

The Family of George S. & Elizabeth Nelson

by Minnie NELSON Blum

retyped by Dean Bones November 2022

We were 6, father, mother and 4 children. I was the eldest at age 9. We left sunny Kansas December 1st and reached the Hebo area on about December the 18th. We came by emigrant train to Portland, by the old Narrow Gauge to Sheridan, and by stage to Grand Ronde.

Our destination was Hebo. My grandparents lived there having moved from Kansas 5 years before. They were James S. and Susan Hill and their two sons, Steve and Will.

At Grand Ronde we employed a quiet, gentle, civilized Indian to bring us to the toll gate. It was situated near where Dolph afterwards stood. The Indian somehow assembled a good 4 horse team, and we started out. We were warned that in all probability we could not get over this piece of road on account of mud. Being determined, we pressed on. We rode down the long Grand Ronde hill into the mud. It was deep, sticky and continuous. The noble little horses pulled, lugged and struggled through it all day. By nighttime we arrived at the toll gate, a distance of 14 miles. At the toll gate we were sheltered for the night in the home of Mr. Fuqua, the keeper. He knew my grandparents.

The next morning we started out with Mr. Fuqua for Hebo, the last lap of our journey. He drove a 4 horse team. We splashed along down Alder Creek to Three Rivers. Here we stopped, and Mr. Fuqua studied the stream. It looked formidable. It was deep and swift and churning fiercely around its big boulders. Finally Mr. Fuqua said, "Mr. Nelson, I will try it. You take your family around that trail on the mountain. It will take you past 2 fords. I will meet you on the other side if I get across."

My father took my baby sister, Nora, in his arms. Mother took little sister, Eva, by the hand. Brother Lee and I had to scramble for ourselves. That mountain trail looked formidable too. Traveling it was scary! I wished we were back on the prairie. We reached a place where we could look a way down and see the surging stream AND Mr. Fuqua! He was in mid-stream, and the waters were swirling around him coming into the wagon while the horses were almost submerged. He was standing with the lines taut. With skillful hands he guided his horses oh so slowly over the boulders. The wagon reeled, tipped and then straightened up, and the ford was crossed.

There were 5 more fords on Three Rivers. We crossed them all safely. We reached the Big Nestucca. Grandfather lived on the north side, and we had to cross. But that was easy as we went over in a row boat.

We took the loved ones by surprise, and we had a happy reunion. And, the toils of the road did seem nothing when we got to the end of the way.

On may 15th, 1887, we moved to our own home on Alder Creek. We were about halfway between Dolph and Hebo and between the last ford on Alder Creek and the first one on Three Rivers. We lived there at Cloverdale (? db) for 15 years. We lived simply and strenuously and thought nothing of it. 4 more daughters came into the family there. At no time while there did we ever call a doctor. Once mother rode horseback 42 miles to Dallas to get some aching teeth extracted. And she road home the next day. My brother once fell onto a pitchfork that was standing with tines up. One tine penetrated his arm at the elbow and ran down this forearm into his hand. Father removed it. Because of extreme high water we could not call a doctor. His arm gave him no trouble, and in a few days it was well.

One night my strong, healthy father was taken suddenly and severely ill. He writhed in pain. It was in his right side. We got him into a farm wagon and started to Dallas. After getting over the mountains he began to feel better. When we reached Dallas he felt well. He wanted to know what had ailed him. Upon examination they told him he had acute appendicitis. They said the appendix had exploded saving his life. Had it not burst it would have been fatal. They said that such things happened in less than 1 in 1000 cases. His was that 1. They credited it to the rough ride. It never troubled him again.

The Grand Ronde Indians often passed our house on their way to the bay to get salmon. An Indian and his wife returning one day had a runaway team. They came pell-mell down the big hill and into a tree. The wife sustained a broken arm. We took her in, bandaged her arm and put her to bed. We sent for the doctor at Woods. He refused to come as he was sure he would get no pay.

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The Indian then went to Grand Ronde for the agency doctor. In the night he returned without the doctor. That doctor did not have to go outside the reservation in the performance of his duties, so he would not come.

In the morning we helped her into their wagon and onto a bed of hay. They wept their gratitude to us and drove away. We never heard of them again. The Indian felt deeply for his wife and wept pathetically in his sympathy for her suffering.

One fine day in early spring a McMinnville liveryman and 3 school teachers drove by. They had summer schools in Tillamook. The river was somewhat swollen, but the man drove into it. It turned his hack onto its side. The girls scrambled to the top while the driver extricated his team. They teetered there precariously. An old man on a pony came along, and he gallantly rescued 1 girl but with such difficulty that he did not try it again.

Just then Steve Hill rode up. He was a dashing, daring and young native riding a powerful horse. He quickly rescued the other girls and drew their conveyance out with a big rope fastened to the pommel of his saddle.

It seemed our mission there was to care for the traveling public. Tillamook people had to haul in their supplies. Travel was slow and difficult. We enjoyed the campers from the Willamette Valley. They drove good horses, and they liked to fish and hunt. They enjoyed our scenery, and, I believe, our hospitality. We formed many permanent friendships with them.

I have spent the glowing days of happy childhood here. I have climbed the mountains and waded the streams. I have loitered in my boat on the silvery rivers and have lived on horse-back. I have spent the days of wistful girlhood here when it seemed those mountains stood as a barrier between me and all that my heart desired, the great wide world.

Womanhood's years with their responsibilities and their recompenses have come and mostly gone. I rejoice in it. I have found God here.

So long have I lived with these: the hills, the rills, the deep dark forests, the graceful little ferns and the pale green billows of alders that they all seem a part of me. The changing moods of the mountains, the lights, the shades of the fog, crowned and sunlit Mount Hebo in its majesty of being, the sea with its song and its shore, with its gulls and dunes. All form parts of one great beautiful picture, and I am in the midst.

I am a Tillamook Pioneer.

Mrs. Charles NELSON Blum . . . Minnie NELSON Blum