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A BRIEF LOOK AT HISTORY AND THE RUFFNER CONNECTION IN WASHINGTON STATE

By Betty Lou (Deebach) Gaeng

Formerly part of Oregon Territory, in 1853 the new Territory of Washington was established and Isaac Ingall Stevens was appointed as Territorial Governor. Olympia became the capital for the territory.

Two years later on January 22, 1855, over 155 years ago, at Mukilteo, Island County, Washington Territory, an important event was unfolding. After listening to the chicanery of Gov. Stevens and knowing his people would not be able to withstand the great influx of the Bostons, well-traveled and mighty Chief Patkanim of the Snoqualmie and Snohomish people, a friend to the white people, added his mark to the Point Elliott Treaty. Patkanim's name was second, just below that of Chief Sealth (Seattle), the important chief of the Duwamish and Suquamish people. Adding their marks came the other chiefs from the Snohomish, Swinomish, Skagit, Lummi, Muckleshoot and Suquamish tribes, plus all the minor chiefs. Reservation lands for the Indians were then established and placed under the jurisdiction of the Tulalip Indian Agency.

With this treaty the native people of the Puget Sound country gifted the United States with thousands of acres of the most spectacularly beautiful real estate imaginable. Rich in natural resources, this land is described as lying between the summit of the Cascade Mountains, the western shore of Puget Sound, the city of Tacoma, and the international boundary with Canada, including all the lands in the present counties of King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan, and part of Kitsap County. As a thank you, the American Indians were rewarded with many years of deception and abuse by the government and the Bostons who were swarming onto the land and waters to harvest its riches, especially the majestic firs and cedars of the vast forests.

Many years have come and gone since those times. The native people persevered through the many trials and hardships and they now stand as forces in their own right. Patkanim did not live long enough to see the outcome of the treaty. He died a few years later and was buried along the Snohomish River, but due to floods and the washing away of his burial spot, his remains were removed to the Mission Beach Cemetery on the Tulalip Indian Reservation about 35 miles north of Seattle. Thus, Patkanim rests far from his home along the Snoqualmie River. He never knew that it would be 144 years before his own Snoqualmie people would receive recognition by the federal government and some of the entitlements promised under the treaty.

Across the Cascade Mountains in Southeast Washington Territory, following the 1855 signing of very unpopular treaties in the land of Chiefs Kamikan, Skloom and Owhi of the Yakimas; Peo Peo Mox Mox of the Walla Walla; Lawyer, Young Chief, and Looking

Glass of the Cayuse and Nez Perce, one of the last major blood-letting wars in that area took place. The native people were concerned about the vast number of white settlers invading the land and the plans for a railroad which would surely bring more settlers. The will of the federal government prevailed and the railroad came.

Long after Patkanim, Sealh, Kamiakin, Skloom, Owhi, Peo Peo Mox Mox, Lawyer, Young Chief and Looking Glass were gone, it was the railroads that brought William Henry Ruffner to the Pacific Northwest.

Washington was still a territory in 1887 when William Henry Ruffner, great grandson of Peter and Mary's eldest son Joseph, was commissioned by investors in the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad to do a geological survey concerning the potential of the railways in the development of the territory. His survey of the territory was to include the feasibility of a rail system to carry coal, iron, logs and other natural resources to other parts of the United States, and eventually to the world through a terminus at Seattle on Puget Sound.

As a result of his work, William Henry Ruffner wrote *A Report on Washington Territory*. Published in 1889, his work gave a surprisingly prophetic glimpse into the future of Washington.

At the beginning of Section 1 of his *Report*, Dr. Ruffner told of his arrival and introduction to Washington Territory. He stated:

"I entered Washington Territory by way of the Northern Pacific Railroad on the morning of October 27, 1887, coming first to the valley of the Spokane River, and spending the entire day in traversing the plains of Eastern Washington, reaching Pasco Junction a little after nightfall. I crossed the Cascade Mountains on the Switchback, and arrived in Tacoma about noon on the 28th, at which point I took a Puget Sound steamer, and landed in Seattle about four p.m. the same day. The next morning, accompanied by Mr. F. H. Whitworth, engineer, and Mr. F. M. Guye, I went out on the Columbia and Puget Sound Railroad to the end of the road, near Newcastle, where we took horses, and reached Hop Ranch, on the Snoqualmie Hop Ranch, Snoqualmie River, the same night."

