

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.

Index to the oral history interview with Robert Benson

May 9, 1978

TRACK 1

- 0-10 Interviewer's introduction. Brief personal history (R. Benson). Family settling in the Valley Vista area. (p. 1-2)
- 10-20 Valley Vista. History of the land. The coming of the railroad. The pre-development primeval forest. (p.2-3)
- 20-30 Logging and lumber companies. (p. 4-5)
- 30-40 The building of the United Railroad. (p. 5-6)
- 40-50 The story of the competing Hill and Harrimon railroad interests. (p. 7-10)
- 50-60 The railroads. Ordering groceries and supplies via the railroad. The automobile vs. the railroad. (p. 10-12)

TRACK 11

- 0-10 Final comments on the railroad. (p. 13-14) The original settlers of Valley Vista.
- 10-20 Swiss families settling in the area. (14-16)
- 20-30 The original Swiss. The Bruegger brothers. Swiss Catholic and Protestants. (p. 17)
- 30-40 The Community Church. The value of the church as a social and moral adhesive for the people. (p. 17-19)
- 40-50 Logging in the area. The clearing of land of trees and stumps. (p. 19-21)
- 50-60 Chinese landclearers. Indians in the area. Grande Ronde Indian Reservation. (p. 22-24)
- 60-70 Indian reservations. White takeover of Indian lands. (p. 25-26)

Mr. Robert Benson  
May 9, 1978  
Accession No. LOH 78-1914

The following interview is with Robert L. Benson. A map maker by profession and a farmer and woodcutter by preference, and a historian by general acclaim. This oral history conversation takes place at his farm up in the northeast corner of Washington County. Kicking back in rocking chair in front of his wood stove—on this rainy spring day, Mr Benson talks of a wide variety of historical topics. For example, he begins by explaining of how he and his family happened to settle in this area, The history of the railroad running through Washington County and the history of the town of Helvetia, his various map making projects, and so on. Mr. Benson touches on the history of Washington County, both specific occurrences and the general themes running through out comparative importance to the world at large.

LM: Good morning Mr. Meyer.

LM: I would like to start out asking some personal questions about yourself, when you were born, where you were born . . .

RB: I was born in 1915 in Portland. The folks were living there during the war. The war hadn't begun yet <sup>for</sup> in the U.S.A. My grandfather, my mother's father, and his family <sup>hadn't</sup> had moved out to the west a few years before, and my mother was a young woman and she and my father got married in Oregon City. They were there for a while, then they moved to Portland and the family stayed more <sup>or</sup> less within a house or <sup>two</sup> of each other for a while, so I was born there in the middle of Portland.

LM: How did you end up out here in Washington County?

RB: Well, my dad had a number of jobs, he was a carpenter sometimes he would

Page 2  
Mr. Robert Benson  
May 9, 1978  
Accession No. LOH 78-191.4

have to take a job quite a few miles out of town <sup>and</sup> so it was inconvenient for the family to be with him all the time . So he would be here and there and ~~then~~ then for a while the family would be together . So they thought it was best to buy a place out in the country and in the mean time ~~my~~ grandfather bought a place at Valley Vista, which was on the new railroad going out northwest of town. So naturally we <sup>visited</sup> ~~lived with~~ grandpa and grandma now and then. I ~~knew~~ knew quite a bit about Valley Vista, so my parents decided to buy lots there and settle down rather close to my <sup>grandfather</sup> grandpa. My father would still have to be away quite a bit but we could gradually ~~could~~ look forward to all ~~the~~ <sup>being</sup> together ~~ness~~. And that's what happened. Valley Vista is <sup>by the</sup> might say the first or second station on the United railway, as it comes through the range of mountains or hills west of Portland . It comes through this long tunnel about a mile in length and all of a sudden your in what they call Rockton and in those days ~~went~~ went across a very high tressle across the wild forest, you could see the treetops below you, at the present time it's one of the worlds largest <sup>bird</sup> ~~bird~~ fills, <sup>as you pass it as you</sup> as you come up the canyon on the railroad there you see it, at your left coming up a tremendous earth fill. <sup>earth</sup> At the time it was made it was said to be the largest in the world. I don't know if it still is, but it cost ~~them~~ <sup>Primevil</sup> three quarters of a million dollars and of course that ~~destroyed~~ destroyed this beautiful forest, that we used to be able to look on there. So the forest is coming back ~~even~~ even though the bulldozing was pretty drastic. <sup>Why</sup> why another generation or two, there will be forest there again. So them you go across from the far <sup>side</sup> side from the canyon which is Rockcreek Canyon, pass an old farm and pretty soon you're at Valley Vista which feeds out to the ~~the~~ south through county roads to Hillsboro. We were rather remote there at Valley Vista we children had to walk two miles to school everyday , and that school

was that little Rockcreek school which is still standing near Rockcreek  
tavern. So we had to walk those two miles morning and evening and that's  
supposed to build character but whether it did or not I doubt. <sup>A</sup>nd the roads  
were of course very muddy. <sup>A</sup>t first they were all mud and corduroy, there would  
be corduroy across the worst mud holes. <sup>N</sup>ow corduroy is long planks or poles  
that you put across, <sup>at</sup> ~~the~~ right angles to the the direction of travel, ~~and~~ They are  
not really very good, they do get the traffic across. Then along about ~~1922~~  
<sup>1923</sup>  
or so they started graveling the roads. <sup>B</sup>y the end of the 20's all the county  
roads were gravel and everybody thought that was a wonderful improvement, you  
know, a really progressive county to have all the roads gravel (laughs) <sup>N</sup>ow -  
a-days it's one of the most backward counties in the state. <sup>I</sup>t's one of the few  
counties <sup>that still has</sup> ~~that have~~ any gravel on it's county roads, but it has quite a bit.  
They just ~~are~~ <sup>aren't</sup> able to finance the 100 percent paving <sup>that</sup> most other counties  
have.

