



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Portland District

# **“THIS PLACE IS ROMANTIC AND WILD”**

An Historic Overview of the Cascades Area,  
Fort Cascades, and the Cascades townsite,  
Washington Territory

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Fort Lugenbeel, upper left, can be seen in this view of Bush's reconstructed store-saloon-hospital (foreground) taken by C.E. Watkins in 1867. The original building was burned by Indians during the battle of March 26-27-28, 1856. In this blow-up of a previous photo, Bradford's Store and warehouses (in back of Bush's) are easier to see.

## **FORT CASCADES**

Fort Cascades was located at the Lower Landing or the George W. Johnson Donation Land Claim on the north shore of the Columbia River. This site was, at times of high water, located on an island, separated on the west by Hamilton Slough which ran between the Johnson farm and Hamilton (or Strawberry) Island and on the east by Greenleaf Slough. The closing of Greenleaf Slough with fills for railroad and highway rights-of-way in the twentieth century have made this site effectively part of the north shore of the Columbia River. None of the nineteenth century maps of this area gave a name to the the “island” on which the fort was located.

## **SETTLEMENT OF THE JOHNSON LAND CLAIM**

Fort Cascades was located in Section 38, T.2N., R.7E.; that portion which included the post site is known today as archaeological site 45SA9. The earliest development on this part of the Johnson claim occurred in July, 1850, when George Drew had the location surveyed for the town of Cascades, Oregon Territory. No plat of this survey has been located in archives, and it is not clear whether such a plat was ever filed. In that month George W. Johnson, George L. Johnson, Frances A. Chenoweth, and T. B. Pierce opened a trading house or store at the site (Evans 1889[1]:312; Bancroft 1890:37).

George W. Johnson filed on Sections 17, 20, 21, and 29 in T.2N., R.7E. (by the original township survey) as a Donation Land Claim of 320.21 acres. Johnson stated at the time of his filing that he settled on the land on July 15, 1850 and that he was born in 1831 in Essex County, Massachusetts. Daniel F. Bradford and Putnam F. Bradford served as witnesses in this filing (Seattle Genealogical Society 1980:173). Johnson remained in the area at least a decade and was enumerated in 1860 in the household of Daniel F. and Chloe Bradford in the Cascade Post Office district. He gave his age as 28 and was identified as a merchant with \$100 in personal property (U. S. Bureau of the Census 1880:155).

In litigation over this land in the Court of Claims in 1860s, Johnson stated that he held, cultivated, and improved this tract so that by Jul 15, 1854 he had met the proof requirements to claim such land under the Act of Congress of September 27, 1850, permitting Donation Land claims. Johnson further alleged that by late April, 1856, he was expelled from his land by military authorities and that for the next eleven years he was deprived of use of the property by the government (Welling 1867).

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF FOR CASCADES**

The course of events that led the U. S. Army to take over the Johnson farm was the increasing strategic importance of the Cascades region in the mid-1850s. Although

long a crucial link in travel and trade through the Columbia Gorge, the Cascades took on added significance with the establishment of military posts on the Columbia Plateau and increasing Indian tensions. During the Cayuse War of 1846-48, volunteer soldiers established Fort Wascopam at The Dalles. In May, 1850, U. S. Army regulars arrived at that site to establish Fort Drum, later known as Fort Dalles (Knuth 1966:-297).

By the fall of 1855, tensions with Indians were at a breaking point throughout the Pacific Northwest. For a decade thousands of Americans had poured in to settle on Indian lands. These pioneers were spurred in part by the prospects of free or “donation” lands eventually authorized in 1859 by a generous Congress. In southwestern Oregon the gold rush of 1852 helped spark a series of bloody conflicts with the Indians. By the late summer of 1855, the likelihood of renewed warfare had spread from the Rogue River Valley to Puget Sound as well as to the districts east of the Cascades. Indian anger focused on the wholesale deaths by new diseases, taking of lands, callous massacres of women and children, and treaties which made grand promises but failed to gain Senate ratification (Johansen and Gates 1967:252-258; Beckham 1977:111-126).

The role of the U. S. Army as peacemaker and protector of the Indians became increasingly evident by 1855 in the region. Repeatedly the regular forces were called into the field to quell hostilities fomented by volunteers or by intransigent Indians (Beckham 1971:147-167). These realities, plus the absolute necessity of keeping open a route of transportation of military supplies through the Columbia Gorge in 1855-56, led to both the survey and construction of the Military Portage Road and the building and staffing of the blockhouse at the Cascades (Townsend 1855; Derby 1855c).

The Army moved into the Cascades area in the fall of 1855 and established Fort Cascades on September 30 (Anonymous 1878). Because of the priority of protecting the most difficult part of the portage, the military focused its first construction on the blockhouse at the Middle Cascades. In little over five weeks the soldiers erected the first military structure in the Gorge. Lt. George H. Derby noted its presence at the Middle Cascades during his portage road survey in October (Derby and Whiting 1855a). In November, Lt. E. D. Townsend wrote: “On my return from Fort Dalles, I examined the block house erected for the protection of the Government stores on the portage at the Cascades. A corporal and 10 men are stationed there.” (Townsend 1855).

At the time the Army moved onto the Johnson Land Claim the property included a wharfbat, three buildings, and a small field enclosed by a split fence (Figure 9-1; Derby and Whiting 1855b). At least one of the three structures was a zinc or metal-clad, pre-fabricated building similar to others shipped to the Pacific Coast in 1850. the *Alta California*, a daily newspaper published in San Francisco, advertised these buildings for sale. Several were shipped by the Winchester Exploring Expedition to the Umpqua River in the fall of 1850 and were erected at Umpqua City on the sand spit at that river’s mouth on the southwest Oregon coast. Amos E. Rogers, the claimant to a

Donation Claim at that site, wrote on January 1, 1851: "I have an iron house that cost me \$300 in San Francisco that I can take \$1200 for with the lot it stands on." (Rogers 1851). These buildings were of great importance on a frontier where sawmills were few and lumber an expensive or unobtainable luxury.

## CONFLICT WITH THE INDIANS

On March 26, 1856, hostile Indians attacked the white settlements at the Cascades. Lawrence W. Coe described the Indian attack at the Johnson place:

There was considerable government freight in the wharf-boat. They (the men at the Lower Cascades) stayed about the wharf-boat and schooner nearly all day, and until the Indians commenced firing upon them from the zinc-house on the back. They then shoved out. Tommy Price was shot through the leg in getting the boats into the stream (Evans 1889[1]:604).

When these refugees returned to the Johnson claim with Lt. Philip Sheridan and his contingent of soldiers, they found that the Indians had burned all the building and destroyed much of the government property stored at the site (Evans 1889[1]:604). An Indian named Gabriel was later hanged for having burned George W. Johnson's house (Leavens 1925:171).

Philip Sheridan later recalled that his forces arrived at the Lower Landing on the *Belle* on the morning of March 27:

The Columbia River was very high at the time, and the water had backed up into the slough about the foot of the Lower Cascades to such a degree that it left me only a narrow neck of firm ground to advance over toward the point occupied by the Indians. On this neck of land the hostiles had taken position, as soon as I learned by frequent shots, loud shouting, and much blustering; they, by the most exasperating yells and indecent exhibitions, daring me to the contest (Sheridan 1888:74-75).

Sheridan and his forces advanced across the site of Fort Cascades toward the Indian. A bullet grazed Sheridan's nose and lodged in the neck of a soldier, severing an artery and killing him instantly. Just as the Indians advanced, more soldiers joined Sheridan and brought the ship's gun into play on their enemy (Sheridan 1888:75).

