

Elk City Idaho
A Journey Through Time
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Because of technical difficulties this presentation was not taped. Here are the notes from the presentation

1 *ELK CITY IDAHO – A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME*

A presentation on the research trip to retrace my grandmother's time teaching in 1905 and 1907 in Idaho County, Idaho. Part her narrative and part my travel journal.

2 *THE PLAN*

There were several reasons for this trip: Revisit grandmother's teaching past in Idaho; My husband had wanted to see Idaho and it was his birthday; and I hadn't been there since the early 60's;

Time: About a week; 3 days travel; 3 days in Idaho County and an extra day for the 'just in case' that sometimes happens on vacation.

Organizing: Most paperwork was already scanned and organized but I reviewed and set up a notebook section for each day.

Pre-Trip Research (coming up)

Maps: Internet research was helpful in locating trip maps and local maps

Daily itinerary and reservations: Although normally we are more 'seat of the pants' travelers, our time was limited and so I insured we had reservations and daily itineraries

3 *OLD PHOTOS AND NOTES*

Here are some of the photos and notes that I have on my Grandmothers teaching in Idaho. I made copies of these along with her narrative for the local Genealogical Society, The Elk City Museum, the Friends of the Elk City Road group and the Idaho County Free Press, these were connections that I made during pre-trip research.

4 *1963 FAMILY TRIP PHOTOS*

These are photos that my father took the last time I was in the area in 1963. None of these buildings now exist. [explanation later slide]

5 *PRE-TRIP RESEARCH*

- Located plat map of Grandmothers land in Coeur d'Alene through the Kootenai (KOOT nai) County Assessors
- Contacted Friends of Elk City Wagon Road – invited to meeting potluck lunch Mr. Lohrey (Clearwater Grange Hall)
- Idaho Genealogical Society – because I had student names from 1907, and set up a meeting with Secretary Jeanie Hafner (unfortunately missed their montly meeting by one day)
- Idaho County Free Press (whom I had worked with before) – sent them my grandmother's narrative and pictures
- Elk City Hotel – Emailed with the owner of the Elk City Hotel (Jamie Edmondson) to let her know I would drop off narrative and Photos
- Dining – found a Mexican Restaurant with good reviews in Coeur d'Alene for husband's birthday lunch
- Old Spiral Highway map out of Lewiston
- USGS to locate the Canfield property (will explain later in presentation)

- A map of the Elk City Wagon Road from the forest service.
- The museum in Grangeville was, unfortunately, closed while we were there.
- Reservations – Grangeville where we would be based
- All research was done online
- Had a few detours on the way to Grangeville, but that is a different adventure story

6 **DAY 1 COEUR D'ALENE**

Because my Grandmother had owned land in Coeur d'Alene we thought we would visit. Aug 13th was my husband's birthday so it seemed like a great day trip/lunch opportunity.

The drive to Grangeville (where we stayed) to Coeur d'Alene on I95 was 3 ½ hours – we took scenic route around Lake Couer d'Alene– and it ended up being over 5 hours! It was extremely smoky so the views were disappointing.

It was funny that when we got into Coeur d'Alene we noticed “Bigfoot” or “Skwatch” as they called it, stuff everywhere.

We had a late lunch at Mexican restaurant (which lived up to the reviews), and drove back on I95.

We didn't take to Old Spiral Highway....it was extremely smoky, and, because of the smoke, we didn't take many pictures.

7 **ELIZABETH 'LIZZIE' JANE KEZIAH SIMKINS MERRITT**

Before I go further a little background on my grandmother she was Less than 5' tall, and had long dark red hair that she always kept pinned up.

This photo was taken about time she was teaching in Elk City

She also wrote all of her life including a children's book, poems, and narratives about here life.

She was extremely active, traveled by train, and had a chin-up bar mounted in every place she lived and did chin-ups regularly until she got sick in her 80's.

8 **SCHOOL LISTS**

These are some of the schools she taught in and the years she was there.

She was a school teacher and occasionally a principle from the time she was 16 until she retired in her 70's. Most schools were One room although later there were a few larger schools.

Her longest residence was in Ashland while raising my Dad (summers in S.F.)

