

SPRING CREEK

On up the road now. We come to where we can see, from the fill in the road, a tiny creek coming in from the north and further up the hollow the signs of habitation. This is where John and Tena Berg homesteaded 160 acres in 1914. They named this little tributary of the river Spring Creek. There were two other families who filed claims in the Spring Creek area--the Hobe Thompsons and Vernon and Myrtle Olsen. Ross Berg writes about those days.

"They built a home by a big spring at the head of Spring Creek, approximately 20 miles east of Basalt. They would live there during the summer and then move to their home in Basalt so the children could attend school during the winter.

"After they arrived they built a large pond to store water to irrigate the potatoes and hay they planted along the creek bed. Dad's brother and one son obtained land that was also farmed by the family. All the farm work was done by horses and it took a considerable amount of time to harness 20 horses daily. During the grain harvest the number of horses to care for increased considerably.

"Corrals were built to put sheep in for the night, plus corrals for the horses. In the spring we would trail a band of sheep from Basalt to Spring Creek and this was done by walking. Dad had a wagon and would pick up the sheep and lambs that got too tired to walk. Along with the other livestock, Mother would raise 200 to 300 turkeys and an enclosure had to be built for them so the coyotes wouldn't kill them.

"During the first years of grain harvest, horses were used to generate power to thresh the grain. This was done by having four to six pairs of horses hitched to a doubletree. When all were attached it formed a circle. In the middle there was a gear casing attached to the center pivot and when the horses would walk around in a circle it would start the pulleys to turn and the threshing would begin. Horses were used on a header machine. It would cut the grain and elevate it into a header box. When the box was full it would be pulled to where the grain could be pitched into the threshing machine and the finished product put in grain sacks. Later on the threshing was done by Henry Jemmett who had a gas-powered machine that did the threshing.

"Sheep shearing came once a year. Shearing pens were built alongside a frame to hold the wool sacks. The shearing was done by hand and when the sheep had been sheared the wool was tied in a bundle, thrown into the wool sack and then us kids would tromp the wool in order to get a tight full sack. The wool sacks were loaded onto a lumber wagon and taken to Blackfoot.

"Our recreation was fishing and hunting and during this time it was the greatest. Never did we go down on the Blackfoot River that we didn't load up and the hunting was the same. Joe Davis operated a store on Trailton Creek and once or twice a month we would go over and purchase groceries, get the mail, buy some candy, and maybe attend Sunday School.

"Time came when it was hard to make a living in the mountains so Father sold the dry farm to L. D. Cox for \$3 per acre and moved back to Basalt."

MINER CREEK

The land from Spring Creek on over to Miner Creek was held by a lot of Armstrongs from Basalt who had cabins on Miner Creek and all worked together on their claims. There were the parents, William and Elizabeth Armstrong and Oscar, Marion, Alf, twins Carl and Katie, also Lell Armstrong and his wife Winona. On the other side of the Miner Creek crossing stood the Davis cabins, with the canyon starting there that continues west to the river. Bachelor brothers John and Hi lived there, also their brother Sam and his wife May. A Singleton family homesteaded on Miner and stayed with them--Lew and his brother Charlie and five sisters. Lew Singleton was one who stayed on in the hills for a lifetime of being an all-around cowboy and ranch hand, working for different outfits in the country.

John, Hi, and Sam Davis ran the land to the south and over the hill to the river. Then Lorin and Emma Freeman and his brother Rass and wife Selma took up the rest of the ground between Miner and Trail Creek, on up the river.

Those homesteading years included World War I years, also the years of the big flu epidemic. The Freemans started homesteading about 1916 when many of the young fathers were about to be drafted. Emma Freeman worried about Lorin leaving her and their five little children, with another coming. Then the flu hit, with people in the valley dying around them, especially expectant mothers. The school was closed and people rarely ventured in public. When they did it was with face masks. Emma begged Lorin to take them back to the hills so they'd escape the flu, but when they got there they found the flu was there too. Beatrice Freeman Dye told me about that sad time. First the aunt staying with them got sick and Lorin had to take her back to the valley. Then he was stricken too, fainting there before them in the kitchen. Beatrice, eight and her sister Bernice, nine, were sent walking to Trailton to get Aunt Maude Crofts to help them. Maude and Walt Crofts were there living in a tent while Walt helped Joe Davis with his harvest. After that, Emma was taken sick too. Lorin was still not well, but he had to find a way to get them to the valley where his wife could have a doctor. He found a sheep camp someplace to borrow. It had a stove and a bed so they would be sheltered on the long trek home to Basalt. When they reached the Art Miles home in Goshen, a rider was sent ahead to tell the grandparents, the Elijah Freemans, to warm the house for their arrival. When they reached home, Emma had the comfort of knowing that the armistice had been signed; but she died before morning, her baby with her. People didn't come to help--they were afraid of catching the dreaded flu--but Emma's brothers John, Ray, and Frank Crofts came from Iona to take their sister's body

