

*Yellow Roses By The Doorstep  
Apples In The Orchard  
Berries On The Fence:*

*Women Homesteaders on the Payette National Forest*

*By  
Sheila D. Reddy*

*Heritage Program  
Payette National Forest*

*1993*





YELLOW ROSES BY THE DOORSTEP, APPLES IN THE ORCHARD, BERRIES ON THE FENCE:  
Women Homesteaders on the Payette National Forest

By

Sheila D. Reddy

Our view of the woman pioneer is often unrealistic and distorted, created by Hollywood and by writers like Stanley Vestal, who wrote in the 1930's:

The women...scuttled fearfully across the prairies...Invalids and women and old men rode in Dearborn carriages or spring wagons. But free men, healthy men, rode horseback, or on mules (Vestal 1957:8, 23).

A more honest viewpoint comes from immigrant and Idaho Pioneer, W. A. Goulder. In his autobiography he wrote:

There was, however, a great deal of real gold found that year (1845) along every mile of that long, dreary transit across the wilderness...It was the gold that was found in the courage and fortitude, the patience and cheerfulness of the brave and persevering immigrants. But in none of these qualities shine out in such resplendent lustre as among the women of the immigration. There was never a day that did not bring them its peculiar trials and burdens, its difficulties, and its dangers...No one could avoid a feeling of exposure and helplessness; and particularly did these experiences and this feeling press with all their force upon the women who were making this long dreary journey. In spite of all this, they were courageous, patient and cheerful, and ready at all times for every emergency. What is true of these women, who were marching under the banner of 1845, it is true of those who came earlier and later (Goulder 1909: 132-133).

#### THE HISTORY OF HOMESTEADING ON THE FOREST RESERVES

After Idaho was admitted to the Union on July 3, 1890, an Act passed by Congress gave the President power to establish Forest Reserves from the public domain. The principal objective was to reserve timber lands, preventing them from passing into private ownership. In 1904 the Seven Devils Forest Reserve and the Little Salmon River Reserve were established. In 1905 the two Reserves were combined to create the Weiser National Forest. In the same year the Idaho Forest was created. On April 4, 1944 the Weiser National Forest and the Idaho National Forest were combined to create the Payette National Forest.

In the original Forest Reserve Act no provisions had been made for homestead entries. Congress recognizing some lands in the Reserve areas were more suited for agriculture than for timber harvest passed the "June 11 Act" of 1906, authorizing homestead entries on Forest Reserves and in the National Forests. The task of administering and overseeing the processing the new law fell on the limited personnel of the newly created Forest Service. J.B. Lafferty, Forest Supervisor for the Weiser National Forest (1906-1920) later wrote, "Examining land applied for under this act required a large part of the supervisor's time for several years" (Lafferty 1963:37). He pointed out, of the 321 applications, 176 were approved.



The process began after specific Reserve lands designated as more suitable for agriculture than timber, were "listed." A person wishing to claim a listing applied for the tract of land, was given a numbered entry and allowed to settle on the land. Maximum allotment was 160 acres. The homesteader generally lived on the land, built a home, cleared, farmed and made it their home, however, the rules and regulations were many, varied, and changed over time, depending on governmental laws. At the time of final proof, an announcement was published in the local newspaper; the homestead and the improvements were examined and evaluated, generally by the Forest Ranger responsible for that area. The Ranger filed a report, making a recommendation regarding the applicant's compliance with the "spirit and the letter" of the Homestead law. If noncompliance and violations were found, the entry was denied. If requirements were met, and fees paid, patent was issued and land title given to the homesteader.

The largest number of the entries were made by married couples, often with families, a smaller number by single men, and an even smaller number by women. The application reports made by the Forest officers provides a unique opportunity to examine the lives, social conditions, and accomplishments of the pioneer women, on what would become the Payette National Forest.

