



Sentinel of Silence



**A
Brief History
of Fort Spokane**



Sentinel of Silence



A Brief History of Fort Spokane

by
David H. Chance



Contents

1

Strategies for a Fort

The threat of the vanquished
Choosing a place • Construction
The career and deactivation of Fort Spokane

2

Army Life at Fort Spokane

The routine • The units and organization
Officers and enlisted men • Housing • Health
Schools and education • Other diversions • Arms
Communication and transportation

3

Restricting and Settling the Indians

The reservations • The Moses reservation problem
Preserving the Nez Perce
The Sanpoil and Nespelem passive resistance
Lesser frictions • The ghost dance chimera
Indian scouts • An Indian company

4

Other Roles for the Troops

Road building • The white population grows
The first Coeur d'Alene Mining Riots
Panic and depression: 1893-94 • A new direction

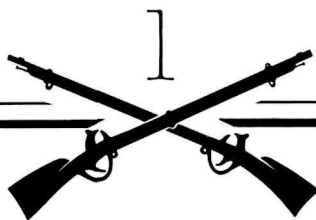
5

Presiding over Transformation

The failure of Miles, Washington
The demise of Indian strength • Fostering settlement

Sources and Suggested Reading





Strategies for a Fort

Fort Spokane was the last of the frontier Army posts to be established in the Pacific Northwest. Begun in the fall of 1880 as Camp Spokane, it was garrisoned by several companies of infantry and, in the first decade of its existence, also by a troop of cavalry. Parts of regiments and individual troops of cavalry rotated in and out until 1898 when the majority of its remaining soldiers were withdrawn to fight in the Spanish-American War. In the 1880's, Fort Spokane was considered to be the Army's most important post in the Department of the Columbia, then the official military designation for the Pacific Northwest.

In 1899 the post became a school for Indian children, then in 1914 it was transformed into an Indian hospital and tuberculosis sanatorium. In 1929 it ceased to have a public function. Four remaining buildings and the grounds are now maintained by the National Park Service within the Coulee Dam National Recreation Area.

The Threat of the Vanquished

The last serious Indian revolts to occur in the Pacific Northwest, the Nez Perce War of 1877, the Bannock War of 1878, and the Sheepeater troubles of 1879, caused the Army to move larger numbers of troops onto the northern Columbia Plateau in an effort to prevent the Indians there from making common cause with their compatriots to the south.

After a decade of peace, the Pacific Northwest suddenly had become insecure again. The Nez Perce in 1877 and the Bannocks and Paiutes during the next year had led the Army on humiliating chases through the mountains and had been brought to bay only when exhausted from keeping their families with them. The next trouble spot looked as though it might be the northern Columbia Plateau where the federal reservation policy and white settlements were beginning to constrict the native Salishan tribes. The Nez Perce, Bannocks and Paiutes to the south had risen almost overnight, without warning. It might happen again in the north where unrest among the Nez Perce, Palouse, and Columbia Salish refugees in the Colville Valley threatened to spread to other Indian tribes.

What was more, the Colville and Spokane Salish farmers were resisting Indian Department attempts to move them off their farms and onto the Colville Reservation. Troops were requested by the Colville Indian Agent, John Simms, to transplant the Salish by force. White settlers on the Plateau had initially been miners, but by the late 1870s that interest was very rapidly evolving into a new emphasis on agricultural settlement, a change that might easily and very logically push the Indians to desperate resistance.

The year 1878 had found troops stationed in makeshift camps at a number of places in the northern Plateau: at White Bluffs on the

Columbia River, at Foster Creek near the mouth of the Okanogan River, and in the small village of Spokane Falls, now modern Spokane. Soldiers had been posted at Fort Colville in the north since 1859, and a company of infantry was still there.

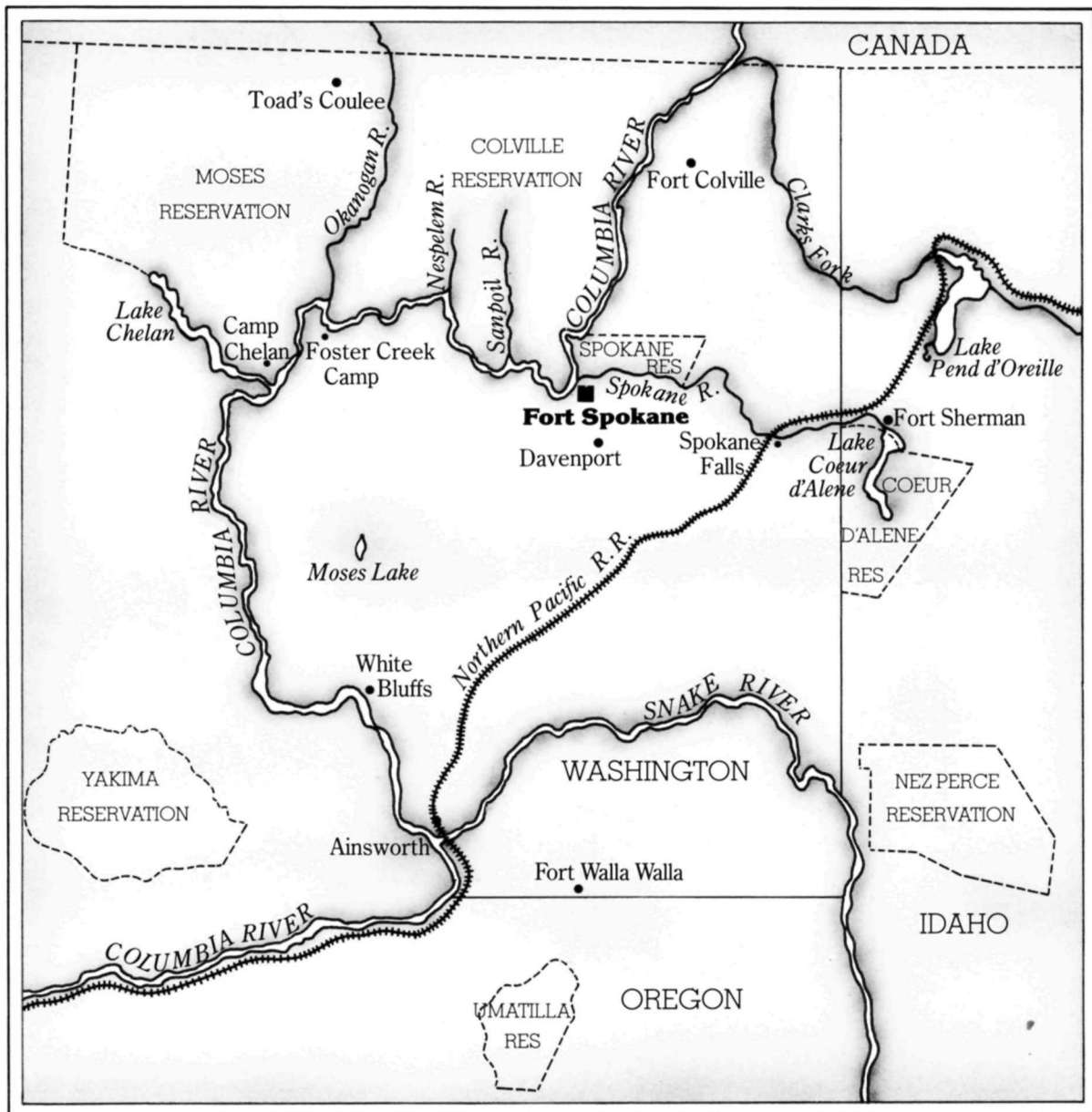
The Salish of northeastern Washington who were now under suspicion were actually a relatively peaceful people who had only once previously constituted a military threat to the United States. On that occasion, in 1858, they had been dealt with harshly by the forces of Col. George Wright. By 1880 the majority were accomplished farmers, even if they still relied to some extent on the dwindling salmon and native root crops such as camas and wild hyacinth that their forefathers had harvested on a systematic basis; but by 1890 the salmon, like the bison east of the Rockies, became but a shadow of their former numbers.

Small tribes speaking dialects of Interior Salish had maintained a long and peaceful intercourse with European and Canadian fur traders since the first decade of the century. From them they had learned to farm and to raise cattle, pigs, and poultry. Agriculture in what is now one of the breadbaskets of the world was unknown until the fur traders arrived with an Asiatic grass-wheat and European fruit varieties that would grow on the cool plateau and in the valleys of northeastern Washington. In the late 1870s, the farming potential of this region began to be advertised by the Northern

Pacific Railroad. Train loads of settlers with their horses, cattle and farm machinery poured in during the early 1880s.

Many settlers considered the Indians to be in the way; they were also difficult to understand, often uncommunicative and therefore threatening. Indian camps were suspected of harboring communicable diseases such as smallpox. Genuine appreciation of Indian cultures was rare. Newspapers abounded with uncomplimentary references to local Indians, the majority of whom were, in reality, just as much sturdy, pioneering farmers as the newcomers from the East. Of the 408 men among the Spokane, Colville, and Lakes Salish in 1881, 205 were farmers, 88 were laborers (mostly agricultural), and only 115 were classed as hunters, fishers, and woodcutters. Most of the latter apparently wanted to farm but lacked the wherewithal to do it, for they were begging the government for the necessary tools.

The Army was needed not only to discourage any concerted Indian resistance to the white takeover, but also to calm the minds of timorous white settlers, many of whom were apt to overreact to rumors, while others were eager to start them. Another factor which sometimes caused uneasiness was that none of the tribes sent to the Colville Reservation had ever made a treaty with the government or had ceded its lands, so there was no legal basis for the removal of the Indians.



Choosing a Place

Indecision over how best to stabilize the Indian situation involved the Army in several false starts. The location for Fort Spokane was chosen after much examination and expensive trial and error. The troops who had arrived at Spokane Falls during the Nez Perce War were sent southeast to the banks of Coeur d'Alene Lake to establish Fort Coeur d'Alene (later called Fort Sherman) in 1878, while those at White Bluffs and Foster Creek were directed northwest to build a post at the south end of Lake Chelan in the following year. Lt. Col. Henry Clay Merriam, a Civil War veteran from Maine, was in charge of each of these moves. Merriam had recommended that the place where Fort Spokane was later built be used for the northwestern post, but this was rejected by Gen. Oliver Howard, commander of the Department of the Columbia. Howard favored the Chelan site which was closer to Chief Moses, his protégé and leader of the Columbia Salish.

The post at Lake Chelan proved very difficult to supply. It was linked to the railroad at Ainsworth, located at the mouth of the Snake River, by a long and rough wagon road constructed by the soldiers. Near Chelan the Columbia had to be ferried at a very treacherous part of the river. These difficulties finally impressed General Schriver, Inspector General of the Pacific Division, who recom-

mended that Camp Chelan be abandoned as a colossal mistake. Merriam was instructed to have a board of officers select another location, one that he already had in mind.

After much traveling, the board, headed by Lt. Thomas Symons, an engineer, recommended the very spot that Merriam had earlier suggested. So the sawmill at Chelan was dismantled and hauled the hundred or so miles to the new Camp Spokane. The troops then moved back across the Columbia River one company at a time. Some of the property had to be left behind in charge of bewildered Chelan Indians who did not understand the reason for the move or why they should lose a good market for their vegetables and beef.

The reasons for establishing Fort Spokane at the mouth of the Spokane River reveal something of the purpose for which it was intended. Some of the reasons were stated explicitly; others must now be inferred from other historic facts. The three-man survey board which selected the site claimed that it was a "strategic point of great importance" and that it would "take the place and answer the purposes of both Chelan and Colville." The survey board was following Merriam's preference for a consolidated position at the mouth of the Spokane. Merriam's thinking was dominated by his belief that "a few troops are most effective for protection of scattered settlers when occupying the smallest number

of stations, provided those stations are within easy striking distance of all points exposed."

Perhaps also influencing the move of the garrison eastwards to a point closer to the town of Spokane Falls was a now obscure incident on the night of May 9, 1880. As reported by Ned Chambreau, Army scout and messenger, trouble arose between the Spokanes and the whites of the town. During the night, the well-known chief, Spokane Garry, delivered two inflammatory speeches in the Indian camp despite Chambreau's effort to quiet him. As a lad, Garry had been educated by the Hudson's Bay Company almost fifty years before, so that he might lead his people in the formation of a Christian and agricultural civilization. That hope and plan had been by now lost, and Garry was a bitter and disillusioned man.

The whites sent a wagon at 3 a.m. to Colville to obtain 100 rifles and ammunition, some to arm a recently formed volunteer company, the rest to be passed out to the citizens. Rumors spread that Indians had been killed, but this cannot be authenticated. The story is known only from Chambreau's report, but it may have weighed substantially in changing the mind of the Army, for far away at Camp Chelan the troops were too distant to do anything about this incident.

Just across the Columbia River from the new site lay the southeast corner of the Colville Reservation, established in 1872, and to the

north across the Spokane River was the proposed Spokane Indian Reservation, formally set aside in January 1881. To the south of the fort there was every indication that the country would "rapidly settle up, thus ensuring a cheap supply of forage and farm products in the future." Supply had been one of the major drawbacks of Camp Chelan. The Northern Pacific Railroad was reaching from the southwest toward Spokane Falls, and at Sprague the line was only 55 miles from the site. The plan was, of course, for the Northern Pacific to be a transcontinental line; that became true in the summer of 1883.

Like the fur traders of earlier years, the soldiers in 1880 considered the gathering places of Indians, and the trails leading to them, to be important considerations bearing on the location of forts. The confluence of the Spokane with the Columbia had been an important rendezvous and camp of the fur traders who called it "The Forks." The site was found by the Army to be but three miles from the principal salmon fishery on the Spokane River where, in the words of Henry Merriam, "hundreds of Indians annually congregate from all directions from various tribes, and all the great Indian trails center at this point, thus making it easy for troops to move in any direction that may be necessary." These trails led to the Colville Valley, Walkers Prairie, Kettle Falls, the Grand Coulee, the Sanpoil Indians, the Spokane Indians (said to be

twenty miles away) and to the Okanogan country and British Columbia. Merriam fully expected steamer traffic to begin on the Columbia River which would take the main route to British Columbia past Camp Spokane, and no longer through the Okanogan Valley.

Some of the complex reasoning over the choice of location can be reduced to the fact that Camp Spokane was visualized as a block or barrier separating the incoming settlers and the Indian reservations to the north. The view taken by the Army was that the new post would be a shield between the settlements southeast of it -- Spokane Falls (modern Spokane) and Cheney, and the Indians to the northwest of the fort. Indian Agent John Simms at Chewelah had pointed out to the military that the Indians of eastern Washington were being pushed further and further north against the Canadian border, a situation fraught with danger. Simms argued for the retention of Fort Colville, but his remarks instead influenced the move from Chelan to the mouth of the Spokane.

