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WHEN RANGERS RANGED

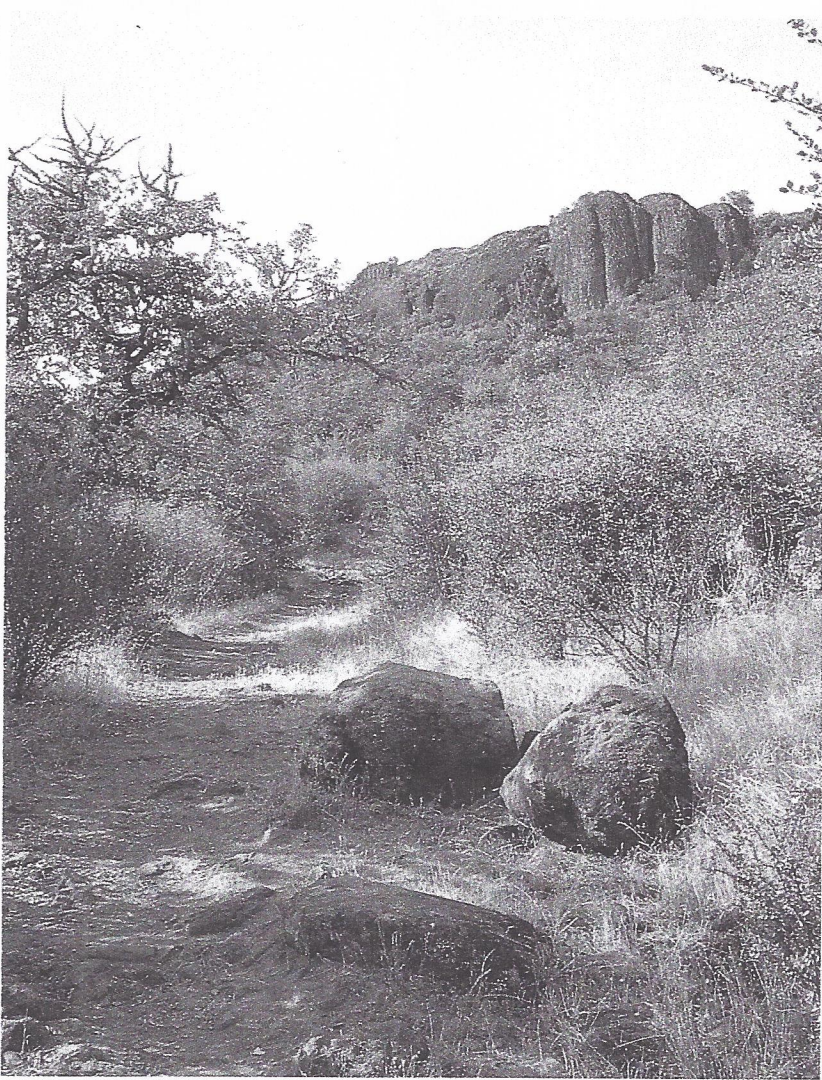
BY HORSEBACK, SNOWSHOES,
OR ON FOOT, THIS MEDFORD
RANGER'S LIFE TRACKS THE
BEGINNINGS OF THE U.S.
FOREST SERVICE

DIARY OF INDIAN AGENT GEORGE AMBROSE

REMOVALS FROM TABLE ROCK—
A "TRAIL OF TEARS."

"GOING PLACES"

NEW EXHIBIT EXPLORES LOCAL
HISTORY FROM FUR TRAPPERS
TO THE FREEWAY



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIL of TEARS

1856 Diary of Indian
Agent George Ambrose

Edited by Stephen Dow Beckham

Undisturbed for centuries, the Indians of the Rogue River Valley faced a dizzying onslaught of changes and calamities between the 1820s and the 1850s. In less than thirty years the spread of Euro-American settlement, new diseases, ecological disruptions accompanying the gold rush, and failures of federal Indian policy swept through their villages with disastrous consequences. Because they resisted trespass and sought to defend their people, they were labeled “rogues” or “rascals.” Their own names—Latgawa [“people of the uplands”], Dagelma [“people along the river”], and Shasta—were largely lost in the rush of events. To the victors who drove them from their lands, they were “savages” and “rogues.”

