

*It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.*

## Alexander Lewis Coffey (1831-1913)

**From: Vancouver Weekly Columbian 14 Aug 1913<sup>1</sup>**

*Birth :Mar. 15, 1831  
Boonville, Cooper County  
Missouri, USA  
Death: Aug. 8, 1913  
Vancouver, Clark County  
Washington, USA*

### *PIONEER VETERAN SUCCUMBS*

*Alexander Lewis Coffey, Indian War veteran, pioneer resident of the county for 61 years, died at St. Joseph's hospital yesterday afternoon after an illness of two weeks duration. Mr. Coffey crossed the plains with his parents in 1852 and located that year in Clarke County. He was born in Cooper County, Missouri, Mar. 18, 1831.*

*His life is closely related with the early history of Clarke County. He was an Indian War veteran and took active part in many battles of frontier days. In 1872 he was elected sheriff of Clarke County. He was a civil engineer and spent much of his life in the pursuit of this profession. For a number of years he has made his home at Camas.*

*Mr. Coffey is survived by one brother, T. M. Coffey of Washougal and one sister, Mrs. M. L. Abbott of Mill Plain.*

*The funeral services will be held tomorrow (Sunday) at 11 o'clock at Oak Grove farm near Fern Prairie. Interment will be made in Oak Grove cemetery. (Oak Grove Cemetery is now Fern Prairie Cemetery).*

**Burial:**

*Fern Prairie Cemetery  
Camas (Clark County)  
Washington, USA  
Plot: Sec: 0 Blk.: 11 Grave: VVP*

**From: "Clark County Pioneers, A Centennial Salute"<sup>ii</sup>, 1989**

*Twin brother of Terrel M. Coffey, Alexander L. Coffey was born on March 15, 1831, at Boonsville, Missouri. He came west with his family in 1852 and settled near Fern Prairie. During the Indian Wars of 1855/56, he served under Captain William Strong in Company "A," First Regiment of Washington Volunteers, and later under Captain Hamilton J. G. Maxon in the Second Regiment of "Washington Mounted Rifles." He is described in the military records of 1856 as: age 25 years, 5' 11" tall, blue eyes, black hair, dark complexion, born in Missouri and occupation farmer. Alexander registered his cattle mark, a square crop off and a slit in both ears, with the County Clerk.*

*In 1872 Alexander was elected sheriff of Clark County. He was a civil engineer and spent much of his life in pursuit of this profession. He was unmarried and lived at Camas for many years. He passed away on August 8, 1913, and was buried in the Fern Prairie Cemetery, Clark County, Washington*

**From: "An Illustrated History of Umatilla County"<sup>iii</sup>, 1902**

*A. L. Coffey, C. E.*

*The scenes and incidents of the life of the man now under consideration are well worth a more extended detail than we are now enable to give them. It would be gratifying to all old-timers, and the generations to follow as well, if Mr. Coffey could be persuaded to write out in detail some, at least, of the items in his eventful career. We sincerely hope that such will be the case. However, we will as well as possible, outline the matters as they were briefly given to us.*

*He was born in Boonville, Missouri, in 1831, and attended the public schools of his native town, completing his education in a private institution. It was as early as 1852 that he came to Vancouver, Washington, making the trip by ox team, as was customary in those days. His first impression of Vancouver was associated with the British flag, which was flying over it at that time. The great fur companies were then holding tyrannical sway over great portions of our territory. He was occupied at sawmilling and various other enterprises until 1855, when the Indian war broke out and he enlisted in Company A, Washington Territory Volunteers, called Mounted Rifles. He was stationed at The Dalles continuously until January, 1856, when they were disbanded. They re-enlisted in the service and were immediately called to the Sound. About eight miles from Olympia, the savages had massacred several pioneers and were in the way to make much more trouble. While this company was proceeding to the scene of tragedy they had frequent skirmishes with the reds, and at one time they killed several and captured thirty; from*

*these they were able, by keen and careful methods, to ascertain the whereabouts of the main camp. Being a company of westerners, they were enabled to use the Indian tactics and succeeded in surrounding this camp without giving the slightest notice of their presence. The surprise was complete and every Indian in the camp was killed. Not one escaped to tell to his comrades of the other tribes that day's record. With the bloody scalps, wrenched from unwary and unsuspecting settlers, still hanging to their hideous persons, in the midst of their fiendish glee, with their devilish triumph of the days before only half enjoyed, they were met with summary and most terrible judgment. The men in that volunteer company knew their business and followed this victory with such relentless sternness that they drove the noted Lashi clear out of the Sound country. He then joined the Umatillas and the Cayuses, but his enemies were on his track and retribution was not to be so easily evaded. He was overtaken in the Grande Ronde valley and he and his colleagues with all their bands were routed after most severe fighting. Mr. Coffey returned to Walla Walla and went with Lieutenant Mullen upon the construction of the famous Mullen road through parts of Washington, Idaho and Montana. By some misfortune they lost all their stock and had to freight all their equipage on hand sleds from November until January. To anyone who has been over the old Mullen road and toiled up and down its steep and rocky hills and canyons this will almost seem beyond the power of man. But such was the case, and one may well meditate with what hardships that way for the immigrant was opened up. Upon the completion of this enterprise he was discharged and went back to Vancouver.*

*The next spring he returned to Walla Walla and worked for the quartermaster until 1862, when he went up to the mines at Florence, Idaho. Returning from these, he went and helped to establish Boise, Idaho, and then returned to Vancouver. Here he was elected assessor and then sheriff for four years. He then came to this county and was county surveyor for two years.*

*After this he went to Adams County, Washington, where he was surveyor. In this county he was employed by Dr. Blalock to construct an irrigating ditch. In November of 1896 he removed to Pendleton, and has since resided there. He is quite an extensive land owner, having a farm of five hundred acres, which he rents, and also a half section down the Umatilla River, which is used for pasture.*




---

<sup>i</sup> Created by: Eileen, Record added: Feb 04, 2009, Find A Grave Memorial# 33556916.

---

ii **“Clark County Pioneers, a Centennial Salute”**, Clark County Genealogical Society, Vancouver, WA, 1989.

iii **“An Illustrated History of Umatilla County by Colonel William Parsons and of Morrow County by W. S. Shiach”** with a brief outline of the early history of the State of Oregon. W. H. Lever, Publisher, 1902.