

AREA History Document
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EXPERIENCES IN FT. Rock Valley
by
Mrs. Loie G. Horning-Hecker

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At Age 90

Experiences in the Ft. Rock Valley

by Mrs. Loie G. Horning-Hecker

We were living in Oregon City, Oregon my husband and I and baby boy. When we decided we would take a Homestead, as the Government had put up the land in the Ft. Rock Valley for filing. So, my husband got in touch with Alvin Hawks who was locating people. So he, my husband, and his brother Charles went with Mr. Hawks and located on a place 7 miles from Ft. Rock and 7 miles from Freemont. The fall of 1914.

We took the train to Bend and waited there for his brother who was on his way from Gresham co. with covered wagon. Then we all went on to the Homestead. 75 miles, camping overnite and sleeping on pine boughs. The boys, my husband¹ and his brother, had put up a house for his family, and in a few days our little shack was put up just about a quarter of a mile north, on our 320 and our life there began. With no well, we had to haul water from Geo. Hockman's ranch 3 miles away, once a week. Chas. had a few cows besides his two horses, so needed more water. He had 4 barrels and we ^{one} 1. He would fill the barrels, put a block of wood afloat on top then put a gunny sack over the top and drive the whoops on tight so not much water was wasted, over the rough roads. We were up high so we could see a long way off. A dog or coyote would sound a long way off, and quiet, I used to think it made my ears ring.

The soil was good. Would grow almost anything, if it had water. There was very little water, and frosts. We saved our wash water for the garden that we tried to grow. Had a few vegetables. Once some horses got in, and ate it up.

It got real hot sometimes. To keep butter and milk cool, my husband dug a hole and sunk an apple box into it, on the north side of a big juniper tree, with two covers; it worked real well. The pine and juniper trees were beautiful.

We got our milk from Charlie's. We would send Johnie sometimes with a pail with tight lid, but ^{a cousin} Leota would have to meet him for they had an ugly turkey gobbler. She would have to carry a stick to drive him off.

A baby girl arrived December, 1915. We rented a couple of rooms of the storekeeper, for the occasion in Ft. Rock then moved back to our Homestead shack in about a month, in a bobsled.

On the fall of 1916 when Henry had been out at Corvallis 2 months I and the children went, it was a hard trip for us. In the spring we left for the Homestead again. In Salem, Johnie was sick; had scarlet fever, were quarentined 4 weeks, then we started for Bend. There he ^{Johnie} got pneumonia so had to rent a ^{ice} room. When he made a turn for the better, his daddy came down with it, and in 10 days passed away. We, the children and I went on to our Homestead as we had no money and no place else to go. I proved ~~(?)~~ up on the Homestead. The people signed a petition for me to get the Post Office, as the ones who had it were leaving. So I became the postmaster of Wastina, and moved down, it was 3 miles. It only paid about \$17.00 in 3 months, the cancelation, I boarded the teacher, as it was close to school and as my father had come out from Wisconsin he did the janitor work and cut most of the wood. Which the latter was hauled

from the Reserve. By getting a permit, so Geo. and Granpa would go up and cut and saw all our wood and haul it down in big blocks. A Mr. Aldretch and Embody used to have a mill in the Reserve. We had quite a few picnics up at the old mill. A Mr. and Mrs. John Lundquist lived there. Most all the children rode horseback to school. Grampa bought a pinto pony for my children, but one time she got in with some range horses and left. So I bought a horse of Beelers, a pacer and single footer. We all rode him, except Grandpa. He ran away with me one day. The riders from school camp up behind us. I was going to Hockman's, so little Hubert rode with me in the buggy. He didn't know it, but said, "Oh, aren't we going fast!" Well, ^{the horse} he stopped when he got there. I just kept him in the road and let him run. The buggy was old, I was afraid it would go to pieces when it hit the rocks.

