

Ryan W. Booth, ABD
PhD Candidate in History
Washington State University

Plateau War Resources Annotated Bibliography

A note about names for the conflict. Currently, historians refer to this conflict as the Plateau War(s) since it involved multiple Native nations against the US. The war engulfed tribes across the Pacific Northwest (Puget Sound, Rogue River, Celilo Falls, Yakama, Coeur D'Alene), but particularly those in the Columbia Plateau. The war represents one response to the treaty-making process in 1855, the lack of follow through on the treaty promises, the discovery of gold near Fort Colville, and hostilities between Natives and immigrants to the Northwest. In the past, the conflict went by different names but was most frequently referred to as the Yakima War or Yakima Indian War (note the different spelling from current Yakama). The naming conventions are important because of how information is recorded in libraries and archives.

One might note how the historiography of the conflict changes over time. The earliest secondary sources are interested in capturing as many eyewitness accounts as possible. Although the histories rely heavily on US Army perspectives, they do contain Native voices as well. This is a marked difference from many other regions and their respective Indian Wars, where the Native voice is much more difficult to find in the histories of those conflicts. The orientation or perspectives on the Plateau War changes in the 1940s to 1960s to focus on different aspects of the wars such as the Jesuits. A "what did they know and when did they know it" period of history writing emerges in this time period. Then in a Vietnam-era milieu, the interest in military history plummets and the scholarly interest in the Plateau War disappears. Perhaps the appearance of Cutler's book and this institute will spur a new generation of scholarship to take another look at the Plateau War and its meaning for our own time.

Primary Sources

Images

Battle of Toppenish from Plateau People's Web Portal

<https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/butte-battle-toppenish-yakima-indian-war>

Rock Circle Barricades, Battle of Toppenish, Yakima Indian War from Plateau People's Web Portal

<https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/rock-circle-baricades-battle-toppenish-yakima-indian-war>

1858 Map of Military Reconnaissance from Fort Taylor to the Coeur D'Alene Mission from Plateau People's Web Portal

<https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/map-military-reconnaissance-fort-taylor-coeur-dalene-mission-washington-territory>

Nicolas Point Missionary Drawings. (Jesuit Father Point drew many early depictions of Native American life across the US West).

<http://jesuitarchives.omeka.net/collections/show/4>

Pierre-Jean De Smet Map Collection.

<http://jesuitarchives.omeka.net/collections/show/5>

“Plan of Col. Steptoe’s Battlefield on Ingossmen Creek, May 15th, 16th, & 17th, 1858”

<http://content.libraries.wsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/maps/id/734>

Sohon, Gustavus. Most of Sohon’s drawings and paintings are housed at the Smithsonian Institution. A few of his images have been digitized, but many more remain to be digitized and made available in the public domain. A link to the resources:

<http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=Sohon%2C+Gustavus>

Wright, George. The Library of Congress has one image of Wright trying to enlist the support of the Nez Perce in his campaign against the other Plateau Tribes. “Council with friendly Nez Percés Indians held by Col. G. Wright U.S.A. August 4th 1858 near Fort Wallah Wallah, W.T. previous to march against hostile northern Indians.” <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630847/>

Missionaries

De Smet, Pierre Jean. De Smet Papers at Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections at Washington State University. <http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg537.htm>

Point, Nicholas. *Wilderness Kingdom: Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains: 1840-1847; the Journals and Paintings of Nicholas Point*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967.

Although Father Point was mostly in Montana during this time, his paintings, journals, and sketches are some early images of Native peoples of the Northwest. This is a collection of his works in a coffee table book.

The Last of the Old Jesuit Missionaries—Father Joset

<https://jesuitonlinelibrary.bc.edu/?a=d&d=wlet19011001-01.2.4>

Although De Smet gets much of the attention in Northwest Jesuit history, Father Joset was often the more compelling figure since he developed strong and enduring connections to the local *communities* particularly the Coeur d’Alene, but he was well-known to almost all of the Plateau Tribes. He also brokered negotiations between Colonel Wright and the tribes in 1858 to end hostilities.

Soldiers

Drew, C.S. *Communication from C. S. Drew: late adjutant of the Second regiment of Oregon mounted volunteers, giving an account of the origin and early prosecution of the Indian war in Oregon*. Washington, 1860. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101079825194>

Jackson, John C. *A Little War of Destiny: The First Regiment of Oregon Mounted Volunteers and the Yakima Indian War of 1855-56*. Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996.

