

PIONEER OF PIONEERS.

Frank McBean Mines at Canyon City in 1863.

Frank McBean, of Canyon City, is one of the grand old pioneers of Eastern Oregon, who has helped to make the country's history from the time when there was an almost daily skirmish with Chief Paulina's bandit tribe, to the present time, when the schoolhouse stands near the battleground and the red apple grows by the old time trail of murdering savages.

Mr. McBean first came into Grant county in 1863, when miners dug coarse gold out of Canyon creek by sackfull; he was there when the mail sacks and pack trains ran the gauntlet of ambush by day and swift attack by night, when packers and express riders were left dead by the wayside, and a government escort was necessary to safe conduct from The Dalles to Canyon City.

Since 1863 Mr. McBean has been a resident of Grant county. He knows the town of Canyon City, its birth, and remembers well when it was the county seat of all the country from Nevada north to Snake river, and when Joaquin Miller was judge over all the mountains, deserts, lakes and valleys, and held his court in an old log house by Canyon creek. As a miner, Mr. McBean was among the first to break ground in the camps that have made eastern Oregon famous. At Canyon City he worked a rocker when pianos were unthought of; when an abstract of title consisted of a six shooter and a ready finger; when a man who wore his linen cuff for a collar could not have gotten a job at carrying boiled beans in a hash house.

In 1864 he worked with the miners who made Susanville, the old and picturesque camp whose log huts are now slowly crumbling in the deep canyon between Greenhorn and Dixie, and, one year later, he saw the impetuous miners leave and abandon the tailings of their year's work to the people who were to come with future years. He knew the Cable Bros., who discovered Cable Cove, and sold out on Elk creek to Bill Thurbrain, who blew in the installments of a good old English annuity just over the mountains from where Granite and Lawton are making money galore for the lucky mineowners of today. He has seen the mining industry rise and fall, and has seen it rise again upon newer principles, and watched the growth of fields and orchards, for which he helped pave the way.

After Susanville, in 1865, failed to the ambitions of the early miners, Mr. McBean returned to Canyon City, where he engaged in business, and in 1869 was burned out by the first great fire, in which Canyon City became a total wreck, but was speedily rebuilt and carried on, through good fortune and bad, to the present time.

It was in the year of his return to Canyon City, in 1865, that he was one day called upon to investigate the cause of a delayed express from The Dalles. Securing the company of another, he rode down the narrow valley, of the John Day river, 35 miles to Cottonwood, where Express Messenger H. C. Page, now a resident of Spokane, Wash., told him of an Indian attack upon the stage in which the mail pouches were stolen and he, himself, escaped only after an exciting bareback ride. This episode was one of the many in which Paulina's marauding savages figured in those days, and led to the encounter near Waterman Flat, in which H. H. Wheeler, the pioneer, whose name is given to Oregon's youngest county, received a shot which pierced his face from cheek to cheek. At this time he joined the United States troops, then stationed at Camp Watson, and followed the savages

into the Beaver creek country, where they were overhauled and engaged in battle, the scene of which, strange to say, is not known to any man of Mr. McBean's acquaintance. However, the prompt measures of the miners and soldiers served to check the hostile raids, and trouble was only intermittent until the murderous old Chief, Paulina, was killed by Jim Clark and Howard Maupin, which put an end to their marauding.

Illustrative of the crude methods which then prevailed, Mr. McBean relates an incident in surgery which occurred at Canyon City in 1864, and which was, the other day, the subject of conversation between himself and B. R. Witzel, of Burns. In that year some of the miners discovered an Indian in the act of stealing their horses, and when captured he was found to have a gunshot wound in his leg. Upon promise of surgical aid and good treatment, the Indian proved recreant to his comrades in the crime and disclosed their identity. In keeping with their promise, the wounded Indian was taken to the physician of the camp, who was poorly equipped for administering amputation. Surgical instruments were not to be had; but an accommodating butcher loaned a meat saw and steak knife and with these, without anesthetics of any kind, the Indian received his reward for betrayal of his confederates, and retired from the horsetealing business with one leg missing.

In 1870 Mr. McBean engaged in the mail service of the United States, his first contract being to transport military mail, once a week from Canyon City to Fort Harney, in which service he gained the distinction of being the first mail carrier to enter what now is Harney county. This contract was over 68 miles of mountain road, which was traversed on horseback, when possible, and at other times on snow shoes, or "any old way." For four years he filled this service, during which his contract was extended to the point of carrying general mail from Canyon City to Camp McDermitt in Nevada.

This service carried him over a route that is unique in the history of the U. S. Mail service in Oregon, for it carried him 245 miles south of the initial point, in which distance Fort Harney was the only postoffice supplied. During his trip he carried a camping outfit and wood, water and grass were the only adjuncts necessary to his stopping places en route. After leaving Harney, the only habitations passed were the pioneer cabin of Todhunter & Divene at Alford and at Camp C. F. Smith. After leaving this route, he ran stage lines out of The Dalles to Canyon City and to Prineville, and became familiarly acquainted with all the pioneer settlers of central Oregon. During the great "star route" trials in 1876, he was three times called to Washington as a witness in the famous cause.

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