

**HARNEY COUNTY
ITS EARLY SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
AS WRITTEN BY MAURICE FITZGERALD
1940**

The first known civilized human being ever to penetrate the region now embraced in what is known as Harney County, Oregon, were Hudson Bay Company trappers in the 1820's. The leader of the small party was named Sylvais, from whom comes the name of Sylvies River, designating the principal water course of the country; having its source in the Blue Mountains and flowing southward, emptying into what is known as Malheur Lake.

In 1826 the well known Peter Skene Ogden, leader of a large party of trappers coming from the Snake River country enroute to the Klamath Lake region, passed through the Harney Valley, crossing the sand reef which then separated Malheur and Harney Lakes, and which continued to do so until May 1, 1881, when, owing to an unusually heavy freshet that spring, Malheur Lake broke through the sand reef barrier and discharged its surplus waters into Harney lake which was eleven feet lower, thus raising its surface to a level with Malheur.

But the most outstanding event in the early history of Harney Valley was the crossing of the "Lost Immigrants" in 1845. This unlucky train of six or seven hundred wagons and 1500 or more immigrants was following the false representations of one Stephen L. Meek that he knew of a shorter and better route to the Willamette valley than that heretofore followed by other immigrant trains. They parted from the rest of the large immigrant train near the spot where the town of Vale now stands, and followed their pseudo guide into a rugged and uncharted region where a wheeled vehicle of any kind had never been. They suffered untold hardships, climbing over rocky hills and crossing ravines and canyons innumerable, and never saw any level country till reaching Harney Valley. But that was merely an oasis in the desert, for after crossing it they entered another stretch of rugged and barren country, till finally they reached The Dalles.

After passing through Harney Valley they became aware that Meek knew nothing of the region into which he had led them, and the men became so wrought at the way he had lied to them that they determined to lynch him. However, some friend gave him a tip and he departed in the night and that was the last seen or heard of him.

Several women and children died on the journey from the hardships and privations endured; and all were in a sorry plight up reaching the Columbia River.

The next party of white men of which there is any record coming through this region occurred in 1857, when a Major Stein, with a party of soldiers explored the Steins Mountain country, giving his name to the mountain and christening the river having its source therein, "Blitzen".

The next person of which there is any record is Lieut. John J. Coppinger, who was stationed at Camp "Three Forks" on the Owyhee, and appointed to look over the Harney Valley with the purpose of establishing a military post there. He made a sketch map of the valley at that time, 1866, which I had an opportunity of examining in 1874, as I was in charge of all such records while Sergeant Major of the Fort at the time.

In 1867 Camp Harney was established as a military post. The buildings were mostly constructed of logs hauled down from the timbered hills and lumber furnished from a sawmill on Coffee-Pot Creek, established by a mill man named Roby from Boise, Idaho. A few years later Roby moved his mill to a better location, some twelve miles, on the head waters of Cow Creek northeast of Camp Harney. From this mill all the early stockmen and settlers of that region (which was then a part of Grant county) got their needed supplies of lumber for the next ten or twelve years.

The Piute Indian War, which had been carried on in a rather desultory manner for several years, was finally brought to a successful termination in 1869, by Gen. Crook, who got the Indians placed on two reservations. Those having their habitat in Nevada were placed on a reservation in the northern part of that State where their head chief, old Winnemucca, was "hyas tyee". Those belonging in the Stein Mountain and Blue Mountain regions were placed on another reservation that embraced an extensive territory in what is now Harney and Malheur Counties. The agency was established at a point near the base of what is known as "Castle Rock Mountain" on the north fork of the Malheur River.

When the news reached California that the Indian trouble was ended in southeastern Oregon and Nevada, John S. Devine of Marysville, who had been contemplating going into the stock raising business on a large scale, immediately made arrangements to start out for that section of country which was reputed to be especially adapted for that kind of business. So, getting together some 2500 or 3000 head of cattle and six or seven vaqueros, a cook and a supply wagon, he started out for the "Promised Land." He had information of a desirable locality and reached it in the late summer months of that year, 1869.

He had as a partner in the business, W. B. Todhunter of Sacramento who was engaged in the butchering business in that city on a pretty large scale. The name of the firm was "Devine and Todhunter".

With him was Juan Redon as boss cow-man, who might be termed an expert in that line of work, and who retained that position for twenty years until the business was taken over by "Miller and Lux" in 1889. Also with him went Horace Layton who became a permanent resident and tax payer of Harney County. Other members of the outfit were vaqueros of Spanish-Mexican origin; all top-notchers in that line of work.

The place selected for permanent headquarters of the business was Camp "C.F. Smith", an abandoned military post of the Civil War period. It was situated on White Horse

Creek, which had its source close to the Nevada-Oregon boundary line, and was well adapted for stock-raising purposes.

Here Devine planned to keep the business expanding until it should equal, if not excel, anything in that line on the coast. For years his aims seemed to be on the march to that goal. But the best laid plans of mice and men "Gang aft agile", and so they did with John Devine. In some twenty years, after encountering many unlooked-for barriers and reverses he had to turn his holdings over to Miller and Lux, retaining only the Alvord Ranch of some 12,000 acres, for his own. Here he resided with his wife quietly and, apparently, contentedly, until his untimely death from the effects of an accident in 1903.

There was one incident of his life, in the early years of his residence at White Horse Ranch, that but few have any knowledge of. In the late months of 1874, a tramp came along and asked for employment. As was his wont, Devine put him to work doing some chores about the premises. (He rarely, if ever, refused employment to anyone who came along looking for a job.) After working a month he asked for his pay and got it, saying he was going south. While he was on the job a stray horse had wandered there from some distant point, having a brand that no one there knew. As customary, he was put in the enclosure with other horses until such time as his owner might happen along and claim him. If no one claimed him he became the property of the ranch. That was the custom!

This tramp knew of this stray horse, so when he was preparing to leave he caught the horse and rode off in the direction of Trout Creek. When Devine learned what the fellow had done he swore he couldn't get away with anything like that. So, mounting his horse he started out on the trail of the horse thief. He caught up with him at the ranch of John Catlow on Trout Creek, thirty miles from White Horse. He commanded the tramp to mount the stolen animal and come back with him to the ranch from which he had taken him. The fellow obeyed reluctantly; but when about half way back he stopped and said he wouldn't go any farther. (He probably thought he might be lynched when he got there.) So, getting off his horse and picking up some large stones he told Devine to go right on home, or he'd knock him off the horse. (He evidently didn't think Devine was armed.) Devine told him to put down those rocks or he's plug him. He called Devine a hard name and then he dropped in his tracks.

There was nothing done about that homicide for two years thereafter. Then the authorities at Canyon City began to realize that some judicial steps should be taken to comply with the law in such cases. It was then decided to notify Devine to come to the County Seat to give account of his actions in taking the life of his fellow man. He did so, two years after it happened. It took a good four days to get to Canyon City. I remember meeting him in his buggy a few miles from that town as I was on my way back to Camp Harney. He asked me a few questions regarding the distance to Canyon, as this was his first visit to the county Seat. That was the first time I ever saw John Devine, but we became very good friends in after years.

His explanation satisfied the authorities and nothing further was done regarding the homicide of the unknown horse thief.

In 1870, Mace McCoy came to Camp Harney from Walla Walla and got Col. Otis and others interested in the purchase of swamp land from the State of Oregon, under the provisions of the Act of March 12th, 1860. With such a purchase in view a small party visited Diamond Valley, and did purchase a few claims in the western or lower portion of that valley which then consisted of a dense mass of tule and flag. Their rights were soon afterwards transferred to one Mr. Roby, who had a house at the foot of a bluff in the southeastern portion of the valley which was non-swampy.

McCoy had intended taking a preemption or homestead claim on the creek which still bears his name, but failed to do so.

Two or three years thereafter Rube Kiger settled on another creek flowing through Diamond Valley, still known as "Kiger Creek".

In 1871 Abbott and Whiteside took up claims on Alvord Creek in the vicinity of Old "Camp Alvord" of Civil War times.

Both were well-to-do-men of good education and carried on a livestock and farming business for several years until selling out to Devine and Todhunter in the early eighties.

The senior member, Jim Abbott, was the Republican nominee for State Senator of Grant County, Oregon, in 1880, but suffered defeat by "Tommie" Davidson, Democratic nominee; another resident and stockman of the Steins Mountain region.

Now, here is a good place to record an act that had something to do with the development of what is now Harney County. In 1868 Wm. Clark of Canyon City, a member of the firm of Clark and Poindexter, retail merchants, was elected a member of the Oregon legislature. While in that capacity he succeeded in having a bill passed appropriating a certain sum of money for the purpose of opening a passable highway from the John Day Valley to Winnemucca, Nevada, for the convenience of those wishing to reach the nearest point of the Central Pacific R.R. which had but recently been completed from Ogden, Utah, to Sacramento, California.

