

# Mrs. H. N. Wilson Writes "Glimpses Into the Past"

By Mrs. H. N. Wilson

This being the time when everyone is looking "back" into Oregon's past, we thought it might be fun and interesting too. BUT, we'll never be a historian! Just try to relate some happening well known to most everyone—say the Great Chicago Fire about the turn of the century when Mrs. Murphy's brown cow kicked over the lantern which caused such a conflagration. Right off someone says, no, no, it was a black cow, and the ladies name was Smyth (or was it Brown), and EVERYBODY knows Mrs. Murphy is the gal who makes CHOWDER. See what I mean?

Now, when Marco Polo wrote of his 30 year's travel in the Far and Middle East, 100 years before Columbus, he used a Preface which went in part, as follows: "Some things indeed there be herein, which he be held not; but these he heard from men of credit and veracity!" We feel this fits most suitably the following glimpses.

With means of travel, and highways such as we know today, distance is practically forgotten—one just GOES. Those who go hunting or fishing can zip from the coast to the end of the trails in Eastern Oregon all in one day, and with little effort or expense. Back in 1905—well, on June 6th to be exact—a young couple and their 6-year-old daughter left John Day, Oregon on a one-way trip to Mill City where a new home awaited them. Their household goods and supplies had been loaded into two wagons; one called the freight wagon driven by the wife's brother, the other to be their camp wagon, which held their food, clothing and daily needs. Two horses were hitched to each load, leaving a mare and small colt and a saddle pony to follow or be led.

The weather was warm, dry and roads well defined, but dusty—and beginnings of a town all had the friendly sameness—a wooden general store with hitchingposts or wracks both front and back. Their gait was slow but steady, and about 30 miles was average for a day! Breakfast was cooked and eaten before they started out each day; noon day dinner was a hearty one, with left over food wrapped and carried on for their supper, if possible, which was eaten as soon as "camp" was made just before dusk and everything settled for the night. Few thought it wise to travel by night.

Their trip took them through Prineville, Mitchell, Redmond and Sisters toward the mountains. The Santiam Pass was unknown then, of course, all travel going south through Post and on to the much talked of Tollgate Road. Rumor had it that one paid toll on everything owned, but it was generally conceded to be worth it since the owner maintained a good road all the way through his land. After leaving Post quite a distance they put a saddle on the pony and the brother, Bob, was to ride ahead to reconnoiter a bit. It seems the toll was so much for a horse, but as much as \$2.50 for a horse with saddle. But as he trotted along around a

bend he immediately came upon the Tollgate entrance, and too late to turn back and hide the saddle! After their loads were checked and toll fees taken care of they only drove a short ways before deciding to make camp, for they had traveled far that day.

About noon the next day, they stopped to cook their dinner, and the brother, Bob, had made a fire by the roadside, in a sort of trench. He then stirred up a batch of sour dough biscuits (right in the top of the flour sack), and was cooking them in a heavy iron skillet, tipping it to get the reflected heat, when a heavy team and wagon passed. A few moments later, the wagon stopped and a man came striding back to the fire and put out his hand, saying "Howdy Bob!" Taken by surprise, it was a moment before Bob recognized his former employer in the John Day country! After a bit of news-gathering, as they called it, the employer started that he knew and recognized his old "hand" by the way he handled that skillet in cooking the sourdough bread! Many were the times, on the prairie, when he had watched him turn out a batch of biscuits for the crew, done to perfection!

The cooks always carried their bath of "starter" for their sourdough bread. If something happened to it, they borrowed a starter from someone else. For meat they had several "hams" and "shoulders" of deer and elk meat, which had been salted and smoked at their John Day home before they left. This was sliced and fried, it did not require much cooking however, when thin. However good, one longed for a change of diet sometimes, the wife told us, and twice camp was made by a lake and a big catch of fish were salted down and carried along on their trip. Coming to a roadside store just at dusk one evening, and needing bread, the man routed out the owner (it had already closed up for the night), and his wife finally said she could spare a loaf, so he handed her the price, one nickel, returned to his wagon, and started on. Minutes later the storekeeper's wife came running down the road after them and handed him a handful of money! It seems, in the dusk, he had handed her a \$5 gold piece, (very common then) mistaking it for a nickel. For that most part, people were honest in those days, though most agreed it did not pay to get took friendly with travelers along the way.

Then on through Swisshome, Foster, Lebanon and on up to Scio which was a flourishing little town. They were allowed to camp inside the city limits, in a vacant lot with a picket fence on two sides. The horses were tied to a section of the picket fence. The small colt got too nosy, and meandered off, too far, it seems, for the mare, who finally whinnied shrilly, reared up on her hind legs, and broke loose, taking a section of the fence with her as she cantered out into the street. Police came quickly, from all directions, and the young couple feared a bit of trouble, but the police only wanted to help, and mare and colt were soon in their places again.