#### THE HOUSE

Although the land and the way it lay was vital and important, the construction of a house was the first sign of permanence. Often the first home in the wilderness was a tent. Sarah Royce describes her first pioneer home:

Our house was of cloth...one end I curtained off for a bedroom...The rest of the house I divided more by arrangement of the furniture than by actual partition into kitchen, dining room, and parlor...My dining room...was furnished with a table and a couple of chairs; and if I did have to use my dining table in preparing my breads, pies and cakes on baking days, I did not have very far to go to put them into the oven, nor much farther, to put them into the cupboard, when done and cooled (Royce 1932:128-129).

More permanent houses were required of the homesteaders proving up their land. Bethenia Owens-Adair describes her first cabin home:

The improvements on it consisted of a small cabin 12 by 14 (feet) in dimensions, made of round logs with the bark on them, each notched deeply enough at its ends to dovetail into its neighbors above and below it. The cracks still remaining after this rude fitting were filled with mixed mud and grass, but this cabin had never been "chinked." It was covered with "shakes" (thick, hand-made shingles, three feet long) which were kept in place by poles, tied down at each end. The door was so low that a man had to stoop to go in and out, and it was fastened with the proverbial latch and string...Later I gathered grass and fern, and mixed them with mud, and filled the cracks, thus shutting out the snakes and lizards, which abounded in that region...My cooking utensils were a pot, tea-kettle and bake oven (all of iron), a frying pan and coffee pot, a churn, six milk pans, a wash tub, and board, a large twenty or thirty gallon iron pot for washing purposes, etc., and a water bucket and tin dipper...In addition, mother gave me a good feather bed, and pillows...I considered this a most excellent start in life (Luchetti 1982:175-176).



## THE WOMEN

The following information has been selectively chosen and edited by this author from records in the historic files of the Payette National Forest. Original wording and content has been followed as closely as possible, to retain the spirit of the circumstances, and the personality and observations of the recorders.

JANE (BRADFORD) SHELTON

The final application examination was made by Forest Ranger John B. Barr, 1916. CLAIMANT: Mrs. Jane Shelton, formerly Mrs. Jane Bradford, Bear, Idaho. When the claimant filed on the land she was a widow with three children. On Dec. 24, 1912 she was married to Earl Shelton and there are now five children in the family. The family resides on the claim.

SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE: Claimant made H.E. (homestead entry) May 16, 1911, and established residence some time during that summer. During the winter of 1911-12 and again from Oct. 1, 1912 to Apr. 15, 1913, she moved into her sister's house about 3/4 mile from the claim in order to be nearer school. She and her family have lived continuously on the claim since April 15, 1913. There are now 55 acres in cultivation. Additional entry made Aug. 7, 1916.

Farming implements consist of: plow, harrow, disc, mowing machine, rake, binder, wagon, hack, and harness. Household goods and furniture: cookstove, heating stove, tables, chairs, cupboard, dishes, cooking utensils, lounge, sewing machine, beds, bedding and clothing.

IMPROVEMENTS: The house first built was 16 x 24 (feet), 1-1/2 stories high with three rooms downstairs. In 1913 an additional 12 x 24 (feet), containing two rooms were built. Value of house, \$200.00. It is habitable the entire year. In 1913 a barn 14 x 30 (feet), value \$100.00; a hen house 10 x 12 (feet), value \$25.00; a woodshed, value \$25.00, were built. There is also a granary 12 x 16 (feet), value \$50.00. In 1915 a wagon shed and a stable each 14 x 30 (feet) were added to the barn. Value of both \$100.00. During this year 1/2 mile of 3 wire fence was built at a cost of \$50.00. Water for domestic use is secured from a well. All of the original entry is fenced. With the exception of part of the fence, which was put up by the owners of the adjoining land, all the improvements were made by the present claimant or her husband.

CULTIVATION: There are now 55 acres in cultivation. In 1912, 10 acres were sown to oats and 300 bushels raised. In 1913, 25 acres were sown and 900 bushels raised. In 1914, 45 acres were put in and 1,000 bushels of oats and barley raised. In 1915, 50 acres were sown to oats and barley and 800 bushels raised. In 1916, 55 acres were sown to oats and barley and cut for hay. About 60 tons were secured.

GRAZING: Claimant's husband owns 15 head of cattle and 13 horses. They have 1 hog and 40-50 hens.

