

South Tillamook County from 1881 - the Early 1900s

This story was published by Headlight-Herald, Tillamook, Oregon, Thursday, July 30, 1959. It has been retyped by Dean Bones in March of 2023.

My mother's parents, the J.S. Hills and their two sons, Steve and William, preceded our family by 5 years arriving on the Big Nestucca River near the present town of Hebo in 1881.

Their nearest post office was Grand Ronde, Polk County, some 25 miles distant. Their letters never told us how far they were from the post office.

By 1886 there was a post office at Hebo, Oregon, the time of our arrival there. There was also a post office at Woods. However, I do not know whether Hebo or Woods had the first post office. William Booth was the first postmaster at Woods, and George Bodyfelt was the first Postmaster at Hebo. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Woods were the first settlers at Woods.

My grandparents lived in a small log house on the north side of the Nestucca River a mile west of the Hebo post office where the Bodyfelt family lived. My grandmother did most of her cooking in a large fireplace though she did have a small cook stove. I remember that house quite well. Its one door was on the east side of the living room. The fireplace on the north side was where Grandma baked her light bread in a Dutch oven. This vessel had a heavy iron lid. Live coals were piled all around and over this iron baking dish. The lid was not removed until the bread was baked, and it came out light and white. It had a flavor that seemed to excel that of any bread I have eaten elsewhere. Grandma made her own hop yeast, and often housewives exchanged starters of yeast.

The dining table stood in one corner of the room with the spinning wheel near. About everyone had a spinning wheel, but few had sewing machines. There were dasher churns, but no washing machines. Wood ashes were saved to make lye which when combined with waste grease made soft soap. Tallow candles were used for light, but lamps soon followed. Some men were fortunate to own a coal oil lantern while others used a pitch torch.

All the kids in every family had their gum logs where they dug dried pitch from a crevice in the log and chewed it as gum. Just here let me add that it was at this time when I first heard children called "Kids".

It was also new to me to hear twenty-five cents called "two bits". Another colloquialism of western origin that caught on was "dad", meaning father.

South Tillamook County from 1881 - the Early 1900s

My dad rented a house farther down the river for the rest of the winter. We were driven out of it twice by high water. Good neighbors came to the rescue and took us in until the waters subsided. These neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. John Knifong and Mr. and Mrs. Sanders. I have always remembered that it was here I first learned to play checkers, or rather I learned to lose as I never did win a game. I think this one thing alone I have learned in life - I learned to be a good loser.

The following spring, in May, 1887, we moved to our own home on Alder Creek. This stream was only about 3 miles in length, flowing northward and emptying into Three Rivers on my father's place. Its scenery was beautiful, but the valley was scarcely wide enough for a road. There were only 3 homes along this stream, the Ed Graves, The Dixon place, and the Nelson place.

Three Rivers came tumbling out of the Mr. Hebo regions flowing westward until it reached the point where Alder Creek emptied into it. Here it turned abruptly and flowed northward about 7 miles emptying its waters into the Big Nestucca River just below Hebo. One of the finest bits of scenery in this area is Castle Rock, a monolith resembling a castle. At its base Three Rivers has cut a gorge where it runs slow, dark and deep. A lesser cliff on the opposite side of the river adds much to the beauty of the scene. There is sufficient level ground for a small park. The place is always cool even on the hottest days.

The source of the Big Nestucca River is found in the Coast Range summit on the northeast slopes of Mt. Hebo. It winds westward into the Nestucca Bay on the ocean front. The Nestucca is a beautiful stream with fine farms along its banks for some 20 to 25 miles.

The Little Nestucca River is the most southern stream in the county. (*Hm . . . what about Slab Creek? db*) Its gorge opens into a draw at Dolph, a forked valley. Here the Little Nestucca flows westerly 'till it reaches Nestucca Bay. The other fork of the valley opens into the upper reaches of the Alder Creek country. As the name implies, the Little Nestucca River in no way equals the Big Nestucca River in size or importance as a dairy producing valley.

Dolph was reached by a public road from Grand Ronde in Polk County which crossed the Indian Reservation and met the toll road which led into Tillamook County. This was a distance of about 13 miles. When the road entered Tillamook County it divided and became the Big Nestucca Toll Road owned by Mr. Fuqua

South Tillamook County from 1881 - the Early 1900s

and the Little Nestucca Toll Road owned by Mr. Baxter. These roads followed the streams which I have just described.

Here I feel led to follow geographical rather than historical times remembering that as the county settled new towns sprung up and addresses changed.

Dolph lay on the county line. It came into being about 1884 and was named for our state senator Dolph at that time (*Senator Joseph Norton Dolph db*).

The toll gate was built right across the road, but soon Mr. Fuqua sold his road to Cal Landingham who lived by the gate. Joe Hill was the first postmaster and storekeeper. L. Shortridge built a hotel and livery stable. About 1/2 mile to the west down the hill lived the Baxters at their toll gate. The Henry Hills were a very large family, and they and the Gallands lived north of Dolph. The three Hill families in the community were unrelated.

