

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #5 Side A

Subject: Harry Clark

Place: Drewsey, Oregon

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Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Harry Clark tells the story of Bob Ward who went to Ontario to the rodeo. He was a very good rider, one of the best. The first day he took the wild horse event, a horse race, and a roping contest.

HARRY CLARK: So the next day the other cowboys thought they'd job him. The way they used to do it when they first commenced to roping, they used to line up all the ropers and turn one steer loose. And the one that caught him was the winner. So here was --- oh, six or eight or something like that --- all lined up. So these two had it figured out that when they turned the steer loose they'd cut in front of Bob Ward so that he couldn't get the steer, put Bob back behind the whole line you see. But Bob, instead of trying to go around them --- he was a pretty active fellow --- he just raised up in his stirrups, and threw out over the heads of the other fellows and caught the steer. He always had a long rope. He gave his riata a whirl, a couple or three of them, and wrapped it around his saddle horn a couple of times and piled the whole business, horses, riders and all, up with the steer. Well, the judges disqualified him because he fouled by interfering with the other riders. But he was the first one to get his rope on that steer.

... Pause in tape.

PAULINE: They had a racetrack in Drewsey and horse racing was a popular pastime. Whenever someone thought he had a horse fast enough to beat everyone else, they'd

have a horse race. They had horse races on the Fourth of July too, and in the fall when the work was done.

And baseball was a popular sport. All the communities had teams and they played one another. Crane would come to Drewsey, and Drewsey would go to Harney, etc.

HARRY: One baseball tournament they had Neil Dawson as catcher.

... Pause in tape.

HARRY: The pitcher was a fellow named Bonneville. He was an ex-league player, he'd played big ball quite a bit but they'd ruled him out of league play because of a little bit of dirty pitching. And Drewsey got him to come over and pitch for them, and it was just a game between him and the catcher was all it was. It was when they was putting the railroad in here and the railroad outfit at Juntura had a team, all big husky fellows. Drewsey was quite a bit ahead on score. One of these big husky fellows came up to bat and the pitcher turned one loose. Just as soon as he let loose of the ball he said, "Look out," and by golly the ball just sailed right along past him there. The batter says, "Say there, you want to be careful how you throw a ball like that to a man my size." The pitcher was a small man. The next ball took him right in the short ribs. The fellow took his bat and started out to the pitcher's mound. Dawson (the catcher) run and picked up the ball and threw it to the pitcher. The pitcher stood there with the ball in his hand. The batter walked out there about 15 or 20 feet from him and stood there and looked at him a little bit and threw his bat down. (Laughter)

PAULINE: He knew if he kept on he'd get that ball right between the eyes.

HARRY: There was quite a little large sized purse involved for the winner of that. And Drewsey got away with all of it. But that first pitch the fellow let loose was just an accident

and he warned the batter to get out of the way. "Look out," he told him. And afterwards he apologized and told him, "I'm sorry it just got away from me. I didn't mean it to be that close." But the fellow wanted to take it that it was.

Did I tell you about that fellow killing himself up there, Potts?

PAULINE: Yes, but what was the name of the fellow that found him?

HARRY: Mitchell. I don't know whether he was a minister or not, but the kids used to sing, "This is our story, this is our song, praise brother Mitchell all the day long." I think he used to hold church meetings occasionally in Drewsey. He had come from Silvies. It was getting pretty late in the day when he got to the old fellow's house up there. It was what he'd figured to do when he left Silvies was to stay all night with Potts. He heard the dogs barking inside. When no one answered the door he walked on in and found the man dead. He'd locked himself in with the dogs and shot himself. There was snow on the ground. He saw where he'd been shooting target there. Was where he'd taken a shot and walk over, come back, shoot again. He waved his last shell and killed himself with it. All those shells laying on the doorstep where he had been target practicing.

PAULINE: The winter of '89-'90.

HARRY: They called it an equalizer, which was what it was. No one put up any hay then at all, you know, and there was awful heavy loss in the country. If it hadn't been for the store here that winter --- John Daley was running the store here then --- he gave credit to everybody in the country. He got a mortgage on every-thing and looked out for the interest too. But if it hadn't been for him, the whole country was broke flat and they never would have come out of it. And two thirds of the country cussed him for it. That's always the trouble with those things.

I think I told you about the old editor of the paper who said he dreamt he died and went to hell. Devil told him not to tip that old iron kettle over because he had John Daley under there, and if he let him out he'd have a mortgage on all hell.

Heath was quite a wit himself (fellow that run the paper). He made up a piece about the neighbors, just used the alphabet and had one of his boys spoke it the last day of school. A place or two I've forgotten it, but it started out:

A is for Anderson who lives on the creek.

B is for Beede whose all the time sick.

C is for Capps with the Frenchman's coat.