Territory was more familiar now, as the young couple had been raised on this section, and at Mehama they met and talked to many they had known. After passing Lyons they met an oldtime friend, an older man named Hobson, and with a studied look he remarked "Why, Daisy, you're tanned!" Daisy smiled, but hid her eyes with her sunbonnet. (Ladies did not SASS or make smart remarks in those days, but inside she thought, "If you had been where I've been these past two weeks you'd be TAN, too.")

Their last meal on the road was fixed at noon in the shade of the old red six-sided barn which stood until about 10 years ago, on the farm now owned by Jack Johnston, near Lyons. This old landmark, sturdy with high six-gable roof will be remembered by many and was reportedly built at least 30 years previously by a man named Bill Surrey. Then on up to Mill City, to a home on the north side among the hills, the site of the original homestead of her mother, Mrs. L. J. Thomas, who had proved up on the land under President Benjamin Harrison, 1888-1893.

They had been 18 days on the road. Weather had been most perfect all the way. The looked forward to the future, and knew they would be happy here. There was wood for fuel everywhere; wild game and rabbits; all the fish you could want, any time you dropped a hook in the water. A couple of men could go a short ways into the hills after breakfast and have meat for dinner—as many as six or eight deer might be brought down at a time—there was no limit, but meat was not wasted. Dressed out and hung in a shelter, it was shared with others in need of meat. Hams and shoulders were salted heavily and later smoked about as pork is cured today. Steaks were salted, peppered and sugared and stored layer for layer in earthen crocks—kept for weeks and delicious when fried.

Women knew all the native plants, gathering such as horehound, Oregon grape, elderberry, yarrow and cascara (or Chittum, as the Indians called it) in the summer, and after drying, stored it for later use in case of illness.

The railroad had been put through—a rooming and boarding house at Gates was run by the young wife's uncle, Albert Gates. This was on the

6—THE MILL CITY ENTERPRISE  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1959

Marion county side, about where Jerry's Tavern stands today. A large sawmill and the Postoffice was on the Linn county side of the river on land owned by H. N. Wilson, today. The schoolhouse, one room, with pump on porch, stood on what is now at the Martha Bowes farm across from the Gates Airport. About three miles further east the town of Minto was growing steadily, there also was a schoolhouse, and a bridge across the river at that point. Roads on the Marion County side had not been put through—all travel going up on the Linn county side. The bridge at Gates was located in the same general area as the one used today. Rumor has it that the one used at the time of this story blew down in a high wind, and was replaced by the old red covered one, most folks will recall.

Men in these communities formed a large band, which had a large brass section and played for many large and happy gatherings and dances. One 4th of July event was staged in an open pavilion, made of donated lumber and free labor at the site of the Oak Park Motel. Community sings were most popular and held often.

Here the couple lived until February 1959 when they purchased property in the City of Gates, where they still make their home—now 87 and 79 years of age, known to all us "Ned and Daisy" Richards.

Early day travel in the wet Oregon country was often difficult, and transportation took many twists. A horseback was the only sure way of getting through many times. A heavy wagon two or four horses was needed for freight. Many had canopy tops to protect the merchandise, and swayed badly when loaded. Mud, as you can imagine, played a big part. Going down into a "draw" and getting up out of it, and fording rivers, added peril. In case a wagon fired down, a young boy would walk out on the wagon tongue, unhitch the lead team, climb on one and take them to the rear, where it was hitcher up again and pull the load out backwards. This sort of ruse was used on a balky horse, also (he that he was heading home), but tales were told of more drastic methods, like building a fire under the poor critter.

As late as 1931, pack horses could be seen heading east up the canyon, going to the Lakes for fishing, or on

hunting or prospecting trips. A good lead pack horse was worth a fortune, and the pride and joy of his owner. The end horse was the next most reliable, and could be counted on to stand his ground. Those in between, which might number 1, 2 or 3, were joined nose to tail in front, and if all went well good time was made. BUT, snakes, bees, bear or cougar coming too close often upset man made plans, and no typewriter can set down the awful string of heiroglyphics poured forth by the "packer" when trouble overtook him on the trail.

Business places were open early (no banker's hours in those days) and one could do their shopping or repairing and head homeward by early afternoon. Men did most of the going and buying for their families. Only the Belle Wattings (of "Gone With the Wind" fame) traveled much, but rumors say a team of fast-stepping blacks could always be found for those "ladies" who traveled in the early dusk or just before dawn.

