

RAYMOND,
GRACE, JEAN,
AND GEORGE
ALONG THE
MINAM
C. 1913



and trying to walk on deck was a case of climb, then slide. It was no time to have eaten a big chicken dinner. The spray was dashing over the bow of the boat and swells looked grand as they rolled in. It was gorgeous with the sea whooping in like that. Raymond felt so smart because he didn't get sick though he did have to go and lie down for a while. A bunch of fellows were standing in the bow of the boat when a big wave struck it and went clear over them, knocked them flat and simply drenched them.

Letter G. C. to J. B.
June 7, 1914

Two days out of Seattle they reached Alaskan territory. They stopped at Ketchikan for an hour just as the sun was setting. Grace inhaled deeply, she stepped on the strangely springy earth. They had only a tantalizing glimpse of totem poles against the sky at an Indian village in the distance before they had to reboard the Sampson.

In the morning they landed in Petersburg. Grace and Raymond explored the town, it was full of rickety old buildings and strange narrow winding streets. They saw the hides of three bears that had been killed that morning. Grace could not resist purchasing a tiny pair of baby moccasins from some local Indians. They looked Eskimo, with their dark, leathery faces. They wore strange combinations of blankets and shawls and white men's clothes. Grace learned later that furs were worth so much to the trappers that they discouraged the Indians from wearing them.

By June 12th they had steamed further along the coast to Cordova, where they unloaded the horses and sheep. Raymond spent the day making arrangements with the railway to take them to Chitina. The little railway ran back and forth between Cordova on the coast, and the inland town of Chitina, a distance of 80 miles. They departed with their livestock on the train, along with thirty-two government horses. The government expedition was headed for the interior to make a survey for the new railroad. The countryside was chilly, the streams a milky colour from the glaciers. They passed glaciers that glittered in beautiful blue-green colours. The railroad bed itself was laid on solid ice.

In Chitina Raymond hired a man named Nick O'Brien to herd the sheep, and they moved the camp outfit to the edge of town to wait for Bill and Dutch and the cattle.

They had to wait a week there outside of Chitina, in the middle of a herd of sheep, where the wind blew constantly up between the mountains, and the air was filled with a fine grit, making it impossible to keep clean. A longshoremen's strike in Juneau delayed the cattle, which did not arrive until June 23rd. In the meantime there was much to keep them busy. The novelty of Alaska alone kept Grace's attention all day. She had a hard time sleeping, lying in bed while the sky stayed light, and the sun always woke her up, shining like noon at one thirty a.m. She observed that the locals never really went to bed on a regular schedule, they just napped whenever the notion took them. The Indians around the area were dirty, quite undesirable people, unlike the Yakutat Indians where Grace had bought the moccasins. About a half-mile from their camp lived an ancient Indian woman named Horse Creek Mary who was 111 years old. She lived alone in a tent with seven Husky dogs, and chopped down trees and snared rabbits to make her living.

The salmon were running, King salmon, and they managed to catch a few; Grace and Mrs. Sharkey cooked the delicious, melting pink steaks over a twig fire. The first night the mosquitos were unbearable, and they had to unpack the little mosquito tents, but for the rest of the week the insects were mysteriously absent. They built a sheep corral, set up the wagons, fitted harness and tried out Grace's saddle horse, Chako. Raymond washed his clothes. They went on a walk and saw a ptarmigan (a northern grouse-like bird) with seven young ones. Raymond caught one of the chicks and took a picture of Grace holding it. They took a 'buggy ride' up the trail in Dutch's rattly old wagon.

When the cattle finally caught up with them they decided to graze them for a day.

June 24th -- Let the cattle rest. Bill and I shod the work horses. Grace found a head of cabbage.
Diary R. McKennon

Grace was the day's hero. The head of cabbage was like a gold nugget, supplementing as it did their usual diet of beans, bacon, potatoes, bread and coffee. They badly craved green vegetables.

On the tenth day, they broke their camp and gathered the livestock. They started up the trail for Fairbanks, over 300 miles away.

This has been the first of a three part story about a young woman in Oregon in the early nineteen hundreds. The text was compiled and written by Jessica Lackaff and Marti Reece, Grace's daughter. We are proud to share this history not only because Grace Carter is also the Great-Grandmother of our Graphics/Assistant Editor, Sally Lackaff, and the mother of Dallas McKennon (a long-time resident of Cannon Beach), but also because it affirms our belief that a "woman's place" is in the world, no matter where or when.

