

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #267 - Side A

Subject: Fred Baker

Place:

Date:

Interviewer: Richard Cowan

RICHARD COWAN: ... but, well Thornes had it when I came here. Frank Thorne had that.

FRED BAKER: Well that was Rolley Thorne, Frank's dad, and I think that Rolley homesteaded that. I'm pretty sure he did. Then up there at Thornburg Flat where Chuck Macomber lives now, Thornburgs homesteaded that. Cary Thornburg and Lee Thornburg, they were brothers. And they homesteaded that there. On up the canyon above Cecil's there used to be a house, a homestead, in that upper field there. And John Witzel, my uncle, he lived up there, oh for six, eight years after they were married. I don't know why they lived up there in that rock pile and rattlesnakes, but he did. They had, oh two or three of their oldest kids was born there.

Then you went up on Nicolls Creek, and that was the old Johnson Place, but they didn't homestead that. I forgot who did. There was a homestead up there. Then the upper valley, old Pete Hanson owned it for years and years. When he died he willed it to Pete Peterson. But I couldn't tell you who homesteaded that. Charlie Renschler was raised up there. Buck Renschler owned that at one time, and sold it and went over and homesteaded there on ... But Buck owned that, well he owned it when my brother and sister died, when Harold --- Harold and I had a brother and sister, between me and Harold, and they had summer complaints. And they went up the mountains, that's all the

doctors told you to do in them days. And my brother and sister died up there. But Renschler's lived there in the upper valley at that time.

RICHARD: That was about seventy years ago then?

FRED: Yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: Yeah, seventy. Yeah, just about seventy years ago. And it used to be up there at Dairy Creek. You been up to Dairy Creek?

RICHARD: Oh, yeah.

FRED: Well, Williams' run a dairy there, and on the --- what's that other creek over --- well I can't think of the names of them creeks now, it's been so long since I've been over there. Well anyway, they run dairy up there in the summer. They'd go up there and milk them cows, and run them in the timber in the summer.

RICHARD: Up in Rough Creek, or ---

FRED: No, it was up that other way. There is Gumboot and the one over the ridge from it was ---

RICHARD: Dick Miller?

FRED: No. On up, the upper valley there. And what in the dickens is ---

RICHARD: Oh, Wickiup.

FRED: Wickiup.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: Yeah, Wickiup. And the last time I was up there, of course that's been thirty years ago, the old buildings was there yet.

RICHARD: Still signs of them.

FRED: And old logs.

RICHARD: Yeah. George owns that now.

FRED: Yeah. Well they run dairy up ---

RICHARD: Oh, Williams'.

FRED: Yeah, Bob Williams. They'd go up there and milk them cows all summer, and churn that ... and put it down in brine the way they used to.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: And in the fall they'd bring it out and sell it, for use in Burns and things during the winter.

RICHARD: Well now, Mike had a place, part of the old Williams ranch ---

FRED: Well that was ---

RICHARD: Willow Springs.

FRED: That was Harry's and Bill's homestead.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRED: They each one of them homesteaded a section there. Harry did and Bill did.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: And some way, well they got that, Mike got that I guess when he bought that. Harry had it, and that --- oh Kellogg that bought Harry out. He got it, then Mike got it.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: Yeah, there were two sections up there. And the Lee Williams homestead was right on down there at the mouth of the creek, where the old Williams' shearing pens used to be.

RICHARD: Mouth of ---

FRED: The mouth of Wickiup.

RICHARD: Wickiup. Uh huh.

FRED: I guess George McGee owns it now too, I think.

RICHARD: Yeah, I think so. No, George has it leased.

FRED: Oh, he has it leased?

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah. Well now who homesteaded Egypt?

FRED: I couldn't tell you.

RICHARD: That goes with the old Foster Ranch.

FRED: Yeah, it went with the Foster Ranch. And who homesteaded that, how they got a hold of Egypt, I don't know.

MAN: Dibbles I think got it.

FRED: Might have been.

RICHARD: Dibbles, uh huh.

MAN: Dibbles I think. I know I've heard my dad talk about it when he was over there renting it from Dibbles.

FRED: Yeah, Dibbles might have had that.

MAN: And Dolly Dibble.