LM: So then from Valley Vista you moved up here to this side?

RB: Yes, In the depression times, it was so hard to get along and our two lots  
there in Valley Vista they were each seven acres ; about 15 acres, that 15 acres  
was a little bit too large for a parttime place a little too small for a full  
time place that <sup>would</sup> ~~was~~ to support a family. So we rented a little pasture close by  
but that was <sup>not</sup> to satisfactory, so my father and I would walk up here now and  
then especially in blackberry time, we would get some blackberrys, wild  
blackberrys, and we <sup>found</sup> ~~saw~~ this nice lying track back way off far from everyplace,  
<sup>it</sup> belonged to some speculators who had gotten <sup>it</sup> from a big timber company  
after the timber was all <sup>put</sup> ~~caught~~ off, you see. These speculators were selling  
it <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ small tracks <sup>were</sup> (tracks of 40 acres let's say) to hopeful ranchers and

(26) farmers that hope to make their home here. So all sorts of very small poor people were contracting at a very low monthly payment with these speculators, and so in some cases the speculators sold the same tracks over and over because the contract was written that ~~the~~ you had no equity. If you walked off the place and didn't pay any more payments, why, all your equity was cancelled. And so they were able to sell some of the places several times over. All three of them were wealthy speculative types, and so that's the history of a lot of this cut over land here. The employees of the ~~lumber company~~ <sup>at the cut</sup> ~~lot of them were~~ <sup>over land here.</sup> local people from down in Helvetia here. They were offered, the timber company offered them (boys why don't you all pitch and buy this piece of land that you <sup>have</sup> had a nice speculation for the future), but working people don't save, they can't you know, they just weren't able to ~~scrape~~ <sup>scrape</sup> up the very few dollars the timber company wanted for their worthless cut over, and so it got into the hands of these three millionaires. <sup>If they</sup> ~~They~~ weren't millionaires to start with, they certainly weren't the ending.

LM: Who were these three millionaires?

RB: One was Governor Bowerman, and the other two you probably haven't heard of but their names were Reid and <sup>Morlan</sup> ~~Marlan~~.

LM: They were connected with the railroad, or own the railroad?

RB: Morlan and Reid, they might of had connections with the railroad but the timber company was not particularly connected with the railroad, you understand.

It had made a little railroad up the canyon, the road you follow up the canyon is the old railroad grade but it was strictly a logging railroad. It had no relationship as far as I know to the big railroad combine. But this area was <sup>logged</sup> ~~owned~~ by railraad. In some cases they would put what they call shoefly in other words a short stub of railroad up a canyon to get as close as possible

to the trees. In other cases, as it was here, they would put spartree on a ~~promontory~~ promintory that overlooked the railroad, you see, theres a lot of capes that you ~~might~~ ~~promontory~~ might say these points that come rather far out, and on those they would select a spartree. To make a spartree you send a experienced high climber up ~~there~~ <sup>There</sup> with a saw, he saws off all the branches ~~you see~~ and cuts the top off, ~~if you have~~ <sup>and what</sup> a temporarily living <sup>it</sup> ~~and~~ soon dies of course, but for that season it's still living a good strong support for cables, ~~and~~ these cables are attached to the spartree and they drag the logs out of the woods and then by rigging up some more cables you can cable your logs right down to the railroad, ~~and~~ <sup>it's</sup> really quite an efficient way of logging if you have enough timber all at once, which they did in those days you know. And so all this land from here on back like that was logged in that way.

LM: When did they do this logging?

RB: That was in the early 20's. <sup>K</sup> There was a saw mill <sup>which</sup> at Rocton ~~that~~ was a little settlement you come to right after you leave the railrodd, across the railroad there are four or five houses well that is Rocton. In those days it was a big sawmill, you can still <sup>see</sup> ~~see~~ the remains of it if you to look. So that was <sup>where</sup> where they sawed most of the lumber up. <sup>K</sup> It was the closest sawmill to Portland so it was a favorite of Burnside winos, you see, they could for just a few cents ~~they~~ they could hop on a train if they were completely out of wine, <sup>if</sup> (food you know) they had enough muscle power left to jump on a train, pay a few cents, why they could get a job, but it was also known that it was a very unpleasant place to work apparently because the winos seldom stayed more than two or three days. Well of course all they wanted ~~was~~ was a little more wine, But anyway I was much too small to be roaming through the mill. <sup>you see</sup> It stopped producing about 1930

must have been sooner that, ~~that~~ probably about 1927 was the last year.

(30) LM: Did ~~they~~ <sup>the mill also</sup> hire several local men?

RB: None that I know of, I think <sup>that</sup> they were mostly <sup>transients</sup> from Portland.

I never knew anybody that worked there, but I do know that some of these local people worked out in the woods you know as lumber jacks as they call them back east, loggers here in the west.

LM: You mentioned the railroad several times. When was ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> railroad put in here?

RB: The United Railroad dates from 1910. The tunnel has a dedication sign on it

1912 although some say it was used in 1911, anyway in 1910-1912 was the good dates for the railroad going in. They wanted to push it out to the coast, but the Southern Pacific beat them to Tillamook so they contented themselves with going to Vernonia and Keesey and that part of the world.

That was one of the best stands of timber there you see, so they took all <sup>those</sup> that

wonderful fir logs and came out through the railroad here, through the

tunnel and down the ~~road~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> Linton.

