

Klickitat county

Moon, Minnie W.

Came to Washington Territory April 3, 1879 from Vernon county, Wis. with brothers because of opportunity.

Came on the Great Republic to Portland. The next trip the boat was wrecked.

My sister was here. Her husband was Mr. Jewett who tried to colonize this part of the valley. There wasn't anything else around here.

The Jewetts had a large nursery and employed a number of salesmen to travel.

I taught school two years at Camas prairie where I had seven pupils. Then I taught at White Salmon, then at No. 6 and finally at Chamberlain Flats. When Cascade Locks were built my brother raised vegetables to supply the camp.

Born May 20, 1858. Married April 5, 1883 and Jan. 31, 1932.

My sister's house was built of shakes. Where I taught on Camas Prairie there was a log house. No saw mills at first.

There are two parts of houses standing. Theodore Suchsdorf on the old Joslyn place is the only man living here now who was here when I came.

There was a narrow path around Ball mountain. I rode horseback over that trail. I was so frightened I stopped at Gilmer's and George took me the rest of the way. Wagon wheels were chained for brakes over the mountain road.

We used to buy brown sugar by the bbl. in Portland, bought salmon, venison and bear meat from the Indians.

~~Quilled~~ Mrs. Moon was Miss Waters..they were among the earliest pioneers in that part of Klickitat... 1936.

Supplementary Nelson family history:

One of the first men who drove an ox team across the plains in the emigrant train of 1843 was John B. Nelson. In his prairie schooner rode his wife and three children, Margaret , Jasper and Elizabeth.

In Virginia civilization's very center, far removed from the land where flowed the Oregon "and heard no sound save its own dashing," the Nelsons answered the call of the West and were on their way the first year of their marriage, stopping first in Indiana.

Each move found them a little farther toward the land of their dreams. Missouri, the real frontier of those days, was finally reached with its little settlement at Liberty the last outpost of civilization.

The talk was all of Oregon, the land of opportunity: Oregon with its mild climate, fertile soil, crystal streams, snow-capped mountain peaks. There was a mile square of land waiting for the man who had the courage to face the unknown, to vanquish the obstacles and dangers of the trail; the persistence to carve a home for himself and family from the uncivilized wilderness which called from far across plains and mountain peaks.

Strong and hardy, of true pioneer stock, both of them, longing for better opportunities for their children, the Nelsons joined the long train. Mr. Nelson was a blacksmith and his tools went into the prairie schooner along with his gun.

We know of one thing Mrs. Nelson considered indispensable. That was her hop vine. How could she make good bread without hops for her yeast? So a root of her cherished hop vine went along.

It would be interesting to know just what went into the covered wagons. We know that many keepsakes had to be left by the wayside when the going got too tough, when wagons began to break up. There were only two wheels left to a wagon sometimes when they had forded the last river, broken camp for the last time.

"All the way over the long trail Mr. Nelson found use for his tools. He made knives and tools of various kinds. He repaired broken wagon wheels, or made new ones. The bone-handled knife he made for himself which no doubt sliced many a buffalo-steak is still cherished by his descendants along with his old gun which provided the meat along the trail and for years afterward.

Tales of the long journey across the plains have been handed down through the generations of Nelsons. Every night a fort was made of the wagons and the stock drive inside. Roving Indians came into camp wanting to trade; they wanted matches and sugar or anything which they thought novel or amusing or decorative. When one Indian was allowed to come inside the camp others crowded up and in sign language insisted upon being allowed to trade. They soon became hostile and on one occasion threatened attack.

Badly frightened but not letting the Indians realize it the white men went out to meet them and rushed them. It was a bluff but it worked. After a short parley the savages retreated.

One day when the wagons were on the move, the scouts saw horsemen appearing on a hill some distance away. Others joined them until a long line of riders waited for the oncoming wagon train. The scouts dashed back and gave the alarm. The usual preparations were hurriedly made--with the women and children and stock inside. The men waited.

Down the hill, across the plain at breakneck speed came the riders, filling the air with whoops. In a vast cloud of dust they made straight for the wagons. The men stood their ground, ready to fire at command. They could hardly credit their eyes when the attacking party turned out to be a detail of soldiers on the trail of the very Indians who had been annoying these travelers. They followed and punished them severely.

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One morning when they were well on their way from camp it was discovered that the baby, Elizabeth, had been left behind. Fearing the worst the parents turned back, praying that neither wild beast nor savage had found the sleeping infant. When they reached the campsite there lay the little girl, wrapped in her blankets, sound asleep.

