

GLENN CORRIN

Interviewed by:

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Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

## GLENN CORRIN

Troy; b. 1890

farmer, shepherd, drove supply wagon, odd jobs.

.9 hr.

minute page

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with Sam Schrager  
May 21, 1975

## II. Transcript

Glenn Corrin was 14 years old when Troy's Marshall Hays was shot to death by Payne Sly in 1904. He gives his eyewitness account of the incident, and tells a number of stories that show Hays as a cowardly bully who regularly ran into people who were tougher than he was--such as Joe Wells of Deary. In the summer of 1906 Glenn drove the mail and supply wagon on its two day trip from Troy east to Collins and back, and he describes the route and the looks of the country. He also discusses the fruit industry around Troy.

SAM SCHRAGER: First I wanted to talk about Marshall Hays, and first thing I was wondering about him was what kind of reputation he had.

GLENN CORRIN: Oh he didn't have a very good reputation. Everybody that I saw just pret'near hated him (laughs). He was always looking for trouble, always looking for trouble. My way of thinking he was kind of a stinker (chuckles). He was marshall there, I don't know just what the dates was, but you may know that.

SAM: Well, I know when he died.

G C: Well so do I. But I don't know the date.

SAM: I don't know the date either, but I know the year.

G C: I know where he died. He died down there by some ties down there along the railroad track.

SAM: Well, why don't you tell me that, everything, what you remember from that day, just that whole situation that lead to his death.

G C: Well, all that I am sure of...I've heard, some of it is hearsay, but all that I know for sure is when this Sly's stepdaughter come out there and was a-hollerin' that papa is trying to kill mama. And then Hays come a-runnin' up there. And I'd heard that they had a little trouble over town before this. And he come running up there, and he went up to the house, and he knocked on the door, and didn't anybody open it. So he throwed his hand around to his hip and pushed the door open, and just as he pushed the door



open there was a gun cracked and the twig fell off'n the tree out in front of the house. And I don't know, but then he pulled his gun and emptied it inside and then turned and run down the hill and got down there among those ties, and he fell in there and there's where he died. That's about all I know about that, but I know there's some of 'em around town that was shooting at him (Sly). He was up there on the hill. He came out there in sight and he said that he'd got one man he was after and there was two more. And we all supposed that the two he was after was the old man's two boys. And there's one of 'em was laying down there at the corner of the hotel shooting at him up on the hillside there. He took a shot through the sign board up over their head there, told the people to get out of the road so that he could get a chance at this guy that was laying down there by the hotel, around the corner of the hotel. And he finally give up, and that night they had him there in the hotel, holding him upstairs, and his wife tried to slip him a gun (laughs). Now that's all I know about it.

SAM: They stopped her? His wife?

G C: On, evidently.

SAM: Well now, you say that some people were shooting at Sly besides Hays' sons, or just his sons?

G C: I don't think, it was just Hay's sons that was a-shootin' at him. That's the only ones that I know of. And he was wanting to get a chance at one of them (chuckles). He wasn't shooting at anybody else, he was just shooting at those guys. There was one of the Hays boys, I don't know whether the other one was in town at the time that this happened or not.

SAM: So Hays just bled to death on the tie? Was it fast, slow?

G C: Oh I don't know. It didn't last very long. He was shot right through here, right through the jugular vein. I don't know how long he laid there before he died. I don't think it was very long.

SAM: Was there a crowd around him?

G C: Well, I don't think so. Not too many right at the time, because they didn't know who this Sly was going to shoot at, you see.

SAM: So the people were scared that Sly was gonna go on a rampage, huh?

G C: Yeah. But he didn't. It just seemed like it was just those certain ones that he wanted. And he probably had good reasons why that he wanted 'em too.

SAM: Did people say, any ideas why?

G C: No, they didn't say. But I just know that those Hays boys was always... picking pockets and everything else (laughs).

SAM: Well, did Sly just come out and give himself up, or did the people go up and reason with him? Do you remember about that?

G C: No I don't. I don't remember just exactly how that was. But I really think that he give himself up, is what I think. Because if he hadn't there wouldn't a been anybody a-goin' up there against that rifle (laughs).

SAM: And the business there with his wife and daughter, was that a real fight that they were in?

