

Historical Analysis  
LOH78-1915

In this comprehensive oral history interview, Mr. Robert Benson, one of the finest amateur historians in Washington County and a most remarkable gentleman, reflects back upon the events of his life and the environmental and cultural phenomena<sup>9</sup> and their evolutionary changes in his particular region in northeast Washington County. His remarks are not only interlaced with both wit and humor but a number of thoughtful comments on past historical eras and historical preservation projects conducted to note these eras. As a result of his own map-making projects, written articles, and scholarly efforts, Mr. Benson has developed a keen world view and an awareness of the integral role that the knowledge of local history plays in it.

Mr. Benson's character is a composite of many of the traits which identify and set apart the long-time citizens of the county; a sense of civic duty and community participation, a care and concern for the land and its use, and that sense of fulfillment which comes <sup>to</sup> ~~when~~ <sup>who</sup> people are satisfied with one's station in life.

The oral historian ventured out into the watery elements one rainy spring morning to conduct a long-anticipated interview with this extraordinary man. Testing my car's <sup>shock absorbers</sup> ~~mufflers~~ to the limit, I jolted along the gravelly, muddy road leading to his cabin. Upon my arrival, Mr. Benson, clad in his denim overalls and tennis shoes, cordially greeted me at the door and bid me to come in and pull up a wood chair in front of his very warm wood stove. He proceeded to fascinate, entertain, inform, humor, listen to, ~~and~~ discuss, and share with me stories and anecdotes about the events and people ~~and~~ of the county. It is the oral historians' sincere wish that this invaluable resource material generates an interest and an appreciation <sup>for</sup> ~~of~~ the function ~~of~~ local history ~~for its users~~. plays in lives of the citizens of the county.

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LM: I would like to switch topics here a little bit and get a little bit more into your personal experiences and your life. Maybe you could just start out and tell about how you got interested in the history of this area .

RB: Well, I <sup>think I</sup> guess I better tell you about our fire district first, we have a volunteer fire district headquartered in North Plains but it <sup>subsidiary</sup> subsidurates <sup>to</sup> in Hillsboro. It isn't independent. It is such a large district that ~~hobody~~ nobody could know all of it from his own experience unless he is a specialist, such as a mail carrier or something like that. ~~If he had~~ served all four routes you see than he would know it , but anyway most people were ~~not~~ not very well acquainted with the fire district. So the result was that people would lose <sup>their</sup> ~~there~~ way in a emergency situation. ~~You know~~ These volunteer fireman would <sup>be</sup> gathered together at North Plains and they would jump on the fire truck, that was bought at such expense and dart across the county and then at the far side of the district they would find they didn't know the country and somebody had given them a wrong road name or just a rural route and box number or someth<sup>ing</sup> you know and in addition the county had given them some of the official <sup>county</sup> ~~copy~~ maps that date way, way back that show roads in that are no longer in, you see and things of that sort. So there was one <sup>particularly aggravating case</sup> ~~particularly aggravating~~ piece where the official county map had shown a nice road going right across this canyon through the place where the fire was so depending on that th<sup>ey</sup> chugged up the lane and there at the ~~brink~~ brink here at this vast canyon yawning, you know, no road, and there was the fire burning away at the far side (laughing) so they went ten miles around to get

there just in time to wet down the ashes. And after they laughed a little bit about it why they said th is will not happen again. So they knew I had been drawing so local maps to hang up in the stores. The store keeper says why don't you draw a map<sup>?</sup> Because people are always asking how to get around. So I would draw a little sketch<sup>es</sup> and ~~so~~ One of the guys on the fire board came up to see me one day and said " Bob you and I are gonna sit down and draw a accurate map"and he had ink and pens and everything. So that's just what we did. He paid me for it he said " You put in a bill for this" and so I put in a bill for the district and got paid. ~~and~~ At that time I was very naive, you see I had to teach myself almost <sup>everything</sup> all there is about <sup>everything</sup> drawing~~g~~ except from boyhood I had always been a sketcher. I had always been able to sketch any scene or any plant of bird or animal. It is simply a something or knack that I have of drawing. A lot<sup>of</sup> people have knack of drawing and I had it and still have it to some extent. But all the other things that go with draftmanship I had to learn from scratch. I didn't even know that if you drew on transparent paper, tracing paper, you could get a very cheap print printed at any blueprint shop. Where as if you drew on heavy paper why it cost a fortune to have a copy made. I didn't even know that at first so I had to learn the hard way that you draw on tracing paper. Our first map was drawn on heavy drawing paper and oh we had to pay a lot to get a <sup>transparency</sup> ~~transparency~~ made where we could just as well drawn on transparent paper but you live and learn.

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(10) LM: What ~~if~~ <sup>is</sup> your educational background?