The tragedies that befell the Indians of the Rogue River Valley attained a crescendo in the years from 1846 to 1856. In that decade, overland emigrants poured through Indian homelands via the Applegate Trail. The discovery of gold on Jackson Creek in early 1852 unleashed a flood of newcomers. Miners as well as pioneer settlers filing for lands under the Oregon Donation Land Act of 1850 scrambled for the resources of the valley and the corridors of its tributary streams. The federal government did too little and acted too late to check the calamity.

Settlement and the gold rush unleashed ecological disaster and robbed the Indians of the means to survive. Settlers split rails to fence their fields and erect cabins; they suppressed the Indian fire ecology which was essential in the harvest of tarweed seeds and maintenance

of an open forest understory productive of food for deer and elk. Settlers’ hogs rooted out camas lilies and gobbled down acorns, further depleting traditional food resources of the Indians. The miners turned over gravel bars in their quest for placer deposits and sent a flood of mud cascading downstream with terrible impact on the runs of salmon and eel as well as hindering the ability of the Indians to fish for trout and harvest freshwater mussels. The settlers used firearms to kill deer, elk, and bear, while the territorial legislature made it illegal for an Indian to possess a gun or purchase ammunition. A place of abundance was transformed into a land of starvation.

Not until 1853 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs negotiate treaties with the Indians in the Rogue River Valley. By that date the levels of distrust and ill-will were so high on both sides that the treaties and creation of the Table Rock Reservation seemed but a lull in the storm. The lands reserved for the Indians were but a fraction of their territory and lacked many of the resources they needed to survive. The token garrison of soldiers at Fort Lane (near the Rogue River, below the Table Rocks) proved inadequate to stop trespassers, to confine the Indians to residency on the reservation, or to stop the machinations of self-styled “exterminators” who murdered and massacred Indians and then repeatedly provoked them to retaliate.

Above: “Beaver Teeth” Lower Table Rock. During the removals of 1856, Indian Agent George Ambrose was responsible for escorting the Indians on Table Rock Reservation to the Grand Ronde Reservation, thereby ending millennia of Indian occupancy in the Rogue River Valley.

These events were made worse by the spread of measles, influenza, and other new diseases. Lacking resistance to these ailments, the Indians sickened and died by the dozens. Some villages were entirely wiped out. Forced removal to the Table Rock Reservation in the waning months of 1853 only concentrated the sick and the well in unfavorable circumstances.

An attack of October, 1855, by "exterminators" from the Jacksonville mining camps precipitated the Rogue River Indian War of 1855 and 1856, and caused the flight of many able-bodied Indians west into the canyon of the Rogue River.

As the war slowed with the onset of winter snows and bitter cold, Indian agent George Ambrose collected the Indians who had remained on Table Rock and others scattered from throughout the valley, and planned their removal. The 1853 treaties provided only that the Table Rock Reservation would serve temporarily as a holding place for the Indians. In accord with the national policy of removal and relocation, Ambrose set in place Superintendent Joel Palmer's larger scheme, to colonize all of the Indians of western Oregon on the Grand Ronde and Siletz reservations.

Born in Pickaway County, Ohio, in 1823, George H. Ambrose and his wife, Ellen Frances, had emigrated overland to Oregon in 1850. Sensing the opportunities of the Rogue River region, they filed upon a Donation Land Claim and settled in 1852 in Jackson County.

S. H. Culver was removed as agent because of charges regarding his abuse of agency assets. Ambrose then took over administration of the Rogue Valley Indian Agency. Ambrose believed all was under control and declared so in the fall of 1853, in a series of letters signed "A Miner" in the *Oregon Statesmen*. His optimism was dashed by the massacre of twenty-three Indian women, men, and children at the mouth of Butte Creek on October 8, 1855, by volunteers led by J. A. Lupton.

In February, 1856, Ambrose directed the removal of the surviving Indians of the Rogue River Valley. His diary, a chronicle of the journey northward via the Applegate Trail, is terse and typical of the day, revealing no emotion regarding the suffering and dislocation of those he led. Ambrose readily admitted in his account that the wagons to haul the aged and ill were inadequate for the task. His diary dryly tallied the deaths of eight people and the births of eight children during the journey.

The snow, mud, shortages of food, and constant fear experienced by the refugees were made brief note of by Ambrose. Pursued for days by Timeleon Love, a self-styled executioner of Indians, the agent had difficulty staving off Love's designs. The Indians may have feared that Ambrose was leading them to slaughter. Love's dogged pursuit of their party and the inadequate military escort must have caused alarm and anxiety.