After many months of hardships the train reached the Dalles. The last stages of the journey were more trying to the Nelsons. They reached the Dalles, Ore. and there on Christmas Day, 1846, in the covered wagons, their fourth child, Thomas, was born.

They went to Linn county, Oregon, where they resided at Oregon City. He melted the old wagon wheels and made plows, setting frames of wood to them himself.

Alice Nelson, now Mrs. Sinclair, was one of the younger children, one of the two now living out of a family of eleven. She remembers her mother telling that food was scarce that first year. There was always plenty of meat, of course, always venison and other kinds of game, but Mrs. Nelson wanted coffee and sugar and flour. No doubt, like Mrs. Whitman, she missed her mother's good bread and butter.

The Nelsons had brought seed to plant and they used the dried peas to make a substitute for coffee. The climate which kept the valley green was not so favorable to food supplies, wheat became damp but it was carried to the mill at Oregon City, nevertheless and ground into flour which Mrs. Nelson told her family, "makes bread that feels like gum."

When the country around them became too settled to suit Mr. Nelson's adventurous, pioneer loving spirit, the prairie schooner was again loaded. It was in 1863 that they followed the trail along the Columbia River to the Dalles. There he shipped his family and all his possessions, including the old covered wagon. At Wallula the head of navigation, he and his sons built a scow and loaded it. Mother

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and daughters and small children embarked on this strange craft.

A true pioneer mother and wife, Mrs. Nelson did her part under all circumstances. Her own family, her old neighbors, even historians have paid tribute to this brave and energetic woman.

The Nelsons proceeded up the Columbia, mules hitched to the scow, father and sons taking turns prodding the slowly moving boat along with long poles as it neared the shore. Thirty miles up the river they came to the mouth of the Yakima where they wintered in a little cabin which they built.

One day the men were all away, probably looking for the stock which history says was driven away by the Indians; the children were playing outside when a band of fierce looking Indians came dashing up on their ponies. The children screamed and fled for the house. Little Adam, the youngest, failed to reach the latch-string. At that instant a tomahawk came streaking through the air, cutting deep into the door just above the little fellow's head.

Mrs. Sinclair, who was born at Silverton, Oregon., remembers the journey to the Yakima valley and many other experiences, some of them startling which made pioneer life eventful and added the spice of adventure to what many people would declare a dreary existence.

When the Nelsons came to the valley the white population numbered only a few families. The Thorps and Splawns were located in the Moxee with their herds of cattle. Two or three trappers and adventurers came in 1863 but being of a nomadic nature, soon moved on. Two cattlemen, Fred White and William Parker were established on the land known as the Parker bottom.

In true pioneer fashion Mr. Nelson determined to locate far from neighbors. They traversed the valley, on and on through miles of sagebrush and came finally to a spot near the mouth of the Naches river where they camped. From there he made excursions but found no place more satisfying.

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They built a cabin and remained for a time but the same disaster overtook them which many times since have caused settlers to flee for their lives.

Down the Naches valley a flood of waters threatened to carry away their frail house. At midnight Nelson and the boys carried the younger children and their mother to safety, wading waist deep through the rushing, swirling river out of its banks, uprooting trees, carrying everything in its path.

March 26, 1864 they moved for the last time. Nelson and his wife, their six sons and five daughters, like the patriarchal families of old, entered the valley which was to them the "Promised Land." Past the historic painted rocks, the wonderful formation covered with Indian hieroglyphics which none can translate, the family made their way to a spring, again repeating Biblical history when men camped by springs that they might have water for man and beast.

Today a stone dairy stands over the spring.

The Nelsons were the first settlers in the Naches valley. Typical pioneers, they possessed an unusual measure of compassion for the homeseekers who followed--some of them poorly equipped for the first hard months of frontier life. With this big-hearted generous family the community and its needs came first; their own advancement secondary. It is said of Jasper, the oldest son, that twice he gave the roof over his head to newcomers, victims of unfortunate circumstances, who seemed unable to cope with situations bound to prevail in the new land.

Mrs. Nelson grieved because there was no school. They brought a teacher from The Dalles, a young Frenchman named Lang. Later they secured the services of George Jackson. Alice went to The Dalles and attended the Sisters' school, preferring it because it was so neat and orderly.

The Nelsons were thrifty and industrious; they were progressive, too, could see ahead and made preparations. Their cattle and horses roamed all over Wide Hollow. Supplies of food were laid in for the winter months, but sometimes the flour and molasses gave out. Meat and fish were plentiful of course.

