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Chapter 1b My Heritage and Life through Stibnite (1936-1945)

Introduction

I reached the age of 80 on August 19, 2016 and was surprised by the family with a big party. I looked around and began to think about the forks in the road that resulted in us being here. A different decision along the way and this would not be happening. Pondering all of this I decided to put it down in writing.

The Hathhorn Journey to the West

My great grandfather John Ripley Hathhorn (known as JR) was born in Burlington, Iowa, October 22, 1841. He was the son of George W. and Mary Ann Ripley Hathhorn, natives of Clarke County, Virginia. They moved from Iowa to southwestern Missouri and had a family of five sons and four daughters.

I would not be on this earth if not for JR, my great grandfather, surviving the Civil War. He succeeded by escaping from his imprisonment and death sentence and heading west to Montana. Thank you for doing what you had to do to survive the Civil War.

JR enlisted in the Confederate Army with Co K Missouri Mounted Infantry in July 1861 as a private, and later promoted to officer. He participated in 20 major battles. One of the most famous was Wilson Creek. He fell ill after an engagement in Helena, Arkansas and was sidelined for several months. While still recuperating he was arrested by the Union Army. Since he was in civilian clothes he was treated as a spy and sentenced to be executed. He conned his two guards into taking him on an evening walk and overpowered them (reportedly killed them). He then jumped into the river and used a reed to breathe through while he floated away under water.

On the run he met up with William Quantrill who he had served with in the cavalry. Quantrill was now leading a group called Quantrill's Raiders. They were a brutal bunch that JR soon had no use for. He departed for Denver using the name Huddleston, which was the married name of a cousin.

He hung out around Denver and did some freighting to Virginia City, Montana. Then he installed hydraulic plants for placer mining in Montana, and took up ranching. According to my cousin, Marvin Hathhorn, JR's Trail Creek Ranch was approximately 10 miles north of Livingston on the west side of the Yellowstone River near the present day DePuys Spring Creek. According to Uncle Dallas he also established a ranch near the north entrance to Yellowstone Park. This ranch was acquired by a religious sect called the "Moonies" in the 1970's.

Paradise Valley and Livingston, Montana

JR returned to Missouri in March 1872 and married Nancy (Nannie) Lilly, the daughter of a judge. They returned to Montana in a buggy behind a team of mules.

JR and Nannie had three sons and two daughters. They had a winter residence in Livingston where the children attended school. All five children graduated from college in the east, which was an unusual occurrence in that time.

The oldest son Frederick Hosea became a prominent attorney in Helena, Montana with the firm Brown and Hathhorn. He had connections in Washington DC and was able to acquire a pardon for JR. This was necessary since JR was a fugitive, and not covered by the blanket amnesty granted after the Civil War.

The second son, Charles Clifford, became a medical doctor. He died in a train wreck on a Sunday in late October 1900. He normally traveled by train on Monday to Big Timber, Montana to tend to patients, but instead was on the Great Northern that fatal Sunday. Seven were killed and so mangled that identification was almost impossible. A meal ticket with his name on it and a few facial features identified him. Also killed in the wreck was the fiancée of Montana Hathhorn. The funeral procession for Charles was the longest seen in Livingston.

The third son Harry Homer (my grandfather) stayed on the ranch and married J. Nina Vandebroek, a young school teacher from Michigan who was teaching in Clyde Park, Montana. She never disclosed what her initial J. was for and always went by Nina (historical records show her name as Jane Nina). Harry Homer caught her attention while riding his white stallion by the school house. I have a newspaper picture of him on his white stallion dressed as Uncle Sam in the 4th of July parade. Must have made an impression.

The two girls were Montana Lilly and Evaline (Eva) May. They became school teachers and married Lovelace brothers.

JR passed away February 12, 1921 at the age of 80. Nannie passed away Dec 8, 1921 at the age of 66. They are interred in the Mountain View Cemetery, Livingston, Montana. Their graves are in the northwest quadrant of the cemetery.

Today, the Hathhorn building on the northeast corner of Main and Wilson in Bozeman, Montana is a visible remnant of the legacy of JR. There is also the Lovelace building across the street. JR is a recognized Montana Pioneer and appears in the history given in "Progressive Men of Montana" on pages 663-664. Also, in Volume III, "History of Montana", pages 1699-1700. His history also appears in the book, "Paradise and Beyond" by David W. Depuy. The history books have a sanitized version of his Civil War duty with, "he was released from service".

