

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #179 - Sides A/B

Subject: George Hibbard

Place: Hibbard Home - Burns, Oregon

Date:

Interviewer:

GEORGE HIBBARD: I think I was telling you on the last tape about Dad, and most of the family got down to Bill Brown's Ranch, which is what is called Fife on the Bend road. The turnoff is on the Bend road down to this. When they arrived there his sister --- because Bill Brown never married, was there and she gave them breakfast and gasoline to get on home.

And now I want to tell you a little about Bill Brown. He had several ranches, some out in Silver Creek, and on further towards Prineville. This one that I have told you about was closer to Prineville, well it was near Buck Mountain. And then he had the Gap Ranch, and he raised horses, and he raised sheep and he became a very wealthy man. And he never married. In fact, you had an interview with Peck Amort, and he told about being --- driving chuck wagon and cooking for Bill Brown's crew.

Well, this Bill Brown had big herds of horses, and during the First World War --- I'm going to borrow a little from Tex Long's book. He went by Bill Brown's, and along with his horses gathered some of Bill Brown's, and took them to Bend to sell to the army. And in -- - the army buyer said, "How do I know all these horses are legally yours, and branded?" And Tex, knowing that he was a greenhorn, told him, he said, "You'll find that they all have the rising sun on the rim rock side of the horse, branded on them." Well, that's the end of that story.

But this Bill Brown in later life, when he began to --- well he was so well to do that -- Harney County National Bank was where he kept his account. And he would write a check on an old envelope, or a shingle, anything that came at hand, and his checks were good always. And the bank knew his signature, and that's all it took. Whether it was on a shingle, or an envelope, or on a printed check blank. But he was such an individualist, and as he grew older he gave --- I can't remember how much, it seems to me it was something like \$200,000 to the Methodist Home for Old People in Salem. And then he was no longer able to live alone, he moved down there and lived the rest of his life in this Methodist Home in Salem, and died there.

Now I want to tell you about an organization called The Order of the Antelope. It was formed, I think started by some Lakeview people, and also Harney County, because of the antelope range out on Hart Mountain. And it was for the preservation and propagation of the antelope. In fact now they have mountain sheep introduced in this same area, as well as on the Steens, and elsewhere. But at that time, it was more or less --- well there is the Sheldon Antelope Range that runs clear into Nevada, for their preserve, and antelope cannot be hunted in those areas.

And this Order of the Antelope would meet once a year, in July usually, atop Hart Mountain, in what they called the Blue Sky Hotel. And they would have a gathering of maybe two, three hundred people from all over the state, interested in wildlife. You took your bedrolls, and only men, no women allowed. And there was a day and a night, and the next --- it was on a Saturday, and broke up the following Sunday, I mean the next day.

And they would have a barbecue, of maybe a whole beef. One time they had the chef from Portland, named Henry Thele, who had a famous restaurant in --- Thele's Restaurant in Portland. But the chef got so drunk he didn't do such a good job on this

beef barbecue. And lots of times it did degenerate into a drunken mess, and when it reached that part, my father and brother Llewellyn both quit going. But it's a unique, and I believe it is still in progress --- organization. And the aim is still the same, to keep a good supply of antelope, which there are. Because, you know, there's open season every August which is really a poor time of year to have it, but that's what the game commission does.

Now I want to tell you something I found in an article, tribute paid to my father by his boyhood chum, at the time of his death. This man was L. H. MacMahon. And he was, I think I referred to him before, he was a lawyer in Salem, and later became circuit judge, and a most profane, and atheistic man who said that my father was spoiled when the Methodists got a hold of him. But he was the best dancer in Marion County until then. And somehow I think I inherited my like for dancing from him. But anyway, he told in this article how --- well he named his youngest son, this MacMahon, after my father, Eugene.

