

A STORY OF CLIMBING MT. RAINIER IN 1881

A story of the first white people to climb to Mt. Tahoma on the eastern slope of Mt. Rainier in the year 1881 on August 9.

Written in 1938 by Mr. Archie L. Flint, one of the party.

On August 9, 1881, a party was organized in the small town of Yakima City, now Union Gap in Yakima county, for the purpose of getting a close up view of Mount Rainier.

P. J. Flint, who came to the Yakima Valley in 1867, and engaged in the raising of cattle, was the organizer of the company consisting of himself and his wife, Miss Minnie Flint, Miss Helen Flint, Miss Clara Burch, Miss Annie Mattoon, Miss Mathilde Guiland, Miss Clara Wright, Edward Whitson, J. M. Adams, Dorsy Schnebly, George Goodwin, L. H. Brooks, E. P. Boyle, Judson Pratt, A. L. Flint, and one or two others.

An Indian of the Yakima tribe was engaged as guide and horse wrangler. Saddle and pack horses were collected to the number of about 25. The women used side saddles and wore the old time long riding skirts, the latter not convenient for negotiating trees, brush, logs and rocks. Modern equipment would at that time have been thought not just the proper thing.

Much of the way was over a single trail and often not that, and if the lead horses disturbed a yellow jackets nest, it was up to the following riders to get over that hot spot in the briefest possible time. The party proceeded leisurely, camping at convenient and pleasant spots up the Tieton river and Indian creek to Cowlitz Pass, down Summit creek and the Ohanapecosh river to the point of Backbone ridge. Up this ridge and the Cowlitz divide to Cowlitz Park, a beautiful camping spot almost within a stone's throw of the foot of the glacier, at that time.

Because of rain and low clouds, we had made camp on Cowlitz ridge one day and two nights. The members of the company, being from a cow country and with no equipment for mountain climbing and

not being in favor of any considerable walking while horses were handy. The morning at the park saddles and packs were thrown on and the whole company, except the Indian guide, who refused to go, proceeded up Whitman glacier (The Indian guide said, "No come back." So he wouldn't go.) to the base of Little Tahoma peak, almost due east from Gibraltar Rock. We made camp on a spot found bare of snow and within a few feet of the crest above Ingraham glacier. Tied the horses to rope stretched between two stakes driven in the snow.

Two of us attempted to pass around Little Tahoma on the west side, took a chance on falling off the cliff, did not get very far. The fall, if it had happened would have been straight down to the glacier for a thousand feet more or less. A fine place for a parachute jump or a suicide..

Returned to camp and that afternoon explored the upper reaches of Whitman, Fryingpan and Ochanapocosh glaciers and from points near camp could look down on Emmons and Ingraham glaciers to their full extent. The air being very clear we had a view of all the snow peaks from Baker to Jefferson. The trip up the glacier was attended with some danger no doubt. Crevasses had to be avoided, gone around or crossed where bridged with snow.

At one place, water could be plainly heard running beneath the snow.

The Indian guide was loyal enough to come up to our camp that morning and assist in getting us back to safety at Cowlitz Park.

Next day explored to the crest east of the park and south to Basaltic and Marie falls and another day down the divide and ridge to the site of a previous camp on the river, thence up to Cowlitz Pass and along the summit of the range to Carlton Pass and down Bumping river and lake to Goose Prairie, across the river and up a steep

hill 3000 feet to Clover Spring, down the ridge across and down the Naches River to a point below Horse Shoe bend where we made our last camp.

Had some flour left and but little else.

The Indian uncovered some dried meat which he said was wild goat with which he had provided himself at the beginning in case of emergency. The ladies did not take kindly to this, being suspicious of the sanitary condition thereof. From a few miles below, secured some potatoes and eggs at a ranch house and thus avoided the pangs of hunger at the last, and then home to the mild surprise of our friends who had concluded that some of us would not return alive after three weeks during which they had not heard from us and we had not seen any person other than our party.

All returned well and happy, soiled and disheveled. We neglected to take a bath tub along and mountain water is cold.

We saw no game on the trip except Marmot, Ptarmagan, and grey wolves. The Indian remarked that the noise we made notified wild life that enemies were near and soon were far. Two Indian words were sufficient to convey the thought: His-ak clat-a-wa. Clat-a-wa means get out of the way.

To a youth from the cow country, all trees appeared about alike and vegetation the same except as to requirements for horse feed.

We had no botanist, geologist or naturalist in the party; just plain people with a desire and ability to go places and return, even with primitive equipment and without compass, aneroid, tapeline, field glasses or motormetre.

The writer picked a good wife from this bunch (Miss Clara Wright) and after about 56 years are still married and the only surviving members of the expedition.