

Corbett Pioneer Writes History of Beginnings of Favored Section

(By Lydia Taylor Ostrand)

The pioneers of Eastern Multnomah county are nearing the end of the trail, and as there will soon be none left to tell the story of the early settling up of this beautiful and fertile country, I feel it my duty to put in writing some of the things I remember and what I could glean from records and from early settlers. Corbett high school students have come to me for information about the early history of Corbett, but that is not far back, for Corbett was known as Taylor until about 1886, when H. W. Corbett came into possession of the Taylor estate.

Let us go back into ancient history when my father, E. J. Taylor, first bought this land from the government. The only way to get to it was to walk. My father had never told me the year he filed on this land but for the benefit of the Corbett high school and my own satisfaction I started out to investigate.

I did not realize what an undertaking this was and I have many earnest friends to thank for their data and information. However, there was none that could tell me the date my father first settled on this land. My older brothers had told me our mother had lived on this land in a log house, the roof made of cedar bark and the floor of mother earth. The cabin stood near the river where Mr. Corbett later built his summer home.

As our mother passed away in 1867, I figured my father must have settled there in 1865 or 66. I visited early settlers of the Corbett district, the Misses Buxton, John Hall and the Harlows, early settlers of Troutdale, Tom Hurlburt and Geo. Himes of Portland, I searched the records at the courthouse but couldn't get the information I desired for my starting point. I was advised to write the state house at Salem but went myself instead, and to my great satisfaction found a letter written by my father to Governor Gibbs on October 5, 1866, making application for lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, south half of section 27, S. E. quarter of S. E. quarter of section 28, township N. R. 4 E., containing 348 acres. My father added to this till he owned 640 acres, one square mile.

That was the beginning of what is now Corbett. About that time a man by the name of Valentine Brown located on land joining father on the east that was later bought by a Mr. Van Scuyver and was for years known as Van's landing.

My memory takes me back to about 1868 when I lived with my father and two brothers in this log house. There were no roads, no schools, no neighbors except a few old bachelors. What little education I got was acquired by attending school over in Washington, which was open for three or four months in the summer as the roads were unfit to travel in the winter. We even then had to walk two or three miles as they did not run free school busses in those days.

Until the coming of the O. W. N. the telegraph line ran over the mountains from Troutdale to where Chanticleer Inn now is, thence down the hill past Rooster Rock and Latourell to Cascade Locks. A trail known as the wire trail was kept open for the convenience of the man who tended the wire.

Joseph Latourell later had a telegraph office in his home. He was operator, lineman, battery man combined. Telegraphing was done not by sound but by dot and dash made on tape paper run automatically through a machine.

I do not know in what year Joseph Latourell settled at Latourell Falls, but my earliest recollection was of going to his house. He had a large log house and it was a regular stopping place for travelers and homeseekers, as well as our social center. Three or four times a year friends would gather there for a big dance. People came in row boats from as far down the river as Camas, and as far up as Cascade Locks. Mr. Latourell, who was an expert on the violin, furnished the music. A big feed was furnished at midnight and the people would often dance till daylight, as it was almost impossible to travel on the water at night. We had neither lanterns, flashlights or spotlights.

The mountain east of the Sandy river was first known as Staggerweed mountain, so called from a plant growing there that poisoned cattle. It was the first thing to appear in the spring and although not relished by cattle, in their desire for something green they would eat it. After eating it they grew dizzy, would stagger and fall, and unless they received prompt attention would die. The younger generation has tried to modernize the name by calling it Larkspur

mountain as the staggerweed is a wild larkspur.

Tom Hurlburt tells me the land along the Columbia in this Corbett district was surveyed in 1855 and that in 1873, Tom, with his father, surveyed the remainder of Staggerweed mountain as far east as Larch mountain, south and west as far as Sandy river.

It was about that time that settlers began to arrive. I believe that it was in 1872 and '73 that grasshoppers were so bad in Kansas and Missouri, causing many to come west, and some found homes on Staggerweed mountain. Among the first settlers were the families of Littlepage, Cole, Gandy, Evans, Hurlburt, Russell, Wilkie, Leader, Benfield, Painter, Emily, Files, Dunn, Wash, Reed, Sweeney, Smith, Ross, Dever, Williams, Willow, Chamberlain and others.

The first industries were cutting cord wood, drawing pitch from the fir trees, cutting knots from maple trees for furniture and raising potatoes. All these products were shipped to Portland. Mr. Latourell boated cord wood for many years with a scow equipped with sails. My father owned a side-wheeled steamer at one time and carried farm produce, passengers and wood from Cape Horn to Portland. Some will remember the boat, called The Minnehaha.