Throughout March 27 the Johnson Donation Land Claim was the battlefield for

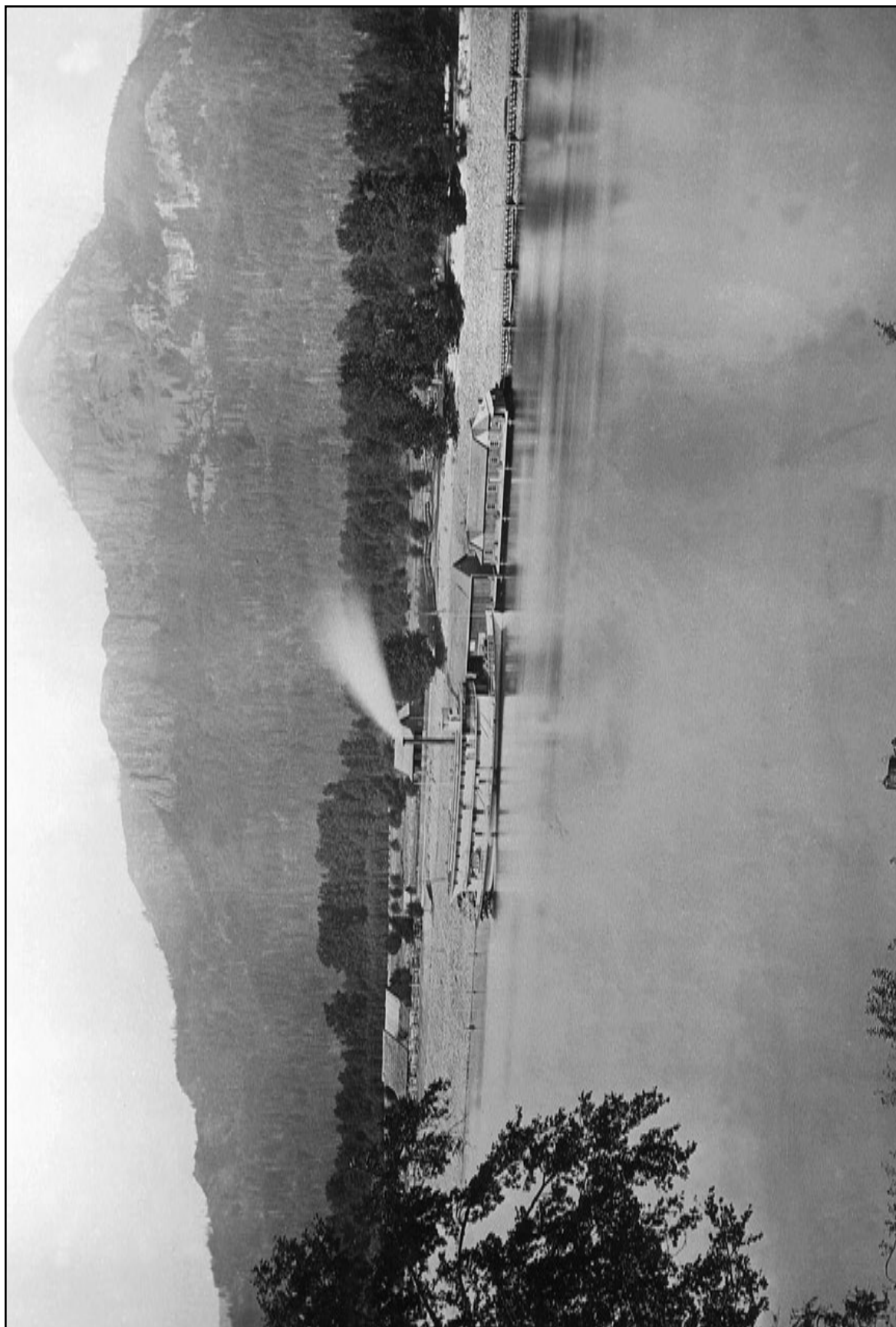


Photo taken by C. E. Watkins in 1867 from the Oregon side of the Columbia River, looking at the wharf barges, portage railroad incline track and the steamboat "Cascades," at the Lower Landing on Hamilton Island. The farm belonged to the Hamilton family.



A closer view of Fort Cascades at the garrison site. Fort Cascades (Lower Cascades) blockhouse is in group of buildings on left. Tip of Bradford Island in river on left. Bonneville Dam was constructed through this island in 1935-1936. Photo by C. E. Watkins, 1867.



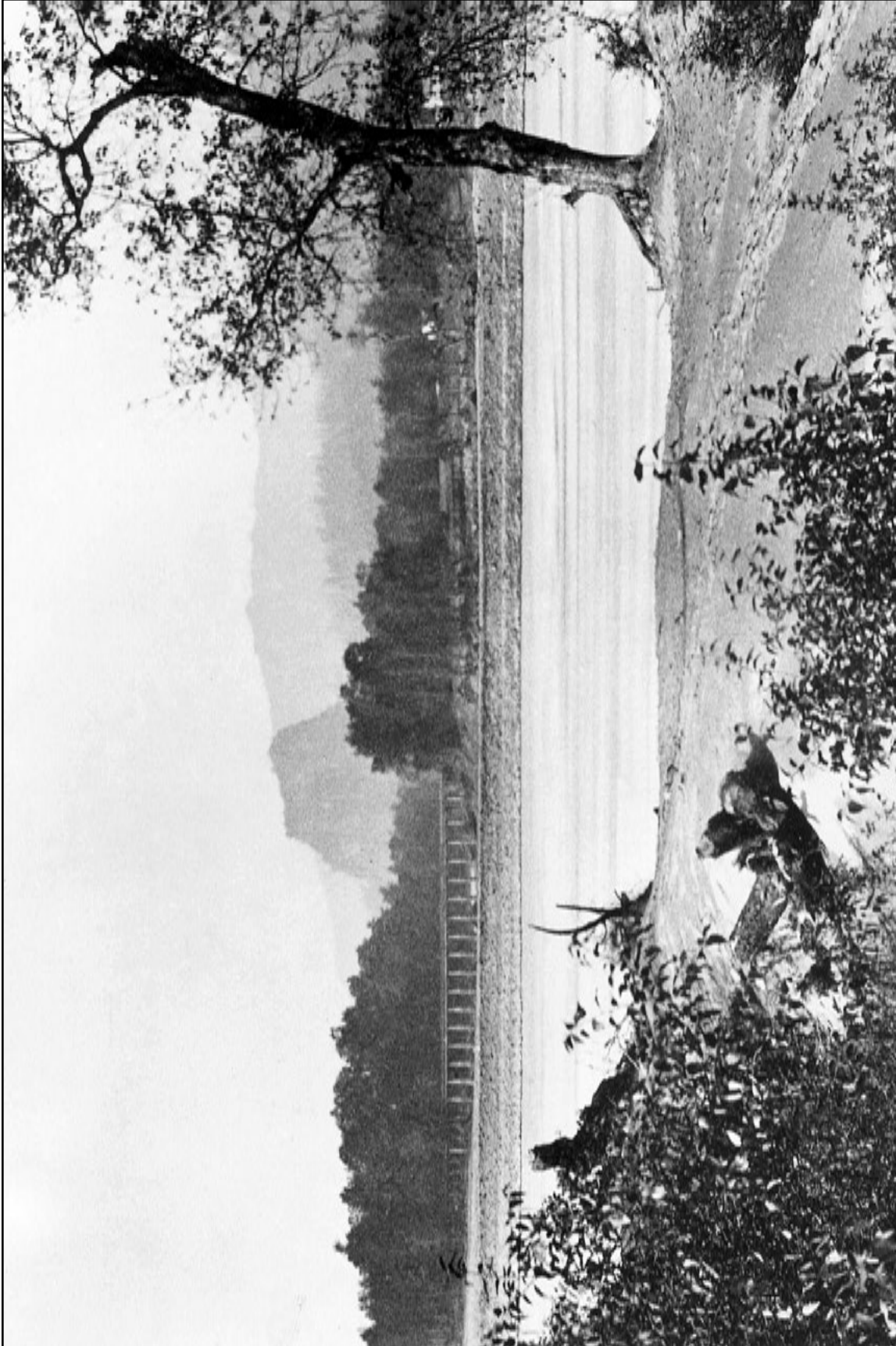


Photo taken from the Oregon shore looking down the slough between Hamilton Island on the left and the main shore on the right. This is the only photo that clearly shows the trestle across the slough. Beacon Rock, once known as Castle Rock, is in the background. (Photographer: C. E. Watkins, 1867).

