

History of Weston

Some Interesting Facts Briefly Narrated

(By Eugene Niles)

On May 1, 1863, five families started from Mercer county, Missouri, to a new, unsettled country. They were leaving their homes on account of the war which was destroying their farms, and also to better their condition financially.

They were not coming to a land altogether unknown to them, for Thomas Lieuallen had been here and had written to them about the country. Although it took six months to get a letter and answer it from Oregon to Missouri, their desire and curiosity to come was not diminished.

The small company was joined by other adventurers along the way until there were 10 wagons in all.

The journey was made by ox teams and proved to be long and dangerous, but there was something about the practically unknown country which led them on. Aunt Sarah McDougal, then only twenty-one years of age drove seven yoke of oxen all the way. After five long months, five families landed in what is now Milton. From there they went to Linkton mountain but not finding a desirable location, came to this place.

The country was covered with bunch grass which resembled a waving field of barley. There was nothing to disturb their solitude, except coyotes and Indians, which were very abundant, and the latter much dreaded.

The first winter was spent in a log cabin which stood just back of where G. W. Proebstel now lives and was formerly occupied by cattlemen.

The winter was long and severe. For forty days they were not able to see the sun on account of the fog, snow being two feet deep, and the mercury falling to about 30 degrees below zero.

The next year and the years following, people began to settle here, coming from the east and from other parts of Oregon.

For provisions they had to go to Fort Walla Walla and Wallula. The supplies were shipped from cities on the eastern coast, came around Cape Horn to Portland and from there to Umatilla landing, and were carried by mule team to Fort Walla Walla and Wallula. This made the cost of provisions very high, flour being \$15 per hundred pounds, butter \$1 per pound, meat 75 cents to \$1 per pound. There wasn't any currency and the money they used was gold dust, which was weighed out in scales. The greenbacks which people brought with them were only worth half as much as gold, or 50 cents on the dollar.

In the year 1865 Whitman built a sawmill on Pine creek, and the first house built from the lumber was Mrs. McDougal's in the year 1867. A. Bell started the first store. In 1869 Thomas Lieuallen got the right to build a post office and was the first postmaster. The same year, the first stage came through Weston from Walla Walla to Pendleton, Charles Porter being the driver.

The first church was called Mt. Pleasant and was built in the year 1868.

The first public school house was built in 1878 on the site where the new public school now stands. The land was deeded to the district by Hugh McArthur.

In the year 1874 a fire was started in a barn by three boys playing with matches and the whole town, the exception of Mrs. McDougal's residence and one brick building, was destroyed.

In 1885 the first train came through Weston. There wasn't any station and they boarded the train at the road crossing in front of Thomas Price's residence.

The first lodge was the "Grange," which was started in the year 1873.

The little town of Weston, whose name was given by Thomas Lieuallen, has grown and prospered since its early settlement and is now the seat of the Eastern Oregon State Normal School, which was practically started in 1893.