"Memoirs of the Oregon Trail"

**Part 3**

**Our Trip to Oregon, by Sarah Jane Reed Hill**

Written about 1883

Original manuscript (27 pages, page 9 missing) located at the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon

Sarah Jane Reed Hill was my 3rd great grandmother. She was born in Indiana in 1823 and died in Oregon in 1913, 3 days shy of her 90th birthday. She married Almoran Hill on July 4, 1841.

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We left the Big Osage River, Missouri for Oregon May 12, 1843. We traveled on until we came close to Independence. There we camped two days. We layed in our supplies excepting our bacon which we had. We started from there to Caw [correct spelling is Kaw] River, now Kansas River. There the stream was wide and deep. They built a platform of their wagon beds but could not carry much over on them at a time. The first one to get to the river was the first one to cross. When it came to old man Jackry’s turn he loaded his boat too heavy. They tried to keep him from it but could not. Then he put two of his daughters on top of the load, Holly and Lucitie. The later Henry Black’s wife, the former Saul Emerick’s wife. Near the middle of the stream it capsized, turned everything out. Two big Indians threw their blankets, jumped in, and rescued the girls. This was done free, but they had to be paid to bring out the provisions. They had to dive in order to get the flour but the rest floated.

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There was no more accidents at that river. Then from there to the Little Blue three or four days travel. The next stream from there was the Big Blue River. In crossing the Big Blue we had to raise our wagon beds 8 to 10 inches high to keep the water from coming in our wagons. Our company all crossed over the Big Blue that night. Dan Waldo came to the opposite side that evening. They wanted him to cross over, but he would not, to his own sorrow. Now a terrible storm came from the North West. It blew all of the tents down and rained so it even floated the ox yokes. Where we crossed the evening before, the next morning it was forty feet deep. We had double covers on our wagon. I slept in my feather bed. I had a blanket and two quilts over me and all my clothes on. There wasn’t a dry thread on me. There wasn’t a yard of cloth in my bed that was not wet and I

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could scoup water out with my hands. In forming a corell with our wagons was the preventing of their turning over. The one I was in would raise up and fall back. Some of the men stood guard all night around three log heaps and Almoran was one of them.

Here the company divided, and Peter H. Burnett took one half and Jesse Applegate the other half. When they went out the next morning to gather up the cattle Jesse Applegate found one of his steers struck dead by lightning. Then we moved out on higher ground and got breakfast. It took all day to dry our bedding and clothing. The next day we started on our journey. We came to where the Sous [Sioux] and Shians [Cheyenne] had fought a battle the day before. They had left some of their dead on the ground. There was a Spaniard in our company that cut the hand of a dead Indian and tied it to his saddle and brought it into camp. He cut it off with Bill Wilson’s

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knife. Bill threw the knife away.

We had a coward in the company by the name of McArver [probably McCarver]. He wanted to make treaty with the Indians and give them a beef but the company would not so they give them some shirts and tobaco and moved on. We crossed through the country to South Platt [Platte]. We traveled up South Platt about four days when Dr. Whitman came to us. We traveled up South Platt two weeks. In traveling up South Platt we passed a chimney rock several hundred feet high. We stopped on Platt for a wash day and four of the men went hunting and while crawling on the ground to slip upon some buffalo Dutch Jaker’s gun accidently went off and shot Goodman through the wrist. They sent a man to camp after Dr. Whitman while two men helped him to camp. Dr. Whitman missed them and did not get into camp until after dark when Dr. Long had the wound dressed. From this place we travelled up South Platt a week to find a place to cross. During this

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time a party went buffalo hunting on horseback. A man by the name of O Neal got off his horse to shoot and his horse went on with the buffalo. Night overtook him and he never got his horse. In a day or two we crossed the river and left Mr. O Neal behind. He came to South Platt found our trail and followed us to where we had crossed the river and he swam across and on the ninth day in the evening he came to us. He had killed an antelope that was his diet until he came into camp.

