

HISTORY OF MIDDLE VALLEY

by Evelyn Leger

The discovery of gold in California in '49 caused great excitement in the East, and thousands of persons left their well-founded homes in search of the treasures said to be awaiting them. Many were disappointed and returned East to reestablish their homes. Others who possessed the roving spirit of Daniel Boone, wandered about, reveling in the wild beauty of the West. As each valley became more thickly populated they left it for one more wild and secluded.

Among this latter class was J.H. Reed, who, after many wanderings, finally alighted upon a little valley hidden among the mountains of Idaho, which he decided to make his home. This valley, which white man then entered for the first time on record, was one of luxuriant beauty, such as we often read of, but seldom see. It had the appearance of a great basin hallowed out of the mountains, and a wooded river flowed through it from end to end.

Near the center of the valley on the river bottom as an Indian camp where a panorama of life was constantly enacted. Stretching away from the river on either side the ground was covered with a mantle of dull green brush, streaked here and there with the brighter green of the willows which marked the courses of the streams. Wild animals were everywhere in abundance in their natural state and filled the whole valley with life.

Thus Middle Valley was, before the hand of the white man had touched it; and it was into this valley that Mr. Reed brought his family in the fall of 1868. He settled on the claim which is now owned by his son, A.M. Reed, and immediately erected a rude one room cabin and prepared as best

The following two years witnessed the most rapid growth yet experienced in the valley.

he could for the coming winter. Fortunately, the Indians which were of the Bannock Tribe, were friendly and gladly traded the fish (which they caught in large quantities by means of a net stretched across the river) for any bright object such as a bright piece of tin or a bit of red twine.

The abundance of game also made the winter much easier. That "big game" was not scarce was shown by the fact that a bear chased Mr. Reed's pigs into the yard and then came so close to the cabin that Mr. Reed shot him from the doorway of the cabin.

Shortly afterward H.P. Linder and family arrived and located on the old Linder place. The next increase in population was in April, 1876, when John McRoberts and family settled near the river and built his home near the spot now occupied by McCrumb's blacksmith shop, which was the first house erected in the present site of Midvale.

In July of the same year G.S. Keithley arrived and settled on the old Keithley place, forming the basis of what is known as the Keithley Creek settlement.

The settlers were now becoming more numerous and a few who immigrated the two following years were Sylvester Hayworth, Joseph Burger, Mr. Surdam and Mr. Shew. Also W.J. Mackey, who lived with the McRoberts family; "Grandpa" and Robert Reavis, who immigrated from Texas and settled the two Reavis places; Jon, Levi and Robert Keithley, who settled along Keithley Creek, and William Wiggins, who located the Robert Jackson ranch.

Among those who came in and brought families were: Alexander Towell, John and Dudley Evans

and John Michael. Others were Melvin Kilborn, Ed Anderson, Robert Jackson and Montgomery McCauley.

The first record we have of property changing hands was when Mr. Canary arrived in 1882, from Missouri and bought out Mr. McRoberts. The same year Jesse Hauntz and Newton Potter arrived. In April, 1883, Tom Mackey settled the present Ed Wiggins place, and in July of the same year Anderson and Milton Hopper settled the present Clayton ranch and the old Hopper place in the Little Creek Canyon. Moses Hopper arrived soon afterwards from Blackfoot and located on Jim Rhea's place. Frank and Dan Potter, Simeon Ader and Arthur Edson also came about this time.

These comprised the main settlers up till 1885, after which the population had increased to such an extent and the valley was so well organized that the coming of a settler was no longer an unusual event.

During the first years of settlement the Indians were very friendly. They allowed their papooses to play with the pale face children and often went from house to house selling their bows, arrows and beaded moccasins or asking for skins to tan. One winter Charley Reavis and his partner spent several months in the Indian camp and often sat in their councils and smoked their noted peace pipe. This was a great, long stemmed instrument that had been in use for centuries and was filled with a nauseous medicine weed. These councils were held in profound silence and were affairs of great state. The old chief's name was "Bannock Joe," and it is said the Joe Keithley was named

As no war was waged in the valley the settlers soon returned home, but the next spring the Bannocks again took the war trail. After a war in Northern Idaho was ended, a band of marauding Indians came through the valley and stole over 100 horses, which they were taking through Indian Valley, when they were discovered. A party of four men was immediately sent to capture them. The Indians hid in ambush and killed three of the men, who were: Hailey, Grosclouse and Monday. Smith was wounded, but fell into the brush and escaped. When this was learned Charley Reed was sent to bring him home. So great was the fear of

after him. Their friendliness was illustrated by the fact that John McRoberts went to work in Boise and left his wife alone for several months, with the nearest neighbor two and one-half miles distant.