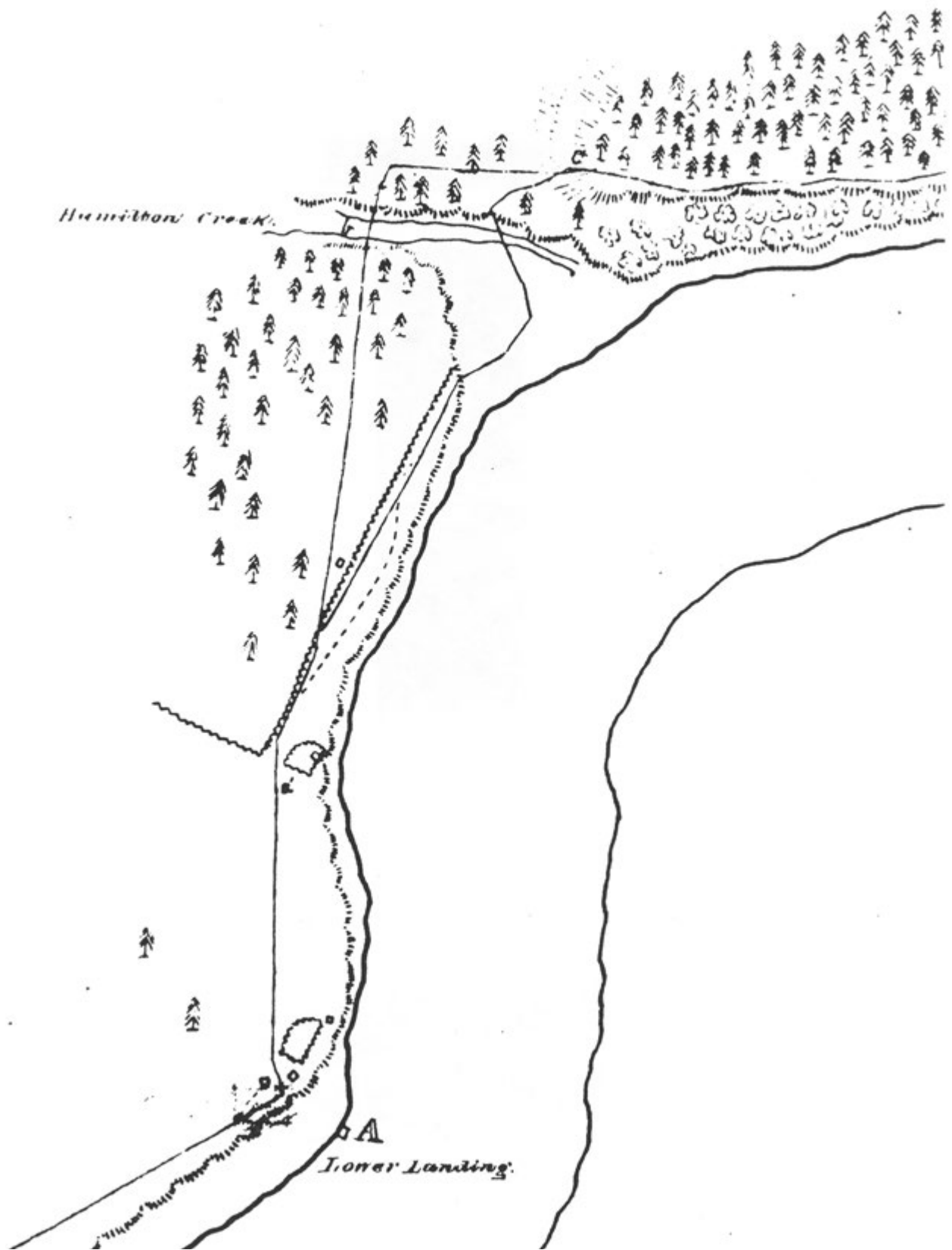


Figure 9-1. Early civilian structures and fields in the vicinity of the Lower Landing in 1855.  
(From Derby and Whiting, 1855b).



repeated exchange between the Indians and the soldiers. Both parties held positions which did not yield to ready assault. Sheridan noted: "My left was protected by the back water driven into the slough by the high state of the river, and my right rested secure on the main stream. Between us was only the narrow neck of land, to cross which would be certain death." He concluded: "The position of the Indians was almost the exact counterpart of ours" (Sheridan 1888:76).

On the evening of March 27, Sheridan dispatched the *Belle* to Vancouver and laid his plans to attempt to relieve the continuing siege of the Middle Blockhouse. He executed his plan on March 28 by evacuating the Lower Landing in stages. He sent his men across the Columbia River in a Hudson's Bay Company bateau to the mouth of Tanner Creek while keeping up an artillery barrage from the single gun on the Indian stronghold in the forest. Finding the current in the Columbia channel along the Oregon shore too swift and difficult to ascend, Sheridan then crossed with ten men to Bradford Island and began the arduous task of towing the bateau upstream along the margin of the island. He captured several Indian women who had taken refuge on the island and compelled them to assist in moving the boat against the rapids (Sheridan 1888:78-79).

This military operation was successful. While the hostile Indians were racing their horses in the meadows on the north bank of the river, the cover of the island enable Sheridan to drag the boat above the rapids without detection. His men slipped silently along the Oregon shore and at the head of Bradford Island the commander crossed back to the south side of the river to load as many soldiers into the vessel as it would hold. This operation enabled Sheridan to come to the rescue of the beleaguered citizens and soldiers at the Middle Blockhouse. A short time later military forces under Lt. Col. Edward Steptoe arrived at the Middle Cascades from The Dalles (Sheridan 1888:80).

Sheridan, Alexander Piper, and Steptoe laid their plans to capture as many Indians as they could. They reasoned that if Steptoe proceeded down the Washington shore of the Columbia some of the Indians would flee from their camp at the Lower Landing into the mountains to the north and others would cross in their canoes to Bradford Island. Sheridan and Piper thus took a howitzer and a number of soldiers, dropped down the river to Bradford Island, and — as they had anticipated — met a large force of Indian men, women, and children on the downstream end. Most of these were members of the local Cascades band. "They were very much frightened and demoralized at the turn events had taken," wrote Sheridan, "for the Yakimas at the approach of Steptoe had abandoned them, as predicted, and fled to the mountains" (Sheridan 1888:81).

Sheridan took thirteen Indian men prisoners and moved them under guard to the Lower Landing. He left the remaining women, children, and old men under military control on Bradford Island. Thus by the evening of March 28 the U. S. Army had regained control of the post site of Fort Cascades. Late in the evening a company of 4th Infantry forces and a company of volunteers arrived from Fort Vancouver but the

hostilities at the Cascades had been largely terminated (Sheridan 1888:82-83).

On the same day — March 28 — military forces from Fort Dalles, under Colonel George Wright, drove the Indians from the Upper Landing and advanced down the Columbia to join Sheridan's men the small detachment which had held out at the Middle Blockhouse. Wright, as commander of the 9th Infantry, ordered captain Charles L. Winder to commence construction immediately of a blockhouse at Fort Cascades. He also initiated construction of the blockhouse at the Upper Landing to protect the point for loading supplies and passengers at the head of the rapids (Weatherford 1961: 18-21).

## RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FORT

Fort Cascades, as a result of the Indian hostilities of March, was bare ground by early April, 1856. If the soldiers had erected any buildings during the winter — and none has been identified — they were likely destroyed during the attack of March 26. The soldiers probably lived in tents or in Johnson's buildings, and these were burned in the conflict. Within days of retaking the site, however, the soldiers appropriated lumber which had been cut by Bradford and Company. Its owners had temporarily abandoned their lumber and their homes. The soldiers used this material to erect troughs and racks for the horses and mules used by the dragoons and to build huts for the men at Fort Cascades. James Van Wart recalled:

The weather was exceedingly inclement, the rain at that season being not only cold but continual, producing a mud through which one could only walk with difficulty and rendering the lumber of the greatest service for the protection and health of the Troops (Van Wart 1857).

The new log blockhouse constructed at the Lower Landing was placed on the margin of the river so that its guns could cover both the forest and the wharf. On April 16, George Nauman reported that a "neat and substantial" blockhouse was nearly finished. The plan was to arm the building with a five pound and a twelve pound howitzer. As of the date of Nauman's inspection of the post, the soldiers still depended upon the gun borrowed from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's *Columbia*. This modest piece had done special duty in the battle at the Lower Landing on March 27 (Nauman 1856).

In April, 1856, Captain Charles L. Winder of the 9th Infantry, was post commander at Fort Cascades. He had a total of 68 troops in the district; seen of these were dragoons under Lt. Philip Sheridan. Four civilians resided at Fort Cascades and worked in the quartermaster department. Another five or six civilian, described as "much more troublesome than useful," also were at the post (Nauman 1856).

Perhaps these latter civilian were involved in the massacre of six Indians near the fort on April 4. On April 17 the soldiers at Fort Cascades found three men, one woman, a girl, and a boy murdered near the trail from the Lower Landing to the Middle Blockhouse. A local Indian headman, Spencer, identified his father, wife, son and niece among those murdered. Sheridan, who investigated the event, wrote:

The men had their hands tightly lashed behind their backs, and were then strangled to death by short cords tied around their necks with slip knots, and then drawn tight by pulling at both ends. The hands of the women were not tied, but they were strangled to death, in the same manner; a silk handkerchief was used to strangle the child, a boy three years old. The person of the young woman, from the position of her body, and dress, was undoubtedly violated (Sheridan 1856).

These Indians had passed the blockhouse at Fort Cascades on their way up the north shore trail. Joseph Meek, who was then at the post, told the officers that six armed white men had followed them, stating that the Indians would never reach the portage. Sheridan reported that those in this party included S. M. Hamilton, E. W. Baughman, S. Vandevere, W. M. Wilson, and a man named Finley (about whom he was somewhat uncertain) (Sheridan 1856).

At least three of these men were early settlers in the Cascades area and undoubtedly were extremely angry over the Indian attack of March 26 and the deaths of a number of their pioneer neighbors. Samuel Milton Hamilton, born in 1818 in Indiana, had the Donation Land Claim west of the Gorge W. Johnson farm. Ephraim W. Baughman was a witness to the Donation Land Claim application for Erastus Joslyn. William M. Wilson, a hotel keeper at the Cascades in 1860, was a witness to the land applications of Hiram Leavens, John Woodward, and Ebernezer Hardy in Skamania County (U. S. Bureau of the Census 1860:152-155; Seattle Genealogical Society, 1980;189, 190, 192, 237, 250).

No record exists of any action taken by military or civilian officials against these men for their alleged involvement in the massacre of these Cascade Indians. The episode has largely escaped any historical notice. Lt. Sheridan interred the Indian bodies near Fort Cascades (Sheridan 1856).

On April 29 Captain Winder issued the official proclamation of the military reservation at the Lower Landing:

Commencing at the Block House and following the bank of the Columbia River half way to Hamilton's Island, courses S32° = 35' W - distance 266 yds

thence N 78° = 55' W until the line strikes a Creek partially dry at present, distance 216 yards; then following this Creek until it intersects a Second Creek which bounds the Reservation on the West and North West = course S82° = 30' W distance 1300 yards then proceeding along this Creek in a direction N.E. by E distance 2926 yards, then due South to the Columbia River distance 833 yards and from this Station along the bank of the Columbia River course SW distance 728 yards to the Block House or the place of beginning (Dixon 1859).

The tract for Fort Cascades thus included 416 acres; all of the George W. Johnson claim, 60 acres of the Bolivar B. Bishop claim, and approximately 40 acres of the Samuel Hamilton claim (Dixon 1859).

## MILITARY LIFE AT THE FORT

Conditions at the military posts in the Cascades area were not particularly

TABLE 9-1. Disciplinary charges against soldiers at Fort Cascades, 1856.

Name	Charges	Date of Event
Francis Keane	Desertion Subversion of Order and Military Discipline	May 17-18
Jeremiah Kellard	Mutinous Conduct Desertion	June 8
John Raddy	Mutinous Conduct	June 8
John Black	Mutinous Conduct Desertion	June 1
George Tucker	Sleeping on Duty	May 21
Henry Kiefer	Sleeping on Duty	June 4
Henry Hunt	Desertion	(?)
John Roark	Desertion	(?)
Source: Winder 1856a, 1856b, 1856c.		

attractive for enlisted men in 1856. Many feared the return of hostile Indians. Others found living conditions wretched. The weather in the Columbia Gorge was a trial of rain, wind, ice, and almost constant dampness. Shelter for enlisted men was barely adequate. Daily life for these soldiers was that of monotonous guard duty or backbreaking labor in constructing buildings or assisting the civilian crews in making the Military Portage Road. Some enlisted men disliked their officers and no doubt cursed the day they signed on for military service. The dissatisfactions of the enlisted men were mirrored in charges brought against them by their officers on June 9 (Table 9-1).

Private John Raddy had called upon his fellow soldiers to help him resist Lt. E. J. Harvie who had ordered him tied up. Raddy insultingly called Harvie a “damned son of a bitch,” a “negro driver,” and alleged that he was “in his wall tent, covered up in blankets, and won’t do anything to keep the rain from falling on us.” Raddy had gone so far as to shout: “Oh! If I dare speak the sentiments of my mind — I defy is persecution.” Jeremiah Kellard had likewise charged that Harvie was a “damn son of a bitch” and a “damn tyrant.” Black allegedly kept talking after taps and thereby created a “spirit of mutiny” among the men at the Upper Blockhouse. Charges against Hunt and Roark were dropped in light of their lengthy imprisonment and apparent willingness to accept military discipline (Winder 1856a).

On July 31 a thief entered the room in the kitchen near the Commanding Officer’s Quarters occupied at Fort Cascades by Lt. E. J. Harvie. This person cut open his trunk and stole \$108.60 in army funds. Harvie, at the time of the theft, was on duty as commanding officer of the troop detachment guarding the laborers building the Military Portage Road. Possessing no iron safe or other means of securing the money, he had locked the funds in his trunk in the locked building where he resided. On September 14, in a report to Bvt. Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, Harvie concluded:

I would here state that circumstantial evidence is so strong against a man formerly in the Quarter Master’s Dept. at this place, that he had been arrested, and will be brought to trial at the next court (Harvie 1856).

No record of that trial survives, however (Lugenbeel 1856; Miller 1856).

In April, 1856, after the Indian attack, the military personnel at Fort Cascades expended many weeks of work to construct a series of buildings. By August, 1857, the post had seven structures — Lower Blockhouse, Commanding Officer’s Quarters, Officers’ Quarters, Commissary Storehouse, Company Kitchen, Bakery, and Guard House. In 1857 a total of 13 extra duty men had been employed to mount this program of construction. They included one teamster, two freight hostellers, one mason, one saddler, two carpenters, one blacksmith, and five laborers. The carpenters, hired at four dollars a day, worked on the Officers’ Quarters (Cross 1857).