And they were at the Yachats in '97, when my father had the tuberculosis so very bad that he could only walk about fifty yards on the level, then have to stop and rest. And they were fishing in Yachats Creek, and their camp was up a little ways from where Dad was fishing. And this little year and a half, or two-year-old boy had a blue suit on, and he had wandered away from his mother and fell into the creek. And where my father was fishing there was a tree stump or roots that went down into the water, and the --- Dad saw a little flash of blue in this deep hole, and he jumped into ten feet of water and pulled the little boy up and gave him mouth to mouth --- got the water out of him and then gave him mouth to mouth resuscitation, and saved his life. And that was one reason why Mr. MacMahon was so indebted to my father, and felt indebted.

And he --- well this Gene died at the Veteran's Hospital, the same year after I was injured. And Judge MacMahon got the head of the Veteran's Hospital to send his best

doctors, neurologists and neurosurgeon over to my aunt's house the next year when I was in Portland, to see if there was anything they knew that could be done for me, which there wasn't naturally.

But he also, when the doctor that put my neck back in place, charged so much --- now I may have told you this before, he sent a \$500 --- a bill for \$500, that my father simply could not pay. And Judge MacMahon went up to the doctor's office in Portland, and said, "Here's \$250, and I want that bill marked paid." And the doctor protested, but he accepted that.

And in this same article, he tells that my father killed his first deer in '97, at Yachats. And as I told you in a previous tape, he killed his last deer in '39, which is 42 years that he probably got at least one, and sometimes more than one, of the --- a deer every year. And always the same rifle that he got from his Uncle George, which I still have. So it shows that the --- well the ways of the hunter are wily and long. Well, I mean if you live the life that my father did, as the doctors told him to do--- outdoors at least half the time. His life was long because he lived to be 81, and died in '44.

So now I'm all-alone, and I --- I was double recording on that, and I want to tell what I was telling one time anyway.

My father went down to the lake to see some people, a guy named Hutchinson. And they --- one of them wanted a set of dentures, and they didn't have the money. And they said, "We've got a sow." One of these razorbacks that lived in the tules down there. So Dad said, "Well I'll take the sow in on as part payment for the dentures." And he loaded her in between the front and back seats of the Pontiac that we had. And needless to say I didn't use the car for dates for a while until after it had been well scrubbed out and had new seat covers on it. But that was typical of him.

We also used to haul garbage in the trunk on the back of it. Not an ordinary trunk,

but a patented trunk that was attached to the back of the car. We would haul garbage from up at the hospital in our own --- out to the ranch to feed the pigs. And like I say, you never could depend on the car or Dad if he was going to get up early and go to the ranch. The --- he would say, "Oh, I'll be back at" ---

Hi Joe ... I know, Joe.

Dad one morning, it was the day I was to have my tonsils and --- out, and so he went out to the ranch that morning as usual, real early. And it came 8 o'clock, and I was supposed to be up to the hospital to have my tonsils removed, and no Dad. So they called from the hospital, and I walked up there and had my tonsils removed with local anesthetic. And my dad got back, I think, in time to take my sister Virginia up at 9 o'clock. Anyway, she had a general, not a local. But we both were out within the week. In fact I went to Crater Lake the following Saturday, over Labor Day.

But another typical thing that my father did was to take me in the front seat, and a woman, Mrs. ... in the back, and also a girl out here studying the cultural patterns of the Paiutes, named Bea Blyth. And we started down through the bird refuge, and up the canal road, to Frenchglen and then went up through Catlow. Pulled off the road, up a long hollow to a cave in a rim there, where they excavated and found Indian relics, and bones, and sagebrush moccasins that were dated back 9,000 years.

Then we went on down to Fields, and started north. And when we came to the Alvord, Dad drove out on it to show us what a nice smooth surface it had. And in getting back, he got too close to where the hot springs run out onto the lake, and we mired down in the mud. And it was a hot summer day, and I was sitting in the car trying to keep cool with a wet towel around my neck. And Dad got out and started to try to get out, and he went over to where there was a little cabin, a bathhouse that had a board roof and some, oh wood fence posts and all that he could pry with, and get the car --- and he sent this

Bea Blyth to the Alvord to get us some help. She had to walk; I think it was five or six miles. So Dad kept working, and finally just as she was coming down the road in a pickup with a man from the Alvord, he got the car out. And we got up on the road, and then we went on up to the Alvord and had to buy some gas and went on --- and started home. I think we got up to the Alberson or the Juniper Ranch and met my brother and brother-in-law coming out looking for us. And as I recall, we got back about 10 o'clock that night.