FRED: And Gus, he went up there and homesteaded that, Gus' well. And everybody thought he was plumb crazy. Just drier than the devil. And by god he dug a well there, and only went I think eighteen, twenty foot and hit a darn good well.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: Right there on that flat where everybody had no idea that you could hit a well there, and two or three hundred --- Well you know up there at Boone Prairie and Crane Prairie, them big meadows up there? Williams' had them fenced, I guess. They never did own them. But they had them fenced, and they used to put up quite a bit of hay up there. They'd hay all of that in them meadows.

RICHARD: Well then would they stay up there in the wintertime and feed?

FRED: Yeah, they would winter a bunch of stuff up there.

RICHARD: Boy that must have been a snowy son-of-a-gun up there.

FRED: Yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: Yeah, there was quite a little log cabin things there at one time, there at Crane Prairie.

RICHARD: Well Bill Brown never ran any stock up in the mountains, up on Buck Mountain or over ... side.

FRED: Not too much. They run mainly out in the desert. Although he did have a sheep permit up there, even after it was turned into Forest Service. Why Brown had a sheep permit up there. But his horses run more out in the desert.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: And in the wintertime they ... them timber horses out the timber, that is out onto the desert. Be open, and snow would be deeper than hell. I've heard my dad say if that's the last ride they'd make, ride that timber and shove all them horses out onto the desert. Keep what they had to feed, what they figured wouldn't winter they'd keep there at Buck Creek, at McIntosh or someplace.

RICHARD: By golly those guys, they had to work all the time didn't they? They just --- always moving, and always a horseback.

FRED: Yeah, they got a bunch of horses in one winter and put them in that great field up there, a hard winter, and colder than hell. Them horses poor, and they cut a bunch of poor horses out and put them in that field that night, and it dropped down to forty-five below that night. Went up there the next morning and them horses froze to death standing up. Papa said they was bunched in a fence corner, there wasn't a one of them down. They was bunched up tight there and every horse standing up and froze to death.

RICHARD: Oh, boy.

FRED: Yeah, some of these young fellers, you try to tell them what you put up with back

in them days, they don't believe you.

RICHARD: You know, even when I came to the country after the war, why I was doing things now that no one would ever think of doing. FRED: I told the Robinson boys, I raked for Bill every summer and things. I've told them boys the first eight to ten years I worked for wages I was working for thirty a month, and they won't believe me. They just can't see it. And you know, I think a man had more money then than he's got now days. It went further.

RICHARD: And if you didn't have ---

FRED: Buy a pair of overalls for ninety-eight cents, a shirt for about fifty-six cents, fifty-eight.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: I bought two shirts the other day, eight eighty-five I think it was. Just common blue work shirts! And if gas and oil keeps a raising, by gosh --- well that's the reason we went to wood. We went to wood; well it'll be three years ago now. And I'm sure glad we did. If we hadn't of, I don't know.

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: It'd been between eating and keeping warm.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's right.

MAN: Well it's getting so ... to get the wood.

RICHARD: It sure is.

MAN: It is over home anyway.

FRED: Well it is over here, although I think I've found out some-thing this summer. Tom Hart got a field up here with a lot of juniper in it. And Tom is a wanting it cut out. I didn't know he was until this summer. I'm going to get my wood up there next year. You get so --- can't hardly, well I got my permit this year to get my wood, and I got one load and it

turned so dry, you know. One day I went to the post office and got the mail there, and there is a notice your wood permit has been cancelled until further notice.

RICHARD: Well, I suppose I'd better be one my way.

FRED: Well I hope I told ... I had an old sorrel horse that everybody in the country had tried to break him. And he'd buck ... And Pat wanted me to go to ride him. Well I rode him for, oh a month and I figured if I was going to have to ride him just as well ... That old son-of-a-bitch he bucked me off more times than I could count. I shoed him one day out at old Cecil's barn, not the one that is there now, but the old one. He kicked me right out through the, one by corrals ... But he was a good horse outside. Well I rode him for eight to ten years, and I rode him ... all the time. You never knowed when he was ...

RICHARD: I'll be darned, uh huh.

FRED: He's bucked me off, he's bucked me off in warm weather, he's bucked me off in cold weather, he's bucked me off when the ground was so damn hard that --- I think maybe that's one thing that's wrong with me now.

RICHARD: Might be.

FRED: Taking all them hard falls.

RICHARD: But you know I get a feeling --- now there were some homesteads between the Gap and Chickahominy, along side the road there.

FRED: Well Emmett Johnson had a homestead, and some people by the name of Perry's had a homestead, Peck Amort had a homestead, ... they had a homestead. On out there Walt ... had a homestead.

