

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #12 Side A

Subject: Bertha Carey

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: April 6, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Bertha Carey has lived in Harney County since 1898. She lived in the Lawen area, at the South Fork of the Malheur River area above Crane, on Big Crane Creek, and little Crane Creek, and in Burns. She is living in Burns at this writing.

Bertha's grandparents crossed the plains in 1862 and settled in the Willamette Valley at what was then called Albany Prairie. Her father was Harvey Spurlock, and her parents lived in the Willamette Valley. Bertha was born at Lebanon in 1884. Her father died when she was nine months old, and her mother died when she was 14. They were living at Prineville at the time, and her aunt and an uncle came to get her. Her aunt was Mrs. Luce. Her uncles were Charlie and Alvon Spurlock. She went to school at Lawen.

PAULINE: How many children were in school at the time that you were in school?

BERTHA: I think there was about 35.

PAULINE: That many?

BERTHA: Ella Thompson was the teacher.

PAULINE: I talked to Alice Presley last week, and she mentioned Ella Thompson as being one of the teacher.

BERTHA: One of the teachers. Well she went to school the same time I did.

PAULINE: Did you skate to school in the wintertime?

BERTHA: Oh, no, I never did, because --- I don't know why. But there was skating on the lake down there, and used to go down there for picnics evenings, you know, and a lot of them did skate, but I never did. I was too big of a coward I guess.

PAULINE: Well where did they have the picnics, down along the lake edge?

BERTHA: On the border of the lake, you know, we used to go down. That was when it was all covered over with ice, you know, and froze hard and used to have the skating parties.

PAULINE: Have a big fire?

BERTHA: Yes, a big fire and then we'd have a big lunch at the, around the campfire. We'd stay there till way late sometimes.

PAULINE: Sounds like it was fun.

BERTHA: Yes, it was.

PAULINE: And when you said you lived over on the South Fork of the Malheur ---

BERTHA: I kept house for my two bachelor Uncles, Charlie and Alvon Spurlock after I was grown, until I was married. I was married in 1906, Thanksgiving Day.

PAULINE: What was your husband's name?

BERTHA: John LeRoy Carey.

PAULINE: What was the middle name?

BERTHA: Carey, John, and his middle name was John LeRoy.

PAULINE: How did he happen to be in Harney County?

BERTHA: His parents came here from the Willamette Valley in 1893. No, wait a minute, 1883 they came here.

PAULINE: Where did they settle?

BERTHA: Well they settled over on Big Crane Creek, just the other side of, where Crane is now. They lived there for years. When the parents died, that is the father died first, and then of course the mother lived with the children. She, after, bought a home up in Burns. Lived here until the youngest daughter was married.

PAULINE: What were his parent's names? What were your husband's parent's names?

BERTHA: David Carey.

PAULINE: David Carey.

BERTHA: And Rebecca. She was Rebecca Barr before she was married. The Barr family was all raised in the Willamette Valley.

PAULINE: And then you lived out on Crane Creek for years, and years, and years?

BERTHA: Well we bought a, after --- my brother-in-law Clarence and John were partners after the parents died. And they bought the old home. We lived there for a few years. Then we sold our, my husband sold his part of the home there, and we went over on Little Crane Creek, ten miles farther east, and bought a ranch over there. PAULINE: Did you raise cattle?

BERTHA: Yes, cattle and horses both.

PAULINE: Where did you sell the horses? Were they --- Where did you sell the horses, or what ---

BERTHA: Sell them you say?

PAULINE: Un huh. Did you sell the horses to a ... or something like that?

BERTHA: We, at the time he used to sell them to horse buyers that come in. And then there were some of the horses that went for chicken feed, but the most of them were sold to the buyers, you know, they used to be horse buyers come in. And the cattle, when we

sold them in 1940, my husband's health failed. And then we came here to Burns and bought a little home up here on the river.

PAULINE: Do you remember what Crane was like before the railroad came in?

BERTHA: Oh yes. When I come to this country there wasn't anything over here at Hines at all. And there was very few buildings, you know, scattered around Burns. There was, I think the old Anderson Hotel, and what they called the Cottage Hotel was still here, or were here at the time, and the French Hotel. But I don't remember more at that time. And there was a church down on Main Street; they called it the Baptist Church, or not the Baptist but the Methodist Church at the time when I came to the country. Then they, afterwards of course, moved that up where the Presbyterian Church is. That was finally torn away.

PAULINE: Oh, then the old Presbyterian Church was once down on, that building was down on Main Street at one time. I didn't know that. I supposed it had been up on the hill all the time.

