

EARLY DAYS AT THE CASCADES*

The first school that we went to was a log house someone had built. It was called the Minter cabin. It did not have any windows and only the ground for a floor. There were six scholars: my brother T. C. Iman, Henry Sheppard, Ellen Sheppard, Ellen Nelson, Mary Ann Nelson and Flora A. Iman. The teachers were Stark and J. A. Bull. The school house stood close somewhere near the Lyndes planing mill. Mr. Nelson lived above Nelson creek bridge and the place has been called Nelson-place ever since. The Sheppard family owned the donation claim where Stevenson now stands and their house stood, at that time, directly on the same spot where the Fleischauer house stands. My father lived on the west side of Rock Creek near what was once the Iman saw mill, and I remember when my father felled a large tree across the creek to make a foot bridge so we could cross on it going to school. It was near the first bridge on Rock Creek built by John Brazee and was built during the early 70s. The foot bridge was constructed by holes being bored every so far apart in the log, and standards put in with rails on them to make it more safe. My father then adzed it off until it was about two feet in width and it made us a good foot bridge.

My father was a skilled workman, one who dared to tackle most any kind of a structure. He built and owned the third and fourth saw mills in this County. The first was built just below the 20 foot falls on Rock Creek, near the L. F. Iman place but was later carried away by a heavy flood in the creek. It stood the heavy strain of the angry water for about 24 hours, when it disappeared in the waters of the mighty Columbia. At first the mill was what was known as a sash saw mill, and very much unlike the saw mills of today. The carriage ran on slides that were kept well oiled and I dare say, there are not many persons of today who have seen the sash mill in operation.

The next mill stood on the ground near where Mr. F. Hapgood lives. It was first a water-power mill and was driven first by what is known as a center-discharge wheel. It was afterwards driven by what is known as the over-shot wheel. It was five feet on the face and 29 feet in diameter. At last the mill was driven by a steam engine of the Houston, Stanwood and Gamble pattern.

*This manuscript was secured for the *Washington Historical Quarterly* by D. A. Brown, Historian of the Skamania County Historical Society.

Times have changed since then, both in the country and the people. The pioneers' policy was to live and let live. Oh how different from today. If a neighbor visited, he was just as welcome as the flowers in May, welcome one day or one week. Those old timers did not open the door and peep out at you as they do these days.

I will drop back to the question of those good old days of the ancient saw mill. My father always had a large number of men employed while operating the mill, including the tie makers and wood cutters, who, with the log cutters, were paid about \$35 and up to \$40 per month and board, work or not, and not many of them were on the loaf at that. The logs were all taken to the mill by the old fashioned ox team, very slow but sure, with no laborers being killed in those days with the sturdy ox as today by the sky line and the destructive donkey which pulls down almost everything in front of it. It is a shame to look upon the beautiful timber pulled down by such equipment as this. The people fight against the destructive forest fires, which is very well; but why not fight the sky line and the donkey engine as well? Monrow Vallett says the world has gone wrong, but I differ with him; not the world but the people.

My father aided in the construction of the blockhouse at the Upper Cascades, built in 1856, if my memory serves me right. About that time there was a village just this side of the cut where the blockhouse stood, the name of it being called "Baghdad" at that time.

The section house at the Cascade Locks was the John Chipman house, on the John Chipman donation land claim and was built in 1855. It is a very good house now and an ancient piece of carpentry. What a pity the old blockhouse was not preserved as the Chipman house has been, and also the other blockhouses of our country. No doubt it would be standing today if it had not been blown down by Geo. H. Stevenson. I venture to say that had I destroyed this wonderful fort with its weather beaten roof and walls, I would have been punished; but those men of yesterday can do most anything without notice. It is most a crime to destroy such as those early day structures.

I wish at times that I could return to those good old days of my youth and gaze upon what will be no more. Even the red men after the war were more friendly than the pale face (as they called the whites). One could buy a salmon that would weigh 50 pounds for 25 cents from them and if one had no money

they would offer the fish as a gift. Oh how different from today. It just makes me wild as I think back and ponder the vision. I am for the pioneers all the time, the most of them true blue, the men that made our country.

Roger G. Atwell, a late pioneer, manufactured the first matches in the early 50s. He lived just across the river from Stevenson and was the father of J. M. and J. W. Atwell of Stevenson, Wash. He and my father were partners in one of the first passenger boats that plied on the river from the Cascades to The Dalles. The people called it the big float. It was huge, its beam being about 12 or 14 feet and its length about 40 feet. It was built of slabs, the edges of which were made straight and sized down on the bark side to fit the timbers, the sawed side out.

Isaac H. Bush, early day pioneer, deserves to be mentioned, a man of much hospitality. It was he who built a hospital near the blockhouse for the benefit of the sick emigrants that crossed the pioneer trail to help build our country. My mother was an inmate of that institution, coming down with what was then called "mountain fever." It has been reported that Isaac H. Bush was put down in the hold of a scow with two of his sons and the scow scuttled and sent over the falls and were drowned but such is not so. After the Bush boys had killed two or three men at the Cascades, including Sheriff Sullivan, they departed for California, and they were wholly in the right of the shooting.

