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Mid-Twentieth Century Pioneering of the Royal Slope of Central Washington

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MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY PIONEERING
OF THE ROYAL SLOPE OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON

A Project Report
Presented to the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ellis Wayne Allred
March, 1996

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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ABSTRACT

MID-20TH CENTURY PIONEERING OF THE ROYAL SLOPE OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON

by

Ellis Wayne Allred

January, 1996

Pioneering of the Royal Slope in central Washington State is explored. Interviews with original settlers, especially those who arrived in 1955 and 1956, the first two years in which water from The Columbia Basin Project was available for farming on the Royal Slope, are the primary sources used. An overview of earlier attempts to settle the area without the benefit of water and power is also included.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer of this study expresses gratitude to all of those residents of the Royal Slope who have contributed either through their helpful interviews or by generously making available other information, without which, this project would have been impossible.

A special acknowledgment goes to the students of Royal High School, who in 1976 collected the letters and oral histories which were compiled in the booklet, Rainshadow, from which I have quoted extensively. Without efforts such as this, much information would be lost forever, since most of these people have now passed on.

I would also like to express gratitude to my wife, Robyn, who has typed, edited, proofed, and supported and without whose support, this project would not have been possible.

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There have been several efforts by non-Native American people of European descent to settle and develop the Royal Slope in Eastern Washington. The first of these were by refugees from civilization who stopped in the area because of its isolation. Later attempts included large-scale and concerted efforts by well-financed promoters, such as the railroads, to subdivide and market the area for homesteads. Until the completion of the Columbia Basin water and power project brought inexpensive water and electricity, development was not very successful. However, with abundant water and power, the Royal Slope has become home to over five-thousand permanent residents. Now, it could be argued that it is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world, with around 500 million dollars in crops harvested annually.¹

The story of the pioneering of the Royal Slope during the middle of the twentieth century is unusual in many important ways. It is, however, a story that up until now, to my knowledge, has never been written. This project is an attempt to begin to detail the history of this settlement.

In this paper I will also provide an overview of the entire period of non-Native American settlement, since this early

¹Information from the Royal City Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 152 Royal City, Washington.

historical information provides a context within which understanding of the latter period can be more complete. I have, however, focused my efforts on the more recent, post Columbia Basin Project period of 1955 and 1956. I have done this for two reasons. First, because it is the only period which could be argued was an obvious success. And second, I feel a need to get information about this most recent period of pioneering down in print before it is forever lost. I began this process chiefly by gathering and transcribing oral histories from some of those who were among the first to settle on the slope after the coming of water and power in the mid 1950s. This sense of urgency is due in part to the fact that many of these people are getting up in years, and their recollection of events will get progressively dimmer. Some who could have contributed have already passed on, and, thus, we have already lost some valuable information.

My objective is not to provide a list of all of the people and families who settled during this period. There are many important events and people who have not been included. Principally, I focused on the factors which helped to turn this region into a successful agricultural area. I have sought to understand who came to the Royal Slope and why, what caused them to succeed or fail, and to learn of some of the challenges and trials that awaited those who pioneered an area in the middle of this century. I believe that what is contained herein can be of value in providing both a useful overview of the history of the Royal Slope, as well as a place for future historians to begin

their efforts to deepen and expand the understanding of this area and its people.

GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

In the heart of Eastern Washington's central desert, in the rain shadow of the Cascade mountains,² between 400 and 700 feet immediately above the "Big Bend" of the Columbia River lies the Royal Slope. The northern border is defined by the Frenchman Hills, a prominent landmark that can be seen for many miles in all directions. Along the southern end is the Crab Creek which lies at the base of The Saddle Mountains. The western end drops off into the Columbia River across the bridge from the town of Vantage. On the east end the Royal Slope fades into the Potholes, volcanic depressions of varying sizes which are now partly filled with Columbia Basin Project water. From there the Royal Slope merges into the city of Othello.