Kelly, Plympton J, ed. William Bischoff. *We were not summer soldiers: The Indian War Diary of Plympton J. Kelly, 1855-1856*. Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society, 1976.

This diary offers the perspective of an Oregon volunteer during the early prosecution of the Plateau War from 1855-1856. At the heart of the story is chaos. The militia was poorly organized and led. It lacked assistance from the regular army since they saw no need for territorial assistance in dealing with problematic Natives. The book contains useful notes on the various characters involved in the war as well as a strong introduction to bring some order to the sense of chaos in the journal itself. Although these white immigrant pioneers portrayed themselves as orderly citizens bringing civilization, they unwittingly displayed deep-seated white supremacy, disarray, and violence to the Plateau People.

Kip, Lawrence. *Indian Council in the Valley of the Walla Walla*. San Francisco: Whitton, Towne & Co. Printers, 1855. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/53128>

Lieutenant Lawrence Kip was present at the treaty negotiations at Walla Walla. His observations provide more context than the official meeting minutes. He adds in emotive elements indicating tone of the words as well as attitudes towards the speeches being made. His account was published in 1855 making them one of the earliest accounts of the treaty negotiations from the non-Native perspective.

Kip, Lawrence. *Army life on the Pacific; a journal of the expedition against the Northern Indians, the tribes of the Coeur d'Alenes, Spokans, and Pelouzes in the Summer of 1858*. New York: Redfield, 1859. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/fk03x83n3g>

Lieutenant Lawrence Kip's account of the campaigns of 1858 are one of the few extant US Army perspectives on the conflict. Given the paucity of Army materials, his account stands as representative of the whole Army perspective.

Kip, Lawrence, M.R. Morgan, August Wolf. "The Steptoe-Wright Campaign Against the Northern Indians in 1858." *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Volume 42, 1908. <https://books.google.com/books?id=YM49AQAAMAAJ&lpg=PA475&ots=aGKjtBGtVq&dq=steptoe-wright%20campaign%20against%20northern%20indians&pg=PA475#v=onepage&q=steptoe-wright%20campaign%20against%20northern%20indians&f=false>

This represents three different accounts of veterans of the Plateau War. One is a smaller section of Kip's *Army Life*. The accounts are interesting, but the illustrations and photographs are particularly interesting. Some of the photographs are very rare finds.

Lane, Joseph and Isaac Stevens. *Speeches of Hon. Joseph Lane, of Oregon, and Hon. Isaac I. Stevens, of Washington, on the payment of the Oregon and Washington Indian war debt. Delivered in the House of Representatives, May 18, 1858*. Washington: L. Towers, 1858. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t4fn1175t>

Sheridan, Phillip Henry. *Indian Fighting in the Fifties in Oregon and Washington Territories*. Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1987.

This book is a selection from General Sheridan's much larger two-volume *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan*.

Sheridan, Phillip Henry. *Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan. General United States Army*. New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1888. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015053570084>

This is the full two-volume memoir of General Phil Sheridan. The relevant chapters about his experience in the Pacific Northwest are in Chapters III to VII. Although Sheridan was not personally involved in the 1858 Steptoe or Wright Campaign, he was involved in some of the actions immediately after the Bolon murder. He was present among the Yakama and had some interesting observations of his fellow officers. What emerges from his text is a travelogue of his time around the Columbia River and the futile attempts of the US Army to capture and punish those involved in the murder.

Stevens, Isaac Ingalls and Jefferson Davis. *Report of the Secretary of War, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 21st ultimo, calling for copies of all the letters of the governor of Washington Territory, addressed to him during the present year; and copies of all the correspondence relative to the Indian disturbances in the territories of Washington and Oregon*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1856.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t0tq5rk22>

Stevens, Isaac. *Message of the governor of Washington Territory. Also; the correspondence with the secretary of war, Major Gen. Wool, the officers of regular army, and of the volunteer service of Washington Territory*. Olympia: E. Furste Public Printer, 1857.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t5v698v5b>

One of the oft-reported corollaries in the Plateau Wars is the personal animosity between Governor Isaac Stevens and General John Wool. Their correspondence is often fiery, emotional, and obviously written by men who detest each other. Stevens sided with the immigrants and Wool tried to chart a middle-of-the-road course. Although Wool thwarted Stevens' plan for the US Army as hammer to his treaty anvil in the early war period (1855-1857), Stevens ultimately prevailed in getting Wool removed from command of the Department of the Pacific.