The proposed highway began at the head of the John Day Valley, passing by Warm Springs, thence over a spur of the Blue Mountains through Summit and Crane prairies on down to Otis Valley, thence west down Otis Creek to a ford on middle fork of Malheur River, close to where the town of Drewsey now stands, thence south to crossing of Malheur River and over a spur of Steins Mt., to Barren Valley, thence westward along base of mountain by Juniper and Mann Lakes to Alvord, thence south through Sand Gap and White Horse to Nevada State northern boundary line.

This road was but rarely used for the intended purpose, being poorly constructed and devoid of necessary stopping places, and a very great distance. However it did attract attention to the features and natural advantages of the region traversed, and indirectly led to settlement.

In 1872, John Catlow, an English drover, led to Idaho by reports of its wonderful mineral richness, accumulated quite a little wealth in the Silver City district, then began to hanker after a line of business of which he had a previous experience and a stronger appeal.

Hearing of the opening up of a new stock raising district not a great distance west of Silver city, he struck out to size up its possibilities. Reaching Trout Creek he found a virgin field to his liking. He pitched his tent and located a homestead claim. (There had already been some Government surveying done through the efforts of Devine and Todhunter.) Shortly afterward he secured title to an additional section of land adjoining his homestead, a very choice tract of land nearly all natural meadow.

There was one great drawback to that part of Oregon; lack of timber. He wanted that 640 acres fenced as quickly as possible. So he rode over to the Diamond Ranch to see Mr. Roby about getting lumber from his mill, near Camp Harney, for that purpose. Satisfactory terms were agreed upon.

Roby had an ox-team for hauling logs to his mill, and having a large supply of sawed lumber on hand, he loaded all that his eight span of oxen could haul and started it out for Trout Creek, some hundred and sixty miles away on a very poor road.

I remember very distinctly seeing that ox-team plodding along by Camp Harney, two men geeing and hawing as the creaking wagons moved slowly along. One would think that they would never reach their destination, but they did. Two or three trips were sufficient. That was in 1876.

In 1878 I had occasion to get to that ranch and stay over night, and found that section of land neatly fenced. I believe that was the last tract of land of any considerable extent being enclosed by a lumber fence. The time had come when wire fencing replaced it.

By that time Catlow had secured Dave Shirk as manager of the property, a very efficient executive, and from that time on quite a prominent personage of the Steins Mountain country.

In 1884 I had been given the job of assessing all of the southern portion of Grant county, embracing Harney Valley, Silver Creek, Warner Valley, Catlow Valley, Blitzen, Diamond and Happy Valley, and all the region south of Steins Mountain to the Nevada line.

Many changes had taken place in the Trout Creek situation. Dave Shirk had quit as Catlow's superintendent and moved into Catlow Valley, filed on some desirable land on "Home Creek" and engaged in stock raising. His brother Bill also took up a claim on "Three Mile," built a nice residence and resided there with his wife for many years.

On the day I arrived at Trout Creek for assessing the Catlow property a change had taken place. John Catlow had just bargained for the sale of his interest to A. W. Sisson of

California, and the latter had just arrived with a party of friends to take possession. The party consisted of Mr. Sisson, Clark Crocker, Mrs. Catlow and "Billy" Sisson.

In addition to the party which arrived in a carriage, it was followed by a large wagon carrying an ample supply of the best that California could furnish in the line of good eating and good drinking. I felt that my visit had happened at a very opportune time, for I had just ridden from the Warner country, making long rides and not very good meals.

I had a very cordial greeting, nothing was too good for my comfort and entertainment. I stayed there three days. Perhaps it was partly owing to my business there – assessing the property, which was now in the name of A. W. Sisson, and so remained for many years thereafter under the management of "Billy" Sisson.

Clark Crocker was a brother of the multi-millionaire Charles Crocker. I had very long and interesting talks with Mr. Crocker. I will never forget his saying, "Mr. Fitzgerald, I have all the money that I care for and have no desire to make any more."

Having some of the outstanding settlers of the early days who dwelt on the south side of Steins Mountain already in this record, I will now devote some space to those who settled on the north side.

The most prominent and best known is Peter French, an ambitious young man reared in Sacramento Valley where his father, a native Virginian, had settled in 1850. He always, since childhood, took a great interest in cattle and horses. His home was in the vicinity of that of Dr. Hugh J. Glenn who owned and cultivated the largest wheat raising farm in California, if not in the United States. The French and Glenn families had come from the same neighborhood in Virginia and were good friends. Dr. Glenn admired the energetic characteristics of young French and when the latter reached manhood determined to give him a good start in what ever line he seemed to take a special interest. Stock raising was his preference.

At that time reports had reached California that out in the wide open spaces of Eastern Oregon there was ample room and vast acres of virgin grazing land where energetic and enterprising stockmen, from a modest beginning could develop, in a few years, into what was know as "cattle kings".

About 1000 or 1200 young stock were soon secured, also fifteen or twenty saddle horses, a cook wagon and outfit and six or seven vaqueros and ranch hands, and in the spring of 1872 young Peter French set out to make his fortune, or go broke.

In a few weeks he reached the Steins Mountain country and coming into the Blitzen River, decided there to pitch his tent. He made no mistake. It was a number-one location for stock raising purposes. Eighteen years afterward Henry Miller of Miller and Lux, after visiting the "P" Ranch, remarked to this writer that, "Mr. French got the cream of the country".

For many years thereafter Peter French's efforts were crowned with success. He acquired title to large tracts of land and from the natural increases of his stock and the purchase of many small herds he soon became a veritable cattle king.

The first time I ever saw or spoke to Mr. French was in 1874. I was then Sergt. Major at Camp Harney. One forenoon I saw a rather small quick-moving stranger walking up between the sleeping quarters and kitchens of the garrison. I had seen or spoken to the few settlers then in Harney Valley, but this man was a total stranger. So I inquired of some men standing near if they knew who he was. One of them spoke up and said, "That's Pete French." I had heard of him. Just then a dog belonging to the Garrison, harmless, but a bluffer, seeing the quick-stepping man, started after him barking at his heels. Quick as lightning, French turned, pulling a revolver and ready to pull the trigger. I yelled, "Don't shoot, Mr. French, he's harmless," and ran to drive the cur away. French said, "I don't like to have a cur snapping at my heels," put up his gun and went his way.

During the Indian outbreak of 1878, Peter French suffered heavy damages and had many thrilling experiences. He was surprised at the "Diamond Ranch" about the middle of June by a party of about twenty Indians coming upon him and his men when saddling up for the day's work. They were all unarmed and but one gun in the house which French got and held the Indians off till the men were all saddled and mounted, and then were chased for many miles, only one man being shot in the thigh – John Witzel – and he's living yet, hale and hearty.

The Indians burned some of his houses and killed many of his cattle and in many ways damaged and hampered his business. But he soon recuperated and kept on expanding until his untimely death in 1898, when he fell by the bullet of an assassin, a man with whom he had trouble regarding land.

His livestock business is still carried on in a smaller way by the "Swift" interests of Chicago.

French married the daughter of Dr. Glenn, of which union there was but one son, who had his spine fractured while in training for an Army officer, during the "World War" and died a cripple, five years ago. Mrs. French, with whom I carried on a voluminous correspondence until she passed away about three years ago, was highly educated lady.

Another firm that carried on an extensive cattle raising industry in what is now Harney County, in the early days, was that known as "Riley and Hardin". Amos Riley was a store-keeper of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California, and Col. Hardin had interests in Nevada and California. The business in this region was carried on by Isaac Foster, well and favorably known by all the old timers of Harney County and many of the later arrivals. His headquarters were at Warm Spring Ranch, near the northwest corner of Harney Lake. In later years Mr. Foster carried on a business of his own in Silver Creek Valley, until his death.

Having mentioned Silver Creek I may here state the name of the men who first located there. At the head of this valley, in the Civil War days, there was a temporary post of camp known as "Camp Currey" located at the foot of Buck Mountain. To this abandoned camp site came Logue Cecil in the early seventies and built a comfortable home, had some livestock and contemplated farming. In about two years afterwards he was joined by his brother Carl, who continued there until his death not very long ago. Logue returned to Willamette Valley in a few years after Carl's arrival. The latter was always considered a foremost citizen of that locality and was highly respected throughout the county.

In 1874, I believe, the Baker Bros. settled in Silver Creek Valley all good, law abiding citizens. Many of their descendants are still in the Harney Valley region.

