



Simmons Clan
Nedra L. Trogolo
2633 S.W. 6th
Seattle, WA 98107

Mr. Vincent Ast
2805 Alpine Road
Camas, WA 989607

Dear Mr. Ast:

As historian for the "Simmons Clan" I have been asked to inquire about the possibilities of erecting a plaque commemorating the birth of the first white child born to permanent settlers north of the Columbia River in the town of Washougal.

I have seen the existing wood board that reads of this event. Many in our family have expressed a great desire to have a more permanent marker erected with the name and birth date of the child. That child, born April 14, 1845, was named Christopher Columbus Simmons.

Your name was given to me by Dorothy Piontek of the Historical Society. She said this project has been spoken of at one of the meetings. I do hope you will consider it further. Our clan has several projects to complete for the Centennial year of 1989. We have been gathering each August in Olympia for a picnic and business meeting for seventy-three years.

Enclosed is one of the many stories and some articles written about Christopher, also a paper on his father, Michael Simmons. This may acquaint you further of them. He was a unique person, much loved by his friends and family.

Sincerely,
NEDRA L. TROGOLO
Great-great-granddaughter of
Christopher C. Simmons

FIRST NATIVE SON DIES IN OLYMPIA

Olympia, July 7th 1931 — Christopher Columbus Simmons, described by Washington historian and biographers as the state's "First Native Son," died Monday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Mary Simmons Moore Caudette at Olympia. He was 86 years of age. Mr. Simmons, a member of the state's well known pioneer families, as the son of Col. Michael T. Simmons, the founder of Tumwater.

He was born at Washougal, Clark County, 14 April 1845. At that time few white settlers had made their way into the territory now known as the State of Washington. In "*A History of Thurston County*," compiled by Mrs. George Blankenship, Simmons is described as the first white male born north and west of the Columbia River. Simmons' birth was attended by throngs of Indians. They christened him Kick-a-Poos, meaning "The White Seagull."

Simmons spent virtually his entire life in Thurston and Mason counties. As a boy he played around his father's saw and grist mill at Tumwater. These were the first manufacturing plants constructed in the territory of Washington.

Simmons, the boy, grew up with the Indian children as playmates. He learned their language and the Chinook jargon used by the Indians, alike, that he spoke as adeptly as the Indians.

Later, when his father became Indian Agent, he was even more closely associated with the tribes of the district. Through his familiarity with their language and habits, he ultimately became an authority on Indian Lore.

The last years of his life were spent on Mud Bay, near Olympia, where he had clam beds and oysters. He became ill several months ago and came to Olympia to be with his daughter.

He is survived by his widow, Asenath Ann, eight children, twenty-two grandchildren and sixteen great grandchildren.

FROM THE SUNDAY OLYMPIAN, OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, AUGUST 17 1930

Thrills and dangers of an elopement by row boat were again superceded by the romance and joy two persons very much in love when Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Columbus Simmons relived the other afternoon of their elopement 6 years ago today.

Today, Mr. and Mrs. Simmons are enjoying a gathering of all their family members and descendants at Priest Point Park and probably that same story of young people daring in the face of all obstacles will be the most popular of the many told by the pioneer couple today.

That story of the trip to Seattle in a rudely fashioned row boat from Steilacoom at 10:00 on the moonlit evening of August 23, 1864, and arriving in Seattle about daylight the next morning is one of the many interesting stories told by this couple who have watched so many changes in our own territory.

The writer spent the afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Simmons and noted their remarkable agility, their keen sense of humor, and, above all, their complete contentment with life, health and the privilege of being together.

Living at the Old Home on Mud Bay, Mr. and Mrs. Simmons now have gathered about them members of the family her from diffeent places in Washington and California, and all are anxious to do all honor to the elderly couple.

Mrs. Simmons (Asenath Ann Kennedy) was "born in Pike County, Illinois, on July 26, 1851, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Kennedy. In 1853, the family left Illinois to cross the plains and settled in Olympia, or rather at the place where Olympia is now located.

