INDEX TO TAPH REYNOLD GEIGER LOH78-252 AUGUST 10, 1978

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The following interview is with Mr. Reynold Geiger at his present home in Hillsboro on August 10, 1978.

During the early summer, Mr. Geiger visited the museum after reading a story about Mr. Henry Zenk in the Hillsboro Argus. Mr. Zenk, a scholar from Portland State University, was conducting a field study on the Tualatin Indians for the museum. The project, with assistance from the oral historian Lloyd Meyer, was an effort to locate historic Tualatin Indian sites; be they camp sites, burial grounds, hunting and fishing areas, to discover any of the oral tradition passed down by the white settlers about the native peoples, or any other kinds of evidence or information.

Many people responded. Bones, tools, bowls and pestles, sweathouses, and rock carvings were all part of the find. Please refer to the field notes for further details.

Mr. Geiger's grandfather, William Geiger, came to Oregon as a missionary in 1839. Later, he took up a Donation Land Claim outside of the present town of Cornelius. As a result of his long Oregon heritage and lineage, Reynold Geiger has heard many of the stories passed down about the Tualatin Indians.

One summer day Mr. Geiger took Mr. Zenk and Mr. Meyer on a field trip
to his old family farm in Cornelius, Iowa Hill and Fern Hill, pointing out
Indian campsites, work ar as, a Klickitat Indian horse racetrack, and a sweathouse. A number of photographs were taken and tre available in the collection.

On August 20, I went back and recorded an interview with him concerning these stories and sites. As an aside, on Track 2, Mr. Geiger relates a story told to him by a Klickitat Indian and her son of the legend of a gold mine up in the Coast Range Mountains.

The story, from the museum's standpoint, cannot be documened so the truth of the claim is open to question. The interview, on the whole however, provides some insight on a topic where other information is woefully inadequate.

Reynold Geiger oral history interview

Interviewer: Lloyd Meyer

Date: August 10, 1978

Location: Hillsboro, Oregon

The following interview is with Mr. Reynold Geiger at his home in Hillsboro on August 10, 1978. In this oral history, Mr. Geiger concentrates his discussion on Indian stories and Indian sightings based on information passed down from his ancestors.

LM: Good morning, Mr. Geiger.

RG: Morning.

LM: To start out with, I would like to have you introduce yourself.

RG: I'm Reynold Geiger. I was born in (??), 1902. As far as the family, brothers and sisters some of them was born in Forest Grove. I don't know whether any of them was born out in the farm at the Geiger homestead.

LM: You were born on the Geiger homestead?

RG: No, I was born right in Cornelius, just about a block from the old park that used to be there. The yellow house that used to (?). I don't know if the house still stands or not. Of course I was pretty young then, I remember when mother used to take me around visiting to other places when I was real young.

LM: You have quite a family history I think in this area. Could you briefly tell the story of the Geiger family's first arriving here in Oregon? Where they came from and what year they came?

RG: Well, I'd have to look up part of it. I've got the dates of when they was born, my granddad's kids. I have that here. You probably have a copy of that.

LM: Yeah. Why don't you just give approximate dates.

RG: Dad was born in 1860 and that's the reason they named him Frémont Lincoln [laughs]. Because things were a couple years late, you know, by the time they got here. And they heard about the debate, Lincoln and Frémont when he was running for President. I guess Frémont was probably running too, and they had a debate. And they heard about it, so they named him Frémont Lincoln. He went by the name of Link most of the time. And that's what they called him.

LM: Your grandfather then was the first Geiger to arrive here.

RG: Yes, he came in 1839 when he first got here. And he has quite a history. To start with, I got a letter someplace that I got from Salem, they looked it up for me, and the piece of property that he took up first was over there. And it said something about him but I forgot just what it said. I just read it over once and I put it away someplace. (???)

LM: 1839 is a really early year for people arriving in Oregon. How did your grandfather first come over here. Or do you know why he came to this area?

(tape stops/starts)

LM: All right, we've established then that your grandfather was a teacher at the mission down in...

RG: Well, he went to school back in New York. And most everybody that went to school long enough was a teacher.

LM: He came out to ...