A year later, on the 5th of June, 1914, Grace was on the train to Seattle, her travel bag beside her. She was very happy and excited. She'd spent the last few years finishing up her college studies, and had graduated from Willamette University as a music major. Now she was ready for something different, something more exciting. She loved adventures, she loved to ride, and she planned to prove herself as a cow hand on the trip.

Raymond met her at the train. His parents were also in Seattle to see the expedition off. Grace had liked Raymond's mother from the start, she could see how Louie hated to have her 'Jerry' go.

That same afternoon she made the acquaintance of two old Yukon characters who were accompanying the cattle drive north. Bill Schanbel, tall and lean and keen-eyed, contrasted wonderfully with his partner Dutch, a short, fat, sleepy little man, with a permanent tattered cigar. The two were full of Alaskan tales, and Grace was fascinated with the first real sourdoughs she had ever talked to. Raymond told her not to believe a word they said, and had to drag her away to go shopping.

Grace was planning to press every variety of wildflower she came across, and they wanted to buy a book big enough to accommodate the project. They also went down to the stables by the docks to meet her mount, a little black horse they decided to name 'Cheechako' for the 'Ballads of Cheechako', by Robert Service, which they'd just been reading. 'Cheechako' was an Alaskan Indian word meaning 'newly arrived', translated by the sourdoughs as 'tenderfoot'. They'd call the horse 'Chako' for short.

Louie McKennon insisted that Grace sleep with her at the hotel, instead of staying by herself. Grace was almost too excited to sleep. The city kept her awake. She kept wanting to get up and check her boat ticket. She wished she'd had a chance to try out Chako. She began to feel hungry for breakfast. She decided to try and sneak some sugar cubes for the horses in the morning. When she finally fell asleep she was picturing herself galloping across Alaska on a fine black horse.

The next morning Grace leaned on the rail of the Sampson, scribbling a postcard to her friend Jean, which she asked a girl going ashore to mail for her. The Sampson was loaded down with lumber, cement, 200 sheep, and 150 passengers. Grace hung over the rail, watching as the horses were loaded. She saw Raymond's horse Cy, his long ears twitching as he was led up the gangplank. They loaded the dogs, a team of Huskies and Mrs McKennon's sheepdog, Bummer. The cattle would follow on another steamer, accompanied by Bill and Dutch.

Quite a crowd had turned out on the pier to see the boat off. Deep under her feet Grace felt the Sampson's engines starting up, and she gripped the rail with excitement. Raymond appeared at her elbow and as they waved at his parents, a bugler on the dock began to play "Then You'll Remember Me". The crowd shouted and swayed, calling out their farewells as the boat began to pull away. By the time the bugler worked his way into "Auld Lang Syne" Grace and Raymond had to lean out over the rail, listening over the tug's horn, the roar of the engines, the chop of the water, and the cries of the people around them to discern the tune. The shadow of a gull slipped over them, they were on their way.

At first light the next morning Grace was on deck, drinking in the scenery. The water glistened like silky glass in the morning sun, broken only by a school of porpoises playing off the stern. They were moving up the Inside Passage, a narrow channel overhung on each side by huge old snow-capped mountains. The sun was just striking the highest peaks, all around her little waterfalls dashed down the cliffs, and above in the blue an eagle tilted and hung.

Before breakfast she had been down in the hold to see the horses, who seemed to be settling in well enough. Placid old Lucy, the McKennon's saddle horse, stood beside Cy, and Bummer the sheepdog was camping in his stall.

By the next day they were well on their way up the Inside Passage. Grace became acquainted with the Sharkeys, who would be helping on the drive. Grace liked F. C. Sharkey, a gentle, unassuming man. Mrs. Sharkey was loud, friendly, and outspoken. She was prone to much expounding, talking a lot without really saying much, sometimes cornering 'Gracie' for ten minutes to complain about the rough voyage. Grace wished fervently she could trade her for Jean, but at the same time she was grateful for Mrs. Sharkey's boisterous presence, which alone enabled her to make the trip.

The voyage was smooth until they reached Queen Charlotte Sound.

Then (nothing but slang will answer) there was something doing, believe me. The old boat stood on one end for awhile, then very suddenly on the other.



Copus Sports on Cy, 1913