

# Hazel Bend

written by John R. Blalock

in 1996 for the American Amateur Press Association

*typed by NVMS students J.R., Robyn and Tara during February 2003. Editing was done by Dean Bones.*

About three miles below Blaine the Big Nestucca River turns north across the valley to where Bays Creek empties into it and then turns west toward the bluff of the hill called "Camel Back;" then it follows the foot of the hills west for over a mile before turning back across the valley to the south. Today the road from Beaver to Blaine crosses the Nestucca at the west end of the bend and goes on to cross it again at the east end of the bend, but before there were any bridges a road followed the north side of the River all the way up to Blaine. Boulder Creek runs north down a valley from the side of Mr. Hebo to enter the river about the center of this bend. When I was a boy this area was known as the Hazel Bend Community.

In my earliest memory Hiram Smith and his wife lived just before the bridge at the west end of Hazel Bend at the corner where the old road turned north to follow the north side of the river around past the Blalocks, Charlie Sears' place, John Borba's place, Brown School, and through the woods to join the other road again beyond the second bridge. The Johnsons, Charlie and his wife, Emily, lived about a mile west of Hiram Smith's. Emily Johnson and Hiram Smith were two of the children of the early settler, Hiram Smith who lived near Tillamook.

Back before 1890, Charlie Smith, no relation to Hiram, took up a homestead across the river east of Hiram Smith's place. There were no bridges then, and they had to ford the river. Charlie Smith's wife, Grace, was a Donaldson from Fairview near Tillamook and my mother's sister. They had one boy and three girls born on this place, then Aunt Grace died in 1904. Charlie later moved with the children to near Cloverdale. When I was a boy the Benfield family lived on this place.

Mr. and Mrs. R.Y. Blalock, my father and mother, homesteaded a place on the sides of Camel Back on the north side of the river about 1900. There was only a long south slope above the road for the orchard, the house and the barn. Below the road along the river was the garden. Except for a few acres of meadow to the east next to Charlie Sears, another a mile to the west, the whole place was a hill and bluff and a canyon behind the hill.

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Not long after 1900 Gus Chopard and young wife, Grace (Getchel) Chopard, moved onto a place north of Charlie Smith's and on the south side of the river near the northwest corner of the bend. Here they lived and raised a large family. Part of the Chopard property was on the hills on the north side of the river where he pastured his cows in summer. There he built a milking shed, and he built a swinging bridge to cross back and forth across the river on foot. The bridge was still there in the forties, but it is gone now.

Charlie Sears, who lived just east of us, was probably the earliest settler in that region. I do not know when he came there, as he could neither read nor write, having grown up following his father as a hunter and trapper. He said he had been there when a big fire burned over those hills, about 1850, and he could tell how he, his father and the Indians all fled ahead of the flames down the river to the sandspit at Nestucca Bay. When I was a boy, Camel Back and all the hills round about were covered with tall "snags," the burned trunks of giant trees.

There was a trail that followed the hillsides from Charlie Sears' place along the steep bluff of Camel Back, through our barnyard, along the hillside above our house and over the hilltops to the west. Charlie said that it was the old Indian trail, that when he and his father brought a stove in there they packed it in on a horse over that trail. Part of that trail, along the bluff about 200 feet above the road below, we used to drive our cows to pasture in the canyon behind the hill.

Fannie Smith said that when her parents, the William Smiths, built their house in 1890, the logs were drawn into place by a yoke of oxen owned by Charlie Sears. Charlie's wife, Elizabeth (Cable) Sears, was sister to Fannie's mother. I remember her well. "Lizzie," we called her. She was very hard of hearing and had a large horn she put to her ear to hear with. Fannie Smith's folks lived up towards Blaine from Hazel Bend.

The Bays family moved onto Bays Creek about the same time the William Smiths arrived, and they gave their name to the creek. They moved away about 1912,

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and the place changed hands many times after that, no one keeping it more than three or four years. John Borba and wife, Rosa, lived near the mouth of Bays Creek, and Brown School was up on the hill just behind their place. They had two sons, John and Emanuel. Behind the Borba's house at the foot of the hill was a boxed in spring of clear, cold water. When water was needed up at the school a student was sent with the big bucket down to get a bucket full at that spring.

Up Bays Creek and past the Bays place lived two bachelor brothers named Grifford. I remember that the name of one of them was Jess. They were very superstitious and used to come tell us about the spooks and witches that bothered them very much, would sometimes cause a cow to suddenly go dry or a lamp chimney to crack and fall apart before their eyes.

Beyond the Griffords lived Emanuel Souares on his homestead. He was the brother of Mrs. Borba. Once when Brown School went on a picnic to Battle Lake we visited him, and I remember that we could see the ocean from the porch of his cabin.

Behind Brown School was Bennett Hill where the Bennett family once lived. They had several children, one of whom was retarded. Mr. Bennett was a member of the Salvation Army, and he started a Sunday school in Brown School.

Before a school house was built up Boulder Creek all the children of Hazel Bend came to Brown School. I believe the Jensens were the first house on Boulder Creek. Farther up lived the Kinnamons, the Speece family, the Nicholas family and the Sandoz family. Mrs. Sandoz was sister to Gus Chopard, and they had come from France. Others who once lived up Boulder Creek were Bob Richards, Oliver Mills and Frank and John Kumm. Going east from Boulder Creek to where the road crossed the river again the Gladwells lived just before the bridge. Later on, about 1913, the Magarells moved there. The road passed the Magarell house on the south and north along the river, then right to cross the bridge. Just before the bridge but beyond the entrance to it was the cheese factory. By wagon or hack we all

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carried our milk to the cheese factory each day and brought home some whey for the pigs. Beside the cheese factory in an open area was the Grange hall.

The cheese factory, Grange hall and the Magarell place were a sort of community center for Hazel Bend. Church services were held in the Grange hall, also socials and Christmas programs. For several years we even had our own community fair at that location. In the summer we met together for picnics along the river or for "fish fries." Beside the river fireplaces were built of rock, and big salmon caught for the occasion were sliced and fried by the ladies over the fires. Other foods were set out on tablecloths on the logs, and all ate till they could eat no more. In the afternoon there was baseball in a field nearby, while we small children played in the water, fishing for crawdads with pieces of salmon tied to a string.

The road now passes the Magarell house on the north going straight to the bridge. The cheese factory is gone, and the Grange hall has been moved up the river. The old days are gone but not forgotten.