LM: That was railroads major purpose then?

RB: I rather think so, I think at first they had very good visions of getting the Tillamook traffic, you see or perhaps going to Astoria, but in the reality of the thing the suburban traffic didn't really amount to near what they hoped it would. They had hoped to cash in on a lot of <sup>little</sup> suburbs like Valley Vista, and there were a few but it wasn't anywhere near their hopes. So the Interurban trains ~~they~~ gradually became fewer and fewer. When we first moved out ~~why~~ heavens there was ten trains each day. Ten trains each way each day. It was very good service. You had to wait a half hour or so to be in Portland. But toward the end they finally took everything all the passenger traffic off about 1935, toward the end why you might have one train a day



you know and then not have any train at all.

LM: What was cause of the <sup>demise</sup> ~~divise~~ ?

RB: Well, it was because everybody found the ~~the~~ family car so <sup>convenient</sup> ~~convenient~~,  
up until 1920 few people had family cars but after that they became rather  
common because ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> war years were years of prosperity especially for farmers,  
and so ~~merely~~ <sup>the</sup> every farm would have a oldsmobile or a hutmobile or a star or  
a model A or model T or something. And they would have a car and with  
everybody driving their cars so <sup>convenient you know</sup> ~~conveniently~~, why there just wasn't anybody left  
to ride the train. A few old ladies, a salesman or two so they just had to  
fold up. <sup>It's</sup> a shame too because now we really need those <sup>inter-urban</sup> ~~interlines~~ but  
what's happened to most of them is that the grades have been allowed to grow  
blackberrys <sup>or beer</sup> ~~and then~~ plowed over or something. It's a shame!

(40)

LM: Who was the man or company behind the construction of the United Railway?

RB: <sup>well</sup> I read about it, I believe it was the Hill interest, I believe it was Hill Money  
that mainly put the United Railway in and they <sup>were</sup> opposed to the Harriman interest  
which were Southern Pacific, and I believe it was Hill the builder of the  
Great Northern, <sup>other</sup> Northern <sup>roads</sup> ~~roads~~, I believe it was Hill money that  
mainly built this one. They already had a line, they already owned  
controlling interest in the <sup>S.P.</sup> S. which goes from Portland to Astoria  
down the river, <sup>you</sup> see they already owned that so they really didn't need  
a road to Astoria but they <sup>felt that</sup> ~~thought~~ they could get to Tillamook traffic  
or at least harvest the ~~the~~ big stands of timber around Vernonia at least  
do that, so that was one of the purposes. But they also had big visions  
of having a string of prosperous suburbs, you know like Metzger and Tigard  
and so on stringing out through the Northern Valley. ~~W. S. P.~~ had a  
Wilkesboro

~~the United Railways went to our farm~~

wonderful vision of Wilksborgh, but Wilksborgh was only just six houses <sup>now</sup>  
The business moved over to Banks, Banks became the so called big town  
but it isn't very big in that part of the valley. When they went past Glencoe  
it turned out <sup>The</sup> to be railroad connection was a little bit inconvenient,  
so all the Glencoe businesses just moved, sometimes the buildings and all  
just moved over to <sup>The</sup> ~~the~~ flat along the railroad about half a mile away. So  
North Plains was the result. <sup>North Plains just</sup> ~~This~~ dates from 1910 when the most Glencoe  
businesses moved over to this new townsite. But they had hoped for not  
just Banks and North Plains but maybe 10 or 12 prosperous suburbs, you  
see, and that would <sup>give</sup> quite a bit of traffic to them. Well, depression  
changed a lot of people's minds and it was partly the ~~the~~ family car  
coming in and destroying all market you know for most of the market for  
inter-urban passenger traffic, and then it was the depression that came  
and then in the depression, why just everything came almost to a stop just  
the most necessary things went on. So they <sup>ca</sup>ouldn't sell lumber because  
nobody was building houses anymore you see that's the essence of the  
depression, nobody builds anything. So they did ~~keep~~ taking some timber  
out and they gradually got it all <sup>out,</sup> but it lasted much longer than it  
would have if there had been no depression. It was a great slowing down  
with everything.

LM: When the United Railway first went in did they ~~have~~ to buy the right away  
or the land?

~~RB: Well, I'm Not sure you know the oldest railway depended on donations just  
as the old public schools did. You are supposed to be so delighted to  
have the new facilities that you would sign it over free. But I believe  
that by the time the United Railways went it why farmers~~

page 9

RB: Well, I'm ~~Not~~ sure, you know ~~the~~ oldest <sup>railroads</sup> railway depended on donations just as the old public schools did. You are supposed to be so delighted to have the new facilities that you would sign it over free. But I believe that by the time the United Railways went in, why farmers were driving a bargain for their land. Sometimes the payment would take ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> form of a station they would say, "if you deed us this right away will make it station and a loading platform here." Down in Valley Vista they made along loading platform, maybe 200 feet long and a lot of salvage wood came out of hills here behind the loggers you see in the form of cordwood because at that time Portland burnt mostly cordwood, you see, burnt mostly wood and little places like this where the source of these cords of wood the people would buy. They would load them on the loading platform of course bring them down mostly by horse and wagon, and then the railroad would ~~short~~ <sup>short</sup> the few flatcars in there and somebody would have to load them on the flatcars, probably the woodcutters themselves. To save money they would do it themselves probably. Then away they go to woodyards downtown somewhere around the north end of Portland. <sup>yes,</sup> A lot of Portland firewood came from this whole ridge along here. ~~Portland was really dependent upon this area in that regards.~~

LM: Portland was really dependent upon this area in that regards.

