



Henry L. Yesler.

## *Daughter of Old Chief Seattle*

---

There is a popular myth among old Puget Sounders that old Angeline, the daughter of Chief Seattle, saved the white settlers from a frightful massacre in the days of the earliest pioneering on Puget Sound. However romantic this old legend may be it is not in accordance with the facts in the case. The legend referred to goes on to relate how in the blackness of midnight,

while the little city was surrounded by hordes of savage warriors, besmeared with war paint, this Princess Angeline forgot her own peril and hastened to the camps of the white men and gave the warning cry that saved most of them from sure death. As a legend this story is very beautiful and it has served many times to give the poor old Indian woman food and clothing. Only

a few months ago the city council appointed a committee to take care of her during the time she was laid up with a broken arm. That was right and the city should do much more to care for this only remaining survivor of the family of that great chief from whom the city of Seattle was named.

The facts in the case above referred to are that two men were killed by the Indians at that time and many others would have been slaughtered but for the interference of some friendly Indians who knew all about the plans of those infernal red skins.

There was fighting among all the Eastern Washington Indians at that time, and in fact a general uprising among them. Col. G. O. Haller, of this city, was over there fighting them with United States troops, and also Col. Shaw with volunteers. The Puyallup Indians, under old Leshi, their chief, and the Duwamish Indians under Chief Claycum, became very angry over the distribution of certain property, and were dissatisfied generally. About Christmas time of 1855 old Claycum mustered his forces and went up to Puyallup to enlist Leshi and his men and a number of Klickitats to come down and fight the people of Seattle, in fact to wipe them out of existence.

The information of these movements, instead of being brought to the settlers by Princess Angeline, of the legend, was obtained from Old Curly, the Indian to whom more credit is due than to any other Indian that ever lived on Puget Sound. Poor Old Curly died about ten years ago.

This faithful old Indian was out in his canoe fishing one day when he met an old

---

Henry L. Yesler was one of the most useful and best known of Seattle pioneers. It was he who built in Seattle in 1852 the first steam sawmill on Puget Sound. Two other mills had preceded his but they were both water-power mills. In early days he was in partnership with Arthur A. Denny in the general merchandise business. In later years he was an extensive owner of business property. His quaint little home occupied the corner where the Pioneer building now stands. The old man sitting there whittling was a familiar picture to all old settlers. The street that ran past his sawmill was called Mill street but since then it has been changed to Yesler avenue. He was no coward and during the Indian war of 1855-1856 he took a valiant part. Knowing all the details of the war he was appealed to for the true story of Angeline's supposed aid. In 1889 Alexander Begg and Edmond S. Meany, now professor of history in the University of Washington, were editing and publishing the Puget Sound Magazine. Mr. Meany went to Mr. Yesler's home and served as his secretary, writing down the words as spoken. The results were approved and signed by Mr. Yesler, who took pride in sending copies of the magazine to his friends until a Boston editor got the last copy away from the old man, over which he did not cease to grieve and grumble. Mr. Meany saved one copy and from him has been obtained the privilege of reproducing it here.—Editor.

squaw on her way to the Old Man House, the name of Chief Seattle's reservation at Port Madison. This old squaw told Curly that Claycum and the Duwamish Indians had gone up to get Leshi and his Indians and some Klickitats, said to have been over here at that time, and that they would be back at the city in five days. Old Curly hastened to my office and reported this fact and I immediately reported to Captain Ganzeworth of the Sloop-of-war Decatur, who forthwith sent his marines ashore and guarded the city every night for four nights. Then he had a misunderstanding with Captain Lander, of the Seattle Volunteers, over the question of who should rank, and withdrew his forces. This was the fourth night and as soon as Old Curly found the guard was not out he came to me again and reminded me that the fifth day had not expired yet. Shortly after leaving me Old Curly came back again. He had just seen a messenger from Old Mose, a neutral Indian who lived on Lake Washington, back of the city, and who had seen the hostile Indians in their canoes landing on this side of the lake. Curly knew the Indians were back of the city all ready for a fight. Most of our friendly Indians were corralled on the point south of the city, and early in the evening two hostile Indians came over to these friendly Indians and sought to incite them to help in the attack. I went aboard the Decatur and reported to the captain the information I got from Curly. He immediately sent his men ashore to re-establish the guard. On the next morning the men were taken aboard the sloop again and the two hostile Indians returned to the brush. Then it became noised about that the woods were full of Indians, and the alarm became general. As a proof that Old Curly was sincere, an incident happened that might here be related. In the bushes where the Occidental Square is now located, was a small wig-wam occupied by a shiftless Indian, known as Cultus Jim, who had been over on the point and had learned of all the facts about the proposed attack. He returned and related the circumstances to his folks. A young Indian known as Russell Sam was cooking his breakfast in Jim's camp and overheard all that the latter had said. Jim warned his folks not to tell Old Curly, but the young Indian left his fish that was being roasted on a sharp stick, and hunted up Curly to tell him all about it. And Curly as usual reported to me and I again reported to Captain Ganzeworth, who ordered his men ashore again notwithstanding many of them had had no sleep or food after a whole night of guard duty.

