

## **Nellie Walker talk on the History of Forest Grove**

Recorded by Dr. Donald M. Kent

Probably recorded late 1970s or early 1980s, possibly as a speech to the Tualatin Plains Historical Society. At the time of this recording, Nellie Walker was the oldest living descendant of Elkanah and Mary Richardson Walker, who emigrated to the Oregon Territory in 1838.

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[Recording begins mid-speech. It is apparently the second half of her speech; the first half has not been located.]

[NW]: ...Father came, which is [the building site] where the News-Times is now. There's some remnants of that building there still, aren't there? Or not? I don't know. I know that for a long time after they took the water tank down, the house beneath it was there, but I couldn't tell you if it still is.

Then my grandmother recorded, on her last trip to Portland, I think in 1891, when she was a very old lady, that they had electric streetlights. Electricity had come to Portland. And she said, "You know, it's just as easy to go calling in the evening as it is by daylight." Because they have electricity. And a year later, she could report that Forest Grove had electricity that had been put in the church and certainly was an addition to the evening service. Taking the place of coal oil kerosene lamps that were in use before that.

Then telephones. Somewhere around the same time as electricity was coming to Forest Grove. I don't know exactly which, one of the Hughes brothers set up a telephone system. It was the uncle who ... [inaudible] Potlin's husband. Or [inaudible] his father. And he had the first automobile as far as I can remember in Forest Grove. It was a roadster. And the linemen used it running around on maintenance. And the lineman was Sammy Todd. And would you believe it that Sammy Todd was a very dignified Forest Grove dentist? But anyway, in his teens, he was a lineman and he gave me my first ride in an automobile. He had occasion to come down and call on my father, and he invited me to ride down the long lane to the street. And my father permitted it, and I got in, and we started "Woo hoo hoo hoo!" [Laughter.] I thought I was going to be worked into next week! It was Forest Grove's first car, as far as I know. My brother said that before paving came in, he could stand in our front yard, and look over toward Gales Creek and tell that a car was coming by the cloud that was rising. Or he could look over to North Main Street and see that a car was coming by the cloud of dust that was rising. So you can understand that the coming of the car was a very potent item in the paving.

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Let's see. Telephone, electricity. I think I've dealt with those modernizing features. I do want to interpolate what I didn't tell the P.E.O. women, and that was something about Naylor's Grove. You remember that one of the first settlers was a man that I always knew as Deacon Naylor. Although, I knew him only by name because he was long enough before. But his sons, or some of them, are still here. There was a grove that was called Naylor's Grove. And I remember very vividly that we had Fourth of July celebrations there. And I want to remember one particular Fourth of July celebration where there was a prize for the largest family in attendance. Father, mother and children. The man that was displaying the prize held up this big box of hard candies that was going to be presented to the family. And he was trying to show it to the audience, and he spilled some off. He said, "Come on kids!" and there was a race for the area where the bandstand was where he was standing. And I think most every child there got at least a suck.

Then there was always the picnic dinners. Potluck picnic dinner on those occasions. And there were sometimes bicycle racing and that sort of thing. The track there wasn't long enough for horse racing but there were bicycle racing. And thereby hangs another tale about my brother. He got knocked down by one of the racing bicycles. Got quite a cut in his head and had to have some stitches in. They called the "hack" to take him home. And that made me think, although I have no further evidence, that perhaps the hack served as an ambulance for the years before we got a proper ambulance in Forest Grove. I can't say for sure, but at least I know that on one occasion it was so used. Although my brother was very indignant, and said, "I didn't need an ambulance, I wasn't that bad hurt!"

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Eventually, Naylor's Grove was given to the city of Forest Grove. And my senior breakfast -- I graduated from Pacific in 1923 -- we went to the Naylor's Grove for it, because by that time there were gas plates and water pipes and sort of [things?] attached to it. And so we thought we'd be really up-and-coming. One of our class members lived across the street, so we girls went and made doughnuts and brought them on trays, raw, over to the Grove and fried doughnuts over the gas plates. So we had fresh-fried doughnuts as a part of our senior menu.

I'm sorry to say ... oh and I think the Adventists camped there at least once that I remember. Because with the water and the gas, they could get along very well. So I was very sorry to hear when I was overseas that they, the city fathers, thought it was too expensive. They couldn't run it, so they sold it for residences. I'm not sorry for the people that got it for a residence area, but. My brother says that you look at the big trees there, you wouldn't really want to believe that when my father was a little boy, he saw deer jumping over the little fir trees growing up. It was

evidently a part of Tualatin Plains that the fir trees had been burned down. When they weren't kept down, they began growing up. So the deer weren't forgetting their old feeding places. And I thought that was an interesting little side light to me, to think that Naylor's Grove, which I've always thought of as a big beautiful part of the virgin forest, wasn't. That the trees had all grown up after the settlers came.