RB: Well I graduated from Oregon City grade school and Beaverton High School and <sup>I've had</sup> about two years of college at Portland State. But hardly amounts to anything. And I have a couple of stray courses in between. But anyway that sort of took my mind into the public service <sup>sphere</sup> sphere you understand. Before something like that happens why you are more less a, the Greeks call it a idiot a person who lives for himself alone, and you don't have much of a public spirit. You know there are people over at the Court house you also know that there is a volunteer fire department, but there out of your <sup>canton</sup> ~~ten~~ more <sup>or</sup> less you just write them a check when you have to and the rest of the time you try to forget them. But when you yourself are actually been involved than it is a little different you start thinking in terms of the public more <sup>or</sup> less you know or sometimes in how you can do the public (laughs). Anyway it is a different frame of mind <sup>from</sup> ~~cause~~ simply being on the outside of things looking in. So it wasn't long after that than the Oregon Statehood <sup>of</sup> Centennial <sup>came</sup> paved in sight in 1959, and Everybody got a fever to do a little something for the Centennial, The usual thing to do was grow a beard, Or maybe to wear a old fashioned plug hat or for women to wear long skirts and it was quite a thing for just a few months there. But in my case I didn't care for any of those activities but I thought how nice it would be to get a little pamphlet out just giving the history of the families around here. When they came and what the names of their children were and a few things like that. And so I talked it over with a elderly neighbor of mine (she is passed on now) <sup>speeder</sup> her name was Mrs. Paisle, and she thought that would be a nice thing to do to for the Centennial from the state. So she did

By close attention to that you can follow the families, of course you most of the work, but I typed her notes and I also did some of the research and in some cases she would say " I just don't seem to get over to the such and such a family and couldn't you do that one and so on. So I would do some of them, and in addition to our own notes that we took why several of the families handed us family histories (and just to borrow you know) and so we would either copy them down as they were given to us or in cases of long ones, we would condense them. And so this pamphlet is still in a unpublished state. I considered that it belonged mainly to my friend and when she died, she willed all her property to the little church and so I finally got everything together and just handed it to the church committee. I knew the executors of her will and they handed it to the church committee. So with their Centennial which will come up pretty soon they are going to finally publish this history of the Swiss community. So that was my initiation you might say to local history, Our family has some geneological traditions, there is a one branch of it has a family of association back in Ohio, and they had a very good history of that branch of the family. And then oddly enough the Scandinavians branch of the family has hired that line researched and it is quite hard to research in Scandinavia, because in Scandinavia up untill the last generation, a generation or two ago, the last name changed, and so what you have to do is go the home town and ask to see the church records that is your only hope, you see because the church records will tell you who married whom and who had what children and as they were christened, and as they were christened and all the christenings and all the weddings and all the burials would be in this church register.

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So by close attention to that you can follow the families, of course you have to do that here for the female lines, you see the female lines are quite a headache, but for the male lines, why you have one <sup>surname</sup> ~~sername~~ that carries through. But in Scandinavia why all the lines are hopelessly mixed up unless you are a very hard worker and willing to take a lot of pains with the church records. So that branch as I say traced the ancestry back to, well back into the middle ages and genealogy <sup>doesn't</sup> ~~doesn't~~ do anybody any good of course but is just a sort of a hobby, so when those things came through my hands I made a copy for myself and if I would look hard enough I would find it here. Eventually I am going to make a little folder or dossier for my nieces, so every thing I know they will know to.

(30) LM: All right you began with this Centennial gift and your map project <sup>began</sup> ~~again~~ with <sup>the</sup> fire department, what were some of the later ones that came along?

RB: It wasn't long before other public bodies were asking me for maps and I found I had <sup>an</sup> almost full time job but I still couldn't move to town, I still had to keep my mother going out here. For a few years I was afraid I neglected her quite a bit. But she wasn't sick then. Later on when she got so ill I could see I just couldn't be working out. Anyway I had had bad luck with my little business in town, I didn't lose any money, but I didn't gain any <sup>money</sup> either. I wasn't making anything. ~~And so~~

LM: This was your map making business?

RB: I had a map business and a drafting table and a stock of maps and so on and I thought I could make it. But although I didn't go broke or end up owing anybody, I paid all my debts but still I could see that added to the home

situation here I just couldn't <sup>persevere</sup> persevere. So I moved everything up home and spent more and more time ~~taking~~ <sup>persuade</sup> taking care of my mother ~~and then~~. But I <sup>did</sup> try to keep my maps up unfortunately I <sup>wasn't able to do</sup> couldn't do what I wanted too. Because I was telling a bit ago that I have some maps right now that are promised for many months and they are way over due and it's just a matter of doing them when I can. I will work on them in the next few weeks and get them done.

LM: You <sup>here tell me</sup> told me about the fire maps you made for the volunteer fire department.

That's obvious why they need that map but what do you think are the importance of some of the maps you are working on now, such as the old <sup>military trail</sup> mill trail?

RB: Historical maps are only of interest to history buffs and the general public has only icy and indifference to historical maps. However, more and more people are becoming history buffs you see, so there is a market for historical maps and I have been <sup>asked</sup> asked by several publishers, that when I get things finished by all means let them see them. So let's put it this way it's a good possibility that I won't have to publish my own expense, that I could probably or at least <sup>possibly</sup> possibly get publishers for much of my stuff. I just wish I had more to show you, but most of it is in the preliminary stage. I have an Indian map, I have a Donation Claim Map, I have a map of old trails and so on and so on.

LM: You mentioned that history buffs are mostly interested in it, do you think it has more of a serious importance to <sup>?</sup> that people will realize?