The first school on the mountain was held in a little one-room house near Chanticleer Inn. That was about 1875. We were then in Troutdale district, No. 29. In 1884 my father donated one acre for school purposes where the Corbett grade school now stands. Lize Chamberlain tells me it was through his and my father's efforts that this district was formed. Land was given and money raised for the schoolhouse, and teachers were secured. Father was one of its first directors. Now the donor, the home and even the little Taylor school is forgotten.

But as mighty as an empire were the stalwart pioneers who shaped an empire's destiny and carved her broad frontiers.

My father took an active part in building up this community. He built and maintained the first road from the wire trail to the river at Taylor's Landing. He gave bed, food and work to many of the early settlers, went with them and helped stake out their claims. I know this to be true for I had to write out a description of the land

when a girl of 14 years. Although my father died a poor man, he did his bit for the Corbett country, and I hope to see a marker erected at Corbett in his memory.

Geo. Himes tells me Multnomah county was formed in 1855. Before that it was a part of Clackamas county.

The O. W. & N. was built in 1882 and '83.

The first store in the Corbett neighborhood was near Van's Landing, run by J. S. Stevens in 1888.

My father established a post-office in his home in 1884, called Taylor. When I was married in 1877 we got our mail in Portland. The old pioneers thought nothing of walking to Portland, although it was 22 miles. They would go down one day and back the next, carrying their mail and a few necessities. They often went the Powell Valley road, a short cut from Troutdale, but through dense timber. I have heard them tell of hearing the cougar's call.

There were few horses on the mountain at this time. Hauling was done with oxen hitched to a crude home made sled. Land was cultivated with a grubbing hoe, hay cut with a scythe, threshing done with a flail. Although my book learning was sadly neglected, I stood perfect in the art of using a hoe, axe, scythe or flail.

I am glad to be the daughter of pioneer parents and a pioneer of east Multnomah county, to me the dearest spot on earth, glad I was born in pioneer days when one worked on one's own initiative, looked to nature for health, help and happiness. I would not give my knowledge of the wilds, flowers, birds and beasts for silver or gold.

No doctor was ever called for us children. If we had a cold or felt indisposed a good dose of barberry bark tea was given us and a cough syrup made of hoarhound and honey. For a cut or sore, balsom from the fir tree was applied, a bandage was put on. We never knew the meaning of blood poisoning or infection. Father had a pair of dental forceps and extracted teeth for the neighbors as well as us children. All herbs, such as catnip, sage, mint and hoarhound were dried and kept for an emergency.

I made bread and baked it in a Dutch oven, did my own sewing by hand, made candies, when I was only 9 years old. The sun was my time piece and I could tell time quite accurately. We parched and ground all our own coffee. Self-sealing jars were unknown then

and our fruit had to be dried or preserved.

Santa never visited our home in those days and we were so isolated even the circuit rider never found us. It is quite different now. I was invited to a feast on Thanksgiving day of this year at Corbett. We sat in our easy chairs and listened to the wonderful Thanksgiving program at the auditorium over the radio, so I am glad to have lived in the present as well as the past.

The King's Message Is Peace

Once more it is Christmas. Once again the message of Bethlehem will be flashed across the world. Little babes will have it whispered in their ears by mothers' loving lips, children will sing its praises, and men and women of all walks of life will join in the blessed chorus, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing." Yes, this is the King's birthday. The Prince of Peace, the Son of the Living God, the Saviour, Jesus the King is born. Why should not man and "heaven and nature sing?"

Thus in the name of the King I greet you. By his authority I bring you this Christmas message: "Peace on earth to men of good will." It is a message of love, liberty, salvation, joy and peace, if we will accept same. For this King is



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the world's only and sufficient hope. He is the Morning Star of your destiny and mine, who will, if he may, lead us on, unshaken by the storms of life and through the trying days to the dawn of immortality and eternal happiness. So, may we—who know the King—count it highest joy and privilege to consecrate ourselves anew to him and his service and thus hasten the return of this our Redeemer and King.

Yours in the King's name,
JOHN S. NORDELL,
Pastor Haley Baptist Church.

Chapel Planned For Gates Funeral Home

J. E. Gates, proprietor of the Gates Funeral home, came to Gresham in March of 1925 from Estacada. He purchased the Boone Johnson house, with nearly an acre of ground on south Roberts avenue which he has fitted up as a modern funeral home.

The house immediately underwent a general remodeling which has added to the attractiveness of the place. The plans for the future include the erection of a chapel on the south side of the residence where funeral services may be held amid suitable surroundings.

Mr. Gates is assisted in his work by his wife. They still retain a line of undertaking business in Estacada and are often called there to

officially. Mr. and Mrs. Gates express themselves as much pleased with the appreciative treatment which has been accorded them in Gresham.

Geo. W. Page

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