However, they were not always so peaceable, for in the year 1878 they went on the war path. Giving no warning, they left one night, and by morning not one Red Man remained. The river bottom was as bare as though it had not been occupied by them. The people became greatly alarmed and immediately set out for the forts, which were located at Salubria and Boise. The settlers were still more terrified when a horse stealing band of Indians was captured near Indian Springs by H.P. Linder, James Sutton and others. A similar band was discovered near Mann Creek by Tom Galloway, A.F. Hitt and others. These saw an Indian jump into the brush and fearing strategy, they set fire to the woods. A few minutes later an Indian squaw was found unconscious on the ground with a tiny papoose strapped to her back. Although the baby was nearly blinded by the smoke it had not cried or given any sign of pain. The men took the squaw to camp, and after giving her presents, sent her back to her people.

An amusing incident was enacted when Mr. Adams refused to sleep in the fort, because he declared the Indians would capture it. One night a bear visited the fort, and when the men shot at him, he rushed into the brush, running over Mr. Adams, who was in bed. Mr. Adams was unhurt, but declared; "If stay in fort, Injuns get me; if stay in brush, bear get me." However, he moved into the fort and seemingly preferred the Indians.

Indians that he traveled at night and hid during the day. One day he was hiding between two logs when a deer jumped over him and bounded away. In a moment a panther crept up, and scenting Mr. Reed, began circling the logs. After several minutes of terrible suspense, it picked up the scent of the deer and slunk away into the woods, leaving Mr. Reed unharmed. Sheriff Walker's wife was a daughter of Mr. Monday. After the massacre the Indians were not allowed to return and camp, but each year passed through the valley on their way to the Snake River fishing grounds.

Nevertheless, the Indians were not the only

difficulty with which the pioneers had to contend. There were no roads, stores, means of transportation or education. These difficulties the settlers strove to overcome. This they did as the years passed. In the early seventies work was started on the great Middle Valley ditch, which was incorporated in 1884. This was the greatest work of the early settlers and is second only to the railroad.

Very early a road was made to Cuddy's mill and some time later a road was built through Reed's grove to the mill which Mr. Reed had purchased and moved to Pine Creek. Mr. Towell and Robert Jackson held the contract, and were working one day when they discovered some large bear tracks. Mr. Jackson tracked the bear for some distance, when it suddenly jumped out of the brush and rushed toward him. At that moment Mr. Towell arrived with his ax, which missed the mark and bruin caught Mr. Towell in a warm embrace. Mr. Towell extricated himself as soon as possible,

The inhabitants of Middle Valley keenly felt the need of a post office, as the home letters and papers arrived very irregularly and at long intervals. All communications with the outside world were brought by means of a mail carrier, who had to face grave dangers in order to deliver his treasures. Often the roads were impassable, save on horseback or snow shoes, and many times the carrier had to swim swollen and icy streams in order to reach his destination. This was so dangerous and inconvenient that at last a post office was established in the fall of 1876 at the old Day place, in the south end of the valley with Mr. Surdam as postmaster. Two years later it was moved east of the river, there several persons served, among whom was Mr. William Wiggins. Soon it was returned to the west side and located in the McRoberts house, with Mr. McRoberts as postmaster. In 1882, Mr. Canary bought the place owned by Mr. McRoberts and later got the appointment, which he retained till Deaton & Towell established their store, after which they had charge of it for several years.

It was some time after the establishment of a post office before a store was built. John Reavis had a little trading point on his farm, but the first real store was erected by Ed Fletcher in 1885,

however, without leaving most of his shirt in bruin's grasp. After getting help the bear was finally killed, and some say it was the largest bear ever seen in the valley.

There was also a road to Salubria, Weiser and the mill. These needed constant attention, as the bridges were often carried away by spring freshets, and it was not until the late nineties that the railroad was built. This was the most important event in our history, and after its construction population increased more rapidly.

Before any roads had been built, the provisions had to be imported overland from distant points. The nearest railroad stations were Boise; Kelton, Utah; and Umatilla, Oregon. These conditions made it necessary that stores be established at nearer points. Tom Jeffries established a store in Weiser, which was a great improvement, as it made possible the securing of provisions in a shorter time.

where Than Newman's house now stands. The store was small and very limited, scarcely carrying more than tobacco, sugar and coffee. Flour was obtained from the Cuddy mill. Soon after, a second store was erected by Mr. Carrol near the present site of William Edson's house. The reason the buildings were erected in this locality was that it was thought the railroad would go through that part of the valley. When the present site was decided upon, the buildings were again moved to the west side. The next store was built by Deaton & Towell (where the S. & S. Hotel now stands), which they conducted till about 1904, when they sold out to Mr. Clements. Mr. Mackey owned the hardware store, which he later sold to Joe Keithley. The meat market was established by Jack McPhearson.

