

THE MATLOCK STORY—

"We Did Nothing That Somebody Else Couldn't Have Done"

As told to Mrs. Tom Wilson

No recording of the events during the time of the Heppner flood would be complete without Leslie Matlock's own story of the happenings on that Sunday and of the well-known ride that he and Bruce Kelley made down Willow creek to warn the residents of Lexington and Lone of the water.

Numerous writers, some of them quite well known, have told and retold the story many times and Matlock tells it again here. It took persuasion to get him to give it, for he has indicated on more than one occasion that all the publicity is rather embarrassing. He strongly emphasizes that "We weren't trying to do anything smart, and we did nothing that somebody else couldn't and wouldn't have done under the same circumstances." He and Kelley just happened to think of it first.

A matter of minutes or a twist of circumstances meant the difference of life or death to the inhabitants of Heppner when the tragic flood swamped the town

cutters at Gilliam and Bisbee's and I'll get some horses at the livery stable."

Orve Rasmus helped me break in to get the wooden handled pruning shears we found and then we took off over the hill behind the bank cutting fences where necessary. Kelley got his own horse but in the haste and excitement grabbed for me someone else's horse which I changed at the Frank Rainey place a mile or two below Lexington. We didn't talk much, except to call warnings at homes along the way. The flood water had already beat us to Lexington, but we felt we could make it to Lone before the water hit there. No one questioned our story and everyone along the way hurried to higher ground.

Though the flood water had subsided by the time it reached Lone, after the arrival of Kelley and Matlock, the townspeople showed their gratitude to the two young men by presenting each of them with a gold-headed cane inscribed "Presented by the people of Lone in grateful remembrance of heroic ride during flood at Heppner, June 14, 1933." This is still



LESLIE L. MATLOCK as he looks today at 79 years of age. He and Bruce Kelley, were widely acclaimed at the Paul Revere of Oregon for their horseback ride to Lexington and Lone to warn residents there that the flood was on its way down the creek. Shown in the picture is the inscribed cane given to Matlock by the residents of Lone in appreciation for his efforts. (GT Photo)

Sunday afternoon fifty years ago, according to Leslie L. Matlock, who with his friend, Bruce Kelley, rode their horses over the hills to Lexington and Lone hoping to avert further loss of life that happen there.

In the afternoon, Matlock recalled that he returned to his room at the Palace hotel after having dinner with Dr. McSwain at the home of his uncle, T. J. Matlock. After a call to the Abe Wells home, Dr. McSwain and John Ayers later went to the George Conser home, which circumstance marked their fate.

Matlock dozed off in the murky extreme heat and was later awakened by claps of thunder. Going through the hall he reassured the worried waitresses that the storm would be harmless, and went out on the street where he stood with a young cigar-maker watching the rain.

"Moments later we saw women running for the hill, so we called to the men in Swaggart's Saloon, now Bucknum's, and all fled through the storm to the hillside watching the destruction in horror."

"Bruce Kelley said to me," Matlock recalled, "Everyone on this creek will be drowned." I replied that "If we get some horses we can beat it down the creek." The idea took hold and Kelley said, "You get some wire

a proud possession of Mr. Matlock.

After remaining at Lone for part of the night, Kelley, Matlock Bert Mason and others rode back to Heppner, arriving about daylight. Amid the destruction and desolation they learned that the worst had happened and those who were left joined in recovering bodies.

"My friends, John Ayers and Dr. McSwain ran out of the Conser home when the water struck and were drowned. Mr. and Mrs. Conser themselves ran upstairs, which saved their lives, as the house remained intact as it was swept downstream to the Methodist church with a section of sidewalk through it," Matlock said.

Among other victims was Mr. Matlock's uncle, J. W. Matlock, who was pulled from an upstairs porch along with his son, Lee. The young man had thrown off his coat and managed to get to safety after trying unsuccessfully to rescue his father.

Most of the Abe Wells family, too, were drowned when the water tore their house apart. The body of Mr. Hanby, on whose farm the flood struck, about 7 miles up Balm fork, was found at the edge of Gale street.

People from some distances observed the flood cloud that day. Kelley said, "You get some wire



HEPPNER DEPOT in the lower end of town was unhurt by the waters, though it was well surrounded by debris after the flood receded. The building still stands and is still being used for the same purpose, though remodeling has changed its appearance slightly.

HEPPNER TIMES.