We went from South Platt Laramary Fork here we took all the water kegs, tents and wagon sheets and lashed them to the wagon beds and went across the river. The men at the fort told us if the Indians bothered us it would be in the Black Hills. When we got to the hills our train was about two miles long. We had spies out. One old man Dave Kelso slipped out unknown to the rest. He looked ahead of him and he seen a cloud of dust raising. He came back as hard as he could on his horse. He met Applegate told him

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the Indians were coming. And he sent a runner back to have the company corell as soon as possible. Applegate took his field glasses to see if he could tell what it was. He could not just them. As fast as the teams caught up they corralled. Some of the women went to building fires out of sage brush, some hunting lead, some moulding bulletts by the time the last team was corelled. A runner came back stating that it was a lot of mountain men with pack animals. They had a buffalo calf with them. We started from here to North Platt. We was a day and one night until the next day about 10 oclock before we had any water. It was hard to tell which would get water first the men or cattle. Then it was a buffalo pound [pond?]. We had to take a bucket and hit the water to get the bugs away before you could dip a bucket of water. Then had to strain it before making coffee.

We went from here to North Platt. In order to cross the river we chained five yoke of oxen together then Whitman took a rope tied it to the steetile

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of the front yoke and took it over on his horse. There were about 12 men on the opposite shore to help pull them over. There were four men holding to a wagon to keep it from drifting as the stream was very swift. Roselle Applegate and myself was the first women to cross. Bill Wilson walked along by my side. He told me not to be afraid for if anything should happen he could swim out with me. Dutch Jake walked by the side of Roselle. It took all day to cross and hard work at that. As fast as a wagon would cross they went two miles on a little creek called Bear Creek. About the middle of the afternoon Jordan Hembrie’s [probably Hembree] little boy about 6 years old fell out of the wagon and was run over. He died that night. The next day they buried it and covered its grave with large rocks. Went from here to Sweet Water. Then we came to Independence rock. There were thousands of names written on this rock so high up one would wonder how they got there. It was an emense rock two or three hundred feet high and covered several acres.

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We traveled from Sweet Water to the Rocky Mts. We came to the Pacific Springs. There we found plenty of blue gooseberries. Maybe you think it wasn’t a treat, every woman and child was [word unreadable] with its bucket or cup. We had some of the finest dumplings for dinner you ever seen in your life. Went from Pacific Springs to Green River. There had to block our wagons to cross as the river was so deep.

Here we have lost memory of a portion of the country until we get to Fort Hall. After we left Fort Hall we came to Bear River, then to Soda Springs, then to the Hot Springs. They were so hot they would of cooked eggs. You could wash your hands in one pool of water then in a few steps you would come to another, it would be so hot you could not wash in. From here we went to Snake River. Then we camped on Rock Creek but it was dry. We had to drive the cattle down on Snake River bottom to get water and feed. The men carried water about a half a mile to cook with. Wayman Hembrie, Lafayette his brother and some other

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Caw River and the Big Blue when he thought he would take aim on a mule to see if he could shoot an Indian if it happened that way, when the gun accidently went off and killed the mule. From that time on we had mule beef. There is another instance happened to Captain Applegate on South Platt. One evening we camped very late. By the time supper was ready it was dark. A few days before this the top of the lantern got mashed off. It was an old fashioned tin lantern. We lit it several times and it went out, as the wind was blowing. Captain Applegate took off his hat and placed it on top of the lantern, by the time we were done eating it had burnt a hole through the crown that you could run your fist through. One of the young men that helped drive the cattle said “Well, Well! If the captain is that green what can you expect of the rest of us?”

As our memory comes we traveled up Burnt River some times on one side then in the middle of the river then off the other side.

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Sometimes it was so steep it took four or five men to hold the upper side of the wagon to keep it from turning over. We traveled up the river one day and a half before we came to a place we could leave the river & it was so steep it took 8 or 9 yoke of oxen to a large wagon. There was no resting place until we reached a bench about half way up. There they had to go from there to the top. It took us all day to reach the top the distance 150 yards. The third wagon we had an accident with. Mr. White’s wagon, it was about 20 feet from the bench when the wheel yoke broke loose from the wagon, the wagon running back on this bench and cramped then stopped. Mrs. White had left her baby 11 or 12 months old in the wagon. She screamed take my baby out, take my baby out. We went from here over to Powder River about half way our oldest living was born. We camped for a short time then joined our company which had gone on a short distance. We traveled four days down Powder River then we came