In 1874, or 5, a Mr. Rann brought a bunch of cattle from the John Day Valley and turned them loose in Sylvies Valley. They did well and multiplied for five years or so, owing to favorable seasons. In the fall of 1879 Tom Overfelt and Frank Sweetser came along looking for a desirable location to go into stock raising business. Sylvies Valley looked good to them. They bargained for the Rann herd. Then along came the winter of 1879-80, one of the longest and most severe ever experienced in what is now Harney County. Every stock man suffered in a lesser or greater degree, but Overfelt and Sweetser almost completely wiped out. Sweetser returned to California soon after, but Overfelt remained and got interested in some property on the lower Malheur River country in what is known as the Harper Ranch, in which shortly after, he got Miller and Lux interested, which led to that firm becoming largely interested in Harney and Malheur Counties which is partly held to this day by that firm.

Overfelt got killed in 1886, either by a run-away team or by the man riding with him at the time.

Now I must return to 1873, a very important year in the settlement of Harney County.

In that year the Smyth family, George Smyth, Sr., wife and three unmarried sons and John Smyth and wife, came up from Willamette Valley and pitched their tent near where the big saw-mill of the Hines Lumber Co., is now located, close to a hot spring. A son-in-law of George Smyth, John S. Miller, came with them and took up a claim on a spring about a mile northwest of them, which still bears his name. Another son-in-law, Stilly Riddle camped with the old folks. In the late summer a daughter, a girl baby, was born to the John Smyths. This was the first white child born in Harney Valley, and she now resides in Burns, the wife of the widely known and respected James J. Donegan. A year or so before the arrival of the Smyths another family named Venator had come from Goose Lake and settled on what is now known as "The Island", close to Wright's Point.

Both the Venators and Smyths liked the country and became permanent fixtures, some of the original members of both are still living and highly respected. For instance, D. H. Smyth, Sr., and Alvena Venator.

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Tom Prather also came in 1872 and settled on what is still known as "Prather Creek" although it was then on the Malheur Indian Reservation. A son-in-law of Venator, Joe Cooksey, arrived a year or two after Venator and settled on the west branch of Sylvies River very near Wright's Point, where he resided several years and became manager of the Devine and Todhunter interests in the Harney Valley region.

About this time also John Chapman and Jim Weaver arrived from the Willamette and made a location at what is known as "The Sod House" near the south of the Blitzen, also took a claim at what is known as "Weaver Spring", a few miles west of Wright's Point. Two other Chapmans, Andy and Hank, located on the Island at what is known as "Chapman" Slough.

In the early eighties all the Chapmans moved to Montana.

In 1873 Frank McLeod came up from California with about 250 head of cattle and turned them loose on the west side of Sylvies River in the vicinity of what is now Burns. He had some lumber hauled from the Roby Mill and constructed a comfortable little dwelling just within the limits of what is now the town of Burns. He remained there a few years and was reasonable successful in his stock business, but owing to trouble in his family relations he pulled his freight and struck out for Montana, leaving his wife behind. She afterwards married first Mike and later Frank Mogan, both of them were killed in Prineville in the troublous days, the one by Mossy Barnes and other by Bud (Col.) Thompson. She finally married Charley Adams, who had a place on Owyhee River.

The fall of 1873 was very fine up to the 27th of November – Thanksgiving, I remember it very distinctly. The snow began falling just at the noon hour and continued almost without intermission for three days. Harney Valley was covered to a depth of more than three feet. The Smyth and Riddle families became alarmed for the safety of their little bunch of livestock. Riddle mounted his horse and struck out to find a better location. He returned in a few days with the good news that over in the Steins Mountain Country the snow was only about eight inches and plenty of good range. So over to Happy Valley they moved and made permanent settlement – one on what became known as "Riddle Creek" and the others on "Smyth Creek". They prospered and had no serious trouble until 1878.

Another man who played a prominent role in Harney County life for many years was Charley Jones. He came up from Southern Oregon in 1876, while quite a young man, and secured a job on the Island Ranch as a vaquero under Joe Cooksey. His exceptional qualities soon attracted the attention of John Devine and Joe Cooksey resigned and sold out his interests Devine promoted Jones to the position held by Cooksey which he filled successfully for many years until some time after Miller and Lux had acquired the Devine and Todhunter properties. Thereafter he carried on a ranch and cattle business in partnership with his brother-in-law, Dore Poujade, on Cow Creek, until his death.

Frank Burns of Crane Creek was an early settler – the first on that stream. He had quite a good many hundred head of stock and a nice home. He came there, to the best of my

recollection, 1875 and sold out his interests in 1882 to Ed Stauffer who carried on the business for many years thereafter.

In 1879 Ed and Frank Roberts of San Jose, California, drove up seven or eight hundred head of cattle and turned them loose on range between Crane Creek and Malheur Lake.

The winter of 1879-80 was a very severe one and Roberts Bros. suffered heavy losses. As many as 85 per cent perished. They had built a nice home on Crane Creek below the Burns Ranch and resided there for four or five years thereafter before returning to California.

Another of the old time resident of Crane was Chas. Peterson, who came from Surprise Valley, California, in the early eighties, and maybe there yet for all I know.

In 1874 "Doc" Anderson, quite an original character in his way, a Kentuckian by birth, carried the mail to Camp Harney a few trips and then took up a claim in the little Steins Mountain Valley, which still retains his name. There he constructed a small one room, wooden shack by a nice spring. It was on the main highway between Camp Harney, Oregon, and Camp McDermitt, Nevada, there being no other house within many miles. Camp Harney 50 miles to the north and Juniper Ranch 25 miles, over a rugged mountain, to the south.

Any unfortunate travelers – and there were quite a few – who were compelled to put in the night there, would have to partake of such fare as Doc furnished. This had to be cooked in the one pot he possessed and was anything but appetizing. Turnip tops was often the sole occupant of the pot and that, with a chunk of his frying pan bread constituted the menu.

Another family that came to Harney Valley was Whiting, in 1874. Tom, the head of the clan, first pitched his tent on the west side of Sylvies River, a short distance from Frank McLeod, but in a short time moved to a more favorable location on the east side, then within the limits of the Malheur Indian Reservation. A good rugged citizen of the pioneer type, he resided there for many years, rearing a good sized family, a few of whom are still in that neighborhood.

In 1875 Peter Stenger came up from Western Oregon and located on Poison Creek, where he resided with his family until 1883, when he disposed of his holdings to Pete Clemens. He acquired an interest in the McGowan Mercantile business which he held until the business passed to Julius Durkehimmer and subsequently to Mason and London.

In 1875, also came Tom Potter who located on the edge of a tule marsh which lay close to the foot of the Wright's Point ridge. With him came Mart Brenton, then quite a young boy who has become a Burns landmark and is still hale and hearty. In a few years Potter disposed of his interests to Joe Bates.

Also, in 1875, Dan Wheeler made a location on land on Sagehen Creek, close to a splendid spring and there led a bachelor life for many years, most of the time being a Justice of the Peace, the only one of the kind in the Harney Basin, where all minor troubles were adjusted.

In the early seventies Nick Oliver made a location by a spring about a mile from Burns, later named "Egan". The Curreys also, Mons and Bill, located in the vicinity as did the Levens Bros., Hank and Bill, well and favorably known stockmen.

In 1874 Jimmie Gentry came to Camp Harney from Linkville and stayed around the Camp for several years carrying the mail and other jobs until moving to Barren Valley in the early eighties where he located on "Rinehart Spring" and resided there until 1903 when he moved to Burns where he died in 1907.

In 1877 the oldest of the Hanley Brothers, John, came to Harney Valley and remained for two or three years and then returned to the Jacksonville country in Southern Oregon.

In 1879 Bill Hanley, then quite a young man, came up driving a small band of cattle with the firm purpose of expanding in that line of business in a region naturally adapted for it. It is needless to say that he succeeded even beyond his fondest hopes. He became the best know "Cattle King" in the United States and retained his standing and popularity till his death at the Pendleton Round-Up a few years ago. I knew him very well from his arrival in Sage Hen in 1879 until a short time before his demise when he was a very sick man in San Francisco.

A younger brother, Ed Hanley, came up in 1882, and became a partner of Bill's in the cattle business until 1897, when they dissolved partnership, Ed going to Alaska, while Bill still continued in the old line to the end.

Ed Hanley now lives in Seattle, where he still continues in the salmon packing business and is, reputedly, in the millionaire ranks.

The most disturbing and exciting time ever experienced in the Harney country was during the summer of 1878, when the Indians were on the warpath.

Everything was quiet and peaceful till the first week in June, to be accurate, on the morning of the 3rd, there rode into Camp Harney a courier bearing a message from the commanding officer at Fort Boise, Idaho, to the Commander at Camp Harney, that the Bannock Indians at Fort Hall had gone on the warpath and requesting him to send all the troops that could be spared from that Post of Fort Boise, as soon as possible. One troop of cavalry and a company of infantry were ordered to get ready and take the road as quick as possible. They started out that afternoon.