The first railroad at the Cascades ran near the I. H. Bush house; its cars were drawn by mules. I have some of the wood taken from it, if I am informed correctly. It was built about 1850 or 51 and extended down the river as far as to where the little "Nipigon" station now stands; and was then called "Leather Point." It was owned by Bradford and Company.

There was also a mule road on the Oregon side of the river, owned by Colonel Ruckle; afterwards taken over by Harry Olmstead. It has been reported that Ruckle was a good man but a poor manager, hence it was taken over by Olmstead. I also have some of the car wheels of that road. It extended from the Cascade Locks down to about Eagle Creek. Joseph Bailey owned a saw mill on Eagle Creek.

At the time those roads were in operation, the first steam craft came upon these waters to ply between the Cascades and The Dalles. She was an iron hull boat about 50 feet long with a propeller. Her name was *Allen*. Her Captain's name was Glad-

well. She went to wreck on a bar near Hood River. The next boat was the *Mary*, and the third the *Wasco*, built by my father during the year 1854. She was a side wheel steamer, sharp at both ends. The steamer *Idaho* was modeled after her. She was a nice little boat and ran long after the *Wasco* had gone to wreck.

Now again speaking of our early pioneers, I will speak of Samuel B. Jones, a kind man and full of hospitality. I well remember some of Mr. Jones' kind acts. He was for many years conductor on the little railroad that ran from the Upper to the Lower Cascades and one of his habits was not to make a charge to those old pioneers who wished to ride. He was the father of Mrs. Minnie Stevenson, who now resides in our town, Stevenson.

H. A. Levens, our old family doctor, and I venture to say, was the best we ever had in our country; one who went out to save the lives of the sick, and not merely for money. The good old doctor did not want to accept any pay but sometimes did accept a small amount if one insisted on his taking it. Mr. Levens was born in the state of Illinois, if I am right, and, as I have been told, wished to quit his profession, saying he was worn out by the many trips he had made to doctor the sick. He was for a number of years in our community before any one knew him to be a doctor. If I am correct, the first party who learned of this was Mrs. H. McNatt, early day pioneer. She was very ill and not expected to live as Portland and California doctors had given her up. Mr. Levens came to see her without being called, and after taking a good look at her, remarked, "It is not such that this lady must die; I can cure her if you will let me." The people asked if he were a doctor and he replied, "I am," and so started in attending to her needs until she finally recovered and lived long afterwards. He was known as Dr. H. A. Levens from that time on, but, as I said before, did not care to make a charge. The deep snows did not stop the kind old man. If it were possible, he would trudge for miles on foot to try to save the life of some poor sick person who needed his aid. I well remember when he once walked from Castle Rock, (now known as Beacon Rock), to our house to doctor several of our family who were ill. One little sister did not survive as, he said, she was too far gone. There was snow on the ground at this time and, as usual, he did not want money. At the time, my father owned a fine roan durham, a male, which the old man had always taken a fancy to, so my father said, "Doctor, you have done much for

us and have charged nothing, so now I am going to give you this critter as a present," so the old man accepted the offer and later came and took him home. Such are men, and real men; not the men of today, who all want the money and any way to get it. Mr. Levens later operated a grocery store at the Cascade Locks for many years; now known as the Inn of the Bridge of the Gods.

Mr. Andrew McDonald, George McDonald, S. M. Hamilton, who lived in the vicinity of the Lower Cascades were all pioneers of early days and have crossed to the "other side" like Samuel B. Jones and Dr. Levens whom I have mentioned. Not many of them are left. My aged mother, just about outlasted any of them.

A model pioneer was Simon Geil, one of our early Justices of the County, who believed in the "live and let live" policy, who served his full time and never tried a case. By talking to the parties, he settled all cases without their coming to a trial. This man lived with us about 25 years; not the type of man of today. Mr. Geil crossed the plains in the year 1853, a Volunteer under Governor Stevens; he also fought the Indians in the war of 1856 on the 26th day of March at the Cascades.

On one of the small islands, known as the Sullivan Islands, also called "lower Memaloose Island," was once a burying ground for the Indians. Their mode of putting away the dead was to take them out on the Island and put them in what was known as "dead houses." I well remember just how this dead house looked as I have visited this island many times. A hole dug in the ground, 4 or 5 feet deep and the size on the ground they wished it to be. They then put some pieces on the ground around the top of the basement, afterwards building a house with walls and roof. They would take the "Memaloosed" party down in the basement and put it next to the wall; then stacked them as they died, one on top of the other, till the house was filled. The boxes used for burial were of most any length; it mattered not what the size of the person might be. The boxes were covered with most any kind of calico so long as it had red in the color. All of their belongings were put in with them. Another mode of burial was to put the corpses up into trees on shelves, also to hang them by the neck to pins or beams in a house. Those who were hanged for participating in the war of 1856 were buried on the river bottom, below where the Fred Kiteuring dock now stands. Most or all of the trees they were hanged on are washed away by high water. I once knew where some of them were but time makes changes.

GEORGE IMAN.