



Chief Daloose Jackson and his daughter Lottie, about 1906

## **An Incident at Coos Bay**

From time to time it is possible to compare an oral tradition with a contemporary document from generations past. Historians love it when that happens. Oral traditions recorded in the Field Notes of John Peabody Harrington in the Smithsonian Institution compared with the Hudsons Bay Company Journals of Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod provide some perfect opportunities to make such a comparison.

During the Summer of 1942, John Peabody Harrington was at Coos Bay interviewing descendants of the Coos Indians who were old enough to remember how it was in earlier times. His prime consultant was Lottie Evanoff (1872-1944), the youngest daughter of Chief Daloose Jackson (c. 1827-1907). At the time of her death she was credited as being the last full-blood Coos Indian. I remember that when Dad read of her death in the *Coos Bay Times*, he sadly said, "There are no more Coos Indians. The last one died yesterday." I was ten years old and to me it seemed that time, from then on, would be measured from that day.<sup>1</sup>

The Harrington field notes include over 100 pages of utterances and stories from Lottie. She was exceptionally well informed, had a fine memory, and was a quite reliable informant on many cultural and historical matters. One of her stories is about the killing of a Coos Indian which matches very neatly with entries in the 1826-27 Journal of Alexander Roderick McLeod.<sup>2</sup>

Lottie begins her account, "When my father was a young boy." Her father, Chief Daloose Jackson, died in 1907. Serious estimates place his age at about 80, which would make him born about 1827 and this incident occurred in 1827. Lottie continued, "Some whitemen trappers came and camped at Q'alya [Jordan Cove]. They saw an old man coming along in a canoe and killed him."<sup>3</sup>

What happened, as recorded in McLeod's journal, is as follows. In January and February, 1827, the Hudsons Bay Company fur brigade of 30 men and perhaps half that many women and children were in the Coquille River valley, preparing to transport their furs to the Umpqua River via the North Fork of the Coquille. Four of the men had reason to go by way of Coos Bay, apparently having left some items there. The plan was for them to rendezvous later with the main body of the brigade at a camp near the present site of Scottsburg.

Three of the men going by way of Coos Bay were Alexis Aubichon, 31, Charles Jeaudoin, 27, and Tourawheene, a 26 year old Hawaiian labourer. They departed the Coquille

valley on January 23. The fourth man, an Iroquois freeman named Little Ignace, remained to finish dressing his furs and intended to meet them later.

After the three arrived at Coos Bay, they probably hired an Indian to transport them by canoe across the bay to Jordan Cove on the North Spit. According to them, there was a loaded gun in the canoe and as the owner of the canoe was pulling it onto the shore, the gun went off and killed him. The three men panicked and headed north along the beach as fast as they could, leaving the fate of Ignace to chance. When the body was later discovered by natives, the event was obviously thought to have been a deliberate murder of their relative. McLeod stated in his February 13 journal entry, “it can scarcely be expected of them otherwise.”

After Little Ignace had finished dressing his furs, he left the Coquille valley for Coos Bay, expecting to meet with the other three as planned. He arrived and, as McLeod stated in his journal, “fell an easy sacrifice to the irritated natives.” In Lottie’s telling of the story, they “killed those two whitemen.” She was mistaken in that they had only killed one, and he was not a whiteman. Little Ignace was an Iroquois freeman who stayed in the Oregon country after his contract with the Hudsons Bay Company had expired. He had a wife and small daughter with him.

Lottie continues her story: “But [they] spared the white woman and girl that accompanied those two men. They 2 were here at Empire for about 4 years.” Of course, she was not a white woman. Ignace was Iroquois and his wife was certainly also Native American, as were all the wives who accompanied the fur brigades.<sup>4</sup> McLeod’s party was 90% non-white, made up of Northwest Indians, Métis, Iroquois, Hawaiian, and only three or four whites, the officers.<sup>5</sup>

Lottie was no different than any other great storyteller: she would sometimes make changes or add things that “make a good story even better,” consciously or unconsciously. McLeod’s contemporary journal makes credibly clear what actually happened, as well as what the Coos Indians legitimately thought had happened at the time. The story, as Lottie told it in 1942, shows interesting drift and embellishment over 115 years.

To continue the account, on January 24 Little Ignace came to McLeod for help with his sick child. McLeod noted in his Journal, “The child’s case is not dangerous, tho’ the father alarmed.” This is the first we know that Ignace, apparently a devoted father, had his family with him. He had been with McLeod on at least part of the 1826 trip down the coast to the Siuslaw

River but had been “indisposed” for a time and was in debt to the Company. He is mentioned several times in the journal and it appears that McLeod respected Ignace to a greater degree than that of some other men in the company. For example, on July 23 he called Jeaudoin, “an awkward lad.” On July 26 he said of Tourawyheene that he “possesses every bad perfection I believe he is both indolent and slothful to a degree beyond bearing . . .”. No negative comments were ever made of Ignace.