His obituary states that JR took an active part in the Montana vigilante movement and was present at the trials and executions. It also states that "he and Nannie brought into the world a large family they reared to manhood and womanhood, gave them the best educational advantages possible, and handed down to them the heritage to continue the building of the state they loved so well".

Harry Homer raised sheep which was not accepted well in Paradise Valley. So, he and Nina and three young boys picked up stakes and went to a place near Anatone, Washington in the south eastern part of the state on the Grand Rhonde River. This is where my Father Charles Converse was born, and called Kim. Later in life he went by Charlie. The middle name of Converse came from my grandmother Nina's mother, Caroline Converse of the Converse shoe company clan. I remember that she had bad feet in her older years and always wore black and white Converse high top shoes like those worn for basketball.

Harry and Nina then acquired a ranch up Rush Creek near Cambridge, Idaho where they raised seven boys, Boyd, Marcel (Parse), John, Charles (Kim), Frederick (Fred), Dallas, and Jim. An eighth son, Woodrow Wilson, died in infancy.

Cambridge, Idaho

The ranch was, and still is, a beautiful ranch at the end of the road about eight miles from Cambridge, Idaho. Cuddy Mountain is in the background. The house is red brick that was made onsite. It was two stories with an upper and lower porch. There was a large yard with a white picket fence, a huge flower bed, large garden, a huge barn, and a separate pantry. Coal oil lamps provided the lighting . A hand pump for pumping water was beside the sink. Since there was no indoor plumbing an outhouse sat out back. The inside was papered with pages out of the

catalogs that made good reading and provided insulation. Two white eagle statues about 3 feet tall were in the front yard until they disappeared one night after the move into town. I wonder if they are hidden away in a barn somewhere or ended up in the Weiser River to get rid of the evidence.

The ranch is still owned by the Fords who bought it from my grandparents in the 1940's. I have heard that my uncle, Earl Armacost, became aware of the deal and offered more money. Granddad replied, "no, we shook hands on it".

We visited the ranch a few years ago. This is where I lived the first three years of my life. It looked the same as I remember. One of the sons told us something that I did not know. He said the family of my maternal grandfather, Ed Edmunson, owned the ranch before the Hathhorns. He would have taken us through the house, but it is occupied by his mother, and she was in town. He and his wife live in double wide nearby. He also told us the house is featured on a post card that is sold in the drug store. We dropped in and bought a few. The ranch is worthy of a movie setting.

There are stories about the Hathhorn boys on the loose in Cambridge. There was a large Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) camp nearby and there were a lot of fights in town. Seems as though Dad was the great equalizer. He was not big, but they say he packed a punch. The brothers relied on him to bail them out of trouble.

Granddad Harry never learned to drive. He came back from town one day with a new Model A and was much the worse for wear. He never drove it again.

I remember getting to ride with him in a horse and buggy to take milk to the creamery in Cambridge. After he delivered the milk we went to the saloon where he liked to watch the patrons play pool. However, he never drank or played pool. I guess the boys made up for it.

The Edmunson Journey to Idaho

My great grandfather on my mothers side is Bradley Edmunson. He was born in 1843 in Norway, and was married to Emma. Bradley and Emma had eleven children, but four passed away at an early age. The fourth child Edward Nicholas, my grandfather, was born March 8, 1880. Emma is the first person to be buried in the Cambridge cemetery.

My Mother, Doris Louise Edmunson, was born in Cambridge, Idaho. Her parents were Edward (Ed) Nicholas Edmunson and Theresa (Baily). She had been married to Bradley Armacost and

they had several children. He passed away and she married Ed Edmunson and they had my mother and Mary. They ended up getting a divorce as Ed had a drinking problem. They remained friendly through the years. Ed worked on ranches and herded sheep. Grandma lived in a house up the road from her son Earl Armacost and cooked in the Cambridge High School for years.

I have great memories of staying in a sheep camp wall tent on Cuddy mountain with grandpa Ed. He was a bear hunter and had great tales about bears coming into camp. He said they would come into the tent and lick our face at night. He made great sour dough pancakes for breakfast.