Here I must say a few words about the man who brought the dispatch, for I never could get over my amazement when I saw him. He was a hatless man, mounted on a very good looking horse. He had but one leg, the left one had been taken off just as close to his

body as possible, and a wooden one, like a shovel handle, to replace it, sticking out two or three feet from the horse's flank. On his head was a mass of black curly hair. He had a round pleasant looking face, and was foreigner of some kind; I never could figure out what. I talked with him while he was still on his horse. He seemed in good humor, and not a bit tired, although he had ridden two hundred miles with but one change of horses, through a rough and roadless country. He dismounted on the right side with the greatest ease. The loss of his leg didn't seem to hamper his movements in the least. I never heard of him afterwards.

Two or three days afterwards a man named Jim Croly rode into Camp with the information that the Piutes and Bannocks were all in the Barren Valley, holding a meeting of some kind, probably with the purpose of combining forces and going on the warpath.

This information caused the Camp Harney Commander to send a courier to overtake the two companies that were on the way to Fort Boise and have them return to Harney as quick as possible. By this time most of the settlers in the Happy Valley and Diamond, having heard of the Indians being assembled for hostile purposes in Barren Valley, hastily left their homes and came into Camp Harney for protection. Among these was George Smyth and his married son, John, with their families.

The Commanding Officer had difficulty in finding anyone to carry the news to the troops enroute to Boise, and have them return immediately, for no one at the post had any knowledge of the road, it being entirely through an unsettled Indian Reservation.

Finally John Smyth said if no one else would go he would take a chance and carry the dispatch. This decision caused quite a tumult among the Smyths and their friends, and they united in impressing him a married man – with the risks of going through an uninhabited region on such a dangerous errand. They succeeded in getting him to withdraw his consent. Then attention turned to an Indian boy of about eighteen years who had been doing chores for the Post Trader for two or three years. He agreed to go if given a good horse. They brought him an excellent animal named "Fandango" that was inclined to be a little mean at times. This horse, never having had an Indian on his back, the moment the boy mounted, started bucking and in a short time succeeded in tossing the boy over his head, giving him a very hard fall from the effects of which he died in a few days.

I had been out in Sylvies Valley, that day, hunting a couple of horses that had gotten away necked together. When I returned toward evening, I was immediately surrounded by officers and civilians who begged and implored me to take that message for the immediate return of the troops enroute to Idaho, as the situation was critical. I consented and over took the troops after an all night ride of sixty miles, at the Agency on the North Fork of the Malheur. There I got another dispatch to Gen. O.O. Howard, to be taken to the nearest point where a telegraph line could be reached, which was Malheur City, fifty-five miles distant. I reached that little partly deserted mining town and learned there was no telegraph operator there, so had to ride on to Baker City, 32 miles further.

It was a long ride of 142 miles, made in a little less than twenty-four hours. I returned via Canyon City – a few miles longer – which took me four days.

Upon arriving at Camp Harney I learned of many startling events that transpired during my absence. The hostiles had come into the Steins Mountain settlement, destroying much property and killing some of its best citizens.

Before entering on events that transpired during the Indian outbreak of 1878, I have to mention a few immigrants who arrived in the Harney Valley country, of more or less importance, prior to that event.

I have already mentioned Peter Stenger settling on Poison Creek in 1875. A year or so later his brothers, John and Ed also came along from Douglas County and engaged in stock raising; and still later the youngest brother, Lew, came along. John remained some ten or eleven years and was reasonably successful. Then he disposed of his interests, and went to Bellingham, Wash., where he bought a hotel, and carried on that business until his death. Ed remained in Harney Valley only a few years, and then went to South Dakota where he engaged in the stock raising business near Rapid City, and was quite successful. I believe Lew went to Bellingham, but know nothing of him afterwards.

In 1875 J. W. Scott came to Camp Harney from the vicinity of Spokane and took contracts for delivering cord wood and hay for the Garrison. He remained until the Fort was abandoned in 1880. He was a peculiar character and was well known to everyone in that region. Another well known man was Frank McBean. He had the contract for carrying the U.S. Mail to and from Camp Harney to Canyon City until the abandonment of the Fort.

In the spring of 1874, a family named Simmons, came up from the Willamette Valley, and located in Prather Creek Canyon. They were very nice people. I remember spending one Sunday with them in September of that year. The country didn't suit them, so they returned to Western Oregon the following season.

Wm. Barton and family came to the Steins Mt. region in the early seventies and made a settlement at what is known as "Barton Lake". The location didn't suit him, so he moved up the valley a few miles and built a house on the east side of Riddle Creek, well above any possible danger of overflow water, and where he resided for many years thereafter.

The Oakermann family settled in Silver Creek Valley in the seventies and remained there for many years.

In the Wagontire Mountain region the Hutton family settled in the seventies and some of them are still living there. (settled 1884, Ed Grey)

Wm. Brown also settled in the Wagontire "Gap" in those years. He was sheep owner on a large scale.

In the summer of 1878, among the scattered settlements of what is now Harney County, Oregon, when the tidings were brought that the hostile Bannocks and Piutes were coming, and the fearful import of that warning became fully realized, it is not surprising that there were hasty preparations and hurried flight, and that but little food, and less clothing, was taken along. The one thought and purpose – to get to safety as soon as possible – was uppermost. So to Camp Harney they came, where U. S. soldiers were stationed who would shield and protect them from the hate and fury of the savages.

But when these fugitives were in security for two or three days and no reports of adjacent atrocities being received, their minds began to turn to the abandoned homestead and the uncared for stock, and to minimize the danger. What, after all, if it was only a big scare! Something that has happened many times before on the frontier. Yes! They would take a chance; go back to the ranch and look after the stock and other things that needed attention, which, to be sure, was natural enough. In this category were two men, who, at the first report, both having families, left their comfortable homes in the picturesque and fertile little valley called “Happy”, which nestled at the foot of Stein’s Mountain, where they had made settlement in 1873. With the few other settlers then occupying the little valley they came to Camp Harney seeking protection from the impending danger. George Smyth and his son John, both being industrious and highly respected citizens and in fairly good circumstances, had left all their household goods and stock without anyone to care for them. A few days having elapsed without any hostile Indians having appeared upon the scene they began to think that the report was exaggerated and that the “scare” might be without good foundation.

In this frame of mind they determined to return to their homes or a day at least to put things in order and see that their stock had access to feed and water. Both carried good rifles and plenty of ammunition and didn’t anticipate any serious danger. Happy Valley was fifty miles from Camp Harney, with no intervening settlement.

When they arrived at their homes they found everything as they had left it, and no sign of Indians, hostile or otherwise. After attending to the necessary chores, when evening came they both repaired to the home of the elder Smyth. After supper, bolting and barring the doors, they retired for the night, with the intention of returning to Harney the next day.

About daybreak, hearing some unusual noise, they arose and looking out the window saw fifty or sixty Indians on the outside, carrying bundles of sagebrush and other combustible materials and placing them against the house. Quickly realizing what was up, they got their rifles and each taking position at one of the two windows in the upper story, opened fire upon the Indians, who quickly scattered and sought shelter behind some rocks. From under cover the redskins riddled the house with bullets, but apparently didn’t do any damage to the occupants for they continued to fire in return for quite awhile.

Some of the hostiles then gathered a lot of brush and approaching the house from the side where there was no upstairs window, piled it against the house and set it on fire. In a few

minutes the building caught fire and was soon enveloped in flames. The doomed men remained at their posts firing every time an Indian came in sight until the heat and smoke of the burning house compelled them to descend to the ground floor. The savages meanwhile made a regular pandemonium on the outside, yelling and dancing with delight, knowing there was no possible way of escape for their prey.

At length the unfortunate men, almost roasted by the heat and stifled with the smoke, were compelled to open the front door with the evident purpose of making a dash for life. But the Indians were on the look-out, expecting such a move, and just as the men appeared in the doorway a volley from the hidden foes was poured upon them. Wavering for a moment, without uttering a word, they fell back into the house, riddled with the bullets, and were consumed in the flames.

Thus perished two excellent men and exemplary citizens, whom I had known quite well for about five years since they first settled in Harney Valley in November, 1873. Both left families to mourn their untimely and tragic fate.

The main body of the hostile Bannocks and Piutes did not pass through Happy Valley but followed a more northerly route, crossing the Blitzen River at what is known as "Rock Ford"; thence by Weed Lake, around the southern shore of Harney Lake and north to the western side of the same to Silver Creek.