GOOD FAITH: The number and kinds of buildings and the presence of livestock, farming implements and household furniture and the continuous residence of the claimant gives the appearance of a personal home.

Remarks: The application was reviewed by Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty, Sept. 13, 1916. Patent was issued May 9, 1917, signed by Woodrow Wilson.



ELIZABETH BROWN

Elizabeth Brown, Council, Idaho (Stevens), on Aug. 12, 1909, made Homestead Entry, applying for 5 acres. No examination or report was filed. Patent was issued on May 13, 1913.

KATE LEE COLE

Forest Ranger Clinton M. Mangum examined the entry April 19, 1916.

CLAIMANT: Kate Lee Cole. The claimant is single and resides on the land.

SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE: The land was filed on Jan. 7, 1914. residence was established Jan. 29, 1914. Residence has been continuous except for the period from Dec. 7, 1914, to May 6, 1915. During this time the claimant was away earning money to improve her homestead, and was visiting her sick mother in Missouri. There are no farming implements on the claim. The household furniture consists of a heating stove, cook stove, tables, two beds, chairs, and various cooking utensils.

IMPROVEMENTS: The following buildings are on the claim: a two room house 18' x 20', cost \$75.00; a wood shed 8' x 12', cost about \$20.00; and a smoke house 6' x 6', cost about \$12.00. About 70 acres of the claim are fenced with 3 wire fence, posts about 16' apart. Cost \$63.00. The dwelling is habitable during the entire year. Water for domestic use is secured from a spring on the homestead. One room of the dwelling was built by Wm. H. Arthur (previous homesteader who relinquished). All the other improvements were built by the present claimant.

CULTIVATION: About 22 acres of land are now under cultivation. There is no orchard on the claim. None of the land is under ditch. The timber on the homestead is scattering, and none of it has been removed by the present claimant. The following crops have been raised on the homestead by the claimant: one acre of grain hay and garden in 1914; in 1915 about 10 acres of grain; in 1916 about 22 acres of grain. The crops were all sold.

GRAZING: The claimant owns no stock.

GOOD FAITH: The area in cultivation, and the improvements that have been made indicate the claim is intended for a permanent home. I do not think that a hearing should be ordered to determine validity of this claim.

Remarks: Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty approved the report Jan. 26, 1917. Patent was issued Nov. 8, 1917.

MINNIE C. DAY

Forest Ranger Arthur V. Robertson examined the entry Dec. 4, 1907 and determined it to be a Desert Entry. The case was transmitted to the local General Land Office Feb. 10, 1909. The following information was taken.

CLAIMANT: Minnie C. Day, Wild Horse, Idaho. Family members, husband and four children.

IMPROVEMENTS: No structures built. 115 acres suited to tilling. 30 acres under plow. All the land under fence. 150 acres under ditch. Claimant raises alfalfa hay and garden (12 tons of alfalfa and enough garden to supply family).

GRAZING: 15 cattle grazed on Weiser National Forest under permit.

DATE CLAIMANT SETTLED ON THIS LAND: Did not make actual settlement except to cultivate and improve the place. Claimant filed on land Jan. 4, 1904,... but has not lived on the land.

REMARKS: I found about 30 acres in cultivation and ditches...There can be no question as to this being desert entry land in character.

Remarks: No information available regarding patent.



CORA ROTH, daughter of John C. Derrick, deceased.

Assistant Ranger Nick S. Phelan examined the entry Aug. 23, 1912.

CLAIMANT: Mrs. Cora Roth of Fruitvale, Idaho. Mrs. Cora Roth is a daughter of John C. Derrick, deceased. and resides with her husband on a homestead.

Total area about 90 acres.

SETTLEMENT: John C. Derrick, deceased, settled on the land May 16, 1907 and he filed on it Feb. 21, 1910. During the year 1910 Mr. John C. Derrick, deceased was absent from his claim 4 months, he worked 2 months for Mr. Peck at cutting wood, the other 2 months was spent visiting his children in Nebraska. While he was absent Mrs. Cora Roth, the present claimant and her husband, spent two months on the claim. In the year 1911 the deceased was on the claim about 10 months, the balance of the year he was living with his daughter about 6 miles from the claim. In 1912 he left the claim the last of Oct. to go and live with his daughter, at which place he died in Feb. 1913. I have been acquainted with the deceased and his daughter, Mrs. Cora Roth since 1910, during my official work I have passed the claim many times during each year.