My Mother was starting high school when she met my Father, who was six years older and working on the family ranch. The courtship was short and they were married in January 1936. I was born in my uncle Earl Armacost's farm house (still there) in Salubria on August 19, 1936. I was named Harry Edward after both grandfathers. Doctor Whiteman came out from Cambridge a couple days early to be there for the birth. He was a rotund man that liked food and his wife kept him on a diet. Grandma Edmunson was a great cook and fed him well. So, it worked out well for him.

We lived on the Hathhorn ranch until I was about three. The Hathhorn's were fond of nick names and I became Hi. I suppose I got the nickname since there were two Harry's in the house. The family on both sides have called me Hi ever since.

Horse Heaven Hills, Prosser, Washington

Dad was the only son that wanted to stay on the ranch. His brothers went on their way. Granddad intended to hand over the place at some point but kept delaying. Dad, and I suppose my Mom as well, got impatient and decided to move on. Dad got a job herding sheep in the Horse Heaven Hills outside of Prosser, Washington. We lived in a tent out in the wind, sand, sagebrush, rattle snakes, and heat in the desolate area between Prosser and the Columbia River. It was a god forsaken place and one day Mom had enough. While Dad was out with the sheep she lit the tent on fire and burned it down. Mom got her way and got us out of there.

Rio Tinto Mine, Mountain City, Nevada

Dad's oldest brother. Boyd, was working in the sawmill at the Rio Tinto Mine near Mountain City, Nevada about a 100 miles north of Elko. He sent word that the mine needed beginning miners (called muckers). So, off we went. I believe the car was a 1936 Ford coupe at the time.

My place in the car was standing behind dad. That is where I rode until I got much older and sat down.

He was hired and that was the start of his mining career. The mine owner had built two story apartment buildings for the miners to live in. They had stairs on the outside and we lived in one of the upstairs apartments. Uncle Dallas came to live with us and find employment at the mine, also. He ended up being inducted in Elko and ended up in the Army Air Corps, and made a career of it.

It was 1939 and I was three years old when we arrived. I remember a few things about living in Rio Tinto. My first daredevil adventure was when I rode my tricycle down the outside stairs. I guess I wasn't banged up too badly. Uncle Boyd and I were great buddies. He would take me walking around the camp area. His leg was injured badly by the big saw blade in the sawmill and gangrene set in. It was amputated but he passed away in 1939. Afterwards there was a big scene when someone found his leg in the garbage dump.

Uncle Boyd was the dapper dresser of the Hathhorn boys. He liked to wear a white shirt, blue blazer, and white pants. Not bad for a ranch kid. His body was sent back to Cambridge via the train and we went for the funeral. On the return trip just north of Mountain City and out on the desert a rear wheel came off the Ford. It tore out through the sagebrush out of sight. We looked all over but it was never found. I wonder if it is still out there somewhere.

We went through Mountain City, Nevada a few years ago and one of the apartment buildings like we lived in had been moved from the mine into Mountain City. It is on the left side as you enter Mountain City coming in from the south and Elko. It looked the same as I remember it.

Another artifact was the old sign over the Miner Bar where they used to party while I slept in the back of the 36 Ford.

We visited the museum and found a picture of a foot race during the 4th of July celebration about 1940. Leading the race was a guy in a white shirt, slacks, and dress shoes. I am 99% sure it is dad as he dressed that way. He also liked a foot race as he was very fast. It is strange that the Hathhorn boys grew up on a ranch but dressed very well.

Dad liked to fish in the Owyhee River in the canyon south of Mountain City. Mom and I would wait in the car, which seemed like forever. Mom would start throwing rocks in his fishing hole to get him to stop.

Dad was a quick learner in the mining game, catching the eye of the bosses. He quickly moved up in the pecking order. In 1940 there was a labor dispute and two or three bosses decided to leave and join the Bradley Mining Company operating a mine in Stibnite, Idaho. It was known as the Yellow Pine Mine as it was a few miles up the creek from Yellow Pine. Dad was invited to go since he had proven his worth. So, we were off to Stibnite, Idaho and a fork in the road.

Stibnite, Idaho

The Stibnite mine is in interior central Idaho and isolated. The nearest town is Cascade which is 80 miles of mountain dirt roads with summits to climb and descend. You pass through the very small village of Yellow Pine about 20 miles down stream from Stibnite. There was a bar, a cafe, and a rooming house to serve miners and prospectors in the area. The road was a challenge, and in the winter very tough due to the heavy snow. The mine and the state worked hard to keep it open as the mine trucks had to haul the ore to the railroad in Cascade.