As it turned out, Colville was not abandoned by the Army until the summer of 1885, though the plan had been to close it down as soon as Camp Spokane was established. One reason for the delay was the scarcity of hay and grain for horses around Fort Spokane; the cavalry assigned there often had to be maintained at Fort Colville where adequate feed was available. Although the country

south of Fort Spokane was indeed settled rapidly, particularly after the railroad link with the east was completed in 1883, it was not until the mid-1880s that grain and hay were sufficient near Fort Spokane to allow for the closing of Fort Colville and the ceasing of grain importation by Columbia River barge from the Colville Valley.

Fort Spokane was also placed close to one of the proudest and most conservative Indian tribes anywhere in the Pacific Northwest--the Sanpoil, dominated by the prophet chief Skolaskin, a leader of the Dreamer religion which still thrives. Skolaskin's principal village and residence was only nine miles downriver from Fort Spokane. Whether this proximity entered into Merriam's calculations or not is unknown. It is certain that the choice of location improved communication between the Indians and white authorities. The Colville Indian Agency, poorly located at Chewelah, was closed in 1886 and moved south to a location just across the river from Fort Spokane. Until that year the Army found itself doing much of the day to day business of the Indian agency, assisting and parleying with the Indians. After 1886, very little notice is taken of Indian conferences and encounters in the post military records.

Construction

When the troops arrived south of the

Spokane River in 1880, they lived in tents while they erected the first log barracks. Civilians were also employed to increase the speed of construction. The log barracks were only nine feet high and must have been far less imposing than the frame buildings erected later. Even while temporary buildings were going up in the fall of 1880, and though the post was not yet authorized by the Secretary of War, Lt. Col. Merriam requested plans of Army regulation buildings designed in 1872. Yet one year later, one of the four infantry companies was still housed in tents.

General Howard was replaced in 1881 by Gen. Nelson Miles as Department of the Columbia commander. Howard's judgment appears to have been questioned, since Miles was asked by his superiors if the new post was necessary and in a good location. His inspection caused him to report it a good choice. Early in 1882, therefore, President Chester Arthur formally set aside a military reservation at Camp Spokane, changing the name to Fort Spokane. Construction, which had lagged for over a year, began again in earnest that fall. The commander, then Maj. Leslie Smith, a native of Ireland, requested "mechanics" of all kinds from Portland to carry out the construction. He asked for one master builder, fifteen carpenters, two stairbuilders, two lathers, four plasterers, one brickmaker, three bricklayers, and one sawyer, all to arrive with their own tools.

By the summer of 1884, there were about 25 buildings on the post including the six barracks, a schoolroom, and an icehouse. A two-story administration building had been built surmounted by a large glass-sided cupola and flagstaff. In Merriam's opinion, the appearance and convenience of this structure surpassed all post administration buildings he had seen in the Army. The arrangement of offices is interesting: the quartermaster and commissary offices were on the first floor, while upstairs were the offices of the commanding officer, the adjutant, and the telegrapher. The erection of buildings went on into the early 1890s until there were about 50 structures on the post.

As with many posts of the period, the officers' quarters formed a row facing the parade ground. On the other side of the parade and facing the officers were the enlisted men's barracks with the post headquarters in the center of that line. On the west side the parade was open to the vista of the Columbia Valley. On the east side of the parade were two structures having to do, one might say, with morale and well-being: the hospital and the chapel. Northeast of them was the "dead-house" or morgue and the quarters of the hospital steward and non-commissioned officers. The quartermaster department's warehouses, shops, and stables led away from one corner of the enlisted side of the quadrangle. Further to the east of these buildings

was the store of the post trader where the soldiers bought their sundries and some of their drink.

The Career and Deactivation of Fort Spokane

For most of the post's 19-year military history, the soldiers spent their time training for battles that never came. On a few occasions in the 1880s they were called out to demonstrate their presence to the local Salish. But not a single shot was ever fired in anger. The events in the post's history are somewhat disconnected; but between the few peaks of activity we have an opportunity to examine a way of life and to view Fort Spokane as a reflection of more widespread and subtle changes that were occurring throughout the United States.

As the white population swelled in the 1880s and the outnumbered Indians seemed less threatening, the Army turned its attention to stabilizing the lawless white element. Now that the American continental empire had been achieved, the Army might even be used overseas in a belated attempt to emulate the European imperial powers. Indeed, the Spanish-American War of 1898 drew Fort Spokane's troops away almost immediately. Within a year the post was transferred to the Department of the Interior for the use of the Colville Indian Agency and became a board-

ing school for Indian children. There the children were drilled like small soldiers in the white customs of clothing, dining, and learning by sitting. This lasted until 1914 when the agency was moved away and the school closed. For the next 15 years the post was a tuberculosis sanatorium. In 1914 it was estimated that 12 percent of the Colville Reservation Indians had tuberculosis, and the disease appeared to be on the increase. In 1929 the installation was abandoned to picnickers and vandals. Just over a decade later the rising waters of Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake, the reservoir of Grand Coulee Dam, flooded the canyon of the Spokane River below the fort. In 1960 the National Park Service took over the administration of the property, now reduced to four buildings standing in the tall grass, as a part of Coulee Dam National Recreation Area.



Army Life at Fort Spokane

If a visitor had arrived at Fort Spokane during its military years ignorant of its place in current events and strategies, the daily routine, the matter of rank, and the questions of who did what would have been the most obvious features of the post. The story of peacemaking and the strategic importance of Fort Spokane would have been hard to uncover without interviews, research, and much time. Rather, it would have been the business of supply, mess halls, guard mounts, inspections, and the bureaucratic shuffle of invoices, rosters, telegraph slips, and correspondence that would have met the eyes and ears. To keep from becoming disorganized in battle, a garrison in peace required an almost mechanical round of repetition, drill, and ritual. Only then would each man know his position and function by habit. This is why the fort would have appeared to be more routine than anything else.

The Routine

Troops in garrison followed a heavy schedule of drills, roll calls, parades, details, and training sessions. Part of this intensity was a reflection of the reform of the Army begun by Gen. William Sherman in the late 1870s. The reforms had been stimulated by unexpected defeats suffered at the battles of Little Big Horn and Big Hole in Montana. Reform included increased discipline and drill. By

1891 when the reforms had taken root, a typical daily schedule at Fort Spokane consisted of:

6:15 a.m.	Reveille	First Call
6:20		March
6:30		Assembly
6:30	Mess Call	
7:15 a.m.	Surgeon's Call	
7:30	Fatigue Call	
8:50	Guard Mount	First Call
9:00		Assembly
9:05		Adjutant's Call
9:00	School Call	
12:00 noon	Recall from fatigue	
12:00	Orderly & Mess Call	
1:00 p.m.	Fatigue Call/ Drill Call/ School Call	
1:10	Assembly	
2:10	Recall from Drill	
4:00	Recall from fatigue	
5:15	Mess Call	
30 min. before sunset	Retreat	First Call
20 min. before sunset	(When dress parade)	Assembly
15 min. before sunset		
10 min. before sunset	Retreat	First Call
at sunset	(When no dress parade)	Assembly
9:30		Tattoo
10:45	Call to quarters	
11:00	Taps	
10:30 a.m.	Church call on Sundays	
2:30 p.m.		
7:30 p.m.		
7:30 p.m.	Church call on Fridays	

There was also a Saturday inspection held alternately in either full-dress uniform or in heavy marching order with "blanket bags properly packed," and a Saturday evening inspection, but not under arms.

Whether Sunday inspection, common in the Army at the time, was observed at this post is not known.

For guard mount--the term used for the inspection of guards before they went on duty--the men were to be in full-dress uniform, weather permitting, and remain that way until retreat. A tour of guard duty lasted twenty-four hours divided into two-hour shifts of sentinel or prisoner guard duty. Between shifts the men might sleep on the banquette, a platform in the guard room.

Recruits and "awkward privates" were, according to the set of orders quoted above, to attend drill twice daily. The "calls" were sounded by a trumpeter, just as were the commands on the target range. Sometimes a cannon was fired in front of the guard house ten minutes after the first call for reveille, as it was for fires and fire drills and at sundown. Since Fort Spokane was never a regimental headquarters it had no band, otherwise drums would have been used for some of the calls. In those days Army life was punctuated by live sounds and music that today are heard on special occasions or from a record player and loudspeaker.

Variations in the schedule depended upon

the weather and the discretion of the post commander. More than one Fort Spokane commander required an officer from each company to be present at reveille and retreat. That was apparently unusual in the Army of the time. Reveille was adjusted periodically to the time of sunrise, and the moment of retreat was altered every day, according to monthly tables that showed the exact time of sunset.

Dress parades might be held as often as three times a week, that is excluding winter when very little parading and drilling outdoors occurred. Even in winter, however, there was the monthly inspection and drill when the men were reviewed in their overcoats, fur caps, gauntlets, and arctic overshoes. A report to department headquarters in Vancouver concerning one such inspection contained the dry remark that

the military appearance of the battalion was good and the marching satisfactory considering the difficulties presented by the snow and ice, in consequence of which one commissioned officer, Captain Carley, and seventeen enlisted men were unable to complete the march around in double time.

In other seasons the men might turn out in a variety of uniforms. After 1882 the full-dress uniform called for the blue wool suit, cartridge

belt, white gloves, rifle, helmet, and black, square-toed boots with tops that just covered the ankle. The helmet was modeled on the Prussian style with visor fore and aft and a spike on the top; it reflected the high esteem felt then for Prussian military customs and successes. But off the parade ground helmets were seen less. More common headgear was the French kepi or forage cap with forward-tilted crown, which we associate with the Civil War and somewhat less with the later Indian Wars. The forage cap was worn until the 1890s when it was gradually replaced by the campaign hat that had a wide brim and creased crown.

Frontier troops had the habit of wearing non-regulation boots, socks, and headgear even when on parade. In the field or on maneuvers they might wear whatever was most comfortable or weather-resistant. Uniform regulations were not as strict as they are today. One post commander, in reporting on the appearance of the troops at the monthly inspection, casually remarked that "about the usual percentage of the men [were] wearing boots and shoes not issued by the government."

The irregularity of dress did not go unnoticed by the inspector general, H.M. Lazelle, of the Department of the Columbia. Reporting in 1886 on the department as a whole, he stated that

there is not unfrequently worn

by officers a mixture of uniform and citizen dress . . . Unauthorized straw or felt hats are worn by officers and by enlisted men; blouses of the men are worn unbuttoned in imitation of similar laxity of dress by their officers; trousers of the men, when not under arms, are not unfrequently seen rolled on one or both legs, and the coat or blouse is often soiled, or dirty.

Photographs and news reports rarely convey dishevelment such as is preserved in this official report, which went on to say that "a languid, drooping mien and dragging gait are noticeable among men at every post." Lazelle may have been prejudiced since he just recently had observed the British Army on maneuvers.

At fatigue call the men appointed by their first sergeants to perform various details reported for work. Many of the jobs performed in the Army today by specialized troops were then assigned to the privates of line companies. Cavalry troops had to care for their mounts, clean stables, and herd the horses. Some cavalry soldiers were permanently detailed to such jobs as farrier and blacksmith. Every company or troop at Fort Spokane had a man assigned as cook, apparently on a long-term basis. The post baker, another detail, made

bread for the whole post while working under the supervision of the post treasurer.

Other details were for kitchen police, post janitor, post exchange attendant; there were work gangs for the quartermaster and commissary, wood cutting for officers' quarters, work in the sawmill, cutting ice on the Columbia River in winter, and gardening. Details like building construction and telegraph line repair entitled the participants to "extra duty pay," a form of overtime, amounting to about 25¢ a day. The sawmill and the water pump on the Spokane River, both steam-driven machines, were under the supervision of civilian mechanics.

Target practice received great emphasis in the Army during this period. The records of Fort Spokane substantiate this. Most of it was done in the spring and early summer on a range east of the post. "Aiming and pointing" drills were held during the winter inside the barracks, along with signal training. Shooting was competitive, and outstanding marksmen, called sharpshooters, were sent every year to Vancouver to compete in the Department of the Columbia matches. Along with target practice went sessions of reloading ammunition.

With the onset of summer, but occasionally in late spring, the cavalry went on patrols of the Indian reservations. The infantry went on at least one annual maneuver called the "practice march," which sometimes took the infantry across the Spokane Reservation. On

such a march an infantryman carried his rifle, a "prairie belt" with twenty rounds of ammunition, a haversack containing two days' rations, a meat ration can (in lieu of mess plate), knife, fork, spoon, tin cup, overcoat, one half-shelter tent (half of a large pup-tent), and a one-quart canteen. While traveling, the soldiers were often issued canned beef. The cavalryman's equipment was exactly the same except that he also had a rubber poncho and usually carried more ammunition.

Five pack mules carrying rations, two blankets for each man, and more half-shelter tents followed in the train of each company. A wagon was also sent out with more rations and a change of underclothes for the whole battalion. Sometimes light artillery went too, pulled by mules.

The usual destination seems to have been the Colville Valley, but on two or three occasions the troops went to Spokane. More rarely they went south. In some years a special camp was established at the destination where the command ordered a pause for field training. This included reconnoitering as far north as the Canadian border, outpost and picket duty, throwing up earthworks, skirmishing, and classes in field tactics. If near a settlement like Chewelah, evenings were sometimes spent in the local saloons.

The marches were often hot and dusty affairs with sick and footsore men riding behind in a mule-drawn ambulance. But these

were welcomed; they gave the men the opportunity to see the country and to break the routine.

There were also details for the commissioned officers. Those for which all officers were liable were both general and garrison court-martials which met frequently. Another was the holding of formal "boards of survey." These boards were called to investigate every conceivable problem or discrepancy encountered in the functioning of the post. The following letter is an example.

Fort Spokane
August 6, 1896

The Adjutant, Fort Spokane

Sir:

I have the honor to request that a Board of Survey may be convened to report, investigate, and find responsibility for the damaged condition of (15) Fifteen 1 lb. cans of Lobsters, received from the Purchasing Commissary U.S.A., Chicago, Ill. on the 5th day of August 1896.