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I didn't mention youth delinquency when I was talking to the P.E.O. And there wasn't too much of it that I could find, but I did find two interesting examples. One was that we had a Chinese laundry in Forest Grove, as many places had. And one day it burned down. And Ernestine Brown Davidson is my authority that when they asked the boys that had started the fire, why on earth they did it, they said, "Oh it was so much fun to watch his pigtail bobbing!"

And the other delinquency that I turned up was when the local justice of the peace had to discipline some boys because they were standing outside the early Baptist church that soon gave up the ghost. Is no relation, so far as I know, to the present Baptist Church in Forest. And [they] were making cat-calls and noises and otherwise disturbing the meeting. I don't know what excuse they gave, because I didn't hear. But anyway, those are the only two instances of juvenile delinquency that I have any evidence of. I suspect there were more, because I think boys will be boys in most any town. But as one middle-aged woman said in regard to some tombstone-tipping in one of the cemeteries here recently, she said indignantly, "Why, we used to go to the cemetery so we could have a place to smoke and talk, a quiet place. But we would have never thought of tipping over tombstones."

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Well, when the Lewis & Clark Fair came, there were many visitors. And following the fair, there were quite a lot of settlers, especially from the Middle West, [who] came out to Oregon. And Forest Grove got its share of them. At that time, Dorothy Seymour's family, the whole Higby family came, and Dorothy and her husband and family came along with Grandma Higby. This is Seymour's brother, and older half-sister, and so on. It seemed to me that by and large, the people that I know that came following the Lewis & Clark Fair became assets in Forest Grove.

I have one amusing incident that occurred. How many of you knew John Thornburg? You remember that he was sort of a "well-built gentlemen"? [Laughter] Well we were at a church meeting one night. Sitting around, sociability. One of these ladies from the East said, "You know, since I came to Oregon, I've gained three pounds." And another one looked at her scornfully and said, "Well I can beat that. I've gained five and a half pounds." Somebody else

said, "Well I can beat that. I've gained eleven pounds." I heard this myself. This is one thing I'm sure of. And Mr. Thornburg was sitting there, and I saw his eyes twinkling. Being a little person, I was all ears with this adult conversation. He said, "I can beat all of you. I've gained over 200 pounds since I came to Forest Grove!" [Laughter]

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I didn't think that the Indian School in Forest Grove had too much actual permanent influence on the city. I didn't think it was a factor in shaping the Forest Grove environment. But you know there seems to be so very little information about the Indian School, that I thought maybe I should give you what little I've gleaned from my grandmother's [Mary Richardson Walker's] diary kept during the last five years the school was here.\* If you want to cut it off your film, you can. Grandma's diary that covered these last five years, along with the other things she was commenting on in those days, begins... The earlier diaries are stored elsewhere ... begins with the arrival of the next to the last head of the Indian School. He was an army chaplain who was seconded from his army post somewhere I think in Wyoming, or somewhere. And [he] came. At the same time that they were just getting welcomed into Forest Grove, a group of Spokane Indians came down with, to bring a group of tribal children for the school. They came to call on Grandmother and she was thrilled because one of the chiefs as a boy had been the boon companion of her oldest son [Cyrus Walker] when they lived in Tshimakain up near Spokane in the Whitman Mission. She was so pleased, and she was going to, the next day was getting out her things to bake a cake for these little boys, I mean these grown men that she had known as little boys. When word was brought that the Indians had been hurried off. They had to keep an appointment with some Indian agent or army man who had something to do with the Indians. And so Grandmother couldn't. But she had an intense interest in the Indians, and particularly when the Spokane Indians and children of people she had known in the days when she lived among them. And so she found herself welcomed to the services that were held for the students at the Indian School and also, she went to some of their parties, like their Christmas party.

Incidentally, the dear lady who occupied the [McGillobrough?] house with her father at this time, persuaded some of her city church friends in Portland to prepare a Christmas gift for each boy and girl in the school. I was disappointed that Grandma didn't say what these gifts consisted of, but anyway, it was a happy thought to do something like that for them. She also mentions going to the home for tea, and also often says that this chaplain would take, quite often, maybe once a month, an evening church service at our church. So they all approved of him very much. Forest Grove people worked for the school in some capacity. My uncle Levi's wife, Belle Putnam Walker, was often called on to substitute. The head of the school would think that a teacher was arriving from the East, and wouldn't arrive. So my aunt Belle went over and substituted till they

got someone. Or a teacher got disgusted and left, and my aunt Belle substituted. So she had quite a bit of experience in the school.

[Audience member]: Was your relationship with the Indian School through Pacific, or was it a separate school?

[NW]: I have never found any evidence, but it is possible that shortly before this, perhaps there was some sort of agreement that Pacific University taught the students. I don't know. But I have never found any evidence of it. And I have not been able to get in touch with Grandmother's diaries of those days. I'm sure she would have mentioned it had they done so.

