when the volunteers, who armed and equipped themselves, came to go into the field with the regulars, they could not agree as to the mode of fighting Indians, so what with one thing and another, the war became an exciting topic for more reasons than because the whites were afraid of the Indians. As for General Wool, he was in great disfavor both in Oregon and Washington because he did not believe that there had existed the necessity for a war; and that therefore he bestowed what assistance was at his

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[14] Frances Fuller Victor, *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon* (Salem: Frank C. Baker, State Printer, 1894), 328.
[15] Ibid, 385.
[16] Ibid, 328.

> command very grudgingly. General Wool, it was said, was jealous of the volunteers; and the volunteers certainly cared little for the opinion of General Wool.[17]

Victor's judgment of General Wool obviously hardened somehow at some point after 1870.

In 1878 Hubert Bancroft hired Victor as one of his so-called assistants, more accurately as a staff writer who wrote a number of the books published under Bancroft's name.[18] Bancroft's practice of not crediting his writers later diminished his reputation significantly. As one historian, obviously a Bancroft admirer despite Bancroft's tarnished reputation, admitted in 1945, "Bancroft's failure to credit his helpers, explicitly or semiexplicitly, on the title pages or in the prefaces, was the greatest mistake of his life."[19]

Victor was Bancroft's only female assistant.[20] Victor was an early feminist who explored the socially constructed nature of gender and advocated gender equality during the 1860s and 1870s in her fiction, poetry, and newspaper columns before she turned to the professional writing of history.[21] In 1874 Victor wrote that "[m]ind is the same, whether it resides in a man's form or a woman's. All the laws of the mind, the soul, the affections, are the same in men and women, so far as observation and science can determine."[22] Two

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[17] Frances Fuller Victor, *River of the West. Life and Adventure in the Rocky Mountains and Oregon; Embracing Events in the Life-Time of a Mountain Man and Pioneer: With the Early History of the North-Western Slope, Including an Account of the Fur Traders, the Indian Tribes, the Overland Immigration, the Oregon Missions, and the Tragic Fate of Rev. Dr. Whitman and Family. Also, a Description of the Country, its Condition, Prospects, and Resources; Its Soil, Climate, and Scenery; Its Mountains, Rivers, Valleys, Deserts, and Plains; Its Inland Waters, and Natural Wonders.* (Hartford: Columbian Book Company, 1870), 508-509.

[18] William A. Morris, "The Origin and Authorship of the Bancroft Pacific States Publications: A History of a History," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 4 (December 1903), passim; Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 325-331.

[19] John Walton Caughey, "Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of Western America," *American Historical Review* 50 (3) (April 1945): 467.

[20] Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 328.

[21] June Johnson Bube, "Prefiguring the New Woman: Frances Fuller Victor's Refashioning of Women and Marriage in 'The New Penelope,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 18 (3) (1997), passim.

[22] Quoted in Ida Rae Egli, "Introduction," in *Women of the Gold Rush: "The New Penelope" and Other Stories*, ed. Ida Rae Egli (Berkeley: Heyday, 1998), xvii.

relatively recent feminist writers saw Victor as an important pioneering feminist and offered much praise for her fiction.[23]

But from reading Victor's historical work, it seems as though her ability to empathize with the oppressed may have been dependent in large part upon the degree to which the oppressed were like her. For example, her interpretation of Indians' motivations for resisting the incursion of settlers into their traditional territories is quite typical of Victor's representation of Indians in her historical writing. Victor theorized that because Indians had

> nothing of their own, they were the more covetous of the possessions of others. Lacking a knowledge of any law, human or divine, except a law implanted by nature in the beginning of people – "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," they were quick to find offenses and ready to avenge them. Without feeling under moral obligations to keep faith with others, they were ready to resent any appearance of duplicity in the superior race, of whom they were unavoidably jealous.[24]

Victor's eloquent reassurances of the guiltlessness of the settlers most likely contributed to her popularity.

In the early 1890s the Oregon legislature paid Victor $1,306.13 to write *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*.[25] Victor elaborated her attitude towards Indians in the preface when she wrote that

> [t]he Indian is a wild man; it would only be a fact of evolution to call him a wild animal on his way to be a man, provided the proper environments were furnished him. While the instincts and perceptions are acute, the ethical part of him is undeveloped, and his exhibitions of a moral nature are whimsical and without motive. Brought into contact with white men, whether of the lowest or of the highest, he is always at a disadvantage which is irritating, and subject to temptations which are dangerous. On the other hand, the white man is subject to the more subtle temptation to abuse his superiority for selfish purposes; he being in selfishness often but little, if at all, removed from the wild man.[26]

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[23] Egli, passim; Bube, passim.
[24] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 292.
[25] Martin, 185.
[26] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, v.

Although Victor's succinct four-paragraph preface mentioned neither Wool nor his allegations, right after she elaborated her attitude towards Indians, Victor described

> the accountability of the government in our Indian wars, and its indebtedness to the pioneers of every part of the country: first, in inviting settlement, and then in not properly protecting settlers. The policy of the government for a hundred years has been to throw out a vanguard of immigration, and then when these had fallen victims to savage cupidity or hatred, to follow with a tardy army and "punish" what should have been prevented. The Spaniards did better than this, for they sent a garrison out with every colony and "reduced" the native population with comparatively little bloodshed.[27]

Her choice of examples suggests that Victor meant comparatively little bloodshed to the settlers. Not surprisingly then, especially considering that the state legislature paid her to write the book, she depicted the wars as

> unavoidable. They laid waste the homes of white and red men alike; but the white race was compelled to make good its own and its enemy's losses, and while it plowed and planted and built, the Indians were fed, nursed, and taught, so far as they would be. When a large portion had died off, who were unfit to love, the remainder began a new growth and increase in numbers. The children born on the reservation know no other home, and even their elders are at length content, living a half civilized life, which, compared with their former nomadic existence, is one of indolent ease.[28]

Thus, it would seem that from Victor's viewpoint the wars were beneficial to the Indians who survived them.

Victor's historical writing was firmly situated in Manifest Destiny. The Indian resistance had been pointless. Victor characterized the resistance as "all of no use. Let them kill and steal and burn never so bravely, the fate of the savages was fixed beforehand; and not by volunteers, white or black, but by almighty providence, ages before their appearing, just as we of the present dominant race must fade before a stronger, whenever such a one is sent."[29] And there was little room for doubt about who had been destined to mete out the fate

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[27] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, v-vi.
[28] Ibid, 420.
[29] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 379.

that awaited the Indians. Victor argued that "[t]he savages should have been more quickly and cheaply killed; the regulars could not fight Indians."[30] Victor showed no signs of empathy with members of the hostile Indian bands, even noncombatants. Commenting upon a report in the Oregon *Statesman* that volunteer actions in the Rogue River Valley "blotted out Jake's band", Victor's sentiments concerning the controversy with General Wool and the treatment of Indian noncombatants were clear. Victor also appeared to be presenting a sample of contemporary public opinion on the activities of the volunteers when she wrote,

> That they [volunteers] had done so [nearly exterminated a particular band of hostiles] was a cause of congratulation to the white settlers, who could nevermore hope for security of life or property while they were alive and free. But General Wool in his official report stigmatized their proceedings as murder, and drew a pathetic picture of the women and children of the slaughtered Indians making their way to Fort Lane "for protection," with their limbs frozen. That some had frozen limbs was probably true, for the winter was an unusually cold one, a circumstance as injurious to the volunteers, many of whom were ill-clad, as to the Indians. But war is a trade, whose masters cannot show mercy, even to themselves, peace being obtained only through relentless strife.[31]

These passages and many others of a similar nature reveal Frances Victor's work as explicitly racist and implicitly social Darwinist, neither of which is particularly surprising for the time that she was writing. Nor is it surprising that Victor justified the conquest of Oregon with rhetoric of racial superiority. But some authors are unable or unwilling to see such things in Victor's work. In Jim Martin's hagiographical biography of Victor, *A Bit of a Blue*, he claimed that "Frances valued the truth above all else, and was never shy about putting forward her view of it.... Her insights, enriched by contact with a wide variety of people, remain clear, direct and relevant."[32] In the introduction to a more recent biography of Victor, Thomas Vaughan, a former editor of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, downplayed the

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[30] Ibid, 413.
[31] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 364.
[32] Martin, xiii.

highly opinionated nature of Victor's historical writing when he assessed the current relevance of Victor's work. Vaughan wrote that,

> Most important for our era is the huge mass of information she acquired on her endless trawls. There is still much to consider in all she saved for us in the essentially unprocessed, uninterpreted information concerning those uncharted landscapes Victor visited from the Isthmus of Panama north to Alaska.... [W]e can be grateful that she spent far more time recording and preserving rather than interpreting her bountiful catch.[33]

Unfortunately, it is not just writers of popular history who avoid dealing with Victor's fervent racism, and it is more problematic when a contemporary academic does it. In *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880-1945* (2003), Julie Des Jardins devoted a total of just over two pages to Victor's career. Still, one might wonder how closely Des Jardins read Victor's work. It is strange that in a book with "race" in the title, Des Jardins ignored Victor's many strikingly racist comments in *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*. Perhaps an acknowledgment of Victor's racism would have undermined Des Jardins' argument. Des Jardins claimed that because they tended not to be associated with university history departments, early women historians "obtained the freedom to investigate areas of the past long ignored by the academic establishment, including the untapped field of Native American history."[34] But, the manner in which Des Jardins fit Victor into her argument is seriously flawed, because it misinterprets the goals of the Oregon legislature. Des Jardins stated that

> [u]niversity presses accepted monographs on slavery and urban poverty with increasing frequency, but the historical abuses of Indians continued to receive only marginal attention at regional presses. Fortunately government agencies compensated for the lack of academic support by providing women with access to archival

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[33] Thomas Vaughan, "Introduction," in Hazel Mills and Constance Bordwell *Frances Fuller Victor: The Witness to America's Westerings*, edited by Thomas Vaughan and Marguerite Wright (Portland: Peregrine Productions for the Oregon Historical Society Press, 2002), xi.

[34] Julie Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 64.

> evidence and funds to publish their findings on Native American topics. Frances Victor proved as early as the 1890s that one need not have academic credentials to seek government sponsorship for these projects. Frustrated by the rejection of university presses and her menial compensation at the Bancroft Library, she finally turned to the Oregon state legislature, which hired her to write *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon* (1894).[35]

This passage raises the question of why the Oregon legislature was interested in "Native American history."

Not surprisingly, they were not; they were interested in the history of the settlement of Oregon, and "House Concurrent Resolution No. 22," which was included in the opening pages of *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, makes that abundantly clear. The Legislature resolved that,

> Whereas the early history of the territory of Oregon is in a chaotic state as regards the early pioneers, – those noble men and women who braved the perils and sufferings incident to a long and tedious journey over the then trackless and uninhabited desert; and whereas there still remains a full and varied record of the heroic deeds of those brave men and noble women, in the office of the secretary of state, the compilation, tabulation, and publication of which would redound to the honor of this patriotic people, worthy of adorning the brightest page of American history, and thereby transmit to posterity the fortitude and sacrifices of the men who saved this state to the United States, – a state that is today the brightest gem in the galaxy of our glorious constellation; and whereas many of those early pioneers have passed that bourne from whence no traveler returns, and Time has laid his heavy hand on the hoary heads of those that remain, let us join with them in erecting to their memory a monument that will stand in the solitude of time, beneath whose shadow nations may crumble, and around whose summit generations yet unborn may linger, by the publication of those records, now resting in oblivion, in the archives of the state.[36]

Des Jardins never mentioned this explicit statement of legislative intent as to what type of history should be produced from what type of sources. Indeed, Des Jardins endeavored to fit Victor into her hypothesis on women historians. As Des Jardins described it, "Delilah Beasley had relied heavily on oral testimony for her history of African American Californians, as did Frances Victor when writing her histories of Native Americans in the

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[35] Ibid.

[36] "House Concurrent Resolution No. 22," in Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, iii.

Pacific states."[37] However, this statement is highly problematic. Although Victor did use some oral testimony in her work, she did not write "histories of Native Americans." There are no Native American voices in Victor's work. Indeed, among Victor's more important sources were letters written in the field by volunteer officers. Instead of Native American voices in *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon* then, we find many examples of the voices of volunteer Indian fighters. When she described an encounter between a company of volunteers and a band of Tule Lake Modoc in 1853, Victor wrote that, "On the Indian children was found the blood-stained clothing taken from murdered immigrant children. These families, hiding from the justly apprehended wrath of white men, were made to pay the penalty of blood without process of law, or the law's delays."[38] Another example is found in Victor's description of a bloody pre-emptive strike made during the autumn of 1855 by a group of volunteers on the coast in Coos County, who wished to make sure that local Indians did not communicate with emissaries from hostile upper Rogue River bands rumored to be in the area. Victor wrote that "[a]n attack was made on them at Drolley's, on the lower branch of the Coquille, four being killed, and four captured and hanged. This chastisement seems to have convinced these Indians of the folly of attempting to follow the example of the Rogue-rivers, for they remained quiet during the winter, being closely watched and guarded."[39]

Clearly then, Frances Victor and the state legislature were trying to ensure that the volunteers' stories were preserved for posterity, but they showed no such interest in the stories of the Indians and the few dissenters brave enough to speak out. But apparently that is not clear to everyone. Des Jardins described Victor as "initially a serial fictionist who came to applaud the new scientific age of truth-seeking and tried to transform herself from a

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[37] Des Jardins, 101.
[38] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 318.
[39] Ibid, 378.

story teller into a serious research historian."[40] This statement by Des Jardins is difficult to accept in its entirety. Victor was indeed at one point a serial fictionist, but she always remained a story teller, because what she turned out to be was much more propagandist than historian. It was her position as a literary figure that was stressed in the memorial article published in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society.* At the beginning of the article, Victor was described as "the most versatile figure in Pacific Coast literature, a literary pioneer on the coast, and a woman to whom Oregonians owe much."[41] At the end of the article, she combined "the qualities of poet, essayist and historian, [and] she occupied a position without peer in the annals of Western literature."[42]

Victor may have believed that she was "a serious research historian." She certainly projected an image that she was seeking the truth. She showed this clearly in a response to a critic during a letter exchange published in a newspaper in 1870. Victor argued that because she had "access to old files of papers – all the books previously written about the [Oregon] country and its history – private papers and public documents, it would be strange if, with a disposition to write the truth without fear and without favor, I had not arrived at something approximating to it."[43] Over two decades later, in the preface to *The Early Indian wars of Oregon*, Victor wrote that "fiction and sentimentalism on the one hand, and vengeful hatred on the other, have perverted the truth of history."[44] Through the years, Victor engaged in public crusades against "fiction and sentimentalism," which seems to have been her term for myths she did not accept. The most enduring of these crusades targeted the popular myth that had grown up around the martyred missionary Dr. Marcus Whitman, the first fatality of

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[40] Des Jardins, 26.
[41] Morris, "Historian of the Northwest," 429.
[42] Ibid, 434.
[43] Quoted in Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 321.
[44] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, v.

Oregon's first Indian war. Victor fought particularly hard against the unsupported assertion that Whitman had "saved" Oregon for the US by organizing and leading the important 1843 immigration over the Oregon Trail. This struggle apparently began in 1880 and continued through the rest of her life into the early twentieth century.[45]

Proponents of the Whitman myth also took the struggle seriously. A prominent local historian noted in a review of *The Early Indian wars of Oregon* in the *Oregonian* that

> Victor's estimate of Dr. Whitman will not be generally accepted. The impression of him given in her writings is of an inflexible, but designing and narrow-minded man, whose aims were largely personal. She says of him and his associates that, instead of spiritualizing the Indians, they became themselves unspiritualized. She makes the astonishing assertion that, upon his setting out for his winter trip to Washington city, in 1842, he threatened his Indians that he was going to bring many white men back to chastise them. What proof she has for a declaration so little accordant with Whitman's character, and so unnecessary and foolish, she does not give, relying apparently upon the rumors around the Hudson's Bay trading post....
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> It is to be remembered, however, that Victor has never been a friend of Dr. Whitman, and not until positive documents were found, ever admitted that he went to Washington. Yet it is too much to imply, or almost boldly assert, that the massacre and the Cayuse war were to be laid to a threat of Whitman's that he would bring many people to chastise his Indians. The idea is preposterous, and should not be found in a book published by the state.[46]

About Victor's technique of writing history he argued that

> Victor has written the history of Oregon with the Roman steel, trying to reach objective verity. This has been a great service, even where her conclusions have been prejudiced and unjust; for, since her method of destructive criticism has been applied, a certain sentimentalism that rejoices in the indefinite and improbable has received a great correction, and the materials of constructive history are defined as never before, thanks as much to those who have combatted her as to herself.[47]

Thus it would seem that Victor's belief that she was actively seeking the truth was shared to an extent by at least some of those who disagreed with her.

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[45] Martin, 192-196; Mills and Bordwell, 291-293; 304.

[46] H.S. Lyman, "Victor's Latest Work: Her Book on "The Early Indian Wars of Oregon," *Oregonian* (March 14, 1897), 12.

[47] Ibid.