The Bradley Mining Company was based in San Francisco and operated by three brothers, Jack, Jim, and Worthen Bradley. Jack had operational control over Stibnite and later the Ima Mine at Patterson. They were mining engineers and geologists educated at University of California and Stanford. They were great employers.

To support the mine in Stibnite, and later in Patterson, they constructed an airfield in Boise called Bradley Field. It was situated near the present-day fairgrounds west of Garden City. It had several company airplanes, repair facilities, a cafe, and a small motel called the Skytel. Airplanes flew regularly to the mines with parts, supplies, and personnel.

We arrived in Stibnite in 1941. I remember hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor shortly after. The mine was being ramped up to produce war critical antimony and there was not much in the way of housing. However, a crash effort was underway. We lived initially in a wall tent with boards around the sides to keep the snow from smashing in the tent. Must have worked as mom didn't burn it down.

Dad by then was an underground shift boss and we got one of the first houses when it was completed. It was a small two-bedroom frame house and dad soon had some grass planted and a white picket fence around the yard. I remember the snow so deep in the winter that we had a tunnel to get in and out of the house. At an elevation of 6,500 feet the average snowfall was 5-8 feet and temperatures could get 40 below. The windows had to be boarded up in the winter to keep the snow from crashing through. You could walk onto the roof of the house.

One winter the road in and out of Stibnite was closed for about 2 months. Food and supplies soon ran out. The Army Air Corps parachuted basic supplies until the road opened.

Bradley Mining Company worked hard to build the infrastructure. There was a boarding house, a recreation hall with cafe, bar, bowling alley, a place for movies, and a new school. I started first grade in the new school and my teacher was my aunt, Irma Armacost. Uncle Dick Armacost (mothers half brother) worked at the mine.

Medical needs were provided in a small clinic staffed by a nurse, Bea Green. A larger 16 bed clinic was built and Doctor Haliday was brought in. My brother Garry was born April 29, 1943 in the new clinic.

Due to the war the men worked long hours with little time off. Everything was rationed, so there was not much in the way of extra food or fuel. If there was a day off I remember camping and fishing excursions over into Big Creek.

The road through Yellow Pine went over a pass to Big Creek and it was steep and rough. The car by then was a white 1941 four door Chevrolet and somehow it managed to get us there and back. It was essential to catch fish if you wanted to eat. I remember one trip the fishing was bad, so the men shot squirrels for dinner. One time I was sitting on a blanket holding brother Garry and a baby fawn deer came and started nuzzling my ear. Someone in the group had a camera and got a picture that we still have. The fawn had a makeshift harness so it must have been from a cabin in the vicinity.

Around the winter of 1943 my uncle Dallas was at the family ranch recuperating from injuries he received in a bomber crash. Dad managed some time off and we went to bring him into Stibnite to hang out for a while. We could also bring a hog and some of grandmas canned garden stuff with us to bolster the food supplies.

It took all day to get the hog slaughtered and everything ready for the trip back to Stibnite. It was in the dead of winter, and bitter cold when we left that evening with the hog carcass tied onto the top of the car. It was about 150 miles of bad road ahead of us. No big deal for people used to living in the back country, and we made it fine in the Chevy. I think a little whisky was passed between the adults in the front seat. They seemed to enjoy the trip. The hog was frozen stiff when we got to Stibnite.

Uncle Dallas was my hero. I thought his Army Air Corp dress uniform was the greatest looking uniform ever, and I still do. We would go outside and watch formations of bombers passing

overhead and he would identify them. What we didn't know is if they were on training flights or headed across the Pacific to war. This was probably the beginning of my love for airplanes, flight, big bombers, and the military. Little did we know then that we would meet near London years later while we were both in the US Air Force.

Early 1945 the Bradley Mining Company took over an old established tungsten mine, the Ima Mine, near Patterson, Idaho.

The locals that had been working at the mine were not cooperating and the operation was not going well. The company decided to send a team of managers from Stibnite to take over and straighten things out. Dad was selected to be the Mine Superintendent and Assistant General Manager. So, off we went around January 1945. I was in the middle of the 3rd grade.

end chapter 1b. Continued in chapter 2b (Life in Patterson 1945-1954)