But this area down there is where the old borax works are. And they had vats where they boiled the hot water and evaporated it and accumulated the borax. And it was one of the early industries, mineral industries in this county. And probably one of the most productive, because as far as gold being found in Harney County, there wasn't very much. There is some I think on the east side of the Steens, and up at Idle City here in the Malheur forest. But never enough to make a real strike out of it. Although some of them thought they had.

But it was --- at that little bathhouse was where Claire McGill was born. And some of the women in the ranches --- the neighboring ranches, had a layette prepared for Catherine Rogers McGill, for the baby Claire. And I thought that might tie in fairly well with the history.

Now I want to tell some about our relationship with the Indians. It seems as far back as I can remember, we have always had Indian help, and still do. But we favored either one of two families, usually the Jim family. And my first recollections of the Jim's was the squaw that did our washing, named One-Eyed Suzie, and then her daughter, and then her granddaughter by a marriage, and on down to the present time. And also the Kennedy's, whose original name was Sixspear, or Shakespeare.

In a trip to the South, Atlanta, I saw a very close resemblance to the way we treated the Indians, as the way the southern families treated certain Negro families. And

it's --- well a platonic relationship. You sort of become their patrons, and see that they have food and clothing and yet they were second-class citizens in most people's eyes. But thank goodness I don't feel that our parents, our family treated them as such. They were always given clothes, and welcomed into the home. And the relationship with the Indians has always been very close with our family.

I was starting again now. I had just finished reading about the Indians. Well I think next I --- you asked me today to tell you the children of the family, and the order. Roberta was born in 1895; Eugenia, and that's spelled E U G E N I A, was born in 19---, 1898; and Hazel --- I mean Llewellyn was born in 1900; Hazel was born in 1902; Hal was born in 1904; and Frances was born in 1907; and I was born in 1913; and Virginia was born in 1915.

Next I want to tell you about the --- some of the characters that lived in this town in the early days, and one of them was Tom Stevens. He was a bartender, gambler, atheist, a coward, what have you. And it was also rumored that he and a very short --- he was tall and stoop shouldered, and there was a young, small, short --- well short man named Jefferson Bailey, and they used to go to Winnemucca, or Reno for the horse races. And it was told that Sidney Porter, the comic strip originator of Mutt and Jeff had used these two as the pattern for his comic strip. However, Wally (Welcome) told me in later life the --- somebody had contacted Sidney Porter, and he said, "No, that wasn't where he got the idea."

Nevertheless, Tom Stevens was some character. One time he was on a trip over to Canyon City, and the car he was riding in rolled off the grade and he crushed his chest some, he broke some ribs anyway. And they got him to the doctor in Canyon City, and the doctor said, "Well, I don't know whether you can pull through this or not." So he said, "If you want a minister, why you better see one." And so they got a minister for him, and

he confessed every-thing, the life he had been living and all, but then when he got about through why he said, "But you understand if I get well, this is all off."

And then he had a little game he played. He would come into the Harney County National Bank and ask for a --- well give them the money, and ask for a twenty-dollar bill. And then he would go down the street, and pretty soon he would come back with a whole bunch of change and hand it in to them, and then it would be twenty dollars worth, and then he would ask for another twenty dollar bill. And this had gone on a time or two, and finally Mr. Brown asked him what the idea was. Well he said, "Some of these times some of these guys are going to make a mistake, and it isn't going to be me."

One time the buckaroo boss from the Island Ranch came into town, his name was Henry "Tex" Long. And Saturday night, he made the rounds of the saloons. And he had his pay, and he proceeded to get drunk and gamble. And woke up the next morning and he didn't have any money left. So he decided to go back to where he had been the night before, and get some of his money. So he went into the Johnson Saloon, which was located where Alice --- The Vogue is. And as soon as he came in the door the bartender, Lee Caldwell, said, "Tex," he said, "you was pretty drunk last night, and the boys were taking you, here is the money I saved for you." I don't know whether he really did, or whether he just thought it the better part of valor to give him some money.

