

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #183 - Sides A/B

Subject: George Hibbard

Place: Hibbard Home - Burns, Oregon

Date:

Interviewer:

GEORGE HIBBARD: Dr. Llewellyn, spelled L L E W E L L Y N, Eugene Hibbard, came to Burns, Oregon, in Harney County, for his health from Portland. He started practicing dentistry in Portland, and he contracted tuberculosis, a rather severe case of it evidently. The doctors told him there was nothing they could do for it. The best thing for him was to find a high dry climate. So he had some man, about his own age, who agreed to come with him on a trip to Eastern Oregon. They found out they had to have a spring wagon, which they purchased, and left from LaGrande in 1898, and drove south into the Harney Valley. As they tried to cross the Silvies River out where the Willow-Ray Dairy now is --- at what is called the Stancliff Lane, they pulled the spring wagon apart. They came on into Burns with the parts, and had it repaired.

My father's sister was teaching in LaGrande, was why they started from there. My father was already married, having married Ina Maude Works in 1894, and had two daughters, Roberta Vincent, and Eugenia Skiens. Eugenia --- Roberta Hibbard, and Eugenia Hibbard in Portland. But he left his wife and girls there when he came here.

The man with him was named Shelley --- S H E L L E Y Morgan, a Portland businessman, whose son is now a surgeon --- probably retired in Pendleton. As my father came in on Foley Drive below the hill, he said, "If I ever live in this town, I'm going to build my house on that rocky point." And that is where this house, my father's, is

standing today. He and Mr. Morgan were self-sufficient, in that they could buy what perishables they needed, either at the store here in Burns, or at The Narrows, which was run --- called by a man named Charlie Haines. Or from the ranchers they stopped at --- going to the Steens Mountain. For six months they lived on the mountain off of the fish and game, plus their dry supplies, which they carried with them.

I remember an incident that my father told me of. He was riding a horse up a stream on the Steens, and he saw a trout so large trying to get upstream to spawn, that its back was sticking from the water. He had a 22 with him and he shot the fish, dismounted, and they had it for their evening meal.

Another time he saw a deer, a rather small buck and shot it with the same rifle, and it dropped. He and his dog approached it and he took his hunting knife and stepped on the deer's horns and started to cut its throat, when it suddenly regained its senses and pitched him down the hill. It had evidently just been stunned by the bullet striking its spine. The deer got to its feet and started to jump down on to him, but the dog pulled the deer to one side. He had many such scary escapes.

He also told me that up on the Steens he found a spot in a little aspen grove, just over the summit where he thought surely no White man had ever been before. As he wandered through the grove, he came on to a remains of a cabin that was so old that there were new aspens growing up through what had been the roof. At that point he decided that there was no spot that he would ever reach where White man had not been before. This was evidently a beaver trapper's cabin. As there were numerous trappers in this area, in the early days, early days.

I also remember another incident. They had come down to The Narrows, and my father had a canvas-covered boat, somewhat like a kayak, that was to be assembled with a wooden frame. There were lots of ducks flying at The Narrows. So he assembled the

boat on the stone warehouse dock of Charlie Haines' store. And with his shotgun and gumboots, or hip boots on, and a heavy coat, as the wind was blowing, he launched his boat out into The Narrows. As he reached about midpoint, the waves were quite high, and he found that his boat was not properly assembled and it sunk under him, with his shells and his shotgun. And he began to try to swim to shore. The heavy clothing, plus the hip boots made this a fearsome task, although he had been a member of the YMCA and the Multnomah Athletic Club, and was a good swimmer. However, after going a few yards, or maybe a bit more, his knee struck the bottom. So, he stood up, and turned around, and went back to where his boat had sunk. Pulled it up out of the water, walked ashore with it, and proceeded to dry out the contents and his clothes. And lived to tell about it.

After two summers on the Steens Mountain, he returned to Portland, and the doctors examining him found his lungs had cleared. And they told him that they would advise him to go wherever he had found this --- his health, and make it his home. But, they would not advise him to spend more than half of the day in his dental office, as he might get tuberculosis again. That is a vow that I well remember he kept, even though he had appointments, he very seldom spent more than half a day in the dental office.

My mother, father, and two older sisters arrived in Burns in October of 1899, via the train to Ontario, and the stage ride over Bendire, and into Burns. At that time it took three days and two nights on the stage. He first set up practice in the old French Hotel, while living in the Burns Hotel. However, a short time later he found a little house to rent where they moved. And then in 1903, he had the present house built on the same rocky point where he first had decided to build, if he should settle here. In 1903, also, he had the little false front dental office building on East Washington built.