RG: He was interested in the missionary life. That's what he was started out to be. He studied to be a doctor. In those days you know maybe you didn't have to have too much of an education. He was over at the Whitman mission for awhile.

(Recording interrupted)

RG:...at the Methodist mission near Wheatland during the winter of 1839 and 1840.

LM: From this letter then, it indicates that your grandfather was motivated by his missionary zeal to teach?

RG: Well, (??) you know, he wanted to come here, it was a new country and everything. Young fellow. He was just like most of the people that traveled someplace that way. I know that if I'd been living then I'd be anxious to come.

LM: You never knew your grandfather, then. Personally.

RG: No. But -

LM: Were quite a few stories (??)

RG: Almost like as if I'd known him.

LM: How is that, do you think?

RG: You probably wouldn't believe me, but he's been around, his spirit's been around. He's done a lot of things for me and so forth. He's been working around here too, lately. In some ways. He was helping the doctors all over at the hospital, so. (???) told that he wasn't supposed to do too much things that way.

LM: He came initially to teach, then. What...

RG: Well it's just like anybody that goes to a new country. He came to kind of be a missionary, you might say. That's what he was interested in.

LM: How did he happen to settle in Cornelius then, with the farm?

RG: Well it's a great place. I haven't got all of it in here [looking through some papers? Then reading aloud]: Spring of 1840, Mr. Geiger went to California on a sailboat. Stopped at the Russian settlement on Bodega Bay. The Russians would not allow him to leave by land. So he continued on to San Francisco. The authorities refused to allow him to land because he had no passport. He then went to Honolulu where he taught school for, I don't know, 7 months I think it was or something in that range. Receiving \$30. In February 1821, having procured a passport, he left Honolulu on an American ship, the Lausanne, for Monterrey and later went to San Francisco. At the time, San Francisco was a small place. The Hudson Bay Company had a double large house there, and there was a combined saloon and billiard hall. And the (??) hotel, containing about 100 people. Half of them were transient. After a short time in San Francisco, Dr. Garner went across the bay to a point opposite to Emeryville City and secured some cattle. Took them up the river to Sutter's Fort, where he remained until the spring of 1842. And in the meantime, surveyed Captain Sutter's claim for him and had charge of the fort while the captain went to Monterrey for supplies. He gave to Dr. Geiger, for his services, land 3 miles square situated in the fork of the Yuba and Feather rivers.

LM: When did he come up to Cornelius, then? Back to Oregon?

RG: Well he was back to Oregon, let's see here, before [looking through papers]...1839 and 1840 -

LM: Did he settle on a donation land claim?

RG: Well he took up a claim...hmmm...(???) then gave that up. They couldn't make it there, he gave it up for that purpose. And later on they come here and took up land claims afterwards.

LM: There must have been quite a few -

RG: He went back you see, he was supposed to find a place down in California for those settlers. But he (??)

LM: Were there quite a few Indians here when he settled here in Cornelius on his land?

RG: No, not many. They was in different places around, they were around Gaston. There were some of them that knew where all the camas was but they were different places around.

LM: What were some of the stories that were passed down to you that your -

RG: Well there wasn't any – you've probably heard that there was some kind of a battle you know, over up north here. You've heard about that. That's when the Indians were in with the white people there. When those Indians came down from – the Klickitat Indians came down to fight.

LM: That's something that was told by your father to you?

RG: No, he said something about it but not very much.

LM: Well you know then of the Klickitat site over here in lowa hill?

RG: Well, if they were from Klickitat in the first place, they wasn't in with the Klickitat group, because what they told me is there were only a few of them and they didn't want trouble with anybody out here on Fern Hill.

LM: The Indians that were there originally.

RG: That's what they told me, they couldn't see any reason for fighting.

LM: Who told you this?

RG: Those Indians did. The old lady. Old squaw.

LM: Who are these Indians that you talk with? How do you know them?

RG: Those two? She introduced herself when she heard my name was Geiger. They said that they used to stay on my granddad's place, they camped there in the summer. And they went up on the hill in the winter. And that my granddad was always good to them because his peaches was ripe by then. He would give them peaches and he'd let them camp. There's other fruits he had too, apples and things that he'd give to them. And he wouldn't let his kids run the deer with dogs like a lot of the rest of them did. Because they depend mainly on deer for their food in the winter. And the deer were so scarce around here, they got so scarce that they had a hard time making a living sometimes there'd be a week that they had to go without anything to eat.