RICHARD: Out where now?

FRED: Well just, you know where you go out, just before you get to the highway and Carl drilled a well right down ---

RICHARD: Yeah.

FRED: --- well that was just the ... homestead where he drilled that well. There, going across, well where you hit Chickahominy there on the road, right below the road, Emmett Johnson's. Then that one out there on the corner was the Perry homestead. And there is a well on it. I got tickled at Carl; I'd been over here to the Lamb Ranch for four or five years. One day I got mail from Carl. I said, "I wonder what in the hell Carl wants." I opened it, Carl says will you come over and show me where that well is on the old Perry -- - So I went over and showed him, and he didn't know where the well was, but I did. So I showed him. Damn good drilled well there. And ... oh what was them people's names? Well I didn't know them names on up under the ridge there. There was four or five homesteads up that way.

RICHARD: How about those across the ridge, on south of the ridge? There is a string of homesteads of ---

FRED: Well out of the ridge, you know that Eddie --- runs the garage there in Bend now, right on the corner.

RICHARD: Oh, Williamson.

FRED: Yeah, Eddie Williamson. His folks had a homestead there. Who in the hell else? I've forgotten now. There's a lot --- there is one ninety-foot well there, but it's cemented up. They dug it and then cemented the walls. And unless somebody's filled it in the last few years, the BLM or something, ninety foot. You can look right down in there, ninety foot, no cover over it, no nothing.

RICHARD: Huh.

FRED: Well there is one there in Carl's field, if he ain't filled it up. I pretty near went off in it horseback one time. It's an open hole.

RICHARD: South of the ---

FRED: No, north of the --- there on the flat right ---



RICHARD: Oh, uh huh.

FRED: If you cut across from Carl's across there, to the Clyde Gibbon's place, it's right off the road just a little ways. And there was big sage, and that's the only way you could tell, the sage was a little bit bigger there. I was running the cow off out there one time, and I was on a darn good horse, or he'd of went off in it. There we was a running the cow, trying to head it, and by god right ahead of it that big hole showed up. And that old horse jumped side ways around it, or we'd have went right down that way. I tried to talk Carl into filling it up all the time I was there, and I don't know if he ever has or not. Just an open hole right out there in the middle of that flat. They're dangerous, really.

RICHARD: You bet they are. You bet they are. Well there aren't, there aren't too many people left who know that old country out there.

FRED: No, there ain't. That's the reason I'd like for that fellow to come before my mother and Henry ... died. They could have told him a lot then, and he could have wrote a pretty interesting book about it. And he was going to come, and by god he died. He wrote me a letter, even told me when he'd be here. And the next thing I heard was he died.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Well you know I've been talking about doing this for years. And I've let Virgil pass away, and Peck, and you know I just ---

FRED: Well when I come past Carl's out there last summer, Carl said, "Did you know Bill Brown?" I said, "Well I did, it was in the later years of his life." Well he said, "Dick Cowan is a looking for you."

RICHARD: Well I think it was Lena Street, or Lena Wilson was telling me that there was one of Pat's --- I guess it was Pat's sister ---

FRED: Yeah, he had two sisters and a brother.

RICHARD: That his mother was trying to get the sister interested in Bill Brown. And Brown was interested, but the girl was never. FRED: Yeah, and she never did marry.

That was the girl that lived to be an old maid.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: Yeah. At one time I guess Bill was pretty much interested in Louise.

RICHARD: Yeah, Louise, uh huh. And apparently he bought her some jewelry and ---

FRED: Yeah. And she never did marry. She died an old maid. Yeah I guess that the old lady, Cecil tried to put him up to get Louise interested in Bill. And Louise wasn't interested in no man. And you know what, the funny thing, she was a typical old maid. She was well educated --- well she was well educated, but she was a typical old maid, just typical. And I worked there for Cecil's for years and years, and you know she taught ... in the winter. But she come up there and stayed at the ranch in the summer. I'd be off riding or someplace, and Louise would come. When I come in there to the ranch, I'd know she was there on account she wore these great big baggy bloomers. Come clear to the knees, the way they did. You'd see a bunch of them hanging on the clothes line and say, "Well Louise is home." The old lady, or mother twice as old as she was, you never seen any of them big old baggy bloomers out on the line of hers. But Louise wore them. And I'd come over the hill, the clothes line full of clothes, and them big bloomers on it I'd know Louise was home.