Dad studied dentistry in Portland. They had no school at that time. He worked

under another dentist named Nicholas, or Nichole, and learned to do laboratory work, and the necessary things in a dental office. Then started practice, after passing the state board in about 1890. I recall that he went to a mid-winter fair in San Francisco in 1890.

My mother, at that time, was about sixteen and had just graduated from Portland High School, which was the only one in Portland at that time. And had got a job as bookkeeper, and the only bookkeeper, for the Meier and Frank Store there. They were that small. They were married in 1894. My mother was, as I have said, Ina Maude Works, born in Au-Sable, A U - S A B L E, New York, in the Finger Lake region, and came to Portland.

I want to go back about ten years before his first trip, that I have just described in here for his health. He came into this country with his father in 1888, on a site seeing trip from the Willamette Valley. I remember him telling of one incident in which they camped out at Warm Springs, just south of Burns, which would be at the Hines Mill. He found a nest of mallard duck eggs. He put those in a bucket of oats and wired it to the wagon reach, and then the next night they camped at the top of Sagehen. That evening he took his 30-30 rifle, and up on the point under a juniper, he shot a buck deer. That rifle is still in my possession. It is a special gun, made for his uncle. He always shot with a peep site, and was a very good shot. He killed his last deer at the age of 79, where the railroad tracks cross Poison Creek, or Taylor Creek, north of Burns about fourteen miles, or I should say about ten miles.

Now I would like to regress a bit and tell of an incident, or several incidents, that occurred in about --- in the spring of 1914. My father purchased a new Model-T Ford from Harry Z. Smith, and Archie McGowan for \$635. Llewellyn, who was 14, soon learned to drive it. With him acting as mechanic and chauffeur, my father took Eugenia, 16, and Llewellyn, 14, in the car with his dental equipment, including the old foot engine to drill

with, and started on a tour of the big ranches to do dental work where it was needed. The roads and the distances involved precluded many people from coming to Burns for their dental work at that time.

They started the 18th of May, and drove to Drewsey where they worked, even up at Beulah, or Agency Ranch. Then coming back to Drewsey, there was a spring shower, and as the old Model-T's had poor dim lights, they came to the bridge of the --- that crosses the north fork of the Malheur in the edge of Drewsey just after dark. The lights being dim, my brother ran the car accidentally up onto the bridge railing. My father gingerly got out and walked over to Drewsey and had a team come and pull them back onto the approach. Then they crossed safely, and spent some time there doing dentistry.

As they were going up the Stinkingwater Grade, they met a six-horse freight team coming down. You understand the roads were very narrow, and the drops on the sides were as precipitous as they are now. My brother pulled the car to the side as far as possible, and the team started to go by. Just as the leaders came by the side of the car, they became frightened and started to back up. This put the rump of one of the horses, almost in the back seat where my sister was sitting. She didn't know which way to jump, over the bluff, or stay with the car. My father stepped out and took the lead horses by the bridle, and led them by so that safe passage was made.

From there they went on down to Juntura, then over to Crowley and Barren Valley, then southwest to Folly Farm, then on down to the Juniper Ranch, also known as Albersons. Then on down to the Alvord, with others in between, Mann Lake and others. At Alvord they had an unusual experience. They would work during the cool of the day, and then in the afternoon as it got warm, and they were wanting some rest ---

SIDE B

--- they would take a drive. This evening they were driving south of the Alvord where there are some rather deep washes across the old road. There was some characters who worked at the Alvord that knew my father was collecting in silver or gold for all the work done on this trip. They decided he was a prime holdup prospect. Three of them, one of them named Rhodes, nicknamed Dusty, decided to hide in one of these washes beside the road and collect the money. The only gun they had was a 22 rifle. They got in the wash on their hands and knees, and when they heard the car they began to approach where the road would cross. The only trouble was the one that was carrying the gun was behind Dusty Rhodes. And walking on their hands and knees, the gun discharged and shot Dusty in the rump. That ended their holdup attempt.

My father, and brother, and sister did not know of this until they had returned to the Alvord. There, when appraised of the fact that a man had been shot, and the circumstances by which he had been shot, they asked my father if he would get the bullet out from the wound, which he said he would. He took a bit of fine rabbit wire, made a hook in the end, inserted it in the wound and retrieved the bullet. All of this without Novocain, or anesthetic of course.

