2026 TALKING HEADSTONES

Terry Church, George Rogers Clark SAR, presenting "Harvey Cameron Narrative" Union Pioneer Calvary Cemetery. Tumwater, WA.

Hello, I am Harvey Cameron.

Not everyone here is famous and I certainly fit into that category, however I do have a story to tell.

I would call myself a gypsy since my lifetime has been spent on the move, however I always return to my favorite place, Tumwater, Washington.

I was born in Knox County, Tennessee in 1831.

After my parents passed, I moved to St. Joe, Missouri finally leaving there to head west in 1852 at the age of 21 to the wilds of Northern Oregon Territory where I stayed until 1856.

Strange enough, the territory was renamed in 1853 to Washington Territory and stayed that way until November 11, 1889, when it became the 42 state. At this time, in 1853, my life took an unexpected turn.

As I traveled across the great plains to the western territories, following the Oregon Trail, I realized pioneers were constantly being attacked by the native population.

The year was 1855. I enlisted in Company G, first Regiment of Washington Volunteers, serving under Captain Gilmore Hays.

This was the time of the Indian Treaty Wars and lasted from 1855 - 1856. We were ordered to build forts and block houses in the Washington Territory to serve as a refuge for the settlers.

Now this territory was quite large and included what we know today as as Canada what is now today British Columbia and Alberta (Canada officially formed as a self-governing country on July 1, 1867), Idaho, and Montana.

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"Harvey Cameron Narrative"
Talking Headstones - Union Pioneer Calvary Cemetery.
Tumwater, WA

My service area included the tri-cities, Spokane, Missoula, as well as forts and outposts in what is now British Columbia and Alberta.

I decided after spending the winters here, to travel to the state of California (1850 statehood) in 1858, but did not stay. New Market called for my return. In 1863 New Market became Tumwater which is the native name for "Waterfall." It was there I met my future bride; her name was Catherine Simmons (October 5, 1857 - February 2, 1941).

Now this name may not ring a bell just as mine does not flow off your lips either.

Catherine is the daughter of Michael Simmons, one of the two non-indigenous founding families of Tumwater. Perhaps because of her name and fame, I was briefly Mayor of Tumwater in 1876.

And now you know why I returned to Tumwater. Catherine and I had two twin boys, James and Harvey.

With a family and a full life of travel, I have always called Tumwater my home. I received a land grant to build a home over near Black River and Mima where we farmed the land. We grew Grains like oats, wheat, and rye, root vegetables, and also, once the Olympia Brewery began, we grew hops.

However as age encroached the end of my life was at the Orting Soldiers Home where I passed at the age of 83.

I lived long enough to see Oregon Territory become Washington Territory and that territory to become the 42 state of Washington. I have also seen the invention of electricity (Olympia Light and Power), the electric narrow gauge railroad, the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the Capitol Brewing Company (1896). The brewery failed in 1916 with the advent of prohibition. and Washington become the 42 State in 1889, and Idaho the 43rd in 1890.

Narrative written by Art Dolan.
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