LM: These are the Indians you're talking about?

RG: Yes, that's what the Indians said. That is pretty tough, living out there on the deer with them dogs, they sort of kill them off and run them out of the country. Scaring the deer away.

LM: These Indians then, that you talk with, they had lived at your grandfather's farm all these years?

RG: They didn't say that. They came from some other place, they must have. Because they weren't as old as the ones my mother talked to up on lowa hill. They're the ones that told about (??) on top of the hill where they could see around, pointed out to my mother the different peaks that their ancestors used to go across to in canoes. They'd go over there hunting and so forth. (??) at that time.

LM: Your mother told you this story.

RG: Yeah, that the Indians told her.

LM: Your mother knew quite a few Indians?

RG: There wasn't many in that group. There was only about 3 or 4 left when she talked to them.

LM: These lived on Iowa hill, then.

RG: Iowa hill, yeah.

LM: Did your mother ever mention what year this might have been?

RG: Hmm...no, I don't remember what year. I probably asked, because I asked her a lot of questions, but I don't remember. I was interested in the Indians -

LM: What year do you think, approximately? What decade maybe?

RG: I'd have to go over -

LM: Before 1900 do you think?

RG: Oh, it'd be before 1900. In 1893, the (??) was fall...so it would be before that time, before '93. Sometime before then.

LM: Do you think they were Tualatin Indians? Or native Indians of the Tualatin valley?

RG: Well, (??) called Tualatin Indians. But there were different Indians around, from what they told me. They wasn't so much one group, they were independent, more independent, and there (??) group not far from them and (??). They didn't get too friendly with them, because when you, she said if you get too friendly with them you're bound to find something to quarrel about and have a falling out over. And they wanted to get along.

LM: This is your family and the Indians?

RG: (???) They picked certain places to hunt and they didn't go over and bother the other Indians much, and they'd go back up in the hills (??). And certain places they'd hunt you know, not to bother the other Indians too much.

LM: The Indians then on Fern Hill were the Klickitats. Is that right?

RG: Yeah. Well I don't know if it was the Klickitats or not, but that's where they took them. They were a little different tribe than the others. They probably had some [tape stops/starts] well I never heard too much, only what I got from dad. But this lady told me quite a lot, you know.

LM: Is Fern Hill part of your property or grandfather's property?

RG: His was – my uncle, granddad's oldest son, William Jr., why he took up a homestead up there on Fern Hill. At that time they couldn't take up as large of a one. So I don't know just what his was. We went by the place up where he took it.

LM: Have you found Indian artifacts at all up there, or have some of your relatives found some?

RG: Well I never really looked for any artifacts, I just run across some things in different places. I'd be digging around and dug some up, some small stones you know you grind the food up with? And some of them had a nick out of them and I didn't particularly take good care of them, they all disappeared, you know how all things that way do. Put them outside someplace. But you don't find too many artifacts unless you're looking for them. Why you go someplace where they lived in caves or something like that, why it would be easier to find the artifacts probably. Where they scattered around the ground, why they disappear, they go in the ground, you have to wash the dirt in order to find them. Actually they dig them up.

LM: Who told you the story about the racetrack down there? The Indian race track?

RG: Well, dad told me about that. Because he was living when they come in, they had their horse races there. (??) round place.

LM: Your father actually saw some of these horse races?

RG: Oh yeah. Yeah, when he was young, they was around pretty often.

LM: What did he say about these horse races?

RG: He didn't say much about them. But he showed me where they led the horses down to the water.

LM: Down to the Tualatin River?

RG: [We went to the] camping place and I asked him several times about that and he finally, and I went over and looked and I found that place where they made their (??) area. That kind of floods in the winter, but the ground wasn't grubbed right in there, right at that time. It was grubbed a little bit later.

LM: That's where you showed us the stump there? Or where the stump was?

RG: No, that's farther west where the camp was. It wasn't where the stump was.