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to the hill to go down into grandround valley. It was the rockyest hill a wagon ever was taken over. There was a rock for every wheel from the height of a half foot to a foot. John Copenhaver got about half way down when his team run away. There was tin pans buckets kettles etc. everything that was in the wagon to the bottom of the hill. We crossed the Valley until we reached the foot of the Blue Mountains. There we camped. Applegate and some others got some pine knots to make tar. They got the pitch out of the knots and when they went to cook it down it got too hot and burned up. That night it rained and on top of the mountain it snowed, the next day we traveled all day and camped at the Lone Pine. The next morning we wanted to get an early start. Peter H. Burnett was the first to raise camp. He got up and went to singing, Harrick hawk the taylor cut the cloak and the frog made the yoke

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Harrick hawk the taylor cut the cloak and the frog made the yoke until he raised the whole camp. We don’t give any distances as the road had not been measured at that time. The next day we came to Whitman’s camp at Whitman’s station. There we got a beef and payed two cows for it. We went from Whitman’s station to Fort Walla Walla. Here we stayed three weeks. While there we made three skiff one big batteau and chartered another. Here we left our wagons and traded our cattle to the Hudson Bay Company for cattle on Sophaias [Sauvie] Island. Then we started in our batteaus and skiffs. There were 60 of us to come down in them, men women and children. The men at the Fort told the men to let the women and children walk when they came to the grand rapids. We had an Indian for our pilot. We could not understand him and he took us through rapids. We went through like a bird in the air. Our boat came near a rock but a miss is as good as a mile. Next was the Columbia falls.

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Here we traveled to the north side of the river and took our goods out and carried our boats around the falls. It took sixteen men to carry a boat. They turned them bottom side up and carried them on their shoulders.

Some of the women went with the boats and some remained at camp. While they were gone 4 Indians came to camp. All of the guns were laying together. They went up and picked up two of them. Mrs. Carry motioned for them to lay them down but they did not obey. She seized her husband’s rifle and loaded it and told them to go. They went away laughing heartly. Mrs. Carry now lives at Lafayette Yamhill County. Next of note is the Little Dalles where the water went through two perpendicular rocks. There the women and children walked around and the men took the boats through. Some times the one end of the boat would be forward and some times the other. But they got through without any accidents. From here we came down the river to the Big

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Dalles, just above the Dalles [The Dalles]. One skiff turned over and three were drowned and two got out. If there had not been two feather beds in the skiff there wouldn’t any of them got out but one. One bed was in the act of sinking when the Indians saved one man one man swam to a sand bank and took a cramp and had to rub his limbs before he could get out. Then we crossed from the North side to the South side of the river.

We hired Indians to take our boats through the big Dalles and we carried our goods around. We went from here to the Dalles. Here was a missionary station run by a man named Perkins. We went from here to the Cas [portion missing, possibly Cascade] Falls. We camped here for the night. After supper was over Peter H. Burnett sent his negro girl to the river after a bucket of water. The river was running high as the wind was blowing hard. It was supposed she threw her bucket as a wave came up and when it succeeded it took her in as she never was seen

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again. Next morning we started to carry our boats and goods around the falls the distance of two miles. We were on the North side of the river. I walked and carried Diantha she was now six weeks old. It rained all day. I had a linsey skirt around my shoulders for a wrap. I did not have a dry thread on me. The next important place is Vancouver. We landed here November 10 and presented our papers to Dr. McLaughlin. When he examined them he said tut tut gentlemen this will never do. The cattle on the Island are wild and you can never do anything with them. You give me $2.50 per head and I will take care of them. Then in the spring you go up and get your cattle. So we got ours. At Vancouver we got all the butter salt beef and provisions we wanted. We left Vancouver for Sophaias Island. Here we stayed four days. From here we went to Oregon City. Here we stayed one week. We left Oregon city for the Old Dickie William’s [Richard Williams, father of Martha who married Sarah Jane’s brother Jacob Reed] on the Taulatan [Tualatin] plains near

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Hillsboro now and from there to the Donation claim later owned by J L Hallett. We lived here one and onehalf years then we sold it to J C Reed [I’m sure this is probably a relative, but I do not think it is Jacob T Reed, Sarah Jane’s brother as he had his own Donation Land Claims and this looks like J C not J T] for 400 bushels of wheat.

