

## SHUMWAY PAPERS

Contributed by Harold McConnell

Courtesy of Frazier Farmstead Museum

Ca. 1960-1970

James Shumway was born in 1833 in Pennsylvania and died in 1909 in St. Mary's Hospital, Walla Walla Washington.

He left the east coast in a sailing ship, bound for San Francisco and the gold fields. After a stormy trip around The Horn, he landed in California and made his way to Sutter's Mill, where he mined gold in 1849, on the American River.

A brother, Jerome, was killed by a war party of Chief Joseph's braves, and is buried about mid-way of the Whitebird Hill, between Spokane and Lewiston, Washington.

Another brother, Paul, wrote to James, telling him of the fortune to be made selling merchandise at a new strike in Mormon Basin, just south-east of the town of Baker, Oregon. James and Paul ran a store in the Basin for a number of years. James hauling their supplies by freight wagon from Umatilla Landing, on the Columbia River, near where the town of Umatilla Oregon now stands. A round trip took six weeks.

Matilda Mock was born January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1852, in Ottumwa, Iowa and died in 1938 in Walla Walla, Washington.

She left Iowa with her mother, Nancy, and several sisters and two brothers. Matilda was nine years old and helped drive milk and beef cattle on the way west with a 300-wagon emigrant train. Shoes soon wore out and Matilda trudged most of the way barefoot. She took care also, of the crated chickens to which the party looked for eggs and Sunday dinners. At each stop she would let them out of their crates to forage, and replace them when the train was again ready to move. They became so tame they would squat to be picked up. Several deaths occurred and the wagons were driven over the fresh graves to keep the Indians from finding and digging them up. Horses also died and were replaced pulling the heavy wagons, by milk cows. The trip took three months, and while the train was never attacked it passed the remnants of several previous trains that were not so lucky. Cooking fires were made from buffalo chips which were far more plentiful than fire wood. After cottonwood logs were lashed to the sides of the wagons to float them, they were lowered down the steep banks of the Snake River, and floated across, where teams were doubled up to pull them up the other side. The train, having split up, part heading south for California, and part up the Burnt River, now stopped for a much needed and well-earned rest. Grass was lush; the weather was good; and the small valley where they were encamped was promptly named Pleasant Valley by Matilda's brother John; a name it retains today. Gold had recently been discovered just east of the present town of Baker and Matilda and an older sister, Mary, established and operated a boarding house for miners. Matilda also ferried miners across Burnt River in a dugout canoe for ten cents each.

When she was thirteen years old, she met James Shumway and they became engaged. James obtained Matilda's mother's consent and started on snowshoes for Baker to get the marriage license. On the way he lost the letter and had to go back for another. Winter snows blocked the pass, and as Matilda had a birthday on January third, she became fourteen before they could get the license and be married.

She accompanied her new husband on a freight trip to Umatilla Landing, on the Columbia River; the trip taking six weeks. At night, James and his partner took turns sitting up to guard against the Indians stealing their horses. They traveled up the Umatilla River, crossing the Blue Mountains via The Ruckel and Thomas Road; traces of which may still be seen. Coming down near what is now the town of La Grande, they skirted the north side of the valley to a point east of Hot Springs, before they would get around a vast lake and reach the mouth of Ladd's Canyon. Ladd's Canyon took a full day to negotiate; Matilda driving the team, and James walking behind to block the wheels of the wagon when the horses were stopped to rest. James and Matilda lived in Mormon Basin where their three daughters were born. Then, as most of the gold seemed to be gone, moved to Baker.

In 1870, when Ada, the second daughter was twenty-one months old, they moved to the town of Weston and spent the winter there, where James again tried his hand at running a store. He then purchased some land on Couse Creek; so named for the yellow Couse that grew in abundance on the hills, six miles south-east of the present town of Milton. Soon after their arrival, news came that Chief Joseph had again eluded the troops so James took his family to Fort Walla Walla and returned to look after things at the ranch. He and a neighbor spent the night in the corral with their horses saddled and their guns handy, but even though the dogs barked all night, nothing was molested.

James successfully farmed the fertile hills and added two sons to his family. Olive, Ada, Amy, Alva, and Arthur grew up on this farm. Alva walked the nine miles to Weston to get part of his education. At his father's death, Alva continued to farm here, until his death about 1940. His son then farmed it, until his death in 1971, and it is still in the possession of Arthur's widow, having been in the Shumway family name for one hundred years.