

NORTH



CHEMUNIS R.

Road to Claguto - 1954

KLABER 1911

John Hague  
Claim No. 44  
1853

No. 1 School  
Later Grange Hall  
(Baw Faw)

Peter Charles  
Claim No. 45  
1852

Samuel T. Adams  
1853

Church 1888

Charles F. White  
Claim No. 37  
1852

William  
Marcy  
Claim No. 38

Fort +  
Stockade

Later  
Road  
To Pe Ell

Turner R. Round tree  
Claim No. 43  
1853

G.W. Buchanan  
Claim No. 39  
1853

HALEMAN  
CREEK

1887  
CEM

MOUND

First  
Entrance

First  
School House  
1854

Thompson W.  
Newland  
Claim No. 40  
1853 - 1st school

Trails  
from  
Cowlitz  
Landing

H.R. Stillman  
Claim No. 42  
1852

William Murphy  
Claim No. 44  
1853  
Palmiter  
1861

To Baw Faw Peak

1862  
The Falls  
Sawmill

50' End of  
Prairie

Road To Wildwood  
1935 to Vader  
and Ryderwood

BOISTFORT PRAIRIE  
1850's

STILLMAN or MILL CREEK

FORK CHEMUNIS RIVER

STILLMAN CR.

LOST CREEK  
Lost Valley

# A HISTORY OF BOISTFORT VALLEY

100 Years 1850 - 1950

Compiled April 1955 by:

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of Chehalis, Washington  
with the help of her Mother,  
Eliza Harris Sweany

Born at Boistfort, June 2, 1873  
Died January 17, 1968

The Boistfort Valley was first called Baw Faw Prairie, then Boisfort, and finally, Boistfort. The French word, Boisfort, pronounced something like 'bawfaw', means "a small valley, surrounded by green hills." This described the prairie at the time the first white settlers arrived in the spring of 1852.

When first seen by white men, as far as is known, the prairie was one and one half miles long, north and south, and about a mile wide. It was devoid of trees but covered with wild grass about eighteen inches high, a beautiful sight after a long journey.

The south fork of the Chehalis River marked the eastern edge of the prairie and on the west is another river called Stillman Creek, or Mill Creek, both flowing northerly to help swell the Chehalis River. The north end of the prairie was somewhere near the present Church, with the cleared area extending south about a mile and a half. The rest of the valley was covered with trees until it was gradually cleared. Now it is all farm land and homes, about two miles wide and fourteen miles long.

Boistfort Valley is located in Lewis County, Washington, about fourteen miles southwest of Chehalis. About six miles further on southwest stands Baw Faw Peak, the highest point in southwest Washington. It has been the location of a State Fire Lookout for years because from the top of the Peak one can see the Pacific Ocean, then turn around and see the Cascade Mountains, the city of Chehalis, other towns, rivers, etc. The Peak and surrounding hills were completely covered with beautiful timber when the settlers came.

It seemed that the prairie was not used as a permanent home by

the Indians, but they kept it burned over so that the camas could grow. These blue-flowering, onion resembling, bulbs were dug in late summer and used for food, often cooked, by the Indians. They dried the blackberries for winter use, also fish.

The Siwash Indians, as they were called by the white settlers in this area, were a branch of the Chehalis tribes. During the Indian wars of 1855-1856, the people of Lewis County were not molested by the Indians but, in order to feel more secure, at least two blockhouses were built on the prairie. Turner Roundtree built one on his Donation Land Claim and the family spent a few nights in it.

Historian of Pioneer days, Charles Miles, has a letter written to him by Clarence Maynard in 1962, at the age of 85. He writes:

"My mother Mary Alice White was born Feb. 26, 1856, in the stockade at Boistfort Prairie. There was a fort and stockade located about a short quarter mile south of Grandfather White's home. The forts were located at each corner of the stockade to give the defenders a clear view of all sides. The fort and stockade were gone when I was old enough to understand, just a few logs left scattered around, perhaps less than a dozen."

But the Indians in this area were always friendly and the settlers were kind to them. The white and Indian children played together while the Indians camped along the rivers. For years they camped in the valley twice a year---fishing season and blackberry---camas season---and were not disturbed by the presence of white people. Everyone learned enough words of the other language to converse in a more or less limited fashion. In later years, after 1888, the Indians came to pick hops grown by white men.

They had an interesting way of catching eels. One Indian would wade out into the river where eels were known to stay in the rock beds. He would stir up the water and when the eels would try to get away another brave, holding a three foot stick

with a string and hook attached, would swing the stick at the eels catching one on the hook. They rarely missed the swift moving eels. They were especially enjoyed smoked or cooked over a fire. I have never heard of the settlers trying to eat them.

The trails to Boistfort were from a branch off the beaten trails, hence the settlements were not stopovers for Pioneers going to other sections in the early days. Boistfort was the end of the trail going west from Cowlitz Landing (now Toledo). A few years later some of the growing families moved over the hills to Pe Ell.

An act passed by the United States Congress in Sept., 1850, allowed a single man to claim 320 acres as a Donation Land Claim. A man and his wife were allowed to stake 640 acres. Over the Indian trails came the settlers, horseback or walking, looking for homes after coming west in covered wagons, suffering many hardships.

The first settlers of Boistfort Prairie were Charles F. White and his wife Elizabeth Buchanan White, in the spring of 1852. Mr. Charles F. White and wife, son Jasper, and Mrs. White's brother Mike Buchanan left Peoria, Illinois, in April, 1851. They crossed the plains in covered wagons and ox teams reaching Portland, Oregon in the fall of that year. After staying there for the winter, in the spring of 1852 they came to Boistfort and staked out their claims. Charles F. White's son, Cyrus White, was the very first white child born in the valley. That was Dec. 20, 1853. Their next child, Mary Alice White, (married Charles W. Maynard) was the one born in the afore mentioned stockade Feb. 26, 1856. Then Arthur James White was born in 1860. Charles W. Maynard later became State Treasurer. In fact many of the people of the valley took part in the affairs of the County and the Territory of Washington, later of the State.

