

A TRIP TO "ALKI" POINT NEAR DUWAMISH BAY

With a large war canoe full of potatoes, sold to a Mr. "Lowe",
At \$1.00 a bushel from Fort Nisqually, Friday, March 12th 1852.

By
E. Huggins.

A few days prior to the 12th of March, 1852, a Mr. Lowe, came to Fort Nisqually, and informed Doctor Tolmie, that himself, Arthur A. Denny, Messrs Bell, Terry and Doc. "Maynard", had settled at "Alki" point, a promontory, situate about 30 miles down the Sound from Fort Nisqually, with the intention of laying out a town to be called Seattle, named after a noted Duwamish chief, who made his residence at, or near Alki point, and as they were short of provisions, and desirous of obtaining any thing in the shape of eatables.

Doctor Tolmie agreed to sell him one hundred bushels of potatoes, at one dollar per bushel, and I was directed to convey these vegetables, in our large mail canoe, to their destination.

The canoe was a very large one, and had been obtained from Northern Indians, Hydah's, I think, who lived upon Queen Charlotte, and adjacent Islands.

The canoe was, or had been a war canoe, and was used by us at Fort Nisqually, to convey passengers and mail between Nisqually, and Victoria, Vancouvers Island. Many trips had been made in this canoe and I do not recollect any accidents having happened during its active life, and it was in use in Winter, as well as Summer.

Mrs. Edward Huggins, has made six trips to Victoria, in her, sometimes these passages would occupy a considerable length of time, as the canoe occupants would not attempt to cross the straits during the flowing of a stiff breeze of wind, and Mrs Huggins, has been as long as eight days making the trip.

She one made a (p.2) trip with "Theodore Winthrop" (in 1853) the celebrated author and soldier.

The potatoes were put in the canoe and were well covered; I selected a good crew, all Indians, and about 2.30 P.M. I started from the landing, during a dead calm, with every indication of a pleasant and quiet trip. Just a little before dusk, we reached the usual encampment a small streamlet, on the mainland, at the North end of Day's Island, called by the Indians "Tukumalie", and from the large mound of shells there, it had evidently been a camping ground for centuries. We partook of a good supper and after listening to stories and legends from the Indians, one of the party being a story teller of renown, and as we supposed making out canoe secure, retired to rest, myself in a comfortable tent, and the Indians under a shelter made quickly with a few home made mats. I awoke early next morning, feeling anxious about the canoe, which I found, to my surprise, and chagrin, high and dry, and the weight of the potatoes had damaged it so much, as to render it impossible for us to proceed any further on our journey without making repairs. I blamed my leading man for this mishap. I was inexperienced in canoe traveling, but he was an old hand at the business, and ought to have anchored the vessel further out beyond the danger of grounding. I set about unloading the canoe, the bulk

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of the cargo being in sacks and remainder in bulk. We found the canoe to be severely cracked and it required some mending before we could proceed. It was blowing nearly a gale from the South (p.3) West, and I was in an unpleasant position, my canoe in a half wrecked condition, and no means of repairing it, when it occurred to me that three or four miles below our camp was the ship yard -so called- of "Bill Bolton," an Englishman who had been one of the crew of the British ship "Albion", Capt Brothie (William), the vessel, which about two years ago, had been seized by the Custom house authorities at Astoria, (she was seized in the beginning of April 1850) for cutting timber at Dungeness port in the United States Territory, condemned and sold at Steilacoom, the particulars of which I have given in a former story published in the Sunday Oregonian, in 1899 or 1900.