RB: To some extent, of course ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> had lots of other areas they could draw off ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> for firewood, <sup>but</sup> this was one of them. And then everybody decided that it was so convenient to press a button and have a thermostat regulate the oil, Oil was never run out, there was so much oil, that everybody changed over to

oil or natural gas, or any way electricity, just anything than this vulgar wood that you got slivers in your hand and pitch all over the place, had to keep rising from your chair to replenish the fire, how inconvenient (laughs) so they all changed over to the modern way. Now some of them are changing back and that's the hope of us little woodcutters up in here, you know that we can supply the new market for the firewood.

(50) LM: <sup>Much has</sup> ~~What's~~ been made of the bitter competition between <sup>the</sup> ~~of~~ United Railways under Hill and the Southern Pacific under ~~He~~ Harriman. ~~Harriman~~ went out with the Southern Pacific, why was that?

RB: Well, he got a little earlier start perhaps maybe had a little bit more money, but they pushed their lines through to Tillamook rather early. I think as early as 1906 or 1908 I think there was traffic to Tillamook. But the other plans were on the drawing board as they say, so they went through the other plans to but they didn't go to Tillamook they just curved around to Vernonia. Yes, there was quite a bit of rivalry there, two railroads were in competition for part of the market, other parts they had monopoly conditions and of course where they had competition the rates went down and who do you suppose paid the difference? It was the people living on the monopoly parts of the land, their rates went up. I was too young to <sup>to take</sup> much interest in that of course. We really didn't use the railroad much for farm produce, although I can remember my granddad taking the horse and wagon full of potatoes over to the station and sending <sup>them to</sup> ~~the~~ downtown market that way and we also had strawberries a couple of years. We would take the crates of strawberries down to the station and put them on the train and it seemed to work alright

we even got our groceries on the train for a few years. The local grocery stores were so far away there were <sup>not</sup> any, <sup>now let's see</sup> there was one in Helvetia and sometimes when we needed a small quantity of things, we would walk over to Helvetia across the tressle. We walk across the tressle to the little Helvetia store a very quaint little store and the owner of it was a old Swiss named Mr. <sup>Wenger ← spelling?</sup> ~~Weinger~~. He was noted for always putting in anything anybody asked him for, so even though you asked for <sup>what</sup> often not be there you go back in a month and it would be there, no matter what. So he had everything <sup>was</sup> ~~just~~ his wall just hanging full of the <sup>most</sup> ~~odd~~ odd assortment of trinkets that people would ask for, you know and he would sell them and he made a living out of it. That's where we would buy small quantities but for several years there, <sup>why</sup> my mother would just write a letter to Meier & Franks and say send us so and so and put in on the <sup>United</sup> Railways marked Valley Vista, <sup>so they</sup> would put off this box of groceries in the station and we would sometimes be there to meet it and even if we were <sup>because</sup> ~~not~~, nobody would take it because ripping off just was <sup>not</sup> in style then. Nobody thought of <sup>taking</sup> ~~stealing~~ anybody's groceries, but now days my goodness.

LM: Was that a common thing for the people living <sup>out here?</sup>

RB: Oh, most of these people had these convenient family cars, but we were a family with <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ car. My dad didn't like them, He could fix them, he fixed neighbors cars when they would go out of time or something why he would retime them or whatever you know. <sup>Depression</sup> ~~At the present~~ time you couldn't afford a trip to the repair shop very much. So neighbors would come over to

my dad and he would say "sure I can fix it". He <sup>dealt</sup> built machines all of his life, things like pumps, stationary engines and so on. So he could fix these cars mostly to keep them going. But we <sup>our</sup> ourselves never had a car because my hated them so much. If he needed something hauled he would hire a neighbor's truck, to truck the stuff in. If he wanted to go somewhere he would walk and I followed the same plan until about 1950 and then I finally broke down and learned to drive and bought a car and since then I haven't been without one. <sup>You need those if you're going to get along.</sup> But they are expensive and just don't fit in with a low income way of life. You see my dad had a big advantage over me, he had a trade and I had none except for this map making which I taught myself. But he had the trade of carpentry and could mostly get a job building a barn or building a house or putting in some cupboards or something like that. He could very often get a job like that, in the depression time he would have to work at very low wages to get something like that but he could <sup>often</sup> always get it. Where as I have the merest beginning of a trade and as so I can't be quite so care free as he was. In other words, I feel I should have a car to get around, instead of depending on hiring my stuff hauled and so on.

End of track 1

Page 13

Mr. Robert Benson

Accession No. LOH 78-191.4

Start of track 2

LM: Well, one final question on this railroad business. Why did the one company give up once Southern Pacific made it to Tillamook? Couldn't both lines ~~survive~~ survive?

RB: Well, probably there just wasn't enough business for two lines. That's my thought. You see these little feeder ~~in~~ lines <sup>would</sup> be unprofitable unless they had a monopoly situation, you see. When one big combine would send a feeder out into an area, why, generally the other didn't compete because there just wasn't enough business. It was better if they each left each others feeders alone. That's what it amounted to in most cases. There are cases where they built up the <sup>canyon</sup> canyon. For example, in eastern Oregon both built up the Deschutes canyon. One on one side of the river and one on the other (laughs). And you can still ~~see~~ still see the bed of the defunct railroad today. I think the Southern Pacific pulled out. You can still see its bed today.

LM: Alright, you mentioned that your family came here around 1920, or thereabouts.

RB: Yes. We moved out into Valley Vista about then.