Mrs. W.H. Arnold, a granddaughter, recently prepared a historical sketch of the family. She relates that a root of the old hop vine her grandmother brought from Virginia was carried from Oregon and set out beside the cabin in the Naches.

In 1871 or 1872 they set out fruit trees. The Nelsons gave some seedlings to the Gleeds, neighbors, and to this day they speak of these trees as the Nelson plums. The fruit trees were a disappointment to the Nelsons for a long time as they had no pollination. They would be loaded with blossoms but no fruit would appear. They we can scarcely realize the disappointment of the pioneer family. They craved fruit. The eldest daughter married and living in Portland sent them baskets of fruit. Mrs. Sinclair tells of their joy when such a treat arrived.

Mrs. Arnold's sketch, which was read before the Yakima Valley Historical Society mentions the old inn built of cotton wood slabs from trees along the river. This inn was a stopping place on the trail from The Dalles to Wllensburg. Mail was distributed from the inn and guests were accommodated. Jasper Nelson, the oldest son and Mrs. Arnold's father drove the stage. Later when her grandfather was appointed probate judge in 1875 court was held at the inn.

Looking back through the haze of time the descendants of ox team pioneers grieve over the loss of old ~~map~~ landmarks. The dog cabin with its puncheon floors, rude furniture, window glass brought around The Horn in a Yankee clipper, home-made tools, spinning wheels, Early American china and glass, ladder-back chairs,

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all have given way to modern furnishings.

The chairs in the old Nelson cabin were ladder-backed, with buckskin seats. There was a little rocker to match these chairs. No doubt these were all fashioned of douglas fir with woods of Oregon .

So the old inn was torn down, the old bridge for which ~~One~~ Nelson and his sons hewed the timbers from cottonwood trees along the river is gone, too, but the present structure bears their name. There was a ferry before the bridge was built, the Nelson ferry, A neighbor Elisha Tanner was drowned while crossing.

A stockade was built at the Nelson homestead. One day the family was warned by a friendly Indian that Indians were coming to kill every "Boston "man as they called these first settlers. Nelson grabbed the Indian and threw him flat on the hearthstone, telling him that every Indian would be treated the same. The Indian wars were over, but there were anxious days at times when rumors came of Indians having committed crimes, such as the Perkins murder in 1878.

Primitive methods were used in threshing the wheat grown in the early days. A threshing ground was prepared by removing some of the dirt from a tract of ground, making it slope toward the center. This threshing ground was tamped down until it was quite hard; then the wheat was piled up on it and the boys and girls of the family rode their horses over it until the grain was threshed out. This is a far cry from the modern combines. The wheat was taken to the government mill at Fort Simcoe and ground into flour, the grinding being paid for in flour.

Irrigating on a small scale they were able to raise vegetables. Mrs. Sinclair recalls the method used by her father in keeping these vegetables during the winter. He dug a long trench, lined it with wheat straw, put the potatoes and cabbage in and covered them with dirt and straw. The cabbages were placed carefully, roots up

and a portion of them sticking through the ground so it was not difficult to extract them. Mrs. Sinclair is still enthusiastic regarding their keeping qualities.

Fireplace methods were used for cooking at first. Mrs. Arnold remembers two wooden utensils in use in her father's home. One was a churn, the other a chopping bowl. They were received in trade by her father, Jasper Nelson, who drove a freight wagon over the old trail to the Dalles. At Goldendale after making the long ascent, he decided to sell two of his six horse teams so traded them in at the store.

Mrs. Sinclair remembers the Sunday school in their old log cabin, the Congregational minister coming over from the Watanum, the pioneer Protestant church of the valley. Mrs. Sinclair is the only living member of the group who organized the Congregational church in the Naches valley and built a little church. Before that time traveling preachers administered, sometimes holding services in the old new barn on the Nelson homestead. One of these missionaries offered to help them get a church. He wrote a petition and Alice was sent out to get signers and donations. She rode her horse up the Naches and crossed over into the Wenas, presenting the petition to the settlers, getting their promises. She was gone two days, making a successful canvas. She visited the Sinclair sawmill in the upper Wenas. Here she met Frank Sinclair, her future husband. He signed up for 1,000 feet of lumber.

More money was needed as the work progressed. The women had necktie socials and box socials where boxes of lunch were auctioned off. Rivals for Alice's favor once bid her box up to \$5.00. Musical entertainments were given at the church.

