

GETTING OUTSIDE BONUS



Michael Waterman

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Preface

These chapters are not included in my book *Getting Outside*.

1. The chapter “First People” confronts the vanishing of the Native Americans that Europeans displaced.
2. The chapter “Lonely Premises” is a summary of the documents that homesteaders filed to gain ownership of their land. My father collected 13 homesteads into his ranch by 1960.
3. My great-grandfather Charlie Waterman wrote this charming letter about his life. His sense of humor failed to reach at least one of his grandchildren.
4. The legend that the Dumas family on my mother’s side descended from Alexander Dumas is alas not true. Warning: this chapter is more tangled than the others but describes some fascinating people including Axie Hayes-Anderson, my great-great-grandmother.
5. My grandmother Mabel Waterman kept a journal during the wagon trip across Oregon in 1911.
6. The chapter “Bandon Fire” collects a few stories about that cataclysmic event in 1936.
7. After he was wounded and recovering, my uncle Ben Payne wrote a letter about his World War II experiences. It is no secret that war forces good men into awful circumstances.

Chapter 1

First People

The first to arrive were Indians and not much of their life on the Coast remains. The magnificent cedar houses, totem poles, and culture of the British Columbia and Alaska coast never existed in southern Oregon. Perhaps life simply did not require that much organization for survival and well-being. One early estimate is that there were about two-thousand Indians on the Coast from the Rogue River north to the Umpqua River, a distance of one-hundred miles on today's highway. There were small bands which each had a chief with no larger social organization.

This sheltered and rugged land was so isolated that no missionary is known to have intruded, and no church work was done with the natives until towns sprang up in the late nineteenth century. There was little strife between the settlers and the Indians on the Coast. The Rogue River Indians, south and inland, commenced hostilities with the first European emigration, as did those up the Umpqua. Dry-country tribes seemed always to be more fierce.

Europeans did not locate Coos or Curry Counties until Don Martin d'Aguilar bumped into it while sailing north along the Oregon Coast in 1603, naming the prominent point Cape Blanco. As Cape Blanco sticks its hook out into the Pacific at the west-most point of Oregon, it is not surprising that it was found in this manner. d'Aguilar was the first person to write about the Oregon Coast.

...on the 19th of January, the pilot, Antonio Flores, found that they were at a latitude of 43 degrees, where they found a cape, or point, which they named Cape Blanco. From that point the coast begins to turn Northwest; and near it was discovered a rapid and abundant river, with ash trees, willows, and brambles, and other trees of Castile on its banks, which they endeavored to enter, but could not from the force of its current.

However it is not certain that it was today's Cape Blanco that d'Aguilar described. Captain James Cook in 1778 raised serious doubts about this matter. The fact that on the same trip Cook himself sailed by and missed some major geography including the Columbia River and the Strait of Juan de Fuca makes me question his reliability. The main evidence against the d'Aguilar discovery of Cape Blanco is said to be the absence of a nearby river. Elk River is just to the south and Sixes River is $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the north of Cape Blanco. After winter rains these rivers are rapid and abundant enough to convince me, and the 19th

of January is the right time for some heavy weather. If more is needed, those academic historians who have debated the discovery of Cape Blanc, if any do remain, should board a 35-foot fishing trawler at Port Orford, south of Cape Blanco, and travel to the Coquille River at Bandon, some 20 miles to the north. There are many days when 25-foot swells break against the river's currents, and the fishing boat will disappear, twisting into deep canyons. Unable to cross the Bandon bar, the boat must then return to Port Orford. I wish to stand on that tall pier and put a question to the travelers finally winched up off the rough pounding sea.

"Well, was that a river or not?"

In 1792 Captain George Vancouver explored and even mapped the Coast. His descriptions of the Indians are detailed and valuable, saying they were under five-foot six-inches in height and slender. The Indians wore small bone ornaments in their ears and noses with their long black hair tied in a club at the back of their heads. *They were dressed in garments made principally of the skins of otter, bear, deer and fox. Their canoes were wrought out of a single tree and were the shape of a butcher's tray, and seemed unfit for use in sea voyages.* Those canoes were hollowed-out red-cedar logs.

Whites did not see the place up close again until Jedediah Smith and his men, after wintering on the American Fork of the Sacramento River, in 1828 made their way up the coast of California into Oregon. They were the first Europeans to make that journey. There were small clashes with Indians who often shot arrows at the horses and mules. (Horses were common in the West by this time but it is unlikely that any had made it to this costal region.) Even without harassment it was no ride on the prairie taking horses and mules through that rough forested terrain. They passed by Johnson Creek in Coos County which is in salal, madrone and jack-pine country about eight miles inland from the great stretch of sand dunes along the shore and ten miles south of the Umpqua River which is where they headed inland. On July 2 at Johnson Creek, Harrison Rogers recorded his relief that the Indians had let them be for one day.

No accident happened to the horses today.

Far up the Umpqua near the location of today's small town of Drain, Oregon most of the party were killed by approximately 200 Indians, and Smith with three others made it to the safety of Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. This incident is famously known as the Umpqua massacre.

In 1850-51 gold was discovered in northern California and then in 1852 at Gold Beach in southern Oregon. Captain Tichenor sailed a steamer along the coast between San Francisco and the Columbia River, beginning in 1850, and he wished to establish a settlement at an evident harbor near Cape Blanco in 1851. This harbor was to become the site of the city of Port Orford. That June he landed nine men on the shore by a large rock, later known as Battle Rock. They took a cannon and had in addition one good rifle, a pistol and some other fairly useless weapons. The Indians, who apparently knew what this arrival meant to them, massed and attacked, and then were driven off by the cannon. A number of Indians were killed including one leader who was apparently a white living with them. (The slightly-hidden moral of these events is that the whites on both sides caused all the trouble.) When the ship did not return as scheduled, the nine men, some wounded but none killed, managed

to make their way up the Coast to a settlement on the Umpqua River. Probably they struggled in the trees and brush and sloughs for two or three times the distance of 105 miles of highway that they could stroll along today.

Indians did obtain a little of the land, although these peaceful people did not warrant a special treaty or being carted off to a reservation. They received a few small parcels later when the land was divided up at the tag-end of the Homestead Act. The only ethnics we had, several Indians lived on Four Mile Creek and their half-blood children went to school with me. Their race was not remarked on at all.

The one official acknowledgment of Indians came every Fourth of July. To celebrate our independence from Britain, the Battle of Battle Rock was re-enacted. (The exact logic of this has remained obscure to me.) The whites came in on boats and landed on the rock, a pretty tricky business if the wind was up and in Port Orford the wind was always up. Then men dressed in Indian costumes more suitable to the Sioux in Montana gathered and built a fire on the beach, later attacking and getting killed by the cannon fire. The point of high drama came when the white-dressed-as-Indian was shot with that one good rifle the whites had. It was a little boring, the same every year, and anyone who could took some whiskey to dull the wind and sand and poor acting. One of my uncle George's nephews vividly showed his Indian blood in high cheekbones and straight black hair, and he was in the attack one year. He had drunk his share of bourbon before the big event, and I saw him after, still wiping war-paint off his face.

"Well we tried, but god-damn-it this wasn't the year," Jiggs King told me. "One of these times, by god, the Indians are going to win and set this damn town straight!"

And I am beginning to believe that the Indian's time may have come at last. With the age of Indian gambling upon us, the Coast communities are confronted with newly organized tribes that want to set up operations, a rest home in Bandon, casinos in Coos Bay. In the end the Indians, or at least their business partners, may skim the cream from the only real crop left on the Oregon Coast, the tourist.

Think of the nerve and determination it took to walk that ribbon of slush onto a new continent, to seed North and South America. Were they trailing game, escaping enemies, or was it simply curiosity? It is beyond imagination. Those who sailed later had vast numbers and dogged resolve, and they swept through the native peoples as if they were ghosts. All that courage and energy and endurance has come to this: risk is now a bet of plastic money made under fluorescent lights.