The Ambrose diary hints at the dimensions of suffering and tragedy endured by the Indians of southwestern Oregon in the 1856 removals to the new reservations. Similar forced marches northward befell the natives of the Umpqua and Willamette valleys as well as several bands brought along the coastal trail from Port Orford to Siletz during the summer. "It almost makes me shed tears to listen to them as they totter along," observed Lt. E. O. C. Ord who witnessed one of these removals.

The Ambrose diary, which follows, documents the closing chapter on countless millennia of Indian tenure in the Rogue River Valley. Left behind were the bones of parents, grandparents, and ancestors, ages-old villages and fisheries, and a way of life

well-tuned to the rhythms of a beautiful land.

—The Indian refugees departed the Table Rock Reservation to take the Applegate Trail west via the Rogue River and then north to the Willamette Valley.—

February 23d Saturday

The weather still continues pleasant. It was found necessary to have more teams than at first contemplated. I accordingly proceeded to Jacksonville for that purpose, and also to provide some articles, such as clothing and blankets to add to the comfort of the Indians, although the weather is sett [sic] down as pleasant. It certainly would be regarded as such, especially at this season of the year, however the nights are quite frosty and the mornings cool, sufficiently so, to render it necessary that they should be provided with Tents, Blankets, shoes & such necessaries as would tend to promote their comfort while on their journey which being procured the day was spent in distributing the articles among them. Also two additional teams were secured to convey the sick, aged and infirm. Our teams now number eight which I fear will not be sufficient. Thirty four Indians are disabled from traveling by reason of Sickness aside from the aged & infirm, who will as a matter of course have to be hauled.

February 24th Sunday

Remained in camp a fine and beautiful day too, our first idle day spent in camp.

February 25th Monday

A heavy frost last night, on consequence of some Indian horses straying off during the night we were unable to get our early start. About Eleven o'clock we all got under way. Our rout[e] lay immediately down the [Rogue] River on the South bank of said stream, a level & good road. We traveled today a distance of eight miles, encamped on a small stream [Foots Creek] near its outlet [sic] in Rogue River.

February 26th Tuesday

Frosty and cool. All things being arranged we took up our line of March which shall lay immediately down Rogue River. In about five miles we arrived at Jewett Ferry which occupied several hours in crossing which being done we encamped for the night, it being the only camp we could reach before nightfall.

[Several men constructed ferries to serve travelers in this vicinity in the early 1850s. In 1853 Derbin's Ferry crossed immediately downstream from the mouth of Evans Creek; Evans' Ferry came next; and Joel Perkins' Ferry was situated near present day Grants Pass (Applegate 1853). Thomas D. Jewett, a claimant against the Indians for damages to his property in 1853, probably operated the ferry mentioned by Ambrose.]

February 27th Wednesday

The weather continues cool & frosty. Our rout[e] still lay down [the north bank of] Rogue River, over rough rocky ground. We marched today a distance of ten miles and camped at Patterson's old Ranch, good water but not much grass.

[At this point the refugee Indians turned north on the

Applegate Trail in the vicinity of present day Grants Pass to ascend the slopes of Sexton Mountain.]

February 28th Thursday

Frosty & cool again this morning. While about preparing to leave camp some person killed an Indian who had wandered off some distance from camp in search of his horse which had strayed off during the night, which caused some considerable excitement among the Indians as it went to prove the statement previously made by some evil disposed persons, to wit: that they would be killed by the way. We learned this morning that a party of evil disposed persons have gone in advance of us, as is supposed to annoy us, or kill some friendly Indians. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Capt. [Andrew J.] Smith at Fort Lane for an additional force to escort us to or thro[ugh] the Canyon if it should be found necessary. We also learned that an individual by the name of Timeleon Love was the person who killed the Indian this morning and that he composes of the party that had just passed. We drove today a distance of eleven miles and encamped on the west bank of Jump Off Jo[e] Creek where we will most probably remain till the arrival of Capt. Smith. [Born in Kentucky in 1827, Love arrived in Oregon in 1852 and filed for a Donation Land Claim in Josephine County.]

February 29th Friday

We remained in camp all day, quite a pleasant day. Capt. Smith arrived about two oclock. Today we had another Indian to die the first by disease on the road, although many are very sick, however there are no new cases of sickness occurring.

