

## **Captain Maloney Starts for Yakima Country**

Herbert Hunt, "Captain Maloney starts for Yakima country," History of Tacoma.

Acting under orders from Major Raines from Vancouver, Captain Maloney left Fort Steilacoom on October 21st, 1855, to join the force of Lieutenant Slaughter on the White River for an expedition into the Yakima country via the Naches Pass. Upon joining Slaughter, Captain Maloney waited until the 24th, when Captain Hays arrived with his company of volunteers.

Maloney took from the fort all the men possible, seventy-five, leaving a young second lieutenant, John Nugen, in charge of the fort with but a handful of men. In studying the events of that period, some seventy years later, it seems apparent that no serious trouble was anticipated from tribes west of the Cascades up to this time. For had the regular army officers and the acting governor anticipated an outbreak upon the Sound, they would not have ordered almost all of the available regular troops at Fort Steilacoom and most of the volunteers to proceed to Yakima at that time of the year. If there had been danger anticipated in the Sound country it is hard to justify such orders on the part of Major Raines. Had Captain Maloney, after he passed the summit, proceeded until he met the large forces of armed Indians in his front; had he been cut off from retreat by snows in the pass; or had he not exercised the sound judgment which he displayed up there in the mountains on that winter's day when he stopped to consider the situation, the history of the Indian war of 1855-56 would be written entirely different than we find it.

Perhaps at no time in the history of this territory and state has a young military officer been placed in the responsible and delicate position as was Captain Maloney during the latter part of October of 1855 up there in the Naches Pass. On the 28th he stopped to consider things in their true light. He was acting under the orders of his superior officer to proceed into the Yakima country. But he knew the situation better than Major Raines. He knew the folly of advancing into apparent annihilation with the safety of the Sound country depending upon his force. He realized that snow would soon cut off retreat.

### **MALONEY DECIDES TO RETURN**

With the great responsibility upon his shoulders, Captain Maloney tarried for a day to give his animals and men a rest and to consider the best policy. He decided to return, and penned a letter to Major Raines explaining his reasons. To carry his letter to Lieutenant Nugen he dispatched an express consisting of A. Benton Moses, Joseph Miles, George R. Bright, Dr. Matthew P. Burns, Antonio B. Rabbeson, and William Tidd.

These men were all from the company of Captain Hays. Doctor Burns was the company surgeon. Tidd was from Steilacoom; the others from Thurston County. Maloney's letter to his major, dated October 29<sup>th</sup>, follows: Camp on Naches River, October 29, 1855. Major G. J. Raines, Fort Vancouver, W. T Major: In accordance with orders which I received from you, I joined, with the available troops at Steilacoom, amounting to seventy-five men, at the earliest possible moment, the 21st of this month, Lieutenant Slaughter's command, which had fallen back to the White river prairies. I remained there two days, until I was joined by a company of volunteers under command of Capt. Hays, on the 24<sup>th</sup>. I commenced my march for the Yakima country, expecting to find you in the field. Yesterday I arrived at this camp, when I laid over to recruit our animals. I received an express today from Steilacoom from which I get information that you will not be on your march for from one to two weeks. I have also got information that there are from two to

three thousand Indians well armed and determined to fight, in my front, and, after considering the matter over, have concluded that it is my duty to return to Steilacoom. My reasons are as follows, viz: my force is not sufficiently strong to fight them and protect the animals and provisions which I have along with me; secondly, if I advance I must meet them, as there is no point before me before I get into the plains, where I can camp and defend myself and animals, where I will not be cut off from communication, both in front and rear by high water, before you can get into the enemy's country; thirdly, in accordance with your orders I started with 30 days' provisions. I have been out 12 days, and, therefore, have only 18 days' provisions, which would be out before my command could join yours. There is already snow upon the mountains, and there is every reason to believe that in three or four days it would close the road from here to Steilacoom, and also raise the Naches river, so that it will prevent communication between this place and the Yakima plains.

I am of the opinion that the best way to get the troops from Steilacoom into the enemy's country will be by way of The Dalles.

I also learn from the same express that the Northern Indians are showing themselves in considerable numbers at Steilacoom and other points on the Sound, intending, with other Indians, to strike a blow in case I should be defeated here.

I am, Major, very respectfully, Your obedient servant, (Signed) M. Maloney, Capt. 4th Inf., Com. Detachment.