Since early childhood, Mr. and Mrs. Simmons were acquainted and, as Mr. Simmons now states it, he "can't" remember when he didn't know Asenath.

Christopher Columbus Simmons was the first white child born north of the Columbia River, and his birth was an event of Interest to all the Indians about.

Colonel Michael Troutman Simmons, his father, was known as the first Indian agent on the Coast, and his services as a friend to the Indians were demanded time and time again by Governor Isaac I. Stevens. Col. Simmons later served as head of a treaty-making party (including Franklin Kennedy) that left this part of the country in the early spring to sign treaties with the Indian chiefs of the Quinault, Quillayute, Nisqually, Cape Flattery and Grays Harbor Indians. Included in that party were Col. Shaw, Ed Miller, Jackson and Franklin Kennedy - all familiar names to the old timers.

The first white child, or "Sea Gull" as he was named by the Indians, was born at Washougal, on the Columbia River on April 14, 1845. When he was only

six months old, his family left Washougal by Indian canoe to go down the Cowlitz River ~ thence across Lewis County by sleds to the present town of Tumwater, where Col. Simmons named his first location "New Market".

The party followed the Hudson Trail from the east side of the Cowlitz, finding no one but Indians with the exception of the Hudson Bay Post people at Dupont.

Col. Simmons built later the first saw mill in the state.

It was at Tumwater that Col. Simmons sent for the first school teacher for his family - Major Goldsborouagh. Later, a public school was opened with Indians as the main part of the pupils and Miss Charlotte Barnes as the teacher.

At that time, little Asenath was then attending school on the Big Skookum River with William Walters as her teacher.

It was on the 22nd of August, 1864, when Asenath Ann was just past 13 and her fiance, 19, that the daring elopement was planned. She was attending school at Steilacoom and living with her half-sister and brother-in-law. That evening, due to pre-arranged plans, young Simmons arrived about ten o'clock. It was dark. Waiting until everyone was asleep, young Asenath Ann cautiously thrust her suitcase out the window and lowered herself to the ground. She was fearful that the family would be aroused by the creaking window. Leaving Steilacoom at 10 p.m., they had a successful journey, arriving at Seattle at daybreak. They went to the home of Dr. Maynard, Chris' uncle. They told him of their plans, and he suggested Asenath put the number 18 in her shoes, because they were worried about her age. No license was required, so vows were taken the next morning, August 23, 1864. When Rev. Daniel Bagley was reading the service, of course, the bride was under 18 but, when the question was asked, since she had the number 18 in her shoes, she answered truthfully that she was over 18.

They spent their wedding night on the beach, where a man gave Chris a hind quarter of a deer for helping him do some work. They went to sleep on the beach and, when they woke up, the deer meat had been stolen.

They remained in Seattle just two days and again embarked in the row boat. Coming back to the Big Skookum, where Simmons' parents were farming, they stayed there until March, then went to Seattle to live at Alki Point for two years. After that, they went to Mason County where they established a home at Kamilche, Washington.

Of the twelve children born to the couple, only one was born out of Mason County.

Mr. Simmons has only been out of his native state but once and that was a three-hour trip to Couer d'Alene, Idaho, with his daughter Mrs. Gaudette of Spokane.

Train rides are also a novelty to the couple, as their longest train ride was

from Seattle to Spokane in about 1919, but their present health and happiness transcends all the other items, and they are satisfied with the charm of their own home and state.

Mr. and Mrs. Simmons have 22 grand children and 21 great-grandchildren. Their children include Mrs. Annie Ellison of Mud Bay, James Franklin Simmons of Potlatch, Mrs. Mary Eliza Simmons Gaudette of Long Beach, California, Zaza Farrington Simmons of Olympia, Mrs. Susie Simmons Huston of Mud Bay, David Walter Simmons of Tacoma, Mrs. Margaret Simmons Weaver of Malone, and Mrs. Bertha Simmons Tester of Seattle.

Between 500 and 600 persons are expected at the picnic gathering at the Park and, in case of rain, it was planned to transfer the celebration to the Grange Hall at Kamilche.