

SECOND IN A FOUR-PART SERIES

Baker's Founding Fathers

■ Baker County historian Gary Dielman profiles four men who were instrumental in the creation of Baker City, continuing today with Dr. J. M. Boyd (1837-1906), who filed on the same land claim as Royal A. Pierce, who was profiled in the May 3 issue of the Herald



Dielman



Baker County Library District Historic Photo Collection

Baker City House, the town's second hotel, on the west side of Main Street (called Front Street until about 1900). Next door is Postmaster W.F. McCrary's Variety Store. McCrary moved his post office in Auburn to Baker City realizing that Auburn, founded in 1862 about 10 miles to the southwest, had no future after the easily mined placer gold had been claimed.

Founding Father No. 1, Royal A. Pierce, was the first to plat land for Baker City. But equal billing as a “Founding Father” of Baker City should go to Dr. Jacob Mackley Boyd, usually referred to as J. M. Boyd.

On April 10, 1868, Boyd, upon discovering that Pierce had not perfected his land claim, filed on the same land with the Federal Land Office. The southeast corner of his claim was where Hotel Baker stands today, and extended west and north from there, as had Pierce's claim. Since Boyd's claim overlapped Pierce's claim, there followed years of property title litigation.

Finally the competing claims were adjudicated in 1871 at a hearing before Federal Land Office Commissioner Willis Drummond, who ruled that Boyd had followed the proper procedure to perfect a claim and Pierce, an attorney, had not. Drummond further ruled that persons who had already bought lots from Pierce were exempt from Boyd's claim. The doctor had out-lawyered the lawyer.

Boyd was born in Ohio on April 6, 1837. He arrived in Baker County in 1865. Little is known about him before 1870. In the 1870 federal Census, Boyd was listed as 31 years old, engaged in stock raising, with real estate valued at \$1,200 and personal worth of \$9,700 (\$218,000 in today's dollars), making him possibly the richest man in Baker County. Also listed were wife Pamela, age 26, keeping house, born in Tennessee, and five children: Edward J., age 14, attending school, born in Iowa; Laura, age 12, attending school, born in Iowa; Carlos, age 5, Esther E., age 2, and Mattie, 7 months old, all three born in Baker City.

One can deduce from the ages of the two older children, and the age of Pamela, that she was too young to be their mother. Boyd also had a daughter named Josephine (unknown birth date), who on June 1, 1880, married Adolph G. Hemple in the Episcopal Church in Baker City. Josephine was also too old to



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Freight wagons and teams that pull them occupy today's Old Post Office Square. Baker City House and Western Hotel are in the background. Western Hotel, Baker City's first hotel, is on the west side of Main Street (called Front Street until around 1900). It burned down in 1907.

be Pamela's daughter. I've not discovered who Boyd's first wife was or what happened to her. Also not known is when and where Boyd got his medical education.

Fortunately more information about Boyd is available in extant issues of Baker County's first newspaper, the Bedrock Democrat, which began publication in May 1870. The newspaper — still publishing today as the Baker City Herald — became the source of much information about the social, political, and economic life of Baker City. From that source we learn that Boyd was very active in Baker City for 13 years. The 1870 census did not list Boyd as a practicing physician. The reason appeared in the Bedrock Democrat, which reported, “Dr. J. M. Boyd gives notice that he has positively withdrawn from the practice of medicine.”

In 1867, before Boyd gave up medicine, he entered into a pharmacy and grocery store partnership with John Wisdom, an 1862 Baker County pioneer from Missouri. Their store was on the southwest corner of Main Street and Valley Avenue. For five years Wisdom had been farming near Wingville and supplementing his income by hauling freight from the Port of Umatilla on

Columbia River to as far east as Western Idaho. By 1867 Wisdom was ready for a new occupation.

Under Boyd's tutelage he learned the pharmacy trade. A year later Boyd sold out to Wisdom, who conducted a pharmacy on that corner until 1917. Wisdom lived another 21 years, dying at age 98. In 1878 John Wisdom (1840-1938) and wife, Mary Sturgill Wisdom (1853-1937), build a two-story house on the southwest corner of Second and Broadway streets, which today is a bed and breakfast rental and one of the oldest houses in Baker City. The Wisdoms are buried next to each other in Mount Hope Cemetery.

In 1870 Boyd, concerned that not one church had been erected in the six years since Baker City was first platted, donated a whole block to the Catholics, upon which they constructed a modest chapel, known as St. Francis de Sales Mission Church, on the site where St. Francis de Sales Cathedral stands today.

Catholic priest Father Leopold Dielman (no known relation to the author) was the first priest assigned to the new chapel. In 1870 Father Dielman began traveling from John Day to administer to Baker City Catholics in their new chapel. In 1903 Pope Leo

XIII created a new diocese comprising all the Oregon counties east of the Cascade Mountains, to be called Baker City Diocese. The Rev. Charles Joseph O'Reilly (1862-1923) was the first bishop of the new diocese. Under his direction construction of St. Francis de Sales Cathedral began in 1905 and was completed in 1908. The original chapel was moved to the northwest corner of First and Madison streets, where it still stands as a private residence.

O'Reilly served as bishop of the Baker City Diocese from 1903 to 1918, when he was transferred to the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska.

In 1873 Episcopalians built an Episcopal Church on four lots at the southwest corner of Church and First streets, south of the Catholic property. Boyd donated two lots and the church paid him for the other two lots. Boyd also donated land to the state for construction of a school on the west side of Fourth Street between Broadway Street and Washington Avenue. In 1869 a private corporation obtained

the land from the state and built Baker City Academy, a two-story wood-frame building. In 1885 School District 5J acquired the building, used it until 1889, then tore it down and replaced it with an impressive three-story brick structure, which served all 12 grades. In 1934 it too was razed and replaced by the present Helen M. Stack building, which houses seventh- and eighth-graders.