March 1st Saturday

Quite a pleasant spring like morning. Everything being in readiness by times we took up our line of march over a rough hilly mountainous country, and the roads were truly in a horrible condition. I omitted to mention that on Thursday last we took a Northward direction and left the Rogue River to the South of us which brought us among some rough hills, between the Umpqua and Rogue River. After passing the Grave [C]reek Hills we learned that Mr. Love and some others were awaiting us at the house, intending



This peaceful photo of neatly fenced farm land and Lower Table Rock (seen from across the Rogue River) hides the turmoil and tragedy created for the Rogue Indians and settlers by the surveying, fencing and settlement of "unclaimed" lands. Dated 1899.

to kill an Indian. Upon going to the house I found it to be a fact, talked with the gentlemen, told them the consequences, went back & requested Capt. Smith to arrest Mr. Love and turn him over to the civil authorities. We passed the house however without any difficulty and encamped on a small stream [Coyote Creek] two miles North of Grave Creek. We drove today a distance of eight miles. We are now in the midst of an hostile Indian Country & not entirely free from danger.

March 2d Sunday

Clear & frosty. Upon consultation it was deemed best to move forward, as we went in an enemys country & neither forage nor grass could be had for our animals. We found the roads horrible as we traveled on, after traveling hard all day we made a distance of twelve miles & encamped for the night on the West bank of Cow Creek one mile above the crossing.

March 3d Monday

The mornings still continue quite cool & frosty; our rout[e] lay almost directly North over somewhat better ground than for two days previous. Our cattle was jaded considerable by our continuous marches, without forage or grass, neither of which could be procured. We drove a distance of seven miles & encamped just within the mouth of the canyon.

[The refugees now faced the difficult descent of Canyon Creek, a dozen miles of boulders, steep sidehills, and fords.]

March 4th Tuesday

The weather still continues fine for the season, during the night our cattle deserted us passing thru the canyon & crossing South Umpqua a distance of twelve miles. Some few of them took the other end of the road, finding it impossible to collect the cattle in time to move. I took the Indians in advance & went through the canyon before night in order to obtain supplies [in Canyonville] of which we were getting quite short. In passing through I found some heavy obstructions the high waters during the fore part of the winter had thrown in large drift logs & a slide from the mountain had filled up the channel of the creek, all of which required to be removed before wagons could pass which was accordingly done by Lieut. Underwood who sent a detachment in

advance for that purpose, the persons who were sent in search of the missing cattle, returned with all but four head.

March 5th Wednesday

The Indians remained in camp today at the mouth of Canyon creek awaiting the arrival of the wagons about three or four o'clock in the evening they made their appearance. The cattle very much jaded & tired as no forage could be had. I secured the best pasture I could find & turned them in that. An Indian girl died this evening. We were now a distance of eleven miles from our camp of the evening of the third being occupied two days in making it. Mr. Love who still continues to follow us was arrested & put under guard.

March 6th Thursday

This morning the cattle were collected together preparatory to making a start, and of the cattle still missing I sent a man back through the canyon in search of those that went in that direction. Towards noon three were discovered in the hills on the North side of the South Umpqua & brought up to camp this evening. Good road this morning until we reached South Umpqua, which stream we ascertained we could ford with the wagons. The foot passengers were all ferried whilst the teams were crossing & ready to resume their march. Here we ascended a considerable hill & passing thru some oak knowles [sic] come to a very narrow pass around the spur of a mountain which projected down to the waters edge, and around which a road had been dug out of the rock wide enough for wagons to pass, emerging from here we came out in full view of an open prairie, found the road good. We traveled today a distance of eight miles, & camped on the North bank of South Umpqua near [William] Weavers." [William and Anna Weaver and their family resided a few miles south of Myrtle Creek. Married in 1831 in Tennessee, the Weavers traveled overland to Oregon in 1850.]

March 7th Friday

The weather still continued cool & frosty of nights and pleasant thru the day. Our road today hilly & in places quite rocky. An Indian woman died this morning & the number of sick increasing. It was found necessary to hire or buy another team. I soon procured one & continued our march. We drove today a distance of ten miles & encamped in Round Prairie on the South Umpqua yet.

