

REMINISCENCES OF SOUTHERN OREGON PIONEERS

Roy McDonald Foster, Glide, Oregon.
A personal interview, June 14, 1938.

Roy McDonald Foster, (unmarried) was born at Westfield, Tioga County, Pennsylvania on October 19, 1881. He was a professional soldier being in the United States Army as a "regular." He served in this capacity in the Spanish American War, 1899-1900, and in the World War, 1917-1919, being eighteen months over-seas. He was discharged honorably from the army March 10, 1920. Being asked by the officers in the East where he wanted transportation to, he replied that he wanted to get as far West as it was possible to get. They gave him a ticket to Oregon.

On April 1, 1920, Mr. Foster arrived in Roseburg. He went to work for Harry Hildeburn who had a construction contract on the Pacific Highway near Sexton Mountain. He worked under Mr. Hildeburn about three months until June, 1920. It was then that he filed a homestead on O & C land, what is now known as the Circle H, "Dude Ranch", on the North Umpqua. In July, 1920, he went to work with the U. S. Forest Service, maintaining trails and work of similar nature.

In July, 1920, he caught his first steelhead trout at the mouth of Steamboat Creek on the North Umpqua River, which at that time was twenty miles east of the end of the road at Rock Creek near what is now Idleld.

Steve Shrum of Glide, "smoke chaser" for the Forest Service at Steamboat Bridge, told Mr. Foster, upon his arrival there, of the big fish that had been taking his spinners and tackle. Mr. Foster determined that he would find out what it was all about and that evening just at sun down, he waded out to the big rock, in front of the station, which has since become famous to fishermen up and down the Pacific Coast and where hundreds upon hundreds of steelhead have been caught. This rock in recent years has been well known to such

celebrated fishermen as Zane Grey, Major Lawrence Mott, Fred Burnham, Tod Powell, and Joe Welch of California. To quote Mr. Foster, "I tied on a spinner after reaching the rock and cast it across the current of the river--immediately the whole North Umpqua climbed on the spinner and it took me thirty-five minutes of battle-royal to land that fish. This was done, not with a heavy steelhead rod and tackle, but with my regular light trout rig which I bought at Churchill's Hardware store at Roseburg, Oregon. The fish weighed 12 pounds and the most beautiful thing in the world. It did sure put up some fight."

Later in the summer Mr. Foster was at the Big Camas Ranger Station near Fish Creek and, in fact, fished this famous Creek many times. He states that he never saw a stream in all his life, as a fisherman, that contained as many fish as Fish Creek at that time. At the present time, with the road into Fish Creek and the many sportsmen going there, one must work hard and skillfully to get a mess in a day's fishing.

He was "snowed out" at Black Rock on the 23rd of September, same year. The next year, 1921, Mr. Foster started and built up a packing and guide trade which did very well. He charged \$1.50 per/day each for horses and \$5.00 per day and board for himself.

In the spring of 1922, mainly through the efforts of A. C. Marsters, the Forest Service, Bureau of Public Roads, and the Douglas County Court became interested in building a highway up the North Umpqua to connect with Diamond Lake and the country east of the mountains. At that time a survey was made for the road from Rock Creek to the Boundary Ranger Station, a distance of approximately nine miles. One mile of this road, a narrow winding road, was constructed in 1922. Mr. Foster packed and also cooked for the survey party which was under the direction of Mr. Meyers of the Bureau of Public Roads.

The next year, 1923, the road was extended to the old Smith place about six miles above Rock Creek, leaving three miles yet to be constructed to the Boundary Ranger Station. That year, 1923, Mr. Foster's brother and himself purchased the Abe Wilson ranch of 131 acres on Burnt Flat, thrity-five miles east of Rock Creek, which ranch they have owned since that time and still own.

In 1925 work was resumed on the road and during the next two years with funds appropriated by the U. S. Forest Service and by Douglas County, the road was extended from the Smith place to Steamboat, twenty miles east of Rock Creek.