9 **A BIT OF THE ELK CITY NARRATIVE**

This is some of her narrative about decision to go to Elk City.

I did some research into the 'Bunkerhill and Sullivan' troubles.

My ancestors (the Cummings) worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad and lived in Wallula Junction, which was the terminus for the NP Railroad.

She bought a lot in Coeur d'Alene. She never built on it, instead buying on the speculation that the NP Railroad was going to go through the area and land owners would then be able to make money selling the land. It never happened as the railroad company made the decision to change the route. My parents finally sold the property in 1966.

10 **A BIT OF LIZZIE'S ELK CITY IDAHO TEACHING HISTORY**

Her record of employment was received from Idaho State Historical Society years ago. There are also a few news articles here that were located online. A new teacher was a big deal in most towns and she was often mentioned in the news each time she went to a new school.

11. **DAY 2: ELK CITY WAGON ROAD**

We did not go to Stites this trip. I discovered there were no original buildings and the Wagon Road from Stites to Clearwater is no longer open to vehicles.

We, instead, went to go to Clearwater via Harpster.

Having said this however, I will give you some details about Stites as it was part of my Grandmother's journey and narrative.

12. **STITES, IDAHO**

From Lizzie's narrative" from 1907

"I went to the end of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Stites was just a stopping place on the way to the mines, Camas Prairie and Grange. No railroad yet had conquered Lawyer's Canyon. We reached Stites about 6 [pm] and spent the night there.

A brawl in the saloon – Oh, it was before prohibition which was 12 years ahead- there was some shooting. The next morning I was shown where a bullet had come up thru the ceiling and 2nd floor, but it missed all the sleepers so there was no trouble."

As I mentioned there are no original buildings left in Stites because of several fires and floods, and the rail spur was removed in 1985. The photos came from several collections. I wasn't able to find any old photos of Stites in my dad's collection, and I don't remember what was there in 1963, and I have 100's of old photos/negatives of all the places my grandmother lived, however many do not have any descriptions, and I have not yet cataloged them all so there may be photos of Stites that I just haven't got to yet.

Interestingly enough there were several hotels in Stites in the early 1900s as it was the RR terminus. My grandmother didn't mention which one she stayed in.

13. **LAWYERS CANYON TRESTLE 1916**

This is a postcard of the Lawyers Canyon Trestle that was built in 1916, 9 years after my grandmother was in the area. It says photograph #1812 but it appears to me to be more of a drawing.

14. **LAWYERS CANYON TRESTLE 2021**

We did find the trestle. As you can see the smoke in the area was pretty bad while we were there. The rail line was closed in 2001.

15. **HARPSTER TO CLEARWATER INTERSECTION**

Travel Tip: Don't assume there will be signs or cell phone service ;)

We had been invited to the Friends of the Elk City Wagon Road meeting and potluck in Clearwater at noon. We were to meet at the Clearwater Grange Hall and we picked up some cookies (as it was a potluck). Just as well that we did as the potluck consisted of Macaroni Salad, Broccoli Salad, Rolls and the cookies we brought ;)

Harpster was just a few buildings off the side of the road and the road to Clearwater off Highway 13 turned out not well marked (actually not marked at all, I guess they figured if you lived there you knew where it was). Cell service was non-existent so I wasn't able to call the contact or pull up Google Maps.

We finally stopped a car and they gave us some general directions and we were able to get to Clearwater via Wall Creek Road. [we discovered later that there was a quicker route via Sally Ann Road]

16. **CLEARWATER, IDAHO**

Lizzie's narrative:

"Stage at 6, the stage was one of the old kinds with a boot on the back for a bag with the mail and express. It swung between the axles and the pair of wheels; with doors opening at the side. This was early August; the mornings were cool for a 6:00 am ride. We climbed up the mountain to Clearwater where we got four fresh horses by 9:00."

So it took about 3 hours to go the 4 miles between Stites and Clearwater.

The Elk City Wagon Road was and still is, a two-way road dirt road so each time you meet another vehicle in some areas making room can be a challenge.

During the 1900's it was the only road in and out of Elk City which was a mining/logging area and the road was often very busy. Running sometimes 30 wagons and stagecoaches a day.

