

Early History of Whitney

by Bishop G. Cecil Foster

Cache Valley was referred to by early trappers and mountain men as Willow Valley, or by some, as Grass Valley. At the time of the arrival of the first settlers in this area, this was true of what is now known as Whitney. Streams coming in to the area, Worm Creek, Spring creek and other small creeks and springs, made it possible for grass and willows to grow prolifically along the stream beds. Also, where the streams came into the flat lands or the flood plains, as they are referred to, the grass and willows grew abundantly.

Many of the early settlers of Franklin were given an allotment of land in the Whitney area. The land was allotted by church authority. There was to be no speculation. Each man was allowed what he could farm conveniently. Because of the Indian problems, the new land owners were advised to work in groups for protection. It was also necessary to built fences, as this was, more or less, an open range for cattle and horses. In 1869, Ephraim Ellsworth and William Handy each built a cabin on their claims. That summer, R.M. Hull and James Chadwick formed a partnership, bought out some of the claims, and each built themselves a home. William Head, Thomas Bennett and his son, William, the George and Joseph Foster families, followed until there was a colony of settlers. At this time, Whitney was known as "Hulls Crossing." (The Trail Blazer)

Following is a list of the Homesteads of Whitney:

Shem Purnell
LeRoy Steele
Earnest Purnell
Henry Ransbottom
William Garrison
Joseph Sharp
Joseph Head
Jesse Gilbert
Adam Chadwick
Gaston Brawley
Joseph Wright, Jr.
William C. Parkinson
James Chadwick
Seenie Moore

Robert Hull

George Swainton
Edward Eardly
Thomas Jenkins
Rudolph Dursteller
William Handy
John Holden
George Foster
Elisha Lawrence
Albert Swainston
James A. Head
Adaline Benson
James O. Lawrence
Joseph Dunkley
James Ransbottom
William Hughs
Christian Monson
Allen Tatem

These homesteads and deeds were recorded from 1880 to 1909. The Homestead Act was passed in 1868 to 1869. This was the beginning of legal ownership of land in this area.

The following received deeds for a School Section from the State of Idaho:

George Alder Jr.
David Jensen
Sadie E. Beckstead
Alexander O. Beckstead
Joseph A. Beckstead
Lydia Alder
George E. Crockett
Heirs of Robert Hull
Gilbert E. Weaver
Herbert Rallison
William Tanner

At the time of the settlement of Franklin, the settlers were having trouble with the Indians. The Mormon Church counseled those living there to share what they had with the Indians. This advice was followed by the people. They shared their food, animals, and other necessities. This relieved tensions somewhat, but did not completely eliminate the trouble. During this time, more people were killed, and some Indians continued to steal animals until the problem climaxed in 1863, with the Battle of Bear River, when Colonel Conners massacred most of the Indians in a surprise

attack. This occurred 16 years before Whitney was organized in 1899. It was during this time that settlers were being assigned small acreages in the Whitney area.

Some so-called white men were more trouble than the Indians. Bob Tartar, a noted outlaw, led a group of men who would steal the settler's horses and cattle, drive them to Corinne, Utah and ship them to market. They not only shipped stolen cattle, but would kill the cattle and offer them for sale to the people in the settlement.

The main traveled road through the Whitney area was the "Montana-Oregon Freight Road."

Later Whitney history:

Hull Construction Company

In 1982, Kirk (Butch) Hull started the Hull Construction Company. This is located on the property formerly owned by Del Monte Corporation and was the site of one of their pea vineries. Butch worked at construction for some time before opening this business, including to seasons in Alaska. In 1986, he took a partner, his cousin, Jim Hull, into business. They do all types of earth moving construction.

The Old Rock Home Poem

*(To LeRoy and Allabel)
by Marilyn N. Hull*

I see a man that's tall for his age,
That's seventy years or more,
Dressed in wool and a worn felt hat
Walk toward the old shed door.
He stoops and gathers some kindling wood
And carefully loads his arm,
Then with a sigh walks up the path
Into the kitchen's warmth,
"Well, will it snow?" asks his wife,
And he replies, "It might."
A minute passes, then he asks,
"Has the cat been fed tonight?"
And thus their lives may seem to us,
Casual and bother free
Compared to the rushing, hurried stream
Of people each day we see.
But the hand hewn rocks in that old home
Tell the story of turning sod,
Of clearing brush and braiding rugs,
Of rocking babes, and of God.
The dishes are washed and put on the shelf.
The crumbs are swept away,
Just as the memories of life are kept
Awaiting another day.