R.R. Stogsdall
2nd Lt. 4th Inf.
Commissary

The finding of the board in this case was that the contents were fermented. Although this

sort of endeavor may strike one as frivolous, it illustrates an important fact. The under-financed Army of these years made strenuous efforts to account for the use and disposal of all public property in its charge. Supplies could not just vanish without causing a spate of letter writing, telegrams, and the fixing of blame. In contrast to our own times, the belief then in the stewardship of public funds was strong. It had to be, for the annual appropriations for the Army hardly changed at all between the Civil War and 1898. During that period no foreign wars were fought and the Army was prevented by law from forming tactical units larger than the regiment, possibly from fear of what a popular general might do with Civil War veterans. If Congress was enthusiastic over military spending, it was mostly for the Navy.

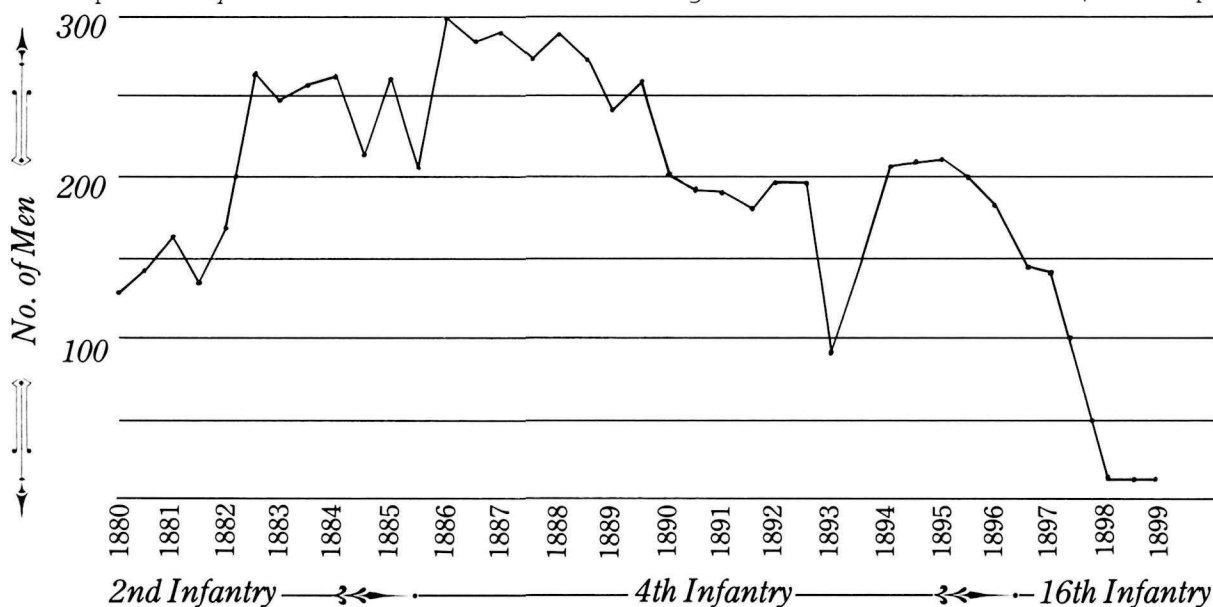
The Units and Organization

Elements of three infantry regiments garrisoned the post in succession. The men of the Second Infantry Regiment built Fort Spokane and took part in the more exciting years. The Second Regiment was replaced, in 1886, by the Fourth which in turn left the post to the Sixteenth Infantry ten years later. Troops of the First and Second Cavalry regiments headquartered at Fort Walla Walla supplemented the infantry and furnished a reconnaissance and striking force. The cavalry

investigated most rumors and performed the bulk of the police work on the reservations. Two to five companies of infantry were billeted at the post at any one time.

structure, included 50 to 60 men.

Supporting the line companies was a small staff section. The hospital staff included a post surgeon and one or two stewards; the chap-



The number of officers & enlisted men assigned to Fort Spokane, 1880-1899. The number is given for each six-month period based on an average of the six monthly post returns. These returns are in the National Archives.

The regimental headquarters of the infantry, with several more companies of the same regiment, were kept at Fort Coeur d'Alene, renamed Fort Sherman in 1887, on Lake Coeur d'Alene. The balance of the regiment was stationed at Fort Boise in southern Idaho. In those days a company of infantry amounted to between 40 and 50 men. A troop of cavalry, equivalent to an infantry company in

lain and the non-commissioned officer staff made up the rest. The latter amounted to the quartermaster, commissary, and the ordnance sergeants. The adjutant's clerk and the telegraph operator were permanent details drawn from the companies. The adjutant, usually a lieutenant, handled the post commander's office work and was often judge advocate or organizer of court martials.

Although a member of the staff, the adjutant was an officer detailed from one of the companies. The same held true for the quartermaster and commissary officers. Below these two officers were the sergeants who actually did most of the work. It was not uncommon for these NCO positions to be filled with fairly well-educated men. One quartermaster sergeant at the post held a bachelor of science degree in agriculture. The quartermaster oversaw buildings, grounds, transportation, quartermaster draft animals, construction, and all supplies except food. The last was the province of the commissary or subsistence section. Completing the roster of personnel on post were a small detachment of Indian Scouts and a handful of civilians -- mechanics and packers.

Each company was commanded by a captain or first lieutenant who was assigned one or two other subordinate lieutenants. Enlisted personnel in each company were the first sergeant, several company sergeants, a few corporals, an artificer or two, and 25 to 30 privates. The monthly return of November, 1884, listed 26 sergeants, 19 corporals, 8 musicians, 6 artificers, 174 privates, and 9 recruits among the enlisted men of the five units on post. For purposes of drill, parades, and maneuvers, the companies were sometimes formed into two battalions; more usually they seem to have been organized as a single battalion.

The post commander usually held the rank of lieutenant colonel but sometimes of major or even captain. As a rule, he was the second ranking officer of the regiment. In times of crisis he would command troops sent from Fort Coeur d'Alene, Fort Walla Walla, or Vancouver Barracks to augment his force. He reported directly to the department commander at Vancouver, and in fact made very few significant decisions on his own.

Officers and Enlisted Men

Officers and enlisted men were divided by a wide social gulf, wider than exists today. Officers seldom, if ever, performed menial tasks; woodcutting for officers' houses, for instance, was done by details of enlisted men. Although the officers had servants, these were civilians and not soldiers. On marches, infantry officers sometimes rode while the enlisted men walked. There is at least one instance on record, however, of the post commander ordering all officers, except for the battalion commander and the surgeon, to leave their horses behind on a practice march.

Unlike some post commanders of the time, Lt. Col. Henry Merriam required an officer of each company to be present at reveille. The following shows how infractions of such a rule were handled by letters that went no further than from one building on post to another.

Fort Spokane
September 2nd, 1883

2nd Lt. H.H. Benham 2nd Inf.
Commanding Troop F, 1st Cav.

Sir:

I am directed by the Commanding Officer to inform you that your excuse for failing to attend Reveille on the 31st August and 1st September is not satisfactory. The calls as now sounded, together with the morning gun, should be sufficient to warn an officer who cares to be warned, or who takes natural precaution to be in readiness for his duties, such as retiring at a reasonable hour for instance.

John K. Waring
1st Lt., 2nd Inf.

Lieutenant Benham had evidently excused himself by claiming that he did not hear the trumpet or gun. The same offense committed by an enlisted man, however, would have resulted in a court-martial, not a reprimand.

Court-martials were frequent. Being drunk on duty, failure to attend formations, and disrespect were some of the usual charges. Liquor was involved in a majority of offenses. As elsewhere in the Army, excessive drinking

was a serious problem. Drunkenness and boredom were probably related; the latter leading to the former. Frustration probably played a role too, for the chance of being promoted was bleak for officers and enlisted men alike, and many men were privates for their entire military careers. And the low pay did not help matters. An infantry private's pay was \$13 a month to start; \$18 a month after ten years. A first sergeant of infantry made only \$27 a month after ten years' service, whereas a second lieutenant of infantry drew \$140 a month after the same amount of time.

Mmilitary careers were exceedingly long by modern standards. In 1887, all 4th Infantry officers from the rank of captain on up, and seven of the twelve first lieutenants, had fought in the Civil War. Most of these men had joined during that conflict as officers of volunteer regiments, but a few had begun their careers as enlisted men. One of the post commanders, Maj. Leslie Smith of the 2nd Infantry, had entered as a private in 1849. In 1887 at Fort Spokane, most of the second lieutenants were West Point graduates.

The career of Capt. Thomas F. Quinn, a 4th Infantry company commander at the post, was probably typical. Born in Ireland, he started out as a musician in the 6th Infantry in 1853. In ten years he rose to the highest enlisted rank, sergeant major of the 4th Infantry Regiment, and then was made a second lieutenant in the middle of the Civil War. He was breveted (promoted on an honorary basis) for gallantry at Petersburg, Virginia,

and became a regular captain in 1876. At Fort Spokane he remained a captain despite at least one court-martial for disrespect to his commanding officer. He retired at his own request at the end of the Spanish-American War after a career of nearly half a century.

Desertions were common at Fort Spokane, but no worse than at other army posts. The annual desertion rate reached almost eight percent in some years. A total of 167 men deserted Fort Spokane, most of them during the years 1882-89. As the following table shows, the favorite time of year to leave military life without permission was spring.

Seasonal Desertion at Fort Spokane

Season	Months	No. of Desertions
Spring	March-May	73
Summer	June-August	48
Fall	September-November	39
Winter	December-February	7
TOTAL (1880-98)		167

The month of May was the worst--or best--depending on the point of view. No one ever left the post in February--the benefits of a warm barracks and hot food were too overwhelming. Until the summer of 1882, that is during the time that living conditions were most primitive, there were only two desertions. This means that boredom, which set in

once the major construction projects were finished, may have been an important cause of desertion. The problem became much less acute in the 1890s for reasons that are not so apparent, except that more avenues of recreation were made available.

It is more than likely that most deserters had recently joined the Army. Recruits came from eastern depots and were mostly city boys; many were also Irish and German immigrants. They came having received little or no training at the depots. One gang of recruits almost wrecked the village of Deep Creek Falls near Spokane as it travelled toward the post.

Some offenses were more innocent. A young private, Andrew Bennett, abandoned his guard post while drunk and was sentenced at a General Court-martial held at Fort Walla Walla to six months at hard labor and forfeiture of \$10 per month of his pay for the same period. With the help of his company commander, Bennett wrote the following appeal.

Fort Spokane, W.T.
December 8th, 1884

Assistant Adjutant General
Department of the Columbia
Through Commanding Officer,
Co. G, 2nd Inf

Sir:

I most respectfully ask that the unexecuted

portion of my sentence may be remitted. I am only a young soldier (having enlisted July 31, 1883) and at the time I left my guard I did not really understand the enormity of the offense, although had I been sober it would never have occurred.

If the Department Commander will be kind enough to grant this remission, I can safely say that I will appreciate it, and will endeavor to prove, by my future conduct, that the leniency exercised in my case has not been misplaced.

Hoping that this application will meet with a favorable consideration.

I am, Sir,
Very Respectfully
Your Obedient Servant
Andrew Bennett
Private Co. G, 2nd Inf.

The company commander endorsed the letter, requesting leniency, but as the petition moved up the chain of command, all other officers, including the Department Commander, recommended against it, citing the damage that might be done to discipline. But when it finally reached Major General Pope, commanding the Division of the Pacific at San

Francisco, he sided with Bennett and his company commander in remitting three months of confinement and loss of pay.

In his cell at Fort Spokane, Bennett could not have been suffering greatly. The wayward soldier at Fort Spokane was watched over by his peers. The prisoners worked under guard during the day, and spent the night in the brick cells of the guard house. These cells with their timeless graffiti on the walls may still be seen. Even then there might be a few amenities. One soldier remembered many years later how a Fort Spokane prisoner had been supplied with whiskey through the bars of the cell window. It had been piped in through the barrel of a rifle. This may be apocryphal, but it must have been at least a genuine fantasy.

Unlike Private Bennett's merciful captain, some company commanders kept their distance. Several years later when Lt. Col Jacob Ford Kent of the 4th Infantry was post commander, an occasion arose which required the colonel to reprimand a company commander for instructing his non-commissioned officers that he was not to be bothered by the men of the company. Kent, a man who had graduated from West Point in 1861, sternly reminded his subordinate that an enlisted man must always be allowed to see his commanding officer.

Soldiers and officers seem to have mixed socially on two types of occasions. The first was in the saloon where the details of this intercourse are murky. The second was on

the baseball diamond; baseball was popular on post. Games were played between companies and against teams from surrounding communities such as Davenport. Newspapers often carried stories of the games. The "Boys in Blue", as they were called by the press, seem to have usually lost to the sturdy sons of the farmers.

Housing

Enlisted men lived in six company barracks. These were two-story frame buildings each of which had a kitchen, mess hall, reading room, and rooms for non-commissioned officers on the ground floor, and a long dormitory on the second for the privates and corporals. In the dormitory, iron beds were arranged in two lines, leaving an aisle down the center occupied by one or two iron heating stoves and circular racks holding the rifles of the men. Wooden chests rested at the foot of each bed containing the uniforms of each man. Along the walls behind the beds were shelves stacked with individual field gear. Every company had two bathtubs.

Most of the officers lived in "double sets" or double quarters that were arranged in a row across the parade ground from the enlisted barracks. Higher-ranking officers occupied single dwellings. Behind these were wood sheds and quarters for the Chinese servants, some of whom, however, lived under the

same roof as their employers. In front of the houses, barracks, and other important buildings, stood lines of street lamps that burned kerosene. Prisoners were responsible for lighting and extinguishing them. Indoor illumination was by kerosene lamps also.

The plumbing was elaborate: outside privies for officers went out of use very early, but the troops in the barracks always had just "privy vaults" out behind their quarters. Scattered here and there about the post were fire plugs supplied by the water reservoir on hill as well as the spring system; the steam pump provided river water for sewers and irrigation. Drinking water was piped from a steady spring on the hillside above the post. Laundry was done at the river by Chinese and Indian launderers, but some of the enlisted men washed their own clothes in the wash houses.

Health

Fort Spokane developed a reputation for being a salubrious place. The climate was moderate and population centers--sources of contagious disease--were far away. This was not quite as true in the first three years when the buildings were inferior and much of the post consisted of tents. During the winter a number of men would be in the hospital, which, until 1883, was a line of tents. When the post was abandoned, the graves in the

cemetery were exhumed for removal of the remains to Fort Wright at Spokane. Only 35 bodies were found, which was considered few for a 19-year period. Some of the remains were of drowning victims in the Spokane and Columbia Rivers.