Dr. Ruffner described the Columbia and Puget Sound Railroad as a narrow gauge coal road serving the mines in the area.

As to the length of time he spent in Washington Territory, Dr. Ruffner ended Section 1 of his *Report* with this statement:

"Thus I was five weeks and two days in Washington Territory. The entire trip, from

the time I left Lexington [Virginia] until my return, was seven weeks and two days. Miles traveled, 8,500."

William Henry Ruffner came to know and extol the potential of the territory and especially that of the Snoqualmie Valley. He became very fond of the North Bend and Preston area and even established his own coal mine (Ruffner Mine) on the Raging River at Preston. In his *Report*, William Henry Ruffner stressed that the railroads were necessary in the development of the territory's resources. He probably never realized the full extent of the ups and downs of the railways and the length of time that would pass before a stable system was established.

The advent of rail travel in the Seattle area was at a stalemate when Thomas Burke and Daniel H. Gilman, along with several other Seattle early-day developers, bankers, and businessmen, unhappy with Northern Pacific Railroad's slow progress in building a rail line to and through Seattle which would connect with Canada, decided to build their own line. With the assistance of backers from the East, plans were underway when they contacted geologist William Henry Ruffner and he left Virginia to travel many long miles to the Pacific Northwest.

As shown, the history of rail travel along the Puget Sound corridor was filled with ups and downs and many changes in ownership control.

The Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern Railroad (SLS&E) was incorporated in 1885, with construction of the line starting in February of 1887. That same year the tracks reached Woodinville and on March 19, 1888, service began to Gilman (Issaquah). In spring of that year their affiliate Seattle Coal & Iron Co. began coal mining. 1889 saw the construction of Gilman Station [in Issaquah today, the station is a museum]. In December of 1889, construction of the line reached Salal Prairie, 63 miles from Seattle and there construction ended. The dream of Burke and Gilman to connect with Canada never reached fruition and in May of 1890, Northern Pacific Railroad acquired control of SLS&E stock. In 1892 the operation of SLS&E consolidated with that of Northern Pacific.

1893 began with a nationwide panic as the nation experienced an economic depression lasting several years. SLS&E filed bankruptcy in June and Northern Pacific did the same in August. Both entered receivership.

In 1894, SLS&E did have passenger service on the North Bend line daily except Sunday, with Seattle to Gilman (Issaquah) taking two hours, Seattle to North Bend, 3 hours and 5 minutes, and a round trip to Seattle requiring an overnight stay.

In July of 1896 SLS&E properties were sold by a bondholder committee to Seattle & International Railway; the sale finalized a year later.

In August the reorganization of Northern Pacific Railway was completed, and in January of 1898 they bought the bonds of Seattle & International Railway and regained control of Seattle, Lakeshore & Eastern Railway in Western Washington. Then in March of 1901 Northern Pacific absorbed Seattle & International Railway.

For many years rail service was controlled by Northern Pacific. However, the railroad system in the Puget Sound area has always been unsettled and in March of 1970 another major change took place when Burlington Northern Railroad was formed from a merger of Northern Pacific, Great Northern, Canada Burlington, Southern Pacific and Pacific Coast. Burlington Northern then abandoned the former SLS&E Lake Union-Woodinville route. By the mid-1970s, the tracks were gone, but the trail that remained is a very popular one as it winds from Seattle to the countryside. Walkers, runners and bicyclists find great pleasure as they traverse the twelve and a half miles of the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Appreciation of William Henry Ruffner's work and his resulting *A Report on Washington Territory* was acknowledged in early Seattle with the naming of Ruffner Street in his honor. Now known as West Ruffner Street it winds its way down from Queen Anne Hill to Puget Sound, skirting the hodge podge of railroad sidings on the south side of the Lake Union Ship Canal. As you follow the street past the railroad sidings, you cannot help but be reminded that William Henry Ruffner once trod this same land as he envisioned the future. As he looked over the land with the eyes of a geologist his mind must have very busy. How accurate he was in his *Report* when he spoke of this particular part of Seattle, and wrote:

"Near the Sound and a little distance from the city will be great saw-mills, grain elevators, canneries, and in time fish-oil and fertilizer mills, tanneries, smelting furnaces, sulfuric acid and chemical works. And here will be a ship canal connecting the lakes with the Sound, and the shipyards of the future."

His vision has been proven so correct, it is almost eerie. Many grain elevators remain. The myriad of rail lines at the bottom of Queen Anne Hill lead to the now heavily guarded port at Smith Cove where huge ships do connect with the world.

Also on the south side of the ship canal, next to the railroad spurs is Fisherman's Terminal. This terminal became home to the fishing boats that covered Puget Sound, the coast of Washington and the waters of Alaska, bringing home fish to be processed in the numerous canneries of the area. There are still fishing boats; some never leaving the docks anymore. The canneries that processed the once plentiful fish are mostly gone, as are the many shipyards that lined the shores of the canal and Lake Union. Today, at Fisherman's Terminal a few fishermen still work at repairing their nets and other fishing gear for the next opening. However, tourism has become the main business. The busy restaurants feature a spectacular view of the boats and the activity at the Terminal.

Across the canal is the community of Ballard. Ballard was once the home to smelters that spewed out thick smoke and wood chips from the many sawmills. There were so many saloons in the small area that it was mentioned in "Ripley's Believe it or Not." Ballard was later the site of many businesses connected with the fishing industry and boating in general. In our time, eclectic shops and restaurants line the streets. Ballard, once the home for mill workers and fishermen, has been tamed and is now another tourist favorite.

Located nearby on the ship canal are the Hiram Chittenden Government Locks, locally referred to as the Ballard Locks. These locks allow small boats and huge ships to enter Lake Union from the Sound, just as Dr. Ruffner predicted in his report in 1889. The project to dredge the land and build the locks to connect Puget Sound to Lakes Union and Washington began in 1911 and the locks opened in 1917. However, the completion of the full canal did not occur until 1934.

Dr. Ruffner and the people of the Seattle area in the late 1880s probably never imaged that the natural resources would eventually diminish to a trickle. However, they have, and as with all places, other means of commerce have taken over. Some remnants of the old days remain, but it is a small percentage of what William Henry Ruffner envisioned. Even so, a visit to these places can still invoke the memory of his presence in the Pacific Northwest.

Fifteen short years after William Henry Ruffner's trip to the Seattle, another branch of the Ruffner family made their appearance. Ballard was their choice, and their plans were to stay and become part of the community. This time those arriving were descendants of Reuben, younger brother of Joseph.

The family came from their longtime home in Crawfordsville, Indiana in 1902 following the purchase of a Ballard newspaper, *The Ballard News Weekly*. Father and mother John D. and Minerva Ruffner headed the family with sons, Albert Everett Ruffner, his wife Rebecca and their daughter Lorena and son Edmund Birch "Tiny" Ruffner; Oscar Emerson Ruffner and wife Olive and their son Landon; and Clifford Hayes Ruffner, the youngest son of John and Minerva.

John, Albert and Oscar wrote the news and printed and published the newspaper. Ownership remained in the family for more than 33 years, and the paper became the eyes and ears of the community of Ballard as it grew from the early days of sawmills and saloons to become a more cosmopolitan part of the growing metropolis of Seattle.

Albert and Rebecca's son Edmund during his career was called Tiny Ruffner and he became well known for his height and his voice. As a young man, following his service in World War I, he traveled to California and the East Coast, working with Standard Oil Company as a singer for their musical radio program, then starring in operettas. His voice in early-day radio became well known in many households when he became a sometimes actor and an announcer of numerous popular radio shows. He then ventured into the very

early days of television before he retired.