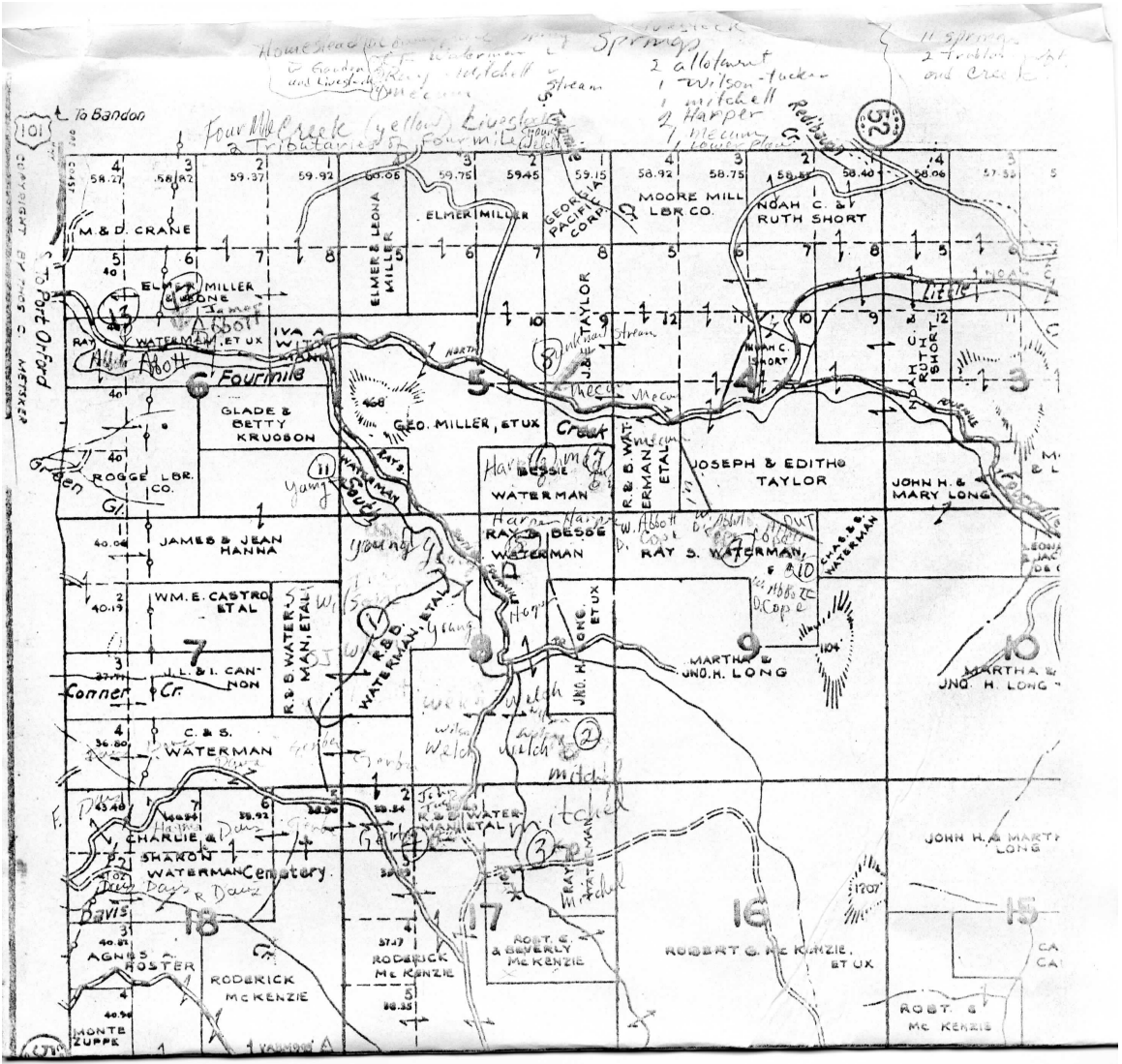
Chapter 2

Lonely Premises

In 1911, my grandparents Charlie and Mabel Waterman came to Four Mile Creek in western Oregon. They lived there until their death. My father, his twin sister, my brother and I were all born there, as well as my brother's two children. In fact, except for me and my father's older sister who left at the first opportunity, none of my direct family has lived off this small watershed for any period of time. My brother's daughter broke this record, but that is another and later story. This land was settled by homesteaders from 1885 to 1900, and you can still trace out who lived where and when. History here is short, and if you have an eye for it, you can still see it traced out on the land and on people's faces.

The rim of forest and mountain shielding this country from settlement was penetrated by rough roads by 1885, and opportunity presented itself: pioneers swarmed over this scrubby country, all looking for a place in the world that was their very own. They came from lines of ne'er-do-wells who were unlucky or lazy or criminals, flung West by disaster, calamity, and ambition, this was their opportunity for a piece of land, something none of their ancestors had ever possessed. The Homestead Act was their ticket, and they did not let this last chance slip by them. The frontier was coming to a close; there was only ocean west of Cape Blanco; it was now or never.

What comes next are some details gathered from Homestead Proofs, legal documents filed to "prove" that the applicant had actually lived on and improved the land as required by the homestead law. When they had "proved up," they then owned their land. Each of the sometimes quaint descriptions is for a property that my father had gathered into his ranch by the time I left Four Mile for college in 1960. It is organized from my view as a child, of each ranch as the unit of property that my father purchased. This means that several proofs may fall under one grouping. Eleven families — count them — eleven families lived on the land which was by 1960 occupied by one family. This land is the foundation of my family's life in Oregon. The baker's dozen of properties changed hands time after time before my father purchased them. The demise of the family farm is not a recent invention.



Grandfather's Place. My grandfather Waterman bought this property in 1916 when he was living above the Cope Place. This was one of the older homesteads located on the south fork of Four Mile.

Name: Albert Young, age 39. Last occupation, saloonist. Family of wife and two children.

Legal Description: SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 5 and the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 146

Date: March 30, 1885

Buildings: One house, 17 by 27 ft, frame construction of split and sawn lumber with five rooms, six doors and five windows. One barn.

Property: An orchard with 60 trees, one plow, one harrow, four hoes, one scythe, one saw. Two bedsteads, one table, two stoves, one lounge set with chairs.

Livestock: One horse, five cattle.

Cultivated Land: Five acres in crops producing 30 bushels of vegetables and 150 bushels of oats, per year.

History: In November, 1902 Albert Young sold the property to Annie Tucker. Annie Tucker sold it to my grandfather Charlie Waterman in 1916. The loan which he never fully paid off was finally settled by my father in the 1940s.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: May 14, 1948 (Except for settling the old loan, this was a simple title transfer. My grandfather received no money from his son for his land.)

Indian Allotment. This property is not a homestead, instead was a grant to an Indian. It is located on the ridge between the main and south forks of Four Mile and is adjacent to the Cox Place.

Name: William Abbott, an Umpqua Indian.

Legal Description: N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 155

Date: December 31, 1885

Deed. "Land thus allotted (subject to all the restrictions and conditions contained in said fifth section) for a period of twenty five years, in trust for the sole use and benefit to the said William M. Abbott or, in the case of his decease, for the sole use of his heirs."

History. William Abbott died in October 1895, and the property was left to his parents. James Cope obtained the property in 1898 and held it until he died. The following were claims against his estate: two plow pharis, fencing supplies, buckskins, repairing tank, putting faucet in tank, shrinkage, delivering and bringing away one bull. Also my grandfather claimed work on the ranch and appraisal of the estate. The property went back to the Abbotts who sold it to B.L. Tracy.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: May 15, 1943

Cox Place. This ranch is upstream of my grandfather's ranch. My parents moved here when they married.

Name: Elizabeth Harper, 45 years old in 1899, widow with two children.

Legal Description: N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8, and the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 5; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon.