One of the major problems with the post's situation was the oppressive stillness and sense of loneliness. There were few noises. Surgeon Hubbard reported in 1893 that the men suspected that Fort Spokane may have been the inspiration for the poet who wrote: "Here desolation keeps eternal Sabbaths." The Ponderosa pine parkland on the lava rims on two sides of the post possesses a beauty quite alien to a European or a North American from the east. They can also seem quite empty or lifeless to someone not accustomed to roaming among them. And, a soldier could then look across at the abruptly rising Okanogan Highlands and know that the forest extended north from there for hundreds of then roadless miles.

Commissary records from the 1890s show much reliance on potatoes and onions in the diet. Also listed frequently were canned baked beans and bacon. Beef was shipped from Spokane. Maple syrup was rather common, and a gallon of vinegar was issued for every 100 men daily. Bread, of course, was a staple, fresh at the post and in the form of hard biscuits for field rations. When vegetables were in short supply, regulations

prescribed an increase in the bread ration.

Despite the fact that post and company gardens were common features of Army installations in the last century, we find Lieutenant Colonel Mears, post commander in 1891, writing a letter in favor of a post garden, as if none had existed previously. And although fresh vegetables were prized and their value in preventing scurvy known, they were nevertheless not considered to be quite as important as they are today. Under the heading of "vegetables" on the basic ration list of 1881, beans, dried peas, rice, and hominy may be noted. Pests seem to have been few except for bedbugs that infested the barracks, particularly after the paint peeled off the walls. A perennial health problem was the bad whiskey sold in the saloons, or "hog ranches," off the post; men frequently ended up in the hospital after only a moderate bender. Drug addiction was limited to the hospital staff, one post surgeon in particular. This came to light only after he contracted blood poisoning from having shaved a corn on his toe too close. He became delirious and was near death when the hospital steward discovered that the good doctor had dosed himself repeatedly with 20 grains of morphine. The doctor saw nothing wrong, since that was his "regular" dose. The steward saved him with three grains of belladonna. A Doctor Gaudy had to walk through the snow from Spokane to attend the post surgeon and take up the post doctor's case

load of two tuberculosis patients.

About spiritual health very little is known. The post chaplain was a popular man, but seems to have had relatively little to do. Church attendance at post chapels in general during the period was slack, but no statistics from Fort Spokane are available.

Schools and Education

Besides the regular training always going on at the post there were four types of schools in operation, though not always continuously. There was an evening school for enlisted men, another for officers, called the lyceum, a day school for the children of enlisted men, and also a Sunday school. The first and last were optional; the others were mandatory, when in operation.

Little is known about the evening school for enlisted men except that it usually was poorly attended. Once, when attendance dipped to two men, it was temporarily shut down even though its functioning was required by statute. In this school men who were poorly educated or illiterate could study English and U.S. History. The curriculum depended on the knowledge and often the whims of the enlisted men who taught. In the 1880s this institution was scorned by most officers and enlisted men.

The officers' lyceum was part of an Army-wide effort to increase the training of the officer

corps beyond the rudiments learned at West Point or from experience in the field. The extensive education program for officers in the Prussian Army was the principal model, but the lyceum or lecture series and seminar was also a popular civilian institution. In April, 1893, 33 sessions of the officers' lyceum were held. The subjects studied were military law, field engineering, the study of regulations (including one set dated 1863) and minor tactics. Tactics received the most attention, followed by military law. Officers were compelled to read papers of their own composition before these sessions. In October of 1893 the following papers were read:

"Why do Soldiers Desert the Service of the United States?"

"The Post Exchange"

"Armies of Asia and Europe"

All of these were timely: desertion was a great problem--five men had just deserted in March; the post exchange had been recently instituted, an outgrowth of the post canteen; and the armies of Asia and Europe were a subject of an admired book by the Army's foremost theorist of the time, Gen. Emory Upton.

The school for the children of enlisted men had a belated start because for the first two years no children were on post. Once it started, between 15 and 30 children attended. Looking at plans of the post, it is something of a problem to decide where the families of non-commissioned officers lived, because only three or

four quarters for them are ever depicted. The teacher was an enlisted man detailed for the job, and school had to close whenever the man's duties called him away from the post. How officers' children were educated is a question for which there is little information. Some were apparently sent away to the cities to live with relatives or to boarding schools. During the 1890s officers' children were taught by an officer's daughter in her own home on post.

Although not a school, the Post Reading Room was a part of the Army's program of education, a required fixture at every permanent post. Until 1883, the reading room was housed in a tent, but that year it was moved to the guard house. Aside from the periodicals, novels and non-fiction books were available. An annual request for periodicals made in the spring of 1885 is typical of the kind of reading matter requested.

Quarterlies:

Journal of the Military Institute of the United States

Monthlies:

Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly

Harper's Monthly

The Century

Weeklies:

Army and Navy Register

Burlington Hawkeye

Brooklyn Sunday Eagle

Frank Leslie's Fact and Fiction

Louisville Courier-Journal

New York Clipper

New York Weekly

New York Ledger

Chicago Inter-Ocean

Detroit Free Press

Frank Leslie's Illustrated

Judge

Life

St. Louis Globe-Democrat

New York Sun

New York Sunday Mercury

Philadelphia Sunday Times

Puck

San Francisco Chronicle

Texas Siftings

Semi-Weeklies:

New York Times

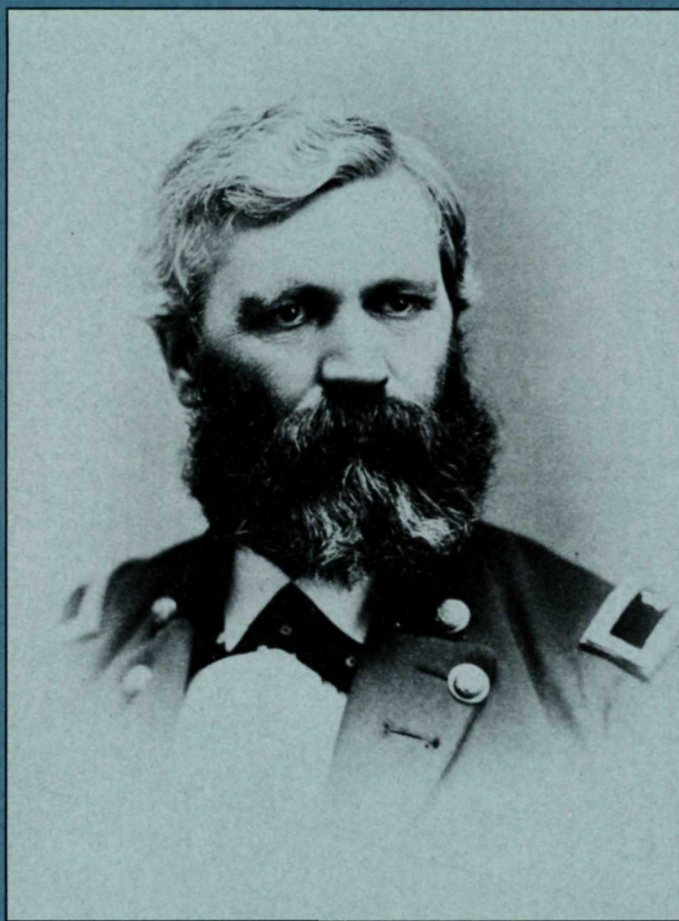
Dailies:

New York Times, with Sunday edition

Portland Oregonian

This is an impressive and interesting list of late 19th century newspapers. The most curious fact is that there is only one Pacific Northwest paper in the whole group.

One of the most interesting forms of education was the organized hunting camp. This was first tried at Fort Colville and then brought to Fort Spokane in 1883. Conducted during the winter in the mountains, the object was to teach self-reliance, cold-weather survival, and hunting skills. The surplus meat obtained was



Oliver O. Howard had a long and distinguished career. Civil War general, winner of the Medal of Honor, commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau, first president of Howard University which

was named for him, and superintendent of West Point were some of his activities and accomplishments over his years of service. (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Cull White)



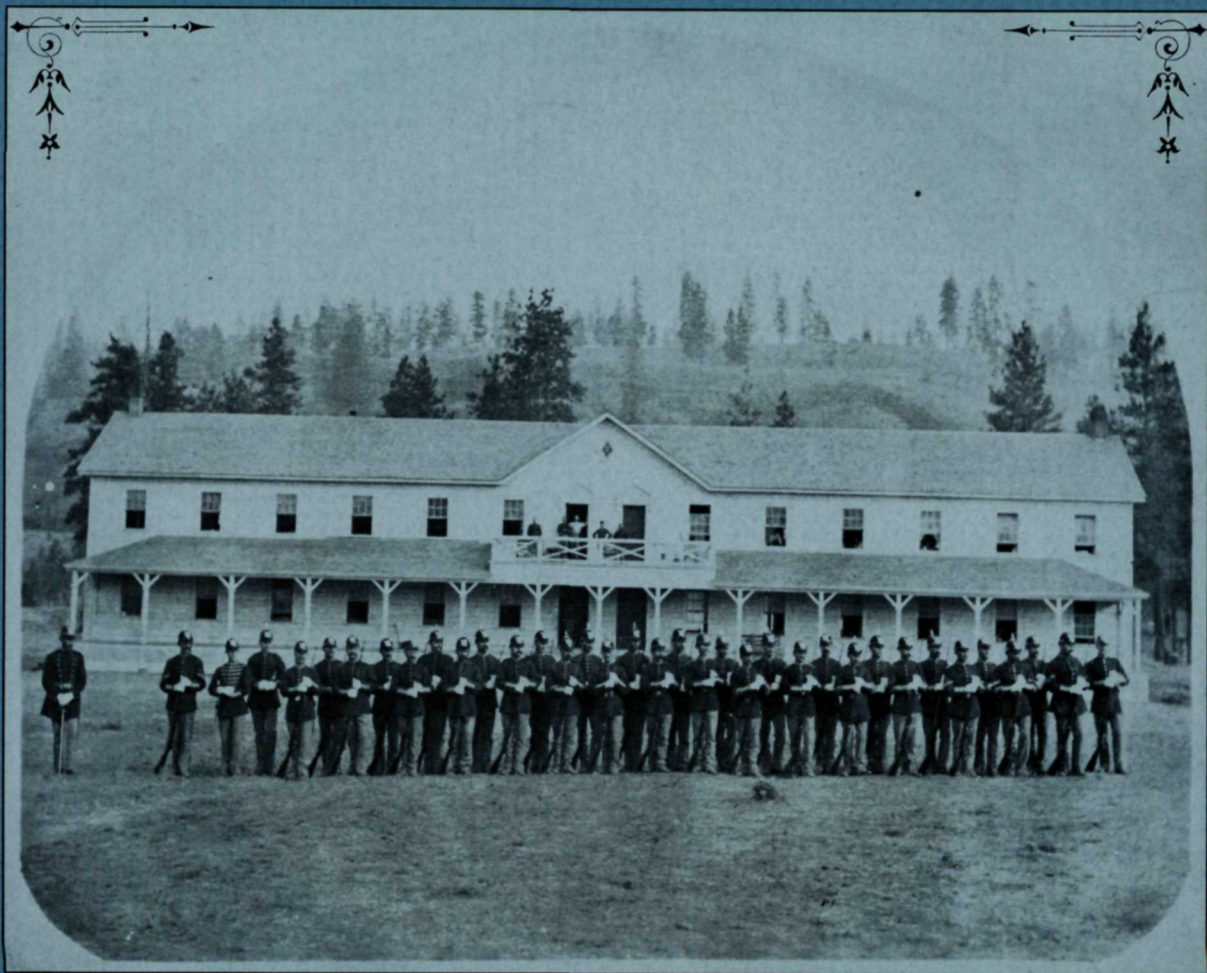
The deep, fast-moving Columbia could be crossed at Fort Spokane only by ferry. To keep from being carried downstream by the current, the ferry was anchored to a cable, not visible in this photograph, that stretched across the river. The ferrymen then poled the boat from one side to the other.



By 1895 Fort Spokane was a well-established military post situated on the level bench between the river and the bluffs and scattered among the trees.



Four friends, two soldiers and two civilians, pose for the photographer. Perhaps one of them is leaving and will carry this memento with him as a reminder of good friendships. The man with the dog is the post tinsmith.



Members of Company C, 2nd Infantry stand before their quarters in dress uniform. The spiked helmets were copied from the uniforms of imperial Germany whose military prowess had been proven in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71. The men standing on the porch of the second story of the enlisted men's quarters are probably glad that they were not part of this dress parade.



Lieutenant Colonel H. C. Merriam, commander at Fort Spokane 1880, 1882-1885, presided over the most unsettled years. This photo was taken a few years later in Wyoming.



Baseball's popularity was firmly established by 1894 when this picture was taken. It was a great form of recreation and provided a friendly means of contact between the soldiers and the people of the surrounding communities.



Supplies were brought to Fort Spokane from the railhead of 55 miles away. A military contingent always accompanied the convoy of wagons. The teamsters were most likely civilians.



A cigar, a glass of beer, and a game of cards helped to while away the long off-duty hours. That these two men chose to transfer their familiar surroundings to the photographer's studio suggests that these activities were a favorite pastime.



Chief Moses' strong personality is readily apparent in this photograph. Forced to deal with a world of which he knew little, Moses sought to maintain his people's customs and traditions and to protect them from white encroachment.



Like Moses, Skolaskin was a strong leader too, and indeed the two men often clashed because of their strong personalities, for neither was willing to yield to the other. As the leader of the Nespelem and Sanpoil, Skolaskin could take pride in the fact that his people were one of the few tribes in the Northwest who had a reservation created out of their homeland. This photograph was taken about 1900.



These members of the Salish tribe were photographed at Fort Spokane in 1883. Some articles of white apparel have already crept into the Salishes' traditional dress, notably the little girl's boots.



The administration building was considered to be exceptionally fine by several of the commanding officers. The atten-

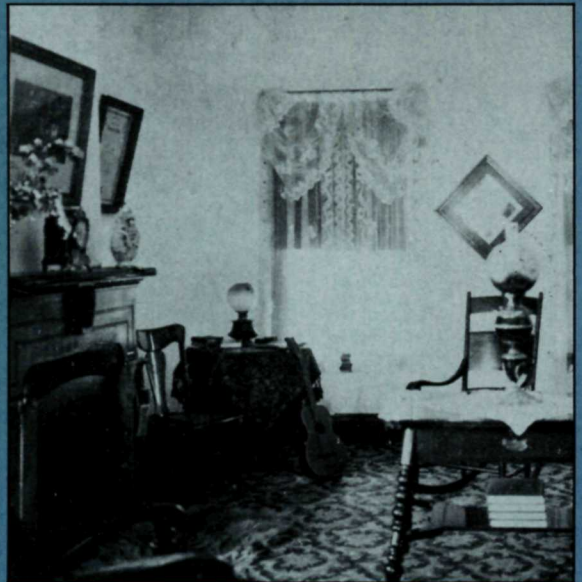
tion to non-functional detail, such as the elaborate cupola, was typical of the architecture of the late 19th century.