Before the Grand Coulee Dam was built, the only water in proximity to the slope was Crab Creek on the extreme south end, and the Columbia River many hundreds of feet below. The water table is, for the most part, deep. Rainfall is slight.

Except for a spur which is no longer in use along the Crab Creek, the nearest main railroad lines presently run along the Columbia River on the west and south or lie 16 miles to the north

²A rain shadow is an area of relatively small average rainfall on the leeward side of mountain barriers.

at Quincy. As a reader can easily see, and as people who have been there know, when describing the Royal Slope, one describes a place that was, without human development, dry, inhospitable, and quite isolated.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE AREA

The area which is now Grant County was one of the last places in the state of Washington to be pioneered by, Euro-American settlers. The reasons for this are grounded in the fact that making a living there was difficult, if not impossible. Although the ground is fertile and relatively easy to work,³ the almost complete absence of water made farming a losing proposition. The lack of streams to trap, and the absence of precious metals to be mined removed two other common economic reasons for people to settle there. In spite of the economic unattractiveness of the place, during the last half of the nineteenth century, there were those who called the area home.

THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLERS

The fur-trappers were probably the first white Europeans to traverse the area. Although there were no streams to trap, trappers and Indians were known to have traveled up and

³Ted and Jean Christensen, from an interview on Nov. 4, 1995, audio cassette tapes and transcriptions are in possession of the author. Ted describes his principle motivation for moving to the slope as that, "there were no rocks like there were in Ellensburg." Many others have also commented about the productivity of the soil when combined with ample water, especially when farming using circle pivots. See additional interviews in the Appendix.

down the Columbia river past what is now the west end of the Royal Slope. Because of the rugged terrain, overland travel through the area would have been difficult. However there was an important trail through present Grant County traveling in a north and south direction which crossed through The Low Gap. This gap, or saddle is the lowest point and the most easily passable location along the approximately forty-mile length of the Frenchman Hills.

As the business of fur trapping depleted the Pacific Northwest's rivers and streams, a few of the former trappers, still craving isolation or who had their reasons for not wishing to return to civilization, chose instead to stay in remote locations in the unsettled West and to try to make a living some way other than trapping. Some mined and prospected, some ranched, others rounded up and developed herds of horses that ran wild in some areas. One former trapper and possibly the earliest non-aboriginal resident of the Royal Slope lived at The Low Gap during the decades of the 1860's and 1870's, and is known as "The Frenchman" or just "Frenchman." He became the semi-legendary figure for whom Frenchman Hills is most likely named. Written information about any earlier non-Indian residents being absent, I have chosen to begin my story with him. Historian Monte Hormel is one who has told a version of the Frenchman's story, elements of which follow:

Nobody knew his real name. He had been a trapper and mountain man in the early days . . . he chose to stick with as much of the old free life as he could by catching wild horses in the remote and

lonely Columbia Basin. His cabin and corrals stood on the ridge later named after him. His foreman was an orphan boy when the Frenchman found him and raised him as a horse catcher. The 1872-73 winter hit the Columbia Basin early and hard. The Frenchman was preparing the herd from the season's roundup to take to the Dalles for sale when he became ill. He told the foreman and crew to take the herd to market. The foreman objected, but the old man insisted. Obedient to his orders they fought their way down the Columbia and forded it twice, eventually bringing the herd to The Dalles.

Once the horses were sold, the crew became surly and insisted that the old man was dead--that they should keep the money and abandon him. Loyal to his trust, the foreman stood his ground alone, and guns were drawn. With two of the rebellious crew falling to the foreman's six shooter, the others [ran] to their horses and fled!

Upon his return with food, medicine, and the money, the foreman found the old Frenchman dead with a scrawled note near his hand "Knew you'd be back--bury me here, and keep it all!"⁴

The Frenchman, or anyone else who sought privacy, could easily have found it in the area because these were the days before the railroad had reached central Washington. It was the railroad which ended the isolation of those few settlers in the area and first began to change the nature of the central desert and the land surrounding it.

