

**A SURVIVOR'S  
RECOLLECTIONS OF THE  
WHITMAN MASSACRE**

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A survivor's recollections of the Whitman massacre by Matilda J. Sager

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**MATILDA J. SAGER**

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**A Survivor's Recollections**  
of the  
**WHITMAN MASSACRE**

by  
**Matilda J. Sager Delaney**



**Sponsored by Esther Reed Chapter  
Daughters of the American Revolution  
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The following modest recital of a life which has covered much of the most interesting period of pioneering in this part of the country is of the greatest interest and value to all who know and love the Northwest. Few lives have been so full of such varied experiences and the clear and poignant recital of the massacre at Waillatpu is of the greatest historical importance. It is so vividly told that it should carry its own convincing truth down the years, as the basis of all writing in connection with the labors of that splendid type of missionaries, Dr. and Mrs. Whitman.

NETTA W. PHELPS,  
(Mrs. M. A. Phelps)  
Ex-State Regent, Daughters  
of the American Revolution.

FANNIE SMITH GOBLE,  
(Mrs. Geo. H. Goble)  
State Regent.

LURLINE WILLIAMS,  
(Mrs. L. F. Williams)  
Regent Esther Reed Chapter.



Matilda J. Sager Delaney



## FOREWORD

The thought of fostering care seems to have remained with this "survivor" since her days with the Whitmans.

Forgiving innocent ones for the atrocious acts of their kindred upon her own brothers, Mrs. Delaney became a benefactor of the Indians. Before the apportionment of their lands the Coeur d'Alene squaws and children suffered great hardships. To them the Farmington hotel kitchen was a haven of warmth and plenty. They started home cheered and fed with bundles of food to tie on their ponies. The Delaney living room is the only place I have seen Indian women and girls light hearted and chatty. They loved to linger to sing for their hostess. Mrs. Delaney's hospitality extended to clergymen of all creeds. Her's has been a life of hard but generous service. "Not to be ministered unto but to minister" seems to have been the life motto of this woman reared in the wilds.

In 1881 General and Mrs. T. R. Tannatt came to the Northwest when the latter began a search for historical data; she sought pioneers and recorded their statements for comparison, in an effort to obtain truth. Opportunity gave her acquaintance with Mr. Gray, author of History of Oregon, Rev. Cushing Eels, the Spalding family, several survivors of the Whitman massacre, and pioneer army and railway officers from whom she gleaned information which later assisted her in writing the booklet, "Indian Battles of the Inland Empire in 1858," published by the D. A. R.

In 1887 she stopped at the Farmington hotel owned by Mrs. Delaney, and continued an acquaintance with her until 1920. She said Mrs. Delaney's account of the massacre never varied, and in discussion of points of difference with other survivors Mrs. Delaney's clear description and logical reasoning invariably convinced the others that she must be correct, while her clear remembrance of subsequent events, known to them both for more than three decades, strengthened Mrs. Tannatt's belief in the accuracy of her earlier impressions.

Mrs. Tannatt often urged this witness of the heartrending tragedy to publish her recollections, and had the pleasure of reading the manuscript for this narrative which she said contained the most comprehensive and truthful description of the Whitman massacre she had seen. She consented to write the Foreword, but before doing so was summoned by her Heavenly Father.

MIRIAM TANNATT MERRIAM.

A SURVIVOR'S RECOLLECTIONS  
of the  
WHITMAN MASSACRE  
by  
MATILDA J. SAGER DELANEY



In the spring of 1844 we started to make the journey across the plains with ox teams. I was born in 1839, October 16th, near St. Joseph, Mo., which was a very small town on the extreme frontier, right on the Missouri River, with just a few houses. My father's name was Henry Sager. He moved from Virginia to Ohio, then to Indiana and from there to Missouri. My mother's name was Naomi Carney-Sager. In the month of April, 1844, my father got the Oregon fever and we started West for the Oregon Territory. Our teams were oxen and for the start we went to Independence, the rendezvous where the companies were made up to come across the plains. There were six children then—one was born on the journey, making seven in all.

The men of the company organized in a military manner, having their captain and other officers, for they were going through the Indian country and guards had to be put out for the protection of the travellers and to herd the stock. The immigration of '43 was piloted through by Dr. Whitman and ours was the second immigration across the mountains. The road was only a trail and was all Indian territory at that time, from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains. We had to ferry streams, sometimes with canoes fastened together and the wagons put on them; and the Indians rowed us across the rivers in some places. The mountains were steep and sometimes we had to unyoke our cattle and drive them down, letting the wagons down by ropes. The Captain of our company was named William Shaw. There were vast herds of buffalo on the plains and wandering bands of Indians. We had to guard the cattle at night by taking turns. After we started across the plains we traveled slowly; and one day in getting out of the wagon my oldest sister caught her dress and her leg was broken by the wheel running over it. There was no doctor in our company, but there was a German doctor by the name of Dagan in the following company and he and my father fixed up the leg and from that time on the old doctor stayed with us and helped. My father was taken sick with the

mountain fever and he finally died and was buried on the banks of the Green River in Wyoming. His last request was that Captain Shaw take charge of us and see us safe through to the Whitman station. He thought that was as far as we could go that winter. Twenty-six days later my mother died. She made the same request of Captain Shaw and called us around her and told my brothers to always stay with us and keep us together—meaning the girls of the family. Dr. Dagan came on and helped to care for us with the boys' help. When my mother died, my injured sister could walk only with the help of a crutch. Mother was wrapped in a blanket and buried by the side of the road. So the Captain and his wife looked after us and the other immigrants showed their concern for the orphans by taking an interest in us. A kind woman, Mrs. Eads, took the tiny baby and the big-hearted travelers shared their last piece of bread with us. We finally arrived at Dr. Whitman's station on the 17th day of October, 1844, seven months from the Missouri River to the Whitman station. It was a long time!

Mrs. Whitman wanted to keep the girls, but she did not care for the boys. Dr. Dagan went on the Willamette valley and left us there. Doctor Whitman finally concluded he would keep the whole seven of us and took us in charge. We lived there three years. I might say something of the home incidents. The first thing Mrs. Whitman did was to cut our hair, wash and scrub us, as we were very much in need of a cleaning up; then she gave us something to eat and the bread seemed very dark to us—it was unbolted flour. Mrs. Eads, who had been caring for my baby sister, five months old, arrived three days later and then Mrs. Whitman took the motherless little one in charge and she grew to be a fine baby. Everything was so different from what we had been used to. The Whitmans were New England people and we were taken into their home and they began the routine of teaching and disciplining us in the old Puritan way of raising and training children—very different to the way of the plains. They hired a teacher and the immigrant families all had the privilege of sending their children to this school during the winter months. We had a church and Sunday school every Sabbath and we had our family worship every morning and evening. We had certain things to do at a certain hour. We never had anything but corn meal mush and milk for our suppers and they were very particular in our being very regular in all our habits of eating and sleeping.

When the spring came all the immigrants left and went on down to the Willamette valley—the families who had wintered at the Mission leaving the Sager children behind with the big-hearted Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. We had our different kinds of work to do. We had to plant all the gardens and raise vege-