D is for Dripps who is --- the goat.

E is for Ed, Bill Ward's blunder.

F is for Farnes as sure as thunder.

G is for Gabe who stole the sheep.

H is for Heath with the great big feet.

I is for Ida, Bill Ward's queen. (Ida Howard)

J is for Jim with his talking machine. (Jim Gearhart had the first phonograph that was ever in the country.

K is for Keeny who'll sit all day on a rock.

L is for Loggan, the city Doc.

M is for Moffet with the great big nose. (Grandpa Moffet)

N is for Norton wherever he goes.

O is for Poke who stole the pig.

Q is for quarter, two tens and a five.

R is for Ryan as sure as you're alive.

Here is another version of that:

Q is for quarter that's hard to get.

R is for Ryan that Bartlett met.

Jack Bartlett and Ryan had a fight one time but I think the other's how it was.

S and T, I forget what they were.

U is for Uncle whose always ready to bet. (That was one of Dan Davis boys.)

V is for five that's hard to get.

W is for Wallace we all know him.

X is the brand on old Grey Jim.

Robbins old horse. Robbins used to brand with the Roaming X iron. That's Abner Robbins iron.

Talking about irons, years later when they made bureaus out of everything, passed a lot of laws and everything --- Gearharts had a brand they'd used ever since they'd come to this country, and they wrote in to get it re-recorded again. It looks like that. It's called the Capital P. Jim Gearhart wrote into have it recorded and they wouldn't let him have it. Said there was someone else using it, the iron, before they did. They wrote back and forth several times and finally the fellow wrote and said, "You might just as well quit trying to get the Capital P --- he spelled it out Capital P --- iron recorded." Jim wrote back and said, "I'm not trying to get the Capital P recorded, I'm trying to get the Half Circle J Connected recorded." And they let him have it.

I guess they wrote back and forth for several months. But they wouldn't let him have it because someone down in the Willamette Valley was using the Capital P.

PAULINE: Back to the poem, was there anything for Y and Z?

HARRY: X is the brand on old Grey Jim. No, there's nothing after that. I told you about people being snake bit in this country?

PAULINE: Well, yes, about the Indian.

HARRY: That was old Pete Teeman, the Indian that got bit.

Joe Altnow's grandfather was gathering firewood, sagebrush for the branding fire and he got bit on one of --- I think the very front finger, I'm not sure which one it was, but he got bit and the snake hung on. He finally got it shook off and he walked over to the branding fire and stuck his finger in the fire and burned the end of his finger off.

There's been very few people in the country that got bit. One of the Heath boys, was playing up here, where there is a hot springs --- it's called the Sitz Hot Springs now, and they was playing around up there one day and he got bit on the toe. You know a bunch of kids always used to go bare footed. This youngest boy, he gets down and sucks that toe out. Never did bother the boy afterwards. I don't know whether he made an incision or not, but he got down and sucked that toe.

PAULINE: Did you ever have much trouble with rabid coyotes?

HARRY: One year up on the Calamity there was a lot of rabid coyotes in the country. There was a schoolhouse up there at the head of the valley. One day the Gearhart kids and the Davis kids was going to school and they met a coyote in the lane. They took a run at it to scare it, and it didn't scare it. It took after them. They all run and got to a fence post and got up on it. And it kept them there quite a while. Finally someone came along and killed it. It was a rabid coyote.

PAULINE: You never heard of anyone being bit by one?

HARRY: No.

... Pause in tape.

(Note: Harry and Pauline are sitting in front of the Drewsey Porter-Sitz Store looking north.)

HARRY: Did I tell you about where the Indians used to have their burial grounds? You see that little point of rocks up there? There used to be a trail up the river there and there was a little basin right up there on top. They used to bury their dead up there. When they died they'd load them on a packhorse and take them up there and bury them.

There was a couple of Indians got poisoned by alcohol here. Fellow used to run the store here, up here at the Odd Fellows Hall, got to making a little alcohol and peddling it. I won't call any names because --- but a couple of Indians got poisoned. Well the authorities wanted to know where they was buried because they wanted to know what killed them. They looked up there where they was camped up there above a little creek up above where Howards lived. They looked there for a week or ten days before they finally found them. The Indians wouldn't show them where they was buried.

... (Interruption by people going by on sidewalk.)

Someone finally discovered that they'd buried them right where they had the tepee. Dug a hole right under the campfire, set them up down there, put a big flat rock on each one of the heads, then covered them up and built the fire up again.