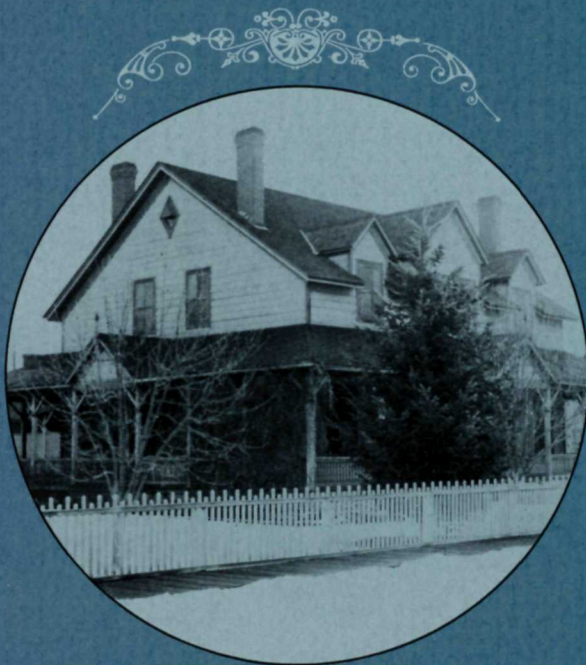
These officer's quarters, a duplex, were for lieutenants and captains with families. The commanding officer lived in a single family dwelling. Notice how much larger this duplex is than the one for non-commissioned officers.



This 1895 photograph shows the dwelling that was home for non-commissioned officers. Besides being much smaller than the officer's quarters, it was also a two-family house.



The parlor of one of the officer's homes is typically decorated for the years of the late 19th century. The qualities of permanence and comfort indicated pointedly that the white man has won his long struggle with the Indians of the American West.



The commanding officer's residence was the largest and grandest house on the post. The wide porch helped keep the first floor rooms cool in the summer and protected them from the elements in the winter.



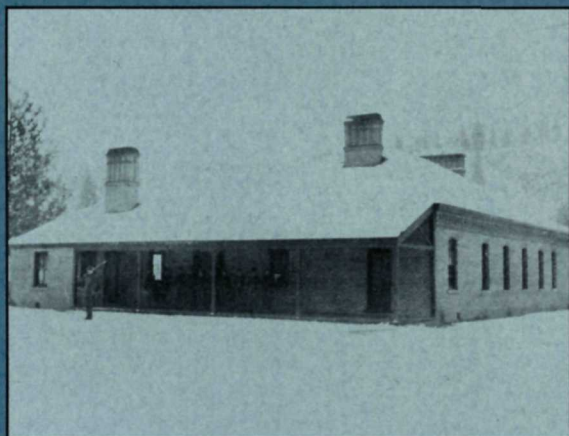
Fort Spokane's plumbing system was quite elaborate. Drinking water was piped in from springs while the pump house, shown here, brought river water for use in the sewers and for irrigation.



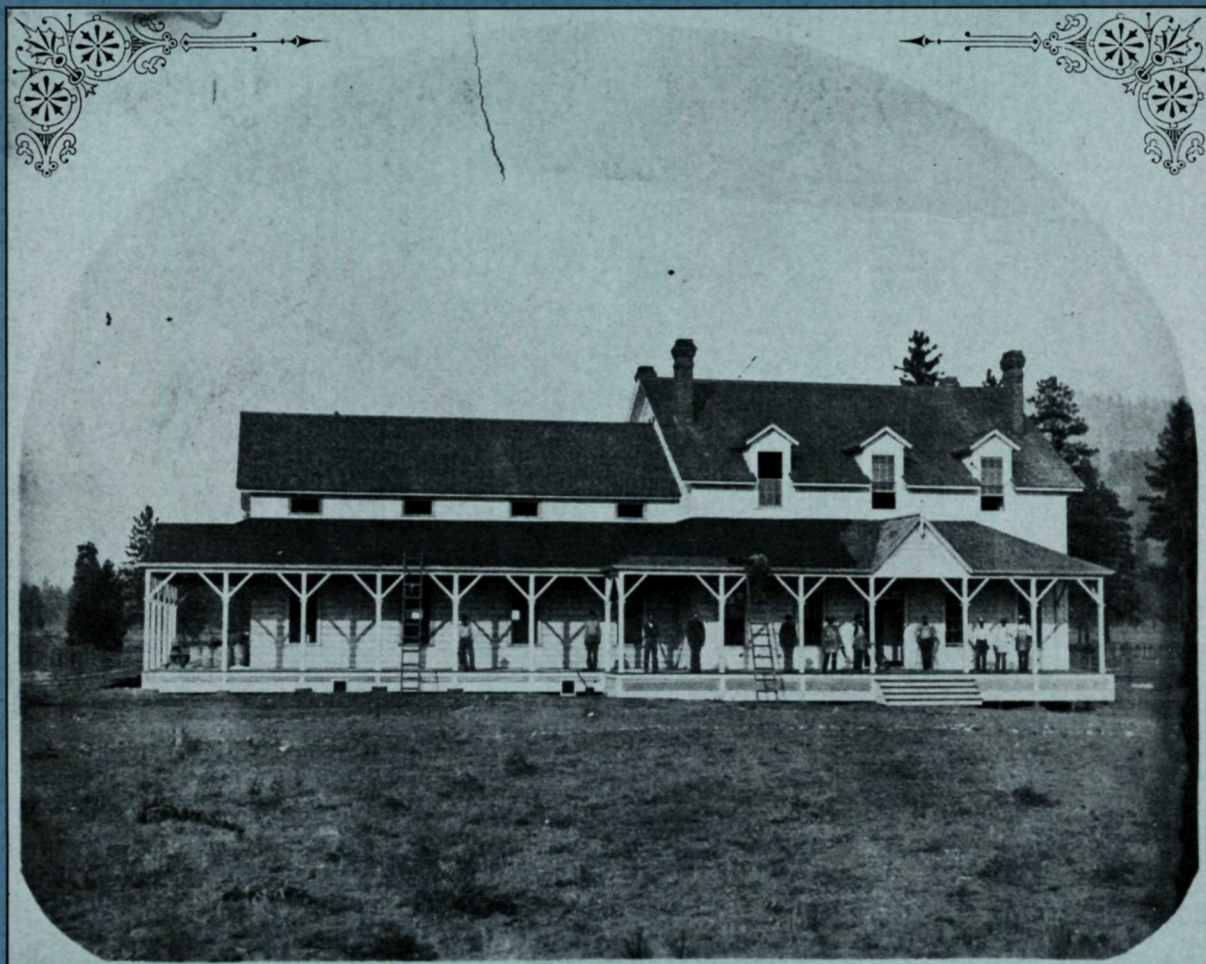
At the sawmill timber was cut into lumber for construction on the post and into firewood.



The second story of the enlisted men's barracks was for sleeping quarters. The ground floor contained the kitchen and cooks rooms, a large mess room, wash room, day room, library, armory and non-commissioned officer's rooms.



The guardhouse was one of the few brick buildings at Fort Spokane. It was a secure structure that served well for the minor crimes committed by the troops. The contingent of troops for the day's guard duty are drawn up in front of the guardhouse.



In the construction boom of the early 1880's a hospital was one of the buildings that had to be built. The man on crutches near the door may be a patient looking forward to the completion of the work.

sent to the post to enliven the board. The camps in 1883 bagged 60 deer; a first sergeant was the top hunter; he killed 12. Following him with ten was the post surgeon. These training camps apparently ceased a few years later when the scarcity of game began to be severely felt by the Indians and their agent.

In contrast with today, men did not join the Army to learn a trade other than soldiering; often they were skilled at one already. For example, in late 1886 the soldiers at Fort Spokane had among them:

1 Baker	3 Cooks
3 Blacksmiths	1 Druggist
2 Bricklayers	1 Civil Engineer
12 Carpenters	2 Jewellers
16 Clerks	1 Moulder
7 Painters	7 Teamsters
2 Plasterers	1 Plumber
3 Printers	1 Harness Maker
1 Saddler	2 Machinists
3 Shoemakers	4 Locksmiths
1 Stonemason	3 Tinsmiths
2 Tailors	2 Telegraph Operators

Probably some of these talents found outlets for employment, either officially or on a casual basis. Yet the civilian staff of the post, usually about six men, took care of several of the functions listed above. Among the civilians in 1885 were a blacksmith, a wheelwright, and an engineer, each employed at

\$80 a month, and also three teamsters at half that rate of pay.

Other Diversions

For most of the garrison's history, a post trader or sutler operated a concession store at the edge of post where food, tobacco, sundries, beer, and spirits were sold to the troops. The prices were regulated by a committee of officers. In the early eighties an Army order prohibited the sale of liquor on posts. This was no solution since, as the commander complained in 1881, "low groceries" sprang up immediately, just off the military reservation resulting in even worse behavior. The order was rescinded.

Bockemuehl, whose local brewery supplied around 2,000 barrels of beer to the troops annually, was once caught trying to sell his beer on post, a privilege restricted to the post trader. Actually, Bockemuehl could only meet part of the demand; the men also consumed vast amounts of bottled beer brought by rail from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Even after the post trader was allowed to resume the sale of alcohol, the men continued to go off post to the hamlet of Miles for more and for other forms of entertainment. Taking a moral tone, Lieutenant Colonel Kent wrote in 1888 that the "so-called town of Miles, within pistol range of the post, consists of a mere apology of a store . . . mostly a drinking

saloon . . . and two brothels." He recommended that a post canteen be built with a shooting gallery; the troops had already cut the logs for this "amusement hall" and all they needed now from the Army were doors, windows and nails.

A post canteen was established soon after, and a gymnasium, designed partly as a substitute for the brothels, may have been put in one of the empty barracks. In 1892, when the Army post exchange system replaced canteens, one of the barracks was converted to this use at Fort Spokane. The exchange, governed by a board of non-commissioned officers, provided the men with cheaper necessities and draught beer, and the profits were to be returned to the companies to be used for improving the mess hall menu. At Fort Spokane the exchange also had a much-used lunch counter, a library, and billiard hall.

Social life seems to have picked up remarkably in the 1890s. There were minstrel troupes and even a dramatic company on post. Balls and dances were frequent and elegant, as were the teas, receptions, and lawn parties. On one occasion the dancing master, Bert O. Pyle, organized a "sheet and pillowcase ball" which was enjoyed immensely by 140 of "the most popular people" at Fort Spokane. For that ball the centerpiece decoration was a large flag.

During the hot summers several officers' families might camp a few miles up the river in

a small city of tents. Servants, of course, did all the camp chores; the campers, led by the Chaplain, went fishing.

Arms

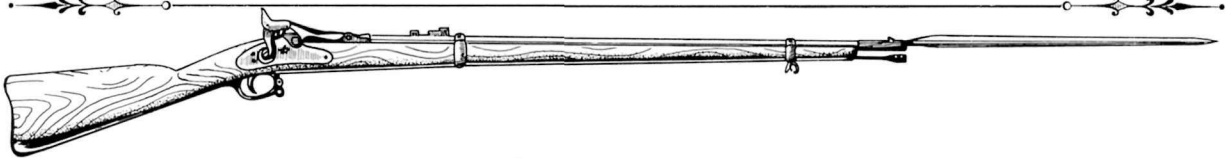
Until early 1894 the Fort Spokane infantry were armed with the Model 1873 45-caliber Springfield rifle, the cavalry with a cut-down or carbine version of the same weapon. This was a single-shot rifle with the infantry version considerably longer than today's counterparts; it had the overall appearance of the older muskets and caplocks. Called a "piece" by the soldier, it was loaded one cartridge at a time at the breech with a large copper or brass-cased, black-powder cartridge.

Repeating arms were known and in production, but not adopted by the Army, partly because a rapid-fire rifle would have increased the problem of ammunition supply. The Springfield was regarded as very accurate at long range. Even Indians armed with repeating Winchesters could be kept at their distance simply by virtue of the superior range of the Springfield.

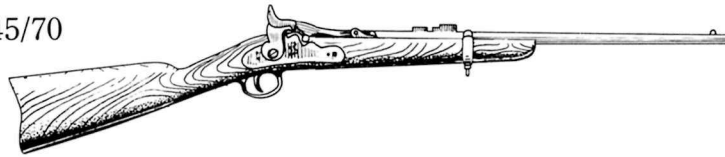
In 1894 the Krag-Jorgensen rifle of Danish invention replaced the Springfield. The Krag was a bolt-action repeating rifle. Officers were armed with Army-issue 45-caliber revolvers although, as elsewhere, they probably also supplied themselves with pistols of their own choosing.

For most of its history, the artillery at Fort Spokane amounted to two field guns, plus a Hotchkiss rapid-fire mountain rifle and a multi-barrelled Gatling gun, forerunner of the machine gun. Most likely one of the field guns was used to signal reveille. These guns were

If in looking at photographs of troops from this period we have difficulty distinguishing them from Civil War soldiers, there is a reason: in the 1890s the Army was still trying to use up some categories of supplies manufactured for the Union Army. Some of the records that



Springfield Rifle .45/70



Springfield Carbine .45/70

probably 12-pounder "Napoleons," relics of the Civil War. The Hotchkiss and Gatling guns sometimes accompanied the troops on practice marches. Like the field guns they were mounted on wheels and had attached caissons that held the ammunition.

Artillery first came to the post in September of 1883, only after special accommodations had been built. For just a short time in 1884 the garrison possessed a "heavy gun." The Gatling gun was taken away forever in 1893, and for several years thereafter the artillery consisted of four field guns and the Hotchkiss. The latter went with the 16th Infantry to Cuba in April 1898, and the antiquated field guns were transferred to the new post at Spokane.

survive from Fort Spokane were written on Civil War stationery. Critics cynically alleged that the "hard bread" field rations they were issued in the 1890s may in some cases have been leftovers from the Civil War. Though untrue, the exaggeration was a telling comment on the quality of Army food.