Alice's father traded a band of horses for an Estey organ, the first to be purchased in the valley. It was sometime taken to the church. Alice placed in that long ago time and now, more than 60 years later,

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the silver tones of this old -fashioned instrument, in its solid walnut case, float through the living room as her finger's glide over the keys in accompaniment of the songs of yesterday.

The polka, the waltz, schottaische and quadrille were merily danced to the stirring tune of Charles Carpenter's violin, often accompanied by Alice at the organ keyboard.

Alice taught cooking to the Indian girls at the agency under Father Wilbur. She learned the Chinook language and still speaks it.

Alice's sister, the baby left on the trail, learned "foxing" or as the Indians called it "topechin." It is now a lost art but in pioneer days it was practiced mainly for the benefit of cowboys before they added chaps as part of their picturesque attire. It was nothing more or less than patching trousers and jackets, reinforcing their worn parts with buckskin, using a three-cornered needle. It was only patching but how beautiful it was done.

Elizabeth's daughter, now Mrs. Cora Gardiner, was the first white child born in the Naches valley.

Five of the Nelson brother took up homesteads in the valley, Adam, the youngest, died at the age of 16.

Of Jasper's four children, three live in the Yakima Valley; the youngest son, J.L., resides in Seattle.

Floyd Nelson married a niece of Mrs. Perkins, who was one of the victims of the terrible tragedy at Rattlesnake springs in 1878.

Mrs. Nell Elgin and Mrs. Iva Jane Arnold are the daughters.

These children and grandchildren of ox-team pioneers are enthusiastic regarding everything pertaining to pioneer days. They have a feeling almost amounting to reverence toward their forebears, men and women of such high courage and adventurous spirit who helped make the Yakima valley the desirable and fruitful land that it is today..1

Supplement to Olney History (Charles Olney)

I am the oldest son of Captain Nathan Olney. I was born in 1853 at The Dalles. My father fought the Modoc and Piutes and Indians from California. He was called captain. He was sheriff at The Dalles.

My mother belonged to the Wasco tribe. My father crossed the plains. I have seen the women of his family and one of his brothers was steam-bost captain on the Columbia.

When the Indians had a big council at Walla Walla and made a treaty my father was made agent for Warm Springs and Umatilla. I can just remember that time. We went to Warm Springs and there was no school.

When I was 12 years old we moved to Yakima valley and settled on a ranch in the Antanum. My father wanted to raise many cattle but he did the next year. He is Buried at Ft. Simcoe. The Indians liked him. The government always sent for him when the Indians wouldn't behave.

I went to school at Ft Simcoe. I learned the carpenter trade and I worked at it. I built my first house. It burned and I built a house on my ranch. Then I built a house by the pine tree, 3-4 miles up the road. Now I bought this house. I have 200 head of cattle for my boys to raise stock. I am going down hill now, but I used to be strong and had many cattle and horses.

When I get in the saeele I feel like a boy. My cayuse is a one-man pony. My wife rides a pony, too. Some day we will ride to Soda Springs. The Indians like to go there and camp and drink the water to make them well.

When we moved to Antanum hardly anyone was in the valley, Thorpe and Splawn in the Moxee, Nelson moved in the same year we do. My mother is buried in the Olney ~~Old~~ burying ground.

My wife's mother was a We-nat-sha. All Indians understand each other's language but cannot speak every language. The Hudson's

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Bay Company's men learned the Chinook language first. The Chinooks lived near the mouth of the Columbia river.

My wife went to the sister's school in Yakima. I saw them move the town from Union Gap.

I helped build the Methodist church in White Swan. I was next to the boss carpenter. I built a lot of houses on the reservation.

The lumber was sawed at the mill at the fort. The logs came from Yellow Pine in the hills.

Father Wilbur preached in this church. He was an all-around man. I am an all around man, too. I was a mason and carpenter and farmer and stockman.

When I was at the school I think I must have been good. I was small but they made me an overseer and I looked after the other boys.

(My father intended to raise stock but he died a year later.)

recheck on typescrip of above.

Capt. Nathan Olney's gun is in a historical collection belonging to a man in Yakima. It will likely be in the display at Whitman Centennial. It was originally a flint-lock and was changed into a percussion cap. It was made at Harper's ferry in 1850. It has a hinged tallow box in the side of the breech. The mountings are all of brass and the ~~wood~~ there are around 250 notches cut into the brass, probably for buffalo killed on the plains.

(Interviewer's comment: He is 83 and getting feeble but is still mentally strong. Lives with his wife and son in a very comfortable home in White Swan. March 27, 1936.