Acres: 160

Date: March 14, 1892

Buildings: One house, 24 by 32 ft, built February 1892. Two barns, woodshed, chicken house.

History: The property transfers were E. Harper to W.C. Sanderson (1904) to W.W. Cox (1909) to B.L. Tracy (1926).

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: May 15, 1943

Lower Place. This ranch is on the main fork of Four Mile just upstream from Highway 101. It has extensive bottom land and includes some hill land on either side of the stream.

Name: James Abbott, 56 years old in 1888, a native of Illinois. Family of wife and two sons.

Legal Description: S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 6; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon.

Acres: 115

Date: July 5, 1888

Buildings: One house 16 by 30 ft, barn, woodshed, smokehouse.

Property: Corrals.

Cultivated Land: 25 to 30 acres in grass, fenced; three acres cultivated.

History: James Abbott was granted the land in 1893. He sold the property to T.H. Shaw in 1906 who deeded the property to his wife Mattie in 1907. Mattie died in 1914; probate refers to "Personal property of mower, rake, cider press: \$50. Accounting of Claims: Item: 1 cow delivered May 1928 for \$30." Shaw's heirs deeded the property to F.T. Guerin in 1929. Guerin took a Federal Land Bank loan in 1933. He sold to V. Anderson in 1937.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: April 1, 1946

Wilson Place (a). This ranch was upstream and south of our home ranch, the Cox Place. It was put together from three homesteads of which this was the earliest.

Name: James Welch, a single man, 38 years old in 1888. He was born in Canada and became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Legal Description: W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 160

Date: July 13, 1888

Buildings: One house 16 by 24 ft. One barn 26 by 43. One storehouse 10 by 25.

Cultivated Land: One-half acre. In addition, 40 acres in grass.

History: James Welch sold to the Wilsons in 1901 who kept it in the family until 1951.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: April 23, 1951

Wilson Place (b). This property was unclaimed, and in June 1906, John Tucker requested it be sold. The land was isolated so was not claimed earlier for a homestead.

Name: John Tucker.

Legal Description: NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 40

Date: May 6, 1909

Buildings: Buildings and other improvements assessed at \$50.

Property: Farming implements valued at \$25; household items at \$20. Four horses and seven cattle.

History: In his request for sale, John Tucker states "I intend to clear the land for pasture." His plan was to run cattle on the land. He sold to S.J. Wilson in 1928. Mary Wilson took over in 1938 and kept the property until 1951.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: April 23, 1951

Wilson Place (c). This land was west and south of my grandfather's ranch and was bought by my father in 1972, but he was running stock on it and treating it as his own before 1960.

Name: Stonewall Wilson, 40 years old in 1910. A native of Coos County, he must have been one of the first Europeans born in Coos County. He had a wife and four children.

Legal Description: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7, and the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 160.

Date: September 1, 1910

Buildings: One house 16 by 24 ft. One woodshed 14 by 20. One 10 by 10 shed. Two 6 by 8 chicken houses.

Property: Two horses, five cows, six yearlings and calves. 18 acres slashed and burned.

Cultivated Land: Two acres cultivated, two acres broken, eight acres in grass. Orchard of 23 fruit trees, fenced.

History: Stonewall Wilson established residence in 1904 when he built the house. W.C. Foster acquired the property in 1916 and kept it until Timber Conversation Company bought it in 1946. It went to another timber company and finally to Georgia Pacific in 1962. My father eventually was able to buy the land he was already using.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: March 10, 1972

Mitchell Place. This ranch is on the south fork of Four Mile, up away from the stream. It is mostly very steep hill with about 30 acres of bench at the base of the hill on one side and 5 acres on another. The other 125 acres are nearly vertical.

Name: Sarah (Sis) Mitchell, an unmarried woman, 39 years old in 1894. Born in Texas.

Legal Description: N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the N $\frac{1}{4}$ and the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17 and the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 160

Date: June 13, 1894

Buildings: One house 16 by 34 ft. One barn.

Cultivated Land: A fenced orchard. Five to six acres cultivated.

History: Sarah Mitchell resided on this property from 1894 until her death in 1949. Her heir was John Tucker who transferred the property to J.R. Truman (1/2 1950; 1/2 1952).

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: June 2, 1953

Walker Place (a). This ranch is adjacent to and west of the Wilson Place. It is on the ridge between the south fork of Four Mile and the coastal plain. As a consequence, it has dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean.

Name: Rollie Davis, 27 years old in 1906. Wife and two children. Born in California.

Legal Description: S $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18; T 30, R 14, Coos County Oregon

Acres: 160

Date: January 13, 1906

Buildings: House, 12 by 16 ft, built in 1899. Barn, 24 by 42. Other outbuildings.

Property: Two horses, and ten to twelve cattle.

Cultivated Land: Orchard, 20 acres cleared, seeded to grass, one mile lumber fence, 3/4 mile brush fence. Garden cultivated for several seasons.

History: Sold to W.B.Haynes in 1930.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: October 20, 1959

Walker Place (b).

Name: Flora Davis, widow of Fred Davis who made the homestead application in 1900. She 25 years old in July 1906; her son, Ellsworth, was three.

Legal Description: SW $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7 and the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18, T 39, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 160

Date: July 20, 1906

Buildings: Small house built before filing. Another larger 16 by 24 ft house was built in 1900. One barn 16 by 24 ft. Other outbuildings.

Property: Five to ten cattle. 3/4 mile fence, lumber and brush.

Cultivated Land: Orchard, a small garden each year, 7 acres of grass.

History: Flora Davis wrote: "He was absent working for wages temporarily. Family lived on the place in his absence. ... Since his death. I have had to live other places. being unable to live alone with my little child on the lonely premises." She married and the property owner is listed as Flora (Davis) Haynes in 1909. There is a succession of property transfers: Flora Haynes to L.J. Brown (1940) to O. Wyss (1950) to L. Kiekhoefer (1951) to John Walker (1951).

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: October 20, 1959

Walker Place (c).

Name: John Gerber, 33 years old in 1908, born in Nebraska. Single.

Legal Description: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7, the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 8, the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17, and the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18 in T 39, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 160

Date: March 24, 1908

Buildings: One house 16 by 20 ft. One barn, 14 by 21 ft. Outbuildings.

Property: Four cattle. 35 acres slashed, burned, and seeded to grass.

Cultivated Land: Orchard, one-half acre plowed for garden and grain hay.

History: John Gerber to B. Parks (1921) to Rollie Davis (1928) to A. DeHaven (1930) to T. Wilson (1934) to O. Weiss (1950) to J.H. Walker (1957).

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: October 20, 1959

Walker Place (d).; This small piece must have been a special sale; no documents exist to report.

Name: William Haynes.

Legal Description: Government Lot 7 of Section 18; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 40

History: W. Haynes (1919) to L. Brown (1940). Around 1943 it was consolidated with the Flora Davis Homestead.

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: October 20, 1959

Mecum Place This property is on the main fork of Four Mile and is adjacent to the Indian Allotment.

Name: Edward Mecum, an Indian who lived his entire life on Four Mile.

Legal Description: W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 4 and the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 5; T 30, R 14, Coos County, Oregon

Acres: 78

History: This property was probably a grant to Mecum. In June 1887, there was a agreement between P. Williams and Ed Mecum to farm and graze this property for the next eighty years. There is a "patent" to E. Mecum in 1914. Then the transfers were Mecum to E. Snyder (1927) to W. Cox (1930, one-half interest) to L. Foster (1932) to B.L. Tracy (1933, from Cox) to A.L. Mecum (1937, from Tracy) to R. Waterman (1943, one-half interest) to Loftin (1960, one-half interest).

Date purchased by Ray Waterman: one-half in 1943; one-half in 1972.