So then he went right north across the street to the Burns Hotel, which had a saloon on the bottom floor. And as he walked in the door, Tom Stevens was standing back of the bar, and he dropped his hand under the bar as though he was going to reach for a gun under there. So Tex just pulled up and fired, and the bullet went through the bar, under the counter top anyway, and hit Tom's belt buckle, and just knocked the wind out of him. He fell to the floor, and Tex just walked out and went up the street a ways to a --- about where Richfield is, to the hardware store and bought a box of bullets and



replaced the shell he had fired and the ---

#### SIDE B

--- and then started across to the ... front which was oh, along there in the Clemens Building. And he was going diagonally across the street. Well, by this time Tom had recovered his wind, and he had gone to the east window of the barroom, hotel, and raised it a little, and laid his gun across the bottom sill and was going to fire on Tex in the back as he was going over into the Red Front. And somebody yelled, they had seen Tom do this, so they yelled, "Look out Long." And he jumped and whirled, and the bullet kicked up the dust under where he had been, but it didn't hit him. And he started walking right towards that window, firing, and Tom Stevens was --- like I said, a coward --- and he broke and went up the stairs and hid under a bed, and lived to fight another day no doubt.

But this Tex Long, like I said, he had come to town and the boys would whoop it up, and they would ride their horses in the saloons, just like you see in Gunsmoke, and so forth. So he came into town one time, and the marshal, and it was before Rube Haines I think. I'm sure it was. Anyway, they were riding up and down Main Street, causing a lot of commotion, and so the marshal just took a shot and it hit the cantle of the saddle. It didn't hit Long. And Tex and his boys rode out of town. But, like I said, the early days there were some pretty wild characters around ---

Now I want to tell about an incident when my father got a lot of --- I don't know how many, ducks and geese. And as he quite often did, he got an Indian and his wife --- this happened to be old Tabby and his wife, to pick these birds. And they were working, it wasn't at this place, but down at the Young house. And Dad went into the woodshed, and he could see through the cracks. And while they were working out there --- and as you probably know the squaw always carried a sack to carry home the groceries or whatever.

And of course the buck never carried anything, and walked ahead of the squaw.

And so old Tabby took two or three ducks and stuck them into his wife's sack. And so when Dad came out of the woodshed, he just went over and dumped the ducks out of the sack. Well Tabby pointed his finger at his wife and said, "Ehhh, ehhh, ehhh, ehhh." And Dad just pointed his finger at Tabby and said, "Ehhh, ehhh, ehhh, ehhh," to let him know he knew who had stolen the ducks. But there was just --- one of the incidents I remember him telling me about.

Now there was a man named Pete Stenger, and it's spelled S T E N G E R. And he was an early timer here. In fact Stenger Creek is one of the branches of Spring Creek. And he lived --- well I don't know where he lived ... Burns was not formed and he held forth out at Egan. He owned all the land west of the Silvies between Burns and the river bridge. What is known as the Sweek Field, or Swick as we pronounced it. And, which Hilton Whiting owns now, and a lot of the Sweek property. And he was a very strong individualist, to say the least. He wasn't adverse to taking other men's wives. In fact two of them --- this occurred way back, I don't know when, but it would be before 1889. He had appropriated one man's wife, and when he --- her husband came and remonstrated. Why he told him, he said, "You better get out of town. I'll just give you till sundown to get out of town." Well this man got his horse saddled and came by Egan and told Stenger, he says, "I want you to know I'm leaving town, and I'm leaving two hours before sundown. So when the next guy comes along whose wife you take, why," he said, "give him those two hours that I'm taking off early." Well when the next guy came, Pete Stenger didn't give him any time to get out of town, he just shot him.

And then Stenger --- The freight wagon came with a barrel of whiskey, keg of whiskey, or whatever, and he was helping unload it, and he got his finger cut with a ---

well, on the barrel hoop. And he died an ignominious death with septicemia. So that was the end of Pete Stenger.