LM: Who was here before then? Who were some of the <sup>original settlers</sup> ~~original settlers~~ in this area that you have read or heard about?

RB: Weell, it was a Swiss district, especially over this way to the west of Valley Vista. There were many Swiss. There were also some Swiss at Valley Vista. Some of our near neighbors were the Swiss family by the name of Berger.

RB: In fact the Bergers had owned either all or most of Valley Vista before it was platted. Before it was developed. Then they sold to a developing firm, The ones that moved in were just chance byers just similar to these people down the road here. Just "chance-byers" they have no cohesion. ~~Was~~ What I mean by that, They weren't all the same religion or all the same district or knew each other at all. They are a complete lottery, a complete random selection. It is the same in Valley Vista. But, it's a rather pretty little district, <sup>there</sup> so members of the family tended to come. <sup>my my grandfather</sup> There was ~~granmother~~ and ~~my grandfather~~ <sup>bought</sup> who there first and then you might say, lured us out there, <sup>grandmother</sup> their daughter, my mother, you see and it was the same way with other families. There was a Luxenberger family <sup>half-</sup> from Luxenberger who the first settlers were brothers, who had the same father and different mothers. And then they lured some of their in-laws, so there was about maybe six families all together at one time that were connected in a round-about way with this Luxenberger group.

(10) LM: How did they happen to pick this area to settle?

RB: Well, <sup>Maybe see an ad</sup> just by chance as we did, ~~they saw a ad~~ in the newspaper, "attractive 5 acres of independant <sup>we</sup> by a attractive fresh air ranch, <sup>only</sup> just 25 <sup>minutes</sup> miles from downtown, 12 trains a day each way." All those things make people's ears <sup>prick</sup> perk up and they say <sup>why</sup> why are <sup>we</sup> agonizing along in this <sup>Smoky</sup> city when we could be out in the country with lots of fresh air. A lot of country people don't like the city anyway. At that time a lot of country people had moved into town, just as as now but worst in a way. A lot of country people were living in town <sup>working</sup> ~~doing~~ town jobs but were wishing they were in the country.



LM: How about the Swiss settlement?

RB: That was from a generation earlier. If you look at the various files down at the museum you'll see various accounts of the journeys of across the ocean and America. So I will just refer you to them, but in some cases the Swiss would say because of religious persecutions but in Switzerland the religious persecutions had never been severe, you understand; the worst it amounted to was a <sup>canton</sup> Capin would have an established church so you would have to pay taxes to that established church <sup>which</sup> ~~what~~ ever it might be, <sup>I varied from canton</sup> ~~a Capin to~~ <sup>to canton</sup> Capin, ~~and~~ If you happen to be a member of an unestablished church ~~you~~ know some little hole in the corner <sup>holiest</sup> ~~holiest~~ sector or a <sup>Pentecostal</sup> ~~Pentecostal~~, or Baptist church or so on that didn't enjoy the establishment features, you see a established church gets money from taxes that's the whole thing, ~~and~~ They have established churches in England and in Scotland and several other countries even today. But you can see why the members of and unestablished church would some how fret by paying taxes to a church that was in serious ~~doctrinal~~ error and probably were an instrument of Satan <sup>Thorp</sup> and they were paying taxes to it you know, where as their own church was left off into the corner and they had to dig down in their pockets to pay for it. So that may have been the reasons in a few cases, but in most cases it was simply that the Swiss had been over here with the pioneers, ~~and~~ I think I could trace it to the <sup>Bruegger</sup> ~~Bruegger~~, <sup>that's B-R-U-E-G-G-E-R</sup> ~~the Bruegger~~ the <sup>"Bruggers"</sup> ~~brokers~~ as some call it, they were three brothers and they settled over at Bethany, which is over north of Beaverton where you probably know where Bethany is, and the Bruegger brothers settled

there and they had relatives back in the old country, and they would write letters and pretty soon others came and there was several large migrations, ~~and~~ <sup>Siegenthalers</sup> As many as ten families all at once. They would pool their money and all come together and then they would buy land close together. The <sup>Siegenthalers</sup> ~~de~~genteller migration has written up a considerable length you should look that up, it is very interesting one. Several of them came with the <sup>Siegenthalers</sup> ~~siegenthalers~~, and then there was the Schmidt migration and so on and so on. So little by little there were as many as fifty Swiss families and maybe even ~~as many as~~ a hundred which moved into the area of Bethany out beyond Helvatia, so it was ~~quite~~ <sup>quite</sup> away ~~and is~~ <sup>They're</sup> still there. It's the third and <sup>fourth</sup> ~~fourth~~ generation now ~~and~~ <sup>on</sup> most families I find have lost the ability to speak Swiss or read German, youngsters can't do it and it's a shame. In some cases they still speak broken English, <sup>(laughs)</sup> They speak broken English but they can't speak any <sup>That's one of the odd things about it.</sup> ~~Schweizerdizer~~ or any German. But that is only in some cases. <sup>S?</sup> In other cases, you see there are <sup>well</sup> ~~many~~ sorts of variations in education you see, in some cases there <sup>has</sup> ~~was~~ been a tradition of better <sup>education</sup> ~~education~~, <sup>and</sup> ~~so~~ the family will have a good knowledge of German and speak very good <sup>English</sup> ~~English~~ and the situation is quite different.

(20) LM: Did the Swiss community maintain their close <sup>knit</sup> ~~net~~ society or groupings throughout the years?