I'll not forget our first Thanksgiving dinner. We had jack rabbit for meat and dried stewed prouns for dessert. We drove to Ft. Rock to get our groceries had to go through an alkali spot down by the Conley school. It took nearly all day with lumber wagon and team. My neighbor, the Hockmans, were wonderful friends and a great help to us. Geo. made us a bobsled so we could haul our own water from his place. He was a missionary and once a month we would have an all day services. Sunday school, lunch and Geo. preached in the P.M. Our house on Homestead or shack was built of wide rough lumber stood on one end with a 2 x 4 laid flat, half way up. The cracks were battened with thin boards, and we put building paper on the inside. It was cold enough that the tack heads would be all frost mornings. We had to get a small air tight heater, as the cookbox-stove was not enough to keep us warm.

We had to clear 40 acres. So Henry would cut the sage brush and pile it. I would help, then evenings we would burn it. A pretty sight. Baby slept in ~~the~~ buggy. After we were left alone, Grandpa did a little brush cutting, but it was too hard for him. That was before we went down to where the P.O. was. Before Grandpa came Rollin Horning used to stay nights with the children and I. One nite Rollins family were all gone to a Christmas program; I was alone. Johnie and I, heard heavy steps walking around the house. I didn't have the one door locked, so I put the baby down real quiet and slipped over to lock it, but sat up 'till late that night, waiting for something to happen but nothing did. In the morning I saw it had been range stock and they'd chewed some clothes I'd had on a line.

Henry had got the children a collie dog, but he wouldn't stay after my husband was gone. All the children rode horseback to school. Those who had to walk would carry rifles. The smaller ones a club for the possibility of meeting a mad coyote or other animals.

One day we were cleaning the schoolhouse when we saw a black object coming up the road. We watched it 'till it got real close then ran for the house and stayed inside 'till it went away. It was a rabid dog. We heard later someone shot it.

One day Johnie was playing with a neighbor's dog when it jumped up and caught him in the eye. We were afraid it had put his eye out, but we bathed it and it turned out all right. Then one time a boy came into Freemont on the stage sick. It turned out to be smallpox. Our mail carrier Chas. Anderson caught it and was very sick; he brought it to the P.O. of course, and several in our neighbor-

hood got it, including my children. We didn't have a Dr.; the nearest was Silver Lake, who was a health officer, and came up after it was nearly over. I had followed instructions in a Dr. Book so got over it all right. It wasn't all bad out there. We had our fun at birthday parties and picnics. We had some good singers, and some very nice programs at the schoolhouse especially after the Roy Pieties came from California.

One nite, (when Grandpa was away) the children and I though we'd sleep outdoors as we had a tent, but in the night a storm came up and we had to go inside.

Johnie had to bring in all the wood for the cook stove and sister the kindling, and of course, I tried to cut it if Grandpa didn't leave enough to last us and then sometimes some friend would come along and cut some. God always provides a way. The big knots we used in a large heater.

I used to catch up the horse and go over to Hockman's, and then go (round up) their cows when they could not go. That was fun. Had to go 3 mi. to round them up and climb a steep rimrock. Would usually take the collie dog which was surely trained well. I helped milk some of the cows too. Back on the Homestead:

My husband Henry Horning was a barber, and used to walk down to Ft. Rock (across fields, and do barber work on Saturday in ^athe building Fred Stratton put up with for a grist mill and me, at market at one time Strattons were our neighbors too. I still hear from Frank.

I remember riding home one evening from Hockman's. It was raining, I couldn't see, but knew Billie would go home anyway. He kept jumping and

going faster. I didn't know why, until I got home. The cinch strap had kept slapping him in the side by the wind.

I set a trap one day to catch a pack rat that had been bothering us and making a mess. It got in the trap, but the trap didn't kill it. So, I had to take my 22 rifle and look into those beady eyes and shoot it. It took all the nerve I could muster and felt weak afterwards. The first one I caught I thought the dog would kill but he didn't want to. I guess they are fighters. I also killed a porcupine that disturbed my bro. and family, who had come out to visit us from Mpls. for his daughter's health who had T.B. Another bro. and wife came out one time; we were glad to see some of our folks. Also a sister of my husband and family came out.

Some thought it a dreadful place to live, but it was fascinating to us and were lonesome for it after we left. I shut my eyes now sometimes, and go over the scenes and the things we used to do. Have wished I could see it again, but I won't at my age. But Frank Stratton and Rollin Horning visit the country and keep me in touch.

The end

So many left the country we had to discontinue the Post Office, we then left to keep house for my father in Portland.