Victor had another illuminating encounter with a promoter of mythology. Perhaps more used to battling men in the media, Victor's final struggle, which would lead to her only publication in a national historical journal, was with another woman. This other woman, more than a generation younger than Victor and the wife of a prominent lawyer, was Eva Emery Dye who, according to one source, stood

> out as an unusually ambitious and accomplished woman of her time. After attending college and earning a Master's degree [in Greek] in Ohio in 1889, she moved to Oregon where she became prominent as a literary figure, a researcher in Oregon history, and an active member of the Oregon State Women Suffrage Association. Dye's novels about early Oregon drew a national audience and were instrumental in launching myths about the state's history.[48]

Dye wrote her first novel, *McLoughlin and Old Oregon*, between 1891 and 1893. In 1894 Dye declined an offer from *Harper's* to serialize it and then allegedly put the manuscript in a drawer for six years before a friend convinced her to submit it to a Chicago publisher.[49] In the meantime, Dye wrote a nominally historical work on the Hudson's Bay Company for the *Historical Series of the Bulletin of the University of Oregon*, which was under the editorship of Professor F.G. Young, who soon became the first editor of the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society.* Even under the editorship of one of the few professional historians in Oregon at the time, Dye's imagination was clearly at work in a piece that has no notes or citations of any type. Dye described McLoughlin as missing "his late imperial fastness in the north. He would be monarch in his fort."[50] Dye went on to describe Fort Vancouver as a "semibarbaric court, with nabob partners and transient guests, with retinues of French-Canadian cooks and voyageurs, and leagues and leagues of Indian

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[48] Kimberly Swanson, "Eva Emery Dye and the Romance of Oregon History," *Pacific Historian* 29 (4) (1985), 59.

[49] Ibid, 61.

[50] Eva Emery Dye, "The Hudson's Bay Company Regime in the Oregon Country," in *Semi-Centennial History of Oregon, Bulletin of the University of Oregon, Historical Series* 1 (2) (November 1898), 29.

subjects."[51] Dye depicted the character of the McLoughlin regime as not only regal, but worthy of admiration when she wrote that

> the Frenchman amalgamates with inferior tribes is the history of North America; he loses his identity, loses his civilization, finally loses empire. The Anglo-Saxon, with a moral onsweep, molds anew. With him, tribes must rise or perish. He never loses himself. Incapables disappear or blend in the leaven of his empire. The way was clear for such an empire here, purely English. But America was too quick.[52]

Even in what was touted as an historical article, Dye played somewhat loose with the details and seemed to be consciously constructing a myth of Manifest Destiny.

When *McLoughlin and Oregon: A Chronicle* was finally published in 1900 its sparse framework of actual historical characters was held together with a few fictitious minor characters and a large quantity of invented dialogue. Readers met Dr. McLoughlin's daughter Eloise, overheard her private conversations with her father, which revealed Eloise as a very royal young woman indeed, and then witnessed a very regal Christmas dinner. Readers were permitted to travel to California with Sir George Simpson, Dr. McLoughlin and Eloise, and even to listen in on their private conversations with high-ranking Mexican officials. [53] This was just the sort of myth creation which would have excited Victor, especially because Dye's book received extremely favorable reviews in the nearly brand new *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society.* The review is unsigned. Given the shoestring budget in those early days of the *Quarterly*, and the fact that Young was paying at least Victor for reviews, it seems likely that the review was written by Young. The review praises

> [t]he secret of her remarkable success in making the characters and conditions of that time live again[, which] lay in her getting the confidence of the principle surviving actors of that period and securing from them the fullest impress of the traditions of stirring times, with all the halo that a half-a-century would naturally invest them with.

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[51] Ibid, 30.
[52] Ibid, 31.
[53] Eva Emery Dye, *McLoughlin and Old Oregon: A Chronicle* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1900), 109-113; 122-128; 210-217.

> Through these sources she attained an understanding of the actors and spirit of the times so intimate that her pretension to supply the words used on all important occasions does not become a mockery, but through this dramatizing the author attains the unique element in her success.[54]

Phrases like "thrilling issues and two real heroes" or "such rare skill and energy" are liberally sprinkled through the three-and-a-half page adulatory review. However, near the end of the review a small cloud appeared in the otherwise bright sky when the reviewer wrote that "[t]owards the closing chapters the author swerves farthest from history towards romance." But the cloud vanished with the last sentence, which declared that "[t]his book is by far the best that the general reader can select for an introduction to the life of early Oregon."[55]

In October 1900, when Frances Victor reviewed Dye's book in the *American Historical Review*, she was far less enthusiastic than the author of the review in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* four months earlier. Victor stopped just short of accusing Dye of being irresponsible with the truth when she wrote that,

> The impression left upon the general reader is very similar to that received from a drama. But the student of history, however the action in the play may entertain him, regrets the mingling of fiction with historical truth in a work which is likely to be mistaken for a wholly serious one. Mrs. Dye refrains from referring to her authorities, although she uses with great freedom all those who are well known, and many of which no account is given. This method leaves her free to put her characters on the stage in any picturesque dress or attitude which she may choose. Where this irresponsibility deals only with the purely romantic it is in a degree pardonable, since it enhances the attractiveness of the book. But when, either by assertion or by implication, it leads the reader to believe that which is essentially erroneous it becomes mischievous.[56]

Victor made a few specific criticisms in this short review of just under two pages. In her book, Dye accused the HBC of trying to thwart American immigration to Oregon by

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[54] "Reviews of Books: McLoughlin and Old Oregon. By Eva Emery Dye," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 1 (2) (June 1900), 209

[55] Ibid, 210.

[56] Frances Fuller Victor, "Review: McLoughlin and Old Oregon: A Chronicle, by Eva Emery Dye," *American Historical Review* 6 (1) (October 1900), 148.

confusing the Methodist missionaries about the trail through the Blue Mountains to the Columbia River. Victor noted that "[e]ven the necessity of introducing the element of villainy into melodrama does not excuse the perversion of history. Rivalry there was between British subjects and Americans in Old Oregon, but criminality, even inhospitality, never."[57] Victor also disliked Dye's efforts to make Eloise McLoughlin appear as a kind of princess on the Columbia and referred to "representing Eloise McLoughlin as an equestrienne" as one of the "unjustifiable instances of this struggling after dramatic effect in Mrs. Dye's book."[58] Victor explained that at Fort "Vancouver the rules of the Company forbade the participation of women in any social functions, and Mrs. McLoughlin and her daughter were forced to live in almost conventual seclusion. With her nimble pen our author ought to improve upon this performance."[59] Clearly, then, Victor wanted to believe that she was seeking the truth. But it seems that what she was actually doing was defending her personal authority while she told the story of the conquest of the Pacific Northwest from the victors' perspective. The truth that she thought she had found was really only social consensus, consensus which she played an important role in strengthening.

This social consensus became powerful. Some people were hesitant to speak openly about the Indian Wars years afterwards. In 1878 Hubert Howe Bancroft made a trip to Oregon to conduct interviews with pioneers and also to offer Frances Victor the job as one of his assistants. One of the interviews Bancroft conducted was with Reverend Josiah L. Parrish, a former Methodist missionary, who later became the first Indian Agent on the Oregon coast. Also present at the interview was John Minto, a friend of Parrish who had come to Oregon in 1844. Minto would later be named by the Board of Directors as Acting

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[57] Ibid, 149.
[58] Ibid, 150.
[59] Ibid, 150.

President of the Oregon Pioneer Association upon the death of the elected incumbent.[60] When Bancroft asked, "Why did they [the settlers] want an Indian war?" Minto responded, "As a means of making money," and Parrish added, "Money was at the foot and head of it."[61] After a brief discussion of profiteering, which Minto concluded by stating "I could name some men in Portland who had [engaged in profiteering] in the Indian war," Reverend Parrish continued, "I presume it will not be neccesary to give my name in connection with this history for I presume they will want to kill me, some of them, and treat me as they did Peopeomuxmux."[62] Parrish had willingly engaged in first negotiations with Aboriginal groups along the Southern Coast who stood accused of committing atrocities upon travelers. He also conducted the first Indian Department count of the Indian peoples of the Southern Oregon coast. During both types of expeditions he was the only non-Indian in the group, accompanied only by former slaves who had been removed from the Southern Coast to the Willamette Valley many years earlier.[63] But in 1878 Parrish was afraid of being killed by fellow settlers for speaking out about profiteering.

If we compare another passage from *River of the West* with something she wrote later, we can see that Victor was apparently affected by the social consensus. In 1870 Victor described the start of the war in eastern Washington as resulting after a

> party of lawless wretches from the [Puget] Sound Country, passing over the Cascade Mountains into the Yakima Valley, on their way to the Upper Columbia mines, found some Yakima women digging roots in a lonely place, and abused them. The women fled to their village and told the chiefs of the outrage; and a party followed the guilty whites and killed several of them in a fight.[64]

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[60] "The Veterans Meet: Celebration of Pioneer Day," *The Morning Oregonian* (June 16, 1893), 8.
[61] Josiah L. Parrish, "Anecdotes of Intercourse with the Indians." MSS P-A 59, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 93.
[62] Ibid, 94.
[63] Ibid, 52-57
[64] Victor, *River of the West*, 507.

Victor also had Indian sub-Agent Andrew J. Bolon bearing some of the responsibility for his own death after Bolon failed to judge "the case impartially, [and] made use of threats in the name of the United States Government, saying that an army should be sent to punish them for killing his people."[65] But the most striking thing about Victor's early assessment of the Yakima War is the way she described Governor Curry's dispatch of volunteers from Oregon into Washington Territory as being "tempted by an opportunity for gain, and encouraged by the somewhat reasonable fears of the white population of Washington and Oregon."[66]

That the Yakima War was triggered by the reaction to several sexual assaults by prospectors and the threats made afterward by Andrew J. Bolon, seems to be very generally accepted today. But Victor's account of the events preceding and following the death of sub-Agent Bolon, changed dramatically in the account she prepared for Bancroft's *History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, 1845-1889.* All mentions of sexual assaults and inappropriate threats were gone, and Victor simply related that

> [f]rom Puget Sound several small parties set forth for Colville by the Nisqually pass and the trail leading through the Yakima country by the way of the catholic mission of Ahtanahm, and by the middle of September it was rumored that some of them had been killed by the Yakimas.... Unattended he [A.J. Bolon, sub-agent responsible for dealing with the Yakimas] set out on this business, to show by his coming alone his confidence in the good faith of the tribe, and to disarm any fears they might have of the intentions of the white people. His absence being protracted beyond the time required, Nathan Olney, agent at The Dalles, sent out an Indian spy, who returned with the information that Bolon had been murdered while returning to The Dalles, by the order of [Yakima head-chief] Kamiakin, and by the hand of his [Kamiakin's] nephew ... who shot him [Bolon] in the back while pretending to escort him on his homeward journey, cut his throat, killed his horse, and burned both bodies, together with whatever property was attached to either.[67]

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana*, 109-110.

In 1890 Victor made no mention of Governor Curry being "tempted by an opportunity for gain" when sending the Oregon Mounted Volunteers (OMV) across the Columbia into Washington Territory.

Indeed, as far as the Bancroft volumes authored by Victor go, any meaningful discussion of Curry's dispatch of the OMV into Washington seems to have been lost. There is no such discussion in Bancroft's Volume Thirty, the second volume of Oregon history. That volume does state that "war followed, the history of which belongs both to Oregon and Washington. But since the Indians involved in it were chiefly those attached to the soil and superintendency of the latter, I shall present the narrative in my volume on Washington."[68] However, in Bancroft's Volume Thirty One, the *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889*, the Oregon Volunteers are given only one mention, which in its entirety says that "[s]everal companies were raised in Oregon, as I have elsewhere related, J.W. Nesmith being placed in command, with orders to proceed to the seat of war and cooperate with Raines."[69] It appears that the discussion to which Bancroft referred did not find its way into publication. In an attempt to find the elsewhere that this information was related, the appropriate volumes of Bancroft's histories were searched thoroughly and carefully, but to no avail. As we shall see in the third chapter, where there is a similar episode of information being lost around the California boundary, the Bancroft volumes authored by Victor had a tendency to avoid information that may have embarrassed her friends.

By the time Victor began working for Hubert Bancroft she had accumulated a substantial collection of historical documents, many of which had been shared with her by a small group of close friends, all elite males, lawyers, all of whom shared with Victor an

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[68] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 368.
[69] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana*, 114.

interest in the history of the Pacific Northwest.[70] These lawyers were well placed to exert an influence on the historical memory of the Indian Wars. One of them, Elwood Evans, offered a very different interpretation of Isaac Stevens in his *History of the Pacific Northwest* (1889), than had the letters and petitions that Evans had signed during the 1850s.

Evans had been the deputy court clerk arrested with Chief Justice Lander of the Territorial Court the second time that Isaac Stevens used volunteer troops to shut down the court in 1856.[71] In a letter to the Secretary of State, Evans described being "seized by armed men and paraded through the street, down in front of the executive [Stevens official residence], like trophies of a conquest. That humiliation is excessively hard to bear – its moral effect is certainly most hurtful on the public mind."[72] Evans was also one of the group of lawyers who petitioned President Pierce to censure Stevens after the first time Judge Lander was arrested.[73] He signed letters and resolutions denouncing Stevens' declaration of martial law published in an 1856 pamphlet with Evans' name among those attached. One resolution stated that "we can arrive at no other conclusion than that the Governor is a usurper, a tyrant and a despot."[74] The arrest of the accused was "without process of law, and without any complaint or affidavit being lodged against them, charging them with the

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[70] Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," passim; Martin, passim; Hazel Mills and Constance Bordwell, *Frances Fuller Victor: The Witness to America's Westerings*, eds. Thomas Vaughan and Marguerite Wright (Portland: Peregrine Productions for the Oregon Historical Society Press, 2002), 281-328.

[71] Mr. Evans to Mr. Marcy, May 25, 1856, in "Message of the President of the United States, communicating ...copies of the papers relating to the proclamation of martial law in Washington Territory," US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 98 (1856), 29.

[72] Ibid, 30.

[73] "Proceedings of a meeting of the bar, third judicial district, Washington Territory, on the arrest of the Hon. Edward Lander, Chief Justice of said Territory, and John M. Chapman, esq., the clerk of the district court, by an armed force under orders of Governor Isaac I. Stevens. Together with the proceedings of a mass meeting of citizens of Pierce county, W.T." in "Message of the President of the United States, communicating ...copies of the papers relating to the proclamation of martial law in Washington Territory," US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 98 (1856), 2-7.

[74] Wallace and others, 12.

commission of any offence against the law."[75] There was "a peculiar similarity" between the grievances of the people of Washington Territory over martial law and "the grievances recited as good cause for redress, when George III imposed them on the Thirteen Colonies."[76]

In his *History of the Pacific Northwest*, however, Evans interpreted events very differently than had the letters he signed in 1856. Evans had to know that attacking the long-dead Stevens in 1889 would undermine the campaign for federal payments to veterans. Evans frankly stated in the preface to *History of the Pacific Northwest*, that he wrote the book to honor the memory of the settlers of Oregon and support the claims of Indian War Veterans.[77] Therefore, it is not surprising that Evans' views published in 1889 were at odds with those presented in the letters and resolutions he had signed shortly after martial law was enacted.

In 1889 Evans referred to the declaration of martial law merely as "the extraordinary subsequent proceedings of Governor Stevens."[78] His position on the loyalty of the accused was that

> [s]uspicions against those persons were undoubtedly justified, not only on account of their marital relations, but also from the fact that they could dwell in perfect safety in a section of the country which no American dared to visit. The hostiles were known to visit their homes. There were reasons justifying the belief that the Indians could and did, by threats or persuasion, obtain supplies; and Indian testimony even charged several of them with having furnished ammunition to the hostiles. Public policy, and the interest of the territory, seemed to demand the removal of those persons from proximity to the hostiles; and no fault can justly be found with the manner in which their removal was sought.[79]

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[75] Ibid, 3.
[76] Ibid, 15
[77] Elwood Evans, *History of the Pacific Northwest*, Volume One (Portland: North Pacific History Company, 1889), v.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

The main objection Evans expressed in 1889 to the declaration of martial law was that it was unnecessary. Evans argued that

> [t]he hostile Indians were disintegrated, were breaking up into small parties, and were disheartened. After the decisive action of Connell's Prairie on the 10th of March, 1856, there never had been another general fight between the hostiles and the troops in either service [regulars or volunteers]. All the reports of the different scouts to territorial headquarters indicated that the Indians had separated into small bands, were avoiding the troops, were thoroughly demoralized, and that many had escaped across the mountains. Assuming that the conduct of those parties had rendered them liable to suspicion by the authorities, yet there was no real cause at that time to justify the subversion of the civil law to the military, and for the degradation of the judiciary.[80]

In his assessment of Stevens' popularity Evans supports Stevens' nomination for entry into the pantheon of patriotic mythology. Evans wrote that

> [t]he majority of people sustained him. His immediate friends and supporters likened the matter to the fining of General Jackson at New Orleans by Judge Hall. There were many who gave utterance to the thought, that the mantle of that distinguished chieftain had descended to and clothed the hero, who, with a regiment of volunteers at his call, had for the time being overawed and overthrown county courts, contemned [sic] their authority, and had twice refused to obey a writ of *habeas corpus*. History does not require the further carrying out of the parallel. It may be summed up in the respective judgments of Judges Hall and Lander. The former fined General Jackson one thousand dollars. Governor Stevens was fined by the latter fifty dollars.[81]

While Stevens was now most valuable as a hero, General Wool had to be demonized in order for Evans to reach the goal he expressed in his preface, the attainment of "justice" for the volunteer veterans. And Wool was, indeed, vilified. According to Evans,

> General Wool had, in a manner most insulting, humiliating and degrading, ignored the authorities of both Oregon and Washington. Through private pique, malignity or envy, or all combined, he had refused to furnish an escort or guard to ensure the safety of Governor Stevens, an United States commissioner, through the hostile Indian country. The time had therefore come, either for the territories to protect themselves or abandon the field and trust entirely to General Wool, who, judging from the *animus* so manifestly displayed in his every report made to the War Department, was not as much interested in punishing the Indians and securing peace

[80] Ibid, 581.
[81] Ibid, 583-584.

