

Montgomery Family History

Index for White Bluffs Hanford Pioneer Association 38th Reunion- 1981
Response to family history questionnaire

Joseph Black Montgomery Family

Joe Montgomery and his wife, Cordelia (Scott) Montgomery and their four small children, Leonard, Bartov, Florence and Jay moved to White Bluffs in 1910 or 1911, during the summer, when the Columbia River was very high and swift. We had to cross the river on a small ferry with four horses and a wagon, loaded with household goods and furniture. The ferry was pulled or pushed by a motor boat along side of the ferry. The river was so high that we were afraid that the ferry would tip over. We moved to White Bluffs from our homestead, which was located on the south side of Saddle Mountain, about ten miles from Othello and about eight or ten miles from White Bluffs.

The Federal Homestead Act required that a person build a house, fence the property, clear the land and also live on the place at least six months in order to get a clear title to the land. Before moving to the homestead, we lived at Hatton, Washington, after coming to Washington from Carthage, Missouri, in 1906. Leonard and Bart were born in Missouri. Florence and Jay were born in Hatton.

The homestead was 160 acres of dry land, sagebrush and grease wood. We used the sagebrush and grease wood for firewood. A nice large barn, a house and chicken house were on the place when we moved there. I believe Dad purchased the place from a previous homesteader who built the buildings. There was no well or water on the place and Dad had to haul water from Othello or from a railroad station on the Milwaukee Railroad. It would take two or four horses to pull the large water tank full of water and would take all day for the trip.

A large project was started to build a water canal for irrigation and domestic use; from the Columbia River, near Priest Rapids, to run along the slope of Saddle Mountain, just above our homestead. When the project failed, everyone left their homesteads and moved away. When we moved to White Bluffs, the town was a very nice small booming town, located by the Columbia River at a river crossing. The town had a very nice large school house, a couple of churches, Hatton's drug store, a clothing store, a large hotel, a large stable and a few small stores and offices including the post office and a saloon. Later, a community hall was built for the Grange, which had dancing and meetings. The town had electricity and a telephone system. In addition, there was an irrigation canal from Vernita, to Hanford, to supply water to the farms and for stock. There was a pumping station on the bank of the river to supply domestic water. A few years later, a railroad was built from Beverly to Hanford. The railroad was built about two miles from the old town site of White Bluffs. A large real estate company purchased a lot of land along the railroad and started a new town site; and moved all of the business buildings from the old town to the new site. The real estate company would move them for free and give them free land for the buildings. The buildings were moved on greased skids, pulled by many horses, as there were no tractors in those days.

The old school building was left in the old town and later became just the grade school when a new high school building was built at the new town. Florence, Jay, Flora, Hazel and Ralph graduated at the new high school and Bart and Leonard graduated at the old school. The church was also left at the old town.

When we first moved to White Bluffs, dad worked at the stable taking care of the horses and teams. He was very experienced with stock, as he owned a large stock ranch in Missouri. When the town was moved, dad rented the O'Leary 20-acre fruit and alfalfa hay farm. He also raised horses, cows, pigs and chickens; and had a large garden for home use.

Three or four years later he leased the 35 acres Lempke fruit and hay farm on the bank of the river. It was the next to the Love, Robinson and Bishop farms, which were the best and largest in the valley. There was a fruit-packing warehouse on the farm and we would pack 5,000 – 6,000 boxes of apples each year. There was a pumping plant on the place for irrigation and a deep well and water tank for domestic water use.

When Mr. Lempke sold the farm to a man named Stoddard, dad leased another farm known as the big 55 acre McClellan farm across the road from the Blakley fruit farm. This farm had only about 10 acres in apples; the rest was in hay and vegetables. There was a large barn and milk house. Dad had four or five milk cows and sold milk and cream. Produce farming was not very profitable, as there was not a demand on a large scale and the price was very poor. Potatoes, tomatoes, onions and other vegetables sold for 50 cents, to 1.00 dollar per 100-pound sack or apple box. When this farm was sold, dad bought a small farm on his own and also worked on different projects with his horses.

After the war was over, the Federal Government started a project to develop one hundred small farms of twenty acres each, for soldiers. The sites were on undeveloped land that was full of sagebrush and had to be leveled for irrigation. Dad got a contract to do this work on several of the tracts with his four horses and equipment. He was doing really good on this project and after completing several tracts, he had an accident. The level hit a large rock and dad was thrown off the level and hurt internally. He was taken to the hospital in Pasco a few days later, where he died November 26, 1924, Thanksgiving morning.

Florence and mother lived in White Bluffs until 1943, when the U. S. Government purchased all the property in and around White Bluffs and Hanford for an atomic plant to manufacture plutonium for the atomic bombs. They detonated in Japan and brought the war with Japan to an end. All of the people in White Bluffs and Hanford were moved to new locations of their choice, by the U. S. Government. Mother and Florence moved to Pasco where they purchased a home and lived until mother died December 4, 1954. Jay also moved to Pasco, where he worked for the electric utility until he retired in 1972. Jay and wife, Mildred; and Florence still reside in Pasco, as of 1983. Hazel lives in Yakima, Washington; and Flora and her husband live in Shelton, Washington. Bart and his wife lived in Portland, Oregon. Leonard passed away in Pasco on June 19, 1971 after he retired in Spokane. Ralph served in the U. S. Navy during the war and died in Kennewick on July 2, 1955. His wife Mary still lives in Kennewick.

Flora, Hazel and Ralph were born in White Bluffs.

JOSEPH BLACK MONTGOMERY

Born Sept. 18, 1873 Verona, Missouri

Died Nov. 26, 1924 – Age 51. Pasco, Washington

Married – Cordelia Scott – July 25, 1895

Born Oct 22, 1878 – Barry County, Mo.

Died Dec. 4, 1954 – Pasco, Wash.

CHILDREN

1 – Leonard Andrew – Born Carthage, Mo. Died June 19, 1971

Married Cora Griffin Oct. 8, 1927

2 – Bart Francis – Born Jasper, Mo

Married Emogene D. Glascock June 8, 1930

3 – Florence Grace – Born Hatton, Wash.

4 – Jay Joseph – Born Hatton, Wash.

Married Mildred Wade Nov. 25, 1937

5 – Flora Viola – Born White Bluffs, Wash.

Married Joe Durand June 6, 1935

6 – Hazel Ann – Born White Bluffs, Wash.

Married William Rousseau Oct. 28, 1935

7 – Ralph – Born White Bluffs, Wash. Died July 2, 1955. Age 36

Married Mary Doyle May 31, 1947

Bart Montgomery

June 1, 1983