There was an Indian called Billy Washington. They put him on the witness stand. They had a trial trying to find out where they got the whiskey. When the doctor examined the bodies they found out it was wood alcohol that done it, and they was trying to make him tell where he got it. They had him on the stand for about a week. Some boy had

come in to help them with it (a lawyer to help from out of town) and they worked trying to get him to tell and he finally nodded his head down toward the store. They said, "Brown?" And he says, "Yes". And that's all he'd say. They finally said, "Well Billy how much did you buy there? You ever buy any there?" "Yeah." "How much you pay?" "\$1 a bottle." "How many bottles you ever buy?" "Oh hell, me don't know, maybe 10,000." "A \$1 a bottle was a big price for the stuff."

They didn't do anything about it. They patched it all up and said that the Indians stole it. They used to use alcohol lamps down here and they used it to light the lamps with and they said the Indians stole it from down there where they left it for lamp fuel.

The doctor had the corpse there in the side room. It'd been dead about two weeks. He opened him up and examined him. And old fellow Rueble was over them watching him. He came over to the store there, he came in one day, he'd been over there watching it and he said, "My gosh, there's just got to be something done about selling these Indians that rot gut whiskey. They've just got their lungs eat all to pieces."

They was tubercular and one only had a little bit of lung and the other didn't have hardly any lung left at all.

... (Discussion of map of Drewsey.)

HARRY: May G. --- run this house here. She had about two or three girls working for her. And by gollies, those girls, you'd never see one of them out on the street at any time. Old May she'd see to it that they stayed in all the time. And by gollies, the only time --- well it was when I was working at the store there --- and any time she needed anything she'd call me up at the store and ask me to bring it over to her, to deliver it. But you'd never see them on the street. And if they did want to come to the store, they'd wait till late. Old May

would call up and ask me if there was anybody in the store --- late, it would be almost closing up time --- and if there wasn't, well the girls would come over and do their trading.

PAULINE: Had a telephone then?

HARRY: Dell Baker organized a telephone company, had it all over this country. Called it the Drewsey Telephone Company. It was along about 1908 or '09. It took in this country and over to Beulah, Riverside, up to Crane and over to Burns.

Old Billy Washington came into the store one day. He said, "Me talk Injun in Burns." I called up Burns and finally got connected up and you could hear Old Billy all over town talking. He talked about five minutes and the sweat was just a dripping off of him. "Yeah, me talk Injun."

... (More discussion about map.)

HARRY: There's one thing though I want to tell you about. I don't agree with Percy about one thing. He said that out here at Stinkingwater it used to be a marsh --- well it was a treacherous stream all right, but it was quicksand. You couldn't no more tell where the quicksand was than nothing.

... Pause in tape.

HARRY: Milt Davis was in the horse business. That's where he made his fortune, you know. He and Joe Lamb up here used to ship horses every year, 700 or 800 head. There was quite a few strays in the country, Silvies Valley. They used to send thousands of head of horses up to Silvies Valley over there too. There was thousands of horses used to go out of this country. They used to leave here and drive them back east and break horses all the way. They'd have a bunch of riders --- this --- Arnold was one of the main riders. He told me he got a hold of one horse a going back one time that he was

really sorry he ever had to do anything with. He said he finally just got off and led him. He just bucked him to death, and he went ahead and rode him a day or two. They finally got into the shipping point there and they were selling horses there and some old farmer came in (Joe Lamb and Milt Davis was running the outfit then) and pointed out this horse and said, "That horse been rode?" And Arnold said, "He's been rode quite a bit coming over." He watched the old fellow saddle up to go and then he got on him and the horse just stuck his head up and walked off and never offered a bit of trouble. Arnold said, "By dang, I'd like to kill that thing!"

There was lots of money made on horses in this country. There would be maybe 700 or 800 head on a drive back east.

Wages for buckaroos was \$30 a month. You was lucky to get a \$1 a day right straight through --- and ride anything that come. Ed Ward was a good rider too. I was up to Pine Creek one time. I had three or four head of yearlings to finish breaking to ride and I got a hold of one big three year old horse that I knew that if he ever bucked with me it was all off with me, and so Ed stopped and watched me for a little while and he said I made him tired. He said get off that horse. Well, it was my saddle, but he climbed on and started out across the flat and pulled him right hard. And I knew what he'd do if he did because I'd just been babying him along to keep him from bucking. Ed pulled him and he started to buck. Ed straightened up in my little old short stirrups, he straightened up in the saddle and the stirrup leather's broke and off he went.

There used to be an old squaw here we called her Old Mother Few Clothes. She was a witch. Indians hung her down there on the bridge two different times and somebody happened to come along and cut her down and saved her. Knocked her in the

head with rocks a couple of times up here and left her for dead, and she came out of it. But they finally killed her. They thought she was a witch and they was afraid of her. They wouldn't have anything to do with her at all and made her stay off to herself. The only thing she could get to eat was just what she picked up for herself. She must have been 200 or 300 years old from the looks of her. Just all skin and bones.

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