

RAILROAD CAME ECHO PROSPERED

UTILLA AGENCY FIRST
Tall Rye Grass and Wild
Game; Homesteaders;
Col. Raley Memories.

Echo was founded by J. K. Koontz. He bought and platted the land into lots and named the place Echo for his daughter. She later became Echo Miller, wife of Charles Miller of the still known firm name George & Miller. The town was brought about through the building

of the railroad from Umatilla east in 1883, and the increased settlement of Umatilla Meadows. To this was added the surrounding wheat lands and the rise of the cattle and sheep business in the vicinity.

Mr. Koontz, who moved from Umatilla, opened a large merchandise business and built a flouring mill which he named Henrietta Mills from the name of old Fort Henrietta, previously located on the opposite side of the river near the farm home of Joseph Cunha. Wheat growing increased, milling paid and Echo prospered many years. It is still a livestock and wheat center, and some of the largest sheepmen in Oregon live in and near Echo.

As a part of Echo is the well known valley basin called the Umatilla Meadows, where one of the very earliest settlements of eastern Oregon was established. The Meadows was then covered with tall rye grass in which Indians could ride and not be seen. It was used for hay in some instances but the Meadows was chiefly a great winter range for horses and cattle. Grass and water was always plentiful.

A heavy growth of cottonwood, birch, elder and willows grew on both banks of the river. There was a profusion of wild roses, currants, gooseberries and raspberries, and wild choke cherries. Heavy bunch grass was on the surrounding plains and came down to the tall rye grass in the valley. Many places on the Meadows were swamped and wild water grasses, reeds and tules grew on them. This was particularly true of the Dillon, Kaufman, John McCoy and the John Teagle and Courtney places.

On the Courtney place (later Houser) was a large spring which is still flowing. The swamps have long ago disappeared. To Col. J. H. Raley of Pendleton we are indebted for some of the interesting and valuable facts of the old Umatilla Meadows. His family, Jonathan Raley, and that of an uncle were among the first settlers and his young manhood was spent amidst the scenes he so vividly describes. He is now in his early eighties and his mind so strong through the years, is clear in its memories of the days when the old west was in its making.

In a lengthy interview he stated that bunch grass grew between Echo

Mrs. Alex Malcolm.



Mrs. Alex Malcolm is a daughter of the late J. H. Koontz, founder of Echo.

and Stanfield to such an extent that it was cut for hay to feed the stage horses at their stations along the old mail routes. Also immense white sage grew in many places which was strong feed for livestock in winter seasons. This was before the days when so many range stock, horses and cattle, and later sheep, were brought in and produced in great numbers on these ranges.

It was a wild animal's paradise but proved the basis for the great fortunes and successes that followed the first immigrant train of 1843, and the discovery of gold in 1849 and 1860. To quote Col. Raley:

"Game birds, some of the species now practically extinct, were in profusion everywhere. Thousands of wild ducks, prairie chickens, myriads of curlews, an abundance of sage hens and native pheasants were to be found on the Meadows. In the winter time especially the cottonwood trees would be covered with great flocks of wild prairie chickens. Nests of these wild birds were to be found scattered all over the Meadows. Curlews, sage hens and prairie chickens, now extinct, existed in myriads.

"Wild animals, such as coyotes, lynx and bob cats were numerous along the river, and some beaver. Two kinds of rabbits were in abundance—the common cotton tail and the big white tailed jack rabbit. It was years after my first recollection," he says, "of the meadows before the black tailed rabbit, now so numerous and destructive, made its appearance in that vicinity. On occasions, to my memory, wild deer got as far as the Meadows, and were killed. Miles northeastward, near the mouth of the Juniper, ranged a band of antelope.

Due to excessive pasturing the bunch grass gave way to sagebrush and other grasses. The wild rye grass on the Meadows that grew in such profusion, yielded to sage brush and greasewood. He says that in the early days there was very little salt grass but that it gradually extended over most of the area of the old Meadows. As time passed and settlement proceeded the swamps of the Meadows disappeared and the salt grass was displaced by rich farms and alfalfa fields.

"Improvements of the first settlers were very meager. Cabins were built of cottonwood logs; floors were of split cottonwoods called punchings. Roofs were made of poles covered with rye grass and dirt. Fireplaces were made from alkali rock, a substance now practically unfounded in that district. Strange as it may seem, fences were constructed by throwing up sod

between two ditches three or four feet high. These sod and ditch fences were replaced by the old worn rail stake and rider fences, which were finally replaced by the modern barbed and woven wire fences. A few of the old log cabin homes remained many years as out buildings.