Then we moved to our Donation Claim on which we now live and own a part. We moved here March 20, 1845. Here we have remained excepting about four years. We lived on our first Donation one year and a half, six months at Lafayette Yamhill Co., at Forest Grove 2 ½ years. This was done in order to give our children schooling. Our first winter we had to bring all of our provisions from Oregon City. Our house was a log hut 12 x 14 with a blanket for a door and the chimney to the mantle. We got with out flour along into winter and we had to live on potatoes and mountain tea strait. We could boil them roast them or bake them just as we pleased. Then is when I roasted the hawk for the dog and he wouldn’t eat it. The big wolves would come and run the dog in the house. In the

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winter of 45 we hired Jim Fields to make [not readable, probably five] thousand nails. He made about one thousand and got sick. One Sunday evening he put on his best clothes and went away and never came back until Monday night when he came he bursted the door open. He had a large stick in his hand he says Hill “get up” I haven’t been out here praying all this time for nothing. So Almoran got up and dressed. Then he said he was hungry. We set him some beef cabbage and bread but he would not eat it. He said it was poison. Then he wanted Almoran to go three miles to the Reed place after a kettle to cook some wheat in that was not poison. He told him he would go in the morning. We got him into bed but he would not stay there he would jump right up. He says Hill you want me to sleep the sleep that knows no waken and dream the dreams that knows no breaking. Then he says “Hill I have a notion to knock you over”. Almoran got up and went to the door. The cattle were running around outside and he

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made him no answer. Then he says “shut the door shut that door”. Then he jumped to get the gun. Almoran gor the shovel. He got the gun it was loaded and calked. Almoran struck him with the shovel just as he turned around. He dropped the gun and jumped at him. Almoran got out the door. Then Fields went down on his knees and commenced praying. He kept reaching for a stool that was in reach. Almoran told me in gargon to move it so I did. He hadn’t noticed me before. He told me to retire to my rest I should have a right here on these premesises. Then turned to Almoran and said “dam you, you shan’t” then he jumped out the door and fell against the railing. Almoran would of killed him then if I would of let him and while he was down I took Diantha and Narcissa under my arms and slipped away. I secured a hiding place until Almoran could put the fire out. Then we went to Mr. Doty’s. When we got there Mr. Doty

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was not home but there was two Sailors there but they were big cowards and wouldn’t help take him. Then Almoran went across the lake wading the water and breaking the ice as he went. He went to Mr. Gillets, now owned by the widow of Fielding Stott. There he found a young man by the name of Abner Kinneythat came across the plains with Fields. They came back with him. When they go there they found Fields in bed. He had kindled a fire and had burnt up FreeMonts travels to Oregon. Then he asked Almoran if he had done right by him last night? He told him he had done what he thought was best and himself. Then he asked him if he would swear to it. “He told him yes”. He said get the Bible then he administered an oath eaguel to a judge. Next morning they took him five miles to Dr. Wilcox. There the doctor bleed him. He did not come back for about one month. Then he come to get his pay for the nails. By this time he was in his right mind. Mr. Doty and Mr. Caton came with him.

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Almoran payed him. Then he went away. We did not see him for about five years.

Clippings From Papers Worthy To Mention

Washington County or Tuality County as it was then, belong the distinctions of having the first woman type setter on the Pacific Coast from June 7, 1843 [hard to read but guessing 1843 or could be 1848] to September of that year. Rev. Griffin published a paper on his farm just north of Hillsboro, called “The Oregon and American Evangelical Journist.” The printer was Chas. F Putman who learned the trade in York State and who crossed the plains in 1846. In 1847 he was married to Miss Roselle Applegate, in Polk County a daughter of the noted pioneer, Jesse Applegate. After removing in Washington County Mr. Putman taught his wife the mysteries of the “art preservation, and she assisted him as long as the paper was published. The press used was the mission press sent from Boston to Sand Which Islands and from the Islands to Oregon in 1839.

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Mrs. Putman died near Yoncalla Douglas County in 1861.