Chapter 3

Great-grandfather Charlie Waterman

I did not know my great-grandfather Charlie Henry Waterman who none-the-less had a presence in my childhood. He invented clever machinery for mills and started up businesses in several places. A ranch he owned on the Two Canyon River was the subject of a small oil painting which my grandfather kept on his wall. Still I knew little about him when I returned to Oregon for my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary. At such occasions old times are brought up and talked about. In the midst of this, my mother started going through old photos and came onto one of the Two Canyon ranch, a photograph made no later than 1910 which had been used as a model for an oil painting. Somewhere, she said, there is a letter your great-grandfather wrote telling about this. My mother was the family historian and collected material in which no-one else was interested. So later that day I had a letter written in 1925 by my great-grandfather Charlie Waterman telling of his life. My great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my brother all have the same first and last names. Here is that letter.

I was born in Northeastern New York on the shore of Lake Champlain June 10th 1853. I came here from Nebraska, by emigrant train to Sacramento, California, that being the end of the railroad at that time. (In 1876) The rest of the trip was made by boat down the Sacramento River to San Francisco, from there to Puget Sound by water on the old side-wheeler Dakota that used to ply on the Panama Route during the early California Gold Rush days. Seafaring men called her the Floating Coffin, for they knew her to be unseaworthy and expected every trip to be her last. She brought us through and landed us, safe and sound, at Seattle on December 20, 1876.

I remember Seattle more as a sawmill camp than as a town. There was a sawmill on the beach and few whitewashed houses among the tall stumps on the hillside. The town of New Tacoma was just being started, where J.H. Halstead built and operated the first hotel.

Being just about down to my last dollar I went across the Sound to see if I could get a job at the Daniels and Lathrop logging camp on Cutthroat Bay. Before leaving Tacoma an acquaintance told me the first thing they would ask me was, where are you from, and if I wanted a job I'd better tell them I was from Maine. Sure enough I was asked, where are you from, I told them I was from Maine, and he said all right you can go to work in the morning, I am in great need of a chopper. During the evening I made the acquaintance of

a big man who told me he was from Maine; I noticed he had a lame leg and a crooked arm, and I asked him how he came to be so unfortunate as to get bunged up in such a manner. He said he had been a chopper for 25 years and explained to me how choppers had to go up two or three springboards high and stand on them while chopping the trees down, and that falling limbs had knocked him off the springboards many times, one time breaking a leg which had bothered him every since, and another time his elbow was broken at the elbow and remained stiff, and at still another time he saw a falling limb coming his way and in trying to dodge it he fell to the ground and his ribs were caved in by the limb before he could get out of its way. He had told me enough and I believed every word of it, and had made up my mind I'd rather be broke and on the tramp than to have a job like that. The next morning I hunted up Mr. Daniels and told him another lie, to the effect that I had a lot of blankets and clothing at Tacoma and thought I had better get them and come back that evening so that I would not have to stop to get them after I had got to work. I have never seen Mr. Daniels since that morning, I am still after my clothing!

A railroad right of way was being cut, up the Puyalup Valley to the coal mines that winter. Mr. Halstead had a contract to board all the men on the line, and operated several camps. He gave me two camps to look after which I did until April, 1877. I then contracted with Mr. Halstead to split out some cedar lumber and erect the first buildings at the coal mines where the town of Wilkerson now stands.

About May 15th a man by the name of Hardy and myself left Tacoma on foot, with our belongings lashed to the back of an Indian Cayuse, bound for Walla Walla. We crossed over the Natchess Pass, waded the icy waters of the Natchess River nineteen times. We found a little trading post called Yakima just below the mouth of the Natchess. For some reason or other the Yakima Indians seemed to Hiyou sulliks. [??] We were finding walking not to our liking so tried to buy saddle ponies from them; they would not sell for money but offered to trade a pony for a bottle of whiskey. Having drunk all the whiskey we had started with, we had to finish our journey on foot.

We crossed the Columbia River at Fort Wallula on a ferry operated by an Indian and a white man. In crossing, the bow of the boat was held at an angle upstream, so the current would force it toward the opposite shore. A sail about ten feet high was stretched across the full length of the boat, to catch the prevailing wind that blows up through the Wallula Gap which kept the boat from drifting downstream. We walked to Walla Walla on Dr. Baker's narrow gauge Railroad with its wooden rails keyed into the ties and capped with scrap iron.

We found the streets of Walla Walla swarming with Indians. They were buying arms, ammunition and supplies. The Mayor finally took a tumble and issued orders prohibiting the sale of supplies of any nature to them. The next morning not an Indian could be found in town and the next night many signal fires could be seen in the Blue Mountains. A few days later a horseman arrived with the news that Chief Joseph and his Braves had gone on the war path and had killed settlers at Cottonwood. Settlers immediately began to flock into town from all parts of the surrounding country for protection. You are no doubt all familiar with the rest of the story, of how Gen. O.O. Howard in command of the troops chased Joseph's band to where they were captured by Gen. Nelson A. Miles. The old timers at Walla Walla that I remember are Dr. Blaylock and his son Yancy, Dr. Cropp, Tom Tierny liveryman, John Justice city Marshall, James McAuliff, Baumister Eros barbers, Holmes druggist, Wm. Kirkman butcher, Charlie Russell, Tom Page, Reesers, Gromns, Swezeas, the Scott boys and

the Hammond family.

I followed teaming here until I went to Dayton in 1881, engaged in the transfer business with James A. Black. In 1889 Mr. Black and I went from Spokane while the smoke was still rising from the remaining embers of the big fire. We operated a transfer business here under the name of the Washington Transfer Co. I sold my interest in the transfer business during the winter of 1889-90 and engaged in the manufacture of brick with N.R. Triplet, familiarly known as Tripp.

Our yard was located in Brickyard Gulch about one mile from Hangman Creek on the old Medical Lake road. We operated a horsepower yard with a capacity of 18,000 bricks per day, and a steam yard of 30,000 per day. We sold and delivered 5,000,000 hard brick at \$12.00 per [?]. Our brick went to Burns and Chapman, John Keenan and others.

I sold my interest in the brick business in the fall of 1890 and returned to Dayton. I bought a ranch on the Tucannon between Dayton and Pomeroy and soon after locating on the ranch I became interested with Alex O'Dell in the operation of a sawmill, planing mill and lumber yard near the mouth of the Tumulum. In 1907 I sold out and moved to my present location at Priest River where I have a position as Millwright.

Charlie Waterman

November 25, 1925

The most important part of the letter for me was the information at the end about the location of the ranch. A map of Washington showed Dayton and Pomeroy in the very southeast corner of Washington state. The river running between them is the Tucannon, going to prove that you hear what you think you hear all those years. I had always imagined those two canyons, their confluence was part of my interior life, and I certainly was not going to see them!

Another notable aspect is the casual mention of the Nez Perce Indian War. The Indians bought guns and a war happened, but this was not a huge matter to these people. Most of so-called frontier life was hard work, dirt and sweat, not bang-un-up gun fights. The romance (and the sensational bloody brutality) of the West disappears in the boredom of walking the rails, walking because there is no money to pay for the ride, *having drunk all the whiskey.*

How did this branch of my family come to North America? My great-grandfather came from New York to Nebraska to Washington State. There was a story in our family of seven Waterman brothers who came to the United States and settled in New York State. Much later I learned that my Waterman ancestor came to Plymouth Colony by 1638, and that I am a twelfth-generation descendant of Robert Waterman. (There isn't a seven-brother family in the entire lineage.) Here are some quotes from a remarkable book *THE WATERMAN FAMILY, Volume I. Descendants of Robert Waterman* which was published in 1939. "The task has been very difficult, and the editor must confess that he has found the Watermans harder to trace than any other family on which he has ever worked." The first reason was that five Watermans settled in New England in that period, and while only two left descendants, the editor found their families "vexatious to disentangle." "A

second difficulty is the *wanderlust* or pioneering spirit which characterized the descendants of Robert Waterman. Always they have been in the forefront of emigration to the newly opened regions....” I cannot resist adding the obvious; the genetic trait of wanderlust was not extinct in my great-grandfather or his son, my grandfather. At that point it skipped a generation.

