

Hydesville as it Was in 1910 – By Leslie F. Rocha

There were board sidewalks on each side of the main street. The streets were real wide, in order for 4 and 6 horse teams could turn with their loads of baled hay and shingles. Hydesville was named after a man by the name of Hydes. Before that it was Goose Lake, which is still on some maps. The lake was back next to the hill and contained around a good 20 acres. We kids had rafts made out of fence rails out there, and always got wet. Ducks, mud hens, and sometimes geese would set down there when they got lost in the fog. The early time teamsters used to haul from Goose lake to Hookton which was below Fernbridge. They shipped potatoes, apples, hides, and hay by boat from Hookton, and lots of shingles.

At that time shingle manufacturing was a very good business. There was a large shingle mill in Hydesville; one at the bottom of the hill toward Alton, and the Beckwith Mill in the American tank vicinity, 2 more toward Bridgeville, Larsen's and Flannigan's shingle mills. These were all large mills and employed quite a few men.

Getting back to Hydesville, there was a large 2-story schoolhouse where our fire hall is now. It had 2 teachers: Dora Newman and Laura Cuddeback. These 2 teachers taught together for at least 15 years. Miss Newman up to the 4th grade and Miss Cuddeback up to the 8th grade.

There was a large blacksmith shop next to Murrish's store. It was run by William S. Fennaty. He shod horses, done wagon work, sharpened plow shares, made wheels for wagons, and etc.

Next to the shop was a small store and shoe and boot repair shop. The man that run it had candy, tops, harmonicas, and violin supplies such as strings, bridges, bows, rosin, and etc. His name was Felix Raunebuler. He did not like to be called a shoe maker; he said, "I have a trade, I am a cobbler." He had large sheets of heavy leather, that he would trace out your shoe size, cut it out and nail it to your shoe for half soles, the same for the heels, all hand work, when he stitched on the uppers, it was with 2 needles and heavy beeswax thread.

The next dwelling was a house where the Nulph [?] family lived.

The next place was a barber shop. Clyde Wilson was the barbers name. My haircuts cost 25 cents. They used just comb and scissors.

Next was the big hotel owned by Ole Pearson. At one entrance was a saloon and card tables and a long bar with long mirrors in the back. The bartenders name was Cook Johnson. A full quart of Yellow Stone whiskey was \$1.00, a drink at the bar was 10 cents.

Next was the big livery stable; it was run by Al and John Hagen. They also had the mail contract from Alton to Hydesville. They had 2 horses on a large buck-board wagon, and on the tailgate in large print was "U.S. Mail." You could rent a saddle horse, a team and wagon, buggy cart or big surry on a Sunday for a picnic. In front of the stable were a large set of Fair Bank wagon scales that would weigh 15 tons of hay or stock. It had high panel sides and ends that you could drive cattle, hogs, or sheep to be weighed. It was 50 cents to weigh. I can remember the men betting how much a horse would way; the one who had the worst bet had to pay the 50 cents for the use of the scales.

It was between the blacksmith shop and the stable that, on the 4th of July, they would take a large anvil, place it on the ground, cover the face of it with black powder, put another anvil up-side-down on top, and put a fuse to the powder. When they lit it and stood back, the anvil on top would go up in the air

about 3 or 4 ft. and the noise was just like thunder. The whole town would stand in the street to witness this act of celebrating the 4th of July. It was usually the blacksmith that done this.

The buggies in those days had bunting of red, white, and blue, all woven in the spokes of the wheels, and the harnesses of the horses was decorated with small flags, and all the business houses had a flag in front.

Now on the other side of the street, where the beauty parlor is now, there was another large livery barn where they had corrals and a place to store baled hay.

Next was Frank Beckwith's big store where you could [buy] anything you needed from bolts of cloth to groceries of all kinds. They had large catalogs with sample of suit material in them, and pictures of the suits. They would take your measurements and you picked your material and style you wished, and in about 30 days you had your suit. Henry Cox was a young man just married and he was the book keeper in the store. Also, he had the first bicycle I can ever remember. Other clerks in the store were: Bill McLellan, Sam Cerini, Mr. Quist, and Dave Hartley.

Frank Beckwith that owned the store was always on the go. The store and shingle mills took a lot of his overseeing. He owned a large Pierce-Arrow touring car. It had large head-lamps on it, which were run by carbide gas from big tanks on the running board. It had solid leather upholstery and a leather top. The body was red trimmed in black. Lots of brass on the brake handles and on long brass rods running alongside of the hood. Very pretty.

The next car in town was owned by Mrs. Jess Payton. It was a chain-drive Metz. Only one seat, but it was fine black leather upholstery. It had a small spare in back may 3 ft. square for a suitcase maybe. It did not have a round steering wheel. It was more like a handle that you steered it with. Those were the first 2 cars I had ever seen. The next car to come to Hydesville was a ford. A man by the name of Ed Bean bought it. He was telling my father about it before he bought it. I thought it was a car that could ford a river. Those were the first 3 cars owned in Hydesville.

The next shop was a harness shop operated by L.L. Bryan. He had a large dapple gray wooden horse for a model that he made and fit harness lines and bridles on it so you could see just how it was going to look.

Next was the Mountain House. It was a large 2 story hotel with a large veranda on the second floor. All the bedrooms were upstairs. Downstairs was the bar and eating section [with] gambling tables and what looked to me like large slot machines. A man by the name of Tom Bulger was proprietor.