BERTHA: No, it was down right on main street, about where the old Burns Hotel --- was it the Burns Hotel? My mind is kind of gobbly I guess. Well anyway it was on Main Street. And it was the Presbyterian Church then. And then it was afterward torn away, and then they built the new one.

PAULINE: Yes, I remember when they built the new one, but I was little. I went to church in the old building. What about Lawen, how much of a community was there then?

BERTHA: Well that was just really a big settlement, you know. At school, of course, the children from all over around close, you know, all went to school there. Some went horseback and some just walked, and got there, and of course anyway to get there.

PAULINE: Was there a store there then?

BERTHA: Yes, the store was down where the schoolhouse used to be; down along the edge of the slough, what they called the slough. And of course after the railroad come through, then they moved the store and school up, you know, closer to the railroad track. But when I went to school there, it was down on what they called the slough. And the store, oh Mr. Clark, William Clark run the store. And then they built the, or had the store ... the store that's there now, only it was down farther.

PAULINE: Did they have a saloon or any other, a blacksmith shop?

BERTHA: Oh yes, they had a saloon there.

PAULINE: What about a blacksmiths shop?

BERTHA: Well I think they had a blacksmith, I'm sure they had a blacksmith there because everybody used horses then. And there was quite a little settlement just around, you know, a short distance from the school.

PAULINE: Did most people make their own clothes, or did you buy your dresses at the store or did you make your own?

BERTHA: Oh my, made everything. We couldn't even go to the store and get a loaf of bread then. You had to make --- everything we ate, you know, we ate you might say. All pastries and everything had to make. And we made our own clothes. We made our own quilts, pieced quilts and made our own bedding and all that. We used to card wool, put between the ---

PAULINE: Well how did you do that? I mean ---

BERTHA: Oh we had cards, what they called cards, with the claws in, and put some wool in there and then you'd have to card it this way, and then it would just all roll up, you

know, it would be just fine.

PAULINE: And then did you spin it, or did you ---

BERTHA: And then spread it out on --- and then either tack the quilts or we would ---

PAULINE: Oh, I see, to make a quilt batting.

BERTHA: Yeah.

PAULINE: Is what you did, you made a batting.

BERTHA: The batting inside, you know.

PAULINE: And you just card the wool until it was nice flat pieces and then put it in the, put it in for batting. Did the ladies get together then to quilt?

BERTHA: No, each, you know, each one made their own. And we had to wash those, all those things on a board, of course. Lots of times we had to wring them by hand. Some had wringers to, you know, that they could use. But I know we always had to wring them by hand.

PAULINE: That would be quite a job, especially a heavy quilt.

BERTHA: And we used to take them out to the hot springs, and that was a good place to wash clothes because that water couldn't be beat, anything like that.

PAULINE: Well that's something that I hadn't heard about. I had heard about the hot springs, and they had a swimming pool there I guess in later ---

BERTHA: Well that was years after.

PAULINE: Yeah, years later.

BERTHA: You know after I ---

PAULINE: But I had never heard anyone mention it from, you know, in the early days. What did you do just take some tubs and then just go down?

BERTHA: Yeah, take our tubs. And we had a wash bench of course, and a wringer in between, and a tub on each side to wash those clothes and wring them through, and rinse them in that clear water. Then we'd usually put them in a tub and cover them over with --- until we got home with them, and hang them on the line.

PAULINE: Well that would be quite a laundry bag.

BERTHA: That's work now, I'll tell you.

PAULINE: Well I imagine. Oh I know. I know my mother had, of course, the conventional type washing machine, a Maytag you know.

BERTHA: We didn't have any washer.

PAULINE: And that was work enough, I can imagine washing them out by hand, it would be a terrible job.

BERTHA: I washed on the board longer than I ever did a machine. When my baby was born, of course I had no machine then.

PAULINE: Well what kind of clothes, and what kind of, well layette did you fix for your children when they were small? Besides blankets and diapers, did they have ---

BERTHA: Oh, they wore bands on babies then, you know, and long dresses.

PAULINE: Boys and girls both wore the long dresses?

BERTHA: Yes. There is more material in baby clothes than there was in our own almost. Because it came way down, you know, the skirts and pinning blankets, and all those things. They didn't wear clothes like, short clothes like they do now.

PAULINE: No. How many children did you have?

BERTHA: On, just one boy.

PAULINE: What was his name?

