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1859 to 1959

Oregon Centennial

Weston Area Played Important Part in West's Development

The beginning of history for the Weston district was in the fall of 1862 although, prior to that time wagon trains and pack train of the Hudson Bay Company passed through to other destinations. Crossing the Blue Mountains dates back to 1811. During the 1820's and 1830's trappers and fur traders worked every stream for otter, beaver and other fur-bearing animals. Through Weston over the Blue Mountains by way of Tollgate and Elgin was the Thomas and Ruckel Road which began as an Indian trail connecting the Walla Walla and Grand Ronde valleys and was often used by fur traders from 1819 to 1834 between Walla Walla and the Snake River country. It was on this route that Fremont passed from the Grande Ronde to the Columbia In 1843. This was also the route followed by the first wagon train to Oregon which arrived that year. About 1864 this road was improved and made a toll road by Col. Joseph S. Ruckel associated with George Thomas and others. It was said to be surpassed by no other road in the country. State Highway 204 now follows part of the road.

One source states that on August 26, 1836, the Whitman party rested at the bottom of the canyon five miles from

where Bingham Springs is. The trails followed by both Indians and also Fremont led around heads of both the south and north forks of the Umatilla River. But McLeod, leaving the Whitman party, turned to the left between those forks along ridges shown on forest reserve maps to a steep and difficult descent into the canyon and then climbed to Tollgate by Coyote Ridge trail. The Whitmans were with a pack train. From the Summit they turned west through timber, down grades to a night camp on one of the sources of Pine Creek toward and near the present town of Weston.

Narcissa Whitman in her diary on August 30 wrote, "In following course of stream on which encamped last night found cherries in abundance. Cherries very fine, equal to any we find in the states." Mrs. Whitman described, vividly the scene in the last camp before reaching Fort Walla Walla, some where near the present town of Weston. "Our employment this afternoon is various," she recorded, "Some are washing their shirts and some cutting their hair, others are shaving preparatory to seeing Walla Walla and some are asleep. For my part I endeavored to divert myself the best way I could doing a little mending for husband trying to write while he and Mr. Gray are stretched upon the ground enjoying the refreshment of sound sleep. On August 31 they proceeded on to Fort Walla Walla, via Van Sycle Canyon.

In the fall of 1862 Tom and Asbury Lieuallen who were brothers settled at the point where Weston now stands putting up blacksmith shop. The following year Tom went back to Illinois and brought out another train among them two more brothers, Joe and James

Lieuallen. His was a family of seven brothers. Joe settled at Adams. There are many of descendents living there. George Lieuallen, Weston, is a grandson. Asbury moved on to the Palouse country. Earl Lieuallen, of Walla Walla, is a descendent of J. Lieuallen as is Mrs. Marvin of Weston.

With a wagon train in 1864 were the William and Noah Lieuallens and the Mosier families. In his diary, William Lieuallen relates that when they reached Grande Ronde Valley he and some of the others left the wagon train and went to Cove to visit some friends for a few days before crossing the mountains. This visit had been planned many months in advance. Upon reaching Weston they found that a garden had been planted and tended for them during the summer and other provisions made for their first here by the other brothers.

William Lieuallen homesteaded a place about a mile southeast Weston. In later years his son James, (Who was born in Weston in 1867) farmed it until his death in 1935. James E. Lieuallen family live on the farm homesteaded by his grandfather, William Lieuallen, in 1864. Other grandchildren living in the community are Tom Lieuallen, Mrs. R. G. (Lena) Blomgren, Mrs. Roy (Geneva) Key, and Mrs. Ace (Mable) Wagner, Umapine.

Andrew Kilgore also arrived in 1862. He traded a yoke of oxen to Robert Warren for his cabin and garden patch, which was located at the spring, which later became the location of the G. W. Proebstel home.

Mrs. Aaron Barnes. and her children along with her parents came in 1862.

Her husband was taken prisoner during the Civil War and was never heard of again. In later years she married Tom Lieuallen and after her third marriage her name was McDougal. She lived in Weston until her death in the late 1920's. Descendents living in Weston are Mrs. Doris Nichols and John Barnes, her grandchildren. Their father was the late John Barnes and their mother, also a pioneer, was one of the Ridenour girls before her marriage.

In 1863 the stage station between Walla Walla and Cayuse was on Pine Creek just below where the railroad trestle is now. This was the principal camping place for freighters and packers as there was plenty, of grass, feed and water available. It was owned by a man named Dodge. That year the barn and a supply of feed was burned by some packers. In settlement they paid Dodge \$1500. In 1864 Taylor Green bought this place from Dodge.