Stevens, Isaac. *Speech of Hon. Isaac I. Stevens, of Washington Territory, on the Indian war expenses of Washington and Oregon. Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 21, 1859*. Washington, DC: L. Towers, 1859.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t0xp6v78p>

Immigrant Pioneers

Beeson, John. *A plea for the Indians; with facts and features of the late war in Oregon*. New York, 1858.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t1zc7s20m>

Beeson's account is focused on the Rogue River Wars, but he was clearly horrified by the actions of the Oregon militia in all the Indian Wars of the mid-1850s. His success also gave him opportunities to share his view with East Coast society. He published pamphlets, went on the lecture circuit, and visited the nation's capital in an effort to plead for better treatment for Native Americans.

Secondary Sources

Bischoff, William N. *The Jesuits in Old Oregon, 1840-1940*. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1945.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015026244452>

Bischoff, a Jesuit priest, provides a glimpse into the history of the Jesuits in the Northwest. His large 100-year scope provides only a cursory glance at this history. Burns and McKevitt's works supersede this work in depth of archival research and providing better context for the Jesuit missionary endeavors.

Brown, William Compton. *The Indian Side of the Story; Being a Concourse of Presentations Historical and Biographical in Character Relating to the Indian Wars, and to the Treatment Accorded the Indians, in Washington Territory East of the Cascade Mountains during the Period from 1853 to 1889, Combined with Some General Discussions Designed to Bring out the Indians Side of the Story, and to Offer a Re-Examination into Stevens-Wool Controversy*. Spokane: C.W. Hill Print. Co, 1961.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89060391802>

This book represents one of the earliest attempts to present the Plateau Wars from the Native perspective. The author, a retired judge, brings a legal mind to the assessment of evidence about the reasons for the conflict and the course of the war. Brown sides with General John Wool and his argument that the major cause of the war was white Americans unwilling to respect Native rights to their homeland, free of violence and encroachment. Wool's position, the subsequent armed conflict, superiority of Native forces, and his feud with Governor Isaac Stevens, all converged to force his removal from command of the Department of the Pacific.

Burns, Robert Ignatius. *The Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Burns, a Jesuit priest, provides one of the only works solely dedicated to the Jesuit papers on the Plateau Wars and beyond. Burns devoted twenty years of archival work from Rome to Gonzaga to the National Archives in Washington, DC. His work presents the Jesuit viewpoint on the conflict. The Jesuits often acted as mediators in the conflict since they had the language skills to translate between Plateau languages and English. Some Americans believed that the Jesuits were behind the war and goaded the Natives into open conflict. Burns quickly dispatches the notion in pages 128-131. The American settlers had trouble distinguishing Jesuits from Oblates, but the small amount of gunpowder found at the Oblate mission at Ahtanum was enough for personal consumption (hunting, protection), but not enough to carry out a sustained war. McKevitt's *Brokers of Culture* expands on the themes of anti-Catholicism in nineteenth century America as well as the concern about foreigners, which the Catholic missionaries were.

Converse, George L. *A Military History of the Columbia Valley: 1848-1865*. Walla Walla: Pioneer Press, 1989.

This nearly 80-page book gives readers a thumbnail sketch of the various forts, roads and other factors influencing the US Army along the Columbia River Valley. This fits in the style of more traditional military history (troop strength, fort defensibility), but offers some tantalizing clues

about US Army attitudes about Native Americans in the region. It also offers a view of the nearly impossible task of the US Army as intermediaries between immigrant pioneers and the Native peoples.

Cutler, Donald. *"Hang Them All": George Wright and the Plateau Indian War*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016.

Cutler's book sheds fresh light on an oft-forgotten chapter of U.S. Army and Native American interactions in the antebellum American West. Cutler carefully details each maneuver in the Plateau Indian Wars from early 1850s transcontinental railroad surveying to Wright's death to modern-day interpretations of the war by the Plateau tribes. Seen as a larger tale of unratified treaty promises, settler incursions, petulant governors and Army brass meddling, Wright's campaign takes on different meanings depending on who is telling the story. Through George Wright's particularly hideous historical actions, the author clearly makes this a moral story about remembrance and legacy.

Dunn, John Piatt. *Massacres of the Mountains: A History of the Indian Wars in the Far West, 1815-1875*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yul.12474430_000_00

This scope of this book tackles all western Indian Wars for a sixty-year period. The author's characterization of the Plateau War or in his book "The Rogue River, Yakima, and Klickitat Wars" is quaint. "This war was little more than a succession of massacres and outrages on both sides, so far as the collisions between the hostile parties were concerned" (189).