RB: To some extent yes, It's <sup>split</sup> ~~been~~ of course into the <sup>two</sup> ~~two~~ confessions, the Catholics and the Protestants, <sup>There are</sup> ~~there~~ about half a dozen Swiss Catholic families and the rest are all Protestants. But I find that the Swiss Catholics are <sup>they</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>accepted</sup> socialize quite a bit with the Protestants.

They are <sup>all</sup> Swiss together just as back in Switzerland they socialized to some extent. So there's certainly ~~know~~ <sup>no</sup> ill feelings between the two parts of the Swiss community, <sup>But</sup> it's mainly Protestants <sup>they're</sup> and ~~there~~ <sup>they're</sup> mainly members of the little Helvetia church down here. It was for many years ~~what~~ <sup>what</sup> they called <sup>a</sup> the Reform church, that's what it is called in ~~Tantimbaron~~ <sup>you see, most</sup> of them were berneed and so they brought their ~~Reform~~ <sup>Reform</sup> church with them. And that's how it was know for many years. And then there were some ~~an~~ <sup>at</sup> the same phenomonen you see all over the country churches, <sup>They</sup> they decided the main headquarters back in Pennsylvania or wherever you know, was getting a little bit too liberal and flirting with some of these modern ideas, and so they said "Let's go back to the Bible" <sup>and</sup> so they broke away and formed what they call a Community Bible Church that means that they believe the Bible and only the Bible should be their guide. And the trouble with being the Community Bible Church is you cut yourself off from central <sup>M</sup> financila help. ~~and~~ <sup>If</sup> if you belong to a big church the central people will make sure you get a preacher some <sup>how</sup> and they won't just abandon you but when you cut yourself <sup>off</sup> you are very isolated sometimes. <sup>But</sup> <sup>They</sup> these got a working relationship with <sup>the</sup> <sup>M</sup> Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland and they are very seldom lost for a preacher, <sup>the</sup> <sup>M</sup> Multnomah School of <sup>Bible</sup> will send some <sup>inspiring</sup> graduate out there when they need a preacher.

LM: Is that something quite common through out the county, community churches?

RB: Yes, ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> are quite a few that have cut off from central bodies and have set out for themselves that way. I won't say terrible many but there are

several in the <sup>count</sup> ~~counties~~, they just turn their back on the advantages of affiliation on these wealthy town churches and decide they want the old time religion and none ~~of~~ these new fangled modern stuff.

LM: How important was the church in the Swiss family and the other communities <sup>around</sup> ~~in~~ the county? Was it a bond or was it a . . .?

RB: Yes I think so it's their social bond and they set great store by it. <sup>Of</sup> course there ~~Catholic~~ Catholic community is different. With the ~~Catholic~~ Catholic community you must support your church it's a case of ~~perfunctory~~ <sup>perfunctory</sup>, in other words you must do it. But in ~~protestantism~~ <sup>protestantism</sup> where you have the option of backsliding without serious consequences and so on, why remaining with the church is likely to reflect a real ~~reflection~~ <sup>affectoi</sup> for it ~~and devaluating~~ <sup>and valuing</sup> the social ~~contact~~ <sup>compact</sup>. In fact my grandfather belonged to the ~~Reform~~ <sup>Reform</sup> Church for a couple decades before he died, he got lonesome ~~and~~ this was the social center, you know so he ~~would~~ go to church ~~once~~ in a while and pay his little dues.

LM: On a deeper <sup>plain</sup> ~~plane~~ it must have been quite hard for especially the earlier settlers coming into the Tualatin Valley here in this particular ~~by~~ area being isolated and all, ~~was~~ <sup>did</sup> the church function as sort of a moral and strengthening institution or was it just a place for people to gather so they won't be so lonesome on the farm?

RB: Well, undoubtedly the preacher and sermon and the ~~Sunday~~ <sup>Sunday</sup> school lessons and the religious literature that was always being distributed ~~undoubt~~ <sup>undoubtedly</sup> they had the ~~facts~~ <sup>effect</sup> you know. I'm sure that there was quite a moral ~~emphasis~~ <sup>emphasis</sup> in all the church people, ~~because~~ <sup>But</sup> it varied from case to case, ~~if~~ <sup>if</sup> there was

backsliders and some scoffers and even they would usually maintain their church membership but there has been a tradition it <sup>Prode-</sup>Protititism but there should be a certain percentage of lukewarm laodeseans (laughs). <sup>Protestants M</sup>

(40) LM: You mentioned that this area up here was originally used for timber production. <sup>what?</sup> The men up here were loggers, did some of it become farmlands afterwards?

RB: Yes, quite a few of the logged over places became farms, None that I can say off hand has become a very prosperous farm, This one for example hardly pays for itself and my neighbor to the east that has a hundred and twenty acres along the ridge there, <sup>he's got</sup> has a nice big walnut orchard he raises a few sheep, but he still has to punch a time clock, <sup>times</sup> five and six <sup>as</sup> times a week you know <sup>most</sup> just <sup>suburbites</sup> ~~most~~ like other ~~suburban~~ acts do.

LM: Is it just too hilly or the soil is not good.

RB: Yes the soil is poor you see, <sup>This forest soil</sup> ~~The soil~~ in Oregon is very acidic some of sourest land in the world outside of the tropics because for thousands and thousands of years the rain has been leeching the sweet elements out and leaving the sour elements in. Well it just so happens the fir tree thrive on this sour ground but hardly anything else does. A few things like tomatoes, strawberries, and clover you might say are three things that thrive on sour ground but most everything else, you have to sweeten the ground up quite a bit before it will really pay for all the work it takes you.

LM: In other words, the people that moved out here after the timber was pretty much gone were just commuting back and forth between a job <sup>or</sup> ~~or~~ . . .

