

Whidbey Island's Own Magazine

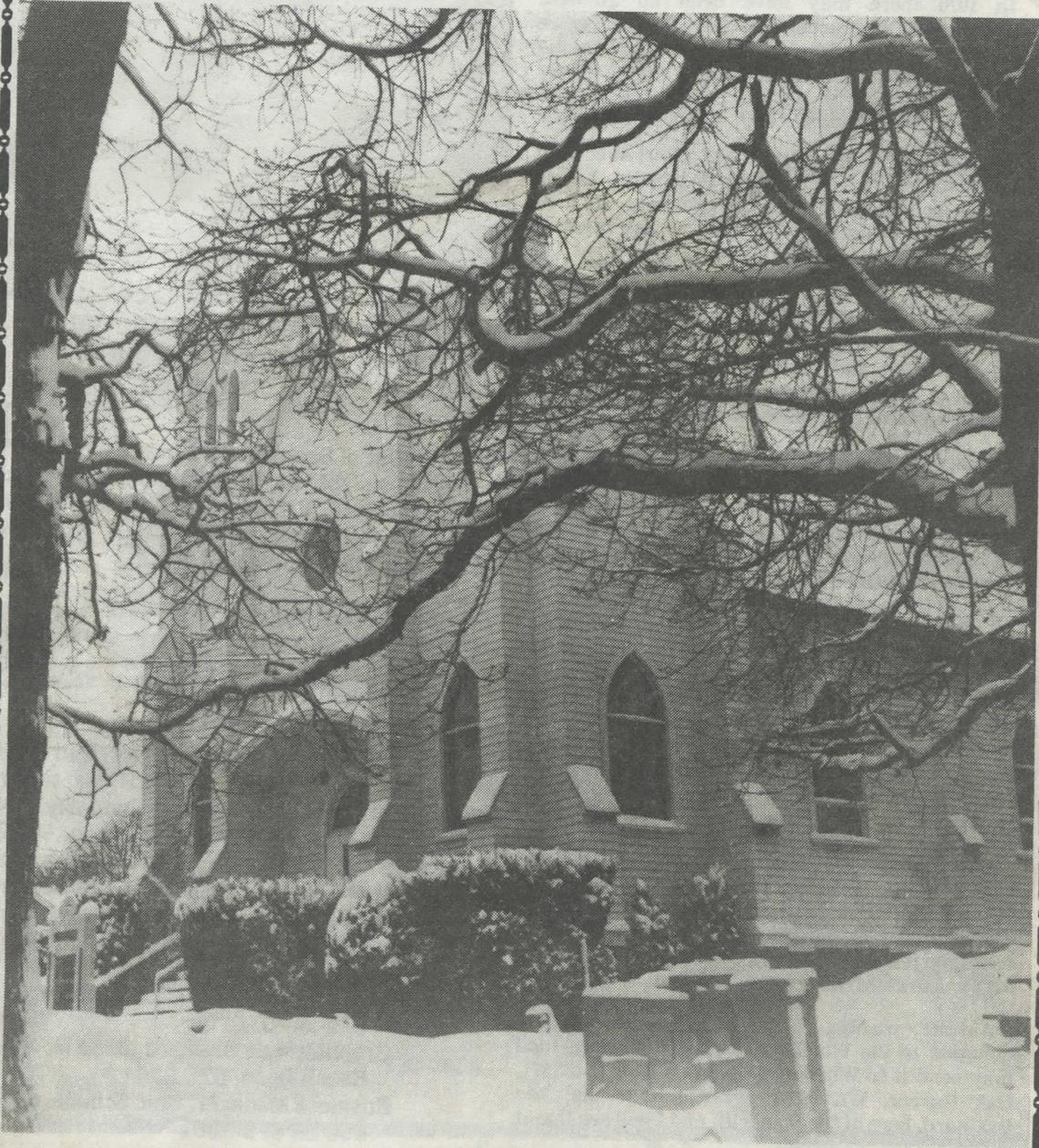
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Spindrift Two

Volume 3

Number 3

Winter-Spring 1980



Indian Agent Fay was Mediator

Indian agents had no easy life in the early days of white settlement on Puget Sound. Captain R. C. Fay, Indian Agent in the areas of Port Townsend, Scatchett Head and Dungeness in the 1850's wrote quadruplicate reports in longhand, camped on beaches in rain and snow and traveled all over the Puget Sound area in canoes paddled by as many as eight Indians.