Glassley, Ray Hoard. *Pacific Northwest Indian Wars: The Cayuse War of 1848, the Rogue River Wars of the '50s, the Yakima War, 1853-56, the Coeur d'Alene War, 1857, the Modoc War, 1873, the Nez Perce War, 1877, the Bannock War, 1878, The Sheepeater's War of 1879*. Portland, OR: Binfords & Mort, 1953. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000391018>

Glassley, a Portland business executive, devoted his free time to writing this history of the Pacific Northwest's Indian Wars. Glassley saw the wars as related not just by geographic region, but by US interests in land acquisition and power. Although limited by sources especially from the Native perspective, the author shows how news traveled across the Northwest about these wars. Native peoples attempted to learn lessons from the wars and apply them in their various situations. Far from being isolated and distinct wars, each one built on the previous one until the balance of power and the ability of the US Army to quickly travel across the West tipped the scales in their favor.

Hunt, Garrett B. *Indian Wars of the Inland Empire*. Spokane: Spokane Community College, 1958. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t7vm43h81>

This volume is a synopsis of the whole Plateau War. Hunt categorizes the war into various topics such as the "Mormon Activity" in the war or G.B. "Dandy's Reminiscences." This topical

approach hinders a narrative approach to the war, but does allow for some interesting dissection of the war from various perspectives.

Karson, Jennifer, ed. *Wiyaxayxt, As Days Go By, wiyaakaa?awn: Our History, Our Land, and Our People, The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla*. Seattle: Tamastslit Cultural Institute, 2006.

In this collection, Anthone Minthorn's chapter on "Wars, Treaties, and the Beginning of Reservation Life" deals directly with the treaty making process and the Plateau War (p. 61-89). The chapter provides an excellent introduction to the issues with the treaty and the subsequent war. It is also richly illustrated and provides excellent maps to understand the various areas under consideration under the 1855 Walla Walla Treaty.

Manring, Benjamin Franklin. *Conquest of the Coeur D'Alenes, Spokanes & Palouses*. Spokane: J.W. Graham, 1912. <https://archive.org/details/conquestofcoeurd00manrrich>

Manring's account of the war drew upon aged Army veterans and their families. His history is one of the earliest and includes details absent from other accounts. He is particularly sympathetic to E.J. Steptoe, whose reputation was destroyed at the Battle of Tohotonimme. His work also included an image of a proposed monument to be erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Rosalia. The proposed memorial and the actual one differ, but the book provided the impetus to construct a series of monuments around the Plateau Region.

McWhorter, Lucullus Virgil. *Tragedy of the Wahk-shum; prelude to the Yakima Indian war, 1855-56; the killing of Major Andrew J. Bolon; eyewitness account by Su-el-lil, locating the place of Bolon's death; and Indian legends*. Yakima: Private Publishing, 1937. [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b30308](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b30308)

One of the myriad reasons for the Plateau Wars was the killing of an Indian agent named A.J. Bolon by the Yakamas. McWhorter, an unabashed non-Native supporter of Plateau peoples, attempts to show the preconditions leading up to Bolon's death. He builds his work on interviews with Yakama people and their various grievances. His work is remarkable since it includes Native dialogue complete with phonetic spellings of their names.

Peltier, Jerome. *Warbonnets and Epaulets: With Pre- and Post Factors, Documented, of the Steptoe-Wright Indian Campaigns of 1858 in Washington Territory*. Montreal: Payette Radio Limited, 1971.

This is a typed version of the US Army records related to just the 1858 campaigns. It is a useful compendium with endnotes. The major problem with this work is the exact location of some of his archival materials. It is unclear where the material came from other than "museum at Spokane," which presumably meant the Northwest Museum of Art and Culture. It makes it exceedingly difficult to trace the proverbial breadcrumbs back to his primary sources. The images used in the book have no attribution whatsoever except when they are from the author's personal collection.

Plucker, Steve Charles. *The 1858 Yakama War: Fort Simcoe's Story of the 9th US Army Infantry and Their Western Prong Attack Campaign*. Prescott, WA: Steve Plucker, 2016.

