

**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.

9

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.