On February 6 McLeod received uncorroborated news that Ignace had been killed. His journal entry states, “the report is variously related, which leaves hopes of its being ill founded.” He added, “So many reports are in circulation founded on fiction that little reliance can be put upon any and I wish this one may prove as ill founded as the others.” He received his sad confirmation of the truth a week later, on February 13, upon his arrival at the camp near present day Scottsburg. Aubichon, Jeaudoin, and Tourawyheene were there and filled in the details. It was a sad day.

But what about Ignace’s wife and daughter? They had no doubt been with him when he was killed. As usual, there is nothing about the women in the contemporary journal record. We have to rely on Lottie’s account in the oral tradition. Lottie said, “The woman and girls clothes wore out and after that they dressed as the Indian women, merely some grass clothes. The woman and the girl did not fuss about the killing of these 2 men, for the 2 killed that old man just to take the canoe away from him so they could travel around the bay by canoe.” Lottie’s assumption that it was a deliberate killing to take the canoe is exactly what McLeod knew the Indians would logically think, and so the story comes down to us, three generations of oral tradition. The story is confused as to who were the “2 men” that were killed. The two men who were killed were a Coos Indian by accident and an Iroquios trapper in mistaken retaliation for it.

Lottie concludes the story saying, “After awhile trappers sent a party bringing *all i ca chik* for buying that woman and girl.<sup>6</sup> The Indians gave the woman and the girl buckskin clothes to wear when they departed. They had been well treated during their 4 years at Empire, where they had been in the keeping of the Empire Chief.” The “Empire Chief” was ostensibly Lottie’s grandfather. That is all we know, and all we will ever know, about the fate of the family of Little Ignace. But we would have known even less had it not been for the oral history provided by Lottie Evanoff to the anthropologist John Peabody Harrington in 1942. Chief Daloose Jackson

heard it from his parents, Lottie heard it from Daloose, and she told it to Harrington. It was three generations, the traditional limit of reliability for oral histories.

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### Endnotes

1. Mills Elaine L.,(ed). *The Papers of John Peabody Harrington in the Smithsonian Institution 1907-1957, Volume One, A guide to the Field Notes: Native American History, Language, and Culture of Alaska/Northwest Coast*. Krause International Publications, Millwood, NY, 1981, pp. 1/58 to 1/68. Lottie's obit: "Princess Lottie Evanoff, Last of Coos Indians, is Dead," *Coos Bay Times*, April 25, 1944. There were later claimants to being the last Coos full blood, but I defer that controversy to others. The Coos Indians as a tribe survived in spite of my dad's pessimistic projection. In the 2020 census 3% of the population of Coos County claimed Indian as their racial choice. There are two active Indian tribal headquarters in Coos Bay, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Siulsaw and Lower Umpqua Indians, and the Coquille Indian Tribe. The announcement of their demise in 1944 was greatly exaggerated.
2. All quotations from McLeod's Journal include the date of the entry in "Journal of a hunting Expedition to the Southward of the Umpqua under the command of A. R. McLeod, C. T. September 1826." Appendix C, pp 175-219, in *Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journal, 1826-27*, edited by K. G. Davies, London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1961. All quotations from Lottie Evanoff are from microfilm reel 24, frame 0693 of the *Alsea/Siuslaw/Coos Fieldnotes. John Peabody Harrington Papers*. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. New York: Kraus International Publications, 1981. Microfilm.
3. Patty Whereat Philips, tribal linguist of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Siuslaw and Lower Unpqua Indians: email to Youst March 15, 2003: Q'alya = Jordan Cove. Daloose Jackson obituary: "Old Indian Passes Away," *Coos Bay Times*, Jan. 6, 1907.
4. For women in the fur trade, see Silvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society 1670-1870*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1983, and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. These two studies convincingly demonstrate that fur trade women were Indian women and the mixed blood descendents of Indian women and Euro-American trappers and traders. Prior to the 1830's there had been an isolated few European women at Red River, in what is now Manitoba, but the first white women to cross the Continental Divide into the Oregon Country were the missionary wives, Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding in 1836. In 1827, the time of this incident, there were no white women in the Oregon Country.
5. *Snake River Journal*, p. 174n lists the fourteen members of the 1826 expedition as follows: 4 whites, 3 Iroquois and Abenakis, 3 Hawaiians, and "3 Natives of this place." The thirty members of the 1826-27 expedition are listed by name or nickname on page 142. Four Hawaiians are named and three Iroquois. The French names imply several Métis. The others are unknown but it is safe to assume that the racial makeup of the 1826-27 expedition was not unlike that of the 1826 expedition.
6. Patty Whereat Philips email to Youst March 19, 2023 explained *allikichik*. She said "It's mentioned in the Grand Ronde *wawa* dictionary, as a rarely used word there. . . It seemed to be current in southern Oregon in the late 19th century." She added that an earlier Chinook dictionary showed it as meaning dentalium. Thus in the Chinook Jargon, apparently, *chickamin* = metal money; *allikichick* = dentalium money.