BERTHA: Chester, Chester LeRoy Carey, after his --- He was married and has two children, two girls. But he died in 1946, after the --- he went to the Second World's War. He never, he was wounded; he lived just a year after he got out of the hospital. He was in the hospital two years after he was wounded.

PAULINE: Well what about the town of Crane? Can you remember what it was like before the railroad came in?

BERTHA: There wasn't any Crane.

PAULINE: There wasn't any Crane before the railroad came in.

BERTHA: No. It was just a gap through the mountain there. And the only store there was, was at Lawen for a long time. Then after the railroad began to, you know, after it came through, why then of course they --- well I'll take that back, Grays did have a post office there, but it was just a ranch post office.

PAULINE: And this was at Crane, in the Crane area?

BERTHA: Uh huh. It was, and they also, then after that then they moved where the store was, Mr. Gray run the store and post office then after Clark left, a long time. And then of course since then different ones have run that store.

PAULINE: He took over the store at Lawen; Gray took over the store at Lawen?

BERTHA: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

BERTHA: And they had a hotel too, and a feed barn there, Grays did. It was the only hotel between Riverside and Burns, was there at Lawen, the old Gray Hotel.

PAULINE: Do you remember anything about a little town called Waverly?

BERTHA: Oh that was just years after, you know, after all this other. Why they had a



post office there, and there was an old couple that run --- they called it Waverly. It was way out by Wrights Point.

PAULINE: That was after 1900, I think.

BERTHA: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah.

BERTHA: Yes, that was long after I was married, been married for years. And then of course they had a, there was new people begin to come in, you know, and take homesteads. But when I came here there was very few people between here and there.

PAULINE: Can you remember the first automobile that you ever saw, or ever rode in?

BERTHA: That was in 1910. I did have a picture of that, the first one that come into Burns, but I'm afraid my granddaughter got away with that. I wanted to keep that, but I think she took it, I'm sure she did.

PAULINE: What kind of an experience was it, your first ride? Did you like it?

BERTHA: It was after my baby was born, and Lon Richardson, I know you've heard of him.

PAULINE: Yes.

BERTHA: He was the sheriff here once. He drove the car and took me home with the baby. And I was in misery all the time. (Laughter) It just seemed like --- well it was the first time I'd ever ridden in one in my life.

PAULINE: It was kind of a frightening experience.

BERTHA: Yes, it was. But that was in 1910. That was the first one that Smith and McGowan brought in here. Joe Rector afterwards bought it.

PAULINE: Did you used to put in a big garden when you lived out in the Crane area?

BERTHA: Yes, when we was up in Little Crane Creek, we raised a big garden. We raised strawberries, and my husband raised alfalfa. Lived there many years.

PAULINE: Do you remember during World War I when they rationed wheat flour, and you couldn't get very much?

BERTHA: Oh yes, yes we had ---

PAULINE: How did you manage without it?

BERTHA: Well it was awfully hard, but then we had to do it. So we managed, like everybody else. Everything was rationed; you couldn't get only so much of things.

PAULINE: Ida Cross was telling me about mixing the wheat four with rice flour to make it go farther.

BERTHA: Yes, we used to manage all kinds of ways. But at that time we raised a good garden. And I used to dry corn and, and we would can my strawberries for fruit. We managed, it was hard.

PAULINE: The food supplies that you had to buy, did you buy them locally or did you go out to Vale or Huntington, or someplace to get them?

BERTHA: When we got so we could buy any amount, we used to go to Idaho and buy, of course buy our fruit, buy flour, and buy everything. Buy a year's supply at a time, and bring it in with a wagon and team.

PAULINE: I was wondering too about the canning, when you canned things.

BERTHA: What?

PAULINE: I was wondering about when you canned, you know, your fruit and vegetables and that sort of thing. Just how, what's the earliest thing, time that you can remember when you canned food?

BERTHA: I just, sometimes I would can things open kettle, but the vegetables I always cold packed and would put them in my jars and boil them in the boiler, one of those old fashioned boilers, you know, that you used to ---

PAULINE: Did you --- you had a wood stove, or ---

BERTHA: Oh wood stove, yes.

PAULINE: What kind of fuel did you burn with it, pine or ---

BERTHA: We burned; no we didn't have any pine. It was juniper and mahogany is what we always burned. My husband would go on the mountain and haul down every fall enough to last to the next fall. We never had any electricity or appliances of any kind. We had coal oil lamps.

PAULINE: Can you remember having to go to the dentist?

BERTHA: Well when we did, we come up here to Burns.