It probably was a burial ground

along there because that urn that granddad or dad, when he was plowing, that he dug up, why that was probably a burial ground in there at one time. It wouldn't necessarily have to be, but —

LM: Where exactly was that, was that in this area then?

RG: Well, it was over farther east.

LM: You mentioned these arrowhead chips, where was that now?

RG: It was down in the lower, down where they camped down in the Indian camp down next to the river. When they were down there.

LM: What exactly was it that was found there? What were they, arrowheads?

RG: They were chips where they made arrowheads and I found some little arrowheads along in there too. When the water would come up and wash, (???), that's when you'd find the arrowheads. Some years it'd fill in part and wash another place. Depends on the current as it comes across. That's how it was, how the area was filled in, there's dirt coming down the river when the water's up high. This river's kind of dirty. Then when it goes over the bank, why maybe it'll take dirt with it from one place and deposit it some other.

LM: Your father, then, saw Indians that lived here at Fern Hill campsite.

RG: Oh yes, he'd been around the camp there and talked to them that were there.

LM: Did he ever describe what they looked like?

RG: Did he ..?

LM: What the Indians looked like.

RG: No, he didn't necessarily. They just looked like ordinary people. This old lady and her son, they were both of them pretty good size, tall.

LM: Could you describe a little bit further what these two women you talked with looked like?

RG: One was a woman, the other was her son. Well, you wouldn't really know they were Indians. You'd have to be told they was Indians, they look like white people.

LM: They weren't full-blooded Indians then.

RG: Yeah, they were full-blooded.

LM: They were?

RG: You know they even have blond Indians some places.

LM: Where exactly were these two Indians that you knew, living?

RG: They was over at the Klickitat Indian reservation at that time. When they come see me. They hunted me out on purpose.

LM: Why did they want to talk with you?

RG: Well, they had a mine out there they wanted to tell me about. Said they'd rather see me get it than anybody.

LM: Because you were related to your -

RG: They told me all about it -

LM: Because they knew your grandfather?

RG: Yeah. They thought a lot of him and he was good to them. While he was there, he was always good to them.

LM: What is the story about this gold mine then?

RG: They used to go nearly every year up to get gold and they'd get enough to do them for a year and when that would run out, they would go up and get some more.

LM: This is up in the coast range somewhere?

RG: Yeah.

LM: They said they would mine it. Or dig it out?

RG: Well they dug it out with sticks and so forth, and they'd take and bust it up by hitting one piece against the other. They'd take what they figured would do them for a while, they'd take and cover it up again, but they had another place before they told me about where this was. But I never dug it out. It's hard to find anything unless you have some measurements, exact measurements to go by. If you're just going about so far down the hill, and they told me the different ways they've went in there, and the other way it was (???) but she wasn't real sure about that part of it. But they told me things had happened, the one that found it well he kind of disappeared from where they was for a few minutes. The rest of them were standing out and dressing the deer they'd killed. And he'd walk down that way and (??) when he found it.

LM: This was an Indian.

RG: Uh-huh.

LM: A Klickitat Indian.

RG: Well, I wouldn't necessarily say Klickitat Indian unless I was sure that that's where they came from in the first place.

LM: When do you think this was discovered, approximately? When do you think they discovered it?

RG: Well they, I don't know how many trips they made to this one place, they'd only been working on that one chunk, they just had a chunk and there wasn't very much of it left. They said they had about enough left for another trip. They didn't know if there was quite enough or not in that spot. That's why I didn't do too much digging.

LM: They were living at Fern Hill at the time when they discovered it?

RG: Yeah. They were going to get what was left out, but they didn't do it because they found a couple men up to stay at their camp to watch them, they thought they were getting the gold from some other place, they killed some of the settlers you know that had gold mines or something that way and getting their gold. That's what they thought.

LM: The white men thought this.

RG: Some of them thought that, yeah.

LM: What did they do with the gold, once they had it?

RG: Well, the old Colonel Cornelius had a store at one time, they'd take it down to him and buy groceries and things with it.

LM: Huh. They would just use it as money.

RG: Yeah. (??). They like coffee just like white people do.

LM: What happened to the Klickitat Indians then?

RG: They took them to the Klickitat reservation. That's where they took them.

LM: Was that Grand Ronde or was that another place?