In the fall of 1852 Peter (Pierre) Charles, who had been an employee of the Hudson Bay Co. and had an Indian wife, staked a Donation Land Claim on the Prairie. The wife did not fit in with the ways of the white women so they soon moved over the hills to where Pe Ell now stands. Samuel T. Adams became own of the D. L. Claim. The name Pe Ell probably came from the mis-spelling and mis-pronouncing of the name Pierre.

The Second white woman to come was Mrs. White's mother, Mrs. George Buchanan, who with her husband brought their sons Ripley, Winfield, and Thomas, and daughter Catherine. That was 1853. Later Catherine married A. F. Tullis and moved to the section now called Adna where they operated a store. That fall of 1853 Mr. and Mrs. Thompson W. Newland arrived. Also Mr. and Mrs. William Marcy and two daughters arrived from Indiana after having spent the summer crossing the plains by covered wagons. They all staked out claims, but ahead of them was some one else.

The Third white woman came in August, 1853. Turner R. Roundtree, who had previously visited the country with his older sons, arrived in August, 1853, with his wife, Mary Adeline, three younger sons--Andrew, Perry Oliver (Grandfather of my husband Orville), and Martin D. Also two daughters were in the party---Polly (who later married Mr. Shirley) and Betsy or Elizabeth (who married William Murphy). They had left Illinois the previous fall, crossed the plains to Oregon City then to Boistfort, and staked their claim, dated October 28, 1853.

Henry Stillman came west to Oregon in 1849 from Lima Center, Wisconsin---stayed in Oregon two years, then went to Cowlitz Landing (Toledo). He went over the Indian trail to Boistfort in 1852, coming out of the woods on the place that the Newlands staked later. Mr. Stillman staked his 640 acre claim and built a house on it while staying at the C.F. White home. Then he went back to Klackamas for the rest of the summer. He had written for his wife, daughter and young son Jay Stillman to join him. They crossed the plains traveling with Mrs. Stillman's

brother, Henry Palmiter (who later married my great-grandmother, Margaret Isabelle).

Henry met the party at the John Day River, came to the Willamette Valley, and remained there until the fall of 1853. They used a row boat to go down the Willamette River, cross the Columbia, and down the Columbia River to Monticello (now Longview.) What a hazardous trip for a rowboat! Indians poled the boat up the Cowlitz River to Cowlitz Landing; then they travelled the overland trail to their new home at Boistfort, arriving in the fall of 1853. Henry Stillman was County Commissioner in 1854. In 1862 he built a water-powered saw-mill on his place at the falls on Stillman (Mill) Creek. He furnished the settlers with lumber, which was a wonderful help.

John Hogue took a Donation Land Claim at what is now Klaber in 1853. J. D. Decker also took a place between Klaber and Ceres on the west side of the river in 1852 or 53, but abandoned it and settled on what was later known as the Scollard place, now Arthur Hamilton's, a mile west of Chehalis.

William Brewer's family crossed the plains with mule and ox teams in 1853, to Oregon, and while living in Lane County, William died. The widow, My Great-grandmother, Margaret Isabelle Scott Brewer, moved with her ten children to Grand Mound where they suffered hunger and hardships before she married Henry I. Palmiter, (Mrs. Stillman's brother). He brought her and eight of her children to Boistfort in 1861. Two older girls had already married: Ann Brewer Crowe and Sarah Brewer Harper. The fourth child, Mary Lucinda Brewer, married Martin D. Roundtree and moved to the Roundtree Donation Land Claim in 1862, where she lived until her death in 1923. Life was hard and the nearest doctor lived in Olympia, so the death rate was high. Martin died in 1871 leaving Mary a widow with five small children, at age 24, but the next year she married Edward Harris. They were my Grandfather and Grandmother Harris, parents of my mother, Eliza Jane Harris Sweany. As children we visited them

of times because we lived only five miles away at Curtis. We had wonderful times around the old farm.

Because of serious injury Grandfather Harris was mostly in the hospital during the Civil War, where he learned nursing and doctoring. After his honorable discharge June 13, 1865, he did not go back to Massachusetts or New Hampshire, but came by way of the Isthmus of Panama to Washington Territory. He arrived at Boistfort in 1866 and found work for Martin D. Roundtree. He lived on that farm until his death in 1928---age 80 years.

These pioneers did not realize that they were making history but they knew that in order to build civilization they must have church and school. In 1853 a school was organized and taught by Mrs. T. W. (Mary Buchanan) Newland in her home. Her husband, Mr. Thomas J. Newland was Lewis Co. Supt. in 1854-1856. Salary \$75.00 per month. This school has the reputation of being the first public school in what is now the State of Washington and was Number One. The five pupils were: Jay Stillman, Jasper White, and Henry, Winfield, and Catherine Buchanan. During that year a schoolhouse was built near the Oak Grove and a little creek on the Stillman place back of the present Boistfort Cemetery. It was a frame house of split cedar and was used only in summers.

School was taught there in 1855 by Mr. J. W. Anderson, a lawyer from Cowlitz. The willow switch was used freely on those who misbehaved. Pupils were not separated according to grades as we know them, but according to ability. Children furnished their own books and slates on which to write their lessons. Orville's Grandfather John Henry Miller (born 1842) taught at No. One in 1874.

The U. S. Congress set aside two townships of land for a University of Washington in 1853-1854. One tract was located in Seattle--the other at Boistfort, but this action was set aside in 1857-58, and Seattle acquired the University.