RELIEF EDITION

HEPPNER, OREGON, THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1903.

No. 22.

Hot Air

AM BATHS

It is necessary for perfect health to have a Folding Vapor Bath Cabinet only perfect bath cabinets made

You can get them at Slocum Drug Co.

Groceries..

Staple and Fancy Groceries. New line being added daily. Large line of tobaccos and Confections.

A. ANDREWS

OF SLOCUM'S DRUG STORE, MAIN ST.

ACE HOTEL..

HEPPNER, OREGON.

Lighted by electricity. Best Meals in the City.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

SCHAN, Jr., Prop.

L. HEPPNER

HEPPNER, ORE.

IES & ASHBAUGH, Props.

Class Accommodations

HING NEAT AND HOMELIKE

\$1.00 AND UP PER DAY

WHITE LABOR THROUGHOUT.

MILL & MANUFACTURING CO.

SCOTT, Manager.

Complete line of machinery for the manufacture of

Blinds, Native and Hardwood Furniture,

will be kept in stock at prices which defy competition

\$3.00 and up. Tables from \$1.50 up.

\$7.00 and up. Kitchen Jewels \$3.50

Wardrobes, etc., at all prices.

If we haven't what you want we'll make it while we are here for your patronage and we intend to get it.

ing in the way of Mill work. Turnings, Balusters, Mouldings, Casings, Window and Door Frames, etc. in the factory ready to put in place.

will say you.

HEPPNER MILL AND MANUFACTURING CO.

HERE!

An immense stock of

and Summer Shoes

AT

LICHTENTHAL'S

Foot and shoe dealer of Heppner, who also has a big line of Boots and Shoes, Rubbers, Etc., a specialty, and satisfaction guaranteed.

West side of Main Street.

T. HATTEN..

ICAL BLACKSMITH, HAS OPENED A

L. BLACKSMITH SHOP

ed Yard. Horse shoeing and Repair work done on a workmanship manner. He would be pleased to receive patronage, and will also endeavor to please you

ALL AROUND AND SEE HIM

Timber Land Act, June 3, 1878.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

United States Land Office, La Grande, Oregon, June 1, 1903. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the states of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the public land states by act of August 4, 1892,

George A. Hill,

of Plymouth, county of Garfield, State of Iowa, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2350, for the purchase of the W¹/2 NW¹/4, NW¹/4 SW¹/4, sec 13, and NE¹/4 SW¹/4, sec 14, tp. 4, R. 20, E. W. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Vawter Crawford, county clerk, at his office at Heppner, Oregon, on Monday, the 17th day of August, 1903.

He names as witnesses: A. W. Beckum, of Terrell, Iowa; William G. Prineas, of Plymouth, Iowa; Charles W. Sanderson, and Winford S. Harris, of Palouse, Wash. Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 17th day of August, 1903. J. H. HATTEN, Register.

Timber Land Act June 3, 1878.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

United States Land Office, La Grande, Oregon, April 28, 1903. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the states of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the public land states by act of August 4, 1892,

William P. Seacrest,

of Okfuskie, county of Whitman, state of Washington, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2350, for the purchase of the E¹/2 SW¹/4, sec 3, SW¹/4 SW¹/4, sec 2, tp. 10, R. 10, E. 28, W. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Vawter Crawford, county clerk, at his office at Heppner, Oregon, on Wednesday, the 22nd day of July, 1903.

He names as witnesses: Van K. Seacrest and A. P. Andrews, of Okfuskie, Washington; Charles W. Sanderson and Winford S. Harris, of Palouse, Wash. Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 22nd day of July, 1903. J. H. HATTEN, Register.

Timber Land Act June 3, 1878.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

United States Land Office, La Grande, Oregon, May 1, 1903. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the states of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the public land states by act of August 4, 1892,

Edward L. Mooney,

of Garfield, county of Whitman, state of Washington, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2350, for the purchase of the E¹/2 SW¹/4, NW¹/4 SW¹/4, sec 14, tp. 4, R. 20, E. 28, W. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Vawter Crawford, county clerk, at his office at Heppner, Oregon, on Friday, the 24th day of July, 1903.

He names as witnesses: Charles A. Gill, Anna M. Gwinn, Grace G. Gill, of Garfield, Washington; and Charles W. Sanderson, of Palouse, Washington. Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 24th day of July, 1903. J. H. HATTEN, Register.