G C: I don't know, I didn't see it, but I had my guesses. I kind of thought that was a put-on to get him up there.

SAM: Where were you standing when this was going on in town? Where were you?

G C: Well, I was down there by, there used to be a fruit house there--there isn't any there anymore--down there by the railroad track. There used to be a fruit house there, and I was just standing out from the edge of that, down there by the depot.

SAM: And where was Hays when he heard the fight breaking out, with the girl screaming?

G C: Well I don't know where he was...

SAM: Was he downtown?

G C: ...When he he heard it, but he came a-runnin' up there anyway. And you

know a fella hadn't ought not say anything that they've heard, it's just what you see (laughs).

SAM: Yah, but even so, most of the people that talked about it, they're all gone now, so what they said, y'know, what you heard, that's important too-- what people said. You can say it's not what you said, what you saw, but what you heard.

G C: Well, I heard that this Sly and Hays had had an argument up town, and this Sly had told him there, he said, "I'll get you." I've heard that. But I didn't hear it myself, I've just heard that people said that. This Hays was always a-shootin' around town. Didn't seem like, he was always kind of trigger-happy.

SAM: He liked to fire his gun?

G C: Yeah. He just seemed like he kind of liked to use the gun.

SAM: You remember any times when he pushed people around?

G C: Well...he tried to.

SAM: ...Or hearing about times when he did?

G C: Well, there's one time there that they had an ordinance there in town that you couldn't ride nor drive faster than a walk through Main Street. And he was out there to grab everybody he could. And there's one guy that was going down the street, and he had an old scrappy bridle on his horse that didn't amount to anything, and he was riding a little too fast. And old Hays come out there to stop him, grabbed ahold of the bridle, and the other guy slipped it over--don't remember who it was--but he slipped the bridle off over the horse's head and throwed the spurs to the horse and run over the top of the old man Hays, and (laughing) come pret'near...

SAM: Come pretty near what?

G C: Come pret'near getting him.

SAM: He went down in the mud, huh?

G C: Yeah. He was always looking for something like that, y'know. And he'd holler and he was always a-shootin'. One time my aunt, she got scared, she thought she was gonna get hit. She was going up the street and the old man had started a-shootin'. He was shooting at somebody, I don't know who it was now. He was a character, that guy.

SAM: I've got one more question about that business, the shootout there. How far above the railroad depot was Sly's house?

G C: Well, I don't know just exactly. Well, the house I think is still there. It's the house setting up on the hillside there. That used to be outside of the city limits. And it was at that time. It was outside the city limits.

SAM: Does that mean that Hays had no right to go out there?

G C: Oh I don't know whether he did or not. I don't know what the rulings was on that then. I always figured that Sly was a pretty decent sort of guy. But you know there are a lot of people can be pushed just a little too far. You know that.

SAM: You told me that there are a couple of times that Hays had run-ins with Joe Wells.

G C: Yes, he did. Well he didn't just ex...well he did have a run-in, too. The time that he came out there to get that Benson that used to live up there. He came out to get him, and this guy, this Benson saw him coming, and he slipped out and come up to Joe Wells' place. And Hays knew that they were good friends, so he just took a hunch that this Benson was up there, and he come up to get him. And this Joe Wells told him, asked him if he was gonna come in search the place to get him, and Joe Wells said, "You got a search warrant?" Said he didn't have to have one or something similar to that, and he was going to come in. But when this Benson came up there, old Joe Wells give the boys and his wife a rifle apiece, and had 'em placed where he wanted 'em. And he told the old man Hays that he wasn't gonna come in there.

They was waiting for him. If he'd a tried to come in I guess they woulda shot him. Another time this Benson and him was to town...

SAM: Benson and Joe Wells?

G C: Yeah. And they'd been drinking a little bit. They drank pretty heavy, both of 'em. And they got ready and started to go home. And they was on their horses going home, and the old man Hays jumped onto his horse and took after 'em. Got out there and wanted 'em to stop and started a-shootin'. And Benson got scared and stopped, and old Joe Wells was laying over on the side of his horse, heading for home. But when Benson quit and went back, well he went back too and made old Hays turn him loose (laughs).

SAM: He made old Hays turn him loose, huh?

G C: Yeah.

