

ADDRESS BY A. G. FLEMING
TO THE PIONEERS OF SUNNYSIDE AND THE YAKIMA VALLEY
AT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE PAGEANT ON JUNE 2, 1952
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PROGRESS
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I, too, want to pay tribute to those early settlers who pioneered in the development of this our famous Yakima Valley. You, the pioneers, were extended a special invitation to be our guests and join with us in our Golden Jubilee Celebration commemorating 50 years of progress. While 50 years is a long time, there were many early pioneers who came to the valley prior to 1902. The first, I believe, was John Ferrell with his wife and family of 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. They traveled over the hills from The Dalles, Oregon. John Ferrell homesteaded on the Yakima River approximately 5 miles southwest of Sunnyside, now known as the Riverside District, in 1879. Later his three sons, Ren, George, and John Junior located on adjoining tracts. Mrs. Ruth Ferrell Mottley, daughter of Ren Ferrell, and Mr. Mottley own and operate her father's original homestead. They have one son, Ren, now in the service. So, we have continuous ownership by three generations of one family of at least one farm in the valley.

Another early settler was Jock Morgan and his family. Jock Morgan operated the first ferry between Sunnyside and Mabton. At that time 95% of the lower Yakima Valley was a sage brush desert inhabited principally by roving bands of indians, wild horses, jack rabbits, coyotes, rattle snakes, and horned toads. Later another group of pioneers settled in the Parker Bottom District, and built what was known as Knowock Ditch.

In the early 80s the Northern Pacific Railroad was building the first transcontinental railroad to the Puget Sound Territory. They selected Commencement Bay as their terminal and platted a town site which they named Tacoma. As an inducement to the railroad company to build a road through the wilderness, congress gave them a land grant consisting of every odd section reaching for 20 miles on each side

of the railroad. In 1889 they decided if they were to operate on a profitable basis it would be necessary for them to assist in the promotion and development of the territory tributary to the railroad. That year, Walter N. Granger, a representative of the company, a dynamic man of vision and action, came to the valley to investigate and appraise the possibility of starting an irrigation project. In 1890 the Northern Pacific, Yakima, and Kittitas Irrigation Company was formed with Paul Schultz, who was the Western Land Agent for the railroad, as president, and Walter N. Granger as secretary and manager. This company, in turn, purchased from the railroad their land grants located in this district.

The following year, in 1891, actual construction of the Sunnyside Canal was started and by the spring of 1893 approximately 25 miles of the canal was completed to a point north and east of Sunnyside. During the construction period a few hardy settlers came in, purchased land, and started developments. These people located in various districts of the valley, Zillah, Liberty, Outlook, Sunnyside, and The Belmant-Euclid district. The townsites of Sunnyside and Zillah were located by Mr. Granger, and were platted in 1893.

W. H. Cline of Tacoma was invited by the company to visit the valley with a view toward opening the first store. Before making a final decision he returned a second time and interviewed a few of the early settlers. After returning to Tacoma he again talked to Mr. Schultz and informed him he was interested, however, when he was told the town was to be named Mayhew, he stated he did not believe he cared to live in a town by that name, but if they were willing to change the name to Sunnyside he would accept their proposition. To this they agreed and thus was born the metropolis of the lower Yakima Valley, with Mr. Cline as the first merchant. John Matheson, who is present here today, hauled the first load of lumber for the new store which opened in the fall of 1893. A number of merchants representing various lines of business followed, these were: Miles Cannon, ^J B. M. Brewer, Mark Mitchell, W. T. Stobie, Frank Petrie, D. C. Gillis, and James Henderson, all "Charter Members" of the early business community. In 1894 a post office was established. D. R. McGinnis, local agent

for the Townsite Company, was appointed as first postmaster.

Then things began to happen. The depression of 1893 and 1894 saddly crippled The Canal and Townsite Company, and they were forced into receivership. The business men as well as the farmers were in dire financial straits. The town was almost deserted and many of the farmers became discouraged and moved away. However, Mr. Cline continued the operation of his store and he and a few other settlers continued in a limited way with their farming operations.

In the meantime, the project was purchased by E. F. Blaine and Associates of Seattle, and the Washington Irrigation Company was formed, with Walter N. Granger continuing as manager at this time.