RG: No. Klickitat Indian reservation across the river over in Washington. Grand Ronde, that'd be different Indians, I don't know what tribe they belong to. There's the Kalapuya Indians, you've heard of them. I don't know whether they belong to that one. But there was the Klamath and some more.

LM: Was your father around when they took the Klickitat back to the reservation?

RG: Yeah. He was born in 1860.

LM: When was it, then, that they took the Indians to the reservation?

RG: Well I don't know exactly. It was shortly before 1900. It must have been '98 or somewhere around there. Could have been a little earlier.

LM: Did this Indian woman and her son tell you anything else about living in that area?

RG: They told me that dad bought a basket, used as a sewing basket my mother had, dad bought from her, she made it for him.

LM: The Indian woman had made it for him.

RG: Yeah.

LM: Huh. Going back to these Indians on Iowa Hill then, your mother must have known quite a few Indians then.

RG: There wasn't quite a few. They wasn't much (??). She said they was older than the rest of them around here, that is they'd been there longer. The rest of the Indians moved around some. They didn't stay in one place all the time.

LM: What stories were you able to get from your mother when you asked these questions about Indians?

RG: She didn't say much about it. She said they'd just stop and talk to them. Hello and that way they visited several times. But they lived not far from there.

But that was a place mother told me that the Indians were there. That's where they came.

RG: But I never had anybody show me the exact spot. But that road that used to go over there, it didn't have all those side branches that go this way and that way.

I used to go over there, but then the Loughtons, Jim Loughton lives along the creek here, I think it's Jim the first name. From where he lives, I figured he fishes down the creek. Catch a lot of these little mountain trout.

LM: Your cousin then would find artifacts

RG: He found some. I never expected him to show me or anything.

LM: Were they arrowheads, more or less?

RG: Well, some of them were arrowheads. I don't think he found any large amount, here they don't find a large amount because they had to have a whole lot of them in order for you to find many. When they'd shoot them and loose them, that would be out where they're hunting. And try to find them again after they shoot them, probably, because it was a lot of work making them.

? What was the, what have you

LM: How about this sweat house that you showed us heard about that?

RG: Well you know how the sweat houses work. Or have you ever heard -

LM: Yeah, basically. Like a sauna, more or less.

RG: They take and heat the rocks up ahead of time, you know. Get the rocks real hot, and when they go in there they pour cool water on the rocks and the steam comes up. Makes them sweat.

LM: How do you know about this sweathouse there? Who told you about it?

RG: My dad told me about that.

LM: Where was this now exactly?

RG:

Fred's wife

lives in Cornelius, but they didn't know anything about it, you know, Indian place there as far as I know.

LM: Did your father remember the Indians actually using the sweathouse?

RG: Well he told me very close to where it was.

LM: How did he know, did he actually see the sweathouse?

RG: I 'spose. The river changes each year. It sure changes a lot. Remember where that trail was a-ways that we walked on? Well that led right down, or it went in a little ways farther, you could go down the slope right down there in that shallow water down in there, you know you can walk right down there, kind of a long, gradual slope and you go right on the bank in the shallow part (??). And the deeper water which where you first go down looks like kind of a hole there on the side. On the way going down there it was a little bit deep, but that's all washed out in there now. It looks a lot different than it used to. We used to go down there, you could take the water. It tasted just as good or better than the water that comes out of the faucet here now. When I first used to drink that water, we used to go out and cut wood out there. Cut the winter's wood. That was 42 and a half acres there that was my dad's share of the farm. And on down the creek where the Indians used to camp, why that was my uncle's. And it was all divided up and things, different ones, (??).

(tape noise, possible start/stop)

LM: And what is that?

RG: Oh it's a young Indian. With the railroad (??) was here. The (??) here for awhile, then they went on up around towards to Gaston. They was working down around the hill. They had a watchman on the (??) with a gun. Anyone wasn't supposed to fool around where their stuff was you know. A young Indian from their camp came down, they had a trail over on the side of the hill, and he came down, just walking into town here. Towards town on the railroad bridge. And this watchman seen him down there where the stuff was, you know, shot him and drove him off. Put his body off over in a grave and covered him up.

LM: This is when they were building the railroad?