There was a government welfare state in the 1850's. The Indians had forsaken to some extent their tribal eating and working habits in favor of the white man's food and wearing apparel. Flour, sugar, etc. was simply not available by digging or fishing or hunting. Moved from their tribal grounds, tolerated by the white man and used to some extent, the Indian became a problem.

The Indian Agent listened to complaints between white and Indians, mediated misunderstandings between tribes, and doled out clothing and food to the tribes, and encouraged them to make their own living.

One entry in Fay's records

reports a ton of flour for a potlatch and "seven gallons of molasses" was noted on a report.

"Twenty nine blankets, eight yards baize; 115 yd. calico; five handkerchiefs, 20 pants; 8 pr. shoes, 18 shorts; 30 flannel shirts; one shawl; 6 undershirts and 60 yards sheeting" kept the record straight in Captain Fay's fine handwriting.

In the year 1860 the Northern Indians murdered two men of the

Skykomish tribe at Mukilteo, and captured two women and one boy. Chief Slah-hah-hath called for the Indian Agent to help settle the matter, and Father N. Dureau of the "black gowns" was also asked to help.

Assisting Capt. Fay on Whidbey Island in 1857 were R. S. Bailey of Bailey's Beach, J. H. Hall of Coveland and Martin Taftson of Oak Harbor at a salary of \$60 per month each.

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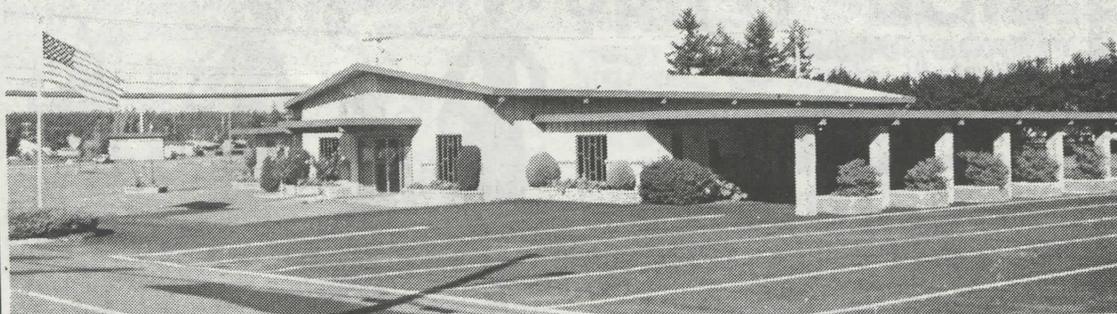

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Perego's Bluff and Lake Belonged to An Old Soldier

Perego's Bluff, located one mile from Ebey's Landing and two and one-half miles from Point Partridge on West Beach, has gotten its share of publicity lately since it is located within the "trail" area that the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission hopes to acquire for a state park.

The site was named for a man by the unlikely name of George Washington Samuel Hilliard Perego, who took a claim of 155 acres around 1880, including 80 in which a half salt, half fresh-water lake was located. The lake was only one quarter of a mile by three-fourths of a mile in length in 1894, and from this miniature lake arises a sloping green bluff to the height of several hundred feet.

Perego's Bluff, with Perego's Lake below between the sandspit and the bluff, is one of the most dramatic sights on Whidbey Island.

Perego had first settled on South Whidbey in the early 1870's but found it too isolated and he moved north.

An 1894 Island County Times report by the editor A. D. Blowers, (for whom Blowers Bluff on Scenic Heights was named) told of a visit to the office by Perego.

"Veteran George Washington Samuel Hilliard Perrego was in town the first of the week, and made the Times a call. He was accompanied by three canines — he has seven in all — who occupy

with him the lonely isle, or spit, when the tide is at ebb, on the west side of Whidbey Island.

"He had just received his back pay or pension, for service in the Mexican War and was jubilant, paying up his old and new debts and having a good time generally.

"George served in all the wars since 1812, he says, first in the Seminole War under Lt. Raymond Rogers of the schooner Phoenix, where he acquired his battery knowledge.

"Later, in the Mexican war he was a gunner, and claims to have shot the first volley at Vera Cruz under General Windfield Scott. He also fought in the war of the rebellion (Civil) but said he didn't fight with the same spirit he did in the other wars.

After peace was restored he returned to his home in Baltimore and then went to sea, turning up on the Pacific Coast. From there he came to Whidbey and then to the bluff that bears his name.