I made a trip to locate the ranch. At Orofino, the National Forest people had not heard of the Wenaha–Tucannon Wilderness. After some calls, I located a map of the National Forest that included the Wilderness. To my surprise, along the Tucannon River is a watershed labeled *Waterman Gulch*! It must be the ranch, I thought, and headed for the Tucannon. First I drove down the steep grade to Lewiston and then on to Pomeroy, which is a small town with one main street and a few grain elevators. There I bought a fishing license and talked with people about the Tucannon. After a little more blacktop, I turned left toward the Tucannon, up a gravel road along some wheat fields, then steeply down to the river. The river was small, and the valley floor was hay fields with some grazing cattle. Turning up the river, I may have passed two ranch houses before the land became so marginal that there were no more ranches. Picture this: I drove up the Tucannon River in my rental car with the old photo in my left hand. My eye is good for geography and landforms, but it didn’t need to be: the place hadn’t changed. There was Waterman Gulch, exactly the way I hoped it would be, fearing all the while that it would be logged or made into some awful condo development.

It was 101 years after my pioneering great-grandfather, and there I was photographing the scene in that painting. To get a view of the Gulch, I climbed the opposite side of the valley, passing stumps the Watermans logged for timber to build their ranch house. The exertion of climbing the steep slope calmed me somewhat, and I made some decent photographs. In the more than eighty years since the old photograph, the hills, the open slopes, even the individual trees standing in the open, were all identical. This country gets such a small amount of rain and snow that the landscape is almost frozen. Of course this is why a small amount of logging or development changes things forever. I could not believe my good fortune. Then I went back down to the car and drove off the road to park near the river. Then I fished through the property, starting below the mouth of the Gulch and ending well above, catching and releasing a number of rainbows on flies. The stream was small but had a nice fish population, and I turned one larger trout which did not hook. My best photo of Waterman Gulch was taken from a higher elevation than the old photo and I keep it with a copy of the 1910 photograph. Much later I located a 1902 photograph that reveals the buildings of the ranch. They named their spread “Saints Rest.”

I did learn a little about my great-grandfather from my trip. The Tucannon land is so marginal that even today it is not used for anything but winter range for elk. Lower down the little river there are cattle ranches, but they have not collected this old ranch site, not even for a hayfield. These were people living on the edges. I imagine my great-grandfather’s trip from Nebraska, by emigrant train in 1876, the year of the nation’s centennial. Apparently he did not even hesitate in California. As a current resident of California, I am shouting to him: just stop here and build up a good easy California life. But perhaps he thought the rich had already claimed California, Leland Stanford and others who appeared to have it sewn up. They had their valley land and then Berkeley and Stanford to educate their children for taking over. My people went directly to the margins and worked out a living there, without

even a stop to look over San Francisco. The story goes that my great-grandfather died while running a shingle mill on the outlet of Priest Lake in northern Idaho, inventing to the end, the clear strong waters of the Priest River powering the new American enterprise.



Chapter 4

A Long Hard Pulling

My grandparents Mabel Crooks and Charlie Waterman married August 1903 in Pomery Washington. And in 1911 with their daughter Leora they traveled by covered wagon from Huntington in eastern Oregon to the Oregon Coast. My grandmother kept a diary in a 4" x 7" notebook, and at the time of her death in 1945 a shoe-box of her things was taken away by my aunt Leora. The account of the trip returned to Four Mile Creek after more than fifty years. That diary is precious to me, my only tangible record of Mabel Waterman except for old photographs. Written on the brown cover in ink in her best handwriting appears:

The Trip Across Ore., In
A Prairie Schooner
Sept. 16, 1911.

Ended Oct. 30, 1911
45 da. on road
Traveled 715 mi.
from Huntington to 14 mi. south of Bandon.
Frank Waterman
Leora Waterman
Mabel Waterman
Carrie W. Rowell
Roy Rowell

Here is the record she kept.

Sat. Sep. 16. Started on our trip from Mrs. Benson's. ...changed [wagon] springs stayed all night & spent the evening. Had a nice time.

Mon. 18. [Sept.]...on the Cottonwood Creek. Played the phonograph. Crossed some bad washouts & the roads were very bad in places.

Tues. 19 [Sept.] Went over the worst roads (12 mi.) that I ever saw. Killed three ducks & a lot of rabbits.

Wed. 20. [Sept.] Had fine weather so far. 4025 ft. on Bendier Mts. A long hard hill 4 mi. long all covered with Juniper trees. Drove 29 miles. ... We go across the Blue Mts. and these are the spurs.

Thur. 21 [Sept.] Passed the Live Stock Co's ranch of 2000 A. Stopped at Beulah P.O. & mailed some cards. This is a beautiful valley. A graphone playing at P.O. ...

Fri. 22, [Sept.] Up a long hill then go up Stinken-water Creek. A very cold & windy day. The finest roads all the way. ... Spent the eve. & played the phonograph & the little boy played on the Organ & sang.

Sat. 23. [Sept.] Drove in Harney Valley a beautiful valley 65 mi. long and 30 mi. wide to Burns. A very cold morning. The coldest morning we have had. Pass some fine farms & a lot of Automobiles. ... Stage line all the way.... Burns is a very nice town very nice buildings & a rich place. Every thing freighted in & very high. Flour \$2.25 a sack. ...

Sun. 24. [Sept.] ... Very rough roads. Stayed all night. A very nice ranch. A lovely warm day. Stopped at 3:30 & cleaned up the wagon. 30 mi. from Burns.

Mon. 25. [Sept.] Drove to Riley P.O. at 2: o'clock. ... Rained a little & a dusty & windy place. It just poured down. 1st hard rain. Stayed all night. Roy's horse was so lame had to lay over 2 da. Tue. & Wed. Baked a lot of light bread & 2 ginger bread cakes. We bought a big horse (One eyed Riley.) & started Thur. & left King.

Thur. 28. [Sept.] A fine morning. Foggy & frosted, froze ice. Sun shining. 2 fine ranches & beautiful willows. A long and wide valley. Drove 21 mi. to a saw mill & stayed all night Fine camping place, and played the phonograph. Fine timber and good roads.

Fri. 29. [Sept.] ... Stop at a rich sheep man's for dinner, fine house. ... Go 8 mi. to the mouth of Crooked River. A lake with lots of ducks & storks on it. Camp for the night. 70 miles from Prineville. Lots of wild hay. Drove 20 mi.

Sat. 30. [Sept.] Cold and frosty. Get up at 5:45 and start at 7:30 down Crooked river for 8 mi. A large stream. Get off the road on to a wood road. A terrible hill right straight up over boulders & rocks. Beautiful scenery & a very pretty valley stop at Bernie's P.O. to water horses. 90 miles from Burns and 47 mi. to Prineville. A fine farm 4 mi. long. Stop all night. Commences to rain. Paid \$2.00 for hay for 4. Drove 28 mi. Just poured down in the night.

Sun. 1 [Oct.] Raining & very muddy. The most beautiful Logan Butte nile green & red dirt& all colors. All kinds of petrified bones & fossels on Logan Butte. Rained and snowed on us all day. Got to an old log house at 2:30 with a big fire place, and lots of hay across the road. Went in & stayed all night. Cooked in the fireplace. ...

Mon. 2, [Oct.] Go up steep hill & muddy snow on the ground 2 in. deep. All the mts. are covered with Junipers. Up one hard hill down into a valley then up again. Hard pulling, some fierce pulls, dobie mud. Some nice ranches on the mountains. Sun shining, but a cold breeze....

Tue. 3 [Oct.] ... A cloudy day, but not very cold. ... go up a long hill about 4 mi. a very hard pulling all the way. [In Prineville] A beautiful town, nice building, 2 school houses. The County Seat, pop. 3,963. 152 mi. from Burns to Prineville on the Military R. Rains all eve. A fine climate not much snow. Go straight West.

