BEHIND THE 8-BALL WITH SQUATTER’S RIGHTS

By Don Clark        No. 8

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This is a continuation of article from the previous edition of the Succotash.

It had taken me 4 hours to get tot Secesh Meadows from McCall in Stockwell’s old Dodge truck, with my load of groceries and supplies for Warren. I’d better hurry up I thought, so I didn’t stop to visit with Alec Beaton, and only waved to Jack and Ethel Fernan when I bounced by their house. Fisher & Baumhauf had put the new road in over Long Gulch and Steamboat Summits, so I was able to get to Warren in good time. Otis Morris was glad to see me because he was waiting for a lot of the stuff I’d brought in.

Warren was a pretty busy place in those days. The dredges were working and several of the hard rock mines were in various stages of development. Leland and Beulah Waggoner were both working with the dredging activity. Tim & Sam Williams were alternating between mining in Warren Meadows and prospecting the whole back country. Otis filled me in on all the latest news of Warren and South Fork, filled my gas tank from the pump he had in front of the store, and filled my stomach with candy bars. In later years I was always sorry that I didn’t spend more time listening and learning about Warren from Otis. He spent his last years with the McDowell family, who were prominent in Warren’s hotel and mining activities. He did show me the building that had housed a saloon run by two uncles of mine – Harry Hanthorne and Tom Hendricks. The old back bar was still in it and it was a beauty. I don’t know what ever happed to it, but I’d surely like to own it now!

About 2 O’clock I headed back toward McCall, past the area on Steamboat Creek where the “Mickey Mouse” dredge had worked, and back over the two summits to Secesh Meadows. I did take time to stop at Jack & Ethel’s, and of course Ethel saw to it that I got fed before I left. One of Jack’s pet deer, with a bright red scarf tied around its neck (which in those days kept people from shooting it), was feeding close to the cabin. Ethel had already caught a mess of nice rainbow trout out of the river. Ethel did her fishing while sitting in a rocking chair on the bank of the Secesh just below Bob Hill’s and Rick Ferriday’s cabins. A large brown beer bottle of their home brew was always present beside her, to help her keep up her strength.

I paused in my journey to revisit the site of the cabin in the upper Meadows where my Aunt Emma and Will Cadby had lived for a time. They had moved to Secesh from South Fork where they’d had a ranch at the mouth of Elk Creek, complete with rooming and boarding house, school and post office. They later built and ran the “Halfway House” between Burgdorf and McCall. Across the Warren Wagon Road and where their cabin sits is where Dad – Fred Clark – and brother Alfred had the “Mickey Mouse” dredge set up ten years after the trip I was then on. Ferguson (a former dredge master for Fisher & Baumhoff) and Tuffy McDowell tore the boat apart and reassembled it on the Secesh property. The dredge would only dig 20 feet deep, bedrock is 30-35 feet, and the effort failed because the gold values weren’t enough. The boat was then torn down again and moved to Ruby Meadows.

I stopped at the site of our first prospect hole near the upper bridge where Dad had washed some of the bank for gold. Using an old Studebaker car engine, a 6” centrifugal pump and a hydraulic “giant” obtained from the Winklers over on the Golden Rule, he had tried his first serious mining. There wasn’t enough fall from bedrock to the river to get rid of tailings using that method, so the sluices had to be “hand-mucked” – and he found out that even though the gold values were high, there was more to gold mining than getting water on the gravel.

I finally got back, with no flat tires, no engine trouble, but a very tired 12 year old, about 6 pm. I know Mr. Stockwell was glad to see me!