

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #71 - Side B

Subject: Jessie Williams

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date:

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

(Sound quality poor. Jessie Williams is very difficult to hear most of the time.)

JESSIE WILLIAMS: I just move from one place to another. I've got box after box of magazines, paper, not of magazines, you know. I really don't want to get rid of them, and yet I don't have anything ...

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Well this is fine, I can just write on this. This will just be fine.

JESSIE: ... That old couple there that run that, their name is ...

PAULINE: Well now was this the Oakerman's that built the house that ---

JESSIE: Yes, that couple that is standing in front of that picture.

PAULINE: And you think it was probably about 1910?

JESSIE: Between 1906 and 1910. It was built and running in 1910, so it had to be built between 1906 and 1910, somewhere along in there.

PAULINE: And do you know what his and her names were, their first names?

JESSIE: ... I don't believe their names were on here. It seems to me it was Albert.

PAULINE: Well I could probably check around in some of the history books; it surely would come up. I just thought maybe you knew.

JESSIE: It would be in some of the back papers.

PAULINE: Yeah, I can do a little ---

JESSIE: I should know. I'm sure I should know. If it comes to me I'll call you.

PAULINE: Okay.

JESSIE: Maybe my girls could kind of help me remember. Names stick with young people, you know, sometimes.

PAULINE: And there were ten rooms in the house, it was a two story house?

JESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: And there were ten rooms, and they were full every night. This was people traveling through?

JESSIE: Well and freighters too.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Freight teams and people moving cattle. I don't know what all. I guess it was mostly people traveling through. Because the cowmen usually stayed with each other, you know, in those days.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah.

JESSIE: Her name was Maggie Vanderpool at the time she ...

PAULINE: Well was this Moe, was he ---

JESSIE: Her name was Maggie Moe, Vanderpool Moe.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

JESSIE: M O E.

PAULINE: And she met her husband while she was working there?

JESSIE: Uh huh. Well see, I don't know, they called him Zeke. I don't know what his real name was. (Laughter)

PAULINE: Did they live here after they were married, or did they leave the country?

JESSIE: No, I don't think they ... I'm not sure they were married here.

PAULINE: Uh huh. How old was she when she worked there?

JESSIE: Seventeen. ... I could get a hold of Charlie Spencer ...

PAULINE: Well we can ---

JESSIE: I'll find out.

PAULINE: Yeah, I've got, is that copied from that Baker thing? I've got that. I can ---

JESSIE: Yes. ... I've been through this so many times looking at people. Vanderpool's name is here. Yeah, her father, I thought he was in here.

PAULINE: What was his name?

JESSIE: I'll have to look back now. Abraham L. Vanderpool, but they called him Linc; they called him Linc. I suppose his middle name was Lincoln.

PAULINE: Lincoln. That sounds, Abraham Lincoln Vanderpool.

JESSIE: Maggie Shields. ... Well when Dick went down to Linfield College he run onto this history and he had this all taken off ... and then sent to me. Anyway ...

PAULINE: Well I guess you had to pay to get your name in the book, so that probably eliminated ---

JESSIE: Oh, did you?

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Oh.

PAULINE: The author would come in and go around and you subscribed, you see, and if you subscribed why you got your ---

JESSIE: Oh you got one of those big books, oh.

PAULINE: Yeah, you got your story in the book.

JESSIE: That's why they --- there has been two of them put in the museum, both by Culp's.

PAULINE: I would sure like to get my hands on a copy of one. If you ever know of

someone that has got one that they would like to sell, because ---

JESSIE: Well I was telling Maggie there that if she ever saw one, ... she said she saw one in Salem one time, and she said she didn't think anything about it until it was opened, and the page flipped open and her uncle's name was there. And she thought I'm going to buy that book. She didn't have any idea what it was. And she said she bought it for a little bit of nothing.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well this is what could happen. Well now at this time, the what, the Oakerman Ranch was the center of the --- they didn't call it Riley, they called it the Oakerman Ranch didn't they, or Oakerman?

JESSIE: Well the post office was Riley, right across the street.

PAULINE: The post office was at Riley.

JESSIE: Yes, it was Riley then. That's why they went back to Riley. It was in the Hembry; G. L. Hembry owned that store. And his name I think is in --- one of the Hembry's names is in there. G. L. Hembry owned that store, and he also had the post office. Now I don't remember ever seeing one of these books at Williams ...

PAULINE: Was there anything else there besides a post office and the store?

JESSIE: There was the residence over there, the Hembry.

PAULINE: Then the Hembry home. And ---

JESSIE: Well now she could have told you that. That's all there was when I was married and went out there, that's all I can remember being there. It still seemed to me like there was some other buildings there, but I can't ---

PAULINE: Well there was probably a stable.

JESSIE: Oh, no doubt.

PAULINE: For the freighters.

JESSIE: Well the Oakerman's had a large stable and corrals and that kind of stuff, and

their horses and all there. And that ... you see in that picture, there is a ... there, just where that picture shows it.