In the inspection of this post in October, 1858, Col. Joseph K. F. Mansfield sketched a rather complete picture of its appearance:

The block house at the foot of the falls is built of logs & two stories high, but small, and of no material value here. It is now used as a store house for supplies of ammunition, &c., and constitutes a part of the post. It is here the main body of the command with supplies for this locality quarter (see sketch of the quarters &c herewith (Figure 9-2). A 2 pr. howitzer is mounted in the 2d story of the log house used by the guard. The ammunition here is 24 howitzer spherical ball shot — 24 howitzer canister shot, & 1000 rounds of ball & buckshot cartridges.

The officers are well quartered in frame buildings. The men are comfortable in log barracks, two stories, but too low. The kitchen and mess room, one apartment, and entirely too contracted; a good mess room required. The bunks of the men indifferent. A bakery exists but the oven is defective & requires rebuilding. A hospital about 10 feet in the clear, a small log building insufficient, a new hospital required, but a good dispensary in the Asst. Surgeons quarters. A laundress lives in a like building. There is an excellent barn, and house for the employees, & a smith's shop, just without the square enclosure & will take the attention of the Genl commanding this Department to the above deficiencies (Mansfield 1858).

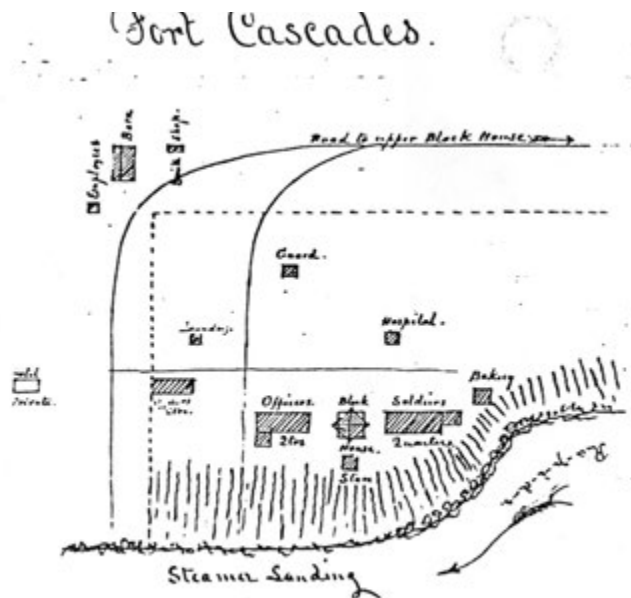


Figure 9-2. Plan of Fort Cascades showing buildings and site development in 1958 (Mansfield 1858).

Figure 9-2. Plan of Fort Cascades showing buildings and site development in 1858 (Mansfield 1858).



Mansfield found Company H of the 4th Infantry — two officers, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, and 69 privates — stationed in the Cascades area. He noted that desertions numbered six in 1855, five in 1856, and seven in 1857 (Mansfield 1858).

A variety of conditions contributed to the decisions of the enlisted men to desert their post. At the various blockhouses at the Cascades, the weather was undoubtedly a factor. On December 9, 1858, Captain H. D. Wallen wrote: “We are perfectly encased in S(n)ow and ice and it does not require much stretch of imagination to trace a resemblance between Dr. (Elisha Kent) Kane, in the polar circles, and ourselves” (Wallen 1858b). The rigors of the setting were a product of the unique climate of the Gorge. On December 18, 1858, Wallen wrote:

We have absolutely no dry season at the Cascades,  
as from the 15th day of October to the 31st day of May  
it rains nearly all the time — and from the 1st of  
June to the 15th of October we have frequent  
showers (Wallen 18568d).

In this setting adequate clothing and shelter were essential. While the housing at the posts was sufficient, the clothing was not. Within a week of conjuring up the nearly polar weather at Fort Cascades, Wallen wrote urgently to Fort Vancouver and seeking issue of boots or shoes. He explained that a number of his men were barefoot and concluded that they “must have shoes or boots of some kind” (Wallen 1858c).

The men stationed in this area carried out a variety of assignments. Primarily they were on guard duty, staffing the three blockhouses. From time to time they were recruited to help with the Quartermaster Department of the Engineers on the maintenance of the Military Road (Bonnycastle 1859a). Between May and September, 1859, a number of these soldiers served with Captain Wallen on his wagon road expedition through the watersheds of the Deschutes and Crooked rivers across the Blue Mountains, and back to Fort Dalles via the John Day River (Bonnycastle 1859c).

Soldier life involved target practice, yet the location of the blockhouses at the Cascades did not lend itself readily to that enterprise. Captain James A. Hardie lamented in June, 1859, that the longest range he could utilize for the men was 300 yards. “I do not now see that I can find a longer range without incurring the risk of killing persons or cattle,” he observed. The almost constant transit of people and their livestock, camping near the blockhouses during their portages, made such military routine extremely difficult (Hardie 1859).

Another aspect of soldiering on the frontiers of the American West in the nineteenth century was drinking. The men stationed at the Cascades were no exception to that pattern. On occasion, the drinking led to troubles of a dimension that

resulted in disciplinary action. When enlisted men — Bruene, Bradley, Ross, McGovern and Welsh — became drunk and fomented a wild night of fights at the Indian encampment near Fort Cascades on February 1-2, 1860, the officers were compelled to act. They found that these men had gone to the village in search of Indian women and in the process beat several people, including Polly-Polly and Sampson. Ross was wounded in the melee. Eventually charges were brought against Welsh, McGovern and Ross (Wallen 1860).

By the summer of 1859, Fort Cascades had attained the appearance of a typical military post of its time. During the years of military occupation the Army constructed a number of buildings and objects at the fort. These included the Lower Blockhouse, quarters for the commanding officer, commissioned officers and enlisted men, privies for these buildings, a commissary store house (used by 1859 as a carpenter's shop), a company kitchen, bakery-laundress building, guard house (used in 1858 as a hospital and in 1859 as a commissary store house), a new hospital (erected in 1859) a hospital privy, guard house, sutler's store, laundress quarters, flagpole, wharf, blacksmith shop, quartermaster stables or barn, dwelling for the quartermaster's portage party, quartermaster's storehouse, a military garden, a temporary magazine, and fencing around the main post site (Figure 9-3; Ransom 1859). These improvements gave Fort Cascades an appearance of permanence and reflected the military commitment to this strategic area.

In the six years the post was active, sixteen commanding officers presided over Fort Cascades (Table 9-2). The number of soldiers assigned to the post was fairly constant except in 1855-56. When the post was first established on September 30, 1855 it consisted of a contingent of 21: 20 enlisted men and a lone officer.

The greatest number of soldiers enumerated in the post returns was 362 enlisted men and 20 officers during the military campaign in this vicinity in March, 1856. Of this number, 322 were from the 9th Infantry, 17 were assigned to the 3rd Artillery, and 34 to the 1st Dragoons. Between May, 1856, and October, 1861, the Army usually kept between 50 and 60 soldiers under assignment to this post; some were, of course, on detached assignment at the Middle or Upper blockhouses. At times of construction projects between April and July, 1856, and in November-December, 1858, and January-March, 1859, the post returns also carried the names of civilian carpenters, masons, and painters who were laboring at the post (U. S. Army 1855-61).