The party that murdered the Smyths and burned some other abandoned dwellings in Happy Valley, had set out to raid the Stein's Mountain settlements; and, indeed, they accomplished their purpose in the most thorough manner by burning, pillaging and driving off stock, both in the Diamond and P Ranch Valleys as well as in Happy. They also murdered Peter French's Chinese cook at Diamond, surprising and killing Tom Dixon and Mr. Harrison near the P Ranch, and, at the same time, giving Bill Shirk of Catlow Valley such a close chase for his life that he said his hair stood up straight for an hour or two thereafter. He owed his safety to the speed and stamina of the splendid horse he was riding. Then, taking a shorter route than that followed by the main body they passed over the "Sand Reef", between Malheur and Harney Lakes and on to Silver Creek where they caught up with Buffalo Horn's and Egan's command.

The hostiles camped on Silver Creek many days during which raiding parties made incursions in every direction, doing all kinds of devilment. One small party for instance, visited Wagontire Mountain, thirty miles to the west, gathered up a large number of range cattle, drove them into a corral and wantonly slaughtered every one. This corral has been known since as the "bone" corral. (Boneyard Spring, Ed Grey)

A short time after the Bannocks had left the vicinity of Silver city, Idaho, to form a junction with the Piutes in Barren Valley, Col. Bernard, with two troops of the 1st Cav. A. & G, came through that portion of the country in pursuit of the Indians. He had to follow a different route from that taken by the hostiles, in order to avoid the extensive stretches of volcanic formation along the canyon of the Owyhee where there was neither road nor trail.

He entered the Harney Valley a day or two after the Stein's Mountain settlement had been raided. Accompanying him were fifteen Idaho scouts under the leadership of Rube Robbins of Boise as chief. These were all experienced frontiersmen, familiar with Indian tactics. Going ahead of the command, in the night time, they soon located the Indian encampment, without being seen by the hostiles.

In his passage through Harney Valley, Col. Bernard's force was joined by fifteen or twenty stockmen and settlers, whose horses had been run off by Indians. Among others, Peter French, the Stein's Mountain cattle king, and D. H. Smyth, son and brother of the men murdered in Happy Valley; both anxious to get a chance at the authors of the deeds done in the raid already described.

On the evening of the 20th of June, after sunset, Bernard saved his command to a secluded spot within three miles of the hostiles and made a dark camp.

The Silver Creek Fight

Before daylight next morning everything was in readiness for the surprise attack. And just as the first faint streak of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, Bernard moved out with his little command to attack a force numerically superior six to one. The scouts and civilian contingent were placed some little distance on his right flank. All moved quietly and cautiously through the sagebrush and rocks until attaining a slight eminence on the east side of the creek where a full view of the entire encampment was had. Here the gait was increased to a trot, then gallop, and just before reaching the creek the command "Charge" was shouted.

The channel of Silver Creek, at this point, was quite narrow and tolerably deep with scattering clumps of willows along its banks. The hostiles' camp situated, principally, upon a small flat, or creek bottom, on the west side of the creek, which was flanked, a little further west, by a steep and rocky bluff. The Indian Horses, great part, were grazing on the stony bunch grass table-land beyond the bluff.

As Bernard's troopers came thundering to the creek, the drowsy and bewildered redskins, awakened by the clatter and shouts of the approaching column which was advancing upon them like a whirlwind, tumbled out of their wickiups utterly demoralized by the suddenness of the unlooked-for attack, and seemed, for a few moments, incapable of resistance. To get out of the way of the trampling horses and their furious riders seemed uppermost in their minds.

The cavalymen dashed across the creek, jumping it in most places and on through the scattered tepees pouring volley after volley into them as they went. It was an inspiring and spectacular sight. There is nothing in warfare that arouses enthusiasm like the cavalry charge, nor is there anything so dreadful and demoralizing to disorganized foes. It almost paralyzes them.

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Occasionally an Indian more brave and cool-headed than his fellows would take a shot at the charging cavalymen, but there was no semblance of concerted action as yet. In the meantime, the greater part of the Indians were rushing to the bluff and securing horses. And as they gained this vantage point they also began to gain in courage, seeing the smallness of the attacking force.

Soon large numbers, coming down from the bluff, began to assume an aggressive attitude, placing troops in what might become a very dangerous predicament. However, Col. Bernard didn't give them much time to plan. When he and his troopers had galloped through the entire hostile encampment, they immediately whirled around and charged back over practically the same ground, intending to do as much damage as possible while the enemy was disorganized. The Colonel also realized his inability to withstand a determined attack from foes with such superior numbers, and was anxious to save his men in an engagement where the odds were all against him. So they galloped back, firing as they rode through the jumble of wickiups, while the hostiles, gathering in ever increasing numbers, were beginning to attack them on the flank. They lost no time in recrossing the creek, and thus prevented an encircling movement which the enemy was preparing to execute.

Meanwhile the scouts and the citizen contingent, being on the right of the troopers, galloped up on the east side of the creek, to where the little valley terminated in a narrow canyon. Here they kept up a galling fire on the Indians who were climbing the bluff near the north end of the encampment. But as Bernard and his men galloped back and recrossed the creek below there was left quite a distance between the two. The Indians, perceiving the isolation of Robbins and his party, now made a well-executed movement in force to cut them off from the soldiers and annihilate them and thus pay the white men back for the unexpected attack upon their camp.

The scouts and citizens were so preoccupied with the sniping and long range contest in which they were engaged that they failed to observe the wedge that was being driven between them and the soldiers until it was almost too late. Then indeed they had to do some fast riding and fierce fighting to extricate themselves and again get in touch with Bernard's troopers. At this juncture one of Robbins scouts – Meyers of Weiser, Idaho. was killed and Robbins' horse was shot from under him, and he would certainly have fallen into the hands of the Indians were it not for the, luck and heroism of Peter French, who, perceiving the predicament of the chief of scouts, galloped to his assistance through a veritable rain of bullets, took the unhorsed chief up behind him and rode to safety.

When the scouts and citizens joined the main command there was considerable long range fighting from the position taken on the elevated ground east of the creek, but the Indians didn't seem inclined to make a serious attack; nor did Col. Bernard deem it wise to take the initiative again in the face of such overwhelming odds.

A few of Bernard's command were killed and several wounded in this spectacular engagement, but the losses of the enemy were far greater, owing largely, of course, to the complete nature of the surprise.

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Among those who fell on the side of the hostiles on this occasion was the great chief of the Bannocks, Buffalo Horn. This, however, has been disputed, some contending that he fell some ten days earlier in an encounter with a small party of Idaho volunteers near Silver city with whom was one Piute Joe, a half civilized Indian, acting in the capacity of guide. No less an authority than Gen. O.O. Howard has accepted the latter version, which is said to have for its sole foundation the statement of Piute Joe, a notorious boaster, addicted to self-glorification. He related the unreasonable story that when the party of volunteers encountered the Bannocks, the former fled at the first discharge of firearms, but that he took deliberate aim at the leader of the Indians and shot Buffalo Horn. The Piutes who were with the hostiles stated afterwards to myself and others that Buffalo Horn was killed in Bernard's charge at Silver Creek. Many soldiers also said that he fell in that fight, having recognized him by the elaborately decorated headdress that he wore.

After the Silver Creek fight the leadership of the Indians was assumed by Chief Egan of the Piutes, a fine looking man, bold and fearless and in every way fitted to command an Indian host. He was assassinated about a fortnight afterwards by a party of Umatilla Indians whom he thought were his friends.

This fight occurred sixty-three years ago and, strange to say, it has only been mentioned, heretofore, as having taken place. To be sure there were no newspaper correspondents on the ground, nor any newspapers printed or published in that locality. But Gen. Howard, in his published volume, describing his various campaigns, might well have devoted a page or two descriptive of the gallantry of his subordinate Col. Bernard, and the men he commanded in that famous surprise attack, for he was in full possession of the facts. Had Gen. Howard been there in person there would have been a glowing account of that remarkable encounter.

About the close of the Bannock-Piute conflict of 1878, in what is now Harney County, an unusual and bold attempt at wholesale stealing of range horses was undertaken and came very near being successful, by a trio of desperadoes that came along from Linkville (now Klamath Falls) in August of that year. These fellows assumed very characteristic names: "Rattlesnake Jake", "Arizona Sam" and "Texas Dick". They rode into Camp Harney one evening and said they had come to take a hand in putting down the "Siwash" outbreak, having had many experiences in that kind of work in Arizona, Texas, etc. They were well armed and garbed in typical costumes.

They stayed only one night in Camp Harney, going on to Canyon City saying they were anxious to go on to the Umatilla country, where Gen. Howard was reported to have overtaken and engaged the redskins.

By that time the Indians had been defeated at Birch Creek, had become demoralized, having lost both their leaders, "Buffalo Horn" and "Egan", and were hurrying back through the Blue Mountains to get on the Reservation, where they would again be safe from the military force.