RB: In many cases yes in other cases they would live among the stumps and live on a very poor diet, mainly fried potatoes and every day go among the stumps, that's what we did there during the depression when there was no work to be had we would go out among the stumps and we would build fires and sometimes we could afford a little dynamite and then we learned how to just break the stuff you know break it so <sup>it</sup> jumps up out of the ground like this instead of flying <sup>up into</sup> into the air ~~so~~ if it flys up into the air that's a risk of injury, you have a waste of dynamite to ~~since~~ you've much too much dynamite so the idea is just to loosen <sup>them</sup> the stuff and then you so in with your stump puller, it's <sup>is soft</sup> kind of a wench with a big pole called a sweep attached to it and to this sweep a horse is attached. Some patient horse that won't be flustered by various snaps and groans, and so you drive this <sup>patient</sup> patient horse in a circle around and around, and that was <sup>often</sup> usually my job, and then pretty soon the root would be attached to a cable of course and pretty soon the the root slowly groan out of the dirt and carry it over to the fire and hook onto another one. That's how a lot of the hill land was cleared. In other cases, <sup>why</sup> that was sometime later. In other cases you could hire a bulldozer but even then it paid to crack the stumps with a little dynamite, then you would have the bulldozer in and if you were really loaded <sup>you'd</sup> you could buy one but in most cases the owner was <sup>not</sup> that wealthy. And the dozer if he ~~know~~ knew his stuff in just a few hours he would have everything out of the ground. A lot quicker than the horse or the wench, and the cables and so on.

LM: How about before the advent of dynamite, <sup>?</sup> what was the ..?

RB: In the early days, why you would work mostly with fire, <sup>you'd</sup> ~~it~~ would burn and burn and burn you know, ~~and~~ we did some of our work with fire too. It's very laborious and slow because of course the stumps would <sup>not</sup> burn by ~~itself~~ <sup>themselves</sup> you have to carry to <sup>no</sup> ~~know~~ end of culled wood over to them and roots and things you carry over to them and is just an endless drudgery, but you finally get the things burned, ~~and~~ you try to burn down so <sup>men</sup> ~~they~~ <sup>that</sup> are under the plow. Now of course sometimes and dishonest clearer whose working for somebody else or just on speculation to ~~sell~~ the land to some unsuspecting buyer, sometimes they would simply burn to the level of the ground and <sup>saw</sup> ~~so~~ some grass and pretty soon you couldn't notice that the roots were right there ready to catch your plow all through the place, there's been cases like that. But those would be done in a cases of a speculator or somebody that wasn't going to farm the land <sup>themselves</sup> ~~themselves~~.

LM: Did some of the farmers or landowners hire out men to clear their land for them?

RB: Yes I've heard of cases like that, there would be single <sup>man</sup> ~~man~~ who wanted a job more less a hired man situation. There <sup>would</sup> ~~would~~ cases like that. I heard of one guy who was a expert dynamite, he would hire out to do your dynamite. There was a certain amount of division of labor there.

(50)

LM: I have heard that around the turn of the century <sup>M</sup> ~~M~~exicans <sup>w</sup> ~~w~~ould come up and clear land in the Cedar <sup>Mill</sup> ~~Hills~~ area and there is also stories of the chinese coming out from Portland clearing land all around Washington County.

RB: Yes the Chinese in the early days (that was before my time), they were considered a sort of labor saving device. The whites were above hard physical labor, just like the speculating class is today. And so the whites would say "Oh don't do that, that's chinamen work" and they would send word to Portland some contractors would say "get a dozen Chinamen out here we got some clearing to do, or we have a ditch to put in" and it would cost so little the Chinese were so <sup>got the</sup> docile and such good workers that nobody would dirty their hands too much. That would be under certain circumstances and <sup>in</sup> any other circumstances, now the Swiss were never afraid to dirty their hands they were all hard workers and so they would <sup>generally</sup> definitely do their own land clearing and help back and forth.

LM: How about the original native American, was there any Indians, evidence of Indian tribes or travels through this area?

RB: Only the <sup>just</sup> merest evidence, there would be a tradition of a certain old farm road with a <sup>trail</sup> Indian cradle things like that, you could never check up on the tradition. There was, in fact we bought from an Indian, ~~this~~ I told you we bought from a land company but apparently this Indian had first bought from them, this I'm talking about Valley Vista now, because they had put up this little cabin that we had lived in for several years, and we never did meet them except we signed over the rights, but I don't know about that because I <sup>just</sup> was a little boy. But talking to the neighbors we found that they were an Indian family but we tribe we never knew, perhaps from the east somewhere there has been always a certain percentage of Indians among the whites.

LM: You don't think that Indian family was from this particular locale?