The last inspection of Fort Cascades occurred in October, 1860, with the visit of Bvt. Lt. Col. W. H. Emory. He noted that all was in order, including the discipline and contentment of the soldiers. Only one enlisted man, Private French, had a grievance; he had been detailed out of turn to work as a cook. "The injustice, if any, done the man

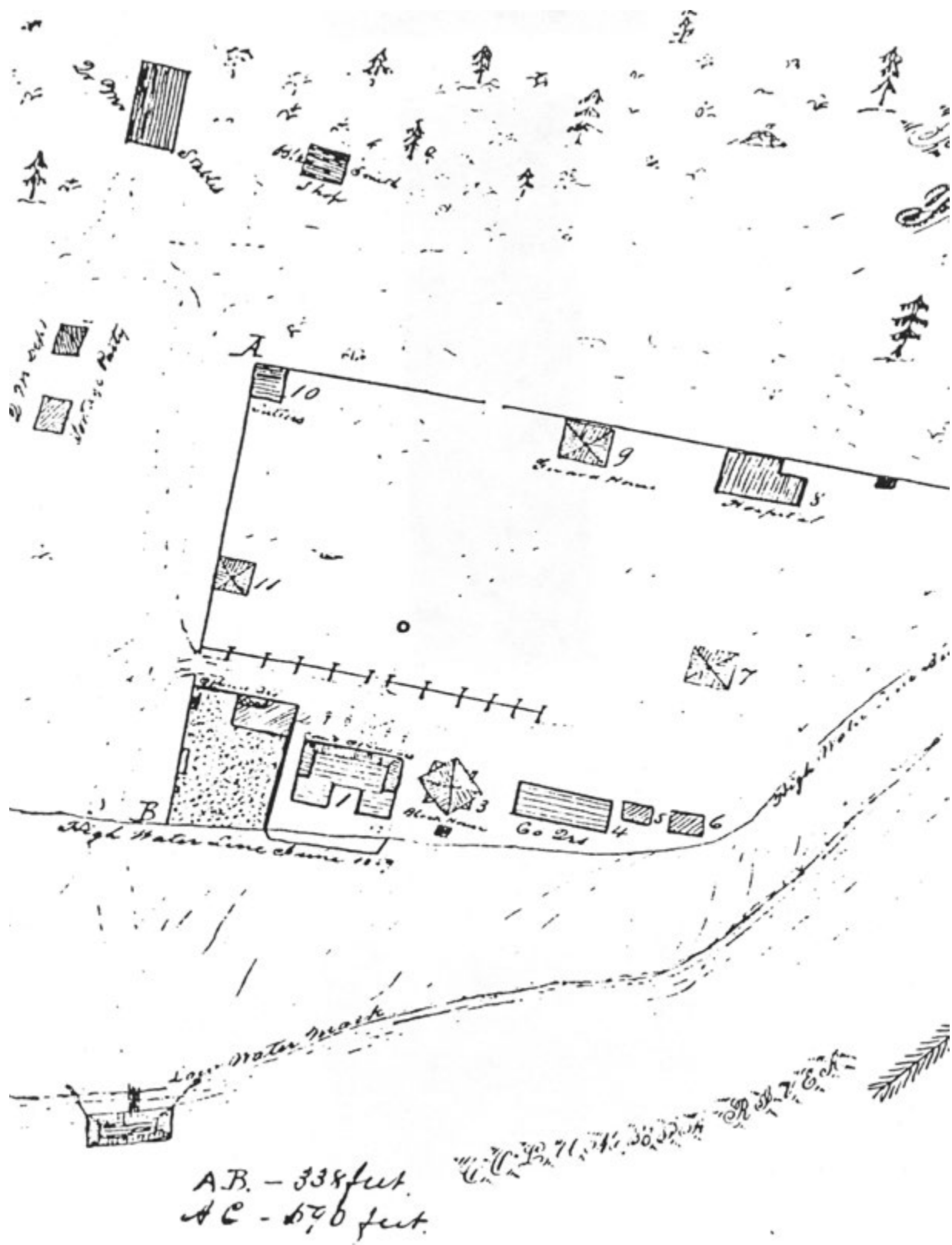


Figure 9-3. Rough sketch of Fort Cascades, Washington Territory, by D. R. Ransom, June 1859. (Ransom 1859).

Table 9-2. Commanding officers at Fort Cascades, 1855-61.

Name	Dates of Command
Robert Macfeely, 1st Lt.	September 1855 - March 1856
Winant Geer, Col.	March 1856 - April 1856
Charles S. Winder, Capt.	April 1856 - December 1856
Francis O. Wyse, Capt.	November 1856 - December 1856
Dunbar R. Ransom, 2nd Lt.	January 1857
Francis O. Wyse, Capt.	February 1857 - December 1857
Francis Mallory, 2nd Lt.	January 1858 - July 1858
Henry D. Wallen, Capt.	August 1858 - December 1858
John C. Bonnycastle, 1st Lt.	January 1859
Henry D. Wallen, Capt.	February 1859 - April 1859
James A. Hardie, Capt.	May 1859 - December 1859
Henry D. Wallen, Capt.	j14
January 1860- February 1860	
Francis Mallory, 2nd Lt.	March 1860 - September 1860
John Bonnycastle, 1st Lt.	October 1860 - November 1860
Henry D. Wallen, Capt.	December 1860 - August 1861
James Van Voast, Capt.	September 1861 - October 1861
Source: U. S. Army 1855-61.	

was promptly corrected by Lt. Bonnycastle,” noted Emory. Gone were the days of stress associated with Wallen’s tenure as post commander. So too had passed the animosities of the enlisted men against officers like Lt. E. J. Harvie who earned so many curses (Emory 1860).

## WITHDRAWAL OF THE MILITARY

The Army evacuated Fort Cascades on June 11, 1861. The post was reoccupied on August 25 but again evacuated on November 6 (Anonymous 1878). These moves were the logical outcome of the exigencies facing the federal forces with the firing on Fort Sumpter on April 12, 1861, by the Confederates. The sobering debacle of Bull Run in July convinced the Union leaders that the war was to be of long duration. Critical to mounting the anticipated assault on the rebel capital of Richmond, Virginia, or of attempting to split the Confederacy by driving down the Mississippi was bringing experienced troops into action. In the fall of 1861, the Union generals began wholesale withdrawal of officers and enlisted men at garrisons scattered across the American West. Fort Umpqua, Fort Yamhill, and Fort Hoskins in Oregon were among those abandoned; so, too, were the three blockhouses at the Cascades evacuated.

The defeat of the Indians in the war of the spring of 1856 had ushered in a period of peace. The successful confinement of the majority of the Indians to reservations and

the spread of settlement onto the Columbia Plateau by the late 1850s indicated that the need for an Army presence in the Gorge was limited. The outbreak of the Civil War and the manpower needs of the Union sounded the death knell of Fort Cascades and its associated blockhouses. Fort Cascades had served its usefulness. The soldiers would not return.

## **OTHER MILITARY POSTS AT THE CASCADES**

Two other posts complemented the military occupation at Fort Cascades located at the Lower Landing. The first military structure in the Gorge was the Middle Blockhouse (Fort Rains), constructed at the Middle Cascades in 1855. The Upper Landing was the site of the Upper Blockhouse, also known as Fort Lugenbeel. These posts, along with Fort Cascades, were the focus of military activity in the Columbia Gorge between 1855 and 1861.

### **MIDDLE BLOCKHOUSE (FORT RAINS)**

The Middle Blockhouse stood at the Middle Cascades or near the western end of the upper portage in Section 14, T.2N., R.7E. The building prominently faces the Columbia River atop Sheridan's Point, a promontory which eventually slipped into the nearby swirling currents (Derby and Whiting 1855a). The post was built in October, 1855, as one of three stations developed by the U. S. Army to protect the passage of military supplies along the north bank of the Columbia River. The structure was not intended to house more than a detachment of soldiers; the headquarters and site of permanent operations was Fort Cascades at the Lower Landing.

In April, 1856, Bvt. Lt. George Nauman inspected this post and reported that he structure was a two-story building. The first floor, containing one room, measured 14 by 20 feet, six inches. The second story, also having one room, measured 22 feet by 28 feet. Nauman wrote:

About the middle of the portage, between the Upper and Lower Cascades, is a blockhouse which I found occupied by one sergeant and nine privates of L. Company 3d Arty. as a guard, the armament of which was one 6 pdr. An additional 6 pdr. or 12 pdr. howitzer should be furnished to complete its means of defence. There was an adequate supply of ammunition for the service of the gun for a short period . . .  
The garrison here need not be numerous (Nauman 1856).