IMPROVEMENTS: The dwelling is a one room log cabin building 12 x 14 feet. It has 3 half windows and 1 door, probable value \$75.00. The dwelling is habitable at all seasons. There is also a log and brush barn and chicken house on the place, size about 20 x 16 feet, probable value \$50.00. There is a dugout which is used as a cellar, value about \$20.00. The domestic water is secured from a spring. All the improvements were made by Mr. John C. Derrick excepting the dwelling, it was on the place when he settled on the land and he repaired it and used it during his residence on the land.

Remarks: The amount of land under cultivation did not meet requirements. This was corrected by the claimant and patent was issued July 24, 1914.

ANNA E. GIBBS

Deputy Forest Ranger A.L. Rawson examined entry Sept. 11, 1908.

CLAIMANT: Anna E. Gibbs, Cambridge, Idaho, and 4 daughter and 7 sons.

IMPROVEMENTS: Part box and part frame, 5 rooms with shake roof worth about \$200.00. Frame barn 14' x 40', shake roof. Log bunk house 15' x 16', shake roof. Wood shed 16' x 30', shake roof. Box chicken coop 6' x 10', board roof. Underground cellar 10' x 12', dirt roof. Worth about \$250.00. 30 acres under plow; 30 acres under ditch; 160 acres under fence.

Furniture: 1 steel range, 1 kitchen cabinet, 1 dining table, 1 writing desk, 1 sewing machine, 1 sheet-iron heater, 4 beds, 1 folding bed, 1 lounge, and 2 cupboards.

Farming Implements: mower, rake, bobsleds, 2 sets of harness, 14" plow, disc, harrow, 2 wagons, and 1 hack.

CULTIVATION: Hay and garden; 17 tons of hay, 2 tons beets, 2 tons carrots, 500 lbs. onions, 1000 lbs. potatoes, 3 bushels popcorn. Cultivated: 3 acres 1904, 8 acres 1905, 13 acres 1906, 21 acres 1907, 30 acres 1908. The claim has 8 acres of scattered timberland. Claim has 23,000 board feet of timber; 70,000 board feet has been cut for improvements and maintenance by the claimant. Number of cattle, 4; number of horses, 6; all grazed on Weiser National Forest.

ABSENCES: At Weiser, Idaho sending children to school from Sept. 1, 1903 to Feb. 15, 1904. In the east for health from Nov. 2, 1904 to Feb. 15, 1905. At Harney, Ore. sending children to school from Sept. 10, 1905 to Feb. 18, 1906. At Cambridge, Ida. sending children to school from Sept. 4, 1906 to (cont.)



Anna E. Gibbs (cont.)

Jan. 25, 1907. At Cambridge, Ida. sending children to school Sept. 10, 1907 to Feb. 15, 1908. There has been no time since claimant settled on the land that some member of the family has not been on the land. Information obtained from claimant and from personal observation.

Remarks: Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty approved the report Sept. 30, 1908, however, the absences came under question. Special Agent J.W. Barker was sent to re-examine the claim. In a report on December 10, 1908, Agent Barker stated: "The entrywoman is a widow and had a family (at home) of 9 children and that her absences have been for the purpose of schooling the children." The agent recommended closing the case, and authorization of final certificate was recommended. Patent was issued Nov. 11, 1909.

MRS. PHOEBE HARLAND

Forest Ranger E.E. McGinness examined the claim April 5, 1918.

CLAIMANT: Mrs. Phoebe Harland of Cambridge, Idaho is the claimant. She is married, the family consists of herself, husband, and daughter and grandson. They live on the entry and have no other home.

SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE: Actual residence was made on June 1, 1913. She moved off the entry Oct. 14, 1913 after a residence of four months and 14 days, this was done in order to get where schooling could be obtained for the grandson. After an absence of five months and 21 days they returned to the entry Mar. 7, 1914. Residence has been practically continuous since. During the years 1913 and 1914 very little evidence was found of any permanent residence being maintained, but during the remainder of the time a few chickens and other domestic animals were found on the claim whenever visited. Very little furniture has ever been found in the house but such as it is sufficed their wants.

IMPROVEMENTS: A very poorly constructed cabin was built in 1912. This was 10' x 12'; it had a dirt roof; was about five feet high at the sides. This was used as living quarters until Aug. 1913 when a board house 14' x 20' with corrugated iron roof was constructed at the cost of approximately \$50.00. This house is habitable the year long. A log wood house was constructed in 1916, board roof 12' x 12', cost \$15.00. About five acres was fenced in 1913. In 1916 approximately 100 acres was fenced at a cost of \$125.00. A part of this is two wire and three wire with quaking aspen posts. All improvements were built by claimant.

CULTIVATION: Twenty four peach trees were set out in the spring of 1913. A small garden of about .2 acre was raised in 1914; 2.8 acres was cultivated in 1915 and in 1916 and 1917 enough ground was cleared to make a total of 9.7 acres. This was sown to grain and cut for hay. None of the land is under ditch except a small garden plot. None slashed. It will cost an average of \$7.00 per acre to clear the land and it should be worth \$25.00 per acre when cleared.

GRAZING AND IMPLEMENTS: The claimant has four horses, nine chickens, three dogs, one hack, one plow, one harrow, and one set of harness. The horses are work horses and are allowed to graze on the claim.

Remarks: Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty approved the report Apr. 18, 1918. When the report was submitted to the District Office questions were ask why a woman living with a husband on the claim be allowed to make application? U.S. Commissioner H.J. Devaney was queried about this, the following is his reply to Lafferty.



Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of April 22nd. in regard to the Homestead of Phoebe Harland..., will say that she filed under the 160 acre Homestead Law which permits a married woman to make entry where her husband is incapacitated from earning support for his family and the wife is really the main support of the family. Mr. Harland, as you know, is practically blind and it was on this ground that Mrs. Harland, as a married woman, made entry.

(Signed H.J. Devaney)

The Forest Service made no protest and patent, signed by Woodrow Wilson, was issued Sept. 8, 1919 for 120 acres.

DELLA (MYERS) LANDERS

Forest Ranger J.W. Adamson examined the claim Aug. 19, 1907.

CLAIMANT: Della Landers, Meadows, Idaho and one boy ten years old, and one baby 18 months old.

IMPROVEMENTS: Log cabin, one and one-half stories; two rooms 16' x 18'. Barn, 14' x 18'; cellar; hen house and wood shed. Two acres are under plow; 35 acres under fence; 15 acres under ditch, by Wm. Campbell. Nothing was raised this season, but vegetables, potatoes, cabbage, about one and one-half acres. There is no cattle and no horses.

SETTLEMENT: Claimant settled on land June 1901, and filed on land April 1901. Made home on land since June 1901 until Sept. 1906. Off a few months during summer to obtain living. Husband refuses to assist in supporting family.

REMARKS BY RANGER: About one and one-half acres under fence by applicant. About 15 acres under fence by Wm. Campbell who used some pasture a number of years before applicant made entry. Recommend patent be issued.

Remarks: Forest Supervisor E. Grandjean approved the report Oct. 3, 1907 and added the following personal letter:

To The Forester, Forest Service  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I here with enclose your report on Homestead ...of Della (Myers) Landers. In view of the fact that the entrywoman is practically separated from her husband, and must support her children and make this her permanent home, raising vegetables to support herself and her children, and must derive an income by leasing part of the land for pasture use, I would recommend that no protest be made in this case. This land contains a great amount of good timber but I feel sure that at the time the entrywoman filed on this land it was for the purpose of agricultural settlement and not for the value of the timber, being over 100 miles distant from railroad, and no streams available for driving timber. Since that time, however, the railroad, P.I. & N., has built a line from Weiser to Evergreen, with the intentions of extending said line to Meadows, which will make this timber more available for market, but I believe that the entrywoman has shown good faith in living on the land, and with the intentions of bettering the condition of herself and children. I would therefore recommend that the Forest service enter no protest, and that patent be issued for this claimant.

