

# Pioneer Story of Fannie Smith - Blaine

(This was written in an unknown year.)

Typed by Dean Bones

When, on the 9th day of April, 1890, my father, William Smith with my mother and their five children, accompanied by my mother's sister, Elizabeth Cable, left the farm in Spokane County, Washington, where we had lived since the two oldest children were tiny tots. Sunshine and shadows were chasing each other over the hills and through the valleys in true April fashion. Less than a month before a carpet of white had covered the ground and in shady spots on the northern slopes of the hills. There still lurked small patches of snow that seemed loath to leave their winter quarters.

Two miles of dirt road intervened between our farm and the highway and that road, being still moist from the departing snows, was in no condition to bear the weight of a heavily-loaded covered wagon. Many times in the short distance from the farm to the highway, it was necessary for my father and some kindly neighbors to take rails from roadside fences to pry the wagon wheels out of the mire. Finally the highway was reached and there two other covered wagons were waiting all loaded and ready for a journey to Tillamook County, Oregon.

One of these wagons bore the household goods of William Napoleon and Sarah Elizabeth Bays and family; the other held the earthly possessions of Marcus Curl, his wife and two small children. Besides the three wagons there was a band of loose horses that was being taken along to stock the farms to which we were going. Fortunately, it became necessary to dispose of some of these animals before many miles had been covered for it was learned later that the raising of horses was an industry not suited to the region to which we were going. However, we older children derived an immense amount of pleasure and wholesome exercise from riding the best horses in the herd.

One day when my brother George and I were riding ahead of the caravan, we came to a little hamlet in Eastern Oregon, where one store and a small group of houses constituted the town. Stopping at the store we asked the name of the place. Glances of amusement passed between us where we were told that it was Zion.

It was the habit of the children of the three families to all ride in one wagon, one day riding in one, the next day in another, and so on. One day when the six children of the Bays family, the five of us and the two little ones of the Curl family were all in our wagon, and it in the lead, we saw two riders approaching. As they drew near we saw they were Indians. There were not riding "single file Indian style" but side by side as palefaces do. When they reached our wagon they separated and rode one on either side of the wagon. Just as they turned their horses aside, they looked at each other with broad grins on their faces as one said to the other, "Heap papoose!"

When we reached The Dalles we found it advisable to shorten our journey by taking a river steamer to Portland. But first, we had to load our possessions onto a freight train to make the portage around Celilo Falls. The women and children rode in a passenger coach, but the men stayed with the wagons and horses.

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After leaving the train and boarding the steamer, the trip was one of pure delight to the younger members of our party.

After leaving Portland we wended our way through the Willamette Valley and over the Coast Range mountains to arrive at last at Beaver, where we camped for one week before going on to our homes on the Upper Nestucca River.

There we found a few old settlers, but most of the families had come the autumn before. We moved to our farm on May 10, 1890, and at once set about establishing a post office and a school district. The post office was named for James G. Blaine, and my father was appointed postmaster.

When a census was taken it was found there were children enough for two schools. Therefore, School District No. 27 (Blaine School District) and No. 32 (Brown School District) were organized. The first teacher in No. 27 was A.J. Buchanan, and the first in No. 32 was Alice Thacker.

Our farm was known as Walker's Prairie, it being a natural stretch of level land along the river and bordered on all sides by a dense growth of Douglas firs. Much of the timber is still standing although two groves have long since been converted into lumber. The name of the place has since been changed to Fir Grove Farm.

Soon after our log house was built (the logs being drawn into place by a yoke of oxen owned by Charlie Sears) it was thought that one big fir east of the house might reach the building if it should be blown down during a storm. Consequently, the tree was doomed to die by the ax. The woodcutters planned to have it fall away from the house, but soon a warning shout from the men told us their plans had failed. We rushed from the house just in time to see the giant of the forest crash to the ground, the branches raking the north end of the building as it fell. No damage was done other than shock to the occupants, as we evidenced by blanched cheeks and trembling hands.

Of the group of pioneer families arriving in Tillamook county in May 1890, several are still making it their home. Mrs. W.N. Bays lives at Beaver; Adell Bays Jensen at Hebo; Belle Curl Ayer in Tillamook; Ottie Curl at Pleasant Valley; Mina Smith MacDonald in Tillamook; Nellie Smith Ayer and your scribe Fannie Smith at Blaine.