One time some gypsy horse traders were coming --- this is another subject now --- through this country. And they had a two-year-old colt that was lame, and couldn't keep up with the herd. And my brother Llewellyn, I can't remember whether he --- it seems to me he paid \$10 or \$5, or something like that, for this colt. And so he named him Stranger. And he was --- turned out to be a good horse, a bay. And well, while he belonged to Llewellyn, all of us used him if we could handle him. He was about as spoiled a horse as I have ever had anything to do with. When we had the barn here in town, he would try to go somewhere, and you would get down to the corner, and he would just whirl and come back up the --- into the yard whether you wanted him to or not. Or if you tried to ride him out to the ranch, that would suit him fine, and he would just go real good after he got to where he knew where he was going.

But he was the horse I told you about when we were stacking hay, and I had to ride pullback, to pull the net back. I would take his reins off over his head and he was supposed to stand. And I would set the net and the pull-up wagon would start taking it up the slide. And then I was to go and get on the horse and ride up behind the net and take a hold of the pull-back rope, so that when the load was tripped up on the stack, I could take turns on the horn and pull the net back. Well, time and again, just as I would start for him, why he would start pulling away and then he would head for the house. And I would have to go to the house and retrieve him, and ride back out there. And all the time they would have to wait while I got back with Stranger to pull the net back off of the stack. So he, as I say, he was spoiled, and he was exasperating, but he was a good horse. I remember finally we had to shoot him when he got old, and it was a pretty hard thing to

do.

Now I want to tell you about a man that used to live here, his name was Billy Carroll. He came as a young man out into Catlow Valley to take a homestead. And a neighbor by the name of Bob Koontz, also had a homestead. Koontz is K O O N T Z, Bob Koontz. And he, Billy Carroll, was about 22 years old, and this was dry land homestead out there ... and they had to dig their wells. Well he got Bob to help him, and they had a wench, and they started digging this well, and they got down as I recall about 80 feet. They would haul the --- one would let the other one down in the bucket to the bottom of the well, and they would dig, and the other one would wench up the dirt. They had got, you know, down to about 80 feet when one time the rope broke and it let Billy drop to the bottom of the well, in fact both of them were in the well.

Koontz went down to try to help him, and it broke Billy's legs, both of them. And this was in the winter. And they were both in the well. Koontz was all right, and he tried to crawl up the sides, but it was too big a hole, and they were there three days, until finally a neighbor came by and heard them yelling. And he, the neighbor then, got them out and they brought Billy in a wagon, and Koontz, into town with Billy's legs packed in snow. Because it was --- they were --- well anyway they wanted to keep the gangrene and infection from getting in the legs. And they brought him into town and they had to take the legs off. Below the knee at first, and finally they had to take them off above the knee.

He later became the county clerk. He --- and he served in that position for many, many years. He married a girl from out near Wagontire named Egli, Lela Egli. They never had any children. But he was one of the best-liked men in the community. Always happy and always pulling jokes on people, and getting them pulled on him.

One time, well there was a book written about him by Ann Shannon Monroe. She is also the author of a Bill Hanley book. She did a, oh, a very poor job --- she called it

Happy Valley. She recounted in this, about Billy's accident. And oh, she had it all romanticized and fixed up, and when that book came out, Billy was just furious and thought there was nothing he could do about it. She wrote the book and he couldn't stop it from being read. But it was a very untrue account of what actually happened.

As I was saying, he liked to joke and he had a little trick with the --- not a trick, but you can take an ordinary cedar pencil and hold the two ends, and have one person hold it and the other one can hit it edgewise with a piece of blotter, if you lay your --- or a piece of paper, if you lay your finger out along side the paper, and it will break the pencil in two. Well, there was a deputy sheriff named Bill Gould, and he came in and Billy told him, he said, "I can" --- well he showed him the trick, he didn't show him the trick, he showed him what could be done in breaking this pencil. So then instead of using a pencil, he had taken an oak pen, you know, ink --- a pen point, and taken the pen point out and made it -- sharpened it in a pencil sharpener so it would look like a pencil. And he held that and told Bill to see if he could break it with his finger along side this blotter, or a piece of paper. Of course Bill came down kerwhack! And it was on this oak pen, and it didn't break. It about broke Bill's finger. He went swearing back to the sheriff's office.