I wish we had had more time in the museum, but we got conflicting messages about how long it would take to drive the Elk City Wagon Road, from 3 hours to 7 hours (it took us 5 ½ with a break), and since Mr. Lohrey (who put together the museum) was, I am sure, willing to wait for us to get done before he locked up, we didn't want to impose.

17. **PASSING ON THE ELK CITY WAGON ROAD**

This picture pretty much says it all.

18. **NOLEN WAY-STATION**

My grandmother did not mention this station in her narrative, although apparently it was there when she went through; Perhaps they did not stop.

We didn't see the cut-off and we were told that the building is no longer there.

I didn't see any photos of this building in my family's photos from 1963.

This part of the original wagon road is no longer accessible by passenger vehicle.

19. **SWITCHBACK STATION**

Lizzie's narrative:

"...then we kept on climbing and reached the switchback at 11:30 where we ate dinner and got four fresh horses."

This station was built in 1895 and provided full-service overnight facilities. There were large barns that could accommodate 100 head of stock along with a blacksmith. Which judging by the changes of horse teams for the ride.

20. **4 HORSE STAGECOACH**

Example of a 1900s 4 horse Stagecoach

21. **CORRAL HILL STATION**

This is another station that my grandmother did not mention. Apparently this was the home for the station keeper along with lodging for travelers and included a livery stable. It was just a few miles past the Switchback Station so they probably didn't need to stop. It may have been used more for the travelers coming from the other direction.

22. **MOUNTAIN HOUSE STATION**

Lizzie narrative

"We climbed and climbed and climbed and reached the top – Mountain House Station- about 4:30; 6,700 feet up in the air. But it was beautiful. Autumn had on all her prettiest colors. The air was clear the sun was bright and warm It was joyful to ride along the ridge on the top of the world surrounding."

As you can see there is nothing left of the actual station. I don't know when the last fire went through the area, but the burn looks fairly recent. At this point we were probably about ½ way along the road.

23. **NEWSOME STATION**

So when I first started researching the Wagon Road there seemed to be some confusion here about this station. The National Register of Historic Places [2000] notes that the Newsome Creek Station was abandoned in 1890 however doesn't mention that it was re-opened in 1897 with the Shissler's as owners. The 1900 US Federal Census shows the Frank Shissler with wife Elizabeth as hotel keepers in Newsom in 1900.

A fire in 1927 destroyed most of the buildings and gold dredging in the 1940 destroyed the rest. There is nothing left there now except a primitive campsite.

Lizzie's narrative was fairly extensive for this particular stop. Since her goal was to see a "real old time mining town" Newsome Station seemed to fit the bill as at the time it was a rather lively quartz mining area, a stage station and a general distribution site for supplies:

[During the presentation Lizzie's entire narrative for this station was read.]

24. **ELK CITY WAGON ROAD 2021**

These are a few photos from our drive of the Elk City Wagon road.

Most of the drive was not conducive to taking photos however I do have a rather wild video, mostly of the dash, the roof of the car and my feet.

25. **FIRE**

All the buildings on the Elk City Wagon road are gone, including the ones my family took pictures of in 1966; also the original buildings in Elk City, while my grandmother was there, were burned in the fire in December 1910, just a few years after she left and 1926 and 29 and sometime after 1963.

26. **ELK CITY**

Lizzie narrative – *"Elk City had a Main Street – in fact Main Street was all it had"*. This pretty much describes Elk City today.

While we were there they were having 'Elk City Days', there was really no place to park and the Main Street was filled with ATV's, and pretty chaotic.

We were able to go into the Elk City hotel where the proprietor has a small museum which she is hoping to expand into it's own building. She was not there while we were there but there were hundreds of photographs that unfortunately we did not have the time to dig through. We will need to go back.

27. **ELK CITY SCHOOL 1917**

After my grandmother retired in the 1950's her retirement project was to contact all her old students – she had lists, visit them if she could or at least correspond.

She had notes about all her students during the time she was their teacher.

[Notes from narrative read during presentation about students.]

28. **HOTEL PARR**

This is the hotel my grandmother stayed in when she first arrived in Elk City.