Wed. 4 [Oct.] ... Go through the timber Junipers. A fine road meet lots of autos. Start at eleven and arrive at six.

Thur. 5 [Oct.] [In Redmond.] A warm day. A beautiful morn. Go up town & look around. Raise the finest garden truck, all kinds & grain & alfalfa. A sandy soil. Met a Mr. Mac Caffery who knows all the Dayton people. Go West to Cline Falls on Deschutes R. ... The falls are just beautiful. Such great boulders and deep narrow canyon below. There is a big pump & hydrolic to irrigate on top of the hill. I found a folding cot for 3.25 A store, Hotel, school house and little farms. The most beautiful house plants up stairs in the store & lots of canary birds. Get here at two, and camp.

Fri. 6. [Oct.] Start for Sisters ... Fine ranches. HAVe lots of water. ... Got to Sisters at 3:30 We take the Santiam Road. A lovely day & warm. Camp at foot of Black Butte. Go 25 mi.

Sat. 7. [Oct.] 3 wks today since we started. Start to climb the Cascade Mt. Sandy roads & hard pulling. just go gradually up hill for 9 mi. then 3 real hard little pitches the worst on the trip. All colors of rocks & light like ashes. A beautiful day and warm. Go 18 mi. Went up Cash Creek, we are on the toll road, ... \$2.00 per team. Go past the foot of the peaks on summit side of the mountain. It was a grand sight. Camped at a little lake 50 ft. across. A pretty camping place. The timber is beautiful. ... vskip 1pc

Sun. 8. [Oct.] A fine morning. Sun shining. Pass by Big Lake. The roads are fine for over the mts. ...

Go down Sand Mt.

Go over an old crater bed for about $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. great holes all along the road. and the most beautiful wild maples. The leaves all colors red, yellow, green & striped. Very thick all the way along. The road were terrible rough. Come to Fish Lake. Very cloudy. All kinds of camping sheds & buildings there, but the people were fishing & couldn't get hay. Had 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. up hill til we reached the summit. Some very steep little pitches and down some too. It is 30 mi. from Fish Lake to hay again.

It is raining hard. Five o'clock when we reach the top. Start down the mt. Go a few mi. & come to the fire belt. A terrible fire came across this side of the mt. 1910. Go til it gets so dark we can't see, the roads slick & more of those steep pitches up & down both. Just stop in the road. Eat a lunch, grain but no hay for horses.

Mon. 9. [Oct.] Get up at 5:30, Feed & eat what little we had left. & start to get horses hay. A hard trip on them. Come to a bridge made of split fir trees. Deep mud & up hill. Put on Roy's team for the 1st time. Hind wheels slide into a big log. Put on the team & pulled it out of road. Start down a long steep road. Cross a nice little stream, the prettiest ferns. The fire [of 1910] hadn't touched this place. Cross some large bridges. Cross the Santiam River 4 times. A beautiful R. Come to Upper Soda a fine Summer Resort nice grounds & store.

Go 22 mi. from Fish Lake at 11:30. Stop at an old house and get dinner Just poured down rain. The ferns are so thick & beautiful. All kinds of pretty shrubbery, wild black berries, & ever green black berries. The way things grow is fine.

We are in Linn Co. now. The nicest camping places & camp sheds all along. Went into the house 2 stoves & tables a lot of things left there. Made a fire cooked on the heating stove & dried our selves. Put the horses in the barn & fed them hay. This is on Lower Soda Creek.

Tue. 10. [Oct.] Go past Canyon Creek a pretty stream & empties into Santiam R. A fine ranch there. The finest vegetables and apples. The most beautiful scenery all along the road and River. The roads were corduroyed & the steepest pitches just straight up and down, one long hill & had to put on the other 2 horses.

Come to a toll Gate called White City. 4 white cottages alike, the White Hotel. Pay \$2. a team. No rain, a fine day.

Wed 11, [Oct.] A fine warm day. No rain. Only \$2. for teams 2 nights & 1 day. Have all the sweet corn & wild berries we wanted.

Thur. 12. [Oct.] Start for Foster. ...The prettiest River. Pass a falls that was very pretty. The roads were just terrible. A loblolie, corded, then 3 long hard hills to pull, clay and dobie mud. Had to put on the other 2 horses on both wagons. I found two holly bushes. And while they took the 4 horses to pull our wagon up the mud hill Leora and I picked a $\frac{1}{2}$ gal. of wild ever green berries off of one bush, very large ones. Commences to rain. Go down a long hill red dobie mud, some corduroyed fine, but terrible rough riding, everything well shook up. & I had the headaches. Stop to camp 1 mi. from Foster in a camp shed. Raining. A very nice farm & hay is cheaper. 50 cents a team now. Most all the trees were covered with moss & little ferns.

Fri. 13 [Oct.] ... Get to Lebanon [at] 4 o'clock. Sawmills all around the country. A train here. Have gone 450 miles. Lots of rain in that country. Go 21 mi. Rained hard in the night.

Sat. 14 [Oct.] ... A very nice morning. Start for Tangent 12 miles from Lebanon. On the main line of the R.R. Going to ship our goods to Roseburg in Douglas Co. The finest

gardens flowers all in bloom, geranums. Corn, beats over a ft. high, fine cabbage, potatoes all in bloom. Sunflowers a ft. across. Lots of mellons. No frost and every thing looks fine. Lots of rain in this country.

Stop by the Depot pack our things. 400 lbs. costs \$2.19. Lots of trains all night

Sun. 15. [Oct.] ... Lots of telegraph 16 wires and 8 wires for the electric power & 2 country lines. Cross the Willamette River into Lane Co. ...

Mon. 16 [Oct.] One mo. since we started. No fog, a little cloudy. We go 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ mi. to Junction City. This is a business town. Land is pretty high. \$40 & on up.

Get to Eugene at three. A Beautiful City. Fine buildings, A fine court house, Osburn Hotel is Swell. ... Street cars in Eugene. ... Pop. 10,000. Rains a great deal.

Tue. 17 [Oct.] Got to Cottage Grove at three A beautiful little town. Saw Dr. F. Ingraham's Office. Fine buildings, paved streets. Pop. 1,900. Fine day. Go to Divide, five mi., & Leora, Carrie and I take the train there for Roseburg. The roads are very bad & the men will drive through. ... We went 530 miles by team. elevation 670 ft. We start for Roseburg at ten P.M. Arrive at 12:00 P.M. Go to the Mc Callan Hotel.

Wed. 18, [Oct.] Roseburg... An ideal climate, no wind, a little foggy, very little snow 2 or 3 in. No frost til Xmas, then it rains a great deal. Go over to the Herrington House Mr P.N. Trumbo prop. A fine place, we have a nice large room, with a fire place. Get fine meals. The men get here at Fri. noon Oct. 20. The roads were pretty bad to Drain but fine from there to Roseburg. We go over to a house & barn & camp on the North Side. A nice place 3 Acres. Took in two moving picture shows & the skating rink.

Sat. 21 [Oct.] Frank is sick & can't look around.

Sun. 22. [Oct.] Leora & I go to the Presperterian Church.

Mon. 23 [Oct.] Trade our heavy wagon for a light one. Don't like the soil & decide to go to Bandon on the Coast. Wash out a few clothes Clean out the wagon. Get Riley & Joker fixed up, and the horses have 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ da. rest. ...

Tue. 24 [Oct.] Go through town down the R.R. track & the Umpqua R, A pretty R. very still & can see the shadow of the trees in the water all along. We ferry across the Umpqua R, then the country looks better. Some fine farms & pretty bungalows & farm houses.

Can see the Coast Range The country is beautiful. Lots of firs, mountain ash, & lots of large Grub Oak trees. Commense to climb the mts. The hills are beautiful. ...