"George W. H. Perego is getting ancient, but still maintains the hope that he will see on this charmed spot, the Stars and Stripes float over one of the finest fortifications on the Pacific, spreading its wings over and protecting the commerce of the world mart," said Blowers.

Jimmie Jean Cook, in her 1973 book "A Particular Friend, Penn's Cove," says: "Nothing remains today but a few dusty records in the archives to show the existence of George W. Samuel H. Perego yet this old soldier so captured the curiosity and attention of his contemporaries that 70 years later the beach and bluff still belong to Perego and are so remembered."

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Jenique



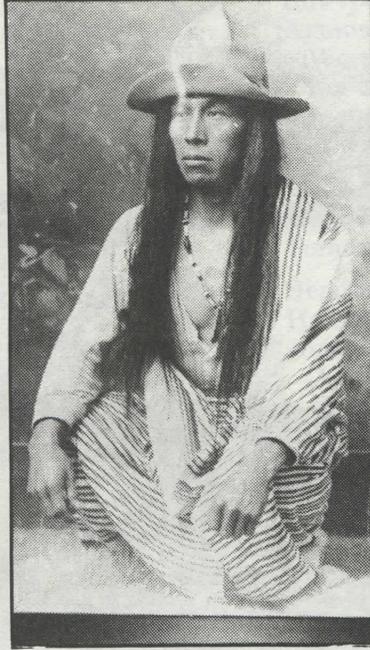
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Early Whidbey Island Indians

White settlers had not inhabited the Coupeville area more than 15 or 20 years, when it was recorded that there were more Indians on Whidbey and especially in Coupeville than white men or "Bostons."

On the beach below present-day Front Street, before stores were built on the north side of the street, there was an Indian "long house" where the tribe lived. The long house was hung with reed mats and mats were used on the floor. A central cooking area dominated the interior, with the smoke from the fire escaping through an opening in the roof.

The Indians at Coupeville and Oak Harbor never went on the warpath against the white settlers. Both the local Indians and the settlers were afraid of the northern Indians, and the Indians



here regarded their white brothers as allies.

The Chief of the Coupeville Indians in those early days was Squy-qui, an upstanding Indian and friend of the white man. In 1863 his family consisted of himself and wife, his two sons, Tom Squy-qui and Billy Barlow, and a daughter named Cricket. Cricket was the belle of the tribe, but while quite young took to the white man's "firewater" and died at an early age.

Old Squy-qui died about 1874 and his son Billy Barlow lived for a long time afterward and is remembered in Oak Harbor where he and his wife lived in a house on the beach. Oak Harbor's 60th N.W. Street was formerly named Barlow Avenue in honor of this fine Indian friend.



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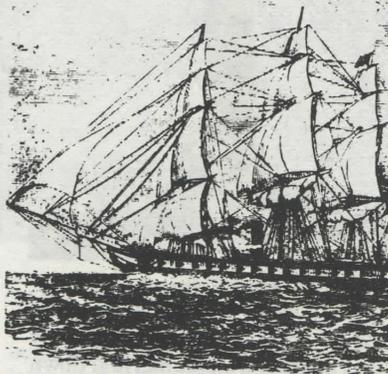
Told by Pioneer

H. A. Swift, pioneer of Whidbey Island, in 1913 wrote of coming to the Island as a 16-year-old boy. He started in May of 1863 with his mother and father from Massachusetts. It took 28 days by steamboat to arrive in San Francisco.

The party then took passage for Puget Sound on an English ship, the King Lear, bound for Utsaladdy where the Lear was to take a cargo of spars to France. From Utsaladdy the party took an Indian canoe to Coupeville, a large canoe propelled by four Indians. Those in the canoe beside the three Swifts and the Indians, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Cranney and Captain Ed Barrington, who kept them all laughing with his jokes and funny stories "of which there seemed to be no end."

They landed on the beach in front of Captain Coupe's home (still standing in Coupeville) at 8 p.m. on the last day of June, and Swift relates that Mrs. Coupe cooked an excellent dinner for the newcomers.

1863



"Up early in the morning and tried to help Tommy and George Coupe do the milking."

After breakfast it was through the woods by a narrow wagon road to the town. There were no

houses until they reached the center of Front Street (today) where John Robertson had a general merchandising store in a small one-story building with a bar in the back, "patronized more than all the others."

(The above was part of the present day building where the "Six Persimmons" is now located.)