(signed E. Grandjean, Supervisor)

Patent was issued Jan. 3, 1908, under the name of Della Myers.



MARY A. (LINDGREN) SMITH

Forest Ranger Louis R. Hillman examined claim Dec. 1917.

CLAIMANT: Mary A. Lindgren Smith of Bear, Idaho. The claimant was a widow when the entry was made. She has since married and resides on the land.

SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE: Entry was made Aug. 22, 1913. Residence was established April 1, 1914. The claimant moved off July 22, 1915, on account of sickness. She returned to the Claim on Aug. 28, 1915, and remained until Dec. 1, 1915, when she moved to Bear with her husband who was feeding cattle for Charles Warner. On April 15, 1916, she returned to the claim where she resided until Nov. 16, 1916, when she again moved to Bear to send her boy to school. She returned to the claim again on April 15, 1917, and has since resided on the land continuously.

IMPROVEMENTS: The following improvements have been made on the claim: during the season 1914, 80 acres were fenced at the cost of \$75.00; a box house 16' x 20' with shake roof, valued at \$75.00, was constructed; a frame barn 14' x 24' with a 10' shed along one side, was started but not completed. In 1915 the barn was completed at a total cost of about \$50.00. It is closed on one side and one end, the balance being open.

CULTIVATION: In 1914, 8 acres of land were cultivated and about 15 tons of hay raised. In 1915, according to claims book, about 25 tons of hay were produced, but the amount of ground cultivated is not given. In 1916, the record shows that 12 tons of hay were produced, but the area under cultivation is not given. In 1917, the claimant said she had about 12 acres in cultivation, but owing to the dry season very little was produced. About 2 tons of hay and 800 pounds of potatoes were harvested.

GRAZING: The claimant owns 3 head of horses, 1 cow and a number of chickens. The stock are grazed on the claim during the summer.

REMARKS BY RANGER: It is thought that the claim was initiated in good faith. At present the claimant is in rather poor financial circumstances. During the time she and her husband have been absent from the claim, they were either working in the mines near Landore, Idaho, or for Charles Warner at Bear, Idaho. The claimant understands that she has insufficient land under cultivation to make final proof at this time. A subsequent report should be made.

Remarks: The report was approved by Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty. Lafferty corresponded with Mary, pointing out the amount of land did not meet requirements (at that time 1/8 of the total acres was required). A memorandum form by Forest Ranger C.E. Clabby notes 24 acres had been cultivated by May 1918. This met the requirements. Patent was issued. Two dates are given: 9-3-1918, and 2-2-1920, indicating additional acreage was applied for.

MARTHA L. OVER

Forest Ranger E.E. McGuinness examine the claim Oct. 4, 1917.

CLAIMANT: Mrs. Martha L. Over of Cambridge, Idaho is the claimant. She is a widow, her family consists of herself and seven children, three of the children are married and have homes of their own, the remaining four make the claim their home with their mother. She has no other home.

SETTLEMENT AND RESIDENCE: The claimant settled on the claim on Feb. 13, 1914, and has resided there continuously since.

IMPROVEMENTS: A two roomed box house with shingle roof, 14' x 24' was constructed during the winter of 1914 at a cost of \$150.00. A log barn 14' x 32' (with) board roof was built in 1915 at a cost of \$75.00. (cont.)



Martha Over(cont.)

A root cellar 8' x 10', dirt roof, cost \$25.00, built in 1915. In 1915 one hundred and sixty rods of two wire fence was constructed at a cost of \$85.00.

CULTIVATION: There is 18.6 acres actually in cultivation and producing crops at the present time. 5.2 acres were in cultivation in 1914. This was put in corn and garden truck. 15 acres was in cultivation in 1915, all but one acre of this was sown to wheat and oats and used for hay, the remainder was put into garden truck. Six tons of hay were raised in this area in 1915. In 1916 an area of about 0.2 acres was cleared and cultivated in addition to the 15 acres already in cultivation and eight tons of hay raised. In 1917 a total of 18.6 acres was under cultivation and about 4 tons of hay raised.