Other settlers were Smith, Haverland, Petersen, Faulconer, and Freer. Along Alder Creek were the Graves, Dixons and Nelsons that I mentioned earlier. Then came the Pollards, Joe Hill of Dolph sold his store and post office to W. H. Carey. The Careys and Henry Woolfe families soon moved to Tillamook.

Along Three Rivers lived John Wilson, Lawrence Sanders, M. C. Kellow, G. H. Ward, Alex Bain and the Steve New family. Farther down the river lived the Lewallens, Lorances and Crosses. The town of Hebo is situated at the foot of Mr. Hebo, the highest peak in the Coast Range, near the mouth of Three Rivers on the property first belonging to Mr. Jensen. The first building at Hebo was a school. The toll road turned west at Hebo, and the county road went north toward Tillamook. This was a natural place to build a town and a very pretty place too charming for its scenery.

Following the toll road south, the first home belonged to Mr. Jensen. His home was there long before the town of Hebo. The next property was my grandfather Hill's though his house was across the river, Mrs. Stone, the Rhodes family and later the Mattoons. The road has reached Cloverdale. Its first business enterprise was a cheese factory. In the year 1900 the first post office came and the same year a general store was built. On the north side of the Big Nestucca River lived the families of Smith, Sanders, Butts, Knifong, Gist, Kennedy, Hushbeck, Dimick, Allen, Compton, Bailey, Burke, Worthington and Waymire.

South Tillamook County from 1881 - the Early 1900s

On the south side of the river lived the Charles Rays, Daniels, Arstill, Riggs, Dawson, Werschkul, Hudson, Hogan, Glick, Dr. Bissell, Henry Miller, Brootens, F. L. Owens, Link Sawrence, guy Ford and others.

Over Little Nestucca way at Oretown the names are Gage, Forter, Upton, Dunn, Warner, Christensen, Commons, Misner, Helenbrand, Porter, Page and others. Let me explain that I was acquainted with this area before Cloverdale had a post office, and I was not in that section afterwards for many years, so I am confining my story to times previous to 1900.

I taught school south of Cloverdale one term, and my pupils were Clyde Hudson, Bill Gage, Harry Hogan, Billy Werschkul, Claud Riggs, Joe Jenck, Tony Jenck, Edna Demick, Ella Gage and her brother whose name I can't recall, Nora Nelson, Pete Jenck, Bess Fleck, Rita Gage and Bee Gage. This was 1894.

Now in my story I have reached Woods. But before we enter Woods we will dash down to what is now called Pacific City. This was a barren and unused territory when Woods was the thriving metropolis of the south end of the county. Its first inhabitant was an old man, Mr. Malaney. It built up after 1900. The Magarell family lived there before 1900 and also the Edmunds. I have said that Mr. and Mrs. Woods were its first settlers, however, there were living in Woods at my earliest recollections a Mr. and Mrs. John Belleque pronounce Blake. Living with John was his brother Peter Belleque. These people were of the French and Indian descent and may have been there many years before any other white people.

Mr. and Mrs. Woods came before there was any road. Mrs. Woods lived to a very old age and was a widow for many years. Her pretty little home was beautiful inside and out with every kind of flower and plant that could be found. Her pioneer experiences were thrilling and heroic. I deeply regret that I failed to record the stories she told me as now they have grown dim in my memory.

Other early residents of Woods were Al Phelps, the first merchant and R. T. Weatherby, druggist and editor of the Ocean Waves. His son carried on the business for years afterwards, and Frank Wilehart was ferryman, boatman and grocer. Other merchants were Findlays, Lucy and Will Compton, and John and Leonard Krebs who owned the sawmill. Other settlers were Fletchers, Ray, Booth, Gulden, Miles, Dr. Linton, Holmes, Virgils and others. Woods was and is a charming spot nestling in a cove between, low hills overlooking the placid river, the Big Nestucca, picturesque and peaceful.

South Tillamook County from 1881 - the Early 1900s

Woods had reached its zenith by 1900. Neighboring towns have reduced it commercially, but it still is the quiet, restful, pretty place where we can get away from the noise and hurry, relax and let the rest of the world go by.

Sand Lake - Leaving Woods and traveling north we pass the Miles place and reach Roeneckes which is now called Tierra del Mar.

Sand Lake is an interesting place. It's a pretty lake when the tide is in and a wet sand bar when the tide is out. It grows cranberries well and is a good place to catch flounders. Sand Lake, I think, was the last place on Tillamook County beaches to get a good road. There the people were practically isolated for years. But they were the most friendly little neighborhood imaginable. The flowers they raised in their sandy gardens could not be surpassed. Sand Lake was friends, flowers and flounders. The citizens were Roenecke, Murphy, McGhee, Billings, Hoyt, Edwards, Shillinglaw, Atkinson, King and Harris. Wild rhododendrons grow there in profusion.