RB: Yes, if it is accurately done. If the . . . and there is <sup>the rub</sup> a ~~regur~~ of course because accuracy takes much time much more than you think to really run down all the <sup>contradictions</sup> ~~contridictions~~ and you have to sandwich in trips to Salem, trips to Seattle, trips to Eugene and so on. And it runs into <sup>up both</sup> full time and money. If you are to achieve the accuracy that you want. And anybody can slap out an approximately accurate historical map but ~~why~~ should one do that,, you only have one life to live why not do it right. Even though it takes maybe ten times as much time to run out <sup>a</sup> of hasty things. There has been a lot of hasty work done in the historical field.

(40) LM: You mentioned some of these original maps, what did you discover in making some of these maps such as the Indian trail map, were there quite a few in this area ?

RB: There must ~~been~~ many but you see there's this gap in tradition. The Indians moved away before they could tell much to the whites and the whites for their part <sup>took</sup> kept a terrificly anti-Indian point of view for <sup>a</sup> generations or two. It's only been recently that there has very much interest of a kindly nature in Indians. And so in <sup>with</sup> difference to the <sup>on</sup> one side and on the other side a combination of sickness and poverty and <sup>one</sup> the continual brow beating of the white custodians, why there was this tradition of just not knowing anything about the old times. And with the <sup>remnants</sup> ~~remnants~~ of these Indians living almost a hundred miles at least a hundred miles away at <sup>Grande Ronde.</sup> ~~Ground Round.~~ That living a hundred miles away and seldom coming, they were allowed to come through occasionally like to pick hops and help out in the crops some way they could sometimes get a pass to come out of their reservation.

But <sup>where</sup> here wasn't any systematic <sup>contact</sup> ~~compact~~ between the Indians and anybody that was interested in them. In fact they weren't even visited by professional anthropologists or linguists until the very last minute. There was <sup>a</sup> this professor Dorsey I believe <sup>who spent</sup> ~~that stayed~~ a couple days at <sup>Grand</sup> Round <sup>SP.?</sup> and took a few vocabulary's down. And then Professor Froctenburg a generation later he took down some text from some old timers that remembered the Tualatin language and a few others. And finally Professor Jacobs <sup>who</sup> just passed away, I knew him. Professor Jacobs when he was a young man just fresh out of the University of Chicago or someplace, he came out here and spent his vacations talking to the Indians who remembered the old languages and taking down text. So thanks to those three Professors we have what little there is that has been saved from Western Oregon Indians.

LM: Does the map show many Indian trails criss-crossing the county here?

RB: Well, I am afraid there won't be very much true Indian trails, although we know some. There was a trail to St. Helens or to Scappoose Bay I better say. The trail to the big towns on big Indians towns on Scappoose Bay, now that is still quite known well because a white county road or territorial road was put right on top of it. It became county road number one and that goes north of North Plains and a little bit to the east finally you end up on the skyline way up there and you follow the skyline about three miles and you dive down into the brush again to the Hindu Temple down in there. Have you ever heard of the Hindu Temple? Back in there, It goes through the grounds of the Hindu Temple and then pretty soon it comes out at Scappoose and goes across the prairie.

That they planted the idea of getting slaves from the Hindu Land. I don't know. But it is probably best

So I would say nine tenths of that is pretty well known. There is a few cases where it crossed swamps and so on where the exact route is not known. And that is probably the main one and it continued through the Forest Grove area and I'm not quite sure of the route there. It crossed Dairy Creek at <sup>Canterville</sup> Centerville so that is a very <sup>definite</sup> definite place. There was a fork <sup>t</sup> there that was used for many years. The <sup>sight</sup> sight became the sight of the Centerville Grist <sup>t</sup> mill and that was also the head of navigation for these very narrow steamboats that came up the Tualatin, up Dairy Creek. The head of navigation was right in the middle of the best wheat area, north of Cornelius a couple of miles. And so ~~there they put a grist mill and warehouse~~ <sup>and</sup> a lot of wheat and flour were shipped down the winding river. That was probably in the 60's. By the 70's I think it was wagon traffic. I think they mostly sent it out by wagons over Canyon Road, <sup>and</sup> other roads.

LM: What did these Indians use the trail for? <sup>J</sup> Just traveling back and forth?

RB: To some extent, but I have heard they really <sup>didn't</sup> go out of their home areas much, ~~because~~ <sup>because</sup> they had trails from one of their home area to another of course. But for international travel that was done mainly by a gangs of roughians that were <sup>hunting</sup> ~~having~~ slaves. There were slave raiders. And there is quite a division of opinion among white historians as to <sup>whether</sup> ~~where~~ the Indians slave traffic was from time <sup>in</sup> memorial way back or whether it was something that the yankee ship captain <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ lost. Because the yankee ship captains would be no stranger to the slavery, because they transported lots of slaves and it might be that they planted the idea among the wealthy tribes that they dealt with down in British Columbia. That they planted the idea of getting slaves from the <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ Hinter Land. I don't know. But it is probably best

to assume that there was some slave traffic way back in pre-history. And a big market for them, The ultimate market was the wealthy tribes down in Vancouver Island and the coast of British Columbia. There was also some slaves in this area but it wasn't nearly as prevalent and slavery seems to have died out as you go up into California.

(50) LM: How about your military road map that you were telling me about last week.