> as he was in seeking to bolster up libelous and slanderous charges he had originated against the people of Oregon and Washington territories.[82]

Victor and Evans corresponded for many years, apparently beginning in 1865 and continuing to at least 1886.[83] At the beginning of her historical career in 1865 Victor wrote to Evans that "[w]e, in our humble way may be serving posterity by presenting the several sides of an argument to dispassionate criticism of another generation."[84] Thus, it would seem on the surface that Victor accepted responsibility for presenting dispassionate interpretations of history. But if we look at the bits of correspondence between Victor and her lawyer friends that have been published, some interesting revelations emerge about attempts at shaping the historical memory of the Indian wars.

In a 1992 MA thesis on the Stevens/Wool Controversy, John Simpson, who made no mention of Victor, listed Hubert Bancroft as one of four "historians who wrote strongly in support of Governor Stevens' actions."[85] Simpson, probably unwittingly, was correct about the authorship of the sections of Bancroft's *History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana* that dealt with Stevens. Around 1886 Victor wrote a letter marked confidential to Evans complaining that Bancroft had "cut down to nothing, almost, the account of the Stevens and Wool war which I had written out fully. He changed my estimate of Stevens, apparently, without any good reason – about the only important change of coloring given anywhere."[86] About the dispute between Wool and Stevens, Bancroft's final version stated that,

> During this visit, as indeed on some other occasions both before and after, Wool did not deport himself as became a man occupying an important position. He censured everybody, not omitting [regular army officers] Raines and Haller, but was particularly severe upon territorial officers and volunteers. He ordered disbanded the

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[82] Ibid, 549, emphasis in original.
[83] Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 317.
[84] Victor to Evans, November 15, 1865, quoted in Mills, 318.
[85] Simpson, 3.
[86] Victor to Evans, n.d., quoted in Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 330.

> company raised by [acting Washington Territorial Governor] Mason to go to the relief of Governor Stevens returning from the Blackfeet country, although Raines put forth every argument to induce him to send it forward. This conduct of Wool's was bitterly resented by Stevens, who quoted the expressions used by Wool in his report to the departments at Washington, and in a letter to the general himself. The effect of Wool's course was to raise an impassable barrier between the regular and volunteer officers, and to leave the conduct of the war practically in the hands of the latter.[87]

This single paragraph is apparently all that Bancroft felt the Wool-Stevens controversy deserved. The martial law episode, however, received four paragraphs, and Bancroft made it quite clear that the Governor faced significant opposition. Bancroft wrote that "Stevens, while having with him the ultra anti-Indian element, had become unpopular in other quarters. His martial-law measure, among others, was severely criticized."[88] Bancroft stressed that public opinion was divided over the declaration of martial law and that there was open dissent.[89] Bancroft's summary of this episode demonstrates that it did not fade away quickly, "for over innumerable technicalities, in which lawyers, judges, citizens, officials, and military men had become involved, wrangling continued throughout the year."[90]

Thus, Bancroft apparently thwarted what seems to have been an attempt by Victor and one of her informants to put their own spin on history. Other episodes revealed in bits of published correspondence show more attempts to manipulate Bancroft, including one that was successful and apparently allowed another of Victor's lawyer friends to put his own personal spin on history.

In another published letter, Victor wrote to Judge Matthew P. Deady in 1883 that Bancroft was

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[87] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana*, 117-118.
[88] Ibid, 202.
[89] Ibid, 203.
[90] Ibid, 203-204.

> given to make disparaging remarks not really necessary to the truth of history, of some of the most prominent men of early times, such as Pratt and Lane. Wherever he alters anything I have written it is usually to put in a paragraph of that kind. He made particular war on Pratt, using such words as "infamous" and "disgusting", and where I had given Pratt some just praise, cut it out entirely.... What I am getting at is to put you on your watch for these passages, and that you may criticize them when the proofs go to you. Mr. B will regard your remarks.[91]

This was not the only time that Victor complained about Bancroft to Judge Deady. In a 1941 *Oregon Historical Quarterly* article on Victor, then editor Alfred Powers presented a very similar quotation, but without the plea for assistance, taken from a Victor to Deady letter of November 3, 1886. Powers noted that this was just "one of a number of complaining references to her Bancroft employment to be found in the Deady correspondence in the manuscript collections of the Oregon Historical Society."[92]

Deady mentioned Victor's "prejudices" in his diary. In his entry for August 10, 1888, Deady wrote, "Worked on 2 *Oregon* and finished it. Have made many corrections of fact and might have made many of opinion, but I did not care to. Wrote to Bancroft on the subject and cautioned him a little against Victors prejudices and predelictions."[93] Slightly over five years transpired between Victor's solicitation of Deady's assistance and Deady's diary entry. From the published correspondence, there is no way to tell what may have transpired during that time in the way of collaboration between them to manipulate Bancroft. Perhaps Deady assisted Victor for a time before tiring of her demands, perhaps not.

But the collaboration between Victor and another of her lawyer friends paid more obvious dividends and strongly suggests that the historical memory was influenced or distorted for personal gain. In Volume Two of the Bancroft History of Oregon and again in

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[91] Victor to Deady, June 18, 1883, quoted in Mills, "The Emergence of Frances Fuller Victor," 329.

[92] Alfred Powers, "Scrapbook of a Historian: Frances Fuller Victor," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 42 (4) (December 1941), 328.

[93] Malcolm Clark, Jr., ed., *The Diary of Judge Matthew P. Deady 1871-1892: Pharisee among Philistines* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1975), 539.

the book the Oregon legislature paid her to write on the Indian Wars, Victor acknowledged her indebtedness to southern Oregon lawyer and newspaper publisher Benjamin Franklin Dowell, for allowing her access to his collection of documents. Victor described Dowell's collection as

> a valuable compilation of original documents and letters pertaining to the wars of 1855-6 in southern Oregon, [that] furnishes conclusive proof of the invidious course of the Salem clique [of the ruling Democratic Party] toward that portion of the territory. Dowell has taken much pains to secure and preserve these fragments of history, and in doing so has vindicated his section, from which otherwise the blame of certain alleged illegal acts might never have been removed. Then there are his *Indian Wars; Scrap Book; Letters; Biographies*, and various pamphlets which contain almost a complete journal of the events to which this chapter is devoted.[94]

In other words, these "fragments" that Dowell took "so much pains to secure and preserve" had a profound effect upon Victor's history, which helped remove the blame for certain illegal acts. One of General Wool's main arguments was that the Indians in Southern Oregon were the victims of illegal acts. Wool stated repeatedly that the whites were responsible for the conflict there and referred to the killing of groups of unarmed Indians, mostly women and children, as "inhuman and atrocious outrages ... several of which were spread before the public as great volunteer victories, and which forever will disgrace the annals of our country."[95] Things did not turn out as Wool predicted. The annals of the country were not disgraced by these instances of what now might be termed societal genocide, and it would seem that Benjamin Dowell deserves much of the credit for that. Dowell may also deserve some of the credit for convincing Victor to toe the party line on General Wool, but that cannot be determined from their published correspondence.

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[94] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, n. 1, 369-370.

[95] John E. Wool, "To the Editors of the National Intelligencer," May 30, 1856, *National Intelligencer* (July 1, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign."

Dowell's "manuscripts" consist mostly of newspaper clippings, largely from Dowell's own paper, *The Oregon Sentinel*, but with a few items from other papers of the area.[96] The second most numerous items are letters written by various volunteer officers. The striking thing about the letters is that many words, phrases and sometimes entire paragraphs are crossed out. They are probably first drafts, with polished versions going to the addressee. All of this material is very one-sided and simply serves to reinforce the perceptions of those involved in the war. Most are correspondence between the Colonel of the Jackson County Volunteers, John Ross, and his Adjutant, Charles S. Drew. In his analysis of "The War within a War," historian E.A. Schwartz argued that Dowell, Drew and Ross were all partisans of the Know-Nothing-Party who were battling the dominant Democratic Party for a chunk of the profits of the Indian War.[97] Drew put a significant amount of effort into the collection of war related claims, and the main focus of his effort, a long submission to Congress in 1860, will be examined in some detail in the final chapter. It seems pertinent and appropriate here to draw attention to E.A. Schwartz's assessment of Drew: "Any statement by Drew on any subject should be viewed with suspicion."[98]

Dowell was in a good position to profit during the war. During the early 1850s Dowell owned and operated a freighting business active in the mining region of the Siskiyou Mountains on the border between Oregon and California. The brief biography of Dowell in Bancroft's second volume of Oregon history revealed an ambitious nature. Dowell

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[96] Dowell's manuscripts are now at the Bancroft library and available on microfilm. The most relevant to the memory of the Indian Wars are: Benjamin Franklin Dowell, "Oregon Indian Wars: Principally the War of 1855-6 in Southern Oregon: Volume 1 Original Orders and Letters, Collected and Compiled by B.F. Dowell," Bancroft MSS P-A 137; Benjamin Franklin Dowell, "Oregon Indian Wars: Principally the War of 1855-6 in Southern Oregon: Volume 2 Original Letters, Collected and Compiled by B.F. Dowell," Bancroft MSS P-A 138.

[97] Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and its Aftermath, 1850-1980*, 76-78; 93.

[98] Ibid, n. 7, 290.

> emigrated from New Franklin, Mo., in 1850, taking the California road, but arriving in the Willamette Valley in Nov. He had studied law, but now taught a school in Polk county for the summer of 1851, and afterward in the Waldo hills. It was slow work for an ambitious man; so borrowing some money and buying a pack train, he began trading to the mines of southern Oregon and northern California, following it successfully for four years. He purchased flour of J. W. Nesmith at his mills in Polk county at ten cents per lb., and sold it in the mines at $1 and $1.25. He bought butter at 50 cents per lb., and sold it at $1.50; salt at 15 cents per lb., and sold it at $2 and $3 per lb., and other articles in proportion.... When war broke out, Dowell was 'the first in and the last out' of the fight. After that he settled in Jacksonville, and engaged in the practice of law and newspaper management.[99]

Obviously, then, Dowell was in a very good position to profit during the war. More uncommonly, however, he was also in a very good position to profit from the war for many years after it was over.

After the war, Dowell's ambitions shifted and when his political aspirations were frustrated,[100] he "derived some political satisfaction from newspaper writing."[101] But his primary activity and main source of income from 1868 to 1891 was as a claims attorney trying to get money out of Congress. Dividing his time between Oregon and Washington, DC, Dowell pursued the collection of claims for volunteers' wages, supplies, and property damaged by Indians.[102] In *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, Victor emphasized a theme of public service when discussing Dowell's legal practice. "[A]s to the widows and fatherless children left by the war," Victor wrote,

> the little indemnity money to be obtained at the end of the congressional deliberation and commissioners' awards counted as nothing against their losses. Many of the claimants failed to receive this pitiful payment, and, in 1872, the balance of the appropriation for this purpose was illegally turned back into the treasury, where it remained for ten years longer before, by the labor of several attorneys and an order of Secretary Fairchilds, it was placed back to the credit of the claimants. And then the commissioner of Indian affairs and the secretary and auditor of the treasury, were

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[99] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, n. 1, [cont.] 370.

[100] Franklyn Daniel Mahar, "Benjamin Franklin Dowell 1826-1897 Claims Attorney and Newspaper Publisher in Southern Oregon" (MA Thesis, University of Oregon, 1964), 41-50.

[101] Ibid, 51.

[102] Ibid, 58-71.

> unable to find the original report of the commissioners of award, refusing to pass any claim without it, or without an act of congress. However, at length, through the persistency of B. F. Dowell of Jacksonville, the original report was discovered, and the claims all settled thirty years after the war.[103]

Histories such as those written by Victor, some sections of which were based largely upon material supplied by Dowell, certainly aided Dowell's cause. The nature and subject matter of Dowell's fragments suggest that he presented this collection to induce Victor to justify the war in southern Oregon in order to support efforts to extract money from the federal government, and one is left surmising that may have been the motive for "collecting" these fragments in the first place.

Benjamin Dowell was one of the more prominent individuals to benefit from the Indian Wars of Oregon. Through his association with Victor and his ownership of *The Oregon Sentinel*, he was also in an excellent position to influence the historical memory. First, those who benefited from the war misrepresented the controversy with Wool and, somewhat later, others, such as Victor valorized the settlement enterprise. The original misrepresentations are not surprising, but the image of Wool thus constructed showed an unexpected resiliency well into the 1980s.

Victor's take on the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest in general and General Wool in particular has proved remarkably enduring. And, unfortunately, in contrast to the very straightforward passage from Kent Richards praising Victor quoted above, some authors are either rather devious about the way they encourage us to take Victor's word for how Wool's personality led him to misrepresent things or rather careless in examining the sources used for the secondary sources they cite. For example, the editors of the memoirs of a young man who made a trip through northern California and southern Oregon in 1855 just as

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[103] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 330.

hostilities were breaking out in the Rogue River Valley asserted that General Wool was uncooperative, antagonistic of civilians, and had his subordinates sufficiently intimidated that they colored their reports to escape Wool's criticism.[104] These editors cited three sources for these assertions. The first source was Volume Two of Hubert Howe Bancroft's history of Oregon, which as we have seen was largely written by Victor.[105] The third was *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon.*[106] The other was a jingoistic tertiary popular history published in 1953, which has no footnotes, but does have a bibliography that includes *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon* and, except for Jeff C. Riddle's *The Indian History of the Modoc War and the Causes that Led to It*, relied exclusively on settler accounts of the hostilities.[107] Thus the spin Mrs. Victor put on General Wool's personality continued to shape the historical memory of the General for well over a century after Wool's death, and nearly 80 years after Victor's death.

Victor's influence upon the historical memory of Territorial Indian Affairs Superintendent Joel Palmer is quite a contrast to Wool's case. In 1855-56 many Oregonians severely criticized Palmer for his attitudes, actions, and communications with General Wool. The *Oregonian* of June 28, 1856 contained a report of a citizens' meeting held June 16th at the Douglas County courthouse in Roseburg. According to the report, the "very large assemblage of the citizens of Douglass county" at the meeting passed a series of resolutions that were then distributed to newspaper editors throughout the territory. This meeting was obviously focused on smoothing the obstacles to federal payment of the debts incurred while

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[104] Sheila Whitesitt and Richard E. Moore, "Introduction," in Ezra M. Hamilton, Sheila Whitesitt and Richard E. Moore, *A Memoir of the Indian War: The Reminiscences of Ezra M. Hamilton* (Ashland, OR: Tree Stump Press, 1987), 3-4.

[105] Sheila Whitesitt and Richard E. Moore, "Footnotes," in Ibid, n. 1, 27.

[106] Ibid, n. 3, 27.

[107] Ibid, n. 2, 27. The volume referred to is: Ray H. Glassley, *Pacific Northwest Indian Wars* (Portland: Binford's and Mort, 1953).

fighting the Indians. The preamble makes a good deal of noise about "nobly fighting to avenge the wrongs of our murdered countrymen who fell fighting for the preservation of American soil, and for the honor and integrity of the American flag."[108] The first four resolutions passed at this meeting placed all responsibility for the hostilities upon the Indians. For example, the second resolution states,

> That the war now existing in Oregon was not brought upon us by the maltreatment of the Indians by unprincipled white men; but on the contrary, that the whites have always observed strictly, the terms of the treaty of 1853, made by Joel Palmer, and their only fault has been in treating these ungrateful wretches with too much kindness and christian forbearance, thereby familiarizing them with our social condition, our exposed situation, and with the use of our weapons of warfare.[109]

Palmer is not mentioned again until the fifth resolution, which resolved

> that although the reports and communications of Gen. Wool represent us in a very unfair light, we do not impute it to any wrong motives in him, but would rather attribute it to the bad hands in which he fell on arriving in Oregon, and from whom he received his information, *especially* the official report of Joel Palmer to Gen. Wool, which, coming as it did from an officer of the United States, appointed by the President, was well calculated to deceive the old General, and which was false in conception, false in fact, and without the shadow of foundation in truth.[110]

This was a minority viewpoint and an extremely rare instance of a contemporary source absolving General Wool of responsibility for statements he had made. Palmer lost his job as Indian Affairs Superintendent shortly after the Roseburg meeting. Stanley Spaid explained Palmer's dismissal as "the result of several complicated factors, namely: Palmer's sympathy for the friendly Indians, his statements placing the blame for the war upon the whites, opposition to [Palmer's] policy of collecting the Indians west of the Cascades on the Coast and Grand Ronde Reservations, and political intrigue."[111] It should be pointed out that

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[108] "Mass Meeting at Roseburg," *The Oregonian* (June 28, 1856) in Evans, "Campaign of Maj. Gen. John E. Wool."

[109] Ibid, emphasis in original.

[110] Ibid, emphasis in original.

[111] Spaid, "Joel Palmer and Indian Affairs in Oregon," 216.

Palmer's plan of collecting the Indians on reservations in western Oregon was founded on his belief that the more popularly accepted plan of removing the Indians of western Oregon to the desert country east of the Cascades was unworkable, but profit motivations were most likely a factor in Palmer's dismissal as well. According to a letter from Governor Curry to Delegate Joseph Lane, sagging scrip values immediately jumped 10 percent when news of Palmer's dismissal reached Oregon.[112]

Palmer's reputation has since been rehabilitated from the negative aspersions once cast upon him.[113] The start of this process was evident during Palmer's lifetime. Many of Palmer's harshest critics during his tenure as Indian Affairs Superintendent were later business or political associates.[114] In 1862 Palmer was elected to the lower house of the state legislature as a Union Democrat, where he served as speaker, before being elected to the upper house in 1864.[115] Suggested as a compromise candidate, Palmer declined a seat in the US Senate in 1866 because of his perception of a conflict with the oath he had taken upon entering the state legislature.[116] In 1870 Palmer, by then a Republican, lost the state gubernatorial race by a narrow margin of just over 600 votes. There was some criticism of Palmer's past during the campaign, but the comments ran along party lines. For example, the *States Rights Democrat* of Albany denounced Palmer's statements during his time as Superintendent of Indian Affairs when they declared that "a more cruel, wanton, unnatural, and altogether infamous libel upon the innocent and suffering white people of Southern Oregon whose happy homes were desolated by the torch and knife of those red devils whom

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[112] cited in Ibid, 243.