The rest of the town of Coupeville included a two-story hall-type of building that later became part of the Central Hotel; and the home of Captain Fay, a large one and one-half story log house, on the corner just above the present wharf.

The Swift family, with Mrs. Coupe and Jennie then took a canoe to "the other side of the Cove" which became the Swift's home for nearly five years.

The writer commented "I was thoroughly disgusted that born and raised in a city, that I had come to such a God-forsaken country."

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Clover Valley

In an account of the history of Clover Valley, written by Allen Power the general tenor of the times is told during the transition from horse-and-buggy to the motorized age.

Ed Power, who owned a farm in the middle of the Valley, where the Whidbey Naval Air Station landing field is now located, bought a five ton one-cylinder farm tractor in 1913, his first attempt to replace the horse on the farm. In 30 years when the Navy took over the land, there were no work horses left.!

Powers also owned the third automobile on the north end of Whidbey Island. It was a 1910 Buick bought in 1912, a four cylinder car with acetylene lights and the steering wheel on the right side. It started with a crank and the horn honked by squeezing a rubber bulb. Because roads were almost impassable in winter, the car was jacked up and left in the barn during the cold months.

The Powers' second car, a 1914 Buick was bought in 1915 and was the first car to use the Deception Pass ferry, operated by a Mr. Finson who used a motor launch and scow. Finson built a ferry

in Early Days

minimum. The first floor consisted of a kitchen, milk room, pantry, dining room, living room and four bedrooms. The kitchen had a sink with a hand pump with which water was drawn from a well in the yard.

In addition to preparing meals, washing, ironing and cleaning, Mrs. Power gathered vegetables from the garden. There were always from one to three hired men who ate with the family, and this number increased during the summer, to 20 or more when threshing was being done. Allen Power remembered that his mother had the help of a "hired girl" most of the time.

It is hard to believe that three-quarters of a century ago houses were heated entirely by wood heaters and fireplaces. Bedrooms were not heated at all in the big Power home, and the boys wore heavy outing flannel nightshirts and slept between sheet blankets. Allan remembered that he usually dressed by the living room stove!

The house was lighted with coal-oil lamps and the toilet was a three-holer 75 feet from the house!

Modern improvements came to the Clover Valley home about 1912-14, with running water, a hot water tank and bathroom. A Delco light plant furnished electricity and a new-fangled circulating heater provided warmth for the bedrooms. Kitchen work surfaces were installed to assist in meal-getting, and the Ed Power home became a model of modernization of that day.

Power recalled that the upstairs of the farm home was never finished. His father dried onions there, his mother dried clothes, and the boys used it as a basketball court!



slip in Cornet Bay on Whidbey, but for some time there was no slip on Fidalgo Island, so the car was unloaded on planks laid down from the scow to the beach.

Woman's Work

Mrs. Power faced the same work load that other early day farm women faced. The big house, built in 1906 was not planned to reduce work to a

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This Was Oak Harbor in 1891

In 1891 a journalist from Coupeville came to Oak Harbor via the steamship Edna on a bright October day. He subsequently wrote what he had seen of the 1891 Oak Harbor.

Arriving at the Oak Harbor wharf, they found the new "horse motor car" waiting. The line ran from the end of the wharf to the store, both owned by L. P. Byrne.

"Oak Harbor is a town situated on a sloping hill to the waterfront and someday will be as beautiful a city as we have on the sound."

Recent additions to the town included the neat cottage of L. P. Byrne which sat upon the hill back of the town, and the large two story dwelling of A. W. Bash just nearing completion a half mile from town. This house when finished was expected to be the finest in Oak Harbor. In addition Bash built a large barn.

(The Byrne cottage still stands in 1980, 89 years old, just north of the Oak Park (Smith Park)).



The Byrne house today

The new Bash home was never occupied by its owner for very long for he was called to Washington by President Grant, then sent to China to engineer and

build a railroad. The Eerkes family who settled in Oak Harbor in the mid-1890's purchased the farm and the big house became the Eerkes farm home.

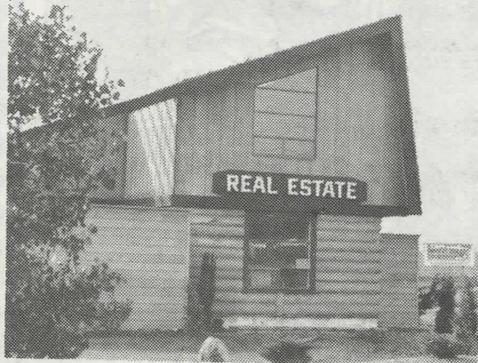
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"Recollections of Coupeville"

(The following stories are the "random recollections of Coupeville" of Carl T. Engle as told to Jim Power on the occasion of Whidbey Island's centennial celebration in 1948)

To look back over the 100 year history of Whidbey Island and especially that part that centers around Coupeville, is to recall scenes of tragedy and humor, hardships and blessings, and continual progress and change.