"Bill Bolton" had been the Albions carpenter, and had become an American citizen, taking a denisation claim, and established a yard for building and repairing boats and scows, and even small ships. I made up my mind to walk along the shore line until I got to "Boltons" place. I was well acquainted with Bolton (who had an account with us) and I would engage him to return with me with tools, and repair the canoe. I had a very arduous trip of it, and arrived at "Boltons" place in an exhausted state. Bolton immediately agreed to return with me at once, and with a man, an english sailor named "Dick Gibbs," and with the requisite tools and material, returned in a sail boat to "Tuckeralie." The wind blew almost a gale, and I felt far from comfortable in the sail boat of Boltons, which sailed at a fast pace steered and managed by "Gibbs", who it seems had been a water man upon the Thames, England. Bolton and Gibbs went to work, and soon patched up the canoe, making her strong, and tight enough to admit of our continuing our trip. I agreed to leave the canoe with "Bolton" upon our (p.4) return, to be thoroughly overhauled and repaired. We remained in camp another night, the repairs being finished too late, to allow us to leave that day, but next morning, early, we put the freight on board, and started with a cold breeze blowing from the North, a fair wind, but we didn't venture to raise the sail, about midday the wind began to blow rather stiff, and my leading canoeist kept under the Vashon Island shore, it being less windy there. We kept on, a little alarmed at the force of the wind, and our heavily laden canoe, until we made a Island, opposite "Alki" point. We had time to cross (six or eight miles) before darkness set in, but "Sweillicualth" my chief man would not venture to make the passage in the face of such a wind, so we made camp for the night, in a place protected from the wind, taking care this time, to keep our canoe afloat all the time. We found our canoe all right on the morning of the 14th (Sunday) and it appeared to me that the wind, which was still blowing from the North, was not blowing hard enough to prevent our crossing. It had snowed a little during the night, and it was cold enough to make thin ice. I was very anxious to cross over and get rid of my cargo, and besides, our provisions were nearly gone, and eight of us would soon have nothing but potatoes to eat, that is if we couldn't cross to Alki point. "Sweillicualth" said that the wind was still blowing very hard, too hard for us to be exposed to with the heavy load we had. He said that where we were encamped, we could not feel, nor see the full force of the wind, but he exclaimed, look at the white caps

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(5.) pointing towards the open water of the Sound, which certainly did look very rough, but I was obstinate, and ignorant too of the dangers to be incurred in canoe traveling upon the wide parts of the Sound, and I foolishly insisted upon leaving at once, and almost drove the indians one of whom waded in the cold water, and brought the canoe close enough enable us to embark easily. "Sweiliqualth" made no further objection, but muttered something in his own language, and I understood him to say "euch squoluahehuke" which means in english, "large fool", of which I took no notice. When we got outside the little bay, around a point and headed for Alki point, I saw at once that the poor indian was right, and that the wind was blowing much too hard for the safety of our heavily laden canoe, and when we were near the middle of the crossing, I began to think we should certainly founder. I then felt thankful that I had selected a good crew, for I am quite certain that it was only the skill of my crew, and the courage of my trusty leader "Sweiliqualth" that brought me safely through the perilous passage. He spoke cheerfully to the men, and evinced no bad feeling towards myself, but tried to put courage into me by saying "we were all right, and would soon be in safety, etc. etc." about two thirds of the way across the wide reach, we passed close to the ship "G.W. Kendall" on her way up the Sound for a cargo of pile timber, and I saw by the way she was pitched and tossed about, how severe the wind was blowing, and the hands on board the vessel crowded to the side as we passed, and stared at us with astonishment. I have often thought since, of the great risk we ran (6.p.) and how nearly my ignorance of canoe traveling, caused the death of seven poor indians, for you must recollect that the canoe was laden with 100 bushels of potatoes, besides the eight 8 human beings forming her crew, she was pitched and tossed about like a little chip of wood, and I expected, every minute, that she would capsize, but no, she didn't even ship any water, and "Bill Bolton" deserved much praise for the able character of his repair work at Tukuaralie. I am quite sure that it was the strength of my crew, and the great skill of my steersman, "Sweiliqualth" that brought us through safely. As we approached the point, and the termination of our journey, the whole population of the village was assembled on the beach landing place, viewing with anxious eyes, our gradual approach to safety, and when at last a big wave drove the canoe upon the sandy beach, upon which she struck, and was split from stem to stern, the good people held her and prevented the receding wave from taking her back, we jumped out, and our united efforts soon had the canoe in safety.

The inhabitants of the point gave me a hearty welcome, and Mr. Denny (who afterwards became eminent, and one of the leading men in the Territory of Washington) took me to his house—a log cabin built in very primitive style—and I spent the remainder of the day and night with him, and several other gentlemen of whom I can now recollect "Chas Terry" "Lowe" "Bell" and "Maynard" but they were not all living in the "Denny" cabin. There were two or three log houses there at that time, and not very long after my visit, Mr. Denny, and party moved from "Alki" point, and located where the present city of Seattle now stands (p.7.) Alki point was found to be too open, and exposed to the wind, and offered no good protection for shipping.

The load of potatoes was found to be but little damaged, but the canoe was in a deplorable condition. I instructed "Sweiliqualth" to patch her up, and with all hands take her to "Boltons" yard, who ("Bolton") had been requested to alter and make into a new canoe, which he did by ribbing her

with oak and putting in rowlocks, and making several oars so that in the future she could be propelled with oars, as well as paddles.