No further construction work was done on the road until 1933 when the State Highway Department of Oregon sent in a party of surveyors which was packed in by Mr. Foster, and which party surveyed the road through to connect with the United States Forest Service road which had in the meantime been constructed west from Diamond Lake to Big Camas, a distance of twenty-five miles. Since 1933, to and including 1938, the CCC have been engaged in moving the "ends of the roads closer together" and in widening and reconstructing the old road. This road has now become a very good highway which in the summer months is heavily traveled, especially by sportsmen.

Mr. Foster's nearest neighbor is Mr. Perry Wright at Caps Illahee, whose place is four miles distant. Mr. Foster and Mr. Wright have always worked in cooperation with the United States Forest Service and in this region of the North Umpqua district there have been, of late years, practically no fires of an incendiary origin.

Mr. Perry Wright of Caps Illahee is a famous cougar hunter and, without doubt, has killed more cougars than any other man in Douglas County. They are a very destructive animal, not only to the settler's stock but to wild

game and especially deer, for which reason the State of Oregon pays a bounty of \$20.00 for each cougar hide.

The present terminal of the North Umpqua Highway is on the Bradley Flat, 29 miles east of Rock Creek. This flat was named after Bill Bradley, the original settler in the district, who hunted, trapped and raised horses for packing purposes. He was finally killed by a wild horse he was breaking. He was buried on the Flat which now bears his name.

A rather pathetic ending surrounds the passing away of Bill Bradley. To quote Mr. Foster, "John Bell Wright who had been working with his brother, Perry Wright, at Caps Illahee, started for his home at Glide with his heavy work team. On arriving at Bradley Flat, two miles from Illahee, he saw a white object off the trail which was waving in the air. Upon investigation he found Bill Bradley lying on the ground, and he appeared to have been badly injured. He was out of his head, in a condition of semi-coma. His clothing had been torn off. The white object seen waving by Mr. Wright was caused by Mr. Bradley's efforts to place his clothing over himself as a covering and shield from the storm.

Mr. Wright, who could not carry Bradley alone, since he was a heavy man, returned to Illahee to get Perry. Together they returned to where Bradley lay on the ground and carried him to his, (Bradley's) cabin which was but a short distance. John Bell Wright then started for Glide and Roseburg to secure assistance and a doctor. On arriving at Bogus Creek he was informed by a trapper, named Martin, that the rains which had been unusually heavy during that storm, had carried away the Rock Creek bridge and had rendered the trail impassable, especially for heavy work horses such as Mr. Wright had with him. Mr. Wright was taken sick and stayed with the trapper for two days. Mr. Perry

Wright who had been left behind with Mr. Bradley, appeared at this time on the scene with a saddle-horse. Upon being informed of the conditions, he said, 'I do not care a d__n, I will get through any way' which he did by going down the river and swimming the river at Rock Creek. He was met at Glide by Dr. E. B. Stewart of Roseburg with Bill Smith and Mason Singleton. After a dangerous journey they arrived at Bill Bradley's cabin only to find him dead.

Upon examination, Doctor Stewart's conclusion was that Bill Bradley had been dragged and kicked by a fractious horse, which injury, and the subsequent exposure, as he lay helpless for hours on the open ground, during the storm, was the cause of his death.

It appears from subsequent information received, that Mr. Bradley had just returned from eastern Oregon where he had gone to get a bunch of horses which he traded the Indians in exchange for furs and other articles he took with him. These horses were wild and unbroken. It was Bill Bradley's work to break them. Without a doubt, one of them was the cause of Mr. Bradley's accident and death."

Mr. Foster says in conclusion, "In my opinion, the work done by the U. S. Forest Service on the North Umpqua River, especially since Vernon V. Harpham became supervisor, is a splendid example of what Government, at its best, can accomplish. Mr. Harpham has cooperated with, and gained the good-will of the people of this district and deserves and receives the thanks of all those who are interested in the construction of good roads in the North Umpqua district."