An orchard of 40 fruit trees was set out in the spring of 1915. All improvements and clearing has been done by the claimant. The house is habitable the year long.

Remarks: Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty approved the report and patent issued Feb. 14, 1919 for 150 acres.

MARY A. RUSOW

Deputy Forest Ranger B.L. Riggs examined the entry Feb. 8, 1907.

CLAIMANT: Mrs. Mary A. Rusow (Riggs records Mary's last name as Russaw at this time. It should be noted, Mary could neither read or write). The family consists of herself and one son. Their only home is on this claim.

IMPROVEMENTS: Box house, 16' x 24' with a small room upstairs and shed kitchen 8' x 16'. Barn 24' x 32' built of lumber. Nine acres are under plow. Ninety acres are under ditch. Ninety acres under fence. Vegetables and hay were raised on the land; five tons of hay, and three tons of vegetables. Eighty acres of timber land are on the claim, with an estimated 600,000 number of board feet. About 600,000 feet was cut before claimant filed on the claim. All the timber cut by the claimant was cut for improvements and the ground from which it was cut is now under cultivation. Claimant sold 50 cords of wood and some dry posts. The money was used to improve the claim.

LIVESTOCK: Two horses owned are grazing the claim.

SETTLEMENT: Sept. 1, 1903 settled; Sept. 30, 1903 filed on land. Claimant has lived continuously on this claim. Information received from B.W. Turnipseed, a near neighbor.

Remarks: Mary settled on her homestead at age, 69 in 1903. As noted she could neither read or write. In 1906, in order to pay final filing fees, Mary borrowed what she thought was \$200.00 from two local merchants. The merchants, realizing Mary was illiterate, added her son's \$400.00 grocery bill on the loan, secured it with the homestead and improvements, and put a 90 day due date on the contract. Being unable to read and trusting, Mary put her "X" on the contract.

Deputy Ranger B.L. Riggs alerted Forest Supervisor Lafferty to the problem. The Forest Service began an investigation before issuing patent on the land, trying to determine if Mary had made homestead entry in the interest of the two merchants, or if they had deceived her. A special agent was assigned to gather the facts.



The following letter, dated Feb. 24, 1909, addressed to Geo. E. Blair, Chief of Field Division, related information about the case:

Sir:

On Sept. 28, 1903, Mary A. Rusow made Homestead Entry...at Boise, Idaho...commutation proof being offered Dec. 22, 1906, and cash cert...was issued Feb. 18, 1907. The land is within the Weiser National Forest. Under date of Feb. 17, 1907 the Acting Forester recommended that patent issue, and on April 23, 1908, you requested suspension of the entry pending further investigation.

On Sept. 29, 1908, Special Agent J.W. Barker made an adverse report ...in which it appears that entrywoman is a widow, the head of a family and legally qualified to make the entry; that from all reports she established residence within six months after filing and has lived on the land continuously; that the entry was made in the interest of --- and ---merchants doing business in Council, Idaho, who desired to acquire title to the land because of the timber thereon; that on Dec. 22, 1906, entrywoman mortgaged said land to --- and---merchants to secure a note for \$600.00 for purchase money and for improvements thereon; that said mortgage contained the usual power of sale in default of the payment of said note; that --- and --- made no effort to sell said land upon default in the payment of said note, but merely took possession of the same. In a recent inventory of their assets listed this land at value of \$8,000.00.

On Dec. 10, 1908, Special Agent Barker submitted a report on this entry wherein he states that on Nov. 20, 1908, he called at the home of the entrywoman who is now 74 years of age, in very poor health and now confined to her bed; that the son lived with his mother on the entry and knows as much about it as she does; that the entry was made in entire good faith and only fell into the hands of --- and --- merchants at the time proof was made; that failing to find any more grounds for adverse action he recommends the case be closed.