[113] For a rather hagiographical example of Palmer's rehabilitation see: Terence O'Donnell, *An Arrow in the Earth: General Joel Palmer and the Indians of Oregon* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1991).

[114] Spaid, "Joel Palmer and Indian Affairs in Oregon," 284.

[115] Ibid, 260, 262.

[116] Ibid, 267-268.

Palmer defended, has never been uttered in the limits of this state before."[117] Slightly over 11,000 voters apparently disagreed. Palmer's obituary in the *Oregonian* discussed his term as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in two sentences and made no mention of controversy.[118]

Historians have been kind to Palmer, so too was Frances Victor. She did not refer to Palmer's removal from his position as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon.* About his activities while in office, Victor simply wrote that "Palmer was a man who took his own way about things, and as he did his work thoroughly, without pother, those from whom he derived his authority seldom meddled with him. If he was arbitrary, he was generally in the right, and it saved a deal of trouble to give him the management."[119] Palmer's time as Superintendent and his removal from office were described in Bancroft's Oregon history in a similar non-judgmental manner. Once he had

> conceived the idea of removing the Indians from the southern reservations, Palmer was not to be deterred either by the protests of the people or the disapprobation of the legislative assembly.
> .... Preparations were then made for bringing all the tribes from Coos Bay south to the California line upon the coast reservation selected in 1854. The legislature had asked for the removal of the superintendent on this ground; though in reality it was a political dodge; and his removal was accomplished before he had fairly finished the work at hand.[120]

None of the earlier criticism of Palmer over his words and actions as Superintendent of Indian Affairs came through in Victor's historical narratives. But Victor was certainly not gentle with General Wool. And, as we have seen, her influence was sometimes openly acknowledged and other times could be clearly seen in regional historical writing in the 1980s, nearly 100 years after she wrote. We have also seen the influence of Benjamin

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[117] Quoted in Stanley S. Spaid, "The Later Life and Activities of General Joel Palmer," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 55 (December 1954), 328.
[118] [Harvey W. Scott], "Death of Joel Palmer," *The Daily Oregonian* (June 10, 1881), 2.
[119] Victor, 333.
[120] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 397-399.

Franklin Dowell upon Victor. Dowell's case shows clearly that the historical memory of the war was influenced for profit. This is not particularly surprising; economic motivation will always be more than sufficient to convince some people to misrepresent situations. The durability of the memory thus constructed is far more surprising.

Chapter Three
"Inhuman and atrocious outrages"

This final chapter tackles the issue of societal responsibility for the War in southern Oregon. This has never really been done before. Settler mythology has long been accepted at face value, and the founding myths have never really been subjected to serious critical analysis. Nor has any real examination been done of how the racial attitudes of the settlers may have influenced interactions with the aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest. Some may find my emphasis on racial factors to be simplistic, or intellectually unfashionable, but the wars were described in racial terms both at the time and for many years later.

During the tension immediately before the outbreak of hostilities in the autumn of 1855, Editor Dryer of the *Oregonian* described the conflict in racial terms and wrote eloquently about his preferred solution to the Indian problem: extermination. Dryer argued that it was time

> to admit that we have about as much sympathy for the whole race of Indians on the Pacific slope, as we have for a nest of scorpions, or a den of rattlesnakes – and would rejoice to see them exterminated in the one case, as we would in the other. Until that is done, there will be no peace or safety, notwithstanding the innumerable treaties that may be made, and the millions of money expended by the general government, under the impression that the race can, and ought to be civilized, or christianized, or that justice ought to be meted out to the original occupants of the soil.[1]

Oregon Territory's Congressional Delegate, Joseph Lane, also framed the conflict in racial terms in a speech to Congress. Lane claimed that

> a general uprising has taken place for the purpose of exterminating the intruders, or driving them from the land. Who that acknowledges the right of the white race to occupy and improve the lands of the natives, (and I know of no one who will deny it) – who that acknowledges such right will deny to them the right of self-defense when assailed in their pioneer homes; and who will not go further than this, and say that,

[1] T.J. Dryer, "More Indian Murders – Prospects of a General War." *The Oregonian* (September 22, 1855), 2.

> where their numbers and their means are inadequate to their defense, it is the duty of the Government to afford them protection, and save them.[2]

Lane clearly expected that racial solidarity would prevail and play a role in convincing Congress to pay the war claims.

In fact racial explanations for the Indian Wars of the Pacific Northwest were dominant before the middle of the twentieth century. For example, the first history text written specifically for teaching Oregon history, by three academic historians, including the head of the History Department at the University of Oregon, stated that, "after all is said, the Indian vanished because he could not learn the ways of the white man. He could not survive in competition with the dominant race."[3]

From its earliest beginnings the developing mythology of the settlement of the Pacific Northwest shrouded the conflicts with the region's original inhabitants in a cloak of denial. In this chapter key aspects of the formation of the social memory of the Indian wars are examined with an emphasis on the denial of responsibility for the Indian wars, which became an important aspect of the settler mythology of the Pacific Northwest. The focus is on the last stage of the conflict in southern Oregon, more commonly known as the Rogue River Indian War, 1855-56. Two starkly contrasting pictures of the war emerge from early accounts. The dissenting account was excluded from the developing historical memory of the conflict in Southern Oregon. The implications of this exclusion upon the accuracy of the social memory become quite obvious upon close comparison of the two accounts.

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[2] Joseph Lane, "Speech of Hon. Joseph Lane of Oregon, in the House of Representatives, May 31, 1856," *Pioneer and Democrat* (July 4, 1856): 1.

[3] Robert Carlton Clark, Robert Horace Down and George Verne Blue, *A History of Oregon* (Chicago and New York: Row, Peterson and Company, 1926), 35.

Denial of responsibility for starting the war began in the early days of the conflict. One common method of denial was the inversion of who the invaders were. This inversion was clearly seen in the editorials of Thomas Dryer. Dryer claimed that the facts were

> [b]riefly this: Our country is invaded by hostile savages – we are suddenly plunged into a war. It becomes absolutely necessary for the protection of the lives and property of our citizens, that immediate action should be taken to repel these savages. An army must be immediately raised, armed, mounted and sent into the field to beat back the invaders of our soil.[4]

Dryer used the concept of the Indians as invaders for a variety of purposes. The above quotation was part of one of Dryer's characteristic polemical attacks on the ruling Democratic party. The following quotation was part of a diatribe against merchants who would not share the risk by raising their prices and taking scrip for supplying volunteer units. Dryer wrote that some merchants

> refuse even to furnish, at exorbitant prices, articles which they have on hand for sale to the Commissary and Quartermaster's departments, without the cash in hand. In other words, they won't trust Uncle Sam when the territory is invaded by a hostile foe, and yet claim that Uncle Sam must protect them, and furnish men in their behalf, without food, without clothes, arms, ammunition, or anything else necessary to carry on the war.[5]

Dryer also used the extermination of the Indians as a concept to rally around in order to encourage unity among the settlers. He claimed that

> [a] long, bloody and destructive Indian war is on hand, which must be checked. Volunteers, arm and out! Let no political party or selfish interest, cause any for a moment to hesitate or falter. The time has come when the people must act in concert to repel and exterminate these Indian marauders, who are the curse and scourge of the country. Let every man who can shoulder a rifle, rush to the contest and never yield until these merciless red-skins are driven from our borders.[6]

If the Indians were the invaders, then the settlers were fighting a defensive war, which was forced upon them. Ideally, the foe should be formidable as well. In early March of

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[4] T.J. Dryer, "To What Are We Tending?" *The Oregonian* (November 10, 1855), 2.
[5] T.J. Dryer, "The Indian War," *The Oregonian* (November 3, 1855), 2.
[6] T. J. Dryer, "Indian War – Latest News," *The Oregonian* (October 13, 1855), 2.

1856, as the controversy with Wool was starting, before the *Oregonian* published Wool's letter to Stevens, Dryer argued there was a general conspiracy of Indians in the Northwest and greatly inflated the number of Indians involved. As Dryer saw things,

> Our common country is now and has been for several months involved in a general war with the combined forces of some *twenty* different tribes of Indians, numbering thousands of warriors, who are well armed, mounted and supplied for a long and destructive war against the Americans, who own and occupy this country. This war is not of our seeking, but has been forced upon us in self defence. It must go forward until the last Indian is exterminated, and a *lasting* peace is conquered. The government of the United States are bound in honor and in duty to stand by, defend, protect and sustain us in this war. That they will pay its expenses we have no doubt, and do all that they have covenanted to do, Gen. Wool's policy, influence or views to the contrary not withstanding.[7]

Dryer significantly exaggerated the extent of the hostilities when he wrote that

> [t]here is no man of common observation acquainted with the facts but who will testify that the present Indian war in Oregon has been forced upon our citizens. Notwithstanding what Gen. Wool has said, done or written, or what the Oregon *Statesman* may have published in its columns in relation to the present Indian war, the facts stand upon record that this war was the result of a combination of all the Indian tribes between California and the British possessions in the north, and between the Missouri river and the Pacific ocean on the west, to commence a war with the whites. Whatever the justification on the part of the Indians – if any – we shall not stop now to inquire. It is enough that the Indian tribes occupying this large extent of country have, by concert of action, commenced at the same time, a war of extermination against the whites. They have been for a long time laying waste to the country by the torch of the incendiary, and by killing every unfortunate unarmed white man who might fall in their way. They have always been in the habit of stealing everything they could lay their hands on. Now, they have simultaneously commenced murdering men, women and children all around us. Treaty stipulations and solemn covenants are set at naught. The whole country resounds with the cry of anguish; and the nights are made light by the flames of burning dwellings and barns. The property of the people is constantly being destroyed, their stock driven into the mountains, and thousands of our citizens forced to abandon their homes and find shelter and protection among strangers, or perish.[8]

It would seem that Dryer was quite aware that more sympathy could be won for the payment of the war debts if more were at stake than the welfare of a few settlers in a remote region.

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[7] T.J. Dryer, "The Indian War," *The Oregonian* (March 8, 1856), 2, emphasis in original.

[8] T.J. Dryer, "Oregon Indian War – Its Cause, Management, and Probable Results," *The Oregonian* (February 23, 1856), 2.

Making it seem like American control of a vast region was threatened most likely can be interpreted as indicating how important payment of the war debts was to Dryer.

Dryer provided an outlet for people to have their say by publishing letters from people in outlying regions discussing events in their region. In the fall of 1855 a settler in the Rogue River Valley wrote to Dryer describing his perception of the situation in the

> lower part of the Rogue river valley[, which] is very thinly settled. The Indians, aware of this fact, take advantage of it, and swarm among us worse than the plagues of Egypt; Indians from all parts dwell among us at all times and in large numbers.... They invade our dwellings at all times, no part of which is sacred from their sacrilegious steps, and not only this, but we must tamely endure the presence and almost daily visits of the most cold-blooded murderers and midnight assassins that our country has ever been cursed with. With the blood of our fellow-citizens, who cried vainly for mercy in the Illinois valley, scarcely dry upon their hands – with the groans from the Klamath still ringing in our ears – the heartless butchery on the Siskiyou, even before our eyes – he that can tamely look upon the fiends, the perpetrators of these atrocious deeds, with the threat of a like fate to himself and family hanging over him, and be satisfied, must be either more or less than a man.[9]

This letter was not published until nearly three weeks later, but it was dated October 8, 1855, the day of a controversial attack upon a sleeping group of Indian women, children and a few elderly men. The events of October 8 and their aftermath will be examined in some detail below. First, however, there were some who saw the situation in the Rogue River Valley prior to the final outbreak of hostilities there much differently than did Dryer's correspondent.

Mining and settlement in the Rogue River Valley started slowly in 1851 and increased in 1852-53.[10] Aboriginal subsistence patterns in the valley were disrupted quite quickly. As Indian Affairs Superintendent Palmer reported in June of 1853, "The increasing

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[9] Rogue River Citizen, "Letter from Lower Rogue River," *The Oregonian*, October 27, 1855, in Elwood Evans, "The Indian War, 1855-56."

[10] For an early secondary account of the beginning of mining and settlement in the Rogue River Valley see: A.G. Walling, *History of Southern Oregon, Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties: Compiled from the Most Authentic Sources* (Portland: Printing and Lithographing House of A.G. Walling, 1884), 336-340.

settlements are rapidly diminishing the roots and game on which the Indians of the valley mainly subsist, and their increasing difficulties in obtaining subsistence, in the absence of moral restraint, impel them to the frequent commission of petty thefts – a source of annoyance, loss, and irritation to the settlers."[11] These Indians' very survival was threatened by an influx of newcomers who saw depriving the Indians of subsistence as perfectly moral, and who viewed the Indians' efforts to survive as theft, which was then labeled as immoral. During the summer of 1852 prominent settlers were drinking toasts to the extinction of the Indians of Rogue River Valley.[12] A year later a recent immigrant to the Rogue River Valley reported in her journal during early August of 1853, "Strong threats are made of exterminating all the Red mans tribe."[13] The situation worsened as settlement increased. In his first annual report of July 1854, Indian Agent Samuel Culver echoed the sentiments heard from Palmer a year earlier. Culver related that "the Indians complained that the white people had come to their country, taken their homes, destroyed their means of subsistence, and shot down their people, until, with the uncertainty of food and of life which surrounded them, and the agonies of continual mourning, life had become almost a burden."[14] Culver also noted that the presence of the settlers was an important factor in the Indians' food shortage. Before settlement began the Indians of the valley

> subsisted in the main upon roots, of which there was a great variety and quantity; each kind had its locality and time of ripening or becoming fit for use. But the whites have nearly destroyed this kind of food by plowing the ground and crowding the Indians from localities where it could once be procured. They did not find these roots upon any one tract of the country, but there would be an abundance in one locality

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[11] Joel Palmer, "No. 82, Report of superintendent Joel Palmer," in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1853.* (Washington, DC: Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs), 209.

[12] *Oregon Statesmen* (August 14, 1852), quoted in Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and its Aftermath, 1850-1980*, 49.

[13] America Rollins Butler, eds. Oscar Osburn Winther and Rose Dodge Galey, "Mrs. Butler's 1853 Diary of Rogue River Valley," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 41 (4) (December 1940): 351.

[14] Samuel L. Culver, "No. 96, Report of agent Samuel L. Culver, July 20, 1854," in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854.* (Washington, DC: Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs), 501.

> one month, and of another variety at another place the ensuing. The settlers have interfered, by the cultivation of the soil in the valleys, with the obtaining of this species of food to such an extent, that while they can get plenty during certain seasons of the year, they will at other times be in a starving condition.[15]

Later in 1854 a report by Superintendent Palmer made the situation of the Indians of the upper Rogue River sound quite dismal. Palmer reported that he

> found the Indians of the Rogue River Valley excited and unsettled. The hostilities of last summer had prevented the storing of the usual quantities of food; the occupation of their best root-grounds by the whites greatly abridged that resource: their scanty supplies and the unusual severity of the winter had induced disease, and death had swept away nearly one fifth of those residing on the [Table Rock] reserve. Consternation and dismay prevailed; many had fled, and others were preparing to fly to the mountains for security.[16]

The settlers' livestock also contributed to the destruction. George Riddle, whose settler parents enjoyed good relations with the Cow Creek Band just north of the Rogue River Valley, related in a 1920 series of newspaper articles that "[t]he settlers' hogs rooted up the Kamas, a bulb upon which the Indians depended largely for food."[17] But it seems that most settlers were either unaware of the fragility of the Indians' traditional means of subsistence or simply did not care.

Agent Culver's 1854 report revealed his impression of the way in which many Euro-Americans in the valley saw the plight of the Indians. Culver explained that

> [m]any, and perhaps most persons then in this valley, had been attracted hither in advance of the settlement to any considerable extent of the country by the rich gold discoveries made in the valley, and were actuated by the same laudable motive of gain as miners generally, without the intention of remaining in the country, and alike without the wish to sow the seeds for future discord between the natives and our own people, to the injury of those of their friends who might wish to reside permanently in the valley. Their minds were upon but the one object; they did not care about or think of Indians. But, as they say, during the whole period of our sojourn here previous to

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[15] Ibid, 504.

[16] Joel Palmer, "No. 87, Report of superintendent Joel Palmer," in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs), 463.

[17] George W. Riddle, *Early Days in Oregon* (Seattle: Shorey Book Company, Facsimile Reproduction, 1968), 36. [Riddle, OR: *Riddle Enterprise*, 1920].

> the commencement of the war alluded to, it has been an unending series of disasters to us and our associates, caused by Indians.[18]

However, Culver's replacement, Dr. George Ambrose, clarified in an 1855 report that many of the miners' "disasters" were actually incidents of petty theft. As Ambrose described the situation,

> In most instances, the houses are of rude logs, and not very securely fastened, which offers a temptation to Indians hard for them to resist, especially when we consider they have been trained to steal from their infancy. After a repetition of thefts a few times, and the individual, after a hard day's work, has had to walk two or three miles to get his supper and lay in another small lot of provisions, which in a few days may probably go the same way, he gets peevish and angry, and embittered against the Indian race, and would about as soon shoot an Indian as eat his supper.[19]

From the beginning of settlement, then, the very presence of settlers threatened the Indians of the Rogue River Valley with starvation, and many settlers seem to have reacted with either apathy or hostility.