RICHARD: (Laughter) Well now where was Jessie Cecil from? Was she a local girl?

FRED: She was from the valley. She was a Bibee. Yeah, Bibee was her name.

RICHARD: Yeah. Well Pat met and married her over there?

FRED: Yeah, when he was going to college. They met when he was down there going to college.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Because I tried to get Jessie to talk about it, and she said she just had only met Brown a time or two. Really didn't know him.

FRED: Yeah, Jessie wasn't too much interested in the history of the country. Yeah, as

long as she was there it looks like --- Well, and I suppose ... that she knowed where her grandparents, well had been her grandparent's place was. Berdell's (sp.?) place down there, and she had no idea where their house set. When I first went to work for Cecil's, why hell parts of the old house and things were even there yet.

RICHARD: Now Gene's grandmother was a Berdell?

FRED: Uh huh.

RICHARD: I see. And he was a postmaster who started Evergreen.

FRED: Yeah, or her grandmother.

RICHARD: Yeah, her grandmother.

FRED: Oh Bill Berdell was sort of a mean old --- well he was a little bit off. In fact he finally, in the later years of his life, he went ... and went clear off. And him and the old man Cecil didn't get along too good. And one day they was all gone, nobody home, and by gosh somebody shot through their house right through a window and out through the front door with a high powered rifle. And they always --- the old man Cecil always figured it was old Bill Berdell that done it.

RICHARD: Is that right? Well now tell --- do you know Woodie Best pretty well?

FRED: Knowed him good.

RICHARD: What kind of a guy was he?

FRED: He was a hell of a nice guy. Bill was a rough, or Wood was a rough old devil.

RICHARD: Okay.

FRED: That is he was, well he was a quiet man, he was a big man, and he was rough. He even played rough. But he was quite a man, quite a worker. But as I say, that is he'd go to a dance, or even around a bunch of men things, he'd just --- Well one time they took a bunch of cattle to Crane when the railroad was there. And old Wood was ... be a riding along, always had a big heavy romal, and he'd just come up and hit a man right

down between the shoulders, just for orneriness. And old Gus ... and you know Gus wasn't much of a buckaroo or anything. And by god they was coming back, and old Wood hit old Gus right down between the shoulders and he ... Just Wood's way of having fun. They come up to a big patch of willows and old Gus got off and cut him a big willow about so big, so long. And he was riding along there a mile or two, and he rode up along side of Wood and he let him have it right between the shoulders. When they got back, old Wood left Gus alone after that. RICHARD: I know Peck didn't like him.

FRED: He didn't like him at all. Well Peck sort of had fallings out with everybody.

RICHARD: Oh, did he?

FRED: In a way.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: They --- Peck was, oh he was a good guy. I liked old Peck. But he was a little hard to get along with. Well just like the time he got mad at Papa out there at ... when he took it. And as I say, they was coming back from Wagontire the next day with the wagon, but old Peck wouldn't wait. He was mad, and by god he walked from Sand Springs into Wagontire. About thirty-five miles, and he walked her across that desert in the hot sun.

RICHARD: Well now he married Bertie Johnson, didn't he?

FRED: Yeah. Married her the second time in fact.

RICHARD: Married her twice?

FRED: You see Bertie was married nine times to seven different men. Well Peck was one of the doubles. Let's see, who in the hell was --- well Vivian Work. Work was the other one I think that she married the second time. But anyway she was married nine times to seven different men.

RICHARD: Well ---

FRED: And she married old Emmett finally, and her and Emmett lived together for thirty,

thirty-five years before she died, and then Emmett died.

RICHARD: Emmett?

FRED: Emmett Johnson.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

FRED: See he was her last man.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

FRED: But them others just a year or two, and by god then she'd kick them out and get another one. And Bertie was a good old girl too. But she had a hankering to live with different men I guess.

RICHARD: Uh huh. I think that was, I think that Peck once told me that Woodie Best made some snide remarks about him and Bertie.

I think that's probably what happened.

FRED: Yeah. Of course Bertie, I've heard her say that Peck's folks was what caused her and Peck to bust up. Then they got married the second time, and then busted up again. Peck's folks didn't like her at all.

RICHARD: Huh. Well by golly, I suppose I'd better hit the road home. It's been quite an afternoon.

FRED: Yeah, your cows may wonder what happened to you.

(END OF TAPE)

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