We who have spent our lives on the island have seen the big and little events happen or heard of them from our fathers and mothers. They are not dull pages from history to us, but personal memories. So, too, shall this short history of Coupeville and the surrounding area be a series of personal recollections aimed at giving life and breath to yellowing pages of records.

Living on Whidbey Island in the early days was pioneering in a very real sense. Much of what we took for granted then seems like almost unbearable hardship today. There were no roads, the country was wild and the Indians a constant threat, mail service was erratic, and provisions were often scarce.

It was said in those days that at San de Fuca they ate salmon and potatoes, at Coupeville venison and no potatoes. It was not uncommon for a family or settlement to be without flour for months at a time.

Town's birth

The history of Coupeville as a town properly begins in 1854 when Captain Thomas Coupe built the first frame house there. He had previously filed a claim on the site on Nov. 20, 1852, after his first voyage to that area.

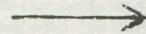
My father, William B. Engle, who came with Captain Coupe on the first trip, staked out his claim on Ebey's Prairie and built a frame house there in 1853. His trip to pick up bricks for the chimney made the first wagon tracks across the future townsite.

Previously, supplies had been put ashore at Davis' Landing, some distance to the north.

My father's claim adjoined that of Col. Isaac N. Ebey who filed in 1850 and is generally regarded as the first permanent white settler on the island and one of its most honored pioneers.

The murder of Colonel Ebey by a group of Haidah Indians on Aug. 12, 1857, is one of the most tragic episodes in the island's history.

Colonel Ebey and his family were then living in what they affectionately called "The Cabins," not far from Ebey's Landing. There had been considerable trouble with the Haidahs for several months which occasionally flared into open warfare.



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Told by the late Carl T. Engle

On the afternoon of the murder, a group of Indians had come to the Ebey house but had left without causing undue alarm. At the time, United States Marshall George W. Corliss and his wife were visiting the Ebeyes before returning to Olympia.

Several hours after the family and their friends retired, the Indians attacked. Mrs. Corliss jumped from a window and ran to my father's place and then to the home of Colonel Ebey's parents to give the alarm.

All the group staying at "The Cabins" escaped except Colonel Ebey. He went outside at the first sound from the Indians and was shot down and beheaded without warning.

The news of his death shocked not only people of the island but those on the mainland as well. John Crockett made the coffin for Colonel Ebey, and my father dug the grave. The murderers were never caught.

The lighter side

Not all the events were tragic, however, and one does not dwell on them too much when looking back. We made the most of our amusement, and much of it was in the spirit of horseplay.

On one occasion, a group got together to shivaree (charivari) a pair of newlyweds. When the couple refused to open the door, they forced a window and pushed a pig through. This brought the door open in short order.

Pigs at one time were so numerous on the island as to be a nuisance. They sprang from domestic ones that had escaped and gone wild, multiplying rapidly.

As boys, we used to sit in trees at night at the edge of gardens and shoot them to prevent them from destroying the produce. Many of the settlers built traps to catch them. The last ones were killed or trapped around 1885 or 1886.

Coupeville's growth throughout the years was fairly steady if not spectacular. New businesses and stores were located in the town from time to time.

The town experienced two booms in its time, but unlike some of the hopeful metropolises started during the same times, it managed to survive.

The first boom came about 1890 when the whole area had a building hysteria. A rash of new town-sites sprang up all over the island, but most of these died aborning. The second Coupeville boom came in 1902 at the time Fort Casey was built.

The establishment of the Puget Sound Academy in the late 1880s made Coupeville an educational center for the northern Sound area. Students came to it from all over the surrounding area and even from as far away as Oregon. There were two of us in the graduating class of '94: Spurgeon H. Calhoun and myself.



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Coupeville History

Continued from page 33

Industries

There were several factors that contributed to Coupeville's permanence. One of these was the productivity of the prairies which made the town a shipping point for apples, potatoes, wheat, oats, wool and lumber.

Being the county seat also contributed to stability as did the presence of a bank in the town.