Communication and Transportation

The age of rapid communication had already started when Camp Spokane came into existence. By March 1881 the post was linked with the world by telegraph. The line went to Spokane where it terminated in a

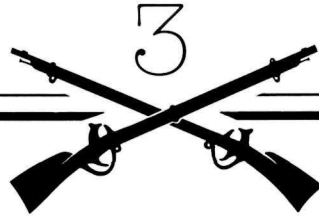
telegraph office manned by a signal sergeant who relayed messages over other lines running to Vancouver Barracks and Fort Coeur d'Alene. A telephone link to Davenport just to the south was opened in 1887. By 1890 long distance calls to Chicago were possible. Both telegraph and phone lines were frequently down and service was sometimes interrupted for weeks while the men struggled to make repairs. Older, but more reliable means of communication sometimes had to be used as in 1898 when the war with Spain loomed. An officer in Spokane kept the command back at post posted on developments by using carrier pigeons, for the telephone and telegraph were again out of order.

Telegraph operators at Fort Spokane were sometimes signal corps men trained for the job, but sometimes a man detailed from one of the companies was taught to work the instrument. Complaints were once made about an operator who could receive only 25 to 30 words a minute. That was no mean feat, however, for standards in the 1940s called for receiving only ten words a minute. Military telegrams from Fort Spokane were usually followed by a letter in the mail containing the "official" copy in writing.

At the founding of Camp Spokane in 1880 the accessibility to the post was considered good, for only 55 miles separated it from the Northern Pacific Railroad at Sprague. In March 1882, regular stagecoach service

was begun twice-weekly from Davenport, then called Cottonwood. The line carried mail, passengers, and freight. By the mid-1880s a tri-weekly stage connected the city of Spokane with the post, and the running time was only 12 hours. In the 1890s the distance between the fort and the railroad began to seem too great, despite the fact that a line of the Central Washington Railroad had been built through Davenport just 24 miles away.

Wheeled vehicles used at the post came under the jurisdiction of the quartermaster. In October, 1887, for instance, they consisted of 13 Army wagons, 4 escort wagons, a spring wagon, an ambulance, 3 "trucks", and 6 carts. There were also 8 horses, 65 draught mules, and 9 pack mules in the same department. Cavalry animals were counted separately. In the same month and year there were 42 serviceable and 8 unserviceable cavalry horses. A comparison of the monthly returns of serviceable cavalry horses and cavalry men shows that there were frequently men without mounts.



Restricting and Settling the Indians

The history of Fort Spokane's dealings with the Indian tribes in its vicinity is not a continuous story. Two reasons contributed to this. The first and most important one is that the conversations, dealings in councils, and thoughts and fears of the Indians are almost all lost to us. But enough references to secret meetings, long-distance messengers, and visitations to fisheries survive to make it very plain that the tribes were in constant communication with each other during this period on matters of war and peace and wrongs suffered at the hands of whites. For the Indians it was a ceaseless event, a connected story and a hopeless nightmare. The military at Fort Spokane were aware of only the most obvious, the occasional eruption of Indian passion.

The second reason for the discontinuity was the government's Indian policy. In effect, the policy can best be described as no policy until the moment one was needed. The soldiers, therefore, functioned like a fire brigade; they spoke and acted only when a flash of lightening out in the forests and grasslands threatened to burn up the country. Most of these troubles revolved around problems arising from the reservation policy.

The Reservations

When Camp Spokane was occupied in late 1880 there were two large reservations

north of the Columbia River, the Moses Reservation between the Okanogan River and Lake Chelan and the Colville Reservation extending eastwards from the Okanogan to the Columbia where its course runs north to south. Most of the Indians intended for these reserves lived elsewhere. A third reservation was planned to provide refuge for some of the Spokane Indians on a tract of land running from the Columbia River on the west to Tsimikaine Creek on the east. General Howard had already ordered his commanders at Chelan, Colville, and Coeur d'Alene to prevent white settlement in this area although President Rutherford B. Hayes was not to set it aside by executive order until January, 1881, in accord with Howard's recommendation. Camp Spokane was set just south of this line of reservations and, until the agency formed its own police force around 1890, the job of policing the reservations was the Army's.

Once the boundaries of the reservations were laid down, keeping the Indians within and the whites without were two rather difficult matters. Several of the tribes in the northern plateau--the Spokanes, Sanpoil, Nespelem, Okanogan, Columbia or Moses Salish, Methow, and Chelan--were in the habit of spending part of each year south of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers. In this high broken country with its deserts, small lakes, and occasional patches of timber, the Indians harvested native roots and also planted

potatoes each spring. Some of them even wintered there. The demarcation of the reservation boundaries did not halt these practices necessary to survival. Bands of Indians traveling on the plateau were a source of irritation to whites, but the presence of troops did much to keep fears below the level of panic.

North of Camp Spokane in the Colville Valley were numerous farms belonging to the Colville and Chewelah Indians, and to the east of them, more farms of the Kalispels in the Pend d'Oreille or Clark's Fork Valley. These areas were outside the reservations, yet well populated with Indians. White settlers had established homesteads there too, sometimes by pioneering on Indian improvements, and there was occasionally fear on both sides. Fort Colville, garrisoned since 1859, was intended to keep everything there under control, but General Howard planned to abandon this post which was too isolated for the rapid deployment of troops. It could not be abandoned, however, until 1885 partly because, as the Indian Agent, John Simms, explained, other Indians such as disaffected Nez Perce, Palouse, and Columbia Salish under Moses had come into the Colville Valley. They were attracted by the relative abundance of food there. Some of them, especially the Palouse and Nez Perce from the Snake River, had already lost their farms to white settlers. So Colville continued as a subpost under the command of Fort Spokane, and for one year the senior

military officer actually resided at Fort Colville along with the cavalry. In 1884 Indian Agent Sidney Waters requested the assistance of the cavalry at Colville in evicting Indian families from their ancestral homes in the new town of Colville.

The Moses Reservation Problem

Although the potential existed for inflammatory friction, not much of consequence occurred until 1883. Up to that time, Moses and his Columbia Salish had moved on and off the Moses Reservation in their annual quest for food and shelter. Moses did refuse to cooperate with the Indian Agent. He also, according to the agent, instructed the Methow, Okanogan, Nespelem and Sanpoil tribes, all allegedly in fear of him, not to give any information to the agent. And to top it off, Moses claimed that he was under the exclusive jurisdiction of the commander of Fort Spokane.

In the northern part of the reserve, a number of Okanogans under Chief Sarsopkin had been quietly developing their farms near the Canadian border. Also on the Moses Reservation were Chelans and Methows within their ancestral valleys. Many of these Indians had been farming for more than 20 years and had homesteads often envied by the whites.

As so often happened in the West, it was the miners who stimulated the unrest of 1883.

Prospectors had found lead and silver ore in Toad's Coulee on the Moses Reservation near the Canadian border, and mines begun in the 1860s were revived about 1880. In a conference at Camp Spokane in 1881, Agent John Simms tried to persuade Moses and Sarsopkin to give up this northern part of the Moses Reservation. Both rejected the suggestion. The commanding officer at Fort Spokane, Maj. Leslie Smith, reported to his superiors that if the Department of the Interior persisted in taking away this portion, the Army would be faced with suppressing another Indian outbreak. The warning went unheeded. The Army therefore found itself in the awkward position of upholding Indian rights against the Department of the Interior's Office of Indian Affairs and also against local pressures.

In the meantime the mines kept on working and besides miners they attracted land-hungry whites who began to settle on Indian farms in Toad's Coulee. Moses had already lost control of one ranch in the area to squatters. Admittedly some of the squatters appear to have been there before the creation of the reserve. But other whites began taking farms from the Okanogan Indians, including one belonging to Sarsopkin, who notified the military that unless they sent troops within two weeks he would initiate action himself.

Rumors circulated and reports appeared in the newspapers that President Arthur had withdrawn part of the Moses Reservation and

restored it to the public domain. This move, of which neither the Army nor the Indians had been informed, certainly had the appearance of being underhanded, and the Indians were especially galled by the way white squatters taunted them with the information. Merriam at Fort Spokane fired off one telegram after another demanding to know the facts.

Another rumor circulated that Moses had called a war council to meet at the Spokane River on the first of June. Merriam instructed Moses to send his people off the reservation and down to Moses Lake, their traditional camas-gathering grounds, which he did. Without a word to anyone 300 men with up to 1,000 horses moved south through Grand Coulee, noticed by only two small parties of terrified whites. What Moses did with the women and children is not known.

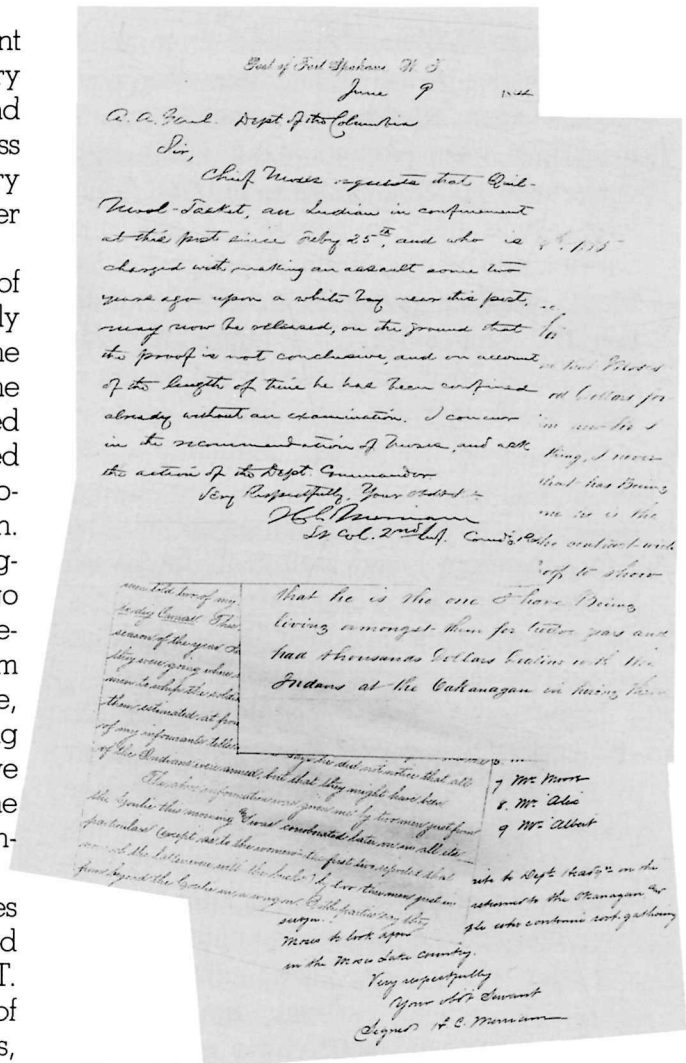
Simultaneously, Colonel Merriam sent a cavalry squadron, followed by two companies of infantry sent up from Vancouver, to the mouth of Foster Creek to await orders. This force became a wedge between the Salish party to the south and the troubled reservation on the north.

Moses was also ordered to meet with Sarsopkin in an effort to cool the latter's justified wrath. This was also accomplished, and then Moses rejoined his men at Moses Lake. Sarsopkin nevertheless called another council of his own people and the Chelans and Methows, but this gathering quickly broke

up at the approach of a cavalry column sent by Merriam into the Okanogan Country under Captain Baldwin. The Army guide and interpreter, Arthur Chapman, was sent across the reservation through the Sanpoil country toward the scene of the trouble to further calm the situation.

When Chapman arrived in the vicinity of Toad's Coulee the crisis had seemingly evaporated. Sarsopkin informed him that he was quite willing for the whites to settle in the 15 mile strip which had already been restored to the public domain, provided he be granted some compensation and the right of his people to retain their farms without molestation. The crisis was over and, at the Army's suggestion, Moses and Sarsopkin planned to go to Washington and arrive at a new agreement. Two years later, when Henry Merriam relinquished command of Fort Spokane, General Howard credited him with having prevented war. Merriam, quite willing to give credit where credit was due, claimed that the cool diplomacy of Moses was equally responsible for the happy outcome.

Merriam volunteered to accompany Moses to Washington, but at the last minute changed his plans. General of the Army William T. Sherman, was on his way West on a tour of the northern boundary of the United States, so Merriam remained at Fort Spokane to ready the post for inspection. It was supposed that he intended to mollify the General with an excellent showing at Fort Spokane, so that the latter would be less displeased at the con-



The Moses Reservation incident was accompanied by a flurry of correspondence describing many different viewpoints. These representing only a handful are from the National Archives.

dition of his sub-post to Fort Colville. Sherman and his entourage, including the Department of the Columbia Commander, General Miles, passed through with much advance, posting guides, horses, wagons, and supplies.

Fort Spokane was pronounced in excellent condition, and in the official report Fort Colville was passed over as having been recently abandoned, though in fact it was to be garrisoned for two more years.

Moses, Sarsopkin, and their party went east by train. In Washington, Moses was talked out of his entire reservation in exchange for a thousand-dollar personal annuity. Had Merriam gone to Washington this travesty might not have occurred. But the right of the Indians in the Moses Reservation to remain on their farms was retained on paper provided they would allow their allotments to be surveyed. Some 42 claims were surveyed over the next two years, the surveyors carrying out the work under the protection of troops from Fort Spokane.

As agreed in Washington, Moses and most of his people moved to Nespelem on the Colville Reservation. Many Chelans, however, refused to go or to even have their farms surveyed. An unsurveyed or unfilled Indian homestead on the public domain was unthinkable in the late 19th century. Making it even harder on Indians who might wish to farm on the white model was the repeated insistence by the government that any Indian who filed a formal claim to land off a reservation, had to sever himself from his tribe and

his tribal rights. This policy insured the ruin of the Native self-reliant agricultural economy that had come into being during the preceding half century.

The Chelan inability to come to terms with the white law, indeed even to understand concepts so alien to their way of life, resulted in troops being sent in 1890 from Fort Spokane. Chief Long Jim and his followers were apprehended by the 45 men of Company A with two Indian Scouts. The Chelans were forcibly removed from their homes and sent east to the Colville Reservation to join the crowded, sick, and starving Indians from many tribes who were by then living at Nespelem.

Moses' earlier move to the Nespelem Valley aroused immediate protest from the Sanpoil and Nespelem Chief Skolaskin. After all, Moses and his people had been accused of stealing horses from the Sanpoil and others on the Colville Reservation and selling them to the whites. This added source of trouble, while prevented by the Army from flaring into open hostilities, remained a problem that echoes to this day.

Preserving the Nez Perce

In 1885 Fort Spokane found itself with a new band of Indians to defend. The new burden assumed by the Army was a group of

Nez Perce prisoners under Chief Joseph who, after their defeat by the Army in 1877 in Montana, had been sent to exile in Oklahoma.