You might be interested in a few of the many problems confronting those early settlers. They grubbed the sage brush by hand, leveled their land with 2 or 4 horse or mule outfits. Available equipment was slip scrapers, and buck scrapers built of plank with a metal strip on the bottom. Their leveler, for the final preparation before marking out the land for water, was also built of plank and needed frequent repairing. About the time you were ready to turn in the water a nice big wind storm came along, lasting from a few hours to a few days. Great clouds of volcanic ash mixed with gritty sand filled the air, your eyes, your ears, your clothes, and your hair, if you had any left. It was almost impossible to see the horses, or even the buildings, so you stopped working and fed the horses, if the hay was not already blown away. You started to the house, if you could find it, wondering just how cordial the reception would be. When the wind stopped you again wondered how much of your top soil had moved to the adjoining section. You are faced with a re-leveling job, the elements behave, and finally the water is feeding the dry, thirsty soil. You plant a few fast growing shade trees and a nice family orchard. You are short of cash and credit, so you take a chance on the jack rabbits and do not buy the necessary woven wire. You start seeding your land and about the third morning you awake and find the jack rabbits have chewed all the bark from your orchard and shade trees. As soon as the alfalfa is up they start harvesting that too. While they furnished a substantial part of the meat,

you just couldn't kill and eat a million jack rabbits. Then, of course, the coyotes dearly loved fresh chicken meat. If and when you raised a crop and saved it from the jack rabbits, the next problem was finding a market at a price which would assure them even a small margin of profit. Hay, in those days, was selling at from \$3.00 to \$4.00 per ton. Potatoes were always a gamble, and they still are. Transportation was on horseback, by buckboard, sea going hacks without tops, or the old work team and wagon. But somehow and in someway they managed to carry on and live.

These were only a few of the problems the early pioneers had to contend with. I am wondering how many of the second and third generations of settlers and new-comers now living in this prosperous fertile valley would have had the stamina and courage to start and finish the job under the same trying conditions that faced those early pioneers.

In the meantime, the irrigation company's promotional program was bringing in many new settlers as well as encouraging new business concerns to locate in the towns. Once again Sunnyside was well on it's way to becoming an established town. Previously it was designated only as a post office.

In 1898 another event of significance happened. This was the entrance into Sunnyside of the Christian Cooperative Movement, organized and managed by S. J. Harrison, Christian Rowland, and H. M. Lichty. This was a colonization program. These men were instrumental in locating many hundreds of people in Sunnyside and surrounding territory. A short time later these men with W. H. Harrison purchased the townsite from the original owners. They and many other pioneers were not privileged to live to enjoy with us the benefits of their successful efforts during our fifty years of progress. However, many of their sons and daughters as well as grand children are still active in business, farming, and the civic organizations of our growing community.

Another event in 1898 was of special interest to me. On June 21 a young tenderfoot from Tacoma jumped off the baggage car at Mabton about 10 seconds ahead

of an infuriated brakeman at the deadly hour of 3:30 a.m. That tenderfoot was Arch Fleming. I inquired the way to the ferry and after being lost twice, finally located it. I arrived in Sunnyside at 1:30 p.m., collapsed time, but still under my own power. Not bad for a 2-legged motor considering the highways in those days. I made it with only 3 stops including the ferry. I gave the ferryman one two-bit piece for the ride and the wife of the ferryman the other two-bit piece for all the milk I could drink, and believe me, it took plenty to fill the old radiator. I then cranked up my motor and started up the hill. When about 2 miles south of Sunnyside, with the temperature over 100 degrees, the old radiator was again getting mighty hot. I spied some water running among the sage brush, and filled up once again. The way it tasted I was convinced I had discovered a mineral hot spring. Later I found out it was just waste water from Henry Resleff's irrigation ditch. Honestly, folks, that was the only irrigation water I ever used without being assessed for maintenance charges. I called on Mr. Cline, who was the only visible man in town, and whom I had known in Tacoma, as my folks traded at his store. I suggested a clerking job, but he shook his head, saying, "Business is not that rushing". He suggested a job making hay, shook his head and said, "But not in those clothes". I had on a derby hat, a blue serge suit and they were plenty dusty. I agreed, and purchased, on credit, a pair of overalls for 40¢, a work shirt for 25¢, a straw hat for 10¢, and 5 pairs of socks for 25¢, and Presto, I was a farmer. Those prices were slightly lower than prices for the same merchandise today.