Lizzie narrative:

"My room – cigar box sized- corner where the stairs went to the lobby – coal oil lit lamps – washbowl & pitcher – I put the pitcher near the stove pipe just outside the door so my water wouldn't freeze solid during the night."

wow...hope there were lots of quilts on the bed!

In 1957 Elmer Parsell, one of her Elk City students wrote a letter to my grandmother...

[Letter read during presentation about 'old timers'.]

29. **BEFORE AND AFTER ELK CITY FIRE 1929**

There have been several fires in Elk City both after my Grandmother was there and after we visited in 1963.

30. **DAY 3, CANFIELD SCHOOL TRIP**

Prior to teaching in Elk City in 1907 my grandmother had taught school near Canfield in 1905.

Interestingly the research into the Canfield family placed them near Walla Walla (Wallula Junction) where the Cummings ancestors lived. Perhaps she knew them from there? She doesn't mention it in her narrative.

Lizzie Notes: 1905 Idaho teaching

"Beyond the end of the Rail Road at Doumecq [doo mek] is the Chief Joseph Indian War region. I went 20 miles to Grangeville on one stage, 20 to White Bird on another, across the river by ferry, then by horseback 11 miles up the mountains between the Salmon and Snake Rivers."

31. **WHITE BIRD GRADE**

This route was not built until after 1920 when my grandmother came to White Bird, however when my family visited in 1963 we went 'up' this grade in a vw microbus...if you have ever driven a VW you know that it was a very slow drive. Jim and I drove 'down' it on the way from Grangeville to White Bird while we were there. It was so smoky however, that the views were not that great.

This was used from 1920 until the new highway was completed in 1975. Many logging trucks used this road and as it was a two lane road sometimes it was very slow going.

- 32 **ROAD TO OSCAR B. CANFIELD HOMESTEAD**
There is a bridge now at White Bird to cross the river to the road to the Canfield Homestead. Lizzie noted that it was 11 miles on horseback, and she mentioned she crossed the river at the ferry but doesn't mention which one, there were several. Our drive was 14 miles on the dirt road. Very washboard and took us nearly an hour to get to the top.
- 33 **CANFIELD HOMESTEAD PICTURES - 1905**
There is nothing left of the old homestead. The original homestead records show 160 acres.
Research on the Canfield's revealed that Oscar Burton Canfield and his wife Clara had moved to Montana by 1910.
- 34 **CLARA GARRETT CANFIELD 1874 - 1929**
My grandmother was fascinated by the fact that Clara had her own herd of cattle. Clara would have been about 31 when these pictures were taken.
Notes on cattle drive: The cattle were driven from the Canfield ranch to Stites which was the end of the railroad (about 30 miles), the cattle were either ferried or swum across the Salmon River depending on the time of year.
- 35 **CANFIELD SCHOOL, DOUMECQ DISTRICT**
These are the students at the Canfield School. My grandmother is standing in the back left of the photo. My father said she always felt that school teachers should look "distinguished and proper"... it shows in her posture in this photo.
Lizzies notes about the Doumecq school (Eventually called the Canfield School)
"The school was in an unfurnished building, Homemade seats and desks; blackboard just a painted board..We did have a maypole. Taught for the summer term Mar-Aug and boarded with the Sargent's and the Cochran's. Friends with the Canfields".
- 36 **CANFIELD SCHOOL SITE 2021**
This is all that is left of the Canfield School Site, the Canfield Cemetery is next to the site. I didn't go through the cemetery as it was overgrown and we were warned that it was often home to rattlesnakes. Since I had no relatives there it wasn't an issue.
- 37 **UNEXPECTED SUPRISES**
A few unexpected surprises on our trip:
The weekly Idaho County Free Press came out while we were there and the story I had sent appeared.
The trip to Coeur d'Alene was extremely smoky and you can see from the weather report I pulled up on my phone that hiking around the lake was not the best idea.
We didn't know that the Elk City Days were going to be going on while we were there, and had difficulty finding a place to park, however we were pleasantly surprised to see how busy the little museum was that was attached to the hotel. The hotel proprietor is selling the business but hoping to establish a stand alone museum somewhere else in the town. We hope to go back to the area at some time when the views are better.
38. **NEXT??**
These are some of the schools my grandmother taught in, perhaps we will see them on another research trip.