The Middle Blockhouse had already seen its moment of glory by the time of Nauman's visit. The building had been subjected to the spirited attack of the Cascades, Yakima and Klickitat Indians on March 26-27, 1856 As the only military structure in

the area, it drew both the attention of the refugees as well as the focus of Indian offensive action. Christina (Griswold) Corum recalled how the Indian attack commenced on the morning of March 26:

Thinking it was the soldiers firing off their guns, as they sometimes did, I walked out in the yard and stood talking to some others. Six bullets in rapid succession came over my head and about me, the last one striking a little boy by my side. He cried out, "I am shot." We then seemed to understand that we were in danger and went in the block house (Brown 1935).

The situation at the Middle Blockhouse was desperate that day. One soldier was killed outside the building; another, shot through the hip, lay at the base of the incline on the portage road below the settlement. Only five military men and a frightened civilian population remained to defend the position. George Griswold, one of the local settlers, was wounded and died once inside the blockhouse. "Everyone was at their post and the yells of the savages and the cannon's roar was kept up all of the day," recalled Christina Corum. Relief came with the arrival of Lt. Philip Sheridan and additional military forces on March 29 (Sheridan 1888:77-79; Brown 1935).

Except for this brief but bloody moment, the Middle Blockhouse, also known as Fort Rains, was never again the scene of hostilities. It became a lonely outpost for detachments of soldiers from Fort Cascades who passed their days and weeks keeping watch at the building. On October 28, 1858, Lt. Col. K. F. Mansfield inspected the Middle Blockhouse and reported:

The blockhouse in the centre is on a ledge of rock looking down upon the termination of the horse railroad. This (building is) miserably built of logs; two stories high, but very low, yet suited for defence against the Indians under existing circumstances. It is armed with a six pounder in the 2 story, and garrisoned by a corporal and eight men, and amply supplied with 14 rounds shot, 27 round canister, 26 spherical case' and 1800 rounds of buck and ball cartridges, and rationed and the men in fine order (Mansfield 1858).

In June 1859, D. R. Ransom inspected the building and wrote:

Two and a half miles from here (Fort Cascades) is the Middle Block House 22 x 16 feet a portion of the defences of the portage. It is two storied





Figure 6-4. Photograph of the settlement at the Middle Cascades in 1867 by Carleton Watkins, with buildings identified as follows: Middle Blockhouse on right, Palmer Saloon on left, Griswold house below bank.



**1900 drawing of Fort Rains, the original structure. In November, 1855, a blockhouse was built by the U. S. Army under the direction of Capt. H. D. Wallen and Lt. H. D. Hodges. It was named Fort Rains for Major Gabriel Rains.**

built of logs . . . It is going to decay, but will last without repair as long as it will be needed. It is not on land to which the U. S. has claim, and it is not occupied (Ransom 1859).

Ransom's report thus confirms that the tenure of the army at Fort Rains may have been less than two and one-half years. By 1859 the station had no utility and had been abandoned.

A graphic description of this building and the events associated with it in March 1856, was penned by Turner F. Leavens in the 1920s.

The block house was, as near as I am able to say, about twenty feet square on the ground the first

story, and about twenty four feet square on the upper story with a projection of about two feet all around the building, thereby making a protection against the Indians setting it on fire at the corners. It was provided with portholes about two inches by six or eight inches perpendicular on the outside but perhaps twelve inches square on the inside so as to allow the gun to be pointed in different directions. It was built of fir logs, close together, and I think the one at Sheridan's Point had a log floor with a ladder or stairs from the lower to the upper floor, which was not very high either. I have played in it when I was about nine years old and dug out some bullets from the wall, but lost them years ago (Brown 1935).

The Middle Blockhouse stood at this site for a number of years, a lonely reminder of the days of conflict between the Indians and the pioneers in the Gorge. The structure was photographed in 1867 (Figure 10-1) and sketched in 1889 (Evans 1889[1]:80). It eventually dropped into the Columbia River, perhaps when the great flood of 1894 undercut the bank (Brown 1935).

## **UPPER BLOCKHOUSE (FORT LUGENBEEL)**

The Upper Blockhouse, also known as Fort Lugenbeel, stood at the Upper Landing in Section 37, T.2N., R.7E. The structure was located atop a hill overlooking the small islands at the head of the portage along the north bank of the Columbia River (Figure 10-2). The site was first used for military purposes when in 1847, during the Cayuse Indian War, volunteer soldiers established Fort Gilliam at the Upper Landing. Also known as "The Cabins," these rude buildings sheltered troops and supplies destined for service in the conflicts farther to the east (Victor 1894:157-158).

During the outbreak of the Indians in March, 1856, the military had no garrison at this site. Civilians fortified up in the Bradford store while the Indians burned many of the pioneer buildings scattered about the area. By June 17, 1856, however, the army had moved in with determination. On that date Bvt. Lt. Col. George Nauman found Bvt. Maj. Pinkney Lugenbeel in command. 1st Lt. Alexander Piper had 47 men of S Company, Third Artillery. Lugenbeel, Capt. F. E. Patterson, and Capt. D. Woodruff, commanded an additional 244 men, most of whom were being outfitted for the Indian campaigns in the Yakima War. Nauman noted:

Besides the troops there are 20 employ[e]s in the Quartermaster's Dept. who are represented to be entirely reliable and are well armed. There were