RB: Yes, that's about ready to put into it's final form. I got the data partly off of the sketch made by the officer in charge. The trouble with that sketch it has no survey lines on it because it was <sup>anterior</sup> ~~anterior~~, it was prior to the survey. And so it lacked survey lines and county lines and all those things that we depend on. And it ~~is~~ also somewhat garbled there must be there are streams flowing the wrong way and things like that. You have to be a <sup>rather</sup> ruthless editor to read the thing, you have to say "well" this isn't what it says, " And of course when you take that attitude your on very thin ice because who are you? to correct somebody that was on the scene. Maybe the Nehalem River really actually flowed up hill at that time (laughing). And so you have to balance the claims of logic against the claims of authority and anyway for part of it I have to depend absolutely on that map but for most of it I have an auxiliary source and that is the first surveyors' drawing. Now some of the Northwest was surveyed as early as 1851. The particularly settled areas were surveyed first. But as you go back further and further into the hills the date of <sup>the</sup> first survey gets later and later. When your up in the coast mountains around Vernonia it's as late as 1890 in some cases. There just wasn't any settlement or any interest in the back country) until it became practical to think about logging or putting

in railroads in and so on. So I do have drawings or copies of drawings from the Oregon land office. It's <sup>a</sup> rather misleading name because it's a federal land office for Oregon. It is over on the East side at seventh and Oregon <sup>streets</sup> st. So I have drawings for all the townships between here and Astoria and unluckily some of them don't show the military route but most of them do. But some of them are so late <sup>Q</sup> that the route had fallen out of ~~memory~~ <sup>memory</sup> mackery and grown in with brush you know, wasn't used anymore so it didn't come to the attention of the surveyer, as late as 1890, you see that was already 35 years old then and hadn't been kept up.

LM: When was this road built?

RB: <sup>1855</sup> 55 was the first <sup>18</sup> ~~recognizance~~ <sup>CONVIZANCE</sup>. Just how much building they did I don't know. The little stretch that I actually located shows signs of <sup>grading</sup> ~~grating~~ and what they used perhaps just shovels and picks, but it does show signs of ~~actual~~ <sup>from</sup> work on the ground coming up the Nehalem River to the <sup>Cochran</sup> ~~Concrin~~ road and just in the near corner of Tillamook County up there almost in our county. So I followed ~~that~~ for quite a ways there and I satisfied myself that it had once been a somewhat improved road, but there were no other signs, there was no sign of gravel, there weren't any horse shoes or any <sup>discards</sup> ~~discarded~~ cannons or whiskey bottles or anything like that, ~~that~~ would make you pretty sure that a lot of people had passed.

LM: What was the purpose of the road?

RB: Well, it may have been partly <sup>boondoggle</sup> ~~the~~ a ~~boondoggle~~. You see they were feeling their oats of being a new territory with a voice in congress. And how about

getting some of that nice federal money out here, we certainly need lots of improvements. Well, what will it be? A canal? Well, let's put a road through first. And so one of the roads (there was at least a half dozen others) one that occurred to everybody was why not have a land connection with Astoria, so you wouldn't be at the mercy of boats going up and down the river. Suppose there would be a war or something and Astoria should be captured why it would be mighty important to have land route. And in those days it wasn't so far fetched to think that there might be a war, there had just been one with Mexico. They just had a rather unpleasant war with Mexico and who knows what Russia or England or somebody would be at war with us in ten years, and try to take the Northwest away from us. They had to think along those lines. So there was military justification for it of sorts, but there was also this great hunger for ~~this~~ federal money, you see These people had been living out here without money you might say for years there appetites were sharp set for easy money and reading between the lines of the old goings and comings, I really think the <sup>good</sup> big share of the enthusiasm for military roads was the little fund of ~~military~~ <sup>federal</sup> money that would be shipped out to be distributed <sup>as</sup> to the politicians and the big shots would do them the most good. I honestly think so. But anyway, it certainly wasn't any picnic to <sup>punch a</sup> puncture roads through and the worst part is that the first route was ~~a very~~ <sup>entrably</sup> unsuitable, it was up mountains and down canyons and I think the reason they took it, <sup>as I perhaps told you</sup> ~~perhaps I told you was~~ that there was a chain of fresh burns through the ~~peninsal~~ <sup>peninsula</sup> there. There was a ~~fresh~~

End of track III

chain of fresh burns, and anywhere else was unbroken jungle so naturally you would take the cleared spot. They had followed a old Indian hunting trail, so they said, and a white man had been shown it by a Indian and this white man showed <sup>that</sup> ~~to~~ their guide. And as I say it was uphill and down hill. So it wasn't long before the farmers that tried to use the road said, "Oh, we just can't live with this." So they would prospect for much easier grades and ~~there~~ <sup>There</sup> are traditions of different routes and I do think they did re-route it. But I can't find any definite records of the re-routing except for this charter about 1878 that Dick Matthews showed me awhile back, that came into the museum's possession. And that shows a route considerably to the east but a much easier route so that was probably the descendant of this earlier military road. And so the military road itself was not kept up beyond the first ten years I suppose. There was a tradition that there was a road through there, you see a dotted line drawn on maps in a very vague way. The surveyors maps are accurate or at least fairly accurate, they show how the road if it was known to them, show how it compared to the township lines and survey lines. So where I have that to fall back on why I'm pretty sure of things. But there is one track across Saddle Mountain up towards Astoria, there is a tract out ~~there~~ where the surveyors maps were made so late, they got in that rough country so late that the traditions of the military roads escaped them. <sup>They just had nothing.</sup> But it ~~showed~~ <sup>shows</sup> behind Astoria and it shows up around Timber and Elsie it shows pretty well. ~~so~~ There is just this six mile stretch over Saddle Mountain that I will have to get at best I can from Lt. Derby's ~~hand~~ <sup>drawn</sup> on sketch.