RG: Yeah. I heard about it later on from one of the fellows working.

LM: Nothing ever happened to the watchman then?

RG: No. No, they didn't know where the Indian went. The watchman was just supposed to look after things, wasn't supposed to let anybody in there. So that was one way of doing it. If it had been a white person, why it would have been the same way.

LM: Were there several Indians in the Gaston area when they were building this railroad?

RG: They were around the hill. I don't know if they had some trouble with some of the railroad around the hill, a soft spot. They had to make quite a (??) some places there. That's just one of the things that happened.

LM: You mentioned one time to me about a burial ground

RG: Well, that was I could probably show you pretty close to the spot where that is. There is some kind of a burial ground there. He told me he run across it -

LM:

RG: Yeah. And I went down there and looked and seen. There was some hair and a piece of burlap and some bones and you know they disappear when they are exposed to the air. After they've been in there for so long, why when you first dig them you can see what there was. But in a short time they just look like the rest of the dirt. That's way it is when bones have been there a long time.

LM: This is something they dug up when they were building...

RG: There was some burlap there and hair that still showed someone had been buried there. Burlap, you know, which you bury in, they're wrapped in that or something or other. Use it for some purpose.

LM: They didn't know about it until they started building there then?

RG: Well, they had heard something about an Indian burial ground.

LM: All right. So far we've talked about the Klickitat Indians, the Tualatin Indians, their sites on Fern Hill and Iowa Hill, and a few of the stories. Is there anything else you'd like to add about what we've talked about or something that we've forgotten?

RG: No, I don't think so. I'm not sure about that Council Creek. I've heard that that's where the Indians had their meetings. And it could have been where the white people met too. Council Creek.

LM: Council?

RG: Over here, out in Forest Grove. That little creek. I can show you the creek. From Cornelius you go towards out north. That cemetery there. Before you get to the cemetery, there's a little bridge there and go across the creek. That creek goes on, you know where the slaughterhouse used to be? (????) They haven't run that for quite awhile I guess. But that same creek comes on down there, runs into Dairy Creek. I don't know just where Dairy Creek is now, I've forgotten. Council Creek that place up near Forest Grove a little ways, there used to be meetings. That's why they called it —

LM: Who told you about it?

RG: That's why it was named Council Creek. My dad told me.

LM: Your father told you about that?

RG: Yes, he told me about that. Council Creek. Well I'm not sure now whether the white people met there or not.

LM: Well that's interesting. Was there any artifacts or Indian things found in that area?

RG: No, you usually don't find anything. You don't find artifacts unless the (??). There'd have to be a lot of artifacts in order to find them. Of course if they were the same kind of metal as we use, I could take a metal

detector and go find them. But otherwise you don't find the artifacts. You know, there can be a place where there oughta be a whole lot of artifacts you figure by amount of people and things. And you go to those places and you don't find anything until you start digging. Because every year, that little layer gets a little bit deeper. Every place around. And it's the same way every year. A certain amount of that stuff comes out of the air that makes it a little deeper. There's that Port Orford meteorite. You've heard about that? I want to go find it someplace. But if I don't find it pretty quick it's going to be clear covered up, there's just a little bit left of it sticking out now. It's almost covered up and it was up there 4-5 feet.

LM: Any other stories that you remember? That's about it, then pretty much.

RG: Yeah. I didn't hear about other stories of the settlers. I told you that one about my great-grandfather, J. A. Cornwall.

LM: This was back east?

RG: No. {Tape noise] I've got a couple of boxes. I've got these wood boxes. My father said let's look at those boxes. Finally, he showed him what he had in there. They're full of books. They didn't bother him anymore but he was kind of scared of them at first, there was something they wanted in those boxes -

LM: This is your grandfather?

RG: Great-grandfather.

LM: your great-grandfather on your mother's side.

RG: Yeah. No, my father's side.

LM: His name was Cornwall?

RG: It was grandfather's wife's father.

LM: Where was this? Was this here, in Oregon?

RG: You hear about Cabin Creek?

[Tape stops, lots of background noise when it starts again but no talking for about a minute]

RG: My great-grandfather was a Presbyterian minister. Have you read about him?

LM: No.

RG: He helped start churches around places and so forth.