During this growth and settlement, the religious and educational opportunities had been greatly improved.

The first step in the direction of education was a school conducted in Mr. Reed's home by an old trapper by the name of Welch. This method of teaching in the cabins was continued for several years. The instructors lived at the various cabins and taught two or three months each year. One of the chief instructors was old Uncle Davey

Richardson. A school district was organized in 1876, which reached from the Mann Creek divide to the Middle Valley-Salubria divide. A school was organized and a teacher by the name of Harold secured. The sessions were conducted in a little shack on the present Jackson place. However, the teacher had such a hard time controlling his mischievous pupils that the school was discontinued. The next instructor was a man named Mr. Montgomery, but the weather became so severe that the school was again dismissed. The third term was taught by Miss Minnie Haven (Now Mrs. Doc Linder) in the McRoberts house. The following term was conducted by Mr. Reeves in a shack near the present site of the Salem School. In 1883, the district was divided and a school house erected near Griff Keithley's. Shortly afterward another building was constructed near William Clark's home. Some years after a large building was erected on the present Salem site, which was destroyed by fire in 1903. In 1904

The most severe winters in pioneer history were those of '87 and '88. At that time the settlers were well stocked with provisions and no one suffered severely, except the mail carrier, who on one occasion nearly froze, although he was wrapped in all his own robes and all the available ones he had borrowed, too.

A flood occurred in the spring of 1881. The ice piled up in the river and forced the water over the bottom land. The McRoberts house was nearly submerged, but as there was no bridge to hold the ice, the jam was carried away as soon as the water had risen enough.

The first bridge was of wood and was constructed in 1883 by Mr. McCully, the father of Mrs. Than Newman. Prior to this time the ferry was used. This was established by Ed Anderson, but was afterward operated by other parties. The first steel bridge was erected about 1893. The approaches were made of wood and often were washed away during the spring freshets. About the year '96 the west approach went out just a few days before the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. John Ader. There was no way by which the minister could get across the river to perform the ceremony. So when the wedding day arrived, the bride and groom stood on the bridge and the minister stood

the present building was erected. The Keithley Creek district remained the same till 1909, when a fine, new building was constructed near the Clayton farm.

The religious element was divided into three denominations: The Methodist, the Church of Christ and the Baptist. The meetings were held in the different houses of the valley. G.W. Williams was the first pastor of the Church of Christ and Anderson Hopper the first Baptist pastor. The second Baptist pastor was Mr. Elton, who was located at Salubria and preached at Middle Valley as an outstation. It was through him the first church building was erected on the southeast corner of Mr. Seid's farm. There were then two regular church services, one held in the old schoolhouse and the other

in the church building. The services in Midvale were first held in the Odd Fellow's Hall, and it was not until 1905-1906 that the two present church buildings were erected.

on the west bank and performed the ceremony while the turbulent waters surged through the intervening space. This was the most romantic occurrence in early history.

The means of entertainment were very limited, but were enjoyed to the fullest extent. As cattle raising was the chief occupation for some time, the round-ups and bucking contests were especially popular. The cowboys gathered the great herds from far and near, and then indulged in sports for several days. At one time Charley Reavis and his partner drove 500 cattle to the roundup. Shooting contests were also popular, and it was the ambition of every boy to shoot "big game", as the cowboys did. Ras Wiggins was about 15 years old when he killed his first deer, and a prouder boy was never seen in Middle Valley. One day a party of cowboys was at dinner at Mr. McRoberts' and, as there was not room for all at the table, Ras waited. He was sitting on the door step, when he picked up one of the men's guns and fired at Mr. McRobert's white mule. He supposed the gun was empty, but it was not, and he killed the mule.

Probably the most popular amusement was the country dance, where young and old gathered, it being considered a great offense if one failed to

be present without a good excuse. The other amusements were the spelling matches and the literary societies so common among pioneers.

The community after 1900 was peaceful and devoted all of its time to developing its several resources. The buildings now began to cluster about the Deaton store, as a nucleus of the present town. The rapidity with which the farms were located and lots purchased shows that many realized the rich possibilities of Middle Valley. The attention was then directed toward the town, which soon became a convenient and effective

In 1905-1906 the two church buildings were erected in Midvale. About this time the name was changed from Middle Valley to Midvale by an order of the postal government. T.S. Youngblood constructed the first drug store in 1904. By 1906 the town had enlarged enough to justify the construction of a hotel, millinery store and restaurant. Also the Red Cross Pharmacy and the bank. In 1908 the telephone was put through the valley and in the following year the high school was organized, which has been of untold benefit to the town.