March 8th Saturday

From camp this morning we had a good road for about two miles. Here we commenced ascending a mountain [Roberts Mountain] on the summit of which a wagon upset & broke out a tongue which caused considerable delay. After fixing a temporary arrangement we were enabled to go down the mountain a distance of four miles and encamped on Roberts creek. About two o'clock in the afternoon in order to repair our wagon before proceeding further which was accordingly done before night. Traveled today a distance of Eight miles.

March Sunday 9th

Quite a pleasant day, but owing to our proximity to the hostile Indians, it was deemed advisable to continue our march, which was accordingly done. Mr. Cain who had been sent in search of the missing cattle returned. He stated that he had found the cattle in the evening of the sixth and correlled [sic] them on the south side of the canyon, that during the night he believes they were stolen by



Above: Acorn basket and cradleboard from Society collections. Takelma Indian women carried young children in cradleboards such as that on the right. Indian Agent Ambrose recorded eight births during the march from Table Rock to Grand Ronde Reservation.

the Indians, as hostile Indians were seen in that vicinity, & appearances went to show that they had taken them. Our road still continues down the South Umpqua River over a broken uneven country. The roads growing worse as we went North. We traveled today a distance of Eight miles & encamped on the bank of a little muddy branch about two miles north of Roseburg.

March 10th Monday

A very fine morning indeed, we got an early start this morning found the roads very bad. In about two miles we arrived at Winchester [s]ituated on the south bank of the Umpqua. Here we had to ferry the river, which occupied us about three hours. We then ascended a considerable hill and traveled over a rough prairie Country, very muddy roads. We found a very pleasant camp about four miles North of Winchester on Camas Swail Creek, a distance of Seven miles. This morning a write [writ] of Habeas [habeas] Corpus was served on Lieut. Underwood to show cause why he detained & held in custody unlawfully the person of Timeleon Love, to which he made a return that he held him by the authority of a legal Indian Agent & according to law & that said Love was held only to be turned over to the civil authorities according to law. Lieut. [William Babcock] Hazen was left at Winchester in charge of the guard & to turn the prisoner over to the proper officers of the law.

March 11th Tuesday

This morning the teams were got up quite early and preparations were made for starting. I then proceeded to Judge [Matthew P.] Deady's and caused a writ to be issued for the arrest of Timeleon Love for the murder of a friendly Indian on the 28th day of February last. Before the service of the warrant Mr. Love had effected his escape. We found the roads in a horrible condition and grass quite scarce. The teams drove but three miles today & encamped for the purpose of attending the trial.

March 12th Wednesday

Cloudy & threatening rain, we had some trouble in finding our

cattle. We however succeeded in getting them together about ten o'clock. After traveling through a canyon about one and a half miles we arrived at Calapooia Creek. Our rout[e] lay directly up the creek for two & a half miles over hilly but prairie Country when we crossed the stream on a bridge at [Dorsey] Bakers. For the remainder of the day our rout[e] lay northward & over some steep hills. About four miles from the mills we struck camp at what is called [O]akland. Two deaths occur[r]ed today since we camped—one man & one woman. [Dr. Dorsey Syng Baker founded the original townsite of Oakland before selling out his investments and becoming a prominent banker and railroad builder in Walla Walla, Washington. Oakland moved in 1872 to a new site on the Oregon & California Railroad.]

March 13th Thursday,

This morning we had quite a shower of rain rendering it quite unpleasant traveling. After burying the dead we took up our line of march over a rough hilly & uneven country. Our cattle traveled brisk today. About two o'clock we struck camp on the bank of a small stream by the name of Elk Creek near Jesse Applegates. The day was quite cool with frequent showers rendering it unpleasant traveling. We however traveled about twelve miles. [Jesse and Cynthia Ann Applegate, emigrants of 1843, took up this Donation Land Claim at Yoncalla in 1849. Jesse's brothers, Charles and Lindsay, and their families settled nearby.]

March 14th Friday

Cloudy & show[e]ry. By keeping our cattle in pasture we were able to get an early start. Our rout[e] lay down Elk creek thru a rough canyon which we found quite muddy. We crossed Elk & Pass creek & several other streams. After crossing Pass Creek our road lay immediately up the creek & bounded by high mountains on either side. We drove eight miles today & camped at the foot of the Calapooia Mountains. [Ambrose took the Indian refugees northward via the Trappers' Trail, the overland route between Oregon and California. The travelers entered the upper Siuslaw watershed near Lorane, Oregon.]