⁴Monte Hormel, The Old West in Grant County. (Ephrata, WA. 1990), pp. 26-27.

THE CATTLEMEN:

By the late 1880s, the winds of change were blowing. The trans-continental railroad had arrived in the Pacific Northwest and companies were hustling to build spurs in order to expand markets for the railroad. Settlers began to pour into the region, lured by slick railroad advertising, boasts of exaggerated crop yields, and cheap land. The railroads themselves were the chief promoters of the region. The land they owned was a very large asset which value they were attempting to increase. Bringing settlers to the areas would also guarantee future profitable markets for the railroad, as settlers would need to ship their produce to other locations and to travel. During this era, promotion by the railroads brought a great influx of immigrants into the region.

Naturally, settlement began in the prime areas which were within relatively easy access of the railroads. And, of course, the railroads naturally chose to develop first those areas which had the greatest economic potential. Since the central desert was unattractive economically compared with other areas, it didn't experience much growth and settlement during the first years after the railroads came to the Pacific Northwest. However, some cattlemen did move to the Columbia Basin during this period. The cattle business became more attractive because now the cattle only needed to be driven short distances to the railroad for shipment to coastal markets. Therefore the second wave of settlers to the area, and they were relatively small in

number, were the cattlemen. During the period after the original Frenchman legends of the early 1870s and before the railroad came to Grant County, there were a few ranchers who allowed their cattle to forage on the bunch grass and other sparse vegetation throughout the Central Desert. Ranchers also continued to round up the Cayuses (wild horses) that roamed freely on that part of the desert. During this period some colorful cattlemen lived in the area.

A history of the area would in no way be complete without some attention given to the two legendary "extra large" cattlemen, Sam and Ben Hutchinson. Sam, who was the tallest, was usually described as being seven feet four inches tall and his brother, Ben, a little bit shorter, was said to be around six foot six.⁵ Photographs from the turn of the century show them both sitting on ponies with their feet virtually dragging on the ground. Regardless what their actual height was, they were extraordinarily tall, especially for the time. Stories and legends of them abound.

Some who knew them noted that the Indians were so in awe of their size that they left them alone.⁶ O.F. Gilbert, a contemporary of the Hutchinsons, after commenting on what fine horses they raised, described an experience he had with Ben.

I could (always) tell him from a long distance away, not only because of his erectness in the saddle, but also because the pair of

⁵Gladys Dunsire, from an interview with the author dated November 21, 1995, cassette tape and transcripts are in the possession of the author. Florence Chadbourne, O.F. Gilbert, and others have also described the size of these two cowboys. Most list Sam as 7'4" and Ben as 6'6."

⁶Ibid.

tapaderos he always wore gave him the appearance of having legs that nearly touched the ground. He dropped into our place one day just after we had finished dinner and I asked him if he had eaten. He said, No, I haven't, but I am not very hungry. I will sit up and eat a bite just to be sociable." My wife opened a quart of solid pack beef, made gravy, spuds, vegetables, a pot of coffee and the rest of the trimmings and Ben cleaned up the whole shebang. When he got through he said, "I sure enjoyed that dinner." and I jokingly retorted that I was glad that he had, but I was equally glad that he wasn't hungry.⁷

Long time Crab Creek area resident, Bud Stewart, also shared some Hutchinson folklore. He told of the time a buckboard was crossing Crab Creek and, "the horse got stuck in the mud and drowned, so Sam got out an' pulled the buckboard out 'cause the horse wasn't able to."⁸

There are many references to the ranching and the roundups which occurred on the slope during this period. These wild horse round ups went on regularly beginning in the 1860's as the need to get rid of the horses intensified with farmers moving in. These pesky horses were one of the main nuisances to them. A short book was written about the last commercial wild horse round up which ended in 1907.⁹ -

Bitter, cold winters were a problem that plagued cattlemen and cost them considerably. Ben Snipes, an early rancher, refused to even count his cattle until they were sold and

⁷From a letter from O.F. Gilbert to the students at Royal High School edited for publication in Rainshadow, a booklet published by the students to commemorate the bi-centennial of the United States dated March, 1976. pp. 7 and 8.