Benjamin Franklin Koontz, an early resident of Hereford Valley about 20 miles south of Baker City, pioneered the route from Bowen Valley over Dooley Mountain to Bridgeport. A company, of which Boyd was a member and principal stockholder, purchased the road known then as the Boyd Toll Road. In June 1871 John Dooley bought Boyd's interest, and the name was changed to Dooley Toll Road. In 1889 Dooley sold it to Baker County and it became a public road.

Quitting the practice of medicine freed up Boyd to enter into politics. In 1873 he ran for the office of Baker County sheriff, winning a two-year term (1874-1876), during which term he also served as U. S. Marshal for a wide area of Eastern Oregon.

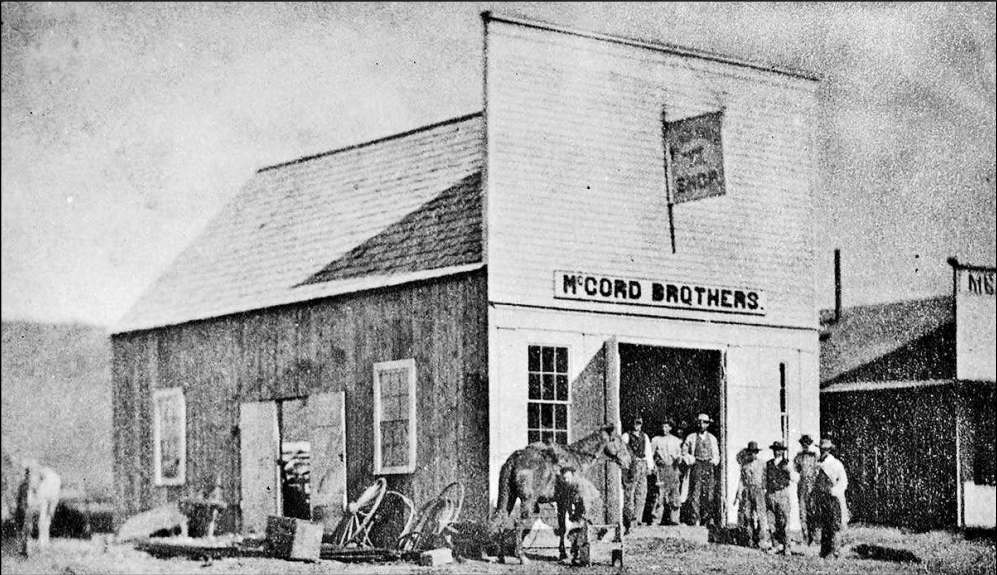
In 1878 Boyd moved to Walla Walla, Washington, and began practicing medicine again. As he had in Baker City, Boyd took an active role in the community, including serving two terms as Walla Walla's mayor. In 1891 he moved to Spokane, where he became administrator of a sanatorium.

Boyd's third wife, Hannah, emigrated to Walla Walla Valley with her parents in 1862. Date of their marriage is not known. Boyd's daughter, Josephine, was not mentioned as part of Boyd's family in the 1870 Census. All that's known about Josephine is obtained from the Baker City Episcopal Church registry of

marriages, which lists her marriage in 1889 to Adolph G. Hemple.

In 1900 Boyd's son, Don Carlos, purchased the Advocate, an Ontario newspaper, renamed it the Ontario Argus, and changed its political affiliation to Republican. He sold the Ontario Argus in 1908. During his newspaper career Carlos bought and sold other Oregon newspapers. In 1885 Carols teamed up with E. L. Eckley and others of La Grande to establish the Argus, the first newspaper in La Grande, after the business district in Old Town moved down by the new railroad tracks. Other newspapers Carlos owned included the Junction City Times in Lane County in 1891, the Yaquina Bay News in Lincoln County in 1897, and the Oakland Tribune in Douglas County in 1919.

In 1905 Boyd, age 68, was struck by a bicyclist in Spokane resulting in serious injuries. After a visit to Baker City that same year, Boyd moved from Spokane back to Walla Walla, where he died on March 20, 1906. At the time of his death he was survived by his wife, Hannah Randall Boyd of Walla Walla, and his children: Edward, Mark, J.B. and Mrs. Josephine Boyd Hemple, all four of Baker City; Frank of Spokane; Don Carlos of Ontario; and Mrs. Laura Darling of Summerland, California. Laura had married Stuart Darling of Summerland (near Santa Barbara), who was a pioneer of the early oil industry of the area. Three of Dr. Boyd's children are buried in adjoining graves in Mount Hope Cemetery: Fannie Belle Boyd (1867-1870), Ester Ettie Boyd (1868-1876), and Mark M. Boyd (1875-1906). Mark, who died just a few months after his father, was a printer in Baker City. Dr. Jacob Mackley Boyd, Baker City's Founding Father No. 2, was buried in Walla Walla.



Baker County Library District Historic Photo Collection

At the other end of the 1700 block was the first McCord Brothers blacksmith shop. The whole block burned down in 1878. The wooden buildings were replaced with brick buildings.



Baker County Library District Historic Photo Collection

In 1873 Baker City's first banker, James W. Virtue, built the Virtue Block, which housed three businesses with Virtue Bank on the southwest corner of Main and Court, present site of a Chinese restaurant. It was the first stone building in Baker City and supposedly fireproof, but the building burned down in about 1883.