End of track III

LM: All right like I mentioned we were discussing your map making, I think we had finished talking about the military road. You mentioned earlier that the original surveyors went from east to west surveying the land here. ~~What was,~~ <sup>?</sup> what were they trying to accomplish ~~was~~ . . .

RB: Well you see the first pioneers had to be their own surveyors, <sup>(# wood stake in background)</sup> there was no systematic survey. <sup>set</sup> So they first thing the federal surveyors did when they came out here was to ~~start~~ <sup>set</sup> up a starting point, a regular geometrical system. They set up the Willamette Stone, which is north of Cedar Mill ~~and~~ west of Portland near the Mount Calvary Cemetary. They set up that stone as the starting point and in that way they were able to set up a base line going from the Pacific Ocean to the Snake River and the <sup>meridian</sup> ~~meridian~~ going from California to Canada. All the land in Oregon and Washington is surveyed in reference to that starting point. Well, the first job of course after setting up the starting point was to get the farm land, especially what was already being farmed, to get it nicely tacked down to a standard system. And then the next thing was to extend the system out enough into the foothills so that homesteaders or who ever wanted to move out a little would also have a standard survey and finally after all those goals were accomplished finally their goals ~~became~~ to survey every acre of the northwest and get all it nailed down and that hasn't been achieved yet. There are still areas in the mountains that have not yet been surveyed. But I would say about ninety percent along in the job. Well, it so happened that either the law or the tradition <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ such that the earliest pioneers were ~~allowed~~ allowed to keep their old amateur surveys.

They were allowed to have their old stakes and borders that they had selected to first. They were allowed to keep those if they wished to and if they <sup>would prefer,</sup> ~~preferred,~~ <sup>they</sup> were allowed to move their stakes to conform with the survey when it finally reached them. So that's how come that even among the earliest arrivals you have some with nonconforming claims and others with conforming ~~claims,~~ <sup>of</sup> because they had the option ~~that~~ either keeping the old amateur lines or else conforming if they wish but ~~they~~ didn't need to. So there is a little bone of contention over at the courthouse. At the courthouse there are people who believe that the conforming claims are not real ~~donation~~ <sup>Donation</sup> claims at all, that they are just homesteads. ~~But~~ that is not right, there <sup>Donation</sup> ~~Donation~~ claims too. one or two that date from 1870 that

(10) LM: When these surveyors originally went through, what <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ some of the details that they marked down? Contours . . . ? like what Alaska was maybe can

RB: Not very much contour because they hadn't the equipment to make a good contour map. ~~But~~ they would make a running <sup>commentary</sup> ~~commentary~~ such as cross road here, or John Jones cabin a hundred feet north or things like that. They would make a running commentary in their notes and those are valuable for certain areas. They don't exist ~~for~~ all areas but in some cases they are quite informative. Then ~~they~~ would turn these notes into a drawing, ~~that's~~ what I depend on is the drawing ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> shows plowed fields and cabins and saw-mills and <sup>grist</sup> ~~griff~~ mills, you know, roads and so on. And those are quite informative but you have to take them with a grain of salt because occasionally there are situations, but again you have to decide whether you, here 1978, whether you have the right to say that it just couldn't possibly have been that way in 1855. Sometimes you just aren't justified in making that decision.

But in some cases you almost have to make it. Well anyway these drawings and these old notes are very informative and it's just a pity they are not completely exhausted because if a farmer had a cabin that was far away from any survey lines (in the middle of the tract let's say) and they couldn't be seen why he wouldn't be marked down. So you would have to ~~say~~ "say" so and so had a cabin but where was ~~it?~~ "it?"

LM: ~~What~~ <sup>When</sup> was the first map, the first Washington County map put together ?

RB: Well at first it was traditional to make a map of western Oregon, and I don't know of any for ~~Wash~~ <sup>Washington County</sup> Co. until rather late. About in the 70's, about 1870 I think they started making County maps, but before I don't know of any. Over at the museum there are one or two that date from 1870 that ~~are of the county.~~ <sup>have the county as a unit.</sup> There ~~might~~ <sup>may</sup> have been some earlier but who knows. But you know Oregon in those early times was like what Alaska was maybe ten years ago. So remote, everything was high priced and there weren't enough experts around to do all the chores that you like experts to do. So among that the things that wouldn't get done would be accurate maps of counties. ~~You see~~ They would have to come later.

(20) LM: When did some of the more accurate maps begin to arrive ?

RB: You might say that the first ones were these surveyor drawings and it wasn't long before they were put in ~~the~~ <sup>in</sup> the form of lithographs at least some of them. I don't believe ~~that~~ the detailed drawing that I admire so much, I don't believe they were ever made into a easily <sup>reproducible</sup> reproducible form. But there were ~~other~~ <sup>other</sup> more formal drawings that just showed the ~~minimums~~ <sup>minimums</sup> of survey lines. They became rather widely circulated in the form of

lithographs and over at the courthouse there are two or three copies of this old book of lithographs of all the townships of Washington County. There are about thirty townships in the county and so the book has thirty pages each with a lithograph of that county, of each one of the townships. I just regret that the complete more detailed drawings were not widely circulated. Then these little known facts about cabins and trails would be better known.