In 1885 they were allowed to return to the Northwest, and some of them under Joseph and Yellow Bull were sent to exile on the Colville Reservation. Arriving by train at Spokane Falls, they were escorted by troops to Fort Spokane. There were 44 men, 74 women, and 32 children.

For several months the Nez Perce camped across the Columbia River from the post. The Indian agent was slow in obtaining rations and clothing for these people, so the Army fed and clothed them from its own stores. When the agent finally had supplies in hand (which were kept at Fort Spokane) he immediately began reducing the daily rations. Joseph was forced to complain that his people were receiving only one-seventh of what they needed. Lt. Col. Joshua Fletcher, by now commander of the post, agreed and complained vigorously to his superiors about this and the absenteeism of agency officials. He alleged that the Nez Perce were begging for food at his door.

When the agency finally started issuing rations, to prevent embezzlement, Fletcher appointed a Lt. Johnson to observe and record the amounts issued by the agency farmer, Alexander Shannon. Fletcher's complaints and reminders naturally made the Indian Agency bitter about Army interference. But

by November, 1885, Fletcher had caved in and passed the word that he would have nothing to do with Indians thereafter.

Joseph and most of the Nez Perce moved to Nespelem to be near their friends and allies, the Moses Salish. The Sanpoil Chief Skolaskin's anger at this appropriation of his people's lands for other tribes grew apace. A few of the Nez Perce, those following Yellow Bull, moved to the Spokane Reservation, and Yellow Bull was signed up as the non-commissioned officer in charge of Indian Scouts.

Adding to the tragedies of the Nez Perce was a mishap involving the Army ferry across the Columbia just west of the post. It broke loose one day in the summer of 1886 with five women, a man, and an infant on board, all Nez Perce. Everyone except two women and the child jumped and swam to safety. The women left aboard could be heard singing a death song as the ferry came to the Spokane rapids; then they jumped. The woman named Nakima and the child on her back drowned.

The Sanpoil and Nespelem Passive Resistance

The Sanpoil and Nespelem tribes, under the domination of the crippled Skolaskin, were a problem only because they wished to preserve their independence. They were one of

the few tribes in the Northwest who managed to remain in their homeland, to have a reservation laid out around them. Skolaskin and his followers took great pride in the fact that they never accepted any gifts or assistance from the government.

As a young man Skolaskin had been stricken with a disease that paralyzed his legs. He nearly died; then miraculously revived and began teaching a new, puritanical religion. The number of his adherents increased rapidly after he successfully predicted the earthquake of 1873. This religion undoubtedly provided a means of resisting the corrosive seductions of white culture. Forced to walk with both hands bracing his knees, Skolaskin was an orator of some capability and was able to demand strict obedience from his followers, to the extent of imprisoning those who disobeyed him in an underground prison roofed with logs. He also jailed Moses' people and made them exchange horses for their liberty.

Skolaskin strenuously opposed the presence of Moses in the Nespelem Valley, especially after 1883 when Moses and his tribe took up permanent residence there. However, Skolaskin was wise enough to avoid open hostilities, and he thus preserved relative autonomy and ensured the survival of the Sanpoil in an enclave virtually under the shadow of Fort Spokane. Skolaskin appreciated the value of wars with words; he presented himself continually at Fort Spokane to voice

complaints and to have them recorded there for transmittal to higher headquarters. But he could not dislodge the Moses Salish from the Nespelem Valley.

Moses, having the favorable ear of Merriam and the Army interpreter, A. J. Chapman, seems to have managed to have some of the small band of Nespelem under their leader Winem Smool-Mool categorized as "desperadoes," and the Army was maneuvered into arresting them. An initial raid in early 1884 by troops resulted in the capture of some, but others escaped. Merriam then sent a corporal and two cavalry privates disguised as cowboys. They moved swiftly in the night and captured another of the wanted Indians in the early hours of the morning. Here Merriam took a great risk in sending troops who might have been mistaken for an ordinary lynch mob. But all went smoothly and the "desperadoes" were put in irons at the fort. Smool-Mool and one other eventually found themselves in jail at Sprague where a grand jury returned a true bill of grand larceny. But the men escaped, much to the chagrin of the Lincoln County Sheriff, J. Freedlander.

In the ensuing year Moses invited the Nez Perce refugees to settle with him in the Nespelem Valley where they would be useful allies against the Sanpoil and Nespelem. Again Skolaskin objected vigorously and mockingly suggested that Moses would succeed in selling this reservation as he had

already done with both his original homeland and then his reservation. Also irritating to Skolaskin were the numerous Chinese gold miners working their placers along the Sanpoil segment of the Columbia during the 1880s. Lt. Curtis Hoppin and his cavalry troop from Fort Spokane repeatedly evicted them in 1886, only to hear of their return. The continual commotion caused by Sanpoil complaints was sufficiently threatening that Merriam recommended that a sternwheel Army steamer be built for patrolling the Columbia and for use in field operations.

For months after the Nez Perce moved over to the Nespelem Valley, their status remained uncertain. The lands they wanted were already "located upon" by Sanpoil or Nespelem. So in 1887 Agent Richard Gwydir decided to have allotments of land designated for them. In the process he provided the only opportunity the Fort Spokane troops ever had to come riding over the hill with bugles sounding at the moment of crisis.

Before setting out for the Nespelem Valley, Gwydir requested that Maj. Jacob Kent, then commander at the fort, send troops to Nespelem to meet him for the grand council where the fate of the Nez Perce would be explained and settled. Kent sent two companies of infantry and his troop of cavalry. Gwydir had already crossed the Columbia and made his way to Skolaskin's village. The latter called a meeting and used the occasion to harangue

his people in a manner which Gwydir found threatening. The next day, Gwydir proceeded toward Nespelem, followed by Skolaskin and growing numbers of Sanpoil. They reached Nespelem to find Moses and Joseph with many of their people ready for trouble.

Agent Gwydir anticipated a fight and took the leaders of the three tribes into the reservation mill for the conference, all the while trying to delay proceedings as long as possible until the troops arrived. Speeches began, and the debate quickly reached the point where fighting seemed imminent between the Sanpoil and the others. Just then a bugle was heard. The Indians had been given no indication that troops were on the way. Lieutenant Hoppin and his cavalry troop rode up and Gwydir stepped outside the mill to tell him of events.

I told him the situation. He immediately gave orders to his men to dismount and picket their horses, and, forming these in front of the entrance to the mill, gave orders to load and stand at ease. A portion of the Indians could see what was being done, but all of them could hear the military click as the breech of the carbine was closed. The Lieutenant and I then entered the mill, when I closed the pow-wow for the time, the main body of troops

having arrived.

Skolaskin soon left, defeated and disgusted, and took his people with him. His complaints continued, and he was accused of spreading rumors that the Indian Department medicines and provisions were poisoned. But he seems to have become more arbitrary in his treatment of his own people. Eventually some of the Sanpoil resisted Skolaskin's particular brand of imprisonment with the result that a man was killed by one of the chief's police force. The alleged murderer and Skolaskin were arrested in November of 1889 by the agent and put in a cell at Fort Spokane. They then were sent to a federal penitentiary. We know of no trial, only that Skolaskin later returned, and that the old fire had gone out of him.

Day-to-day Problems

Among more obscure dealings with Indian tribes during the post's history, were fears of hostilities in the Pend Oreille Valley from 1885 to 1887 when cattlemen started crowding the Kalispel Indians. An unsuccessful move made by the government to transfer the Kalispels to the Coeur d'Alene Reservation may have added to the tension. In the spring of 1886 reports were received that the Kalispels were murdering settlers and stealing stock. Infantry and cavalry were sent out from Forts Sherman and Spokane to investigate. They reported the

rumors to be "entirely wild and utterly groundless." It is probable that here again, timely patrols into the valley by troops from Fort Spokane helped to dampen tempers.

Through the years individual Indians were arrested by either troops or the agent and confined to the guard house for trial or other disposition, but these actions created no commotion among the Indians left at home, at least as far as the records left by the whites indicate.

A sore spot did develop over the fact that the soldiers frequently went hunting on the Colville and Spokane reservations. Indian food was thereby reduced. The agent protested, and the Army complied by restricting the men to hunting off the reservations. But, in retaliation, the post commander, Major Kent, requested that the agent prohibit the Indians from hunting off the reservations.

The Spokanes caused no excitement for the troops; indeed their existence is barely discernible in the post correspondence. The fact that bodies of troops on maneuvers occasionally crossed their reservation was doubtless a reminder of the tragedy they had met in 1858. By the 1880s most Spokanes were Christians, which may have inclined them toward acceptance of whites. Indicative of their orientation or indoctrination, they elected 12 men in 1885 to make and enforce their laws, possibly under the encouragement of Colonel Merriam.

The Ghost Dance Chimera

In 1890 the soldiers avidly followed the development of the Ghost Dance movement among the Indians on the plains east of the Rockies. This was a religious revival fostering the belief that the Indians' ancestors, the old way of life, and the buffalo could be induced to return if the Indians performed the Ghost Dance. It was a last attempt to drive out the whites and restore freedom. During the winter of 1890-91, rumors spread that the Indians on the Colville Reservation were dancing the Ghost Dance. Many of the Indians were holding winter dances, but whether or not these were Ghost Dances is not at all certain. Some whites believed they were and preparations were made to ward off hostilities. Not far from Fort Spokane citizens began drilling as militia. The soldiers at the fort seemed to have made no move—perhaps they knew better. They were probably right, for a number of the Indians accepted an invitation to perform this "Ghost Dance" in Portland, which shows that they could not have been thinking very seriously about evicting the invaders.

Indian Scouts

Employing Indians as Army scouts was one way of making allies of at least some of the Indian tribes. Although scouts often guided troops, they were not always hired solely for

their knowledge of geography and Indian languages. Using Indian scouts in combat against other Indians was believed to be a very effective way of demoralizing the enemy. Although some scouts were local Moses and Spokane Salish, the Nez Perce, who had a much less than perfect knowledge of local conditions and Salish tongues, were also hired.

There were no regularly employed Indian scouts at Fort Spokane until March, 1884, when two were hired. From 1886 until mid-1891, the number varied between five and ten. The scouts were quartered in tents on post with their families. On at least one occasion they were allowed to dance around a fire in the middle of the parade ground adorned with feathers and furs. When the Army began enlisting Indians as regular troops in 1891, the practice of hiring scouts was dropped.

Besides the scouts there was a Department of the Columbia Guide and Interpreter, Arthur Chapman, who seems to have been an extremely versatile man. He spoke a number of Indian languages, knew the trails and the tribes, and was able to express himself well in English. Acting as a one-man intelligence branch, he spent only part of his time in the area under the jurisdiction of Fort Spokane.

An Indian Company

In 1891 the Army decided to enlist Indians

as regulars into special companies, officered by whites. Perhaps this was believed to be one way of absorbing Indians into the "melting pot," but it was also intended to provide the Army with what was thought to be an abundant source of soldiers. It may also have been an early manifestation of guilt over the massacre of the Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee. The turnover among white troops was great, and the Army was simply not an attractive prospect for anyone with promise in his future. Hence, the strategy of enlisting Indians. Yet it was a plan that failed.

Less than a score of Indians could be recruited for Company "I" (for "Indian") at Fort Spokane, and this was accomplished only after many delays and difficulties. Great hopes were expressed by some for the success of this experiment which many thought would result in the instant transformation of Indians into white soldiers. Unlike the scouts who had signed up for six-month stints, these Indian regulars were in for a much longer period--five years. Also unlike the scouts, these men had to conform to all Army regulations and customs, even eating habits. Drill sergeants allegedly knocked uncomprehending Indian recruits down with rifle butts.

Had there been a war on at the time, the experiment might have met with success; Indian troops from this region later fought for the United States with considerable bravery. But the peacetime Army with its attention to

drill, routine, and lack of excitement was another thing. Indian soldiers had the same access to the canteen and hard drink that their white peers enjoyed. Indian troops were required to attend the post school for enlisted men, something very unpopular even with white soldiers. The results of the experiment were unfortunate. Desertions and absences without leave mounted.

The homes of these Salish soldiers were not far away, along with all the temptations of summer fishing, horseracing, gambling and travel. It was too much to expect of a young man accustomed to excitement and in complete ignorance of military routine. And there seems to have been bad feeling among the white soldiers and the local populace. It is noteworthy that after being first referred to as privates in the post returns, after November of 1891 these men were listed as just "Indians" without any reference to rank.



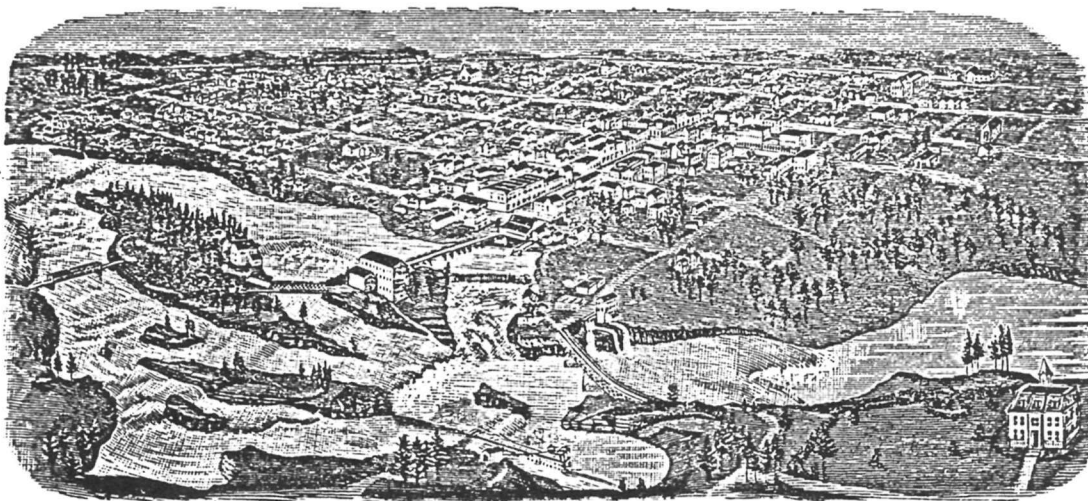
Other Roles for the Troops

Since the founding of the Republic, American troops have had other functions besides fighting the country's enemies. They have been asked to put down many civil riots and rebellions and to protect minorities, such as the Chinese at Tacoma in the 1880s. The Army also had an engineering function, for to move about in an era predating much civil road construction the soldiers found themselves building roads, bridges, and improving navigation.