⁸From an interview of Bud Stewart, by Ellen Lutz, a student of Royal high School and published in Rainshadow p. 25.

⁹A. A. McIntyre. The Last Grand Roundup. (Wilson Creek, WA, 1906).

paid for. Bud Stewart cites an example of this attitude. He tells of the time when:

"Ben's men had been gathering his cattle and branding them. On the way back from one of his trips to Canada, while crossing his land, he ran into his cattle foreman. The foreman gave Ben an old weathered piece of paper with a lot of writing on it. The writing represented tallies of all the calves that had been branded with Ben Snipes' brand. They were sitting by the campfire when the foreman gave it to Ben. He looked at it for a little bit and threw it into the fire. The foreman was rather puzzled so he asked Ben why he did that. Ben said there was no use counting them until they were sold. That was the only time they really counted, because the bad weather could completely wipe them out."¹⁰

One of the most talked about years, which turned out to be a pivotal period of time for this area and its future economic existence, was the winter of 1889-90. The season turned out to be a record-setting winter for cold and snow in The Basin. The damage caused by this unusually hard winter was one factor which helped to transform the area from a cattle ranching region into farms. Virtually every book written on the period makes reference to how hard this winter was. Lewis Williams repeats the most commonly told descriptive story as follows:

"That winter we had deep snow and it did not go off until the first of May so that one could begin to farm. There was very little stock left after that winter, 90 percent of the animals dying of starvation and cold. The range was piled five and six deep with dead

¹⁰Stewart interview, p. 25.

stock. When the first ones died, the others climbed on top of them to get out of the snow and died. Others did the same, so they were in heaps . . . the snow was four feet deep and laid on the ground 180 days."¹¹

While the winter of 1889-90 was devastating to those who ranched and lived in the central desert of Eastern Washington, it had precisely the opposite effect on some of those in neighboring areas who were not ranching, especially wheat farmers. For those who were dry farming wheat in the Spokane area or in Walla Walla "1890 was a banner year."¹² As one author described it, "as the sack piles beside each thresher grew wider and longer, it became clearer with each day that 1890 was going to be a good year."¹³

The effect of that extremely hard winter, completely devastating the stockmen of the central desert, provided the moisture that ensured a banner year for the dry wheat farmers and created a major and highly visible gap between the economic conditions of the two groups. The late, hard winter had broken many of the cattlemen of the central desert at the same time it created a boom for the dry farmers.¹⁴ Therefore, all but a few of the devastated ranchers left the area for the greener pastures of the Palouse or Spokane areas. By 1892, the population of Ephrata was down from over 160 residents to just a few.¹⁵

¹¹William S. Lewis. The Story of Early Days in the Big Bend Country. (W. D. Allen Publishing, Spokane, WA, 1926), p. 15.

¹²D. W. Meinig. The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910. (University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA, 1968), p. 321.

¹³Ibid. p. 352.

¹⁴Lewis, Early Days, p. 18.

¹⁵Joseph Kelley. Early Ephrata History 1870-1910. (Masters Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the School of Education of Gonzaga University, 1962), pp. 1-62.

THE RAILROAD INDUCED INFLUX THAT OCCURRED AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILROAD TO THE REGION

Only a handful of cattlemen who ranched on a relatively large scale and their workers remained in the area for the next few years, but change was not long in coming again. Again it was affected by the railroad, which was now finally extended directly through the region. In 1901, a branch of the railroad was brought through Quincy and Ephrata, causing Ephrata to again start to boom¹⁶ and most important for the Royal Slope the area just to its north began to be filled with new homesteaders. In 1902 and 1903 the town of Quincy was established and began to grow rapidly. The glittering promotional campaigns put on by the railroad and used to bring settlers to other areas in the Pacific Northwest were now finally focused upon one of the less attractive areas in the Northwest, Washington's central desert. Even though nothing about the area had changed fundamentally as far as the prospects of making a living in the area were concerned, except for the coming of the railroad, optimistic settlers poured in at a rapid pace.¹⁷ Within two years after 1901, much of the choice land near Quincy was taken.¹⁸

As the cheap, arable land around Quincy was claimed, new settlers moved farther and farther from town into outlying

¹⁶Ibid. p. 18.