And now we come to two more very important events in the history of our community. First the signing of the Reclamation Act by President Theodore Roosevelt on June 17, 1902, and second the incorporation of the town of Sunnyside. I would like to explain briefly the importance of the Reclamation Act with reference to the Sunnyside project. As stated previously, the railroad owned every odd section. Those lands under the Sunnyside Canal were sold to the irrigation company, which in turn sold them to the settlers with a perpetual water right and a yearly maintenance charge of \$1.00 per acre. However, the even sections were government land and available for homesteads,

desert and tree claims. Many homesteaders filed on these government tracts and demanded water for their lands. The irrigation company had only a limited surplus of water and this was offered to the homesteaders on a rental basis of \$2.00 per acre, just double the charge for company lands. They also offered to sell a limited number of water rights on the basis of \$50.00 per acre, payable over a period of 10 years. A third offer was to give homesteaders a water right for one-half of their land provided they would deed to the company the other half. A few accepted these offers, while others rejected them. This became a highly controversial subject, and in 1905 the Washington Irrigation Company sold the canal to the government.

Following this the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District was formed by the land owners for the purpose of representing the farmers in their negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation.

Our town and community continued it's steady growth over a period of years until the depression of 1933. Even during that period we were better off than most of the country, particularly the large urban centers.

Then in 1935 another dream, also conceived by Walter N. Granger, came true. On December 13, 1935 the Bureau of Reclamation announced the signing of the contract with the Roza Irrigation District for the construction of the Roza Irrigation Project, or the so called High Line Canal, bringing water to another 72,000 acres of fertile land. As of today, 68,155 acres have signed contracts with the Bureau for water. Today 90% of the project is under cultivation with hundreds of new families living in new homes, most of which are modern. So, after 50 years of waiting and working our dreams are becoming realities.

The combined Sunnyside and Roza Projects have under irrigation over 150,000 acres. The average farm unit in the Sunnyside Project is approximately 30 acres. These farms have produced through the years over 300 million dollars in crop returns. I predict that the Roza will do even better due to the increased prices of later years.

These are two of the outstanding projects developed by the Bureau of Reclamation. We have a greater diversification of crops than most other projects. We grow approximately 60 varieties of commercial crops. Yes, we even grow mink. It works this way. We skin the minks for the fur coats which the five percenters in Washington, D. C. buy for the wives of a few politicians, then proceed to skin the public. The climate here is mild and favorable, with nearly 300 days of sunshine and an average rainfall of 7 inches per year. We have one of the fastest growing markets of the nation, The Puget Sound Area and Alaska with the largest potential future markets in the world when the present disturbance in the orient is settled.

During all these years since it's incorporation in 1902, Sunnyside has kept pace with the development of the 'Valley'. From that date to 1950 the population increased to 4,200 with it's greatest growth during the past two years. Today the population is 4,800, plus approximately 2,000 more in additions adjacent to the city limits. Our trading area has a total population of 20,000.

We are ideally located in the center of the two irrigation projects, being served by two transcontinental railroads, The Northern Pacific and The Union Pacific; also numerous trucking and bus lines operating over excellent highways leading to the principal business centers of the northwest. All lines of business and the professions are represented in modern up-to-date buildings. We have beautiful homes, churches, paved streets, and modern schools with an enrollment of approximately 3,500 students in the Sunnyside Consolidated School District. Plans are also ready for the construction of a new, modern high school building.

We have many large produce, processing and manufacturing plants with substantial payrolls, processing and marketing our dairy products, and a great variety of fruit and vegetables, also turkeys, poultry, and seed crops. A nationally known carton manufacturing company has a local branch, operating 3 shifts a day to supply the increased demands for ~~cartons~~ for frozen foods.

Picture and compare, if you please, the barren sage brush desert as viewed by those early pioneers with the 'Valley' today with it's thousands of happy pros-

perous people living in modern homes on their farms and in town, with thriving business communities every few miles to serve them.

In closing, may I say, that this is indeed a very happy day for me. I am proud and thankful that I have been privileged to live and assist in a small way in the development of this wonderful 'Valley'.

I have been asked to extend to the pioneers and other guests present here, today, a cordial invitation to be with us when we celebrate our 100 years of progress. I'll see you 50 years from today.

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