March 15th Saturday

Cloudy. This morning our cattle were missing and upon search we ascertained they had crossed the mountain pursuit was immediately made & they were found about ten miles from camp [on Pass Creek]. They were

bro[ugh]t back and we were ready to start by two o'clock. From camp we commenced our ascent up the mountain at first quite gradual. After ascending some distance we arrived at the Summit. We then followed the ridge of the mountain some distance before we commenced the descent. The road was quite dry over the mountain and till we were near the base, when we found some very heavy mud. The last team arrived in camp after traveling a distance of eight miles. One woman died today.

March 16th Sunday

Cloudy with occasional sunshine. Remained in camp all day to rest. Nothing occurred worthy of relation.

March 17th Monday

This morning we took up our line of march in northward direction. The roads were quite hilly and places very muddy. This morning while crossing a small stream a teamster broke a wagon tongue which delayed us an hour to repair after which we proceeded without any further difficulty for the remainder of the day. We encamped tonight on the west bank of Rock Creek, a distance of thirteen miles from when we started. Arrived in camp by four o'clock.

March 18th Tuesday

Cloudy & threatening rain. During the night an Indian died which detained us a short time to bury. However by nine o'clock we were in readiness to start. We traveled over a level flat country in places quite muddy. The greatest difficulty we experience is in obtaining grass for our cattle, which we find to be exceedingly scarce. We drove today a distance of twelve miles, camped in an oak grove near the claim of Mr. Smith.



Indians of the Rogue Valley wore burden baskets with a tumpline around their forehead. They used these baskets to carry roots, seeds, berries and firewood.

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March 19th Wednesday

Cloudy & threatening rain, quite show[e]ry thru the day. We continued our march down Long Tom [River] & passed over some very muddy roads. We traveled today a distance of fourteen miles & encamped on the bank of Long Tom at Starrs Point [Monroe, OR.]. [Several members of the Starr family settled in this vicinity. Starrs Point post office, established in 1852, became Monroe in 1874.]

March 20th

The weather still continues cloudy and threaten-

ing rain. We secured a good pasture last night for our cattle & this morning quite early were underway. Our rout[e] lay immediately down Long Tom over a level Prairie Country. In consequence of the recent rains our wagons drag[g]ed along heavily all day. We drove a distance of fifteen miles and encamped on the bank of Marys River, at the Ferry [at Corvallis, OR.], a very hard days drive but no camp could be found short of this.

March 21st Friday

Clear & pleasant. This morning we were two or three hours in ferrying the river, for two or three miles we found the roads very muddy. About three miles North from Corvallis our road improved very much, becoming rolling & dry. We traveled today a distance of twelve miles and encamped near the claim of Mr. Rude.

March 22d. Saturday

Cloudy weather again. This morning for several miles our road was in excellent condition. We then found some very bad road and Sloughy Prairie to cross over after which we arrived at the South Luckymute, which we crossed on a bridge. Still continuing our course Northward in a few miles we arrived at Little Luckymute which we also crossed on a bridge & passed upon the North bank of the stream a short distance and encamped near a little oak grove. Traveled twelve miles.

March 23d. Sunday

Remained in camp all day quite a pleasant weather.

March 24th Monday

Got an early start this morning and had an excellent road. We drove a distance of fifteen miles & encamped near Mr. [James M.] Frederick's. [James M. and Clarissa L. Frederick settled their Donation Land Claim in Polk County in 1849.]

March 25th Tuesday

Clear & pleasant. We got an early start this morning and after driving hard all day reached the [Grand Ronde] reservation about four o'clock in the evening after driving a distance of sixteen miles. So ends my journey & journal. After a period of thirty three days in which time we traveled a distance of two hundred & Sixty three miles. Started with three hundred and twenty-five Indians. Eight deaths and eight births, leaving the number the same as when started.



Dr. Beckham is Pamplin Professor of History, Lewis & Clark College. His book, *Requiem For a People: The Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen*, was reprinted in paperback by Oregon State University Press in 1996. Beckham was named "Oregon Professor of the Year" in 1994 and received the distinguished teaching award of the American Historical Association in 1995.

Right: Soldiers at Fort Lane, located at the base of the Table Rock Reservation, were outfitted in uniforms left over from the Mexican War and fired muzzleloading rifles. It is likely that George Ambrose carried something like these brass and leather powder flasks, bullet mold and shot pouch.

ENDNOTES

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