PAULINE: I've heard some stories about the dentist would get in his buggy and go out and go around the country. But I didn't know whether ---

BERTHA: No, he never did while we were --- never for us. Dr. Brown, his name was, of course he has been dead for a long time, he was a dentist here. I don't remember ever --- I think he was the first dentist around too. But I'll tell you, we didn't take care of our teeth like they do now.

PAULINE: No.

BERTHA: ... about having them filled, and all.

PAULINE: Well they didn't have the nice equipment to use then that they did either. I imagine it was kind of a painful experience to have a tooth filled or something.

BERTHA: Yes, it was. Of course Dr. Hibbard, he was a dentist here, you know,

Llewellyn's father he was a dentist here for a good many years.

PAULINE: I'll check my recorder to be sure it is working right.

BERTHA: I reckon you read that it will be crazy. (Laughter)

PAULINE: Oh, it won't be. You'd be surprised how well these turn out. Did you used to go to dances and things when you were younger?

BERTHA: Oh once in awhile, we didn't go very often, because when we lived way up there in the hills, in the wintertime, of course my husband had to take care of his stock. And the snow was deep; we had winters then, not like we have now. But they were real winters, the snow would drift. The only way we'd get out of there would, he'd take the bobsleds and hitch a team to it and put a juniper tree on the back of it and make a road. We didn't get our mail only, well we got our mail twice a week, sometimes, and sometimes we didn't get it that often.

PAULINE: Depend on the weather and how easy it was to get in and out.

BERTHA: And of course they took the mail by team, you know, through, to Venator. Venator's had a little post office there at the lower part of the country. And we had a mailbox out along the highway. One day of the week we would go and get the mail, and the last of the week the neighbors above us was, it was Browns, and they used to go then. We'd take turns, you know, getting the mail. That's the way we managed the mail. We had to go horseback or make a trail with the team and our juniper tree. I'll have to tell you times was different from what they are today.

PAULINE: Well I'm fast realizing this in talking to the different people that lived here way back then.

BERTHA: When I came to the country from here to Bend there was no such a thing as a

highway, it was just a rough road, you know, gravel road.

PAULINE: How long did it take you to come across from Bend to Burns?

BERTHA: Oh, let's see, well I came from Prineville and we was, I think it was three days coming.

PAULINE: From Prineville to Burns.

BERTHA: Well we lived 13 miles north of Prineville, and from there to here was three days.

PAULINE: Did you come in a buggy or did you come on the stage, or ---

BERTHA: No, my Uncle come after me, and my Uncle and his sister, my Aunt. And we'd stop at places, the first time we stopped was up, up above, oh somewhere on the Ochoco. And the next night on Buck Creek. And if I'm not mistaken the next night here.

PAULINE: Well I drove to Bend yesterday, in just a little over two hours.

BERTHA: I know, that's some difference.

PAULINE: Some difference, I guess.

BERTHA: I should say so.

PAULINE: Well it was quite a long time before the roads of Harney County were improved to any great extend, wasn't it?

BERTHA: I should say it was. For a long, long time, now the way we had to travel would be --- of course we used to come to Burns with a buggy, a buggy and team. But usually we'd come from our place to Lawen, stay all night, and then on to Burns and stay over night here and do our trading or whatever we had to do, and go back the same way. So, of course I suppose by driving the team real hard we could have --- but it was fifty miles. Of course the way the roads were, why it was a whole lot different. We didn't get out of

the hills up there very much until of course after the boy got, or after he went to go to school, of course we bought a little home in Crane. That was after Crane began to build up, you know, and they had a school there. And we'd move out in the wintertime, and I would stay there with him and send him to school. His father was back and forth, but he had to stay on the ranch to take care of the stock. This is the way we had to do.

PAULINE: Were you living in Crane then at the time that they had the fires there?

BERTHA: Yes, the time that Leland Weittenhiller burned to death.

Is that what you meant, the dormitory, where the dormitory burned? Yes ...

PAULINE: Then they rebuilt the school after that.

BERTHA: Yeah. Then, of course after, they've had several fires there, but then that was --- we weren't living there only when they had that dormitory fire.

PAULINE: Oh, he was a boy that was boarding in the school at the time, Weittenhiller?

BERTHA: Let's see, yes, he was going to school then, because we were living --- I don't remember, I think that's --- well the first year that he started to school is when that influenza broke out, you know. And his first teacher was Karen Biddle, and she took the flu and died. And then Effie Carey, his aunt, she taught part of the school then, and then to finish up with Ethel Brown, she --- Ethel, let's see what was her name --- Bartlett, she married Curt Bartlett after that. She was good. There was three teachers, and then finally they just quit school, didn't have it anymore. So many died.