The bold bad-men came upon the trail of the retreating hostiles on the middle fork of the John Day River, where they found a couple of old squaws who had been abandoned. These they put out of their misery and, from grimy locks, manufactured three or four good-looking scalps which they attached to their belts, returned to Canyon City with a thrilling story of an imaginary encounter with hostiles, and where they were treated as heroes and entertained to the best of everything, free of charge.

Next day they headed south, stopped one night in Camp Harney and then headed for Steins Mountain.

The next heard of those pseudo warriors was a telegram from the Sheriff at Winnemucca, Nevada, that he had in custody one "Rattlesnake Jack" accused of having stolen some one hundred and fifty head of horses, the property of Peter French of Grant County, Oregon. His two companions in the theft, Arizona Sam and Texas Dick, has escaped and gone to parts unknown. He requested the Sheriff of Grant County to obtain requisition from the Governor of Oregon to the Governor of Nevada for the return of the said Rattlesnake Jack to the Jurisdiction of Oregon.

At this time Peter French was still in Umatilla County with Gen. Howard's forces. The officials at Canyon City immediately took action and sent a message to W. W. Thayer, then Governor of Oregon, for the requisition as mentioned, and asking that this writer (Maurice Fitzgerald) be appointed as State Agent to carry out the intent and purpose of the requisition.

I was notified to get ready for the journey immediately. The Sheriff selected a man to accompany me and assist in bringing the prisoner to Canyon City. That man was John Riggs, a very capable man. The conveyance selected for the purpose was a two-horse spring wagon. Of Course we both were armed and carried a pair of handcuffs to put on the prisoner.

Winnemucca, Nevada, was 325 miles from Canyon City, over a very sparsely settled region. The journey took six or seven days. I had a talk with the Sheriff and then jumped on the west-bound train for Reno. From Reno there was a little narrow-gauge railroad to Carson City, the State Capital, which I took next morning. Upon arriving there I immediately called on the Secretary of the State, Jewett Adams, a very fine gentleman, and announced the purpose of my visit. After examining my papers, he ushered me into the Governor's office where a very plain old cow-man named Bradley, better known as "Broad-Horn", greeted me very cordially.

We had quite a long conversation regarding the man I was after, and which I am not going to divulge, or it would be amazing. He signed the requisition and I returned to Reno that afternoon. Having to wait in Reno a few hours for an east bound train, I dropped into the office of Sheriff Lamb of Washhoe County, for a chat. He seemed to know quite a bit about the record of the man I was after. Among other things he inquired how I was going to take him to Canyon City safely. I told him exactly how I intended keeping him handcuffed most of the time and always at night. He said, "You never can

get that bird to Canyon City with handcuffs. He can slip them off as easy as a glove, having a remarkably small hand." I told him that was all the Sheriff gave me. He kept silent for some time, then said, "If you'll promise faithfully that you'll return it to me after you get to Canyon City, I'll let you have something to put on his leg that will hold him solid as long as you hold the key. It is a recent invention known as "The Oregon Boot". I had come from Oregon, but had never even heard of it. It was solid shilled steel, in two parts, that could be put together on the leg and locked. It weighed fifteen pounds. I am satisfied that I never could have taken him to Canyon City were it not for the "Oregon Boot". See photo pg 11.

We did get him safely landed in Canyon City jail, in which he was confined for two months till Circuit Court time came around. He was tried and convicted of horse theft, but got a light sentence, owing to the fact that he was the son of a Willamette Valley preacher named White who came and circulated among the farmers of John Day Valley, arousing a feeling of sympathy for the poor old father among the jurors, which culminated in a plea of mercy to the Court. He served his term in the penitentiary and swore when he got free he'd come back and kill Pete French and Fitzgerald. But he evidently changed his mind.

After the Silver Creek encounter, the hostiles moved leisurely northward, knowing that Cap. Bernard's command was too small to again take the offensive. They spent a day or two in the main valley where Logue Cecil and the Baker Brothers had made settlement. They did some peculiar things. Instead of setting fire to and destroying everything belonging to the settlers, they simply amused themselves by tumbling the houses over and scattering the furniture and even the food promiscuously about. At one place, where the house had been overturned, they set a table on the ground, with plates for half a dozen, on which were a liberal supply of cooked dried apples over which was poured a plentiful helping of coal oil. That was harmless pastime. But some of the young bloods found a more characteristic way of amusing themselves. A party of them visited the Wagontire region, rounded up a considerable number of cattle, which they drove into a corral, and shot every one of them. That corral was known long afterwards as "Bone Corral".

They then pushed northward along Buck Mountain and over a low divide into the South Fork of the John Day River, and then on to the Umatilla country.

In two or three days Gen. O.O. Howard came along in their trail with a motley command of a few companies of Infantry and Cavalry hastily organized in Idaho, and augmented by a troop of cavalry and a company of infantry from Camp Harney. His supplies were carried in two-horse farm wagons of Idaho farmers until reaching Camp Harney where he secured two six-mule teams.

Upon reaching the head of Silver Creek Valley at old Camp Curry, he had to enter a rugged and broken mountainous region without road or trail, until reaching the John Day Valley, which occupied many days. There were good grounds why Howard and his

command were some days behind the hostiles in that pursuit through the Blue Mountains. But the newspapers at the time severely criticized him for being dilatory.

In this record of events relation to what is now Harney County, I do not intend to follow the Indian campaign to its successful termination in other portions of Eastern Oregon. However, I think that I should briefly state the ending of the last conflict with the aborigines in this portion of Oregon.

After losing their leaders and becoming more or less demoralized, the Piutes hurried back to the Agency on the North Fork of the Malheur. Then, when everything had quieted down, they were all got together and conveyed in wagons under military escort to Camp Harney. From there the military authorities ordered their removal to the Yakima India Reservation in the State of Washington.

In a few years they dribbled back, a few at a time, to their old hunting grounds, and never caused any further trouble. Some of their descendants are still in the vicinity of Burns and are rapidly adopting the manners and customs of the white man.

When the Piutes had all left the Agency in the Spring of 1878, the staff of employees hurriedly departed for the John Day Valley, not knowing what might happen had they remained at their posts. Among them was W. W. Johnson the Agency blacksmith, and his little family. The Johnsons, instead of remaining in the John Day Valley as many of the others did, came around by Canyon City to Camp Harney and established themselves there for the next two or three years, when they moved down to the embryo settlement on the west side of Sylvies river which thereafter became known as "Burns". W. W. Johnson took an active part in making it the most important trading point in the Harney Valley region. Collaborating with him was John Robinson, a young man from California who arrived in 1879. He was a barber by profession and opened a shop in what is now Burns, in 1881, on the north side of the Johnson Saloon, making him a real pioneer of the town. Many of the buildings erected in 1880 and 1881 were old structures brought over from the abandoned Camp Harney and were not very attractive in appearance, but they answered the purpose.

Saloons, eating places and stables were in demand in those days more than anything else, for cowboys, ranch hands and home seekers were practically the only customers. Mrs. M. A. Fry, a survivor of the unfortunate Donner Party of 1846, was about the first to provide something to eat, while M. A. Brenton, the old standby, erected the first stable. Liquid refreshments wee first provided by "Broady" Johnson. But Wash Smelser came along soon after and opened another place.

Prior to this time Mons and Bill Currey kept a few groceries and liquor on their home ranch which they named "Egan".

In 1882 Geo. McGowan came along with a considerable supply of groceries, hardware, etc. and opened a little store at Egan. He did pretty well there, but soon realized that the

other location about a mile away, then called "Axehandle", was the best adapted for trade. He therefore had constructed a suitable building for his business, at the later place, and moved his stock of merchandise there in 1883.

Being a son of Bonnie Scotland and not relishing the crude name already given it, he, with the consent of the other residents, named it "Burns" in commemoration of Scotland's beloved poet, Robert Burns, which it retains to this day and very likely will retain indefinitely.

Soon after moving Mr. McGowan disposed of a one-half interest in the business to Peter A. Stenger which was carried on under the firm name of McGowan and Stenger until it was sold to Julius Durheimer.

In 1884 N. Brown and his two sons, Ben, and Leon, came up from San Francisco looking for a favorable location to start in a general merchandising business. With Mr. Brown came Sam King, a resident of Surprise Valley, California. If I remember rightly, it was in the month of August. They arrived in the forenoon. After lunch, while talking with Mr. Brown he said he wanted to take a look at the valley and asked me to accompany him and Mr. King for that purpose. We drove up as far as Rattlesnake Creek from where an extensive view of the large and level valley could be had. Mr. Brown said simply, "This is going to a good country; I'm going no further". He made his word good.