Into this simmering subsistence crisis we can add a disease that devastated the Indians of southern Oregon. Riddle estimated that between half and two-thirds of the Indians of the southern Umpqua Valley, just north of the Rogue River Valley, died of some kind of fever during the winter of 1852-53.[20] This was most likely the same chills, ague and fever graphically described by America Rollins Butler during the latter half of 1853.[21] However, Butler discussed the disease many times in her journal without mentioning fatalities among the settlers. This dire situation for the aboriginal people of the valley developed rather quickly after the start of settlement in the Rogue River Valley. Riddle described what his family saw in 1851 on their

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[18] Samuel L. Culver, "Report," 500-501.

[19] "No. 5," G.H. Ambrose, Indian Agent to Joel Palmer, Superintendent, September 30, 1855 in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 63.

[20] Riddle, 53-56.

[21] Butler, passim.

> journey through the beautiful Rogue river valley. At that time its primitive beauty had not been marred by the hand of the white man. Our home seekers must have regretted that they could not at that time settle upon the fertile soil of Bear creek valley, but we were in the Indian country.
>
> At the time we passed through the Rogue river valley there were no settlements of any kind and we met no prospectors, but later in the fall of 1851 gold was discovered at Jacksonville, which caused that country to settle up rapidly in 1852. We met with very few Indians in the Rogue River country and those we met were friendly.[22]

Neither Riddle nor early historian A.G. Walling explained exactly why this party felt they could not settle in the Rogue River Valley in 1851, but the Riddles went north to settle in Cow Creek Valley, a tributary of the South Umpqua.[23] Riddle related how his family and the other settlers in the Cow Creek Valley got along very well with the local Indians from 1851-55.[24] However, in spite of these good relations, the Cow Creek Indians decided in the autumn of 1855 to leave Cow Creek Valley and participate in the hostilities, but took no action against their immediate neighbors.[25] Riddle described the dismal situation of

> the Indians of southern Douglas County. In the four years after 1851 their numbers had diminished over one half. The sources of their food supply had been greatly diminished by the settlers' fields and livestock, especially hogs, that ravaged their kammas fields. Many of their race had been ruthlessly killed....
>
> These hangings and killing together with the treacherous slaughter of the Grave Creek Indians and the murder of "Tip-su" Bill by the Grave Creeks at the instigation of the whites, also the murder of the old Indian and squaw near our home, and numerous other slaughters of Indians in Josephine county at a time of peace and of Indians not involved in the short war of 1853 – all these outrages were known to our Indians and made them ripe to enter into the hostilities against the whites when the general outbreak of the Rogue Rivers came in 1855.[26]

A repeated theme in Riddle's narrative is a tendency to dispute published historical accounts of events familiar to him. As he saw it, "The writers of the history of the Indian wars of Southern Oregon were too ready to find excuses for the outrages committed upon the

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[22] Riddle, 27.
[23] Riddle, 31-39; Walling, 336-340.
[24] Riddle, 42-50.
[25] Ibid, 61-63.
[26] Ibid, 56-57.

Indians. The writer of Walling's history was disposed to be fair, but was often misled into making false statements."[27] Riddle then disputed in its entirety Walling's account of the murder of two unnamed miners on Cow Creek, near the Riddle farm, during the summer of 1853, when he was thirteen years old. Riddle was adamant that this incident never occurred, because "[s]uch an event would have been indelibly impressed upon my mind."[28] Riddle was not so kind to Victor and *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*. Before a point by point rebuttal, he called Victor's account of the war of 1855-56 in the Umpqua Valley "a sample of what will pass down to future generations as history."[29] Riddle also noted Victor's tendency "to excuse the wrongs perpetrated upon the Indians by the whites."[30]

Walling's *History of Southern Oregon*, on the other hand, stands in contrast to Victor's historical writing because it is almost completely lacking in racist or racialist rhetoric, and because it stands as one of the first local histories to recognize that some whites had treated the Indians inappropriately while others did nothing to stop to these activities. Walling believed that,

> Concerning the character of the general white population in 1851-6, nothing need be said. Men of all ranks in life and all conceivable characters were there. There is no occasion to go into raptures over the generosity, magnanimity and bravery of the better sort, nor to enter upon a long description of the vices of the worse. Good men were there and bad. The same vicious qualities which characterized the ruffian in more settled communities marked his career in this, except that circumstances may have given him a better chance here to display himself. "A majority of white persons came to the country with kind feelings for the Indians and not wishing to injure them; but there also came many having opposite sentiments." This sentence sets forth the condition of affairs as forcibly as if it were expanded into a volume. A portion were ready to do the Indian harm and circumstances never could have been more favorable to their malice.... Because these Indians were poor, because they were ignorant, and because they were aliens, society frowned on them, justice ignored them, the United States government neglected to protect them and they were left a prey to the worst

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[27] Ibid, 51.
[28] Ibid, 51.
[29] Ibid, 65-66.
[30] Ibid, 42.

> passions of the worst of men. To again quote, "Miscreants, regardless of sex or age, slaughter poor, weak, defenceless Indians with impunity. There are no means for agents to prevent or punish it. There are many well-disposed persons, but they are silent through fear or some other cause," etc. These are the words of Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon.[31]

Walling's *History of Southern Oregon* laid the foundations for limiting societal responsibility for the Rogue River Wars. However, Walling stopped short of laying all the responsibility for the atrocities committed against Indians upon the outcasts of settler society, the placer miners. That task was taken on in a 1907 article in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* by Frederic G. Young, University of Oregon professor and first editor of the *Quarterly*. Rather than dismissing Wool, as had Victor years before, Young rehabilitated General Wool. Gone was the superannuated villain with a grudge against the settlers of the Pacific Northwest; Wool was just some one who made an honest mistake. In Young's narrative, "General Wool and other army officers had meanwhile used with largest effect incidents that had taken place in the contact between disreputable miners and the Indians. It was easy to assume that these were representative."[32] Young attributed this idea to one of Oregon's most notable pioneers, Jesse Applegate. Young obviously felt the need to explain "[h]ow the prejudice, of those who took the other side in this controversy, was created." To explain this prejudice, Young used

> the statements of so representative an Oregon pioneer as Jesse Applegate. In his "Views of Oregon History" he speaks of the ruthlessness with which the Indians were sometimes treated, particularly by bands of miners. He holds that it was regularly observed that when water for washing the gold bearing gravel became scarce and mining unprofitable, the miners would turn to killing Indians as a more lucrative employment. The United States had been liberal with compensation for services and supplies contributed during the Cayuse War, so the miners, he suggests, were not

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[31] Walling, 192.

[32] F.G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon, Part Two: Finances of the Territorial Period, 1849-1859," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 8 (2) (1907): 186.

> disinclined to provoke the Indians to another contest in expectation of a like liberal reimbursement from the national treasury.[33]

In contrast to the greed driven exploits of the miners, Young held up the early settlers of the Northwest as a shining example of Manifest Destiny. According to Young the settlers

> moved across the continent at an auspicious time, and so were able to influence, if not to shape, the course of great events touching the widening of the American Dominion on the Pacific. It was all done so quietly, so efficiently, at so comparatively small cost and without any shock of harrowing disaster, that the world has yet to connect the momentous results with a cause seemingly so inadequate.[34]

The Manifest Destiny described in early issues of the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* was racially idealized. In Young's article on the Oregon Trail he described how

> [t]he Oregon migrations effected at one sweep a two-thousand mile extension of the Aryan movement westward in the occupation of the north temperate zone – 'a far-flung' outpost of occupation and settlement. To appreciate the boldness, intrepidity and consummate effectiveness of such pioneering we have but to note that no previous extension had encompassed one-fourth this distance. Nor were the conditions in this instance easy.[35]

Of course, the fulfillment of Aryan destiny aroused jealousy from the supposedly inferior races being displaced, but this was not the fault of the settlers because this jealousy was "inflamed by the insult and outrage of characters of which no community is entirely rid."[36]

Young idealized Oregon pioneers throughout his association with the *Quarterly*. In the final issue before his death in early 1929 he wrote that "[t]hose who struck out for Oregon were the valiant, the enterprising and the relatively well-to-do in the communities from which they hailed. The ordeal of the Oregon migration meant a process of natural selection of the fittest for pioneering."[37] There are no shortage of such statements in Young's work.

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[33] Young, "Financial History, Part Two," 133.

[34] F.G. Young, "The Oregon Trail," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 1 (4) (December 1900): 339.

[35] Ibid, 342.

[36] Young, "Financial History, Part Two," 131-132.

[37] F.G. Young, "For an Oregon Pioneers Centennial Memorial," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 29 (4) (1928): 372.

Young also published other writers with similar views. The most notable of these other writers was Thomas Condon, a senior colleague of Young's at the University of Oregon, who had an article in the first *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*. Condon came to Oregon as a missionary in 1853, developed a fascination for fossils, became state geologist in 1872 and, in 1876, became one of the three founding faculty members at the University of Oregon.[38] Condon's article in the *Quarterly* put a Darwinist spin on the Oregon pioneers. Condon theorized "that the difficulties in the way of a migration to Oregon – as these difficulties were seen by the people of the frontier states – formed a selecting test of the kind of people who alone could go to Oregon across the mountains in those days – a real and practical natural selection of a new people for a new community."[39] Condon's Darwinist views obviously influenced Frederic Young. Twenty-eight years after Condon's article Young seems to have borrowed Condon's idea without citing him.

One wonders, however, how many early settlers saw themselves in the same glowing light that did Condon and Young. In a letter dated April 15, 1856 an anonymous settler from Oregon responded to letters by General Wool published in California papers before Wool's letter to the *National Intelligencer*. This anonymous writer had the pioneers coming to the Northwest for more self serving motives than Condon and Young indicated. In a letter signed "One of the People," this correspondent claimed that the

> settlers were induced to emigrate to this country by a *National bribe*, donating to the heads of each family, first, six hundred and forty acres of *Indian land*; second, three hundred and twenty-one acres, or to each adult person one hundred and sixty acres. This was considered by Congress a sufficient inducement to lure the honest husbandman and mechanic from his quiet home in the older States, hazard his own life and the lives of his family in a journey across the Plains, subjecting them to every

[38] Rick Harmon, "Thomas Condon and the 'Natural Selection' of Oregon Pioneers," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 99 (4) (1998-1999): 438-441.

[39] Thomas Condon, "The Process of Selection in Oregon Pioneer Settlement," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*1 (1) (March 1900): 60.

> hardship, suffering and privation humanity can endure, *for the purpose of permanently settling the country and wresting it from British and Indian rule.*
>
> This National bribe had the desired effect. The honest farmer, mechanic, and tradesman abandoned their quiet homes and pursuits in the Western States, and after a six months journey of unequaled hardships, suffering, privation, loss of property, and in thousands of instances the sacrifice of human life, they reached their destined *donated homes and settled among Indians, the title to whose lands had not been extinguished by purchase or treaty.*[40]

The idea that the pioneers should be compensated for coming west was very durable. Over four decades after the above letter to the *Oregonian* it can be found in a message sent to the speaker of the House of Representatives some time before late February 1897 by the Grand Commander of the Indian War Veterans, Thomas A. Wood. Wood, a Methodist minister, was very explicit when he wrote that "[t]he reminder that Oregon was not a present from the United States to its settlers, but a present from the settlers to the Union, is offered as an argument in support of the value placed upon services of the pioneers."[41] Similar arguments appeared intermittently throughout the 1890s. Indeed, Wood and six others took their case to the President at the behest of the Oregon legislature.[42] No one who was in the habit of reading newspapers thoroughly could have been unaware of such sentiments, but in the articles Condon and Young wrote on the pioneers there are no suggestions of motivation for anything as crass as monetary gain.

Turning back to the manuscript attributed to Jesse Applegate, the first part is written in third person, not in interview transcript format, and the handwriting in the first part differs from the letters that follow. These signed letters were apparently written by Jesse Applegate to Hubert Bancroft and/or Frances Victor and offer a critique of Victor's first book length

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[40] One of the People, Letter to the editor, *Oregon Weekly Times*, n.d. (reprinted in the *Pioneer and Democrat*, Olympia WA, n.d.), in Evans, "Campaign of Maj. Gen. John E. Wool," emphasis in original.

[41] "Indian War Relics: Oregon Veterans Seeking Government Recognition." *Oregonian* (February 27, 1897), 8.

[42] "Pioneers Meet the President: A Committee to Urge the Passage of a Law Pensioning Indian Fighters," *Special to the New York Times* (February 10, 1901), 1.

historical work, *The River of the West* (1870). The first striking thing about the letters is Applegate's assertion that Oregon history lacks merit as a field of study. Specifically, "It has added no new fact to human knowledge – has produced no high illustration of any fact already known, has produced no warrior, or scholar in any branch of human knowledge, in fact not a single name that for any merit or acts of its possessor deserves to live in the memory of mankind."[43] In analyzing the letter, a later commentator emphasized Applegate's implicit eagerness to forget in this statement and then tried "to establish connections between personality characteristics and life experiences, and those in turn to attitudes toward the past."[44] Applegate's conflicted attitude to history was supposedly a product of the deaths of Jesse's eldest son, a nephew, and an old family friend in a boating accident on the Columbia River near the Dalles just after the Applegate party completed the overland journey from Missouri.[45] This rather complicated analysis links Jesse's despair over the death of his eldest son to his public disdain for the Oregon Pioneer Association. Applegate attached no lofty motives to pioneers, not even himself. As Applegate characterized the motives of the settlers, "for myself and those of my class I claim no higher motive for coming here than the inherent restlessness of our nature, and if we have done any praiseworthy thing it has only been incidental to aims purely selfish, and so far from being proud of the years I have been in this country, I am ashamed to confess the insufficient motives upon which I acted."[46]

But there is the possibility of a more parsimonious explanation for Applegate's disdain of the history of the settlement of Oregon. Perhaps a series of potentially troubling incidents known as the Modoc War shaped his view of the past. Applegate may have felt

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[43] Jesse Applegate, "Views on Oregon History," Bancroft Library MSS P-A 2, 23-24.

[44] Abner S. Baker III, "Experience, Personality and Memory: Jesse Applegate and John Minto Recall Pioneer Days," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 81 (3) (1980): 232.

[45] Ibid, 240-241.

[46] Jesse Applegate to Willard H. Rees, Secretary of the Oregon Pioneer Association, December 25, 1874, quoted in Ibid, 250.

some responsibility for the Modoc War, which caused the deaths of many soldiers and settlers. Little has been written on how land speculation in the nineteenth century West affected relations with the aboriginal inhabitants. However, an article authored by historian Robert Johnston on the Modoc uprising of 1872-73, emphasizes land speculation and the activities of Jesse D. Carr, an affluent business associate of Applegate's. Johnston argued that "the two Jesses – one an Oregonian, the other a Californian – probably did more than all other 'settlers,' civilian governmental officials, or the military, to 'cause' that tragic conflict."[47] Despite this, historians of the Modoc uprising have tended to ignore Carr and downplay Applegate's role.[48] Specifically, the relevant volumes of Bancroft's histories each briefly mention Carr once. The appropriate volume of California history relates that "[i]n the early part of the summer of 1871, Jesse Applegate settled at Clear Lake upon a tract of land owned by J.D. Carr, and lying partly in Oregon and partly in California, which was selected as a rancho from the swamp lands of the states, and of which Applegate was agent."[49] Bancroft's second volume of Oregon history added that "[a]mong the settlers in the country desired by [Captain] Jack, [the Modoc sub-chief who led his band off the Klamath Reservation,] was Oregon's venerable pioneer, Jesse Applegate, residing as agent upon a tract claimed by Jesse D. Carr of California, and lying partly in that state and partly in Oregon."[50] These two mentions comprise the entire discussion of Carr in the Bancroft volumes. Carr was a prominent and highly controversial politician, whose activities in Modoc country were completely ignored by later historians until 1977 when his role in the

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[47] Robert B. Johnston, "Two Jesses and the Modoc War," *Journal of the Shaw Historical Library* 5 (1&2) (1991): 3.

[48] Ibid, 1-4.

[49] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works, Vol. XXXV, California Inter Pocula* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), 458.

[50] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 564.

tension leading up to the Modoc uprising was finally acknowledged.[51] Further, Johnston argues that Applegate played an important role in convincing the Indian Bureau not to grant the Modocs the reservation on Lost River, and also diverted attention from Carr's efforts to assemble a massive ranch astride the Oregon – California border.[52] Johnston also identified Carr as a dishonest politician with connections to other dishonest politicians of the Johnson administration.[53]

In a parallel to the missing description of Governor Curry's dispatch of volunteers into Washington Territory, which was discussed in the second chapter of this study, there are vague, tantalizing bits in the Bancroft volumes that suggest more information on the activities of Applegate and Carr has been somehow misplaced. In discussing the Peace Commission appointed to negotiate with the Modoc band led by Keintpoos, or Captain Jack, Volume 35 of *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: California inter pocula* states that "[o]n the 22d of February their first report was formulated, in which was recited all the alleged wrongs of the Modocs, as already known to the reader of my general history, dissatisfaction with the Klamath reservation as a place of residence, owing mainly to the domination of the Klamaths and ill treatment by the agents."[54] Later in the same volume there is an even more tantalizing bit. During a discussion of the Peace Commission it is mentioned more or less in passing "[t]hat Applegate would have resigned [the Peace Commission] had not his relatives been impugned by the allegations of Captain Jack, into which inquiry was ordered to be made, is rendered probable by his separate report made on the 9th of March."[55] Applegate's

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[51] Johnston, 1.
[52] Ibid, 23-32.
[53] Ibid, 13-28.
[54] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Inter Pocula* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), 517.
[55] Ibid, 519.

report is quoted extensively, and his disdain for the Peace Commission is apparent throughout. Applegate characterized "the commission [as] an expensive blunder."[56]

These bits of information built an interest in Jack's allegation against the Applegates. However, efforts to find further mention of his allegations in any of Bancroft's histories proved fruitless. Another Bancroft volume of California history covers the appropriate period, but deals primarily with political history, and was published in 1890, so it seems unlikely to have been referred to in a volume from 1888. It was checked anyway and no mention found of Captain Jack. Of all Bancroft's volumes, the only other that was chronologically and geographically appropriate was the second volume of Oregon History, written by Frances Victor. The account of the Modoc crisis was more detailed in this Oregon volume, because, although most of the bloodiest events of the crisis occurred in California, the Modocs were under the authority of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs. Victor's account of the Modoc affair was contains no reference to accusations made by Captain Jack against any one. It is uncertain which relatives were referred to. However, two of Jesse's nephews, brothers Ivan and Oliver Cromwell Applegate, both employed by the Klamath Agency, were also involved in the standoff in the lava beds.