SAM: Wonder how he did that?

G C: I don't know. Old Joe Wells had a kind of a way that when he said things that they could tell that he meant it (chuckles).

SAM: Was this Benson that you're talking about John Benson?

G C: I don't know what his given name was. He lived up there by Deary up there down over the hill there from where Joe Wells lived.

SAM: What kind of a guy was Joe Wells?

G C: Well, my way of booking him, he was a first class guy. He was a good guy. And he had been a slave one time, but he was freed, and his old master give him the name of Wells, that was his name. Give Joe Wells the name of Wells. And then in latter years there was a couple of those Wells boys lived up there by Deary, and old Joe Wells and them were great friends, visited back and forth all the time...Old Hays had a habit of drinking with guys until he'd get him drink a little bit, and then he'd arrest 'em for being drunk. Some of 'em asked him when he went to arrest 'em, "what's the matter, you need another sack of flour?" (Laughs.) He was drinking with old Dick Sanderline there one

time in the saloon. That was when they had them long-handled goblets. And the old man had drank with him ever since he'd been in, all he'd drank. And then he was going to arrest him for being drunk. Old Dick Sanderline hit him over the head with one of those goblets, knocked him down, and he drug him outside. There was a livery barn right next to it, and they had a well there. And he took the lid off'n the well, and shoved the old man down in there, and hold his head under, was just about drowning him till they come pulled him off (chuckling).

SAM: Sounds like for Hays being such a tough guy, it sounds like he got his quite a bit.

G C: Oh, there's some tough guys around Troy too (laughs).

SAM: No, did you ever hear tell of times when Hays really beat up people, Marshall Hays himself did?

G C: Well I don't know as I ever heard of him ever beating anybody. I think he's too big of a coward for that. He'd shoot 'em if he got a chance.

SAM: So that was the kind of guy he was?

G C: Yeah.

SAM: That's why you don't hear much about him taking on people, because he didn't think he could take 'em, unless he shot 'em...Well what about Lou Wells, Joe Wells' wife. What do you remember about her?

G C: Well, I don't remember very much about her, in a way. Well in a way too. They had sheep up there, and she would take that wool and wash that wool, card it, make yarn and knit socks, for men. And she'd knit 'em great big, and then shrink 'em, and she'd sell 'em for fifty cents a pair out of that wool, pure wool. And I don't know, I think that you coulda poured water in those socks and they'd a held it.

SAM: You told me that she liked to beat on her washtub?

G C: No, it was a dishpan. You know they didn't have waterworks up there then.

And they just had the water, and then they'd go out and throw the water out, you see. And she'd come back and beat on the bottom of the dishpan. There was a fella with me up there when I was driving that mail route by the name of Marvin Froman. And she'd come back a-beatin' on the bottom of the dishpan, he got up and started a-steppin' her off in the middle of the floor up there. She got to laughing and she pounded on that dishpan till she pret'near knocked all the skin off'n her fingers (laughs). Laugh? She was laughing every minute of the time.

SAM: She laughed a lot?

G C: Yeah. When she was beating on that dishpan, she was a-laughin' when he was a-steppin' her off out there.

SAM: So he started a-dancin', huh.

G C: Yeah, he was jigging, y'know. And she was giving the time beat for it, y'know, and he was just having a time, and so was she.

SAM: Did you ever see her chewing tobacco?

G C: No, I never noticed her doing that. I guess she did though. Pret'near all those southern women did. I don't know for sure about her.

SAM: Do you remember what their house looked like, what the house was like?

G C: Oh, it was a log house, built of logs y'know, the old fashioned way of building 'em.

SAM: It was also a lodging house, right? People stayed overnight sometimes?

G C: I don't think that they stayed there at night so much, but see they always served meals there at noon, I know, because when I was driving that mail route up there, that was our halfway house. We stopped there for dinner every day, going and coming.

SAM: Would they have many people there for the noon meal, or just be just you?

G C: Oh well, and everybody that was riding the mail route with me. See I hauled passengers too. And they all got a stop there to eat.

SAM: Oh, what would one of the lunches be? What would you have for lunch there?  
Be very big?

G C: Oh, it would have all we could eat, that's all that I could say. I couldn't remember just what it was. It was good cooking too.