¹⁷By combining the number of people listed in all precincts from the area in the 1920 census, it can be estimated that between 2000 and 2500 people lived on the slope at that time.

¹⁸Fae Morris. They Claimed A Desert. (Ye Galleon Press, Fairfield, WA, 1976) p. 268.

areas. In the spring of 1904, many cabins in the Burke and Low Gap, south of Quincy began to be inhabited.¹⁹ The immigrants who came had been lured to the area with promises of cheap land and a goal of having their own prosperous farms. They were not ranchers. They cleared the sagebrush usually by dragging a rail between two horses and then planted crops.²⁰ This removal of cover placed great stress on these arid ranges. According to Meinig,

These colonization movements were an almost encompassing movement in upon the dry core of the region. As the farmers took up the last of the bunch-grass prairie lands, they forced the cattlemen into the sage brush country and they in turn pushed in upon the arid wintering grounds of the sheep men the stockmen held out only on scattered non-arable patches of scablands, coulees, and canyons.²¹

And so, in 1904, settlers had pushed the Quincy area's boundaries outward until even ground on and around the Frenchman Hills, sixteen miles away, began to be considered for settlement. It was to be changed, just like the surrounding desert country, from pasture to farmland.

SOME CHALLENGES OF HOMESTEADING

¹⁹Ibid. p. 268.

²⁰Dunsire.

²¹D. W. Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain, A Historical Geography, (University of Washington Press, 1968) p. 376.

Even though the soil was sandy and sources of water were at least ten miles away, a surprisingly large group of settlers had been convinced that they could overcome all obstacles and farm successfully around the place called Low Gap. One of the first, a widow, Mrs. Ella Louise Park arrived by rail from Springville, Utah on December 3, 1903. She was accompanied by her son and daughter, as well as their spouses and children.²² Mrs. Park later bought a "relinquishment" for \$150.00 and moved her family sixteen miles south of Quincy to Low Gap.²³

Water was the big problem here, just as it was throughout the central desert. What little water there was had to be hauled over ten miles from the Columbia River or sixteen miles from Quincy. In wintertime when there was snow on the ground, settlers collected and melted it for household use.²⁴ Needless to say, water was precious and none was ever intentionally wasted. The women often went into Quincy to do their laundry since driving the 16 miles with dirty clothes was more easily done than hauling barrels of water.

Gladys Dunsire, whose family name was Toskey, was one of the rare individuals who had ties to both homesteading at the turn of the century and the post-Columbia Basin Project period. She described the impact on her family, including a considerable elevation in social standing, when they drilled their first well after being nine years on the slope. It was a windmill-driven well, so whenever the wind would blow, Gladys noted the

²²Morris, p. 294.

²³Ibid., p. 294.

²⁴Ibid. p. 296.

neighbors lined up with barrels and other containers to get water.²⁵

The Parks built a cistern their first year in the area, and in 1905 they added a well with a windmill which drew twenty feet of water. The first years there they planted wheat, which was not irrigated, along with potatoes, and peas which they were able to water once they had a well.

Wood for fires, houses and other purposes was also in short supply on the Royal Slope. Most everyone used the sagebrush, which was plentiful, to cook their food and to warm their cabins.²⁶ Most agreed that, although you could not very well build a house out of it, "the sagebrush made good fire."²⁷

Although not abounding with lush vegetation and wild game, there were various wild animals on the Royal Slope. As noted before, there were wild horses or "slickers" as they were often called. These were a pest for many of the homesteaders, especially those who farmed the Crab Creek area.

