

First Grist Mill In Coos Or Curry County

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Who built, owned and operated the first grist mill in Coos or Curry County? The lack of definite information on this one subject is quite in keeping with the general lack of recorded and dependable sources of our pioneer history. A great deal of it must depend on memory passed on from mouth to ear and from generation to generation.

The earliest recorded mention that I have found regarding a grist mill in Coos county appears on page 395 in Dodge's Pioneer History of Coos and Curry Counties: "Among the goods was—a 54-inch Page portable sawmill belonging to Henry Schroeder Sr., and an 8-horse-power portable boiler and engine and a pair of 24-inch mill burrs belonging to William Volkmar . . . The mill was put up on the south fork of the Coquille River, on the Schroeder place, and was operated for several years, William Volkmar filling the position of engineer and J. Henry Schroeder that of sawyer and miller."

From page 408 of the same book I quote:

"We have a little hill hard by a little creek, which doth supply us all with flour, as fine and good as any needs for wholesome food."

However, there appears to be some doubt, concerning the grist mill mentioned above. William Schroeder, now in his 80s, a grandson of Henry Schroeder Sr., and son of J. Henry Schroeder, is of the opinion that no grist mill was ever set up or operated by his father or his grandfather. Other members of the family are

of the same opinion. William Schroeder is one of the best-informed persons on our pioneer history that I have come in contact with.

But there can be little if any doubt that a pair of stone burrs did come along with other equipment in the Dr. Henry Hermann Baltimore Colony. We seem to have the answer. It reached us through the never-tiring efforts of our good friend, Steve Reed, of Myrtle Point. Steve has shown a great deal of active interest in this subject since the matter was first brought up several weeks ago.

Now comes, through Mr. Reed's efforts, a paper of some 12 or 13 thousand words, one of the best pioneer biographies of Coos or Curry county that has come to my attention. It is titled:

"Christian Lehnherr, Pioneer," by Fannie Lehnherr Dixon. The next time you go to Myrtle Point, I suggest that you go into the city park and notice the stone monument there erected to the memory of Christian Lehnherr.

Steve Reed, now past 80, is a grandson of Mr. Lehnherr.

I quote from page 13 of the story aforementioned:

"Settlers were filling the county, and the flour mill was still conveyed on horseback from the adjoining county (Douglas). Father had learned the art of grinding grain from an uncle in Switzerland. The splendid creek running through the farm afforded a suitable site for a grist mill. For Christian Lehnherr to conceive an idea was to put that idea into immediate operation.

"A large overshot water wheel furnished the motive power. A pair of burrs (burstone or millstone) came with the Baltimore Colony and were not utilized. Father purchased the burrs, and then the problem of moving them to the mill site confronted him. The large stones could not be packed on the backs of our mules, and there were no roads, only Indian trails, many places barely passable for single animals. A tree was felled, shaped into a canoe, and when the rain raised the river sufficiently, two men paddled the rude boat against the stream for 12 miles to within two miles of the mill site. These two miles presented another problem. Again the trusty oxen came to the rescue. The trail was widened to allow a sled, or lizard, as it was called, to pass over it.

"The lizard was made from the forks of a tree. The main trunk served as a means to fasten the

strong chain to an iron ring. The forked end was cut to a length of four feet, heavy timbers bolted across to form a solid base, and the burrs were loaded on to that, hauled by oxen to the mill building, and properly installed. Bolting cloth brought from Roseburg, at a cost of \$20 per yard, was stretched over a wooden frame, and the crushed wheat conducted from the burrs soon emerged as a fine quality of flour."

There is much more to this story and you'll be hearing of it again. Let us skip ten pages now and jump to page 23, quoting:

"Late in 1866 a young man from Douglas county, by the name of Reed, brought a band of young horses to our farm to sell to the farmers. Previous to that time all the plowing and hauling was done by oxen.

"In May, 1867, Oscar Reed and Mary Catherine (Lehnherr) were married. For several months they lived in the old home (on Roland Prairie). Oscar was a competent blacksmith, and soon had a flourishing blacksmith shop in operation. Oscar made the horseshoes and also the nails."

Now, let us inject a bit of our own into this story. In due time the Reeds had a little son. They named him Stephen. He is the same Steve Reed, now in his 80s, who dug up this Lehnherr story, the story of his grandfather.

Steve distinctly remembers the grist mill that his father, Oscar Reed, built on the middle fork of the Coquille, a short distance above the junction of the South Fork.

The burrs for that Oscar Reed mill? Where did Oscar get them?

He had taken over the management of his father-in-law's place at Roland Prairie when the Lehnherr family moved to Myrtle Point. In the story of the grist mill at the latter place, there is no mention of the burrs being brought from Roland Prairie. Perhaps cast burrs were shipped from San Francisco.

Anyway, we do know that Oscar Reed built a grist mill on the middle fork. Also it is a matter of record that when he closed that mill, he disposed of the millstones to Michael Breuer who set up his mill on Indian Creek. We understand that Mike Breuer still owns those burrs or millstones. Are they the same millstones that William Volkmar brought from Baltimore, around the Horn to San Francisco, then by sailing vessel to Empire City, on Coos Bay, up the bay and isthmus slough, across the divide, down Beaver Slough, up the Coquille river, served to grind flour for the pioneers through 30-odd years, in three different mills?

Are they the same burrs now owned by our good friend, the Old Sage of Bandon by the Sea? If they are the same old original pioneer stones, I feel quite sure that Mike Breuer will want to have them preserved in our Pioneer Museum.

Hallowe'en Party Plans Progressing

Plans for the forthcoming Hallowe'en party, first event under sponsorship of "All-Year Events Association," were discussed last Thursday evening at the first meeting of the Parent-Teachers Association. Committees were appointed to complete plans and handle the event.

As part of the year's project for the P.-T. A., the school census which must be completed by Nov. 1, was assumed by the association. The \$50 payment set aside in the school budget, will be turned over to the Parent-Teachers.

Report made by the membership committee, while yet in-

complete, showed 100 members signed up by that evening. This contest is being assisted by the classes, with a prize going to the one having the greatest percentage of parents as members.

LOCAL NEWS

Word from Mr. and Mrs. Hollis Peacock of Lark, Utah, state they are preparing for the winter in that section, but wish they had some of Brookings climate. As subscribers of the Pilot, weekly they follow the weather report.

G. W. Shipp, recently of Coquille, who bought the property of Mrs. Mary Povost and Mrs. Parmelia Boie, has taken possession of the property. The two

ladies have gone to San Bernardino to make their home.

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