SAM: Well, tell me some about that old mail route that you had. Where did it go?

G C: It went from Troy to Collins. It went out, well the first stop was there at Nora, you know there used to be a kind of a store and the post office there at Nora. And then we went on from Nora, I think the next stop was at Avon. And I had those little leather bags, the oilcloth bags, to carry the mail. They had a place up there where I could hang 'em on as I went by. It went to Avon--we went out there, then went Bear Creek, and then we went north up to the Avon, there's a farmhouse up there where the post office was. Then we came back, and then Anderson, right down there at Bear Creek, right where the bridge is across Bear Creek. You know where that old barn is setting there? Well there used to be a store building there, that used to be the post office at Anderson. And then from Anderson I went to Janesville, but on the road before I got there is where we stopped to eat dinner, at Joe Wells'. Then we went to Janesville and I had to come back a little ways, and then the next stop after Janesville was Collins, the next post office. But all along the road, everybody along the road, they had their oilcloth sack, I had to leave their mail for 'em, all the way along.

SAM: They'd leave that sack right by the roadside there?

G C: Yeah, they'd have oh a little rig fixed up where you'd hang it on. And that's all the way up there. That's the way old Bovill used to get his mail too. There was no post office there.

SAM: Did they have their name written on the sack, or did you just know who it was?

G C: Well they had their name written on the sack as a rule, but I knew just about



whose they were anyhow from the sack. Old Abe Frei run the post office at Collins. And the father to those Lawrences there at Deary run the Janesville post office. Well Anderson, I guess a fella by the name of Anderson run the Anderson post office, but I can't remember the one that run the one at Avon, don't remember what their names was, nor the one at Nora, I don't remember who run that.

SAM: Well what was the road like to travel on?

G C: Terrible. (Laughs.) Of course there was no gravel at that time at all. In places where we'd put gravel now they had corduroy. Where it was soft and muddy you know they'd take and cut poles and lay 'em crossways of the road, and it bumpity-bump-bump-bump-bump, all over that. There was just an awful lot of that.

SAM: Were they laid down just one next to another?

G C: Yeah, just lay 'em right side by side. You can know what that would be like. You didn't get up any speed very much or anything like that (laughs). It was a walk there, sometimes pretty slow.

SAM: Was it very muddy?

G C: Sometimes. Someplace it went across where it was kinda swampy.

SAM: No places you had to swim though, were there?

G C: No, not when I was driving. But there was times in the winter--I was only there in the summertime, during the school vacation. In the wintertime there sometimes I guess they had to leave their rig and take the horse and swim the creeks and everything else to get up there.

SAM: Well did the roads follow close to the way they are now, or were they real different?

G C: No. They were different, quite a bit different from where they are now. There ain't very many places where it goes anyway very close to it. I know when we got out there, when we went over to go to Avon, we went over there

about to Dry Creek, and then took off--that used to be a sawmill back off up there. And we'd go in there and go across and then go down to Bear Creek from there. And it wasn't anyways near where the road is now.

SAM: How wide was it? Was it wide enough that two rigs could pass each other on it?

G C: Well if you'd look for the right spot there was (laughs). It's just mainly just a single road. But you know you can pret'near always pull off, let another one by.

SAM: Did you run into many people using the road besides yourself?

G C: Oh, quite a few sometimes. Sometimes there wasn't so many. Sometimes you wouldn't see anybody hardly from the time you left until you get back.

SAM: I think of how different that country would be.

G C: Oh, did I tell you that, there at Bovill--that was the prettiest place I ever saw, the first time I went up there I thought. We was going in there just in the evening, y'know, and there was those big meadows, those meadows there, and those big tall trees that you'd look way back to see the top of 'em. And cattle was coming in there bawling, you know, and I thought that was pretty. But they sure spoiled the looks of that country. Those old white pine trees, they were tall.

SAM: There was a natural meadow there at Bovill.

G C: Yeah. And then there was a natural meadow there at Collins too. There's several little meadows up along that creek that goes up there. Several of 'em, I think that's the west fork of the Potlatch, went up there.

SAM: Well Bovill, was he the only person right there at the townsite at that time?

G C: Yeah, yeah. He was the only one there then.

(End of Side A)