PAULINE: Oh, in this one. I picked this ---

JESSIE: In the drawing.

PAULINE: In the drawing. This is from the backside.

JESSIE: No, that is taken out --- you know where the building set, that picture is drawn from standing back this way, not the backside.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Now east.

PAULINE: From the east.

JESSIE: From the east side.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Because you see they get this east porch.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: And in the other picture, you know, just the corner of this shows. And I don't remember where this building set for sure.

PAULINE: Well it is taken from this angle.

JESSIE: Yes, right front. And see that had the --- ...

PAULINE: Well when did they move? Then they moved the post office from Riley to ---

JESSIE: Well no, there was two post offices ---

PAULINE: There was two post offices.

JESSIE: --- for a long time.

PAULINE: Yeah. One at Riley, and where was the other one?

JESSIE: Suntex. Clear out the other end.

PAULINE: Suntex.

JESSIE: You know where, now I want to say the Best Lane, do you have any idea where that, you know the people, older people would know where the Best Lane was.

PAULINE: Yes, yeah.

JESSIE: You know when you go up Silver Creek Valley, there is a lane that goes through there east and west. See the lane that goes through down below runs north and south.

PAULINE: Right.

JESSIE: And the one up there went east and west, and it was clear out several miles the other side of there.

PAULINE: So it would have been, then it would have been ten or twelve miles probably from where Suntex is now.

JESSIE: Or where Riley is.

PAULINE: Or where Riley is.

JESSIE: Yes.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: They don't call that Suntex anymore.

PAULINE: Well I was thinking of the Suntex Station, yeah.

JESSIE: Yes, uh huh. ...

PAULINE: Well I can get that, we have that book up at the library, and I'll just go up and read that.

JESSIE: I just can't read that ... that must have been ... at Silver Creek.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Well that book was written in the 1890's sometime, 1899.

JESSIE: 1892.

PAULINE: '92.

JESSIE: 1865 to 1892. I look back and see some of these names that might ... I didn't know his sister was Mrs. Hamilton that we used to know, I didn't know --- Hembry's ---

PAULINE: Sister.

JESSIE: Sister went out there.

PAULINE: Well now when did they take the post office away from Riley then? Did they actually move it, or did they just change the name?

JESSIE: No, they didn't move it.

PAULINE: Because the Riley Store used to be down ---

JESSIE: No, they still had the post office there, the Riley Store was down below.

PAULINE: Yeah, well I knew they did.

JESSIE: Virgil Shields run it then.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Virgil and Zola Shields. And they still had the post office there. I don't think Riley has ever been moved. I don't think Riley has ever been out of existence.

PAULINE: No, I don't mean out of existence, but it wasn't at the Oakerman Ranch.

JESSIE: No.

PAULINE: The site of the post office changed from the Oakerman Ranch to Shields'.

JESSIE: Oh, I can't remember whether Virgil built that store and moved it down there.

PAULINE: ... Is Zola here now?

JESSIE: ... that Riley was out of existence for a while.

PAULINE: Because I thought they changed the name. The post office department decided to call it Suntex for a while.

JESSIE: Well they just left it at Suntex. The post office was always out there. They never moved Suntex back down where Riley was.

PAULINE: Oh, they didn't, I see they just closed it; they just didn't have ---

JESSIE: It seems to me like somebody --- maybe they give that up. See you know where that north and south lane goes through there?

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: There used to be a store there, but I don't believe they had the post office. ...

PAULINE: Well Jessie Cecil was telling me something about it, and I've got that in her interview. She told me about this business of them trying to call Riley Suintex, the post office department, you know. And people finally got it changed back to Riley.

JESSIE: When Virgil Shields started the store I think maybe he bought these people out that had that store there at the end of the lane, and moved it down there. Because he caught both roads that way. And after the highway went through see, all the roads used to come down the other way, and the store was there at the end of the lane.

PAULINE: How long did this Maggie Moe work there at the Oakerman Place? Did she say?

JESSIE: I think a couple years.

PAULINE: A couple of years. Can you remember some of the things she told you the other afternoon that we could put in under the picture? About some things that happened there that are printable.

JESSIE: ... it was all outdoor toilets, you see, ... She was talking about ...

PAULINE: Mrs. Oakerman cooked the meals.

JESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Did she mention anything about what kind of menu they had, other than just it was good food.

JESSIE: No, ... menu, it was always beef, you know, because I think they had cattle themselves. Because they owned most all of that ranch land that Hotchkiss' own now. So they must have had cattle. Oh, I know they did after we moved out there. Well I didn't pay so much attention where the cattle were --- we went into ourselves.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: And there was so many of us in there, and then Williams ran livestock ... into it, why I didn't ... I helped with the cattle, I didn't drive the cattle. I didn't pay too much attention. Oh, there was a dance hall over this store. (Laughter) I'm trying to think ---

PAULINE: This is over Embree's store?

JESSIE: Over Hembry's store. Hembry not Embree.