The settlers were not confined to the lower lands alone, but had settled the hills, and agriculture became so well developed that the first combine was brought in about 1909, since which time many others have been purchased.

The year 1909 witnesses an unusual number of improvements. Early in the spring I.R. Smith erected his mill. The livery barn by Carl Fletcher, the furniture store by Robert Jackson were also constructed. Mr. Trotter installed a printing press and the first copy of the Reporter was issued March 11. The business is now owned by T.M. Gough, who publishes a fine weekly paper. Local option was also secured that fall.

In February, 1910, Dan Farmer's store was destroyed by fire, this being the first important disaster in Midvale. The Odd Fellows' Hall, barber shops, Fletcher Bros. Store (which is now owned by Fred Lellman) and the pool hall were also added to the town. In the Fall the town went "dry" and was also incorporated, with Mr. Kay as the first mayor.

The first automobile was bought by Ed Sherman in 1911, causing quite a little excitement

trading point. At this time one of the greatest factors in the business of Midvale was the sheep raising industry of the country, as the sheep men bought supplies for their camps in great quantities, thus greatly increasing the business of the stores.

It was about the year 1906 that Mr. Clements bought the Deaton store and soon enlarged the business and the building. About that same year J.L. Keithley erected his hardware store. The first Odd Fellows' Hall was constructed where the armory now stands. Later Dean Farmer located a store in the lower part of the hall. and give Midvale quite a metropolitan air. The great fire also occurred that year. The fire started in the North Depot Street in the telephone office. From there it quickly spread to the adjoining buildings and soon all the block from J.L. Keithley's hardware store to Mr. Clements' house was in flames. There was no way of stopping the fire, but it was prevented from spreading further. The buildings destroyed were: the telephone office, Reporter building, blacksmith shop, doctor's office, millinery shop, Harris' store and the pool hall. This was the greatest fire in Midvale, and as yet the square is vacant for most of these business men secured other locations. The new steel bridge was also erected that year.

The year 1912 introduced a new enemy — that of disease. A plague of Scarlet Fever swept Midvale and all of the surrounding settlements. The death rate was the highest since the establishment of the town, and very few families escaped the epidemic.

The following year was one of growth and prosperity. The exports were the highest yet known. People flocked into the country and settled hills and valley wherever vacant land was securable.

In the year 1914 Midvale was again visited by fire. In the spring Clements' store was struck by lightning and destroyed. The hotel and other buildings also burned a short time afterward. Work was immediately begun on the construction of the S. & S. Hotel and store on the old mercantile site. This building was completed that same fall. The new high school building was also erected and the light line was put through the valley. Last year, 1915, witnessed the greatest grain crop in the

history of the valley, in spite of the fact that the year was uncommonly dry. The drought was such that many fires resulted, and several crops of grain, as well as buildings were destroyed.

The present year has started as one of the most eventful on record. The great flood which

Thus our town has grown from a single pioneer to a struggling settlement; from the settlement to our prosperous village; and thus may it go on through the great future, broadening and growing with life and prosperity till it shall rank with the prosperous cities of our state, and every person shall be proud of being a citizen of "beautiful Midvale in sunny Idaho."

I wish hereby to acknowledge my indebtedness to W.J. Mackey, A.M. Reed, C.T. Reavis, Mrs. Carl Fletcher and others for their kind assistance in furnishing me many of the facts herein mentioned. There are differences of opinion upon some of the dates and details, but I have endeavored, as far as I was able, with the information thus secured, to present the facts correctly. ---- Evelyn Leger

ALUMNI

The Class of 1912 was composed of Herbert Reavis and Edward Fletcher, Jr. They began school in the first year of its history, in 1911, taking junior work, having taken the first

swept Midvale did a great amount of damage both to the town and the railroad property. All the facts are yet familiar, but so far only loss has been realized. However, some benefits may be derived from it, as "It's and ill wind that blows nobody good."

year's work in the public school under the instruction of Prof. Price. The second year was spent at the Weiser High School. One year after graduation these young men started teaching school, which profession they have followed until the present time. Mr. Herbert Reavis has been teaching the Fairview school and Mr. Fletcher has been teaching District 53.

Miss Tressa Fletcher was the only one to graduate the following year. She took ninth grade work in the Weiser High School. The remaining three years were spent in the Midvale High School.

Miss Fletcher taught one of the rooms of the town school the second year after she finished high school and this year is teaching the Sage Creek School.

In 1914 Mr. Lee Turnbaugh and Mr. Floyd Reavis left the high school as graduates. Mr. Turnbaugh, like the other alumni, went to teaching school, but Mr. Reavis, after remaining on the farm one year, secured the position of R.F.D. carrier.

There were no graduates in 1915.