This self-published book is one of the few, if not only, books on Fort Simcoe and its role in the Plateau War. Fort Simcoe was a US Army fort built near present-day White Swan, WA. It was built as a reaction to Native hostilities after the Bolon murder. The earliest campaigns in 1855-1856 revealed a problem for the US Army to get troops quickly across Yakama territory. The book includes useful information on the fort, its design, and some information on the officers stationed there during the Plateau War.

Splawn, Andrew Jackson. *Ka-mi-akin, the Last Hero of the Yakimas*. Portland: Kilham Stationary & Printing Co., 1917. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t9j38wc00>

Splawn's work takes an expansive view of the Plateau Wars. He acknowledges the grievances from the Native perspective and the problems across the Inland Northwest. He also attempts to present the "Indian point of view" (Preface). Although the author claims to have personally interviewed many participants in the war, it is written in a narrative style devoid of footnotes or direct quotations. This leaves the reader to wonder where Splawn ends and the informant begins. It is remarkable that an early pioneer began the process to capture the Native version of events. Splawn's work continues to form the backbone for most works on the Plateau Wars.

Victor, Frances Fuller. *The Early Indian Wars of Oregon: Compiled from the Oregon Archives and Other Sources with Muster Rolls*. Salem, OR: F. C. Baker, state printer, 1894. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hx4lk2>

Archives

Archives West

Oregon Historical Society (Indian War Veterans of the North Pacific Coast)-1.2 linear feet

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv22920/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Indian+War>

Oregon Historical Society (Military Collection 1838-2010)

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv82467/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Indian+War>

University of Oregon Collection-0.5 linear feet

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv85849#overview>

University of Washington (Isaac I. Stevens Papers)-5.98 cubic feet

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv04454/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Indian+War>

Washington State University (Lucullus V. McWhorter Papers)-26 linear feet

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv98497/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Indian+War>

[Jesuit Archives of the Oregon Province \(JOPA\)](#): All of the Jesuit archives across the US are being centralized at St. Louis University known as the Jesuit Archives & Research Center. This new facility was completed in 2017 and the various repositories including the JOPA collection will be transferred to St. Louis in the coming years. One caveat to this involves the Jesuit dictionaries and other Native language materials, they will remain at Gonzaga University for use by tribes and others).

Web Resources

[Fold3.com](#) (Many original military resources are being digitized and deposited as part of the Ancestry.com suite of programs).

Individual service records.

Records related to US Army forts (Fort Walla Walla, Fort Simcoe, Fort Colville, Fort Dalles)

[FortWiki.com](#) (an online, collaborative resource to document historical forts in the US and Canada)

[http://fortwiki.com/Fort_Taylor_\(3\)](http://fortwiki.com/Fort_Taylor_(3))

http://fortwiki.com/Fort_Simcoe

[http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Walla_Walla_\(2\)](http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Walla_Walla_(2))

http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Colville

http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Dalles

[http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Bennett_\(1\)](http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Bennett_(1))

http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Cascades

http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Rains

http://www.fortwiki.com/Fort_Lugenbeel

http://www.fortwiki.com/Vancouver_Barracks

[HistoryLink.org](#) (a website curated by the Washington State Historical Society and focuses on historical events within the state of Washington)

St. Joseph's Mission at Ahtanum Creek...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5285>

Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens Convenes...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5188>

Gutavus Sohon (US Army artist)

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8593>

Chief Kamiakin (ca. 1800-1877)

<http://www.historylink.org/File/10096>

Father Eugene Casimir Chirouse, O.M.I.

<http://www.historylink.org/File/9033>

Gold in the Pacific Northwest

<http://www.historylink.org/File/7162>

Yakima Indian War Begins...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5311>

Yakama Tribesmen Slay Indian Subagent Andrew J. Bolon....

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8118>

Oregon Volunteers Battle the Walla Wallas....

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8132>

Oregon Volunteers Battle Yakamas...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8152>

Washington Territorial Volunteers Kill 50 Cayuse....

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8146>

Yakama, Palouse, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene warriors defeat the U.S. Army...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5162>

Steptoe's Defeat: Battle of Tohotonimme (1858)

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8709>

US Army Defeats Native Americans at Battle of Four Lakes...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5143>

Battle of Spokane Plains

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5144>

Artist Gustavus Sohon Sketches Panoramic View of Battle of Spokane Plains...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/8596>

US Army Colonel George Wright Slaughters 800 Palouse Horses...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5142>

US Army Colonel George Wright...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5141>

Lt. Mullan and a 230-man Crew Begin Building Mullan's Road...

<http://www.historylink.org/File/5225>