Timber Land Act June 3, 1878.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

United States Land Office, La Grande, Oregon, April 27, 1903. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the states of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the public land states by act of August 4, 1892,

George J. Corrin,

of Heppner, county of Morrow, state of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2330, for the purchase of the NW¹/4, tp. 10, R. 20, E. 28, W. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Vawter Crawford, county clerk, at his office at Heppner, Oregon, on Wednesday, the 22nd day of July, 1903.

He names as witnesses: Harrison Hale, John L. Ayers, Samuel Meadows, George Wilkie, all of Heppner, Ore. Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 22nd day of July, 1903. J. H. HATTEN, Register.

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DEATH ROLL GROWS.

Organized For More Effective Work.

150 BUILDINGS WRECKED.

Complete List of Recovered and Missing up to 4 o'clock.

This Afternoon—3000 People Clearing Wreckage Today

The work of gathering the dead and clearing the wreckage was greatly facilitated today. The city council met Tuesday evening and effected an organization that more systematic and effective work could be done. Not less than 3000 men are gathering and burying the dead, beside hundreds of women are working night and day preparing food and otherwise assisting the work.

Following is the city council's order issued last night:

At a meeting of the City Council held Tuesday evening, it was ordered that all persons who do not feel able to donate their work, will be allowed \$2.00 per day and board, per man, and \$1.50 per day for man and team.

The following committees were appointed:

Ways and Means.—Frank Gilliam, George Conser, E. M. Shott.

Finance.—M. Lichtenthal.

Relief.—Dr. Higgs, Thos. Quaid, A. G. Bartholomew.

Supplies.—J. A. Woolery.

Street Cleaning.—D. Matlock, Frank Roberts, A. Minor, Dave McAten, Lee Outwell.

Police Regulations.—Al Roberts, Ben Ramona, Frank Natter.

Help Needed.

There is much need for more help in cleaning debris, as there is yet huge piles of buildings, a mass of kindling wood, scattered for miles down the creek that it will require an enormous force of men several days to remove through. Financial aid is also needed to relieve the distressed.

Hundreds are homeless and destitute, every vestige of property being swept away in the twinkling of an eye, and in numerous instances children and even babies are thrown on the cold mercies of the world. The distressed are being provided for at present and there is little cause for suffering, but as the hours pass the situation becomes more strained and outside aid becomes more and more appreciated.

Burying The Dead.

The work of burying the dead proceeds in a more systematic manner today as the situation is not so strained as for the first day and a half. Bodies are coming in slower and more time is given for properly preparing them for burial. Corpses are being brought in from below Lone, a distance of eighteen miles. The report was current this morning that three dead bodies were seen to float into the Columbia River 45 miles distant from Heppner. Doubtless many will never be recovered.

The scenes at Roberts' hall, which is used as a morgue, are heart-rending beyond description when dead bodies being identified by relatives. Scores of persons were out of town at the time of the flood continued to come in to find a spot for their entire family either in the grave, or among the missing. It is a pitiful, heart-breaking scene that will touch the most calloused heart.

Recovered Bodies

Following is a list of the recovered dead up to the time of going to press:

Bert Hynd

Lois Rota

J. H. E. Dennis

Mrs. Nettie Kintaley

Dr. J. B. McSwain

Stalter boy

Harry Hanby

Gladys Ashbaugh

Rena Ashbaugh

Stalter boy

Stalter boy

Stewart Wyland

Abe Wells

James Matlock

J. E. Hockett

Billy Ayers

J. L. Hockett girl

Will Walton

Meady Jones

A. C. Giger

Perry Dawson

Babe Dawson

Nora Florin

Ada Curtis

Mrs. Tom Matlock

Mrs. C. H. Redfield

Mrs. Percy Dawson

Charley Chinnaman

Conser's Jay

J. M. Korian

Katie Walton

Vaite Anderson

Paul Jones

James Willis

Fred Krug girl

Mrs. J. R. Dawson

Mrs. Fred Krug

Fred Krug

Leah Stalter

Fern Stalter

Mrs. T. R. Howard

Mrs. A. S. Wells

T. R. Harrison

Mrs. W. W. Lipsett

Anna McBride

Sam McBride

Geo. Wells

Mrs. Jesse Kirk

Mrs. Pearl Jones

Move Ashbaugh baby

Unknown baby

Unknown baby

Unknown baby

Unknown baby

Unknown baby

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