I now looked about for means of conveyance home, for you must bear in mind, that in those days there were no steamboats upon the Sound, and sail boats were very scarce also, a large camp of indians was near the point, and there I found a young Nisqually indian named Wyamoch (the man who fights) who was with his wife paying a visit to "Seattle", chief of the Dawamish indians. "Wyamoch" was the son of the deceased Nisqually chieftain "Lochlet" and his wife was sister to "Pathynum" the noted Snoqualmie chief. "Wyamoch" was about to return to Nisqually, and he offered me a seat in his canoe, which was one of the smallest in use, so small in size, that a strong man could carry it upon his shoulders. I didn't like the idea of traveling in such a small canoe, but being anxious to get home, I accepted his offer, and everything being ready we started for home on the morning of the 16th, "Wyamoch" in the stern and his wife in the bow of the canoe myself sitting on the bottom in the middle, and it was so frail a craft that I dared scarcely to move in her, and the passage up occupied nearly the whole day. I recollect when passing across from Point Brown to Point Defiance, in about the middle 'twas quite rough, and I thought (p.8.) that certainly the wretched little canoe would turn over, and take it all together, the last few days of canoe traveling satisfied me, and I have ever since disliked that style of conveyance, and avoid it all I possibly can. On our way up I stopped at "Bill Boltons" and arranged with him about the repairs and alterations to the big canoe, and proceeding we reached the Nisqually landing about 5.p.m. and glad enough I was to get home again, fully satisfied with this my first experience in canoe traveling. Dr.Tolmie had become alarmed at our prolonged absence, and was preparing to send off a party to search for us. At the landing, I found the ship "G.W.Kendall" the vessel we sighted when crossing from Blakley Island to "Alki" point, she had a little cargo for us, from San Francisco. The captain told me of his astonishment at seeing our canoe in such a dangerous predicament, and how, every minute, they expected to see us turn over and sink.

Mr.Bolton, made a good job our canoe, and she was now a strong staunch boat, well ribbed up, and with thwarts and rowlocks, stronger in every respect than ever she was before, she was not in use much longer as a mail boat, the steamer "Major Tompkins" having arrived from San Francisco, and on the 24th (about) of September 1854, she commenced conveying the United States mail, between Olympia, and Victoria, and the good old canoe was disposed of for a good price, after doing faithful service for several years. She made many trips between the two ports during her long active service, no lives were lost, neither was any one injured. Before the advent of steamers upon Puget Sound, canoes were principally used, and to my knowledge (p.9.) a number of lives were lost,

and very seldom were any of the drowned bodies found. The Sound abounds with Dog fish and Sharks, and a drowned human body would very soon be disposed of by these voracious fishes. I have seen sharks brought to our landing, which measured 15 feet in length. I have known of the drowning of several of my acquaintances from boats, and I recollect a sad event which happened in the fifties. Major Larnard when in command at Fort Steilacoom (in 1853 or 54 I think it was) was ordered to make a trip

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down the Sound on some military business, and with five or six men all soldiers, he started from Steilacoom in a fine substantial whale boat, the property of the United States government. He called at Seattle, then a small village, left that place, and nothing was ever after seen or heard of him. He left a widow but no children. I have known of several lives having been lost between Olympia and Seattle, and in all cases the lost ones were white people. I don't recollect ever having heard of an indian being drowned, and in the extensive canoe traveling done by the Hudson Bay Company, upon the Sound, I never heard of any lives being lost. I suppose the indians and the Hudson Bay Cos. servants were more skilful in the navigation of canoes many times I have known the unskilfulness of the occupants of a boat or canoe, has caused it to capsize, and the consequence was loss of life. Thank goodness, now, there is no necessity for using canoes and small boats upon Puget Sound, and traveling is now done with positive safety, many instances in large and swift going steam-boats. There is a large number of quite small steamboats (the "Mosquito" fleet) running now between the different Sound ports, especially from Seattle.

July 4th 1901.

E. Huggins.

A word or two about Mr. Bolton before I conclude. He is alive today, and resides in Tacoma, or its suburbs. For some years he worked at his first shipyard, situate about a mile below Steilacoom creek, and he also established a yard in Victoria, and did a great deal of work there. He constructed a schooner at his Steilacoom yard, and built boats and scows, besides doing repair work when called upon. He is now, I should think, too old to do manual labor, and I hope he has the means of living in comfort the remainder of his life.

If he chooses, and his memory has not failed him, the old gentleman could tell many interesting stories of happenings in pioneer days, and I often wonder why some of the energetic young Tacoma reporters do not interview the old man, and get from him something upon which to base good stories for the Sunday paper.

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