But then, at this time the courthouse got some inside plumbing, and they had outside toilets with these depressed type flushing devices. The lid had to be depressed. And so some of the --- Billy was in the Kiwanis, and they had a big picture of him. And so they, the people of the clerk's office, the deputy got one of these toilet seats and framed his picture, and had it hanging in the clerk's office upon the wall. And it was framed with the toilet seat. And they got it up while he was gone to Kiwanis. And when he came back, he came in and he looked up and he saw that picture, and saw what it was framed with, and he just didn't know who to blame. Everybody in the courthouse was standing around the doorway to watch him for his reaction. He just had to swallow his pride and

accept it, because there was no way of getting back on everybody. But he was, as I say, he was a good sport.

He was in this play, "The Womanless Wedding", as a --- in black face. I don't know whether you saw the cookbook that the E.S.A. (Epsilon Sigma Alpha Sorority) got out, but along about 1926, or '27, the Kiwanis put on what was called "The Womanless Wedding". And it was more or less a tabloid --- well if you want more about that, I'll do it at another time.

I think I told you about the --- my father getting the artifacts out of an Indian grave at Yachats. And it was the same time when he was over there in '97, with L. H. MacMahon and his wife. But they had another reason for being there, besides this Indian grave washing open in a shell mound, oyster shell. The Indian had been buried in his canoe with his dog and his muzzle-loading pistol, and bone handled knife. And his mouth full of coins, and I've got some of those coins yet, and then some beads. And the beads that hung over the big mirror in my father's office were some of those beads that Dad got from this grave.

Well he had, he had known that a lot of the Indians on the coast died from smallpox. So he was boiling everything that he got out of this grave, because he didn't know but what the man had died of smallpox. He found the --- well he got the skull and he was working cleaning this skull up, and he felt like somebody was watching him. And he looked up the trail, and there were two Indians. Well, he didn't know whether he was transgressing on some of their ancestor's graves or not. So he thought surprise was the best defense, so he just rolled the skull up the trail towards these Indians. And they stopped the rolling with their toe ... and the Indian just kicked the skull back to him. So he knew that there was no concern of theirs.

And one of the reasons they had come over to this beach to Yachats at this time,

was because they knew that at certain times of the year, and a certain part --- time of the moon, there is a small fish that runs inland and spawns on the sands in the beach. And it's like the grunion do in Southern California. And this is a pilchard, a small type of, like a sardine. And this was due, and so the next night why there were a few of them, and Dad and Uncle Mac went down on the beach and began picking up these fish, just here and there. And the Indians just sat up there and laughed at them. You wait, tomorrow night, lots of fish. And they had a tub, or maybe it was a basket, I don't know, but the Indians did.

So sure enough, the next night then the fish really came just in thousands. And all you had to do was just throw them up a little further on the beach. And the Indians just collected great quantities of these. And of course Dad and Mac all they wanted was a few to eat.

But the Indians built racks, sort of drying racks out of willows, and then they built fire underneath them with --- so that the smoke would --- probably a willow too, because that makes a better tasting smoke than some of the other woods, although alder is just as good. And they would smoke these fish, and semi-dry them --- Of course at the beach, you never know if anything is going to get dry or not. But, so they could take it back in the packs in their baskets, as part of their food. It's a phenomenon, I don't know whether it still happens or not. It's like the smelt that come in the rivers off the Columbia. You never know when they are coming, or whether they will come back the same the next year.

Well next I want to talk about Mart Brenton. He was Mrs. Hossman's father. He had been a bartender down in Virginia City, and then he came up with Pete French's riders. He was one of Pete French's buckaroos. And the Brenton Cabin in the refuge was named after him. You see French would get his buckaroos to homestead on land, and file on it. And then he --- of course he would furnish their food, and they had to have

a cabin and fence it. But then they would move on, why he would get it --- he would buy the land claim from them. And that's the way he got quite a bit of his ---

Well in later years then Mart married and he moved to Burns, and he opened a saloon. It was called The Star. And it was at the north end of Main Street, just before you get to the --- in the block before you get to the Bennett or Tonawama ---

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