Next was Rogers Blacksmith Shop, where John Beaber's grocery store was built in 1910.

The photo [?] shows John Beaber on the scaffolding. Herman Beaber the little boy on the roof with the white shirt. The man doing the shingling on the roof are George Bannister. The man standing is Jess Payton. The other two are the Miller bros. Oscar Hagen and Les Rocha are the two little fellows pulling a Studebaker wagon on the sidewalk. I got the wagon for Christmas. The Mountain House Hotel and the roof of Beckwith's store can also be seen.

Then across the street on the corner was a large building, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Pete Nelson. At one time the Post Office was located there. Mr. Parsons was the Post Master. Mrs. Nelson had a large loom

in a big room, where she made beautiful rugs for people. Also on Sundays she had sandwiches, ice cream, and tamales.

At that time hunters from the mountains would come to the Post Office with coyotes and Mr. Parsons would cut off the ears which he put in the big wood stove and then pay the bounty, which was several dollars each. Sometimes they had a sack with 5 or 6 pups in it, that was a great thing for us kids to see. They were real cute.

The next place was the big Odd Fellows hall, where I saw my first moving pictures. Beaber's store had a peanut roasting machine, and Fred Beaber would come around after everyone was seated, and sell bags of peanuts for 5 cents. You could watch the show and eat peanuts for 30 cents. 25 cents was the price of the show. Fatty Arbuckle was the one we kids liked best.

Next place was the butcher shop, run by Abe Walker. He had a slaughter-house where he made his own hams and bacon. Perry Barnes [?] was the meat cutter in the shop. They run a 2-horse butcher wagon to all the ranches 3 times a week. You could order just the kind and size you wanted and it was cut and weighed right there. They gave liver away, and there was always a slice or 2 of good bologna for the kids and a bone for the dog.

The next place was Gus Johnson's barley mill. The ranchers would take wheat, barley, and oats to the mill to have it rolled or crushed, and for his pay he would take out so many sacks out of a ton, and sell to people who did not raise grains.

The next place was Mr. Parsons Drug Store. He had all the ingredients for medicines, also a metal bowl and pestle, and he would make pills for certain ailments. Also he had candy in big jars, all kinds of notions such as tops, knives, purses, jacks, rubber balls, tiddle-winks, dolls, marbles, checkers, dominoes, jacks, and cards. That takes about all of the business houses – about 15 in all. At that time, it was a busy little town. There were also 2 large churches, and 2 cemeteries.

Now I have to tell you about some of the times we had at school. There was a teamster, the only one I have ever seen that drove with a jerk-line. Just 1 line. He most always had 2 wagons, one hooked up short behind the first one, and he had 6 horses pulling, and he rode the near wheel horse, with a light saddle. He had a long rope attached to it that he used on the brakes. His name was Haden – Jerky Haden. He was a slim, tall man and I never did remember hearing his right first name. He drove for years in the mountains. He always had bells on the 2 lead horses, and every step they took you could hear those bells a very long way. From the school house past the top of the hill we could hear him coming, and every kid, girls and all, would run and jump on the fence and holler "here comes Jerky!" He would wave at us and I really think he enjoyed it. His harness, wagons, and horses were always well taken care of.

Then in that era they drove turkeys from the mountains, just like sheep or cattle. The lead turkeys had small bells on their necks, about the size of small bicycle bells. They drove them on foot with dogs, sometimes 200 of them. When they drove hogs we kids were always trying to find blind ones, They would follow right along with the good ones.

When the cowboys drove the cattle down from the mountains to load them on the cattle cars at the railroad at Alton, they lot of times had 100 head, some of those cattle came from South Fork Mountain. Lots of the bigger ranchers were Fred Hinckley, Alex and Winfield Lamb, Tooby Bros., Charlie Cobb, and

Dinsmore Bros. A lot of those cattle came 60 miles, it was a 3-day drive, they drove slow because the cattle were fat. They sold mostly 3 yr. olds in those days. In 1925 they were getting 5-6 cents a pound on hoof, so their steers would bring them 75 or 80 dollars a head.

In the center of town at one time was the tallest flag-pole in Humboldt County – it was 90 ft. A citizen by the name of Jeff Barnum donated a flag to the townspeople.

In 1902 my father, Frank Rocha, built a 4 stall horse barn where the service station is now. It had room for two large wagons and 1 buggy and 1 cart. He purchased the lumber from the Metropolitan Mill delivered at Burnell Station at the foot of Hydesville Hill. A number 3 grade from \$4.50 a thousand.

At that time, it was the end of the railroad and they had a large turn table which they ran the engine on and turned it around. I will have to tell you about a man we school kids will always remember. His name was Con Griffin. He wore nice buckskin clothes made of deer skin tanned; cap, shirt, pants, and coat, and sometimes moccasins. He lived in the mountains, I think in the Mad River District. He made his living tanning and selling buckskin tanned hides. My father always bought a hide from him each year for \$1.00. We made shoestrings and he mended harnesses with the leather.

The ranch that I live on now, and have for the last 76 years, was originally homesteaded by the Reedy family. The patent was signed by Abraham Lincoln. Then they sold it to John Rocha about the year of 1900. My father, Frank Rocha, bought it from his brother in 1916.

I remember the men and their names very well because I was born in the house next to Murrish's Market, Nov 14th 1904. And I still live on the ranch, and have seen and lived all the times mentioned with much happiness.