PAULINE: This was about 1917, wasn't it?

BERTHA: Yes.

PAULINE: Of course after the railroad came into Crane, it was quite a booming community.

BERTHA: Oh yes, there was quite a few people went to Crane then, and built little homes. They set up a depot there. They had two hotels. And they had several fires there, and no way to fight fires, you know.

PAULINE: No. Well is there anything else that you can remember about early days in Harney County that you can think of?

BERTHA: Well ---

PAULINE: That's a broad question.

BERTHA: I expect there is a lot of things I could think of, but I just can't think of anything now that is of any importance.

PAULINE: I asked Bessie Duhaime, I talked to her Tuesday, and I said I was interested in knowing how women survived out here in the early days. And she said it was pretty difficult.

BERTHA: Well I'll say.

PAULINE: It was a lot of hard work, and not too much luxury.

BERTHA: I want to tell you they worked, from early to late, there was no fooling around about it. And we had nothing to work with, only just did everything the hard way. It isn't what it is today. Well I don't know of anything else.

PAULINE: Well I sure appreciate your taking time to visit with me.

BERTHA: But I'd like to know what I've said.

PAULINE: Well let's play it back and see how you sounded.

BERTHA: I expect it sounds crazy.

PAULINE: After we listened to the tape I asked Mrs. Carey about the influenza epidemic. And I asked her how they took care of the sick people. And she said well they just really

didn't know how to take care of them, and they didn't know what to do for them. So they were afraid to feed them too much, much more than broth, and they just about starved their patients to death, because they didn't feed them anything. That, and to open the windows wide so that there was lots of fresh air. This she said was the worst possible thing they could have done for them. But they just didn't know how to take care of the flu patients at this time.

We talked about some other things. She remembered what the kids, in her day, did for entertainment. There was no television, of course, or radio. Parents kept children pretty busy; there was lots of work to be done. And when the children got home from school, they had jobs to do, and there wasn't a lot of extra free time. She said she was a great big girl before she ever saw a piano, but that they had an old organ which the neighbor's kids would all come in, the neighbors would all gather around and someone would play the organ and they would sing. And that this was their main form of entertainment when she was a girl.

She told about going to dances when she was young. Several neighbors would all pile into the wagon and go to another's house. They'd roll up the rugs and move the furniture back so that there was room to dance, and then they'd dance. The thing that was different about it than it is today, she said, was that when they had a dance, they just danced all night. They'd have a supper at midnight, and dance until morning. Then she said, when we got home from the dance there was no going to bed to catch up on the sleep. There was work to be done and they went ahead and did their work just as usual. But instead of going out every night, or every two or three nights like people do today, they thought they were doing real good if they got out once a month to spend having a



good time with the neighbors.

She noticed a great change in the way things are today, and the way things were when she was a child and growing up. One thing that she noticed in particular was the behavior of the children. Parent's discipline was very strict, and children generally knew that if parents spoke they had to mind; there was no ifs, ands, or buts about it. She tells of going to church with her family as a girl. She said that the children were all seated in the front row and they sat still and they did not make any noise until the services was over. She told of going to church recently and the small children being allowed to get up and leave anytime to go out to the restroom, and one thing and another. And in her day, you went to the bathroom before you went to church, and then you sat still until church services were over.

She said when her mother or father spoke to her she knew that she might just as well mind, because there was not going to be any choice. But she said she felt like that the children really came first with parents then. They took their job of raising their children very seriously. And that they, children's welfare, and education and well-being came first. She feels that maybe today, this isn't quite as much true in some cases. That parents are so busy with their own lives that they let the children fend for themselves more.

Another thing Mrs. Carey remembered in our conversation after the tape was finished was that she could remember that winters seemed to be much more severe in the early days. She said she thinks its been at least 40 years since we've had a really hard winter like they had at one in Harney County. She remembers drifts piling up between Christmas and New Years that didn't go off until June. She said that the lake, she can remember the Malheur Lake having water in it clear up as far as Saddle Butte,

and in the spring there was water everywhere. In the wintertime when this was frozen over the community used to have skating parties there, she told early on, on the tape. And even up into the 1920's skating on the lake was a form of entertainment in Harney County.

Bertha further told me that when her husband's parents came to Harney County in 1883, that they came to Egan and spent the winter, and the children walked to school.

-pb-

bl