Prior to 1865 the stage route between Cayuse Station and Walla Walla had been along the old Dalles trail crossing Wildhorse Creek at Richard's Crossing which is now Athena and crossing Dry Creek below Weston.

In the fall of 1865 the settlers decided to change the road and William Kilgore plowed a furrow marking the road from where Milton is now located by Blue Mountain Station and Weston ending on Wildhorse Creek at the John Harris place. Thus placing the stage route through Weston.

In 1866 James Murphy settled in Weston and in 1869 the John Ridenour family came.

In the spring of 1866 T. T. Lieuallen bought the claim of a man who had settled on a portion of the townsite. Lieuallen used the shack he had built for a chicken house and built a good-sized house for himself. In the fall of 1868 he persuaded a man named Abell, who ran a store at Richard's Station to come to Weston. He gave him a lot in Weston and a cash bonus. Abell built a shack and started the store but it was not long until the sheriff closed him out. Abell went to San Francisco where he later committed suicide. Jesse Melton took over the Abell building and started a hotel in it.

Asbury Lieuallen had built a little house for a dwelling and in the spring of 1869 T. T. Lieuallen bought it and put in a stock of goods. Another store was added that year by John White and M. D. Seeley.

A post office named "Mitchell's Station" was established in February 1867 with W. H. Abell, postmaster. The town of Weston was founded in the fall of 1867 on the homestead of Tom Lieuallen. The name of the post office was changed to Weston in September 1869 and Lieuallen, became postmaster. History does not reveal whether Mitchell's Station was at the present site of Weston or whether the post office was moved at that time.

Weston was named after Westen, Missouri from which Lieuallen had migrated. McMinnville, Prineville and Sparta were considered for names but when a vote was taken Westen won out. However, the name was misspelled "Weston" on the petition to the postal department and the petition was accepted. So the town became Weston

instead of Westen as originally intended. A school, a store and a small hotel were built in 1869.

The county of Umatilla became such on September 27, 1862. Umatilla Landing was the first and only city until Weston was founded. Pendleton was the third city in the county being incorporated in 1880. Agitation over the location of the county seat flared in 1874 when Weston attempted to be named either the county seat of Umatilla County or have a new county created with Weston as its county seat. The argument was that Umatilla County was too big and it made the county seat too far distant from some parts of the county. It was proposed to create two new counties, one to be called "Wise" with Weston as the county seat, the other "Coal" with Heppner as its county seat. In 1874, Weston came within one vote of becoming the county seat but Pendleton won.

All through 1880 the discussion continued and agitation rose through 1881-82. In the latter year Ben Stanton introduced a bill into the Legislature to create Hill County (later changed to Thurston County) with Weston as its county seat. This bill failed to pass the Senate.

The first county seat was temporarily located at the mouth of McKay Creek known as Marshall's Station before a courthouse was built at Pendleton.

Weston was not incorporated until October 19, 1878. At that time T. J. Lucy was elected Mayor; D. P. Dwight, Recorder; L. S. Wood, Treasurer; and Barney Prine, City Marshall. The councilmen were Charley McHarris,

John Hartman, W. R. Beckett and G. W. Proebstel.

Mrs. I. E. Saling, whose maiden name was Malinda Morton, was born at Fremont, Va. In 1839. She came West with her parents in 1852 from Bellville, Illinois. They were with a party of twenty wagons with William Johnson as leader. Many in the party were sick with cholera as was Mrs. Saling. They were followed by another large wagon train and were never attacked by Indians. In September the party stopped at The Dalles where Mrs. Saling's brother was born. They suffered from lack of food and were glad to get fish eggs to eat. After two days in The Dalles the wagons were put on a flat boat for the trip down river. Two women died from exposure and insufficient food. They landed on the Washington Territory side of the river and it took many days to get to Portland, which Mrs. Saling described as a small village with stumps in the streets. The Mortons stayed only two months in Portland and moved to McMinnville where Melinda married L. E. Saling, October 19, 1856. Three years later the Salings moved to Walla Walla. At Walla Walla then was only the garrison and a few small houses. I. T. Reese, a distant relative of the Salings started the first dry goods store in Walla Walla.



The Salings moved to Weston in 1873 and the following year built a brick building to house the Saling and Reese store. Hill and Baker had owned the general merchandise store previously and was succeeded by Saling and Reese. Money was plentiful, all kinds of labor commanded high prices and the firm did a rushing business. They built an addition to it in 1878. This building still stands on Main Street and houses the Elliott Dry Goods and Hardware Store. It was the only building on the north side of Main St. to survive the serious fires that Weston encountered.