Oscar and Olive's son Landon began his career in the early days of a developing Seattle with the Seattle Water Department, but died at the age of 48.

Clifford Hayes Ruffner, the youngest son of John and Minerva, didn't follow his brothers into the newspaper business, nor did he remain in the Pacific Northwest. Instead he had a longtime career in photography beginning in its infancy, first in Seattle, then moving to Rochester, New York. When he died in 1948, his obituary told of his career with Kodak. He was editor and for more than forty years a member of the advertising staff. He joined the staff in 1909 after working as a salesman and demonstrator in Seattle. He edited the company's trade journals for many years and was credited with Kodak Company's successful promotion of film as a substitute for plates.

Another Ruffner cousin who came to the Seattle area and went on to establish himself in the infancy of a developing field was Benjamin Franklin Ruffner Jr., a descendant of Peter Ruffner Jr. Ben, as he was known, was born in Nebraska and later moved to New York where he received his education and at the very young age of 23 taught aeronautical engineering. In the 1930s he was an innovator of wind tunnel testing in the aeronautical field. He became a very young professor at Oregon State and wrote numerous papers for the government agency that became NASA. He is credited with redesigning the wing configuration for jet planes. Later he accepted a generous offer by Seattle's Boeing Company to join their staff. At Boeing Company he became a vice president and head of the engineering division. He pioneered in the field of aerospace and ballistic missile systems. Viewing the technical aspect of his numerous papers, Ben Ruffner appears to have been one of the most brilliant of the Ruffner cousins.

Over the years there have been other Ruffner men and women to either make their home in Washington or to have a connection. Among them are Julius and Henry E. Ruffner, descendants of Joseph and Anna Ruffner. They were part of the Gold Rush of 1898 and kept an office in Seattle, living in the city part of the time.

Alfred Ruffner Rochester, another descendant of Joseph Ruffner was born in Seattle in 1895. A descendant of a pioneer family, he remained in Seattle and became a figurehead in the Democratic Party, for many years serving on the Seattle City Council. He was one of those with the vision of bringing the 1962 World's Fair to Seattle. Here, I have to add that Al Rochester and my father were very close friends, although at that time we were unaware of the family connection.

Another descendant of Peter Jr. to find his way to Washington State was Andrew J. Ruffner. Born in 1857 in Oregon, he made Washington his home for many years. He lived in Everett, Seattle, and Bremerton in Kitsap County, where he died. During his lifetime he worked in the building industry as a plasterer.

An additional descendent of Joseph made Washington his home. Henry J. Ruffner was yet another Ruffner born in Oregon. Born in 1887, he settled in Pacific County in the southwest part of the state, he lived in South Bend and is buried at Menlo, Washington. He was in the logging business.

Of course, I am glad that my Ruffner ancestress, my great grandmother Martha Carolyn Marye Ruffner Tutt made her way to Washington, settling on the east side of the mountains in Yakima in 1907. From her 1843 birth in Luray, Virginia, she traveled a long way. Mattie's travels took her to Missouri, Nebraska and then Montana, where she was widowed in 1885. Before her death in Yakima, at the age of 85, Mattie was able to meet her first three great grandchildren and even had the chance to name the youngest. Betty Lou is the name she chose. I am sure Mattie would be surprised to learn that this great granddaughter became a storyteller for the Ruffner family.

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The name used by the natives to indicate the white people from the East.

The Voice of Ballard, Ruffner Roots & Ramblings, Vol. 7, Issue #4, December 2004.

The Voice of Radio ~ Edmund B. "Tiny" Ruffner, RR&R, Vol. 7, Issue #3, September 2004.

Benjamin Franklin Ruffner Jr. ~ Aeronautical Engineer, RR&R, Vol. 8, Issue #1, March 2005.

Luray, Virginia to Yakima, Washington, RR&R, Vol. 5, Issue #4, December 2002.