Coyotes, which are still plentiful to this day, could also be a problem at times for the homesteaders. Families worried about the safety of their small animals and children. Florence Chadborn remembered that the coyotes killed her dog.²⁸

The principle food source for the coyotes was undoubtedly the rabbits which were described as plentiful.

According to Mrs. Chadbourne,

²⁵Dunsire.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Florence Chadbourne, from an interview by Pam Munson, a student at Royal high School published in Rainshadow, p. 14.

²⁸Ibid. p. 15.

"They used to have what they called rabbit drives once in a while. They would come in from Seattle, and they'd take the rabbits back with them to sell for rabbit drives they just spread out all over and just walked along, and some of 'em would use sticks and what have ya."²⁹

A history of the pioneering of the area would in no way be complete without some note of whites' contact with what remained of the local Indians. Evidence is strong that by the turn of the century, the Indian population was not large, but there were nonetheless a few in the area. References are made to the fact that the Hutchinson brothers were in trouble with them and forced to hide in the potholes or "toolies" for a time.³⁰

Gladys Dunsire tells of how, when her family first came to the area, while they were camping on Crab Creek in 1906 getting their place ready, they had an encounter with the local Indians.

"They [the Indians] camped on Crab Creek, over here close to where the dam is now. [Mother] and her neighbor were there with the children while the men went to Cunningham to get their equipment off of the railroad car So they went back to get their wagons and while they were gone the women were cooking and the cowboys . . . were camped about a mile away and they were rounding up horses and ēverything. In the middle of the night the men heard a noise and the dog started growling and this one gal, she wasn't my mother, . . . she went outside and took this big long pistol, like this, and shot it up in the air to scare whoever it was away. The cowboys heard it and pretty soon they heard these voices. They circled the camp and the next morning they said, 'What was the matter with you gals, what were you

²⁹Ibid. p. 15.

³⁰Ibid. p. 16.

shooting at?' And they said they heard a noise. Then the next day, here come a couple of Indians and they demanded food. So my mother fixed the food while this woman stood with the gun under her apron so the Indians wouldn't see it. And she fed them. Then my dad and the other gal's husband came and then it was okay and then they went out to their home sites and dumped off the lumber."³¹

WHO WERE THE PEOPLE WHO SETTLED AT THIS TIME?

For her first year on the Royal Slope, Mrs. Parks kept a daily diary. In the sections covering Low Gap there are a number of names recorded which can be compared to the names of residents from later years and give us some idea of the demographics of the area. In fact, the Parks are still listed as Low Gap residents in the 1920 census.³²

This was a time of great influx of new settlers, nearly all small farmers, who were trying to make a go of it in this desert. Twenty eight separate family names are mentioned as residents of Low Gap in 1905.³³ There are numerous names of Scandinavian extraction, many of English extraction, and one family from Russia, the Bepples, is often referred to.³⁴ They were, for the most part, subsistence farmers, or homesteaders, with a few chickens, a cow and some horses. The settlers planted

³¹Dunsire.

³²1920 US. census. Low Gap precinct. In the 1910 census, most residents were included in one or the other of the Quincy precincts.

³³Morris p. 302-308.

³⁴Ibid. p. 304-308.

mostly wheat and tended small gardens using water hauled from Quincy or the Columbia.

Here again, the Toskey family's experience was probably typical of those who settled on the slope at this time. Gladys, who was born on the slope in 1919, recalls that her parents, Elling and Hulda, who were married in Idaho in 1904, came to look at the area. They were hoping to get some of the cheap and abundant land that the railroads were promoting. A promoter from Quincy showed them around until they found a parcel which they tied up. They then returned to Idaho and raised wheat, which they sold for enough money to pay for the land. They were finally able to move to the Royal Slope in 1906.³⁵

Gladys' family moved all of their belongings to their homestead on the slope and begin to make a home. She described some problems with their cabin when, "They brought lumber, green lumber, and when they nailed it up it had split and had spaces and mom would take rags and newspapers and anything else to stuff in the cracks."³⁶

Although there were a few like the Parks and Toskeys who settled during this period, who had moved from agricultural areas where conditions could be assumed to be somewhat similar to the Royal Slope, one notices when reviewing census data from the period, that many moved to the area from homes far away, often from foreign countries. Almost none came to the Royal Slope from a nearby area such as Eastern Washington.