To increase the speed with which it could move to trouble spots, the Army undertook a substantial amount of road building in the West. Fort Spokane troops were responsible

for pioneering at least two wagon roads: one from the post to the middle of the Colville Valley and another that followed the Columbia north to the mouth of the Colville River. There was also a military road to Cheney. The cavalry reopened the Hudson's Bay Company's trail from Kettle Falls to the Okanogan Valley and the road from Peon Prairie to Chewelah. Undoubtedly, the soldiers also build the wagon road that went south to Davenport and Sprague and another that ran west to the mouth of the Okanogan. One stretch of the latter, however, was merely paid for by the Army.

Many bridges were put together by these



Spokane Falls, W. T. May 16th 1886

soldiers, the most spectacular of which was the span across the raging Spokane River just below the fort. To insure access to the Colville Reservation, the Army maintained a hazardous ferry across the Columbia River just above the Spokane rapids.

All these improvements naturally benefitted commerce, speeded settlement, and increased confidence in the military's reaction time. Prospectors, sheepherders, and other intruders on Indian reservation lands must have also gained by these road and bridges. This civil engineering role was only a part of a larger civil function of the Army, an aspect that gradually became evident at Fort Spokane as the Indians gave up the struggle.

The White Population Grows

After the Civil War the Army returned to its job of fighting and controlling Indians in the West. This was true of the 1880s in the region watched over by Fort Spokane. But toward the end of that decade the local white population had multiplied rapidly. A village at Spokane Falls east of the fort became the city of Spokane with a population of over 15,000 by 1890, ten times its population in 1883. The mining industry was growing fast, particularly in the Coeur d'Alene region of northern Idaho, just east of Fort Spokane's regimental headquarters at Fort Coeur d'Alene. Around 1890 railroads were branching out

from the city of Spokane toward all points of the compass.

The First Coeur d'Alene Mining Riots

Over in the Coeur d'Alene mining country a labor crisis had been brewing for some time. In 1892 members of the Miners' Union finally went on strike over lowered wages and then proceeded to blow up mines and mills in anger. The governor of Idaho declared martial law and federal assistance was requested. Two companies from Fort Spokane were ordered to place themselves under Colonel Carlin, their regimental commander.

Strengthened by the local authorities the Army arrested more than 300 striking miners. The soldiers met no resistance, and most of the duty was uneventful. Each small town in the district had its garrison of dusty soldiers living in tents pitched in its center. They soon fell to devising means of entertainment as they had back at post. There were variety shows, ball games, and dances. Then in November they went back to their comrades on the Spokane River. The strike had been broken, and the soldiers had not improved their popularity with labor unions who viewed the Army during these decades with very little appreciation.

There was to be a repetition of the riots in 1899. This time Henry Merriam, now a

General, put them down firmly and humanely. It was the final act of this Civil War Medal of Honor winner. Having recently helped to put together the force that conquered the Philippines, he had made a last visit to the scene of his earlier accomplishments.

Panic and Depression: 1893-94

Economic problems became general in 1893 with the panic and depression of that year. Labor unrest continued in eastern Washington and northern Idaho. That summer, troops from Fort Spokane joined companies from Forts Sherman and Walla Walla for a grand encampment in Twickenham Park west of Spokane. Drills, parades, and a mock battle took place. Some of the citizens of Spokane were delighted, but the down and out may have been sobered by this show of power.

The people of Spokane had wanted a post in their city for some time. There was money to be had in the military payroll and supply contracts. After the Twickenham Park spectacle they began to seriously work toward bringing the troops to Spokane permanently. The Army had no money to acquire new land for a post, especially for one so little needed. But land was donated, and the balance was bought with receipts from benefits and raffles. In 1894 more than a section of land west of the city was ready. The next year Congress authorized

the new garrison, eventually to be called Fort George Wright. The Washington delegation was, naturally, instrumental. But Fort Wright was not immediately occupied, nor was Fort Spokane abandoned. Events of greater magnitude were required to effect this change.

The depression continued into 1894 and the unemployed grew more desperate. There were riots in Spokane, and a small army of jobless men took up residence in the city. They were loosely allied to a nationwide movement led by Jacob Coxey who intended to march on Washington to demand funds for public service projects, to get the unemployed back to work. They also drew inspiration from the great Pullman strike in Chicago. Some Coxeyites seized trains at other locations and troops were called into Spokane to prevent any similar action. The malcontents dispersed, but some apparently joined the railroad workers who demonstrated their grievances by bringing rail traffic in most of the country to a halt.

Congress decreed that troops were to run the trains and protect the mails they carried. Soldiers from Fort Spokane were ordered south to Sprague. For a train engineer they took along one of the civilian mechanics. Together they mastered the art of running a train and for several days probably fulfilled many a boyhood dream. Since bridges and culverts had been burned, these they repaired,

and there reportedly was some firing at snipers in the night.

In May, two Fort Spokane companies were sent by train to Noxon, Montana, to assist the U.S. marshal against the "Industrials" as the Coxeyites were labeled by the Army. They had captured a Northern Pacific freight train in Idaho and headed east. At Noxon they were overtaken by the pursuing soldiers, seven of whom then escorted the freight train on its eastward journey. That July the Army guarded the rails from Tacoma to Missoula.

A New Direction

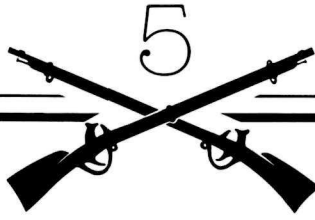
The excitement over, the soldiers rode and walked back to their quiet barracks. In the 1890s the Army began to think in terms of international war. The small American Army of 25,000 men was scattered over a continent in small units. The art of maneuvering and supplying whole regiments and divisions had been forgotten after the Civil War.

To remedy this, maneuvers involving whole regiments became more frequent. The exercise in Spokane in 1893 was one such effort. There were others, including an overland march to the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon in which companies from Fort Spokane participated. By 1898 the United States felt ready again to take on a European army albeit one of the weaker ones, and, provided with an excuse for a war with Spain, accepted

on April 25, 1898.

The men at the post were alerted and then ordered to entrain for New Orleans. They marched away to join the rest of their 16th Infantry Regiment and left but a handful of disappointed comrades behind to guard the post property. As they joined their regimental headquarters in the railway yards of Spokane they were wildly cheered. Flags waved, women wept, and babies were kissed. The young civilian men of Spokane could not withstand the excitement. Enlistments for volunteer units soared.

The 16th Infantry from Fort Spokane found action and victory; they led in the storming of San Juan Hill in Cuba where they fought in the division of J. F. Kent, a former commander of Fort Spokane. The troops of the 16th Infantry were also decimated by malaria, typhoid, and yellow fever. The survivors were withdrawn to Montauk, Long Island, New York, to recover their health. The regulars never returned to Fort Spokane, and the few military caretakers who stayed behind departed in the summer of 1899. The post was transferred to the Interior Department in September for use as a school.



Presiding Over Transformation

Many historians have believed that the Indian or interior frontier of the United States, a fact of life since the first European settlement, passed away in about 1890. This was true of northeastern Washington and northern Idaho, although the frontier there was never an actual line of settlement that could be drawn on a map. The frontier, as measured by native Salish resistance, melted in the final years of the 1880s after having existed for less than four decades. The last time settlers felt threatened by Indians was in 1891, and that scare was probably groundless and overdrawn, aroused by the Ghost Dance then sweeping the Plains to the east.

After 1891 Fort Spokane began to look militarily useless. Nevertheless, the citizens of Spokane reflected even more strongly on the financial benefits of having troops stationed nearby. Lobbyists were sent east to Washington, and, as we have seen, their attempt was successful. The Senate authorized Fort George Wright in 1895, and in 1896 a site was chosen on the heights to the west of the city where the troops had held their war games. By the time the first troops actually garrisoned Fort Wright, the Army had given up its interest in Fort Spokane, and in the terrace overlooking the mouth of the Spokane River.

The Failure of Miles, Washington

The troops left behind an Indian Agency

and the small settlement of Miles, the post office address of Fort Spokane since 1883. It had been named in honor of Gen. Nelson Miles the man who had recommended that Camp Spokane be made a permanent post. Military posts have sometimes become the nuclei of towns and cities. Here it never happened. Today, Miles can barely be termed a hamlet. Towns in the last century often lived or died depending on whether or not they were fed by a railroad line. No railroad ever reached the fort, and navigation on the Columbia River did not become very practical until the waters behind Grand Coulee Dam obliterated all the rapids and rocks in the river. The Spokane River never was navigable except for an occasional Hudson's Bay boat traveling downstream from Spokane House.

Although white settlers were eventually allowed on both the Colville and Spokane Reservations, there was no significant settlement while the Army was at Fort Spokane. The white population lay just to the south and east, and the post was out on the edge of the settled wheat-growing belt. The refuges created for the Indians were an obstacle to the movement necessary for the life of a city. Part of the answer therefore lies in the relative inaccessibility of Fort Spokane, situated as it was not up on the Plateau but down on a narrow bench between the scarp of the Plateau and the Spokane River gorge. The topography was too rough, and the consolidation of British

Columbia with Canada helped to make this area something of a cul-de-sac.

The Demise of Indian Strength

The danger the Indians may have posed passed away without a single military action involving the firing of weapons during the life span of Fort Spokane. There was, of course, still the memory of the defeat suffered at the hands of Gen. George Wright in 1858 to check the ambitious. Yet, one may still ask why the Indians gave up the military struggle. Surely they sensed the dangers of white domination. The whites rapidly became too numerous for the 2,000 or so Salish to resist in any way that would have been other than suicidal.

A few other factors affected the lack of resistance. In the 1880s and 90s the last of the Indians who had grown up before the arrival of the whites were gone, leaving behind only those who had been raised under white domination. And native food resources underwent rapid destruction in the final two decades of the 19th century. The salmon fisheries declined radically in the 1880s as the commercial fish harvest at the mouth of the Columbia River accelerated. The great prairies of camas were settled by farmers or rooted out by hogs and trampled by cattle.

The native population was now partly on the dole of the Indian Agency and riddled with

tuberculosis. Although the Salish had made a promising and substantial beginning at agriculture, whites who knew the intricacies of filing claims frequently took their farms away. Fighting back proved fruitless. For instance, when armed sheepherders started encroaching on one of the reservations in the late 1880s, the Indians judiciously refused even to help their agent evict them.

The army had very little to do with these changes except to preserve whatever new orders and changes were initiated by the Government and the immigrants. But the soldiers provided psychological force, not least with the seasonal din of small arms from the target range, the trumpet calls, and the daily booming of cannon which could probably be heard in Skolaskin's village. But patrols and field exercises provided a visual reminder that the line upon line of blue-clad regulars might appear wherever needed. These were men who, from the Indian perspective, fought mechanically and fell upon them in "human waves" with amazing disregard for the weather, hunger, or fatigue. The Indians around Fort Spokane were well aware that the Army was slowly but surely grinding down the once-powerful Plains tribes east of the Rockies. Yet these same troops also tried to keep the whites from swallowing the reservations as long as the law upheld their integrity. Once the integrity of the reservations was destroyed by the Dawes Act of

1887, the Army seemed to look the other way when the Indians suffered.

This was an era of poor appreciation and perception of Indian culture unless it happened to come close to or surpass white ideals such as the incredible Nez Perce campaigning in 1877. Newspapers were derogatory, and the soldiers and their officers had very little at all to say about the Indians around them. It is almost unbelievable that not a single description of the great Indian fishery on the lower Spokane River has come to light among the records related to Fort Spokane. The soldiers and white civilians were preoccupied with the fruits of their victory over a continent, with "progress" and riches wrought by machines.

When the soldiers went away the buildings provided the government with a ready-made institution for the next stage of conquest, the transformation of Indian children, living away from their "backward" parents, into white-style citizens. The new army of about 160 Salish children moved into the barracks and continued proving that the destruction of the primeval Indian spirit would never be complete. The boarding school was very unpopular with parents and attendance flagged. The parents complained that they needed their children to help them run their farms. So by 1907 day schools on the two reservations had been established, with a resulting increase in attendance. The post was also used to house

the agency, which was moved from across the Spokane River.

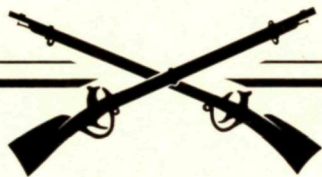
Fostering Settlement

The post probably was instrumental in the settlement of the Big Bend country to its south and west. In 1880 the number of settlers in that area north of the railway line and south of the Columbia and Spokane Rivers could not have numbered more than 200. Soon after, the country around Cottonwood, now Davenport, began to fill rapidly with farmers. Without a doubt the railroad was more instrumental in the settlement of the country, and it was an important factor in the selection of the site for the post in the first place. But with soldiers close by, the fainthearted were encouraged and a market was provided for the farmers. The post may have been situated partly to protect the railroad though we cannot document this possibility.

It is possible that the Indians might have been tempted to give violent expression to their despair in 1883 and 1891 had there been no military post nearby. In the absence of regular troops, the citizens would have raised militias as they so often did, and, like many militias, they might very likely have come close to killing all the Indians. The fort thus aided Indian retention of reservation land as much as it encouraged white settlement. Order was preserved in the scheme devised

by Congress and the President; this is what the Army was intended to do.

Today the remaining buildings of Fort Spokane stand as a fossil of the last ripple of conquest, and of the point when Americans began to turn their efforts to understanding and recovering the native cultures almost totally destroyed.



Sources and Suggested Reading

Most of the material in this booklet was drawn from Army records in the National Archives and the Federal Records Center in Seattle. Another important source consisted of extracts from newspapers and other notes and essays made by Wilma Y. Baker and Belva L. Carter. These are on file at Fort Spokane, as are numerous photographs, plans, and maps. The following books were found useful and should be consulted for added material on the Army, the Indians, and the Civilians during the period:

N.W. Durham, History of the City of Spokane and Spokane Country, Washington, from its earliest settlement to the present time. The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company. Spokane, 1912.

Richard D. Gwydir, "A Record of the San Poil Indians." Washington Historical Quarterly vol. 8, pp. 243-250, 1917.

Jerome Peltier, "A Brief Historical Sketch of Fort Spokane.", Typescript, 1967.

Verne F. Ray, "The Sanpoil and Nespelem, Salishan People of Northeastern Washington." University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, No. 5, 1932.

"The Kolaskin Cult: A Prophet movement of 1870 in Northeastern Washington." American Anthropologist, vol. 38, pp. 67-75, 1936.

Don Rickey, Jr., Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1963.

Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, Half-Sun on the Columbia: a Biography of Chief Moses. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1965.

The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1970.

Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1973.

Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1967.



©1981 Pacific Northwest National Parks Association