"They were but few settlers on the Meadows prior to 1870," Col. Raley said. "They held the lands usually by squatter's rights, some following later with homesteads. The only record I find of any lands patented on the Meadows earlier than 1869, was a patent to John McCoy, dated December 10, 1864. The next patents were in 1869 to Frank Maddock, John Teel, David Coffman, Burr Johnson, Henry J. Raley, Eli Short and Stephen A. Trimble, in 1870. Patents were issued to Burr Johnson and Daniel Simmons to John Bradburn in 1871; and to Thomas Robbins and Jonathan Raley in 1872.

On the east side of the river G. W. Palmer was located about half a mile south of Echo. No settlement existed where the town of Echo now is located.

On the east side J. C. Franklin located, about one-half mile up the river from where Stanfield now stands. The first post office known as "The Meadows" was kept by Franklin at this point.

In 1862-63, W. W. Brassfield also owned the land now owned by Joseph Cunha. Next to him was Louis Tuerman. Where Fred Andrews now lives, was Ray Geddis, who brought the first flock of sheep to the Meadows.

West of Geddis was H. J. Raley, and then Dr. John Teel, a part of whose land is still owned by heirs to the doctor. Another settlement was E. A. Wilson, a civil engineer, who later laid out the town of Pendleton. William Carter had another place and owned and operated the first dairy. His place was bought by Jonathan Raley and is now owned by Frank Corea.

Jonathan Raley owned and operated a line of ox freight teams on the old Oregon trail. N. B. Evans, another settler, owned and operated a ferry near Stanfield on the Butter Creek road through the Meadows. West of Evans was Hamilton, now the Mendanahall place and D. Simmons homestead, now owned by Harry Andrews. Farther west was Lucien Everett, who later became a prominent eastern Oregon lawyer. He operated a freight train to the mines of Grant county. The John McCoy, now Mendanahall place, was the first patented land on the Meadows. Other settlers were David Coffman and Alfred Jobe. At the present time most of these lands are embraced in the Umatilla ranch.

The first post office on the Meadows was conducted by J. C. Franklin about a half mile west of Stanfield. The first store was at Twelve Mile house now at Stanfield. The first school was 300 yards from the big spring on the Houser place. The first brick building was built (also first in Umatilla county) on the Carter place and later owned by Jonathan Raley. The bricks were burned at the Ten Mile house. The first physician was Dr. John Teel. The first lawyer was Lucien Everett.

The first irrigation ditch was taken out of the Umatilla river southwest of Echo near the head of the Westland canal, by Tom and Al Flow, and enlarged by Dr. Teel and Jonathan Raley.

The first settlement in Umatilla county was at Utilla, just west of the Echo bridge, where Fort Henrietta was located in 1851.

Born on Umatilla Meadows

Mrs. Frances Yerxa of Umatilla, was born on the Umatilla Meadows in 1864. Her step-father built the old mill at Umatilla in 1870. Wheat was brought in by boat and freight wagon. Her father was Samuel Markham, whose parents crossed the plains from Michigan in 1851. She married Dick Yerxa in 1880. He helped build the O. & W. into Umatilla where they lived many years.

ECHO SCHOOL BUILDING.



Echo school building is sufficient for grade and high school. On the grounds is a large gymnasium and numerous shade trees.

Butter Creek Hounds.

Farmers of Butter Creek during the big cattle days kept packs of hounds for coyote hunting which became a great sport. Coyotes, as well as wild cats and lynx, were numerous, and neither state nor government provided bounty or protection. Young calves, colts, pigs and sheep were often killed by the range varmints.

SHORTS.

The backwater lake at the diversion works of the West Extension was named Lake Lane in honor of Franklin K. Lane, secretary of the Interior, who granted the funds for building the West Extension.

Joe Cunha uses the first jail built in Eastern Oregon as a smokehouse. It is 12x20 feet of heavy hewn logs.

C. F. Morrow of Walla Walla, postmaster there 12 years, planted 20 acres to orchard in the Westland district and grew the trees to maturity.

R. Alexander of Pendleton, has served thirty years as vice president of the First National Bank of Hermiston. He conducted a large general merchandise store in Pendleton fifty years, and is now vigorous at 86.

W. D. Fletcher, father of Bob Fletcher of orchestra prominence, drilled the tunnel in the cliffs south of Cold Springs for coal. Instead of anthracite, it proved to be glass produced from ancient geological heat.

Mrs. Fred Hendley.



Mrs. Fred Hendley is a daughter of the late J. H. Koontz, founder of Echo.

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for the past 20 years
without interruption.

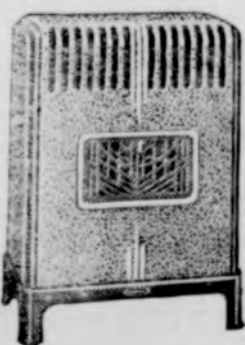
A HOME TOWN PAPER

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