

LAST 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, concludes today with John Jackson Campbell (1811-1892), who moved to Baker County in 1862 and initially lived in a shack in what became Baker City



Dielman

John Jackson Campbell, known as “J.J.”, was a wealthy farmer from Albia, Iowa. Born in Virginia, J.J. also lived in Indiana before landing in Iowa. In about 1833 J.J. married Lydia Noland (1817-1857). During their approximately 24-year marriage, they had 10 children. After Lydia's death, J.J. married widow Nancy Gordon Mock (1821-1897) in 1859. Nancy Mock's husband, Reuben Mock (1805-1851), whom she married in 1836, had died in 1851. Nancy was left with seven children; following were their ages in 1862: John F. Mock, 24, Mary Jane Mock, 22, Catherine Mock, 19, Martha E. Mock, 16, Emmaretta Mock, 12, Matilda Mock, 10, and Rosella Mock, 3.

On May 14, 1862, J.J. and Nancy headed for Oregon. Four of J.J.'s 10 children made the trip: William Henry Campbell (1835-1905); Benjamin Thomas Russell Campbell (1849-1933); George Washington Campbell (1851-1933); and Joseph Albert Campbell (1855-1939). The former three are buried in Mount Hope Cemetery; the latter son is buried in Idaho. All of Nancy's children made the trek to Oregon. When the Campbell party set out for Oregon it included eight members of the two families, several hired men, 16 cows, three horses, and five wagons. Along the way they joined with other groups resulting in a wagon train composed of about 300 wagons.

Years later Nancy's daughter Matilda described their Oct. 22, 1862, arrival in Powder River Valley: “We landed where Baker is now. Our (log) house was the only one there, the first ever built. That winter was cold and snowy, and we had no wood for the fire except what we could pick up along the river. We lived on the dirt floor and cooked on the fireplace. But we were so happy to have a place to stop after such long traveling (over 1,500 miles).”

According to one recollection, “Campbell bought a shack from a man which stood on the south (sic) side of the Powder River at the site of the present bridge by Natatorium Park. The Campbells lived there through the winter of 62-63 in the only house.”

Matilda's and other claims about what was the first cabin built on the site of future Baker City cannot be verified. The site of Charles E. Place's cabin is shown on the 1864 Baker City Township Map. It also shows up in the oldest known photograph of Baker City taken around 1866-1868. The photo shows several buildings in the background — today's Old Post Office Square — with Place's cabin in the foreground near a crude bridge over Powder River, a convenient location to collect tolls. Place's cabin may very well have been built

before the Campbell family arrived in October 1862.

Place, who was born in 1790 in Pennsylvania, may have been the very first settler in the area that became Baker City. Place purchased the toll road that connected Auburn with Durkee Valley and purchased federal land, which he had obtained via a land claim. He platted the land and then sold lots to new residents of Baker City.

The exact site of the Campbell cabin is not known for sure. But three of J.J.'s sons ended up living on the street named for their father. Baker City Directories for the years 1901, 1903, and 1905 give Campbell Street addresses for J.J.'s sons. Although J.J. died in 1892, two of his sons continued living on Campbell Street for another 40 years. The most likely site of J.J. Campbell's 1862 cabin was where son George W. Campbell lived at 1718 Campbell, which is on the east bank of today's Powder River; present site of a log-style building constructed in the 1920s by Baker Rod and Gun Club; today it houses a Chinese restaurant.

William H. Campbell lived at 1546 Campbell, which was on the north side of the street, present site of the Oregon National Guard Armory. Benjamin Campbell lived on the northeast corner of Campbell and East streets, across from the present site of York's Park Grocery.

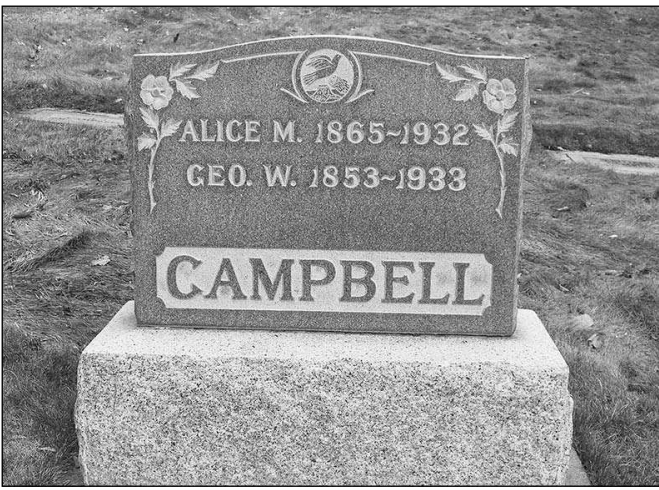
At some point J.J. and his son G.W. acquired ownership of a sizable area north of Campbell Street. Today two additions to Baker City are named “J.J. Campbell Addition” and “G.W. Campbell Addition.” The additions are bounded on the east by Cedar Street, on the south by the 1500 block of Campbell Street, and on the north by D Street. That area includes today's Leo Adler baseball field on the north end and on the south end the Baker County Fairgrounds, including the old National Guard Armory.

The five-year-old marriage of John Jackson Campbell and Nancy Gordon Mock Campbell ended in divorce. In January 1864 Nancy took her children and moved in with John and Mary Shelton, who had built a cabin 12 miles east of Baker City in the area called Pleasant Valley today. The Sheltons had traveled across the plains in the same wagon train as the Campbells. County records from Auburn show that Nancy alleged she had been subjected to domestic abuse and “lived in constant fear for her life.” J.J. admitted that he grabbed Nancy by the throat but only to get her to let go of his hair. The court believed Nancy and awarded her custody of her children. It's interesting to note that Royal Pierce, Founding Father No. 1 (his story was in the May 3 issue of the Herald), was J.J. Campbell's attorney in the divorce case.