³⁵Dunsire.

³⁶Ibid.

One could assume that this lack of familiarity with the area contributed to the failure of so many to make their homesteads work at this time. It's probable that if those from far away places had known the true nature of the dry country, they would not have taken such a gamble. Locals, who were familiar with conditions were apparently reluctant to use the area for anything except as a range for cattle or sheep.

At the time of this rapid railroad induced influx, numerous towns sprang up under the optimistic guidance of their promoters: Low Gap, situated in the gap at the top of the Frenchman Hills, had a post office, a store, and even a school for a time. Corfu, which sat on the Crab Creek on the south end of the slope, had a "whole lot of bachelors and little tiny tar-paper shacks."³⁷ It also contained a store, a school, and teachers' cottages, with a hotel above the store, and a section house for the railroad workers to live in.³⁸ Red Rocks, a community also located on the Crab Creek, had a store and post office. Explosive growth continued until, in 1909, there was sufficient population to justify the creation of a new county, Grant County.³⁹

TECHNOLOGY BROUGHT CHANGES

It was an exciting time to live when, as one homesteader put it, "[this] was the age of invention . . . science was on the

³⁷Chadbourne, p. 16.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Kelly, p. 47.

move.⁴⁰ In 1915, after a good crop of wheat, Gladys Dunsire noted that her father brought the first automobile to the Royal Slope. She explained,

"He learned how to drive. He wanted my mother to learn how to drive. She got in the car and started out okay, but then she didn't know how to stop it. She ran into a fence post and that is what stopped the car. That was it, she never drove another bit."⁴¹

Mildred Elliot remembered living on the homestead when the first automobiles came, probably the one owned by the Toskeys described above. She explains, "my husband came in and said, 'I hear a Ford a comin'. It's going to scare the horses and they'll stampede in the pasture!'"

She and her husband managed to move the horses to the lower end of the field in time and get back to the house to see the horseless carriage chug up the road. She also recalled the first time that she drove a car.

"I read that instruction book three or four times to see how to control the car. I'd like to tell you, I wish I had kept that instruction book. It said, 'These cars are not made to drive thirty miles an hour, they are made to drive fifteen miles...If you go up to twenty and twenty-five, they're dangerous.'"⁴²

Not everyone was thrilled about the prospects of the automobile. This technology created economic depression in one of the few industries that had a chance of success on the Royal Slope, the horse industry. Thanks to the "mechanical cockroach,"

⁴⁰Mildred Elliot, interview by Sandy Jensen, a student at Royal high School, published in Rainshadow. p 30.

⁴¹Dunsire.

⁴²Elliot, p. 30.

horses, for a period of time, were virtually unsaleable, prices having dropped to just \$5.00 a head.⁴³

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOM PERIOD ON THE ROYAL SLOPE

From the beginning the prospects were grim for many homesteaders on this windy desert. Almost as soon as they arrived, many became discouraged and some began to leave. However, the inevitable total collapse of the economy of the area was delayed by an occasional aberration in the typical weather cycle. In 1916, one such cycle produced an unusually wet year on the Royal Slope.⁴⁴ This had the effect of giving encouragement to people involved in an otherwise fruitless project of dry farming wheat. This one year, there was enough moisture to grow a very profitable crop of wheat without irrigation in The Columbia Basin's central desert. Gladys Dunsire insisted that this was the only year that her mother didn't make more money on her small poultry flock than her father did farming.⁴⁵ Moreover, by breaking up the land and clearing the sage brush and other sparse cover, the sandy soil was exposed to the regular hard winds that are so common to the area. This had the effect of making the slope an even more miserable place to live than it might otherwise have been.