in a sleigh to be buried. Frank told the children years later that the saddest thing he'd ever seen in his life was those five little faces pressed against the window pane as they drove away in the sleigh.

Two of Emma's sisters also died of the flu at that time. They were both mothers of young families and were both pregnant. Besides Beatrice, her sisters Bernice and Evelyn, and brother Neil are still living. Lorin Freeman didn't go back to the hills after that grim time, but his brother Rass went one more year.

TRAIL CREEK OR TRAILTON

Let's continue from Miner Creek across the little nearby Menassa Creek to climb the steep Miner Creek Hill. We drop down close to the river now and follow along the bluff to the forks of the road leading to the bridge on the river. For now we'll keep going on the road east until we come to Trail Creek. Imagine a log cabin there sitting just north and east of the crossing with a sign under the dirt roof which says "TRAILTON POST OFFICE." Joe and Annie Davis kept a store in their home too and it sometimes served extra duty as a church meeting house. Joe dammed off the little creek to get enough water for an irrigation on his alfalfa patch. There's evidence of that still. There were several families of Davises who had come from St. Anthony, and I understand that after they left the hills a lot of them settled in Basalt. Annie Davis's father, Jens Sorenson, and four other daughters claimed 640 acres to the south of Trail Creek, which turns west from the crossing. This land, which continues along the river between Trail Creek and the mouth of Brush Creek, is still known as the "Sorenson Flat." There was a son Oscar who had a claim across the river, but we'll get to that section later. The Sorenson home was situated between the post office and the river.



Wallace, son of Joe and Annie Davis, at Trailton Post Office

George Davis started farming the land across the road from the Sorenson Flat, then turned it over to his daughter and her husband, Leland Pope. Alf and Jennie Twitchell had a house just north of the Trailton Post Office. About a mile on up Trail Creek was the tempo-

rary home of a widow woman, Nell Thomas, and her seven children. She was related to the Davises and had come to the hills in 1914 with her father, E. H. Thompson, and her brothers Hobe and Parl--who homesteaded on Spring Creek and Poison Creek. Another Thompson daughter, Lizzie, married to Arvil Godfrey, was on a homestead somewhere close to the Lockyers on Cedar Creek.

Gilberta Bolander told me that her mother, Kate Thomas, was Nell's oldest daughter, that she is still living, and that she remembers carrying the mail from Trailton to Alridge during the time Kate Lockyer kept the Alridge Post Office--at least two summers. Her mother Nell got the contract and went with her sometimes, but it was mostly up to the teenage daughter. The route they took was up Trail Creek, past the shearing corrals on the school section, across Miner Creek, and down Cedar Creek to the post office. Kate says she would stay with her Aunt Lizzie while her mail from Trailton was processed and the mail received from Firth that she would take back to Trailton. In the interval her hobbled horse would munch grass and be refreshed for the jaunt back across the hills. After her mother left the homestead, Kate stayed sometimes with the Joe Davises and became engaged to Oscar Sorenson. After the post office closed, unofficial carriers, like Jens Sorenson and Elijah Freeman, carried the mail from Firth to Trailton and back.

RAWLINS CREEK--HORSE CREEK-- POISON CREEK

Let's climb the hill from Trail Creek now, go past the dry farms and down the steep hill to reach Rawlins Creek. The main road turns down the canyon, but a branch goes up Rawlins Creek to the old Frandsen homestead. When Victor and Lewella Frandsen came to the hills they had their first four children--Lloyd, Vernon, Irma, and Irvin. Lloyd helped me with this article. He said that his dad, in 1916, worked with Hyrum Crofts to build a cabin for each of their families. Crofts' claim was nearest the main road.



Victor and Lewella Frandsen family and relatives
at homestead cabin