Gary Dielman photo

J.J. Campbell's grave stone at Mt. Hope Cemetery. In October 1862 John Jackson Campbell built a cabin on the future site of Baker City and Campbell Street, which was named for him.



Gary Dielman photo

George W Campbell & Alice M. Campbell' grave stone at Mt. Hope Cemetery. Son and daughter-in-law of J.J. Campbell.



Baker County Historic Photo Collection

Charles L. Palmer and his children Ethel (1882-1908), Hannah (born around 1891), and Charles Jr. (1894-1953). Date of photo is around 1899. Ethel's mother was Palmer's first wife, Rosella, who died when Ethel was five years old. The mother of Hannah and Charles, Jr., was Palmer's second wife, Linnie Place, who died in 1894 shortly after Charles' birth. Palmer married Mrs. Rose (Martin) Russell (1855-1942) in 1909, a year after Ethel's death.



Baker County Historic Photo Collection

Ida Mary Place (1865-1907) and Lena “Linnie” Place (1867-1894) around 1879. Their parents were Charles E. Place and Martha Mock Place. Ida and Linnie were still minors when their parents died — Charles in 1870 and Martha in 1879.

Within a month of arrival in Powder River Valley, Nancy's 16-year-old daughter Martha (1846-1879) married 72-year-old Charles E. Place (1790-1870). The circumstances under which Nancy's mother consented to her daughter's marriage to a man 58 years her elder are not known for sure. But later Nancy consented to marriage of her 14-year-old daughter Matilda to a much older man.

Hasty as Martha's marriage was, it was also fruitful and, as it turned out, monetarily fortuitous. Charles and Martha had three children during their eight years of marriage. Luther W. Place was born on April 5, 1864, reputedly the first child born in Baker City, although at that early date no city yet existed. Then came two daughters, Ida (1866-1907) and Linnie (1867-1894). When Charles died, the 1870 federal census taken later that year recorded

that Martha had property worth \$3,000 and personal worth \$5,000, totaling \$8,000 (\$160,000 in today's dollars). Her property would have included the toll road and considerable real estate. On the present “additions” map of Baker City, “Place's Addition” south and west of where his cabin once stood, includes land on which are located Baker City Hall and the old and new U.S. Postal Service office buildings, plus some property along Place Street.

Martha Mock Place died in 1879 at the young age of 33. Charles and Martha's son, Luther W. Place, had earlier followed his grandmother, Nancy Gordon Mock Shumway, to Umatilla County. Orphaned daughters Ida, age 12, and Linnie, age 11, who remained in Baker City, went to live under the guardianship of their maternal cousin, Rosella Mock Shumway Palmer (1860-1886) and her



Matilda Mock Shumway, daughter of Nancy Gordon Mock Campbell, Photo from about 1880.



Baker County Historic Photo Collection

In October 1862 Nancy Gordon Mock Campbell and husband, J.J. Campbell, arrived in Baker County with their children after several months on the Oregon Trail. They quickly built a cabin on what several years later became Campbell Street in Baker City.

husband, Charles L. Palmer (1849-1938), a grocer. By the time Rosella died in 1886, Ida and Linnie had achieved their majority.

In 1889 Palmer married his former ward, Linnie Place, who by then was 25 years old. They had two children, Hannah Myrtle, born in 1889, and Charles L., Jr., born in 1894. Linnie died not long after giving birth to Charles, Jr. Charles L. Palmer served as Baker City mayor on three different occasions: 1893-94, 1910-18, and 1924-26.

In 1908 Hannah, who went by Myrle, married Menzie McKim (1889-1964), who had a machine shop at the intersection of Auburn Avenue and Ninth Street. Menzie served as Baker City mayor from 1948 to 1950. Menzie and Myrle are buried at Mount Hope Cemetery.

Luther W. Place, the son of Charles E. Place and Martha Gordon Mock Place, was the subject of a short biography in the “Illustrated History of the State of Oregon,” published in 1893. We learn that young Charles finished his secondary education at Bishop Scott Academy in Portland. After graduation he attended Portland Commercial College, graduating in 1886 at age 22. He then returned to his place of birth, Baker City, where he opened a book and stationery store.

In 1891 Charles and partner M. Miller opened a large grocery store. Charles served a term as Baker City treasurer and two terms on Baker City Council. In 1892 he ran unsuccessfully as a Republican for the office of Baker County Treasurer. In 1887 Charles married Mollie McCall, who came to Oregon in 1885. They lived at 1535 Second St. (southwest corner of Second and Place streets). Their stately two-story house with three bay windows sat far back on the lot. By 1911 it had been torn down. On that lot today there stands an apartment house and a private residence.

Baker City resident Dr. Robert “Bob” McKim, 81, who lives three miles west of Baker City, is a direct descendent of Charles E. Place, whose cabin was noted on the 1864 Baker City Township Map as being about 400 feet east and a little south of the intersection of Main and Auburn streets one year before Baker City was platted. Bob's direct lineage to Charles E. Place, follows: Bob's father was Dr. Charles Palmer McKim (1909-1963); Charles' mother was Hannah Myrtle “Myrle” Palmer (1889-1977); Myrle's mother was Linnie Place Palmer (1867-1894); Linnie's father was Charles E. Place (1790-1870), the great-great-grandfather of Bob McKim.