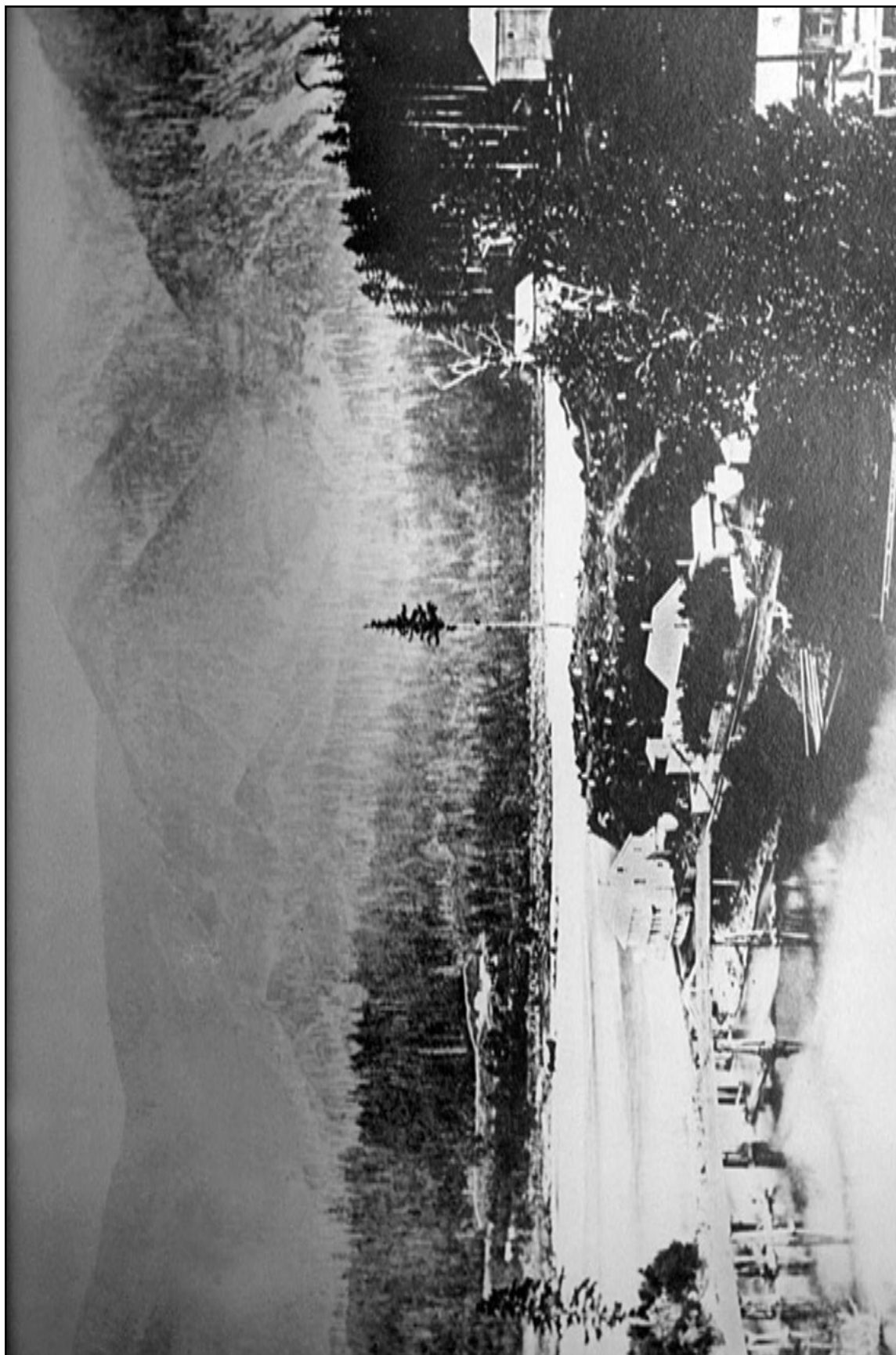


Figure 6-5.

View of the Upper Landing photographed by Carleton Watkins in 1867, showing portage facilities along the nearly north bank of the river and the Upper Blockhouse or Fort Lugenbeel, constructed in 1856, on the hillside above the settlement. (Courtesy Oregon Historical Society)



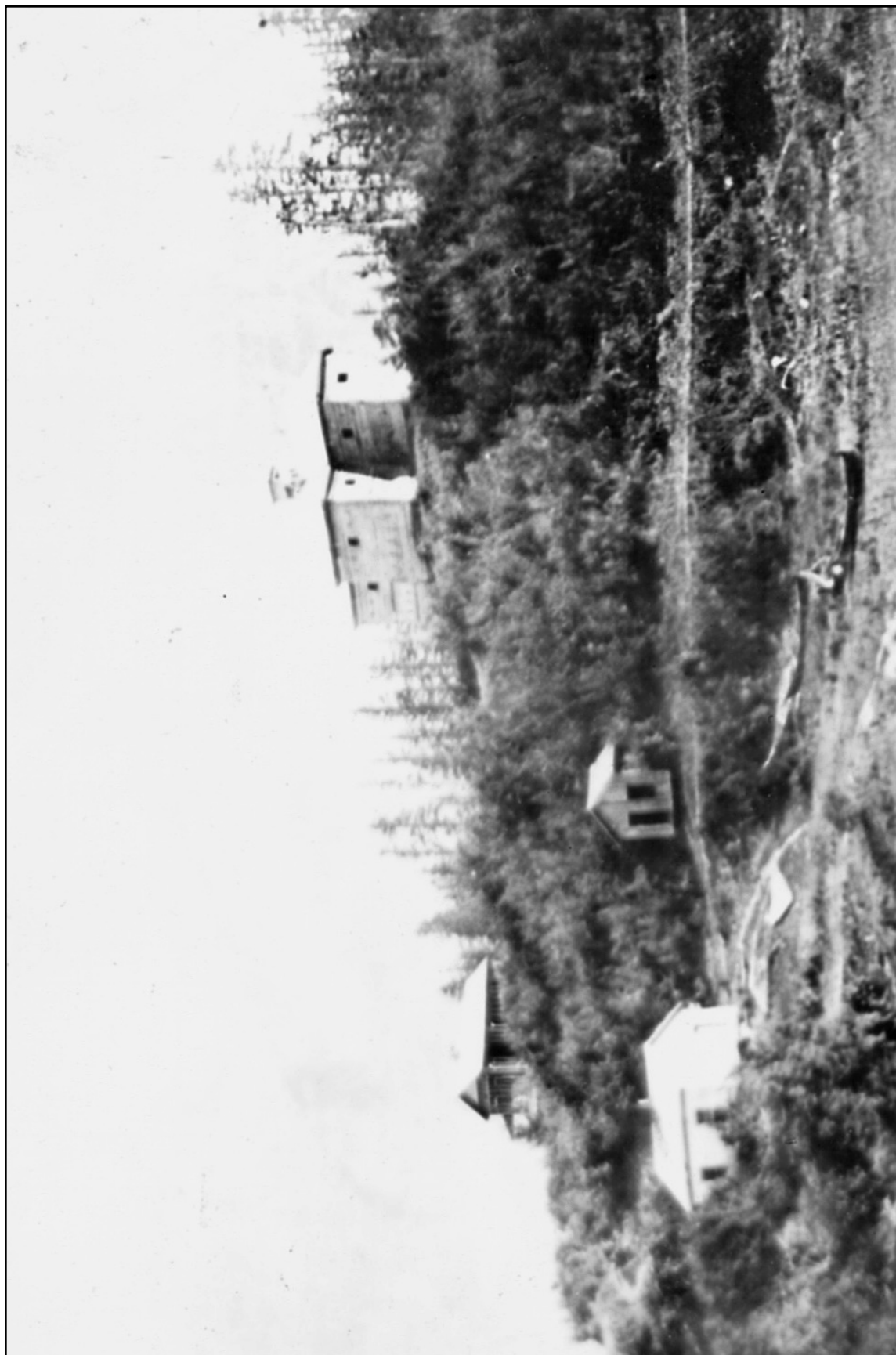


Figure 10-2. The Upper Blockhouse (Fort Lugenbeel) occupied a prominent position over the small civilian community at the Upper Landing. (Courtesy Oregon Historical Society.)

at the post 12 mules and one horse for current service. Supplies when wanted have been readily procured from below, in which no difficulty had been encountered, and none was anticipated. Two mountain howitzers were in charge of Lieut. Piper, with an abundant supply of ammunition, all of which were in excellent condition.

A very excellent blockhouse was being constructed with accessory defences, making, indeed, what might with propriety be called a fort. The armament was to consist of one 6 pdr. and one 12 pdr. howitzer (Nauman 1856).

By August, 1857, the Upper Blockhouse consisted of two structures: (1) the Blockhouse, used as Company Quarters and measuring 55 x 36 feet with single rooms on both floors, and (2) the Officers' Quarters, a one-story building of three rooms, 16 x 16, 16 x 14, and 10 x 14 feet (Cross 1857). In 1958 Col. Joseph K. F. Mansfield reported favorably on these buildings and found a sergeant and eleven privates on detail (Mansfield 1858).

On his inspection of the post in June, 1859, D. R. Ransom found the main blockhouse made of hewn logs, unfinished in its interior, and settling in one corner. He wrote:

Near it is a one story frame building (Officers quarters) 32 x 17½ feet containing two rooms and a small kitchen 10 feet deep. It is lined with boards but unpainted. It is in fair repair, but is not now used as Officers Quarters. The Block House and this last described building are on private land. There is a small guard there — but as soon as there becomes no permanent necessity for a force there, the officers quarters might be taken down and the materials removed to the post [Fort Cascades]. The Block House may be of use as a rallying point for the inhabitants in case of an alarm (Ransom 1859).

The date of withdrawal of troops from the Upper Blockhouse is unknown. It occurred between June 1859, and the summer of 1861 when military forces were withdrawn from the entire Cascade area for service in the Civil War (Anonymous 178). The Upper Blockhouse became a sentinel conjuring up images of past days of soldier life on the Columbia. The old building, slowly rotting away stood into the early twentieth century (Monaghan 1983).