An Old Almanac

J. Henry Brown yesterday showed us a copy of the “Oregon Almanac” published at the Spectators office at Oregon city in 1848 thirty five years ago in the days when Oregon was new. At that time there was only a provisional government that had been organized by the Americans portions of the inhabitants of this county. The Almanac contains twenty four pages and was issued by W. P. Hudson. The following are the names of officers who run the government; Governor, Geo. Abernathy; Secretary, Frederick Priggs; Treasurer, John H. Couch; Auditor of public accounts, Geo. W. Bell; Attorney general, A. Laurence Lovejoy; territorial records, Theophiles Magruder; Judge of supreme court, J. Quinn Thornton; Judge of Circuit Court, A. A. Skinner; Marshall, H. M. Knighton. Of the above all are dead except

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Hon. J. Quinn Thornton, so we are informed. The names of the provisional legislature’s sheriff, treasurer, Justice of the peace are given but there are to many of them to be recapitulated in this article. Gen. Cornilisis Gillman [probably Cornelius Gilliam] was the agent of the U. S. post office department. David Hill and J. M. Shivley [Shively] were post masters and Chas E. Prickett Indian agent. All are dead but Mr. Shivley. In the last part of the Almanac is a summary of the Mexican war which was new then as the only means of obtaining news was by the emigrants across the plains, or the missionary ship a round the horn.

Pioneer North West Journalist Dead

Ellensburg Wash Jan 6

David J Schnebly died at his home here last night. He was the oldest newspaper man in the North West, having been editor of the Oregon City Spectator in 1852 and was contemporaneous with the Oregonian. He published the Localizer here for about 15 years but retired from active work about four years ago. He was born in Hagerstown MD February

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 6, 1818. A large family survives him.

Samuel S White Dead

Pioneer of 1843

Judge Samuel S. White one of Oregon’s early pioneers died Sunday at the family residence 848 Fourth Street. He was 86 years old.

His career was intimately associated with early Oregon History. He was the first probate judge in the state. Judge White came to Oregon in 1845, crossing the plains with his family and three children, taking the old Meek cut off.

He engaged in farming near Oregon City, and was interested in the steamer Lot Whitcomb, the first boat built on the Willamette River. Partners with him were Colonel Jennings and Lot Whitcomb. The ownership afterwards passed to Captain J C Ainsworth. Judge White was the first probate Judge in the state holding office under an appointment by Governor George Abernathy in 1846. In 49 he was one of a party of argonauts who made the

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Trip to California in ox teams during the great gold excitement, engaged in the merchant business in Sacramento for several years afterwards returning to Oregon City.

During his public career he was a member of the state legislature; a county Judge for Clackamas County and a justice of peace for six years in the South Portland precinct. Since 1837 he resided continuously in Portland, and was a well known and highly respected citizen. He was an Indian war veteran, having fought in the Sac and Fox Indian wars of 1831and in the Blackhawk war. Judge White was a devoted member of the First Congregational Church. He left one son Eugene D. White of Portland having survived his wife and six children. The early residence of Judge White is still standing on the old donation land claim at Mt. Pleasant, now owned by M. Kellogg. The house a very pretentious structure when it was built in the early 50’s

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cost between $7,000 and $8,000. Carpenters wages then being $10 per day.

Rev. J. S. Griffin

has loaned the Independent for a few days a file of the Oregon Free press published at Oregon City in the summer of 1848 by Geo L Curry, editor and proprietor. The sheet is a folio 12 by 15 inches in size. There are two columns to the page each being ten inch and 18 M’S or 3 inches wide. The machanics work is good, better than of many of our modern papers. The type used was a French font that contained no W’s two V’s make that letter. There are a few advertisements but they are set mostly in body type. The office was without doubt short of display letter. The paper of June th 10th 1848 contains the election held the previous Monday, as far as heard from, five counties were represented, Clackamas, Yamhill, Vancouver, Tuality and Champoeg. Tuality county was what is now

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Washington. In Tuality county as far as heard from for representative Ralph Wilcox had received 64 votes; S.R. Thurston 52; David Hill 32; sheriff R.E. Wiley 74, Treasurer – Chambers 38 Coroner – Hugh Burns 38 prohibition, 43 – Regulate 40. So it seems that the temperance question was agation the public mind at that day. The Ralph Wilcox mentioned is Mrs. Judge Archibolds father. R.E. Whiley is W.V. Whiley’s father. Chambers is probably W.M. Chambers Mrs. Dr. F.A. Baily’s father.

In this county the 4th of July was celebrated with Judge Burnett for orator. The thing that most forcibly strikes the modern is news dates no later than March 15th. A column devoted to the French revolution that in Jan. and Feb, 1848 the paper is a valuable relic and Mr. Griffin prizes it accordingly. The “Press” was a rivel of the “Spectator” published in the same town.