Coupeville was never much of a manufacturing center due to shipping problems, but some industries were started, and some of them did thrive for a time.

A sawmill built by Luther Clark and operated by the Lovejoy brothers survived for many years. These same brothers also built four steamboats at Coupeville. One of these went to the Yukon and operated there. The other three plied the Sound for many years.

A potato dryer was built here during the Alaska gold rush and operated successfully for several years. Attempts were made to establish a cannery, but this venture never made a go of it.



Three different tries were made to get a railroad on the island. The first was by Jay Cook, the New York financier. If Cook had not gone bankrupt, the island might have had rail service.

Another was proposed about 1890 but failed. The last proposal was made in 1910 when promoters came in and sold stock. After collecting several thousand dollars from investors, the promoters vanished leaving island people bereft of both the railroad and the money they had invested.

Today (1948), Coupeville has forgotten the delusions of grandeur that occasionally swept over it in earlier days. It remains the county seat, a pleasant home for its people, and the trading area for the rich prairies stretching out behind the town.

Good roads link it with others parts of the island, and the bridge at Deception Pass to the north and regular ferry service to the south give easy access to the mainland.

To many of us, however, it still remains a place beloved in memory and rich in history where the pioneer spirit is never very far away.

Martyred Ebey's Scalp Returned

On the night of August 11, 1857, Colonel Isaac N. Ebey was murdered by transient Northern Indians who stopped at his Ebey's Prairie farm home. His scalp was taken and remained in the hands of the Indians for over two years.

Captain Charles Dodd of the Hudson's Bay Company recovered the scalp from the Kake tribe in Alaska. Dodd turned it over to an A. M. Poe of Olympia, who sent it to Port Townsend. James G. Swan, marine reporter for the Register, Port Townsend's pioneer newspaper then delivered the Colonel's scalp to Captain Thomas Coupe of Coupeville and from there it went to the colonel's brother, Winfield Scott Ebey the next spring, and was interred with the body.

Col. Ebey had settled on his



claim seven years previously, 640 acres.

In retaliation for the killing of some militant Indians near Port Townsend, the Indians from the north resolved to kill a white "tyee" or leader. They originally planned to kill Dr. John Coe Kellogg, known as "the canoe doctor" all over Puget Sound, but found the good doctor not at home when they arrived to consummate the deed. Col. Ebey was next.

The Indians moored their canoes on the beach and went to the Ebey house to ask for sugar and flour, refused by the Colonel. About midnight the Ebey dog began to bark excitedly, and the colonel stepped outside where vague shapes of Indians surrounded the cabin. There were two shots and Col. Ebey staggered to the corner of the house holding his head. Two more shots and all was silent.

Mrs. Ebey, and a guest, Mrs. Corliss escaped through the cabin windows and made their way to the home of a neighbor W. B. Engle. Engle, a Mr. Hill and a Mr. Crosby returned to the Ebey cabin where the Indians had been busy ransacking the house. They fled, taking the head of Col. Ebey with them.

The Indians had revenged the loss of their fellow-tribesmen.

Early-Day Justice in Oak Harbor

An early day happening in Oak Harbor on what is now West Pioneer Way is recorded from the early 1850's when Captain Edward Barrington was regarded as judge and jury for many a fracas between the Indians and white men.

The Indians were very friendly and helpful to the settlers, who regarded their white brothers as insurance against raids of the warlike Haidahs from Vancouver Island. The northern Indians regularly raided the camps of the Island Indians, and faint traces of trenches dug for protection by the local tribes still remain on the bluffs of the Monroe Landing area.

Captain Barrington was a big red-bearded man highly regarded by the Indians. He administered justice among

them, and saved many of them from violent deaths at the hands of settlers. It was also said that many an Indian lived to regret the Captain's quick decisions.

Such a one was "Big Billy" an Indian who stood over six feet tall. He happened to be an on-looker one day when the Captain and another settler were butchering near the bank of the bay. Barrington asked Big Billy to "hand me that gam-stick."

Big Billy replied that Captain Barrington had been boss long enough, now HE was boss!

Barrington picked up the gam-stick, felled Big Billy with one blow, grabbed him by the hair and flung him over the bank! The other settler observed to the Captain that he thought he had killed the Indian.



"That was the intention," replied Barrington, who resumed his butchering.

Four days later a somewhat less aggressive Big Billy appeared and approached the Captain. "You still boss," he said.

Another crisis between the settlers and Indians was averted.



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