Victor was already well acquainted with the Applegates before the Modoc War. Both Jesse and his nephew Oliver wrote to Victor in early March of 1873 inviting her to come for an extended visit and write the history of the Modoc uprising. This was over a month before the Modocs killed General Canby and Dr. Thomas of the Peace Commission. However, Victor did not receive the letters until after the Commissioners' deaths, and it took a few weeks for her to arrange her affairs before departing. Victor spent most of June, July and August in the company of the Applegate family and attended the trial of the Modoc leaders

[56] Quoted in Ibid, 520.

before ascending to Crater Lake, which resulted in a rock being named after her. Frances developed a particular attachment to Oliver, over twenty years her junior, whom she called "Dear Bliwas" and her "'plumed' friend." They corresponded for years afterward.[57] Thus it is difficult to see Victor as impartial toward any member of the Applegate family, especially her good friends Oliver and Jesse, but it must be stressed that there does not appear to be any evidence suggesting Victor's complicity with respect to the missing information.

Jesse Applegate was one of the more colorful and conflicted characters in Oregon during the second half of the nineteenth century. At one point Applegate was involved in a bitter legal struggle with Benjamin Franklin Dowell, over a political bond they had jointly posted for a politician who ended up absconding with state funds. Dowell was forced to pay the entire bond and then sued Jesse Applegate for 50%, claiming that Applegate and Applegate's children had conspired to hide assets from the state, thus compelling the state to collect the entire bond from Dowell. Robert Johnston speculated that it was probably the financial distress caused by this affair that led to Jesse Applegate becoming associated with Carr in the first place.[58] These uncertainties in Jesse Applegate's background certainly call into question his impartiality, objectivity and possibly even his honesty. But Frederic Young chose to ignore Applegate's questionable reliability and use his theory about the start of the war on the Rogue River in what appears to be an effort to reconcile Wool's commentary on the war with Young's own tendency to venerate the pioneers.

Another striking point about Applegate's letter to Bancroft is that he explicitly rejected any notion of his own authority on Oregon history. Applegate was very clear that "[f]rom 1849 forward I resided in the Umpqua valley and except for a two weeks

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[57] Hazel Mills and Constance Bordwell, *Frances Fuller Victor: The Witness to America's Westerings*, 211-254.

[58] Johnston, 21-23.

membership of the Convention to form a Constitution of the state took no part in public affairs. I am not therefore in any sense an authority to be used in the history of Oregon subsequent to that time."[59] Immediately after dismissing himself as an authority, Applegate presented his theory about placer miners and Indians. Applegate explained that the

> Indian wars were the main historical incidents of this period. These in their bringing on, as well as management attach no credit upon the whites. Since 1849 a new element, the gold hunters, was added to the population having few if any of the virtues of the early pioneers. The prompt assumption of the Cayuse war debt by the Government being a precedent, suggested an easier mode of obtaining gold than digging it from the bowells of the earth. If new diggings were sometimes difficult to find, a new Indian war was easily provoked which served their purposes equally well.
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> When the supply of water began to fail in the summer an Indian war was almost sure to be inaugurated in Southern Oregon and Northern California.[60]

Admittedly, this theory sounds quite logical, but it turns out that Young distorted Applegate's statement where it contradicts something Young wrote a year earlier. Applegate described the "prompt assumption of the Cayuse war debt by the Government." However, in his discussion of Applegate's theory, Young described the Government as "liberal with compensation." Prompt assumption of debt and liberal compensation are not the same thing, and an article Young published a year earlier makes it clear why he felt the need to change the terms. In Part One of his "Financial History of Oregon," which dealt with the Provisional Government and the Cayuse War, Young said the final appropriation by Congress to pay Cayuse War debts was not made until July 1854. Young also wrote that in March of 1857, the deadline for presenting claims was extended. The reason or duration of the extension was not specified. Young wrote that "the people of Oregon were fairly well reimbursed for the financial losses sustained in the prosecution of the Cayuse War."[61] However, in a note

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[59] Applegate, "Views on Oregon History," 51.

[60] Ibid.

[61] F.G. Young, "Financial History of Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 7 (4) (December 1906), 429.

Young cites *Early Indian Wars of Oregon* (1894), in which Frances Victor wrote that one bill was then before Congress about a claim for Cayuse War expenses. There is a problem, then, with how Young used Applegate's manuscript. The assumption of the Cayuse War claims by the Government was not prompt, and Young's own words of "fairly well reimbursed" do not seem quite synonymous with his later "liberal reimbursement."

In addition to his theory about miners, Applegate left a fairly detailed description of the start of hostilities in the last of the Rogue River Indian Wars, a description that Frederic Young did not mention in his presentation of Applegate's theory. Applegate noted that

> *River of the West* page 507 tells how the war north of the Columbia was inaugurated but does not tell how the Rogue river war of the same time was provoked.
>
> So frequent had been war in Rogue river valley that the Government had established a military post on Rogue river near Table Rock. It was the later part of August + 1st Sept [this alternate date is written above the line] – the Elk hunting season, a large band of Indians had gone into the mountains on the hunt of the Elk, leaving their old men, women, and children encamped close to Fort Lane, under its guns it may be said, to protect them from the miners.
>
> But some 30 or more, ruffians under the lead of a packer, came out of Jacksonville in the evening, sent spies to the Indian camp to ascertain its position and state. There were no dangerous Indians in it and at daylight next morning visited upon it slaughtering indiscriminately male and female, old age and helpless infancy. Certainly it was a great victory for the whites some 30 Indians were killed and only one white man hurt. But this happened to be the brave commander of the white army – a very old Indian who had already been shot used his last simmering strength to shoot an arrow, which struck the white leader in a vital place and ended his life, while his [four illegible words] upon him. A small boy who escaped from the massacre found his way to the hunters in the mountains and told them the whites had killed all that were dear to them.
>
> These infuriated Indians did what of course it was expected of them to do, rushed upon the defenceless settlements and committed a long list of savage atrocities. None of them exceeding in cold blooded fiendishness the provocation.[62]

Applegate's narrative of the commencement of the final conflict in the Rogue River Valley raises far more questions that it answers. The first thing that one familiar with this incident notices is that Applegate has the date wrong. The attack on the Indian camp

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[62] Applegate, "Views on Oregon History," 51-52.

occurred on the early morning of October 8, 1855. Because of the description of the death of the leader of the attackers there is no possibility that Applegate is describing another incident. It appears that Applegate is playing a shell game here, and leaving out this part of Applegate's account suggests that Young knew which shell the pea was under. The man killed, with an arrow through his chest, was James A. Lupton. Lupton came to Oregon with the US Army as a packer in 1849.[63] Outside of that, little reference seems to have been made to Lupton before 1855, other than America Butler noting that she fed him supper in 1853.[64] It is unclear what Lupton was doing in the interval between 1849 and 1855. He may have been in the packing business, which could be lucrative on the edge of an active mining area, such as the Siskiyou mountains to the south of the Rogue River. However, in 1855 Lupton was not a ruffian without community connections; he was a member of the Oregon Territorial Legislature, representing Jackson County.

Jesse Applegate said only one white man was hurt, but Victor noted eleven were injured, and named six of them. She cited two manuscripts in the Bancroft collection, including one of Dowell's, and the October 27 edition of *The Oregon Statesman*.[65] Stephen Beckham also cited Dowell and did not name any of the wounded, but stated that "Several other volunteers were wounded – many of them by their comrades."[66] In *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, however, the wounded were Victor's "proof that the Indians were not all unarmed."[67]

Once again, Applegate's lack of accuracy seems striking, but Young ignored all that and constructed a shaky edifice on a shaky foundation. It also looks as though whoever was

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[63] Beckham, *Requiem for a People*, 151.
[64] America Rollins Butler, "Mrs. Butler's 1853 Diary of Rogue River Valley," 347.
[65] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 372, including n. 7.
[66] Beckham, n. 15, 153.
[67] Victor, *Early Indian Wars of Oregon*, 343.

responsible for organizing the layout of Bancroft's second volume of Oregon history may have been playing a little shell game of their own with respect to Representative Lupton. In the discussion of the attack on the Indian camp, his death is mentioned briefly, but his membership in the Territorial Legislature is not.[68] However, in the subsequent section of the same volume that discusses the Legislature of 1855-56, the fact that Lupton's death caused a vacancy that needed to be filled is mentioned, but the circumstances of his death are not mentioned there.[69] As a further complication, albeit perhaps an inadvertent one, he is referred to in the text as J.A. Lupton but listed as I.A. in the index.[70] But, Lupton's membership in the legislature is not the only inconvenience encountered by those who deny the community connections of participants in the massacre he led.

A good place to start an examination of community involvement in the Lupton massacre is with George Riddle, a teenager at the time. The Riddles lived close enough to the Rogue River to know what was going on but far enough away to avoid direct involvement. Riddle's comments on the Lupton massacre are as interesting for what he did not say as they are for what he did say. Riddle made no mention of miners and left the strong implication of community involvement when he wrote that it

> will seem strange to my readers that forty white men could be so lost to all sense of justice and humanity as to engage in a slaughter of helpless old men, squaws and children.
>
> It is not my purpose to analyze public sentiment at the time of which I write. There was a feeling of insecurity among the white people of the Rogue river valley and a desire that the Indians might be removed and a fear that the Indians might be aroused to avenge their own wrongs. There was some outspoken sentiment against the outrages committed against the Indians, but when the Indians retaliated within two days by a general slaughter of whites, the Indian sympathizers were very unpopular. One man was compelled to leave his home.[71]

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[68] Bancroft [Victor], *History of Oregon, Vol. II*, 372.
[69] Ibid, n. 1 (cont.), 414.
[70] Ibid, 788.
[71] Riddle, 60.

However, Riddle and most other commentators downplay, unintentionally or otherwise, the number of attackers. A newspaper account from Yreka, California, not far across the state line, reported that there were seven parties of 115 men in total and that Lupton led the largest group composed of thirty-six men.[72] Obviously this changes the picture substantially from Jesse Applegate's thirty "ruffians," or even George Riddle's forty white men who had "lost all sense of justice and humanity." The man whom Riddle referred to above as compelled to leave his home was John Beeson of Jacksonville. The picture changes even more when we consider Beeson's information.

John Beeson was born in England in 1803, apprenticed to a confectioner at age ten, joined the Methodist Society at age 14, and emigrated to the US with his wife in 1830. After a few years in the candy business in New York, the Beeson's moved to Illinois in 1834 to farm. An active Methodist all his life, in Illinois Beeson took up the temperance cause, and worked with a network smuggling runaway slaves to Canada. In 1853, when John was fifty, the urge to move struck again and the Beesons moved to the Rogue River Valley with their teenaged son. The Beesons arrived just as the brief conflict of 1853 was ending and paid $1500 for a claim of 320 acres near Jacksonville with a little house and three cultivated acres.[73] Beeson's description of the scene in the Rogue River Valley when they arrived, albeit written seven years later in 1860, is quite interesting. Beeson reported that he

> felt keenly the wrong which was done to the Indians, for gold mines were just discovered in various parts of the Valley, and a host of settlers and miners crowded in, and every fertile spot was soon occupied, and in the second year dams were thrown across the streams and mills erected. The consequence was that the two thousand Indians, consisting of several bands who had heretofore occupied the Valley which furnished them abundance of spontaneous substance, were now suddenly deprived of their homes and means of life. We had gone there by invitation from a

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[72] cited in: Schwartz, 85.
[73] John Beeson, "Autobiography of the Editor," *The Calumet* 1 (1) (February 1860): 4-7.

> Government proclamation which offered free land to settlers; we supposed that treaties had been made and the Indians provided for, but to our surprise and horror, we found that no regard whatever was had to the Indian's rights, and the assumption seemed general that the Indians should be treated as *aliens* or enemies, and that the soil was indisputably ours for possessions. My judgment and conscience protested against the assumption as being grossly unjust and wicked; many of my neighbors in private conversation avowed the same opinion, but the love of gain and the prevalence of low sordid influence prevented their open expression.[74]

Beeson made it clear that it was not only the miners who profited by the war, and that support for the war came from the upper echelons of settler society. Beeson noted that it was "well known that the prospect of great gain had attracted the people to those parts; and as Indian wars promised a ready way to obtain it, we may easily see how, in this case, the love of money became the root of all evil, and how little effort there would be to avoid that which those in high position seemed to sanction."[75] Unfortunately Beeson does not clarify which persons in high positions he is referring to.

Of course, Beeson did not spare the miners and made it quite clear that he felt their "baser passions" contributed significantly to the tension in the valley. Beeson believed that

> [t]he peculiar nature of the climate, and the employment of the mining companies, had also considerable influence in bringing about hostilities. Owing to a scarcity of water during several months of the year, the Miners have no work. Their food, meanwhile, consists principally of fine bread and beef; and they generally use an abundance of tobacco and whisky. Thus the quality of the food, and the poisons, in connection with a stimulating atmosphere, excite their baser passions; and, in the absence of moral restraint and civil law, they seek indulgence by outrages on the persons of defenseless Indians. I forbear the recital of horrors.... It is no palliation to say that the females are willing victims; for it is notorious that their fathers and brothers are often shot in order to gain forcible possession. We should realize the magnitude of this wrong, if we consider what excoration and punishment we inflict upon another race for such violations of our own....
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> The consequence of this amalgamation of drunkenness, filth, and vice, became manifest in disease, disgust, and mutual hate.[76]

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[74] Ibid, 7, emphasis in original.
[75] Beeson, *Plea for the Indians*, 24.
[76] Ibid, 24-25.

From the above it is evident that Beeson's commitment to the Temperance cause made him something at odds with his neighbors, and his attitude toward slavery increased the distance. As Beeson described the situation,

> There were scores of men, assuming the prerogatives of sovereigns, who could not read, and yet made and executed laws, and whose only idea of the Constitution of the country is, that it was made to keep down the "Niggers." Of course they understood it to have the same bearing upon Indians, and all others except "white male American citizens."
>
> This cruel and fatal error was strengthened, rather than corrected, by the aspirants for office; and especially was this the case with the candidates for Representative at Washington. Indians were mentioned frequently in their speeches, but always in such a manner as to convey the impression that it was meritorious to destroy them; and one of the candidates based his claims to the public suffrage on his superior tact or facility for securing the public funds as indemnity for Indian wars.[77]

Beeson's perception of the racist, pro-slavery attitudes of many of his neighbors in the upper Rogue River Valley found support from the work of a later historian who followed the character of Jackson County society through the Civil War well into the twentieth century and convincingly argued that Jackson County was a little pocket of southern sympathy and character throughout that time.[78]

By the fall of 1855 it appears that John Beeson was probably the only settler in the area of Jacksonville who was prepared to speak publicly in support of the fair and just

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[77] Ibid, 23. The election that Beeson referred to here was held in June 1855, before the outbreak of hostilities, so the references to the justification of destroying the Indians can be considered incitement. Beeson's use of the term Representative is incorrect, however. Territories were represented by Delegates, the difference being that Delegates had no vote. The candidate that John Beeson referred to as claiming superior facility for collecting public funds, was most likely referring to the collection of expenses incurred in putting volunteers on the southern section of the Applegate trail to protect immigrant wagon trains in the summer of 1854. That candidate was quite likely Joseph Lane. In his journal for June, Welborn Beeson, John's teenaged son, wrote that they had seen Lane, whom Welborn described as "a red faced man with Wiskey roses all on his nose." Quoted in Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters*, 130.

[78] Jeff Lalande, "Beneath the Hooded Robe: Newspapermen, Local Politics and the Ku Klux Klan in Jackson County, Oregon, 1921-1923," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 83 (2) (1992): passim; "A 'Little Kansas' in Southern Oregon: The Course and Character of Populism in Jackson County, 1890-1900," *Pacific Historical Review* 63 (2) (1994): passim; "The 'Jackson County Rebellion': Social Turmoil and Political Insurgence in Southern Oregon during the Great Depression," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 95(4) (1994-95): passim; "'Dixie' of the Pacific Northwest: Southern Oregon's Civil War," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 100 (1) (1999): passim.

treatment of the aboriginal peoples of the Rogue River Valley. The situation came to a head in early October when

> Major L. came into town and addressed the citizens, informing them that it was determined to organize several companies and attack the Indians at different points, so that none should escape. He also said that the Indians were in great commotion at seeing the Settlers driving their cattle and moving their families away from their [the Indians'] encampments. "I have been among them," added the Major, "and pacified them with the assurance that we were not going to war with *them*;" and he then coolly proposed to massacre them while off their guard.[79]

Later the same day Beeson talked to a farmer acquaintance who said he was going to shoot Indians. Beeson

> felt impelled to remonstrate against such injustice, and pointed out the probability of himself and some of his neighbors falling in such an encounter. I reminded him that the Indians were not only more numerous than ourselves, but that they occupied vantage ground; that when attacked above, they would naturally run down the Valley and kill all before them. I begged him to remember that it is not Indian nature, but Human nature, to make a desperate struggle, rather than give up life and home. But Mr. Jones mounted his horse and rode away, apparently fixed in his determination for slaughter.
>
> Having no further business in town I returned, twelve miles up the Valley, to my home, full of sad reflections.[80]

Beeson was out of touch with the developing plans for a few days, but Beeson's description of events at the Methodist church the following Sunday merits an extensive quotation. Beeson reported that he

> did not know what further measures had been taken until Sunday morning, when I was informed that a meeting of citizens had been held, that two Methodist Preachers, and other leading men, had made speeches, and that the unanimous feeling was in favor of the measures which have already been set forth. Monday morning, October 8th, 1855, was the time agreed on to commence the work.
>
> As there was a Methodist Quarterly Meeting to assemble that day, within two hours' ride of the intended massacre, I hoped there would be heard in that religious assembly some expression of brotherly kindness, and charity for the poor doomed

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[79] Beeson, *Plea for the Indians*, 46, emphasis in original.