The building is built of two foot thick brick walls and all openings were originally equipped with heavy steel doors, made to slide into place, if need be against Indian attacks. Part of these doors are still in place while the ones that covered the windows have been taken down and stored. Incidentally these were, as were many other things, brought around the horn.

To the east of this store until a few years ago stood a building which was the Territorial Land Office. It was built of whip-sawed lumber. It was built before the streets were mapped, not being in line with other buildings. When this building was torn down only a few years ago it still contained the territorial land papers as well as many other items of yesteryear.

Among the oldest buildings is the Saling home which is a large square two-story



structure of twelve rooms of locally made bricks. It had a cupola which was used as a look-out post during Indian raids. This house still stands on Water Street, the highway through Weston. The cupola has been removed.

This home was beautifully furnished with walnut furniture which the Salings purchased in San Francisco. Mrs. Saling had a piano which was brought around the horn. One of the bedrooms had a white marble fireplace.

Mr. Saling died in 1905 and Mrs. Saling lived in her home here until her death near her 100th year. A daughter, Mrs. Bulfinch, lived with her mother the last few years. The Salings had eight children.

In a wagon train which reached Centerville (Athena) in the late 1870's were Solomon and Mary Webber and four children and William and Sarah Getchels, eldest daughter of the Webbers. They had two small children. They camped there with several other campers. The men worked at whatever they could, got to do mostly hauling wheat and wood. After that fall, they moved to Weston where they spent the winter. Webber hauled freight from Blue Mountain Station, the end of the railroad, to Centerville and Weston.

Soon after the Webbers settled at Weston, Nat Travis who in 1878, emigrated to Nevada from Nova Scotia, with a twenty-mule jerk team brought another wagon train from Nevada. William Getchel became Marshall at Weston. In 1882 Webber and Travis filed on homesteads in Horse Heaven and the families soon left for their new homes.

Luman S. and Frances C. Wood, parents of Clark Wood, well known Publisher, was among Weston's early settlers locating here after crossing the plains in 1871 behind a mule team. Among their fellow travelers were the Lansdales, Isaacs and the LaDows.

Weston became quite a little city for those days being a stage coach center and with the establishment of stores and saloons it drew trade from a large territory.

Charles Patterson drove the first stage coach from Walla Walla through Weston to Pendleton and Barney Keenan was the second driver. Charlie Potter, another of the famous drivers, made the town daily with his coach and six horses en route to Walla Walla or Pendleton.

The suffering and heartbreak of these pioneers were not ended by reaching their destination for in the years to come they were plagued by dread malady of diphtheria, scarlet fever and small pox. In an epidemic of diphtheria in the winter of 1878 whole families of children died with the dread diseases. A number of young people made the rounds each morning in bobsleds collecting the small coffins for burial. They were taken to the local cemetery and a simple service and song offered by

mere youngsters themselves. The parents, usually having other children down with the disease, could not accompany them.

The Inscriptions on stones in the old City Cemetery bears witness to this epidemic.

Another story may be imagined from the inscription on one stone which reads "Killed by Indian Charlie."

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Weston Library dates back to, 1912 when Mrs. Norah Watts, wife of Dr. Watts and the late Mrs. George Proebstel, wife of ex-Senator Proebstel, circulated, a petition for a small tax levy to finance it. This was passed, and the county librarian helped in its organization. A tea was given with admission being one book. Many books were secured in this way to add to the allotment from the county library.

The first library was opened in the D. B. Jarman Department store which now is Greer's store. Eliza Morrison, now Mrs. L. O'Harra, who then clerked in the Jarman store, was the first librarian. She and Mrs. Watts borrowed the first two volumes.

The library was moved from the store to the Wheeler Building on Water Street and later to the old brick dormitory which the Normal School had deeded to the city. During this time Doris Barnes, now Mrs. Doris Nichols, and the late Mrs. Jim Stanfield were paid librarians.

The late Mrs. Joe Wurzer was president of the board for many years and the late Mrs. Josephine Goodwin was secretary

for 15 years. They were also active librarians during the 1920's

From the dormitory the library was moved into Dr. Watts' office on South Water Street. Dr. Watts offered to sell the building and to move it to Main Street, the present site, for \$500. The money was raised by subscription. In 1933, the old building, which was 14x24 feet, was moved back 8 feet and a new entranceway was built across the front and a children's room added, extending the entire length of the building. A lawn and shrubs were added to the grounds.

Mrs. Margaret Sutherland is the librarian now.