In that year Harney Valley had quite an influx of people from Kansas who were fleeing from the ravages of the grasshoppers. They were commonly known as "The Kansas Sufferers". Many of them turned out to be number one citizens; and several of their descendants are still to be found in the Harney Valley region.

Prior to 1884 many families and single men had come into Harney Valley seeking new homes and favorable opportunities for bettering their condition. I may mention a few: The Stancliff and Howser families and W.C. Byrd and family. Mr. Byrd was the first to engage in the newspaper business in Burns, and that publication has been carried on by his son, Julian, successfully down to this day.

Two lawyers came to Burns in 1884 to straighten out legal tangles in that new settlement, Capt. A.W. Waters from Salem, Oregon, and Geo. Sizemore from Missouri. The latter is still carrying on in that line of work and seems good for another decade or two. The Mace Brothers, Homer and Fritz, the McKinnons, T. A., and Bob, both family men, Dr. T.V.B. Embree, the Caldwells – Lee was in his teens then and very ambitious to excel in a musical way. The Mahons, old Patrick, his wife and young daughter, had a small cabin about a half mile south of where Burns is now situated, in 1879. The young girl, Mary, afterwards became the wife of Joe Lamb and resided near Drewsey for many years. And having mentioned Drewsey, Tom Dodson's name popped into my head. He came to Burns in 1882 and moved to the Drewsey country in a year or two thereafter.

A young married man, named Rush, came up from Prineville and settled on Cow Creek in 1881. I think he was a son-in-law of old man James who later took up a claim on the

site of old Camp Harney. Rush only remained on Cow Creek a year or eighteen months, when he disposed of his interests to Jim Mahon who resided there for three or four years and then moved to Anderson Valley, where he engaged extensively in the mule-raising industry. His brothers, John and Will came later.

From that time on new settlers came so thick and fast that my small brain cannot correctly remember all the names and the dates, so some one better qualified must carry on the good work.

But in the ending of this little resume of early days in Harney County and Burns, I cannot refrain from recording an encounter that I witnessed in the latter place in 1884, between two men with whom I was well acquainted. It was dramatic and awesome and held you spell bound while it was being enacted.

There was nothing attractive about Burns in those days; in fact it was as raw and crude a little burg as one can well imagine. There were two saloons, two small mercantile stores, a rough-and-tumble hotel, a blacksmith shop and a livery stable in the making. The saloons were the most popular resorts and, seemingly, the most prosperous, for the cow-punchers from the large cattle ranches and the few small stockmen and settlers of the surrounding country, when visiting the embryo city, made such places their headquarters. Much bad whiskey was consumed and card games were well patronized and, not infrequently, a shooting fracas to enliven things, was pulled off.

Among others who came, occasionally, on business or for pleasure, was one Jack Miller. A native of Texas, he came to Harney Valley in the spring of 1883, and was given employment on the large cattle ranch of Devine and Todhunter on which he worked steadily for more than a year and earned the reputation of being one of the best and most reliable hands on the ranch. He didn't touch intoxicating liquor – something very rare among workers in those days – saved his wages and, quitting the ranch, went into business for himself, establishing a camp in the adjacent timbered hills where he got out timbers of all kinds for fencing and building purposes. His camp was located some fifteen miles from Burns where he had four or five men employed in the timber and a camp cook named Matt Egan.

For some reason best known to himself, two or three days before Christmas he paid Egan off and installed in his place a buxom widow of middle age. The discharged cook didn't accept his discharge philosophically. He realized that he had given entire satisfaction to the members of the crew in preparing their meals, and resented the action of the boss in firing him so that a place could be found for a female friend who, Egan believed was incapable of performing the duties required as satisfactorily for all concerned as he.

Egan came to Burns and after imbibing a few drinks of fighting whiskey, let it be known that he considered his former employer a rotten skunk who had treated him so shabbily.

A day or two after Christmas Miller came to town to get a few things needed at the camp. He hadn't been there very long until he was accosted by Egan who let him know in a

very plain language what he thought of him for doing such a dirty trick, and added there was only one he-man's way of squaring the score between them and that was by going out behind the blacksmith shop and shooting it out. Miller, cool and collected, said, "Matt, you've been drinking; go and take a sleep and when you're awake you'll feel different. There's no reason why you and I should have any trouble; we can always be good friends, and I hope we shall". Miller's level-headed talk seemed to appease somewhat the wrath of Egan, for the time being, so they parted without further recriminations. But the armistice was of short duration. Egan took an additional drink or two when his outraged feelings again flared up. Meanwhile the news had spread that trouble was brewing between Egan and Miller. Ben brown and I happened to be standing in front of the Brown store when Egan, coming of the Johnson Saloon which was close by, seeing us, approached and said to me, "Fritz, I'm not going to let anyone do me dirt and get away with it". I tried to mollify his feelings and dissuade him from making trouble. While I was speaking I noticed that Matt was gazing intently down the street, although there wasn't a soul in sight. He knew that Jack had gone down in that direction and saw his horse saddled and hitched to a post on the opposite side of the street. Presently we saw Miller come out of Wash Smelser's place and start walking toward his horse. Egan stepped off the sidewalk and as Miller was nearing the hitching post, shouted, "Jack", at the same time beckoning with his hand for him to come hither. Jack stopped in his tracks, his head bent down for a few seconds, then whirled and came walking up briskly toward us, his arms swinging leisurely by his sides. He wore a heavy blue flannel jacket.

Egan stood motionless as Jack approached until he was within fifteen or twenty feet. Then said, "Look out", at the same time drawing a pearl-handled Smith and Wesson six-shooter which he had ready for use, the long barrel inside his trousers belt in front, with the handle protruding from his open vest which had only the lower button fastened.

In drawing his weapon he had to raise his arm several inches. Just as he did Jack crouched, then darting in like a flash, grasped Matt's wrist with his left hand, forcing it up just in the nick of time so that the bullet passed harmlessly over his shoulder. Then, reaching with his right, he drew from the breast pocket of his jacket, a "Colt's Bull-Dog" which he raised to fire, but Egan, on the alert, with his left caught Jack's gun hand just as he pulled the trigger, forcing it down so that the bullet went into the ground. There they stood for a few seconds, each holding the other's gun hand. It made a dramatic and awe-inspiring tableau. Ben Brown and I were spell-bound and never moved a step. Just then the report of the firearms emptied the saloons and stores so that the finish was witnessed by quite a little crowd. Both were strong men, but Miller, having the under hold, possessed the advantage. With a supreme effort of sheer strength he forced Egan's left hand upward until his own was in line with Egan's body, while still holding Matt's right aloft with his left, then rapidly sent three or four bullets into his opponent's midriff. Egan slumped to the ground, saying as he fell ("You got me Jack") and expired immediately.

Miller, naturally excited, placed his foot on the dead man's body, wrenching the weapon from his hand, then with a gun in either hand, walked up the middle of the street in front of the saloon where seven or eight reputedly tough characters were assembled, saying, "If

any of you s_____ of b_____ don't like what I've done, get right out here and try your hand". None of these reputed gunners said a word or made a move. Jack thought that there might be some friend of Egan's among them, but there wasn't. In a little while Miller quieted down, turned Egan's gun over to the hotel-man and rode to camp. Nothing was ever done to question the legality of the killing. It was generally considered justifiable homicide.

In a few months thereafter Miller left the Harney Country and in 1886, went to Alaska where he spent about ten years trapping and hunting until the Klondike discovery of gold, when he developed into quite a prominent character, amassing a considerable fortune. But not under the name of Jack Miller.

About sixteen or eighteen years ago he came to Seattle and shortly afterwards went to Yakima where he invested in orchard lands. After a few years, getting rid of his holdings, he moved back to Seattle where, I am credibly informed, he is now engaged in business.

It is unusual that, after the lapse of more than half a century, the principal actor and the two closest witnesses of the Burns tragedy, myself and Ben Brown, should all be alive and in reasonably good health.

Before ending this memory record of pioneer events in Harney County, I deem it proper to mention the names of many persons not heretofore recorded who figured prominently in the development of Burns and vicinity in those early days.

The first to come to my mind is Tom Stevens. He and Sam Bailey, better known as "Scotty" arrived in the fall of 1882. They owned and operated the Burns Hotel for several years, also embarked in horse racing and other sporting activities. For be it known that everything went in Burns in those pioneer times.

Two years later the Racine family came along and opened another hotel on the opposite side of the street. It was named "The French Hotel". It was managed mainly by Mrs. Racine. There were two sons and two daughters, named Eugenie and Dolores – exceptionally nice girls.

About this time also, Paul Locher and family arrived and established the first brewery in Burns. Mrs. Locher still resides in Burns and Leonard, the only son, makes his home partly in Burns and Seneca. The eldest daughter, Josephine, died in California a few years ago, and Pauline still resides in Everett, Washington.