On Feb. 18, 1909, Forest Supervisor Lafferty, finding no further means to delay, reported to the District Forester:

...In view of the fact that this case has been investigated by a Special Agent and the case closed on their records, I believe a further investigation by the Forest Service unnecessary. Regarding the notes in the memorandum from Law as to the amount of money borrowed by the claimant from --- and ---, I am informed that the claimant borrowed \$200 and --- and --- had a grocery bill amounting to \$400 against the claimant's son and his bill was included in the mortgage. Claimant could neither read or write and at the time did not know it contained the \$400 to cover the grocery bill.

The case was closed. Patent issued Mar. 15, 1909.



## BUCKETS, BLISTERS, BEDBUGS AND BONNETS:

It is not possible to know the reason each of the women decided to homestead. It could not have been an easy decision. It had to have been both fearful and exciting to walk the boundaries of the homestead the first time, to see the land, the trees and the spring; the meadow next to the creek where the house could be built. To plan.

After the move to the homestead and the building of the house, the clearing and planting was just the beginning of hard work, but it was possible.

Aunt Nell would put the baby on a quilt at the end of the field while she plowed. That way she could keep an eye on her. The old dog laid by the baby, keeping her on the quilt and out of harm's way (Scofield 1992, personal conversation).

A work list could included: plowing, raking, planting, weeding, harvesting, canning and preserving; setting the hens, gathering the eggs; carrying water from the spring or the creek for washing, cleaning and cooking; milking and churning; getting in wood for cooking, heating, and putting by some for winter; clothes and quilts often were homemade; bread, pies and food all had to be cooked on the farm; wild food like, greens, serviceberries, huckleberries, strawberries, chokecherries and gooseberries had to be gathered; animals had to be fed and cared for, and butchering done. Fences had to be built, ditches dug, and crops harvested. A trip to town to get the mail or supplies meant harnessing up the team; it took the whole day. If the women, like Anna Gibbs, Della (Myers) Landers, and Martha Over, had children, schooling had to be arranged for. The Ranger's reports indicate the importance the women placed on this, and the effort they went to, making sure the children were educated.

Friends and neighbors were another important element, providing some security in the isolation. Rangers within their districts got to know the settlers, and their lives. Its not hard to imagine the weary Ranger getting off his horse, being invited into the kitchen table for a meal or a piece of pie and a cup of coffee; visiting with her about the problems ground squirrels were causing in the pasture, or what a good hay crop she had this year, or how well the orchard was doing on the southeast slope above the creek.

That sense of understanding and compassion can be also be felt in the letter sent to Washington D.C. by Forest Supervisor E. Grandjean, describing Della (Myers) Lander's struggle to feed her family, and better herself. Or, in Deputy Forest Ranger B.L. Riggs' and Forest Supervisor J.B. Lafferty's struggle to help Mary Rusow after she had lost her homestead at age 74, and had "taken to her bed". Their actions reveal the heart of the people in the Forest Service.

The complete stories of the women who homesteaded on the Forest will never be known, for history is generally made up of people who remain hidden by time. However, by telling even a portion of their stories we have a chance to remember these proud pioneer women and the heritage they left behind.



## PERSONAL NOTE:

A few years ago I visited the log cabin where my Mother was born. I stood in the doorway, then looked out each of the windows wanting to see what my Grandmother, as a young Idaho pioneer, had seen. The small cabin sat on a rise, leaving miles of grass between the next homestead and the surrounding mountains. The Idaho wind blew around and through the chinking in the log walls and down the chimney where the cookstove use to set. On the wall hung a small match holder made out of a milk can, the edges carefully turned down for safety. The yellow rose had grown over the doorway; all but one of the apple trees had died. But, along the fence the persistent berries looped and tangled, coming back every year from the roots.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Goulder, W. A.

1909 Reminiscences In The Life of A Pioneer In Oregon and Idaho. T. Regan, Boise, Idaho.

Lafferty, J. B.

1963 My Eventful Years. Signal American Printers, Weiser, Idaho.

Luchetti, Cathy

1982 Women of the West. Antelope Island Press, St. George, Utah.

Royce, Sarah

1932 A Frontier Lady. Ed. by Ralph Henry Gabriel, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Scotfield, Afton D.

1992 personal conversation.

Vestal, Stanley

1957 The Old Santa Fe Trail. Bantam Books, New York, N.Y.