[80] Ibid, 46-47. Mr. Jones did not participate in the attack after all. Beeson professed uncertainty as to the reason why Jones did not carry through with his commitment to raise a party for the Lupton raid, but Jones was at home with his family during the early morning of October 9th when the irate Indians in the mood for retaliation fled down the Valley. The entire Jones family was killed at their farm. Ibid, 52

> outcasts in their immediate vicinity. Full of this hope I attended the meeting; but the services progressed with the rehearsal of "*Experiences*" common on such occasions, until speakers became scarce, and the Presiding Elder exhorted all who had anything to say for the Lord, to improve the time.
>
> I arose, and spoke with all the feeling, and all the power I had, in the behalf of the poor Indians. I entreated that Assembly, who had gathered themselves together in the name of Christ – whose whole life and ministry was a living Gospel of Love – to put on the spirit and power of Christ. I begged them, by every principle of humanity and justice, to inflict no wrong upon the helpless. I drew in strong colors the scenes that would inevitably follow such an attack as was meditated. I thought if there was a soul, or a heart in them, I would find it even if it could be reached through nothing but their own selfishness. I pictured our burning houses, our murdered wives and children, our silent and desolated homes, and all the wrongs that would inevitably flow into that crimson torrent they were about to open. In conclusion, I strongly urged them, as citizens and Christians, to raise a voice of remonstrance, or to call on the Authorities for the administration of justice, and thus avert the impending calamity.
>
> No voice responded to the appeal, and the meeting closed; for no one had independence enough to speak his thoughts. But I afterward learned that there were members of that assembly who silently acknowledged its force; but the pressure of public opinion prevented open expression. I can not resist the conviction that if the Presiding Elder, with his brethren of the Ministry, and leading members of the Church, had taken a firm, manly, and Christian position, as advocates of the Gospel of Peace, the horrors of that week, and of the subsequent war, might have been prevented. I am confirmed in this opinion by one who became penitent for the part he had taken in those atrocities. He solemnly declared that he was led into it by the Preachers.
>
> It may be that on questions of mere speculation, or of Politics, that Ministers and leading religious men may justifiably keep silent; but for such to remain passive in the presence of murderous outrage upon dependent helplessness, is a virtual approval, which common humanity and common sense must denounce as a monstrous inconsistency. The wrong and crime sanctioned and propagated by the silence and inaction of that Assembly can never be erased.[81]

Beeson's account seems quite clear. There were two different meetings at which the plan to attack the Indians was discussed. Beeson only attended one of them. He wrote that the meeting he attended was a Methodist Quarterly Meeting, and as a life long Methodist he would be unlikely to get confused about that. Historians, even recent ones trying to get to what happened, seem to have trouble accepting that aspect of Beeson's account. Stephen Beckham, who made no mention of Lupton's membership in the Legislature, described how

[81] Ibid, 47-49.

> [s]elf-proclaimed "Major" James Lupton, a packer who had come to Oregon with the [US Army] Mounted Rifle Regiment in 1849, marched into Jacksonville with the Yreka volunteers. These men, still smarting from the rebuffs given them by the [Indian] agent and military officers in August, called a public meeting to sound out the Oregonians on exterminating the Indians. All looked bright for Lupton's deadly plan, and he consequently called a second get-together on October 7 to plan in greater detail the strategy for the massacre.
>
> Ostensibly the meeting was a quarterly church session, and two "elders" presided. In actuality, the assembly listened to a lengthy recitation of grievances against the Rogues. When the charges were almost exhausted, the chairman called for someone to speak on a religious subject. One brave man, firm in his convictions and calm in his demeanor, rose to address the audience. John Beeson, an immigrant from Illinois who had settled in the valley in 1853, urged all present, as Christians, to desist from the course so clearly laid out by the "exterminators." No one seconded Beeson's plea. His remarks were greeted with silence and, by some, with contempt.[82]

Over two decades after Beckham, E.A. Schwartz wrote that, "The second meeting was held on Sunday, October 7, 1855, Beeson said, and was represented as a church meeting."[83]

However, both Beckham and Schwartz missed Beeson's point. If we look at what a historian of Christianity writing after Beckham but before Schwartz had to say about Beeson's description of this meeting, Applegate's theory of the responsibility for the war takes another serious hit. In his comparison of Beeson's published writings with letters written contemporaneously by a Methodist Missionary couple in Seattle, Frederick Norwood cited Beeson's description of this meeting in its entirety, as above. In a footnote, Norwood directed the reader to "Compare Beckham, *Requiem for a People*, p. 152. Beckham unintentionally garbles this episode through ignorance of Methodist polity and practice."[84] So, the meeting described by Beeson as a Methodist Quarterly Meeting was exactly that, and it seems unlikely that there were many miners in attendance.

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[82] Beckham, *Requiem for a People*, 151-152.

[83] Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, 85.

[84] Frederick A. Norwood, "Two Contrasting Views of the Indians: Methodist Involvement in the Indian Troubles in Oregon and Washington." *Church History* 49 (2) : (1980), 185, n. 23.

Beeson's description of this meeting shows that however much some might like to shift the blame to drunken miners, support of exterminationist attacks, whether that support was active or tacit, had a much broader base of support than just miners. Further evidence for this broadness of support is that when Beeson attempted to publish his letters in two religious newspapers, both located outside the Rogue River Valley, the *Pacific Christian Advocate* and the *California Christian Advocate*, he was turned down because it was feared that violence would be directed against the newspapers.[85] This strongly suggests that a few churchgoers in Jacksonville were not the only settlers in favor of extermination.

The letters that Frederick Norwood used in his study to compare to Beeson's *A Plea for the Indians* were written by a Methodist missionary couple working in Seattle during the Indian wars. These letters support the idea that it was not a big stretch for religious settlers to accept the extermination of the Indians as necessary or inevitable. David E. and Kate Blaine arrived in Seattle in late 1853 ostensibly to minister to the Indians. Within months the Blaines were writing intolerant letters expressing a sense of utter futility in reaching through the Indians lack of intellect and hopefully anticipating the Indians' removal from the area.[86] An example of a Methodist minister who advocated extermination is John M. Chivington, the leader of the 1864 volunteer attack in Colorado better known as the Sand Creek Massacre.[87] Lest it appear that Methodists are being singled out here, an analysis of letters written from the Pacific Northwest during the Indian Wars by missionaries with the American Home Missionary Society shows that although these missionaries did not lead or participate in

[85] Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians*, 92
[86] Norwood, "Two Contrasting Views of the Indians," 179-182.
[87] Frederick A. Norwood, "Serpents and Savages," *Religion and Life* 46 (3) (1977): 303-305.

attacks, they were quite willing to stand back and watch the Indians go extinct.[88] Thus we can see that in the Pacific Northwest during the 1850s being a Christian did not necessarily mean tolerance of Indians. A possible explanation can be found in the work of the late UCLA Professor Emeritus of Sociology Leo Kuper. In his analysis of how texts sacred to Judaism, Islam and Christianity can serve as "warrants" for genocide, Kuper noted that "while an ancient sacred text might provide a continuous warrant for the annihilation of vilified or demonized groups, the mass killings carried out under its authority are intermittent. Only under a particular combination of social forces is the sacred legitimation activated."[89] Perhaps this "sacred legitimation" explains some of the silence at the meeting described by John Beeson.

John Beeson's continued relations with the people of Jackson County are enlightening because they show that many of those who talked to Beeson about the war made a conscious choice to support the war. Beeson reported that

> [d]uring one period of the winter's campaign, the Volunteers were more dreaded by the Settlers than the Indians. Property was wantonly destroyed, cattle killed, and Jacksonville fired; and while the stores were burning the merchants were robbed. Yet those merchants dared not openly complain, partly through fear of private revenge, and partly, lest any public exposition relative to the management of the war, might jeopardize the profitable contracts in which they were all more or less concerned.[90]

After this episode, a group of citizens passed a resolution calling for a public meeting to be held in Jacksonville on January 22, 1856 to consider the possibility of ending the war by treaty. Because the sole newspaper in Jacksonville supported the war from the beginning,

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[88] Patricia E. Karlberg and Robert H. Keller, eds., "Oregon Clergy and Indian War in the Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 79 (1) (January 1988): passim.

[89] Leo Kuper, "Theological Warrants for Genocide: Judaism, Islam and Christianity." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2 (3) (Autumn 1990): 353.

[90] Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians*, 71.

Beeson felt the meeting was not given fair reporting there and began moving around the area discussing the war with people, listening to their concerns. Beeson described how he

> visited and conversed with a number of different persons in various parts of the Valley, all of whom agreed with me, that the war, so far as the volunteers were concerned, was a mere farce, a boys' play, that ought to be stopped; but there were two circumstances that made it a difficult thing to bring about. The first of these was the pecuniary interests involved. There had not been for a long time any profitable objects of industry. Nearly all the labor, and produce, and capital of the country had been employed in the prosecution of the war; and to secure indemnity from the public treasure, it was necessary to be pretty unanimous in regard to the justness of their claims, which would rest directly on the righteousness of the war. Hence, to dispute these points at home, would be to jeopardize their interests at Washington; and the disputant was sure of the ill-will of those around him, and might reasonably calculate on something worse.
>
> In the next place, a sense of shame and mortified pride, in those who had been so long active participants in the campaign, made them wish to retrieve their honor by some more successful experiments of bravery and generalship than they had yet exhibited. They felt how unfavorably they would appear before the country – after spending and losing so much, to be overcome by a few starving savages, whom they despised as being less than human.[91]

Beeson also made a conscious choice, which was to carry on his own, solitary, brand of anti-war activism. Beeson lamented that "although in the succeeding pages of this Narrative the first person singular appears in frequent prominence, it is a subject of regret rather than egotism."[92] Beeson wrote letters to newspapers in New York and San Francisco, and unsuccessfully pressured the publisher of the *Sentinel*, the Jacksonville paper eventually bought by B.F. Dowell, to publish his anti-war letters.[93] Some of Beeson's friends began avoiding him, and other people often glared at him with hostile looks. Beeson became very conscious of his own mortality. Beeson related that he

> knew that law had lost its supremacy, and human life its sacredness; and for weeks I never stepped from my door but I realized the probability of being saluted by the rifle's crack, and the bullets whiz, from the thick brush that fringed the creek, within a

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[91] Ibid, 72-73.
[92] Ibid, 72.
[93] Ibid, 78-84.

> few rods of my house. Indians would have had the credit, or the blame; and my name, with my life, would have sunk in oblivion as a stone sinks in the mighty deep.[94]

In late May of 1856 Beeson was invited to a public meeting. The men who invited him claimed not to know the purpose of the meeting. Beeson readily accompanied them anyway. Upon their arrival the chairman of the meeting was reading from a New York newspaper an excerpt of a letter that Beeson had written some weeks previously. The publisher of the Jacksonville *Sentinel* was at the meeting with another letter Beeson had attempted to mail to a San Francisco paper. Beeson left the meeting after being refused an opportunity to speak. He later heard about a resolution declaring that his writings were "products of a low depraved intellect, and that it was the duty of every good citizen to stop their circulation."[95] The next evening a friend sent word that sentiments against him were running high in town. Several companies of volunteers had just been discharged, men who considered Beeson as a potential obstacle to collecting their wages. Beeson wrote out his will, and left his home and his wife behind as he and his twenty-year-old son rode all night to get to Fort Lane. At Fort Lane, a Captain Underhill arranged an escort of Dragoons north to the Willamette Valley.[96] Beeson then said good bye to his son and left his home for what turned out to be nearly a decade.

Like General Wool and Superintendent Palmer, Beeson was also wrong about how the war in southern Oregon would be remembered. Beeson wrote that he "need not, and therefore shall not; attempt to offer a defense of General Wool. The pure nobleness of his character will do much to redeem from utter disgrace that page of our history which is foul

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[94] Ibid, 84-85.
[95] Ibid, 88.
[96] Ibid, 89.

with the shame of his traducers."[97] After he self-published *A Plea for the Indians*, John Beeson went on to spend nearly decade in the East actively working to better the situation of the North American Indians, during which time he had a number of meetings with President Lincoln, before he returned to Oregon in 1865 to spend his remaining years writing letters making suggestions for the betterment of Indians.[98] With Beeson effectively expelled from Oregon and other sources of dissent quieted due to financial pressure and fear, the desired unanimity of opinion within Oregon was apparently achieved, and there were no serious impediments to the construction and maintenance of a memory conducive to the collection of federal funds for the expenses occurred during the "boys' play" of 1855-56.

However, there were sometimes serious contradictions apparent in the positions of supporters of the war. If we look at what two of the more important supplicants to Congress said during the first years of the agitation for payment of the war expenses, we can see they were highly contradictory, thus raising further questions of reliability. The first of these important supplicants was Joseph Lane, former Territorial Governor of Oregon, and eventually 1860 Vice-Presidential candidate for the pro-slavery Democrats. As discussed in Chapter One, Lane served under General Wool in Mexico as a Brigadier General of Volunteers, but in 1856 Lane was Oregon Territory's Congressional Delegate. Territorial Delegates had the right to be heard, but not to vote, and Lane made several speeches on the Oregon War Claims. On May 7, 1856 Lane was in particularly eloquent form when he responded to General Wool's first letter to the *National Intelligencer*, which had been read into the Congressional record. Lane claimed that he would be "humiliated" if he

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[97] Ibid, 97.

[98] Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984): 468-469.

> could believe one word of that letter, or if I believed this house could credit charges there made by that gallant old man against the people of Oregon Territory as having made war upon the Indians for the sake of plunder! .... Sir, the people of Oregon are an honest, industrious people; and to charge that they could be capable of making a war against the Indians for the sake of plunder is a slander upon chivalrous, high-spirited and gallant men who have periled their lives and bared their bosoms to the weapons of a skulking and treacherous foe in protecting the defenseless women and children who have been forced to fly from their beautiful dwellings, which have, in many instances, been fired by the torch of the savage before they were out of the sight of their once peaceful homes.[99]

On May 31, 1856 Lane continued in the same vein with another Congressional speech that took up slightly more than the entire front page of the Olympia *Pioneer and Democrat* when it was published in that paper. Lane's argument that the people of Oregon were innocent of any responsibility for starting the conflict rested on two main points. The first was the exemplary character of the citizens of Oregon, whom Lane described as "a peaceable, law-abiding, orderly people; and they are also a gallant people. They have taken pains ever since I became acquainted with the country, to cultivate the most friendly feeling with the Indians. They lived in the same valleys and districts of the country with the Indians, and they were anxious to do all they could to maintain friendly relations with them."[100] We have seen how John Beeson and others have described the way that some settlers interacted with the Indians, so we know that Lane's description of relations between settlers and Indians was not always accurate. It also should be noted that Joseph Lane's personal concept of the fair treatment of Indians involved negotiations conducted at gunpoint.[101]

The main part of Lane's argument to Congress that the accusations against the settlers could not possibly be true was that hostilities started nearly simultaneously in southern

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[99] Joseph Lane, Speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, May 7, 1856, *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, First Session, 1144.

[100] Lane, "Speech ... May 31, 1856," 1.

[101] Nathan Douthit, "Joseph Lane and the Rogue River Indians: Personal Relations across a Cultural Divide," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 95 (4) (Winter 1994-95): 478-480.

Oregon and northern Washington. Lane stated that "the Indians commenced the slaughter of the white people, from the southern portion of Oregon to the northern extreme of Washington, at the very same time, the same week of the same month, the 8th, 9th, and 10th days of October."[102] This statement by Lane reflects the common belief among the settlers of the Pacific Northwest that a vast conspiracy of Indians was working to exterminate the settlers. Thomas Dryer and other editorialists wrote of contemporary perceptions of the threat. Many people in the region apparently believed in such a conspiracy. Not everyone bought into this fear, however. Joel Palmer was a non-believer, as he made perfectly clear in a letter to General Wool when he stated that "[t]he reported combination of all these tribes with intent to wage a war of extermination against the whites, is, I apprehend, but a phantom conjured up in the brains of alarmists, unsupported by one substantial reason."[103] In Washington Territory, there was a kinship connection between the Nisqually of Puget Sound and the Yakama east of the Cascades.[104] Some used this relationship as support for arguments of conspiracy, however, no real evidence of any conspiracy has ever come to light.

Another supplicant to Congress who eloquently argued for the payment of the Pacific Northwest war debts was Charles S. Drew. Drew was adjutant of the Jackson County Volunteers during the Rogue River War and later became involved in the effort to collect money from Congress. Drew's presentation to Congress in 1860 got right to the point at the beginning. Drew opened by arguing

> that the rights and interests of the people of Oregon, as connected with the allowance of their war debt, now pending before Congress, are seriously endangered because of the evil reports that have been placed upon record respecting it, and the origin of the

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[102] Lane, "Speech ... May 31, 1856," 1.

[103] "No. 35," Palmer to Wool, November 21, 1855, in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 115.

[104] Reddick and Collins, 390-392.