In 1883 D. M. McMenemy made a settlement on a tract of land a short distance south of Burns and resided there many years, well liked by everyone in the neighborhood.

"Billy" Miller arrived from California in 1883 and for many years thereafter took an active part in the affairs of the embryo city until moving to Ontario where he died a few years ago.

The Cronin brothers, Bart and Charlie, came from Canada about 1881 and made Harney County their permanent home. They both were men of sterling qualities and I believe Charlie is still living.

In the late 1884's J.M. Vaughn arrived with his wife and little daughter, Frances, from Portland. Mrs. Vaughn was P.M. for several years. Frances is still living.

W. E. Grace came up from Prineville in 1885 and opened the first drug store in the town. He did a good business here for several years, but later went to Baker City. His parents came in 1886 and started in the newspaper business, but didn't make much headway, as that field was already occupied by W. C. Byrd and sons who seemed to have the support of the great majority of the population.

Attorney C.A. Sweek and family moved into Burns from Canyon City in 1886, and remained only a few years. They sold their home to P.R. Stenger. Mr. Sweek was a lawyer of good standing.

W. E. Frisch and J. J. Donegan, coming up from California about this time, looking for a favorable location to go into business, thought Burns was the place to cast anchor. I have heard it rumored that one member of that firm can be found there yet. Charles Voegtly and Tupter came about this date also and went into business here and prospered.

In 1886 J. C. Welcome came up from Surprise Valley, Calif. and opened a Saddler shop. He was successful in business, but even more so in having a good sized family, the members of which were always considered among the most popular of the Burns citizenry. Some of these can still be found there. Their names need not be mentioned here.

John W. Sayer and "Cope" Dore came over from Canyon City in 1885 and established a lumber mill a few miles northwest of Burns where the incoming settlers obtained the materials for house building and other improvements. Mr. Sayer has made the Harney Valley region his home ever since.

Two good hard working brothers, Casper and Henry Luig, took up claims a few miles south of Burns in 1884 and lived there many years thereafter. Fred Densted came the same year and settled three or four miles east of Burns.

In 1883 Wm. Skinner, a carpenter by trade, came up from California and remained only two years. His wife was the eldest daughter of R. J. McKinnon. He did carpenter work on the Standlift Bridge, constructed in 1884.

About this time also came Dr. McPheeters who was Burns practitioner for a few years.

In 1885 Irwin Geer came up from the Willamette and opened a hardware store in the little town. The ensuing year his father, Cal. Geer and family arrived and engaged in the

farming machinery business. The Geers were an outstanding pioneer family of the Waldo Hills region. Some of its members can still be found in Burns.

The first of the Biggs to arrive in Burns from old Missouri was M.R., a lawyer. He practiced in Harney County for five or six years. Then he moved to Prineville and continued to practice his profession there up to this date. His wife, nee Laura Stancliff, was a very popular girl in the vicinity of Burns. John Biggs, a cousin of M.R. came from the same State a year or two later. He is so well and favorable known that nothing I could say would add to his popularity.

I must not overlook Thornton Williams, an outstanding lawyer, who practiced here for several years.

H.M. Horton entered Burns, as well as I can remember, in the fall months of 1886 and started another drug business on the north side of the Brown Store, and prospered. He later married Etta Stancliff, the elder of the Stancliff girls.

Not many years afterward Henry Welcome opened the third business of that kind and, being a very popular young man, built up a thriving business.

Now I find myself recording events that are well known to many of the Burns inhabitants, so I had better bring this rambling resume to a close before getting into trouble.

“Finis”

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Fitzgerald spelling used throughout with no changes. Hard to read areas on the document noted.
Year of arrival:

1820 – Sylvais, Hudson Bay Trapper	1875/76 – J. W. Scott
1826 – Peter Skene Ogden	1876 – John S. Devine appears in Canyon City concerning horse thief
1845 – Lost Immigrant Train with Stephen Meek	1878 – Bannock/Piute Indian War
1857 – Major Stein	1879:
1865 – Lieut. John J. Coppinger, map of valley	Hanley, Bill
1867 – Camp Harney established	Hanley, John
1867 – Robey brought in the first sawmill	Mahon, Parick family
1868 – Wm Clark Legislator proposed a road from Canyon City to Winnemucca	Overfelt, Tom in Sylvies Valley
1869 – Piute Indian War ended by Gen Crook	Roberts, Ed and Frank on Crane Creek
1869 – John S. Devine of Devine & Todhunter established. White Horse	Robinson, John - Barber
1870;	Sweetser, Frank in Sylvies Valley
Barton, Wm on Barton Lake	1879/80 – Hard Winter
Brown, Wm Brown on Gap Ranch	1880 – Jim Abbott nominee for State Senator of Grant County
Hutton family	1880:
McCoy, Mace on McCoy Creek	Andrews, Peter
Oakerman family on Silver Creek	Bain, Toe (difficult to read)
Oliver, Nick located Egan	Billingsly, Jeff
1871 – Abbott and Whiteside on Alvord Creek	Boehnes (difficult to read)
1871/72 - Alvena Venator family on The Island	Buckland, Jim
1872:	Carlson, Elmer and Ed Carlson
Catlow, John on Trout Creek	Catterson, Bill
Chapman, John at Sod House	Clark, Manuel
French, Peter on Blitzen River	Claypool, Rube
Prather, Tom on Prather Creek	Drinkwater, J. W.
Riley and Hardin	Dunneaw, Chris (check)
Weaver, Jim at Sod House	Gilbert, Jim
1872/73 – Joe Cooksey near Wright’s Point	Gradon, W. R.
1873:	Haines, Chas
Kiger, Rube on Kiger Creek	Haines, Fred
McLeod, Frank west of Sylvies River	Hayes, Ted and Bailey
Smyth family	Hermann _uh (difficult to read)
1873 Thansksgiving – Began to snow and continued for three days.	Jordans
1873 – Smyth family moves to Happy Valley	Kiger, Doc
1874 - John S. Devine captures horse thief	Loggan Family
1874:	McKinney, C.F.
Anderson, “Doc” in Anderson Valley	Miller
Baker Bros. in Silver Creek Valley	Mothershead, Sam (difficult to read)
Fitzgerald, Sergeant Major Maurice of Camp Harney	Norton, Jack
Gentry, Jimmie delivering mail later at Rinehart Spring	Perle, Jim (check)
Simmons family in Prather Creek Canyon	Peterson, Charles
Whiting, Tom family	Rector, Joe
1874/5 – Mr. Rann Sylvies Valley	Reider, Frank
1875:	Roper, Charles
Brenton, Mart with Tom Potter	Sam __thershead
Burns, Frank on Crane Creek	Sheppard, Jack
Potter, Tom at Wright’s Point	Smith, Sylvester (sic)
Stenger, Peter on Poison Creek	South, John
Wheeler, Dan on Sagehen Creek	Spankelburg, Andrew
	Sparrow, Jim
	Sturgis, Old
	Swarts

Turner, Charlie
 Vickers, Tom
1881 May 1 – Sand Reef broke through
1881:
 Cronin, Bart and Charlie
 Rush on Cow Creek one year
 and sold to Jim Mahon
 Vaughn, J. M.
1882;
 Bailey, Sam - Burns Hotel
 Burns, Frank sold to Ed Stauffer
 Dodson, Tom at Drewsey
 Hanley, Ed
 McGowan, Geo.
 Stevens, Tom – Burns Hotel
1883:
 Miller, Billy
 Skinner, Wm.
 Stenger, Peter sold to Pete Clemens
Pre-1884:
 Byrd, W.C. family
 Caldwelles,
 Embree, Dr. T.V.B.
 Howser family
 Mace Brother
 McKinnon, Homer and Fritz
 Sizemore, Geo. Lawyer
 Stancliff family
 T.A. and Bob (check)
 Waters, Capt. A. W., Lawyer
1884 – Catlow sold ranch to A.W.Sisson
1884 – Gunfight between Jack Miller

and Matt Egan
1884 - Stancliff bridge built
1884:
 Brown, N. and sons Ben and Leon
 Denstad, Fred
 King, Sam
 Locher family brewery
 Luig, Casper and Henry
 McPheeters, Dr.
 Racine family French Hotel
1885 – Overfelt killed
1885:
 Dore, Cope (check)
 Geer, Irwin, Hardware Store
 Grace, W. E., drug store
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1886 – Jack Miller left
 Harney County to Alaska
1886:
 Donnegan, J. J.
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 Tupter (check)
 Voegtly, Charles
 Welcome, J. C., Saddler
1889 – Miller and Lux took
 over the White Horse Ranch
1897 – Ed Hanley to Alaska
1898 – Peter French shot
1903 – John S. Devine killed in accident