RB: I would say it is very unlikely, extremely unlikely. But I don't know of course. You see the Indians from here, so many of them were killed by these diseases and so they lost ninety percent of their strength at least in just a generation and that's a terrific blow for any people to suffer, and so at the time of the treaties they just really didn't have the strength to resist the whites and they let the whites push them around quite a bit. Finally they <sup>accepted</sup> ~~excepted~~ exile to Grand <sup>Ronde</sup> Rock, which is up in the coast mountains west of Salem, so they took <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ farms there on the reservations, ~~and~~ <sup>it's</sup> been now discontinued which means it's been broken up among the Indian groups. <sup>in the valley.</sup> So there are still Indians there and some of them are Tualatins, but the Tualatin language has died there are no speakers of it anymore, ~~and~~ The thrust of the white contact there, you know the priests, and I believe mainly Catholics that <sup>proselytized</sup> ~~proselytized~~ in there, the priest and so on was that anything Indian was either laughably old fashioned ~~and~~ stupid or <sup>wickedly diabolical</sup> ~~wickedly diabolical~~ and anybody who tried to keep any of the old traditions was; there was a strong party of supporters of the priest you see that would see to it that you didn't get very far. So everything Indian has died out, so I am told, Now I am not really acquainted <sup>with</sup> on the Grand <sup>Ronde</sup> Rock reservation so I can't say from my own experience. There was <sup>enough</sup> ~~even~~ of the spark of Indian tradition to give something of a welcome to this Indian church that moved through the northwest <sup>a</sup> generation ago. The church actually started up at <sup>Siletz</sup> ~~Seletthe~~ new church you know. Now it's possible that at <sup>Siletz</sup> ~~Selats~~ the whites in charge were, you see they farmed out the various reservations, just more <sup>or</sup> less a lottery basis. The Catholics were given this the Protestants and Presbyterians that and so on and the Baptists to next one. And it was just by chance

which bunch of whites you were under if you were an Indian. So it maybe that Catholics would be very much against any intrusions of <sup>this radical</sup> the ~~radical~~ Indian religion, which is Christian but ~~so~~ bizarre, that oh my goodness you will have to read up on this sometime! That the orthodox Christians, Protes- tants and Catholics alike they consider terribly heretically. But it still appeals to some Indians and there were meetings at Ground Round and actually a church in operation at Selest which is the next reservation over <sup>Rondo</sup> behind Newport for a few years. <sup>Siletz</sup> So you see there's a spark of Indians interest left. But apparently <sup>sup</sup> it was the <sup>suppression</sup> depression of all Indian traits was rather ~~thorough~~ at Ground Round, but as I say there are a few families <sup>Rondo</sup> maybe a dozen or more that have mostly Tualatin blood; you understand when they got on the reservation even more than before, ~~there~~ was a lot of intermarriage among the various Indians nations. There were many nations brought together but they were all on good terms on the reservations and so (fairly good at least) there was quite a bit of intermarriage so the present day Indian he would say <sup>an In</sup> Well, what do you mean by what tribe ~~I'm~~ <sup>an In</sup> or, because my mother was a Nespe <sup>Nez Perce</sup> ~~Perce~~ and my grandmother was a Tualatin and my great grandmother was a Rogue River and then go down the list of male ancestors and you have six different tribes. Well it is hard to classify a person in a case like that.

LM: Were any of <sup>the</sup> Tualatin Indians allowed to stay here in this area?

RB: No, there was quite <sup>a bit</sup> a lot of pressure on them to go <sup>to</sup> the reservation. I have heard that here and there, that I can't pinpoint, here and there a Tualatin had become a nursemaid or a cowboy you know a hired man and in that sort of a situation they could stay, in some cases.

60

And in a few cases too, why they had been taken in out of charity extremely ill old people, they would <sup>generally</sup> suddenly be <sup>allowed</sup> able to die with their benefactors you see in a couple of cases. But in the main, why the Tualatins they had already made a withdrawal, they had villages <sup>all</sup> through the valley but they had already consolidated over at Gaston they were so weak and few that they had consolidated over at Gaston by the time they talked about reservations you know. For a while it seemed as though they would be allowed to stay on a permanent reservation at Gaston. It is a nice area and they had all the bulbs they needed there, bulbs and deer and so on. And they could have made a go of it. But there were some greedy whites. That's another reason why I would like to have the early records available for study because some of these squabbles came to the attention of the judges, you know, <sup>they came</sup> what I mean to the courts and there are court records that show the details of some of these squabbles <sup>between</sup> of these greedy white squatters and ~~the settlers, I mean the~~ Indians. You see it was a odd legal situation there, the provisional government had simply brushed the Indians' rights aside, in fact you can look up a law of the provisional government that said ~~the that the provisional,~~ that the Indians not having used the land of Oregon in any efficient way their rights are considered to be <sup>null and</sup> known void. But it said, <sup>governor</sup> if the governor finds that any whites are interfering with Indian use of traditional fishing spots and a few other provisions of that sort, why he shall be the advocate of the Indians to maintain their rights, so they did have a little scrap of <sup>Indian</sup> dignity left.

B

Start of track 3

But they had felt perfectly justified in completely <sup>nullifying</sup> ~~mellowing~~ the Indian rights without any <sup>sort</sup> ~~kind~~ of treaty. Well, when the U.S. government took over a few years later <sup>when</sup> the treaty had been written had removed the question competition you know the civilized competition.

LM: What years are you talking about?

RB: Well the treaty with England occurred in 1846 and the provisional government began in 1843 so from 1843 to 1849 your talking about this provisional government because the official territorial government didn't ~~even~~ get out here until the spring of 1849, it was set up in 1848. They had made an attempt to set it up in 1847 right after the treaty, but the southerners in Congress were so nervous of another free territory starting, <sup>they</sup> wanted the slave power maintained at all costs. They knew that there weren't enough slave holders here, in Oregon, <sup>but</sup> there were some, but they knew there <sup>weren't</sup> ~~wasn't~~ enough to make Oregon a slave state. So they just won't have anything of a territory for awhile thank you. So it took the crises of a <sup>The</sup> Whitman massacre and Joe Meeks personal <sup>persuasion</sup> ~~persuasion~~ with a big expense account to wine and dine these, he didn't want to dine the hard shell southerners of course but he did for the ones that were on the fence. And he was able to persuade enough <sup>wavers</sup> ~~wavers~~ that Oregon needed to territory that they would vote for it, and so the Oregon Territory was voted in in 1848.

End of track 2