When supplies had to be brot in, or word had been received that new ships would be arriving from "around the Horn", perhaps bringing old friends or relatives, the heavy wagons would prepare to "roll". Everyone in the settlement would make out a list of things needed and one or two men (called the Purser) would oversee the purchases, making substitutes when necessary. Money was always scarce, and necessities came first, but the ladies then, as now) did a bit of "wish-full thinking" and often a few extras on the list, just in one case! One lady who lived in the area which is now Salem, had a fresh cow one spring, and her wish was for some Tin Milk Pans, liked they used to use back east, which were so easy to skim the cream from. The caravan went to the fast growing town of Portland, but in all his searching, the purser could find no such items. Rather than go back empty handed, this particular buyer came up with a dandy solution, but made of heavy china, not tin. When the lady, Aunt Jenny, saw them, she was aghast! Blushing furiously, she accepted them however. Years later she confided that "those six very white, very large, oversize cups with handles looked very pretty sitting on my spring house shelf full of milk". (Some storekeepers with a twinkle in his eye, often named these "left handed sugar bowls".)

Mehama grew to be a very busy crossroads town—the river often low and easy to cross in early days. Many traveled to the Quartzville area, hunt-

ing gold. Mineral mines were also discovered on the Northfork—a coal mine at Gates—besides the ever-growing number of sawmills to lure men and families.

With the coming of the railroad, many chinese had been imported for labor, and later it was not uncommon to find one or more left behind in a growing settlement, who would labor long and diligently for small fees. Some gave laundry service. One, a cook, was one of a few who had been privileged to have a wife. But the wife had died and burial was in a small plot within sight of his kitchen. Very often, prompted by his longing for her or because there was leftover rice, he could be seen prayerfully carrying the hot bowl of rice, arms extended far out in front, placing it on the mound and shortly returning to his work. Once a bystander smiled broadly, and the Chinese hesitated a moment, then said sorrowfully (with the usual Chinese confusion between our "r's" and "l's") "You raff my lice—me raff you frowers".

The little sawmills which depended on men and horses gave way to the "iron horse", which wound its way through all our hills here and fed the big sawmill towns where man, and his paycheck were owned by the Lumber Company. Wastes were enormous in the woods. Reportedly, man could walk for miles on 'down' logs, never needing to set his foot on the earth itself. But, finally, conservation has prevailed, and the good earth is rapidly growing more trees. The hills, lakes and rivers still remain—our greatest ASSETS! And God Given. With the new superhighways, and the speed of transportation, the future of Oregon is unlimited—but this particular area is a paradise for sportsmen, with recreational facilities for every member of the family, available most all the year 'round. Picnicing, swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, skiing, skating!

Could we but see it, our greatest opportunity for the future lies in sharing our Oregon Wonderland with others. All America is on the move, and with a hospitality similar to that for which the South is famous, or the friendly "Howdy" known to Texas, tourist dollars can be harvested here, with no need for roulette or devious means, because the beauty of old Mother Nature has never ceased to thrill mankind. We can find no better slogan than:

GATES—Gateway to a Sportsman's Paradise!

SUBSCRIBE TO THE MILL CITY ENTERPRISE TODAY! \$3.00 a Year

Subscribe to The Mill City Enterprise Newspaper \$3 a Year



THE NEW HOMELITE SAW SHOP

at Gates, Oregon is equipped to handle all types of small engine rebuilding and repairing.

Power Saw Bar Work

Chain Sharpening and Repairing

Bring us your Lawn Mower, Pump or Garden Tractor Engines for overhauling.

All Work Guaranteed

Marshall's Saw Shop

Phone 7351 Gates, Oregon

WRIGHT TRUCK LINE  
Between Portland-Salem-Idanha all way points Allied Van Lines Agent Local & Nationwide Household Moving Stayton Phone EO 9-2870 Salem EM 3-1636 SHIP IT WRIGHT

Don't Worry... It's Never too Late!  
Say it with FLOWERS  
Just pick up your phone and call us and within a short time a beautiful flower gift... perfect for the occasion... will be on its speedy way to those you want to remember.  
Even if you're a member of the late minute, we flash your greetings across the country with FLOWERS BY WIRE. Satisfaction guaranteed.  
RALEIGH HAROLD FLORIST & NURSERY Ph. EO 9-2534 319 W. Wash. Stayton



WANT A

GOO? Catch!

OF CUSTOMERS

IF YOU DO THEN ADVERTISE REGULARLY IN THE MILL CITY ENTERPRISE. BEST COVERAGE OF THE UPPER CANYON OF ANY NEWSPAPER IN THE WORLD.

We Also Specialize in COMMERCIAL PRINTING Consult us on your next order.

The Mill City Enterprise