LM: When did these <sup>quadrangle</sup> ~~quadrangle~~ maps come in use ?

RB: The program began more than a hundred years ago, I think 1850. The program was begun by the authorities of <sup>Washington</sup> ~~Wash.~~ D.C. and just when the first north-western quads were made as a guess I would say not till the 80's or 90's. They concentrated on the east first. By the 80's and 90's I ~~had~~ actually seen quads dating from those years. In fact, I have a couple of them in my collection. So beginning in the late years of the nineteenth century, why they gradually started making quads for the Far West. Oregon is rather a pity that they never decided firmly one one scale and form and then carried it through to the last acre. It's a pity that they never did that. They started with a two inch per mile scale, call that the half inch map because a half inch equals a mile. They started with the half inch map and mapped about half of Oregon at that scale and left the other half unmapped. Then they started on the inch per mile set and mapped about three quarters of Oregon at that scale and then let <sup>it</sup> ~~that~~ slide. And now there on the two thousandth foot scale <sup>that</sup> ~~two~~ thousand feet to the inch <sup>of</sup> and again they have about two thirds of the state mapped and I think they will go through with this one .

I think they will ~~persevere~~<sup>pursurevere</sup> it. The target date is the year 2000. ~~Because~~<sup>They figure</sup>  
~~if~~ they should finish the U.S. in 150 years then they will set there auto-  
matic back ~~pattern~~<sup>patter</sup> at high frequency and maybe give each other a banquet or  
something ( laughs ).

LM: All right I would like to change topics here a little bit. A while back  
I discovered a book ~~that~~<sup>that</sup> you edited and helped write now with the Centennial  
History of Washington County. how did you get involved with this project ?

RB: Well that also I should have mentioned it of course but it just slipped my  
mind. That also was a product of ~~the~~ Centennial, the state Centennial en-  
thusiasm. But I think that my services ~~of~~<sup>as</sup> an editor were somewhat on the  
accidental side because I was not at all well known at that time ~~and~~<sup>but</sup> I'm  
not well known now ~~but~~ better known now than then. But at that time very  
few people knew that I could edit or do anything of the sort. But somehow  
somebody must have come aross some editing of mine and they laid the whole  
~~sheets~~<sup>sheet</sup> of manuscript in my lap, and said, " here we have a deadline and we  
are depending on you." ~~So~~<sup>So</sup> I got a free copy out of it at least. So it is  
interesting experience. Perhaps I edited it to drastically looking back  
on it I have felt so. Some of the essays as you understand were very well  
done and others not ~~so~~<sup>so</sup> well done and if I had put ~~everything~~<sup>in</sup> exactly as it  
had came to me, it would have been a ~~hotch potch~~<sup>hodge podge</sup>, very uneven quality don't  
you see. Some things would be very detailed and others would be just like  
what a fifth grader would write. So I ~~did~~<sup>did</sup> use the editors pencil, I did  
bore down hard in some cases and looking back on it I wondered if I was  
really ethical in being rather drastic here and there.

But at least everybody expressed themselves as pleased. The thing is that the person that can't spell well or write well, they don't really usually resent it if you correct their grammar, they think that's what an editor is for. So I didn't meet with any open resentment but looking back on it I wondered just how ethical I was. I was rather drastic in several cases.

30 LM: Do you think that book is a valuable resource tool,? *Don't know.*

RB: Well, on the whole it's quality is good. A lot of these ladies, although they only had a limited time to work in, but they saw lots of people and in some cases they were able to present manuscripts that had been worked on for years ~~and~~ <sup>these</sup> some of them were my main problems, because when every other other community is represented by two or three pages, you can't all of a sudden put in a hundred page essay for some other community. So in some cases I ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> to condense. But anyway there was some very good historical work in existance you see, so these ladies were able to touch much of it, maybe not quite all of it. They were able to reach much of it and ~~in~~ <sup>already</sup> many cases they did their own research and their own writing just from scratch.

q So on the whole considering it was a hurry up job it wasn't all bad, <sup>for the time</sup> It could have been much better if they would have more time and seen a lot more people and could have had tapes.

LM: Do you see a real need for more writing for the county with the history of Washington County ?

RB: Well yes, there is always a need for it even though the old timers pass away but you can still tap quite a <sup>fund</sup> bit of information if you can get the people who remember. Those people will remember what their parents told them. So I would say that it should never end because there is always

some feature to put down that has escaped.

LM: This is a broad question. <sup>had</sup> But what did you discover as <sup>the</sup> a major historical themes running through the history of the county ?