Then one of the other men developed a nosebleed, and told my father he was a bleeder. That the only way that the doctor in San Francisco had been able to stop or stem the flow was to pack the nostril. Well, my father said he would attempt to. So he used the same wire and served it through the nostril into the throat, hooked a piece of cotton on the wire, pulled it up into the back of the throat, then unhooked the wire, brought it back out the nostril, and then plugged the front of it. This saved the man's life. Needless to say, he didn't explain how painful it was, but such was medicine in those days.

On the same trip they went over across the Alvord through Trout Creek, through

the Whitehorse Ranch. There they also did work as they had along, and on the way back they started up Willow Creek. And it was such good fishing that they decided to stop and fish a ways. They were so engrossed in the fishing, and my sister Eugenia when she wanted to approach the stream, slid down over a little rocky bluff. ... And landed right between two rattlesnakes that were raised and on the attack. She screamed, and my father hearing her, came up the creek and grabbed a willow, and jumped across and disposed of the first one, and then the other snake. This little incident is recorded in another book that the children may have read.

I recall also on this trip, especially on further south, my brother Llewellyn learned to play the harmonica. It was quite a thing to be able to serenade one of the Mirandi girls with it, under her window at Andrews.

On this interview with Llewellyn and me, I see we were talking about the barn, evidently at the Whitehorse. I don't know, but I think that's what it was. And we were talking about Tom Allen, and I see the word here --- he was a brother-in-law of Allen Biggs, it should have been instead of Allen Bates. Well anyway, I'm getting mixed up on my family relations. By the way, did you know that Drewsey was called Gouge Eye, Pauline? Yes.

Okay, now Pauline I'm going to go on from there. I see in this next paragraph, and I think it should have been Llewellyn saying this, that they were advised not to take any spare tires with them, and they had to buy a tire before they came back because of the number of tires they had broken, or flats they had had. Llewellyn doesn't remember, and 'course I wouldn't know how many miles they traveled. Dr. Hibbard said it wouldn't be hard to figure out, and I say it wouldn't be over five hundred miles at the most. And then we are trying to estimate how far it was from one place to another. But of course they took side trips. And Llewellyn speaks about the different valleys and the Turner Place.

Then Llewellyn speaks about some of the grades being pretty steep, and they would have to carry five gallons of gas with them. I won't go into all of this. Because you know in those days, they couldn't even burn a gallon of kerosene along with some other gasoline in the Model-T's. And then it tells about having to back up the hill to keep the gas tank above the gravity flow. But then they got a pressure cap on the gas tank.

Then I say something about a man named Emmett using the brakes so much that you have to use the reverse peddle to come down a hill. And then it goes into the type of planetary system that the Model-T had with the three peddles. So, I won't repeat that.

Then I think you asked Llewellyn how he learned to drive, and I think I put in --- Archie --- Llewellyn told they practiced around town, and Archie would teach them to start with, or Nita and McGowan. And that's the way we all learned, was sitting in some-body's lap, trying to --- because we couldn't reach the peddles unless we had somebody to either do it for us or hold us up close enough that we could stand on them.

Well, I don't know how much is left on this, but I want to get this side finished, Pauline, so you can listen to this tape. And then I want you to call me and tell me how to proceed next. And I think what I need to do is to go year by year, and try to recall in those years --- well for instance I know that will bring in each child as it was born here, and tell some of the things that occurred.

Well, for instance in 1903, was when this house was being built. And of course 1903, was when the dental office was built also. And all these things --- and I think what I had better do is to try to annotate each year, and then go from year to year as to what I recalled. Then they are just going to be miscellaneous recollections of my father's stories he told us, and things that he did with us.

And oh, like skating and swimming and all these things that we used to do in the early days that are so different from the style now. We used to swim up in front of the old

flourmill dam. And we used to swim out here just east of the house, the place we called the sand bar in the river. Another place down Riverside Drive, called Robin Hood. Why, I don't know. But these are all nicknames for places around here, like down Riverside Drive was down on Whiskey Flat. And I presume that was because bootleggers lived down there during prohibition.

But, anyway, I remember some of them. I won't go into that now either. But these are things that I want you to help me with, and so I'm trying to complete this one tape, and I know it is just an hour, but it's a start. And the way I feel today I'm just so full of beans that I want to do everything in short order, and I know I can't do that. I'll try and close this and let you play it, and then I want you to call me and give me some pointers on what direction next. ...