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Then the people were doing that service that is so common in pioneer and country places where there is no hospital. Sitting by the dying. And the mortality rate of the students, the Indians, was fairly high. So she quite often mentions so-and-so going to sit with the dying Indian. Or even in one case, a white teacher of the school, a white man teacher of the school. It was quite sudden when this chaplain was called back to rejoin his regiment, or whatever the organization his chaplaincy covered. A new man came. I'm not mentioning names, but this new man who came was not well liked by the Forest Grove citizens. They accused him of trying to cheat them when they should pay them for the produce that they might have offered, or sold, to the school. I saw one memorandum that listed a load of apples, a load of cabbages, for the Indian School. As I said, I hope they had other things to eat besides cabbages and apples, although I'm sure that cabbages and apples were a good addition to whatever their diet was. And the Indian boys were very fond of fruit. Grandmother records bartering with them. And I don't know if the boys instituted the barter or whether Grandmother did. For some of their old blue uniforms, that's how I know the uniforms were blue, that were worn out, that she could get carpet rags out of. They took fruit and gave up their old uniforms.

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This last man who came wasn't at all interested in having any religious services at the school. He just started the students to go to the Congregational Church. And I'll say to the credit of the Congregational Church, that they not only welcomed them to the church service, but they organized a Sunday School class for them. Before they were transferred to Chemawa in Salem. They put together a number of Indian schools to make Chemawa. Over 20 Indian boys and girls joined the [Congregational] church. That pleased me of course, as you can imagine, and I expect it would've pleased you.

It was in this period of the Indian School that President Rutherford Hayes and his wife made a visit to Forest Grove. Ostensibly, they were coming to inspect the Indian School and other government institutions in Oregon. They had a special train out from Portland and it was late. They took them to the house where they were to be entertained for lunch, and they ordered the students to march over for inspection. But he didn't go near the school buildings to inspect the school as such. [Laughter.] Some of the local people were introduced to them. Grandma said, "I was one of those." And she commented that she thought Mrs. Hayes was handsomer than her husband. [Laughter.]

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Shortly after this, the union or the uniting of these various [Indian] schools was announced, and perhaps the presidential visit had something to do with it. I've heard that the only reason for taking the school away from Forest Grove was that there wasn't sufficient land for developing. That I don't believe because I think there was ample land; I just don't believe it. Anyway, Grandma missed these boys, the Indians, very much.

I think that covers about all I've been able to discover about the Indian School and I'm glad to record it because I have difficulty in finding information about it.

Well, those early pioneers that founded Forest Grove -- if they were to come to Forest Grove today, I think they would be amazed at the size of the college. Grandma had had a part in the building of the Old College Hall, the original building. She thought it was so big, she didn't think it would ever be filled. Of course she lived long enough to learn that it was. They would probably strongly approve of the pavement that did away with the dust. And I'm sure that they would all look with amazement at automobiles. Because my grandmother was the last of those Whitman [missionary] group to survive, and she was beginning to hear that automobiles had been invented, but I don't think she ever saw one. And they would look at our big supermarkets. They would be amazed at the contents of the supermarket. But with their Sabbatarian anti-liquor views, they would be horrified at their being open practically 365 days of the year, and selling liquor over the counter like food. I know that. I imagine that when they went onto the campus and saw the amazing size of the buildings, even though they had probably seen at Harvard or Yale or some of the big universities in the East much bigger buildings than Old College Hall, I think they would be amazed. And I'm not at all sure that they would approve of no chapel on the campus and that sort of thing. But I think they have left their mark on Forest Grove, and I think that when a girl whose grandmother lived in Forest Grove and was married now and has some children and was thinking of coming back to Forest Grove, when she heard that they had had some destruction down at Harvey Clarke school, she said, "I didn't think Forest Grove had that kind of things happen."

Well, I'm sure that you, better than I, can analyze Forest Grove today and what it is, and perhaps this background that I've given you will explain why some things are as they are in Forest Grove. Thank you for being an audience for me tonight.

[Speech ends.]

[Donald Kent]:

This tape was recorded by Dr. Donald M. Kent of Forest Grove. In reviewing and editing this presentation by Miss Nellie Walker, it should be pointed out that a slip of the tongue was made by Miss Walker in referring to the original three land owners of what is now Forest Grove. Harvey Clark, not Harvey Scott, was one of the original land owners. This slip was made twice, so please think "Harvey Clark" the first two times the name "Harvey Scott" appears. Thank you. End of recording.

\*Note: Mary Richardson's Walker's diaries from the last half of her life are in the Pacific University Archives as a donation from Walker Family descendants, but the specific volumes from the 1880s covering the Indian School may not have been donated.