RB: That is quite a question. The nearest to a large city is a important feature. Were practically in Portland's backyard, so there is this heavy suburban feeling that goes quite far back. Of course there was a time when Portland was <sup>the</sup> a suburb and Hillsboro was the metropolis for a few years and then Portland pulled way ahead and decided they were not going to be run by a one horse town by Hillsboro so they got the legislature to break away their own county. That was in '54. But before '54 Hillsboro was Portland's county seat. The law business had to travel out over the plains to Hillsboro. So there's that, being a suburban county near to a large metropolitan city. That is an important part of it. And we haven't had any <sup>very</sup> serious racial problems that I know about. But we do have enough variety in the county with <sup>our</sup> a Adventists, <sup>our</sup> and Catholics, <sup>our</sup> or Swiss, <sup>our</sup> Protestants, Scotch Protestants and so on. We had quite a variety and they seemed to get along fairly well with one another. They just made up their minds to agree and not to have too many fallings out. So in a way it shows how people if there not too <sup>diverse</sup> ~~to~~ divert can have a rather pleasant society in modern America. But now with the Chicano's coming in and the very <sup>fast</sup> ~~late~~ leavening of the let's say Negroes and Indians and so on. We might be tried a little bit beyond our strength I don't know. There is still a residue, you know, of racial exclusiveness in most Americans, and most Americans will on a occasion tell you how much of a crucifixions it is <sup>for them</sup> to live in the same world as Jews or somebody like

that you know, so you have to sympathize with them. What I try to do is make a joke out of it and say " Ya, these Jews and Welchman <sup>to</sup> are <sup>just</sup> a terrible trial you know and maybe their Welsh you see, and <sup>They</sup> ~~you~~ say, " I wouldn't say Welchman they say, " (laughs)

(10) LM: How about your ~~years here in the county~~ <sup>?</sup> Have you met a number of people that you can consider genuine important historical character <sup>?</sup> ~~that was really~~ . .

RB: Yes, a few but mostly they have been the sort that <sup>" bloomert "</sup> ~~blow~~ the blush unseen as the poet says. They haven't been outstanding people. I haven't known very many.

LM: Who are the some of the few that you might have known ?

RB: Well the Gates, with Mrs. Gates being a descendant of Joe Meek. She and her daughter did quite a service in writing up the family traditions about Joe Meek and <sup>h</sup>is wife. And I would say they are outstanding people in the historical significance. But there are plenty of others who have lived and died without my hardly saying more than ~~hello~~ <sup>hello</sup> to them such as Mr. Hare. He goes way back in <sup>roads</sup> his ~~route~~ here and his involvement with the county. He just passed away a couple years ago. But I just barely knew him. And then <sup>the</sup> ~~Mr.~~ McKinney <sup>had</sup> I just a pleasant acquaintance with Vern, I can't really say I was a friend at all, but I <sup>esteemed</sup> ~~had seen~~ him quite a bit and he <sup>had</sup> a very important <sup>(county)</sup> ~~plave~~ in the <sup>county's</sup> development. It's partly due to him that the county is considered so conservative, because the Argus <sup>has</sup> been conservative of the conservatives <sup>all</sup> during the <sup>years</sup>. Although there are plenty of radicals down <sup>and</sup> about why they more less exist in the shade of <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> conservative traditional <sup>of</sup> the Argus in the republican establishment.

LM: Can you elaborate a little more on that, <sup>?</sup> why?

RB: Well the point is I'm not really acquainted over in Hillsboro very well and don't know the big shots. But it has been a strong hold of Republican conservatives right down the years, you see with the Argus applauding on the side lines or also meddling too sometimes. ~~And~~ <sup>and</sup> so these influential republicans have filled important places in the state, national government and they told these politicians what to do and so on, right down the line. It hasn't been a outstanding or dominating county in the sense of Marion or Multnomah County could be said to be dominating you understand, but it still has pulled it's weight in the republican councils. It's been traditionally republican, although at the present moment I think there's a majority of democrats in the county. Because the newer, younger type people unless there on a straight line to the gravytrain you know, <sup>they're</sup> there likely to be democrats.

LM: Do you think that the Hillsboro Argus was an opinion molder among the farmers?

RB: I ~~rather~~ <sup>really.</sup> think so yes. Yes I think that the whole central part of the county was very much <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ the Argus. In many cases that would be the only paper that would be read. Although they would subscribe to the Oregonian too, or a few daring souls might take the Journal, which was a democratic paper in those days.

(50) LM: Did the political philosophy <sup>of the</sup> ~~other~~ republican parties appeal to the people living in this area, was it . . . ?

RB: Yes until the depression time came why <sup>for</sup> republicanism seemed the only respectable way to get along to lots of people. They <sup>felt</sup> ~~thought~~ that was just about the best way to have gold money and high ~~terrors~~ <sup>prices</sup> and all those things

that the <sup>stood</sup> Republicans ~~did~~ for that was the secret of success for the <sup>A</sup>merican way of life. Nearly everybody in the county voted for Hoover when he ran on the program of "two chickens in every pot" ~~you know~~ in 1928. But as the depression got worse and worse, why more and more of the smaller people started to <sup>rethink</sup> ~~rethink~~ their whole philosophy. "Was the republican <sup>laissez faire</sup> ~~lacey~~ affair trickled down philosophy: <sup>?"</sup> ~~That~~ The idea that if you get the wealthy people prosperous enough ~~why~~ that prosperity was bound to trickle down the pyramid you see and then benefit all the lower orders. That was the <sup>R</sup>epublican philosophy but the <sup>D</sup>epression coming along hurting everybody so badly, A lot of people decided that the <sup>R</sup>epublicans were just not <sup>their</sup> ~~there~~ dish of tea.

LM: ~~Did~~ this decision on the part of the smaller folks, as you call them, reflect in the polls ?