> war on account of which it was created, I have thought it proper to present to you at this time a circumstantial account of the origin and early prosecution of the war in question, for which pay is now claimed and is justly due.[105]

In an attempt to justify the hostilities, and especially their financial result, Drew provided Congress with a list of 259 persons, largely Euro-American but with a few Mexican and French, killed by Indians from late 1847 to early 1857. Most of these fatalities occurred in southern Oregon, but some were in northern California or northern Oregon. In most of these cases Drew emphatically denied any provocation, but in a few cases he did admit there had been provocation.[106]

The main point of Drew's argument was that the settlers of the Rogue River Valley had no responsibility whatsoever for the war. According to Drew, from "the close of war with those Indians in 1853, to the *open* declaration of war by the same Indians in October, 1855, the people of the Rogue River valley did not molest or interfere with them in any manner whatever, but left their management and all dealings with them wholly and exclusively to the military and the Indian department."[107] In Drew's scenario, the regular army troops were so incompetent that they needed to be protected by the volunteers. As he described it, the federal "troops and the Indian agent had lost all control, little as they ever had, over the Indians, and the service of the volunteers was absolutely necessary, not only to save the settlements of the Upper Rogue River valley from certain destruction, but also for the safety of the regular troops themselves."[108] Drew claimed that the idea that the Indian attack upon settlers on October 9 had been triggered by Lupton's October 8 attack upon the Indians was nothing more than politically motivated maliciousness. As Drew described it,

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[105] Charles S. Drew, *An Account of the Origin and Early Prosecution of the Indian War in Oregon.* Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1973 (Reprint: Miscellaneous Document 59, 36th Congress, First Session, Senate 1860),1.

[106] Ibid, 3-8.

[107] Ibid, 26, emphasis in original.

[108] Ibid, 29.

> the report, however, that this massacre [on October 9 of settlers at Evans Ferry on the Illinois River] was a "retaliatory act" – the result of the affair with the Butte Creek Indians on the 8th – I have to say, that in truth it has no foundation whatever; that it originated with a clique of politicians, who had for their object the injury of a few men whom they could not control in political matters, and for this reason sought to render them odious to the community in which they lived, by charging them with being the instigators of the various murders which the Indians had from time to time committed.[109]

Drew seems here to have been playing a shell game of his own. Without any explanation he inverted the order in his narrative of the Lupton massacre and its most immediate result, the deaths of about 15 settlers, including the Jones family, in the Evans Ferry area on October 9.[110] Drew devoted 5 pages to the events of October 9, before using slightly over one page to describe Lupton's attack of October 8. Most of Drew's description of the Lupton attack is of highly questionable accuracy. For example, Drew's explanation for the non-combatant casualties seems contrived. As Drew described it the

> attack was commenced while it was yet too dark to distinguish one Indian from another, and by this reason it so happened that several squaws and children were killed. None were killed after it became light enough to distinguish the sexes. I mention this fact because the action of the volunteers on this occasion has been grossly misrepresented. They are accused of having attacked a "few squaws and decrepit old men," and murdered them with more than savage cruelty. Such, however, is not the fact. If no other testimony could be obtained to refute the accusation, the loss on the part of the volunteers would be good evidence that there were other than cripples, squaws and children in the fight on the other side. Two of the whites, Lupton and Shepard, were wounded, mortally, and some seven others more or less severely. It is true, as has been said, that the bodies of but few warriors were found on the ground after the action was over. But this was owing to the fact that the Indians observed their usual custom in such cases and carried off their warriors as fast as they became disabled or killed.[111]

What Drew did not offer an explanation for was how the Indians could see well enough to leave the dead or dying women and children behind if the volunteers could not see well enough to determine that their victims were women and children.

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[109] Ibid, 30.
[110] Ibid, 22-29.
[111] Ibid, 28-29.

This is perhaps a suitable point to repeat the statement by E.A. Schwartz that "[a]ny statement by Drew on any subject should be viewed with suspicion."[112] With regard to Drew's account of the origin of the war, this is something of an understatement. If we compare Drew's description of incidents just before the Lupton attack with that of Agent Ambrose we can see that some one is lying. According to Drew the Indians in question refused to return to the reserve when requested to do so by Ambrose. Drew reported that

> Agent Ambrose, taking with him Mr. Lupton, who was well and favorably known to these Indians, made his last effort to induce them to return to the reserve on Sunday, October 7th. Their reply to him was that they *would not return*; that they had decided on war, and were now prepared for it; that they could easily kill all the "Boston men," (meaning citizens,)* because they were all cowards and would not fight.[113]

However, in his report of the attack on the Indian camp to Superintendent Palmer, Ambrose did not mention any visit to the Indian camp on October 7. Instead Ambrose said that,

> I had apprehended danger [to the Indians from settlers], and had so informed the Indians several days previous, and Captain Smith [Commanding, Fort Lane] had notified the Indians that if they wanted protection they had to come on to the reserves or to Fort Lane. It seems, from their statements, that they had concluded to go on the reserve, and had accordingly started on Sunday evening [October 7], leaving the old men and women to follow on Monday. In the meantime this attack was made, quite early in the morning, which resulted as above stated [in twenty-three dead bodies]. There were found killed [by Ambrose and Captain Smith] eight men, four of whom were very aged, and fifteen women and children, all belonging to Jake's band. The attack was so early in the morning, it is more than probable that the women were indistinguishable from the men.[114]

In contrast to Ambrose's statement that most of the warriors in the group left camp before the attack and Drew's assertion that the Indians in question refused a request to return

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[112] Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, n. 7, 290.

* Interestingly, John Beeson glosses Bostons as volunteers, *A Plea for the Indians*, 42. If Beeson's definition was in general usage among the Indians, and if this statement was indeed made to Ambrose, the motivations for making the statement were probably quite different than implied by Drew.

[113] Drew, 28, emphasis in original.

[114] "No. 6," *Oregon Weekly Times – Extra*, G.H. Ambrose, Indian Agent to Joel Palmer, Superintendent, October 9, 1855 in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 66.

to the reserve, Lane had the slaughtered Indians seeking refuge on the reserve. According to Lane,

> It was only when all the outrages enumerated were committed that Major Lupton raised his company. He tracked the Indians, and found in their possession property taken from those whose bodies had been found mutilated on the mountains; it was proof positive that they were the murderers. They had tried to get to the reserve, but did not succeed before the Major overtook and attacked them. He himself was killed, and also some fifteen or twenty of the Indians, among them some squaws.
>
> General Wool has charged that this battle was the origin and cause of all the subsequent hostilities. The squaws that Major Lupton killed were escorted by the warriors who killed the men and boy upon the mountains from which place he tracked them to Bute Creek, where he attacked them.[115]

In this, his first Congressional speech after General Wool's letter to the *National Intelligencer* was read into the record, Joseph Lane described Lupton as raising his own company after outrages were committed by Indians, but in his narrative Drew asserted that,

> This is the affair in which Lupton has been represented as the leader. But it is due to truth, as well as to the volunteers who served on that occasion, to say that he had no lot or part in it except in the way that I have indicated. He was not even a private of the volunteer corps, had nothing whatever to do with its organization, nor had he the control of a single individual belonging to it.[116]

With such questionable evidence these early proponents of the settler-friendly memory apparently preferred to avoid a direct encounter with General Wool's account if possible. Using tactics quite similar to Frances Victor's historical disempowerment of General Wool, Lane did his best to have Wool's input rejected by Congress. After reciting graphic descriptions of dead settler women and children, and then noting that Wool had refused volunteer requests for arms and ammunition, Lane asked, "Now, sir, shall this man be quoted here against the people of Oregon Territory? Shall his evidence be used in condemnation of the people of that Territory, who volunteered to save the women and

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[115] Joseph Lane, Speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, May 7, 1856, *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, First Session, 1144.

[116] Drew, 29.

children of the settlements from massacre? Shall such an argument be produced here against the appropriation now asked for? I hope not."[117]

One of the analytical problems that come to mind when examining the accounts of the conflict in southern Oregon is the distance between Beeson's account and those of supporters of the war such as Lane and Drew. Agent Ambrose's month-end report to Superintendent Palmer for September 1855 goes a significant distance toward explaining how such a wide gap could develop between the perceptions of supporters and opponents of the war. Ambrose wrote that

> [t]he month has been passed in one continued series of aggressions; although, taken singly, each item in itself appears small, but in the aggregate the sum total presents a formidable appearance. It would seem as though they had studied how far they can go with impunity, and seemingly have endeavored to go no farther. I think nearly or quite all of the mischief that has been done was perpetrated by a few Shastas and Scotans. The settlers' patience has become exhausted; they are quite irritable and will not bear the least offence from an Indian any longer; petitions are handed me weekly, and in some instances, I may say, almost daily. One day a theft has been committed in one portion of the valley, in a few days another and different part of the valley. The thefts are quite small as a general thing, not amounting to more than four or five dollars; in some instances, a gun; another, some powder or lead, or both; again, a miner's cabin will be broken open, and his little stock of provisions taken.... After a repetition of the thefts a few times, and the individual, after a hard day's work, has had to walk two or three miles to get his supper and lay in another small lot of provisions, which in a few days may probably go in the same way, he gets peevish and angry and embittered against the Indian race, and would about as soon shoot an Indian as eat his supper.[118]

If we accept Ambrose's description of circumstances in the Rogue River Valley during the few weeks before the final outbreak of hostilities there, and it must be noted here that there is

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[117] Joseph Lane, Speech, May 31, 1856, 1.

[118] "No. 5," G.H. Ambrose, Indian Agent to Joel Palmer, Superintendent, September 30, 1855 in "Message from the President of the United States, Communicating Information relative to Indian hostilities in the Territories of Oregon and Washington." US Congress, 34th Congress, 1st Session, House Ex. Doc. No. 93 (1856), 62-63.

evidence suggesting that perhaps Ambrose harbored exterminationist sympathies himself,[119] then we cannot help but conclude that a significant number of citizens were simply irate over being inconvenienced by starving Indians. Indians were prohibited by Territorial legislation from purchasing ammunition, so they had difficulty hunting unless they acquired ammunition by other means.[120] It appears that the inconvenience created by starving Indians might have been enough to trigger Kuper's "sacred legitimation" of genocide And it certainly appears that the number of settlers with such sentiments was significant enough that those not sharing those views tended to keep their mouths shut in order to avoid joining John Beeson on the road out of town.

However, the idea that the Rogue River Indian War was started by undesirables who had little if any connection to the settler community in Jackson County is still with us. It can come up explicitly, as in Steven Novak's socio-economic analysis, in which he attempted to determine how many names from the list of volunteers supplied by Frances Victor in *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon* could be found, still in Oregon, on the 1860 census.[121] In spite of the fact that Novak noted that "it is hazardous to interpret negative data,"[122] he went on to do exactly that because, in spite of significant flexibility about the spelling of names, he was unable to locate over 57% of the names supplied by Victor in the 1860 census records.[123] Novak also distorted John Beeson's account of public opinion when he argued that "John Beeson himself distinguished between unemployed miners who provoked the war and others

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[119] A.G. Henry, *Speech of Dr. A.G. Henry, of Yamhill, Delivered before the Citizens of Corvallis, on the Evening of Dec.3d, 1855* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1995): 12, 19; Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War*, 73-74, 79 ,89.

[120] Culver, "Report of agent Samuel L. Culver, July 20, 1854," 504.

[121] Steven J. Novak, "Who Fought the Rogue River War?: Exploring a Hypothesis," *Willamette Journal of the Liberal Arts* 7 (Summer 1992): 76-80.

[122] Ibid, 82.

[123] Ibid, 77.

who responded out of patriotic motives."[124] As we have seen above, Beeson attributed profit motives to many of his neighbors.[125] Novak cited another passage from Beeson about unemployed miners being joined by settler men who were afraid of being considered unpatriotic, but he did not mention Beeson's next sentence about the settlers bringing mules and ponies normally valued at $30 or $40 to be sold for $100 to $350.[126] Novak provided convincing evidence that Euro-American society in Jackson County during the 1850s was divided into two segments, one more transient that the other, but he did not address the profiteering by the less transient, settler population and ignored Beeson's testimony on this issue. One useful thing Novak accomplished, however, is to show that Applegate's miner hypothesis may not have been original, at least it appeared in written form a number of times before Applegate's letter to Bancroft.[127]

More often, however, the miner hypothesis is implicit in historical writing, seemingly lurking just out of sight in hidden assumptions. Beckham, Schwartz and Douthit have all inaccurately summarized Beeson's account of the Methodist Quarterly Meeting.[128] Douthit represented the account of the Quarterly Meeting the most accurately, and simply got the date wrong by one day, placing it on Monday, October 8.[129] Beeson's full account of his experiences on Sunday October 7 makes it plain that Beeson did not go to the planning session, and that the meeting he attended on October 7 was a legitimate Methodist Quarterly Meeting where he took the opportunity to preach to those in the Congregation who did attend Lupton's organizational meeting. Beeson does not specify when the organizational meeting

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[124] Ibid, 80.
[125] Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians*, 24-25, 71-72,
[126] Ibid, 59.
[127] Novak, 75-76, 81.
[128] Beckham, 152; Schwartz, 85; Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters*, 131-132.
[129] Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters*, 132.

was held, but simply leaves the impression that it was before Sunday.[130] These inaccurate representations by later historians are most likely the result of that vagueness and of difficulty believing that such things could occur at a legitimate Methodist Quarterly Meeting. But if one reads Beeson's testimony carefully, without such preconceptions, that testimony shows very clearly that such a thing could and did happen. Upright, churchgoing citizens participated in the Lupton Massacre, and no amount of wishful thinking on the part of Jesse Applegate, Frederic Young, Steven Novak or anybody else is going to change that.

There was strong and clear support within influential elements of settler society for a war of extermination against the Indians of southern Oregon. Such support is clearly demonstrated in the incitement of Thomas Dryer and others. The settlers' reaction to the behavior of Indians starving as a result of the subsistence crisis induced by the incursion of miners and settlers was clearly described by various employees of the Indian Bureau. Also, from John Beeson, George Riddle, Mrs. Butler and others, there are descriptions of exterminationist rhetoric that show such talk was not spread only by newspaper editors. Although Beeson's evidence of the widespread nature of profit-seeking during the war is unique, it is compelling, and the long-term nature of efforts to extract money from Congress support the accuracy of accusations of profiteering by Beeson, Wool and Palmer. Further, there was a time when the idea of Oregon having had its own war of extermination was accepted by at least some of the elites of Oregon. The authors of the first textbook written specifically to teach Oregon history, including the Head of the Department of History at the University of Oregon, had no trouble characterizing the events of 1855-56 as a war of extermination. This state education department approved text used a bolded heading to describe the operation that Lupton led as a massacre before describing the ensuing war as a

[130] Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians*, 47-49.

war of extermination. For quite some years after its publication the children of the Pacific Northwest learned about,

> **The massacre at Butte Creek**. Early on the morning of October 8, 1855, a company of volunteers, without military orders, went to the Indian village on Butte Creek and began firing into the cabins. They killed twenty-three and wounded many others. When the [regular army] troops [from Fort Lane] went to investigate, they found that the settlers had killed many Indian women, children, and old men. Next day the war began in earnest. The Indians appeared everywhere, they killed settlers and drove off or slaughtered the white men's cattle.
>
> The settlers and soldiers took up the trail, and the conflict became a war of extermination.[131]

[131] Clark, Down and Blue, 256.

Conclusion

The foregoing examination of the historical memory of the Indian wars of the Pacific Northwest, as constructed over the succeeding decades, suggests that this memory was fundamentally flawed and basically dishonest. The few audible voices of dissent at the time were marginalized and excluded from the developing historical memory by character defamation, slander and exile. This historical memory was then further padded by distorted and one-sided evidence from participants. The prime motivation for this distortion of the historical memory was evidently financial, just as the dissenters claimed in the first place. As a result the historical writing on the conflict produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seems to be so flawed as to be completely unreliable. Some writers had agendas of their own, others appear to have been assisting associates, and some tried to be accurate but were misled. All in all, the voices of denial completely drowned out the voices of the few brave enough to speak out.

Later writers, most often intent upon valorizing pioneers, have uncritically tended to be rather easily taken in and very accepting of the memory constructed in the quest for federal funds. More recently, a few academic historians have accurately characterized the Indian wars as built on a foundation of greed, and kept in the shadow by a curtain of deception, but have stopped short for one reason or another of dealing head on with the level of popular support for exterminating the Indians of the Pacific Northwest. Only recently has it been admitted that it was more than just miners who were seeking to profit by killing Indians. The long term denial about the economic motivation behind the wars that has reigned supreme for so long needs still more exposure before it can be finally put to rest.

The fact that, even at the time of the Rogue River war, both supporters and opponents of the war against the Indians explicitly described the war as a war of extermination supports a conclusion that what happened in southern Oregon can and should be described as racially motivated, small-scale societal genocide. From the evidence it also appears that support for, and acquiescence in the genocidal acts, though certainly not universal, was significant enough that only one resident of Jackson County had the courage to speak out publicly against what he saw happening around him.

The sources used in this study cannot allow us to gauge public opinion very accurately. However, the sources clearly show that public support for the extermination of the Indians in the Rogue River Valley was far more significant than the literature on the history of Oregon suggests. At the most general level, this study has demonstrated that the entire history of the Indian wars of the Pacific Northwest needs to be re-examined. More specifically, it would be valuable to re-examine the significant number of relevant unpublished primary sources from the period with a view to determining the extent of public support for exterminating the Indians of the Pacific Northwest and also to determining the foundation of that support, whether it be fear, racial animosity, greed or a combination of motives. Many settlers' journals and letters have been preserved and might be potentially useful sources for determining not only the level of support for the extermination of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest, but also quite possibly might give some indication of the extent that profit motivation played in the wars. The substantial number of pioneers' journals and letters preserved in the Pacific Northwest could very well serve to make the region important for studying the genocidal tendencies of settler colonialism, which is some fresh ground that scholars of genocide have just recently started to examine.

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