Wed. 25 [Oct.] Start down the mt. after lunch on a pole road. Come down on to Camus Valley on the Coquille R. Such a pretty valley. They are grading up the road & putting plank on clear across the valley. It is 37 mi. to Myrtle Point from the P.O. & 26 mi. back to Roseburg. Go to the last ranch before going into the narrow canyon 18 mi. long & terrible roads.

Thur. 26 [Oct.] ... It was a fine day but the timber was so thick the sun couldn't get in. The roads were something terrible. And we called it H*** Canyon. I was very sick all day. Lots of ferns & wild berry bushes. See lots of holly bushes.

Fri. 27 [Oct.] Go into the C.R. Come to the prettiest little ranches all along & the valley is wider & get to better roads & lots of men working them. The finest corn we have seen yet. Then I stopped near Bridge at Mrs [and] Dr Ester. They had the finest little ranch 20 A. we have seen. They wanted to sell or rent. Stopped there a while & looked around. Just what we wanted. Fine orchard, grapes, & garden. But will go on to Bandon by Coquille City & look around. See the 1st big Myrtle Nut Trees. They are beautiful trees. See some very poor ranches then the rest are fine ones. Fine roads all the way to Coquille City. Stop at Myrtle Point & camp. Some very nice houses. A poor town. A R.R. here to Marshfield on the Coast.

Sat. 28. [Oct.] We go down the North Fk. to Coquille and it is 7 mi. farther to Bandon by this way. Every thing grows fine & a great dairy country lots of cans going to the creamery and fine Jersey Cows. Coquille isn't a very large town. Sawmills in the town. It is 29 miles to Bandon We ferry across the R. There is lots of boats that go down to Bandon. Then we strike ... poor looking places. All the houses & barns 6 or 7 ft. high up on stilts. The tide comes up and all the land is over flowed poor looking gardens, til we get out 14 mi. Camp at a ranch ... & we go in and hear the phonograph.

Sun 29 [Oct.] We got a fine salmon 12 # for 35 [cents]. 2 salmon canerys at Prosper.
...

Come to Bandon about 4 o'clock. Can just see a little of the Ocean & waves on the hill. Drive down into town get feed & go out 6 mi. South. Going 14 mi. to Herm DeLongs place. Mighty poor country. The roads are planked & rocked up. A swampy place. Where we camp it gets a little better $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the Ocean. Can hear it roar.

Mon. 30. [Oct.] On 2 Mile Creek. Come to a sawmill 1 mi. then 2 mi. an other one. Sandy soil & a very hard pulling. Can raise fine orchards & strawberries.

Get to Herm Delongs at 3 o'clock on North Fk. of 4 Mile. A better country.

A terrible fire went through this country in 1854. Stumps from 10 ft. to 100 ft. still standing. There is a good 2nd growth now.

We went 1 mi. over the hill Mr Copes Dairy Ranch and went to work on Nov. 6 for the winter.

So that is the record of my grandparents' "hard pulling" to come to Four Mile Creek. These years later we are looking for details of pioneer life, while Mabel's focus is on the new and modern, and on the country she was passing through. All those cars! All that rich living she saw! They could have gotten themselves and their goods to Oregon by train, but that was just too expensive. Even if they had a car it could not possibly have made the trip. They were lucky not to have been hit by more snow in the Cascade Mountains, but the mud and roads sound bad enough.

Chapter 5

The Bandon Fire

While small tragedies and crises abound in rural life, there are few of those larger dramatic events that feature in books or movies. Cattle get through the fencing and are struck by a truck on the highway; sheep catch some disease and some even die; there is a slide in the road during a winter storm; rain comes after the hay is cut, and it cannot be put up before it is ruined by rot. These things are the stuff of rural life, and except for the principals no one gets excited. Around Bandon there is exactly one event in the last one-hundred years that was writ large, and that is the Bandon Fire of 1936. Everyone alive at that time had a good story to tell about it.

On September 26, 1936, fire exploded in the countryside in and around Bandon. The usually cool humid weather vanished; instead it was so dry and hot that people were uncomfortable just sitting. People living on the Coast find eighty-degrees unbearably hot, so they thought they were in hell. When fire started breaking out, everyone went to work, at first fighting fire and then trying to escape fire.

Out on Four Mile, no houses were lost thanks to help and cooperation between neighbors. My father told of fighting off the fire at my grandfather's house when news came that fire was threatening a house on the main fork. Immediately they rushed over and saved that house. They spent a day and a night racing up and down the roads. Some outbuildings were lost, but that was a small price. There was no hope of stopping the flames; they just fought fire at the houses and let the rest of the country including the livestock burn up. Later George Deos came to get my grandmother.

"Mabel, can you come over? Anna needs some company." After the world had burned up, his wife was upset and needed some comfort.

"I never thought he was that kind of man," said my mother who knew these people later, meaning sensitive enough to know his wife needed some emotional support and considerate enough to get her some.

These events, often with less happy endings, were repeated throughout the county.

In another direction from Bandon at Bear Creek, the fire started when a fence post of normally fire-resistant red-cedar exploded into flames like a match stick. Wind blew from several directions with the same dangerously-low humidity, spitting fire across the country. George Merchant, of an old Bandon family, was out in the country when the fire caught him. He and his companions took refuge in a creek, "throwing water on each other as cinders fell on us. We stayed there three or four hours." Fires were raging all over the landscape, and

the usual common sense which everyone in those days had with fire was useless. How can anyone set a backfire when the wind and fire come from all directions? It burned, burned and burned, and the sky stayed red for three days and nights.

The founder of Bandon brought gorse from Scotland where it makes good pasture. The golden spring flowers of gorse and Scotch broom, another exotic, brightens the town. In Bandon, gorse grew into impenetrable thickets ruining the land it covered for any other use. The plant has a high oil content, and thickets of it exploded in flames. Gorse and low humidity fueled this tragedy. But in Bandon, the air was full of booms from water tanks that exploded as the houses burned. A ball of flame came in from the east and kissed the high school which burst into flame. The town became a stark wasteland of chimneys and dead-burnt trees. Chickens that escaped being killed had their feathers burned off them. Snags burned in and around the little town for three months.

Caps, still a prominent family in my days, in 1922 built the first concrete building in Bandon. It was thought to be indestructible.

“Well, that building was certified to be fireproof,” someone said, “but fire don’t know how to read!”

People moved possessions from fishing boats into Caps, fearing the boats might catch fire and burn. Only the fireproof safe in Caps was able to protect its contents; everything else in the building was destroyed.

The theater was a central location in the town and an established spot for organizing in troubled times. During the depression, free food was distributed there. Volunteers gathered at the theater to go out and help people. Of course that building burned too.

I cannot forget Ida Hill’s story. She made her living hand-washing clothes, clothes which were often worn for weeks by loggers out in the woods, clothes she was able to make presentable again. Hand-washing those impossible filthy stinking garments. Finally electricity came to Bandon, finally she saved enough money, pennies at a time, and she bought a Maytag. It was the glory of her life. And now they were leading Ida Hill away from her blessed, beloved machine.

“We took her with us, but she got away and we later found her bones laying draped over that machine.”

Thirty families made their way to the beach and went into the surf to escape. Driftwood, always plentiful near the mouth of the Coquille River, caught and burned, pushing the frightened people farther out into the cold water. Imagine those terrified people crowding into the chilling surf to escape the fire. The waves crash onto the beach, the fire rages in the driftwood, the sky glows pulses from the whole world burning up. There is nowhere else to go. Other piles of driftwood burn, driving the people up and down the beach. They use wet blankets and wet sand to keep from catching fire. The families on the beach that night were offered lipstick for their chapped lips by the Jacob’s girl. Later people huddled together to try to sleep. The next morning someone led a cow down the beach, stopping here and there to strip some milk for the children.

