

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #4 Side B

Subject: Amy Catterson

Place:

Date: April 7, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Amy Catterson was raised on a farm in Montague, Michigan, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Leake. After Amy's mother died, her father became discouraged and sold his farm, and his produce and farm machinery business. He had received some literature from Adam George telling what a wonderful place Harney County was.

So he sold everything and moved out here to take up a homestead north of Swan Lake. (This area borders the Malheur Bird Refuge.) Amy's sister was teaching in North Dakota and she came out to take up a homestead next to John Leake's. Then he sent for Amy and her brother and they came out. This was about 1907. Amy took up a homestead just east of her father's and they were all there in this same area together.

When her father decided to drill a well an unusual thing happened. He was going to drill for water. He had Walter Hodder do it. I don't remember how far they went down, but anyway, it just blew everything, the machinery and everything out of the well and that burned for a year. People came from everywhere to see that well.

John Leake had become discouraged with farming in Harney County and the swamp gas well was the last straw. He was a carpenter by trade and left to go to New Mexico where he built schools. Amy's brother continued to live on the homestead.

Brother got tired of people coming, people came from West Virginia, everywhere, to see the well, they just couldn't believe it. So my brother got tired of it or it would still be

burning yet. So he filled it up and that was the end of that.

Amy sold her homestead and started teaching school. She taught at the Poujade place close to Harney. Temples own this place now. Ivy (Bunyard) and Ruby (Nichols) Poujade and Dick Eivers were some of her pupils. Then she taught at Trout Creek, (near Denio) now the Beatty Place and some of her pupils were the Adrians, the Catlow girls, Ora and Cecil Dolan. This is now called the Fields area. Then she taught below Lawen about ten miles. One night the schoolhouse burned and she lost everything she had. Rose Crawley, George Hendricks and Lee George were some of her pupils.

This was the end of my teaching career. Then I came up here to Burns and I worked for J. C. Turney, and I was a stenographer for him in his real estate office. And I worked at the land office. What my work was, was to enter all the homestead entries in these big ledgers.

Then she was married to Ray Catterson and they moved to Nevada where he had teams and hauled gold and silver ore from the mines. She says, "I lived in every town in Nevada from Lake Tahoe to here, except Lovelock." They went to Rawhide, Nevada first and lived there for a long time. Their children, Jack, Eldon and Gordon were born in Yerington, Nevada.

Ray Catterson was born at Lawen in 1887. Mrs. Catterson didn't know when his parents came to Harney County, but thinks they had lived there for a while before Ray was born. Other children in the Catterson family were Ralph, Frank, Scott and one girl.

After living and working in Nevada for several years, Ray felt he wanted to come back to Harney County. They did several things when they came back. They ran the Diamond store for two or three years. They owned a house in Crane across from the

school, the big house where one of the teachers lives now. Their sons all graduated from Crane High School. Ray Catterson worked for Joe Fine and they lived on the Hunter ranch for some time. Ray developed leukemia and battled this disease for ten years before he died. He refused to give up, continued to work on the Hunter ranch long after Amy felt it would be wise for him to quit. He would go to ride for cattle and she would go along to be sure he would get home all right. He would be so tired he would fall asleep on the bed as soon as they got home. After his death, she sold the house in Crane and moved into Burns where she now lives.

Amy remembers taking the laundry to the Warm Springs near Crane. The clothes come out so white and clean, she remembers. It was the best water in the world for washing.

Ralph Catterson and his wife, Dr. Island, owned and operated the swimming pool and health resort there. They had a house there and a swimming pool and bathhouses. After Dr. Island's death, Catterson lost interest in the place and he sold it. It burned down and there is nothing much there now except the springs and the remains of the foundations, etc.

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