Well, I see I have some more to complete this tape even. So I want to tell you about an incident of my fathers down at Yachats, on the Oregon coast. And this occurred when he was ill with TB, and before he was married. And they were --- he went down there with a Judge L. H. MacMahon from Salem, and his wife and little boy Eugene, who was named after my father. And they had a camp and were fishing, and this little boy had on a blue suit. And where Dad was fishing was in rather a eddy, a rather deep hole with a steep bank. And while he was dropping his lure into the water, he thought he saw something blue down in there, and he jumped down in, and it was this little boy. I think he was about two years old. And he had got away from his mother upstream, and come down and fallen down into the stream, and he saved this little boy's life.

But what they were down there for, they knew that a certain period of the moon, well at a certain time of the moon phase, and also at this time of the year, there was a fish like the grunion in Southern California. But, it's a pilchard type, a sardine type fish that come in on the beaches and spawn, at certain tides, and leave their eggs up to where

they are kept moist. And then when the eggs hatch, and the tide comes in again at high tide, then the little egg --- the little fish are able to get back into the ocean. And they aren't like the turtles that can get up and walk into the ocean; they have to have just the right tides.

Well anyway, they were at this beach, and there was this big shell mound that was washing open. And this shell mound had an Indian grave in it. And it was evidently a chief because he had been buried in his canoe with his dog and all his possessions, which included a muzzleloader horse pistol. They call them horse pistols, but they were a navy model 1812. And a hunting knife, and purse with shell money --- wampum, as it was called. And all this was in this grave that was washing open.

My father was cleaning all this stuff, because the scalp remains still had some traces of flesh, and he was afraid that the man might have died from oh, like one of the contagious diseases, smallpox. And of course in those days they were not given immunity shots. So he was boiling all this that he got out of this grave in a five-gallon can on a fire. And he had the skull, and was working on it. He had it boiled, and was cleaning it up out of the water --- cleaning it up when he thought he felt someone watching him.

And there were --- he looked up the trail and there were two Indians standing there. Well he didn't know whether this was one of their ancestors and they might be a bit unhappy with what he was doing. So he took the skull, not being a bowler, but being smart enough to think that a good offense is the best defense, just rolled the skull up the path to them to see what their reaction was. Well, one Indian stopped it with the toe of his foot and said, "Ugh," and kicked it back to him.

He kept that skull and had it in his dental office, and the last I knew it was in Carroll, or Bud Hibbard's dental office. Because it showed the nerve apertures in the jaw where dentists use the needle to block nerves.

Anyway, he got about --- I don't know how many thousands of beads, and that skull and a lot of Indian artifacts out of that one grave. And those were all in the waiting room of the dental office. So I will close that incident. But that was one incident of his early life that I wanted to include. And I don't know, I may still have some room on this tape. And I'll try to think of something else.

I recall one time Dad had had a partner in dentistry here named Brounton, who had --- his wife was a Bates. That the city of --- the town of Bates was named after. And she is still alive over in LaGrande. Dr. Brounton is no longer dead --- I mean is no longer living, he died at 80. He practiced dentistry until he was 80.

And this Brounton family came over from Canyon City to visit us, and we decided to go up Sagehen hunting, up towards Willow Creek Flat. And I went along, although the boys of the Brounton's were older than I. And we got up a ways and I began to play out, and tire out, and we came to a sheep camp with a sheepherder in it, and so they left me there while they went out hunting for Sagehen.

And I recall this sheepherder asked me if I was hungry. Well, of course I was. So he said, "Okay, we'll have us something to eat." And he opened a can of string beans into a frying pan, and a can of peas, and a can of corn, as I recall. Or, maybe some tomatoes, and held it over the fire and stirred it all together. It might have been slumgullion, or it might have been sheepherders stew, I don't know what. But, it was some of the best tasting food I thought I had ever tasted. And I don't recall whether they got some Sagehen on the trip or not. But I have never forgotten what a wonderful meal I thought that sheepherder cooked for me out over a campfire in the sagebrush.

I presume that was one of the early Irish or Basque sheepherders up here in the --- early days that used the, what is now BLM land, without having to pay head fees, or rental, or anything else. As you know the Basques didn't own any land, and they would

winter their sheep on somebody's ranch, and lamb them sometimes at the home ranch, and sometimes range drop their lambs. But when the BLM came in why it put the sheepherder, particularly the Basque, out of business pretty much. But, I won't go into that either.

But that is the phase of our early development here. There were, as you know, thousands of sheep in Harney County, there's just a few hundred, or few thousand now. And --- but the reason the sheep, and the mountain sheep on Steens Mountain were decimated was because of the scabies which the domestic sheep gave to the mountain sheep. And it became part of the reason that the mountain sheep got down to such small numbers. In fact I think there were fourteen rams ---

(End of Tape)

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