PAULINE: Hembry.

JESSIE: H E M ---

PAULINE: Oh, H E M.

JESSIE: H E M B R Y.

PAULINE: Well I've always ---

JESSIE: There was an Embree, there at the Embree Bridge.

PAULINE: There was an Embree. Oh.

JESSIE: You see, but this was Hembry.

PAULINE: Oh, well I'm glad you said that, because I had them mixed up. Hembry, H E M B R E E.

JESSIE: B R Y.

PAULINE: B R Y.

JESSIE: H E M B R Y. And they used to have some great dances in there. Well it was quite a large dance hall.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: ... grange hall, because ... It was quite long. And then they, I have to stop and think about it. You know how they built the old upstairs; the steps to go upstairs those days, it was open stairways outside.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: Outside and into the dance hall. That's all they used that for I suppose was just

for the dance hall.

PAULINE: Did they have dances, oh once a month or ---

JESSIE: I don't know, maybe they had them oftener than that.

PAULINE: More often than that, once a week maybe?

JESSIE: I'll tell you what did happen there one time, there was a whole bunch of us ... that was before Harry and I was married, it must have been in 1913, and there was ten couples of us out there. I could get ... We went out there in the bobsled at Christmas time.

PAULINE: Uh huh, from Burns.

JESSIE: From Burns. And we went to the Oakerman Place to fix up after we got there. The sled was filled with hay, and the covers, and you can imagine what we had.

PAULINE: Oh, you had to get down and keep warm in there.

JESSIE: Well they put something, a tarp or something over the top. And a four-horse team and the bobsled. Let me see ... because I was safe because my brother was along.

...

PAULINE: You kept everything honest.

JESSIE: ... two of them. Three Williams' boys, I suspect they got it up. And Frank ... I don't remember who all was in that group ...

PAULINE: And you went out and danced.

JESSIE: ... I think maybe we might have went --- of course they had a midnight supper.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well this was always ---

JESSIE: And there was no charge for their suppers those days.

PAULINE: Well tell me a little bit more about Mrs. Moe now, about why she happened to come back to visit.

JESSIE: Well ... the Williams family, and they were always very close, because they all

lived out there at Silver Lake together, you know. And the ... is right up there, and all the kids together. And when they came back, they always come back pretty near every year. And they came up; she lost her husband ...

PAULINE: And she came up.

JESSIE: Her daughter and her sister's daughter, their husbands came up, and she came with them. And then they brought her down here to spend a week with me.

PAULINE: Oh, you had a ball; I know you did.

JESSIE: Oh we did. The girls would ask us, well where are you going this afternoon? We'd get out and go, you know. We went to Silver Creek ... we were out there one day. Then we took her out to the cemetery, most of her relatives are out there, you know. And she just went all over that cemetery looking at her relatives. That's what someone said; you must have enjoyed going out there visiting around. ... It is sad when it comes right down to it. ... we don't have anybody there, you know, where ... There is so many of them gone. ... Some of the pictures ... She comes back pretty near every year and ...

PAULINE: Well a lot of people have been real poor this year. Well let me see what I've got here now. Well I'm going to look up Oakerman's, I'm sure that they're mentioned in that Harney County history book. Not that one, but I mean the other. At least they're mentioned.

JESSIE: I can find out ...

PAULINE: Yeah. And Vanderpools are in there, yeah.

JESSIE: Well it may come to me.

PAULINE: If Vanderpool is in there, why I can get some history about Maggie's family to put in this.

JESSIE: Yes, they would ...

PAULINE: And the Hembry. And I'm glad you corrected me on that spelling because I --

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JESSIE: Well so many people do that.

PAULINE: Yeah, I was ---

JESSIE: Well it gives his father and what he did ...

PAULINE: So it looks like I can get quite a story about that picture. I'm tickled to death that ---

JESSIE: The minute I saw that, I said we've got to take that to the paper.

PAULINE: Oh, that's ---

JESSIE: Because I knew ... When I first found this I wrote to her husband when he was in the hospital ...

PAULINE: And sent this.

JESSIE: And then --- now their great grandchildren, one of them lives down there close to Maggie, Oakerman's.

PAULINE: Oakerman's.

JESSIE: Uh huh. And I sent some down, some pictures down for them, but they have never come picked them up. ... He and his wife came through last year, and he has past away since then. And I didn't know, you know, they signed the register and went through the museum.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: There was so many in there last year, there was so many at a time, and I looked at that register and --- in fact they asked me where the Laundromat was and I told them. And I walked around and looked at that register, and I'd have given anything if I'd have looked at that. Because I could have told them so many things, you know.

PAULINE: Yeah.

JESSIE: And since then I've been trying to keep up with their names, if anyone that I

think might know someone, and asked about them. You could tell them a certain place, or you know this one or that one, you know. And I just enjoy the museum.

PAULINE: Oh, I can't think of a better person to be up there, than you are.

JESSIE: ...

(END OF TAPE)

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