
Selections from the diary of Royal A. Bensell

May 1, 1864

Clear. Pike, Plunkett, Clark, Mr. Harvey, & Luce (Mill-man) go up Coos River 25 Miles to-day after some Indians. Find at the head of tide water is a small ranch owned by one De-Cuys. He had a pretty little girl, some 8 years old. We got two Squaws and a Buck. After getting in the boat I was surprised to hear one of the Squaws (old and blind) ask me, "Nika ika nanage nika tenas Julia [Let me see my little Julia]." I complied with this parental demand and was shocked to see this little girl throw her arms about old Amanda De-Cuys neck and cry "clihime Ma Ma [dear mama]". De-Cuys promised the Agent to school Julia. We started back with the tide. Got home at midnight. Good night.

May 3, 1864

... Manzanita & Myrtle grow in this region finely, the latter making the best of fire-wood. Agent Harvey proves himself an old fogey. We have taken among the rest several infirm Squaws which the Agent proposes leaving behind to die because he says, "it will cost so far to transportation." Lieutenant Herzer informed the Agent if the Squaws were left he [Herzer] would report him. This was the last thing desired by Harvey, and he is now making preparations to take the old Ladies.

May 4, 1864

Clear. 4 men go to South Bend Slough. They were well treated by the "roughs," particularly Mr. Metcalf who begged the boys not to take Mrs. Metcalf, a very antiquated "clutchman [woman]." He produced a small half breed, the fruits (he said) of "lawful wedlock." Coming home, near Peirce Point, they came where the breakers were too heavy and layed too, just below town. I met them about 4 a.m. and, going directly across the Bay, landed close to one Hendersons. This gentleman has busied himself gathering up canoes ostensibly to sell them again to any Indian who may return. We soon demolished three. When Hendreson came down he threatened heavily. We finished the fourth "Kamim" and left our belligerent friend swearing vengeance.

We now have 32 Indians in Conft, and 14 have gone ahead, total 46 Siwash [Native people].

Selections from the diary of Royal A. Bensell *(Continued)*

May 5, 1864

Break camp and strike directly across the sand hills. One Squaw, (Polly) carries all her "icktus [belongings]" and two children. Harvey furnishes one horse when we need four. This horse packs t[w]o old Squaws; the packers made a Diamond Pack of them. At Ten Mile Creek (waist deep) the Indians wade...By 4 o'clock the advance reached Winchester Bay and from that time 'till dark they came in by twos & threes, the rear guard bringing in Old Fatty and Amanda.

May 7, 1864

Clear. Cross the stream with the Indians while the mules followed 3 hours after. Only made ten miles today. The whole days travel reminded me of a funeral procession, so slow and solemn did we go. First one old "Lama [old woman]" would curl up in the sand, then another, then a general halt, during which the mothers would suckle their children, the little youngsters slide down a sand hill on thier "Opack [postier]".... All this time I consigned Indians, Agents, &c., &c., to very warm countries. Finally out of patience, I would cry "Hyac, clatwa [hurry go]." It generally took twenty minutes to get started. Some of the Guard, more irritable than me, swore terrifically.

May 9, 1864

Clear. All hands afoot by half-past 8. We reach the foot of the Big Hill (north side), rest 'till the pack train comes up, after which we commence climbing the second Hill. Toilsome work, and it was well on to 4 o'clock when we camped near a nice stream of good water...I dread to-morrows journey, rough trail for lame Indians...The Siwash gather plenty of [mussels] here. What a blessing for the poor Devils to have such a well assorted Commissary. Harvey expects the Blind to see, the lame to walk, and all Siwash to subsist on nothing.

May 10, 1864

Clear. Got an early start. The Indians take the lower trail. This coast along our route to-day seems volcanic, rough, ragged, burnt rock, here and there a light rock which I called pumice-stone. We crossed chasms running from the shore several hundred feet and in some instances extended under the mountain. These chasms were thirty to forty feet deep. Every tidal wave rushes splashing and foaming white up these natural tailraces. They were wicked looking places.

Selections from the diary of Royal A. Bensell *(Continued)*

Amanda, who is blind, tore her feet horribly over these ragged rock, leaving blood sufficient to track her by. One of the Boys led her around the dangerous places. I cursed Indian Agents generally, Harvey particularly. By 12 we reached the Agency. The great gate swung open, and I counted the Indians as they filed in, turned them over to the Agent, and God Knows, we all left relieved. Coquile Bill & Lady were lockedup in the Potatoe House last night and this morning were "halo [gone]."...

Citation Note

Bensell's diary exists in both a published version as well as an original manuscript.

Bensell, R. A. (1959). *All Quiet on the Yamhill: The Civil War in Oregon: the Journal of Corporal Royal A. Bensell*. University of Oregon Press.

Royal Augustus Bensell diary and scrapbook, Ax 118, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.