Only eleven people died which was surprisingly few. Others passed away after the fire from “smoke pneumonia.” Later a tent city was set up by the Red Cross, and as always, some people remained bitter because they felt others received more than they.

Chapter 6

No Time to Bury

My uncle Ben Payne was finally wounded in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Next is a letter he wrote home to his family from his hospital bed as it was published in the Coquille Valley Sentinel.

January 30, 1945
In Hospital in France

Dearest Wife and Son:

Betty, I'll try and tell you in this letter about my fighting. In southern France, it wasn't so rough. I led my platoon for over three months and in my squad had several wounded but none were killed. We lost in an ambush one day, five at once out of the whole platoon in the mountains; as yet, none of my boys. After 96 days of fighting and constant patrol work, we were relieved and sent up near Paris for a long rest. But what happened then? The Germans made the Belgian bulge and all the paratroopers were thrown in to stop it and the 551st, (of course), went in, too.

I was running a platoon then and had 33 souls in my command. Well, you've read what hell we ran into and it was sure rough. We paratroopers continually attacked and charged against superior forces and tanks. We stopped the Germans finally and started driving them back.

My men were magnificent and would follow "Daddy," (they always called me that) anywhere. By this time I had several wounded but as yet none of my boys were dead. The weather was icy cold never was there anything hot—just attack and kill. I've killed dozens with a machine-gun myself after my boys were wounded.

Finally we started an attack and for six days we kept driving. I did not sleep, except for minutes at a time, during those six days. My platoon lieutenant was killed the first day and from then on it was mine. Capt. Quinn was wounded but kept on fighting and would call me and take my hand and say, "Ben, here's where I want your platoon to attack." We kept on and on.

Artillery wiped out all but two men in my old first squad so I just had two squads left. Attack after attack and men kept dropping and the fifth day I looked around and my radio operator and myself were the only ones not killed or wounded. God—it was hell.

Capt. Quinn had been wounded again and taken back and Lt. Sano was company commander. Only two officers and me left in the company and still the order came down, “Attack!” So Lt. Sano gave the other officer and me each twelve men and we carried on. The whole battalion was shot up.

The morning of the sixth day, my platoon (12 men) attacked over forty Jerries in a little woods on a road intersection and we killed all but two.

Our colonel was killed that morning. Gosh, he was swell. He had told me about his baby girl just the night before.

After we took the road intersection we prepared to hold it and I was out organizing our defenses and the Germans started shelling us with big stuff. One shell lit right between me and “Chris” (radio operator) and hit him in the belly. All he said was (real quiet-like) “Of all places, right in the belly,” and then he sort of grinned and died. He had been my buddy for over six months in combat.

The next shell tore my leg about off and I was finished for a while. I got the radio working and called for our artillery to fire on the German gun and that silenced it and then the other Lieutenant came over and took over and I bandaged my leg and started to crawl back to where I’d get picked up. I’d killed a lot of those Jerries and will never regret it.

If, after I get well, I end up in another outfit, you’ll know that the 551st was so shot up that there was none left to rejoin. I sure hope not. It was the best outfit in the world.

Be sure and tell Bessie (sister) that I came across Kenneth Craig in Belgium but that he was dead. We never had time to bury anybody.

I had enough German lugers for all the boys at home but I left them out there as I had to crawl over half a mile up hill in the snow to where I could be taken care of. Be sure and let Dad read this and I’ll tell you all about it some day.

My leg is sure coming along fine and my precious wife and little son, I love you both more today than I did yesterday and today not as much as tomorrow. Goodnite, my darling, love—Ben.

All my best buddies are dead and I’ll never forget. There must be a very special sort of heaven for soldiers. They were such boys and did look to “Daddy” for everything and I didn’t have time even to bury them. It’ll be a long time before my hate ceases.

If I had my way. I’d exterminate the whole German race. I never took but one prisoner; that was right after I jumped—I was soft then. The Germans always tortured American paratroopers. They sure hate and fear us. If I last long enough—we will finish them all.

The war may end before I get well. It looks good now but never trust any but a dead German. If we don’t crush them completely, why our “Steve” will be doing it next time and, Betty, that would be too much for Daddy. I’ll gladly go back into it and take the rap if it will mean peace and security for the two I love most.

In the Belgian Bulge battle over 75,000 of our boys were killed, mostly infantry and paratroopers. Truth will out some day. It is a tough war. In the Belgian Bulge battle, the Germans knew that they were facing the 82nd Airborne Division and Paratroopers. They hate us and fear us. They threw three and four times our number against us but we'd drive them back. Of course, in time we were all worn down, killed or wounded, but we stopped the Von Rundstedt's push and then counter-attacked and drove them back.

We had no tanks and time after time attacked tanks on foot and knocked them out. When my men got killed, I'd just take the ammo off them and mutter "aw, hell" and then we'd move forward. Sometimes I wouldn't find but a leg or an arm. It was terrible to be so alone. I always wondered where the rest of the Army was!

Just heard over the radio that my 82nd Airborne Division was attacking again in Germany. The Paratroopers are sure living and dying up to their reputation.

On one moonlight night our whole battalion infiltrated through German lines and reformed and pulled a commando raid four miles behind their main defense line. We caught two companies all sleeping and wiped them out, also a number of tanks and vehicles were burned. Then we started fighting our way back to our own lines and made it, too.

The Germans massed a lot of armor and men the next day and started to attack us and our air corps caught them in the open and decimated them.

Dad, I'm telling you, it's been a hard old row at times but when they killed by own boys—it took me down. I've cried many a lonely night since I've been in the hospital. I sure loved my boys. Just kids, they were, you know.

One day I went, during a lull to find Kenneth Craig (as his outfit was fighting on our right). I found him dead but not buried yet. He'd been killed the day before. He was a brave man and a fierce fighter. His Captain told me that Ken's examples of fearlessness were exceptional. God, sometimes I wonder where it will all end.

One thing I always noticed on my boys' faces (when I could still recognize them), after they were killed, was the look of peace on their faces. They had always been so tired and hungry and would ask me the darndest questions. It was hard to be strong at times but I never let them down. The guns and ammo always are so heavy and there was no chow and no water but snow. One must go through it to understand at all. The cold and snow are hell, alone.

Another Incident

At one time my platoon (what was left of us) were crossing an area over 300 yards across. I had one machine gun on one flank firing across the front and an automatic rifle on the other flank, making cross-bands of bullets in front of us. My own command post hole was in the center where I could keep control. Along about three a.m. the Jerries attacked. We could see them plainly in the moonlight against the white snow. My B.A.R. man and machine-gunner opened up and then the machine-gun quit. So I crawled over to their hole and two of my boys were badly wounded. I pulled them away from the gun and reloaded and swung her around. Steadily and continually I fired till dawn. We broke the attack—my little band—and when the sun came up I counted over a hundred dead Krauts out in front of our positions. Good hunting, Dad, but two more of my boys were dead.

This was no extraordinary feat or anything. It is done by unsung and unhonored heroes every day, countless times. The nights were hell, though with the cold and wet. Maybe this letter will help you at home to understand what war is. If you pay attention to lots of articles, one would think all we do is drink and chase women and such but in the Infantry, it's mud-sloughin', fighting, dying and hell.

But I'm not complaining and my wound let's me sleep pretty well; just so we know the ones we love understand. Maybe some day Steve will read and understand this.

It is good that the mind does not retain vividness. I'll never forget how my boys would always ask, "What next, Daddy?" and fix their bayonets. Dad, no one ever had a better bunch to lead. All of them are dead now or sorely wounded. Again I say there must be a very special heaven for soldiers.

Our officers were wonderful but most of them got killed. Good officers always get killed or wounded. Infantrymen always catch hell.

As I have written elsewhere, this letter haunts me. I read it many times and it speaks in my dreams. That humans are still brutally killing each other across the globe would have saddened Ben but probably not have surprised him. "What next, Daddy?"