I was reluctant to have the men brought ashore this time and told the captain that it might only be a false alarm. The old captain said he didn't care. He would rather have twenty false alarms than be caught napping once. One reason why I was so reluctant was that early that same morning before it was known positively that the Indians were so near the city I was met by Frank Mathias and young Bettman, who now lives in Olympia. These two accused me of creating a scare, and they said that Old Curly was no better than the other rascally Indians. But the marines came ashore and with them the captain himself, Surgeon Jeffreys and Purser Jones. They also brought a small howitzer. Purser Jones took in the situation at once, but Surgeon Jeffreys and many others were skeptical and poohed at the idea of danger. The howitzer was placed in position, however, and after the first shot was fired into the woods there arose such a yell and a scramble that there was no longer any room for doubt. I distinctly remember being armed with a Sharp's rifle which had up to that time been my special pride; but when the red skins raised that awful yell I raised my rifle to pick off one of the devils, but the thing went off before I got it half way to my shoulder, and this same thing happened to almost every man of the party. The Indians returned the fire and kept up the attack all that day until 9 o'clock at night. Then they left for up the river and burned every settler's house and barn as they went.

About 8 o'clock that morning, after we had been fighting for a short time, I returned to my end of town and on my way over I met Frank Mathias, who had been run out of the Butler house, where he had been eating his breakfast, by the Indians who literally perforated the old house with bullets. With no small amount of satisfaction, I asked Frank what he thought of the scare by that time. With a wild sort of a look he replied: "By George, they ARE here, ain't they?" And then he rushed for his cabin away from the flying bullets. All day we continued to fight and the Decatur's guns continued to shell the Indians ambushed back of the city. These shells were a source of consternation to the Indians. They couldn't understand the "Mox Pooh," or exp'ain the explosion of the shell after it had been shot at them.

As far as I can remember nobody was wounded but there were two men killed on that day. One of them was young Mr. Holgate, a brother of Lemuel Holgate, who was

shot while standing in the door of the "block house." The other was a young man whose name I have forgotten. He was standing on the porch of a hotel then on the site now occupied by the old Standard Theatre, and was shot by some Indian sharp shooter.

Lieutenant Drake had a very narrow escape. While seated behind a large stump a bullet whizzed through his coat collar close to his throat.

The dead and wounded on the side of the enemy has never been ascertained. Many believed that the Indians, as is their custom, carried off the dead and buried them secretly; but some of the Indians who were in the fight asserted positively that not a single red skin was hit and that the nearest to it was Old Claycum, who lost a lock of his shaggy hair by a bullet from some white man's rifle.

An Indian afterwards related an incident that happened in the camp of the Indians during their progress from Leshi's home to Seattle. The soldiers from Fort Steilacoom were supposed to have been in rapid pursuit, and the Indians took every precaution to avoid a conflict with them. Leshi's wife accompanied the party, carrying with her a baby boy. The child was irritable and cried most of the time. Leshi feared these cries would expose their whereabouts to the soldiers, so he seized the baby and strangled it to death. This incident was told to me by Indians who knew what they were talking about.

Some time after this battle Governor Stevens and Colonel Casey, who was then in command at Fort Steilacoom, concluded that the best and cheapest way to end the Indian war was to call in all the Indians and hang the principal men and the murderers and liberate all the others. The Governor requested me to bring in the Indians, and I succeeded in doing so, and obtained ample evidence against a number of the Indians to hang them. I gave this evidence to a military court martial, appointed for the purpose, and supposed of course that at least three of the Indians would be hanged. I remember that I was so confident that the rascals would be hanged that I accepted a bet of one dollar with Ira Woodin, who said they wouldn't hang a man of them, and my disgust can be imagined when at the close of the trial the matter was allowed to go by default, and I lost my bet. Being naturally opposed to all forms of gambling, however, I am in doubt as to whether that bet was ever paid or not.

HENRY L. YESLER.