RB: Oh yes there has been several victories for <sup>D</sup>emocrats in this county. In fact Congress <sup>man</sup> Aucoin is a Washington County man ~~had~~ he is a <sup>D</sup>emocrat. He got <sup>a</sup> lots of votes from the county. Let's see our delegation up in Salem is half democratic too I think which is really quite a departure for Washington County. Don't quote me on that, ~~I~~ I would like to see the statistics but I know that our state representative here is democratic. It used to be that <sup>R</sup>epublicans were a shoe in for much of <sup>W</sup>estern <sup>O</sup>regon.

LM: All right, how about Lester ~~Newberry~~ ? <sup>Mooberry.</sup>

RB: Yes I knew him and admired him very much. He interviewed many of the old timers. When it was profitable <sup>more</sup> then, then now <sup>not that it isn't profitable now :</sup> ~~But~~ at that time you could reach quite far back with the <sup>octinarians</sup> ~~you see~~ and the <sup>nonagenarians</sup> ~~noniginarians~~ you could ~~not~~ reach not quite to the covered wagon but you could reach to a early date.

He didn't ~~stend~~<sup>stint</sup> on his time. He probably has quite a bit of unpublished material yet, although the Argus said they would print ~~anything~~ he gave to them and they printed a lot of his stuff but he ~~perhaps~~<sup>perhaps</sup> has some manuscripts still in his estate. He died last year. Yes, I admired Mr. ~~Newberry~~<sup>Mooberry</sup> a lot, he was a very good patient recorder. Also he has a personal ~~existence~~<sup>existence</sup> if you read his books about his childhood. Why that has some very personal insights.

That was the book, The Gray Nineties?  
LM: Did that explain why he became interested in recording some of the history or atleast lead to the reasons why?

RB: I don't think he goes into it in any detail.

LM: Why do you think <sup>?</sup> ~~that~~ why did he become interested?

RB: Well as he retired he had had a long career in education. He had been a teacher and principal in the county schools, and he knew many people in the county of course either from having taught them or from having met their parents in conferences over the juvenile delinquents or something of that sorts. So he had a wide acquaintance. So I suspect that he thought that since no one ~~else~~ was doing much along those lines, ~~that~~ why couldn't he write up his various acquaintances and the traditions he had heard and so on, and interview people. And ~~that's~~ what he did. He kept unearthing things that people knew and occasionally somebody would hand him a box of old <sup>full</sup> letters and there would be a very precious piece of history about the experiences of a new arrival or something of ~~that~~ sort. ~~So~~ he was I would say, a good type of local historian. He tried not to let his own prejudices show to much. <sup>Personally</sup> ~~Personally~~ he was conservative. Good <sup>dovout</sup> ~~developed~~ methodist.

(60) But he tried to be objective and give everybody their due. And of course the trouble with this county, <sup>That's</sup> it really isn't very controversial. Nothing too drastic has happened here. If you dig deep enough you can find <sup>antagonism</sup> antagonism and scandals and so on. And perhaps they can be brought to life. One gets rumors and you keep them in the back of your mind. Maybe you'll check up on it some day. For example one hears may not be so, that the big scandal of the early 20's, The attempt to make private schools illegal. That that had its <sup>root</sup> routes in the resentment of some Protestants who hated to see the Catholic Netherlanders go to their Catholic schools. They started the agitation to make it illegal in Oregon to send a child to anything but a public school. Well, I think it had to go up to the U.S. Supreme Court before it was stricken down and it was a very expensive legal fight. But I heard it <sup>have that</sup> started right here in Wash. <sup>Wash. County</sup> Co. but that is just here say. I don't know. The title of the law suit was "Sisters of Saint Mary vs. <sup>Governor</sup> Governor Pierce" They sued the governor that he was enforcing a unconstitutional law. And after several appeals it reached the federal courts and in a very brief opinion they kicked it out <sup>with</sup> not much ceremony. <sup>Of course there</sup> The courts are humorous things that come to <sup>right</sup> life to, for example there were temperence agitators in the early days. Oregon had <sup>had</sup> a strict temperence law in the very earliest days because they didn't want the Indians to get the liquor habit. All the whites got behind this law because they knew that the bunch of wild alcoholic Indians out here would not be good. But when the Indians became less of a problem then liquor came in in a big way. And at one time Portland had a saloon on each of the four corners of every intersection downtown. It must have

a hundred or maybe two hundred saloons in just downtown. You didn't have to go off the block you could find a saloon at each corner and sometimes there would be one in between too. So Portland was just as <sup>sink</sup> sick of alcoholism and so were some of the outlined towns. ~~SO THEY TEMPERANCE~~ <sup>so, the temperance</sup> agitator had quite an audience especially among the country people who would be to town and be scandalized by all this drunkenness. ~~And~~ <sup>A</sup> also they didn't like the idea of so many of the hired men coming out from town being slaves to the bottle. That offended the good moral country types. ~~And~~ <sup>so</sup> the temperance agitator would come around and they would say sure you can give a lecture in the school house and they would send a couple of young kids around on their ponies to tell everybody to come to the school house tomorrow night. And so and so will give us a talk on <sup>The demon rum</sup> ~~demon~~ round or the evils of drink or something like that. And up here at the cowa nia school the present Helvetia school or was, it is no longer there. It was just a light, a very light weight bui lding, so the enemy <sup>pry</sup> 's of temperance they got wind of the celebration so they got some long poles, <sup>high</sup> poles and they inserted them under the schools foundation with a suitable . . . .

*buildings*

*Story continued on next track.*

End of track 4