⁴³Gilbert, p. 7.

⁴⁴Dunsire.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Thanks in part to these terrible dust storms, by 1918, the settlers had a true picture of the real nature of the area that they were settling. In most years, there was insufficient rainfall to get a crop dry farming, and the weather fluctuated back and forth from one extreme to another. Unbridled optimism and overzealous promotion had brought numerous families in to begin farming an area which, without a cost-effective method of bringing water from the Columbia River, was simply not fit to farm. The decade of 1910 through 1920 witnessed a nearly universal souring of people's attitudes toward this desert area. Thus began what was destined to be a flood of people leaving failed homesteads. This flood was to continue until the entire central desert area, with the minor exception of a handful of rail hubs, and oasis, was a veritable ghost region. Even the relatively more productive wheat lands in the wetter areas in Eastern Washington began to witness a decline in both rural and town populations during this period of time. The true challenges that successfully farming in these conditions posed were now becoming common knowledge. Even the railroads had ceased promoting the region in far-away areas.

By 1920, economic failure was endemic all along that arid fringe at the center of the Great Plain.⁴⁶ The post office at Low Gap was to remain open only until 1921, when the population declined to the point that the postmaster was forced to close up shop.⁴⁷ There were, however, still a few settlers grimly hanging

⁴⁶Morris, pp. 470-472.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 470.

on. The 1920 census presents an instructive picture of who had been enticed to settle this central desert area during this boom period. Of the sixty five adults listed as residents of Low Gap, all but seven give their occupation as farmer. Of the seven non-farmers, there is a merchant, a stenographer, a restaurant owner, and four school teachers. Of those adult residents, only two listed Washington as their birth place. Most were from the Midwest with Missouri most often listed as the state of birth. Of the twenty-two adults who are listed as foreign born, nine claim to be from Russia, and seven are from Scandinavia, Norway, Sweden, or Denmark. No other country produced more than one adult settler. One may thus assume that the railroads must have advertised most heavily in the midwestern United States, Russia, and Scandinavia.⁴⁸ These numbers support the notion that many of these homesteaders came to the Royal Slope from regions that were completely different from Eastern Washington geographically. Most had either no idea or the wrong idea of what they were getting into. Land had been sold to people from far away who were unaware of what would be necessary to make a living farming in this dry, inhospitable area without irrigation. Also, due to the nation-wide depression in agriculture and widespread farm failures, there were probably a large number of optimistic prospective settlers looking for a fresh start and thinking they could make it on this relatively inexpensive land.

From the census one can also conclude that typically, the immigrant settlers were not adventurers or refugees from

⁴⁸1920 U.S. Census.

civilization since so many of them came with families and extended families. This explains the persistence and determination which enabled them to hang on for as long as they did. They came intending to be permanent residents. In fact, of the forty-one households listed in the census, twenty-four contained a minimum of two individuals, assumedly married, with an average household size of four family members.⁴⁹

The background and possible naiveté of the majority of these people is also indicated by the price that most of the settlers paid for their lands, between one and three hundred dollars.⁵⁰ From this, one can surmise that they were common people, that the majority were not wealthy. They were lured to the area by the promise of owning their own place and farming their own homestead. Here was land, cheap and plentiful.

As people grubbed the sagebrush and other cover from the land and plowed the sandy soil, the protection that had existed for the sandy soil disappeared. When the winds blew, terrible dust storms occurred which choked the residents and their livestock, dehydrated the soil, and made agriculture impossible.⁵¹ Without irrigation water to keep the sandy soil wet and to grow cover crops such as alfalfa, and with the yields low because of a lack of water, the Royal Slope became a sand dune, a dust bowl. It did not take many years for residents to fail or to figure out that failure was inevitable under those conditions. As once commented, "The blowing sand was not productive enough to

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Morris, pp. 240-472.

⁵¹Meinig, p. 365.

sustain them."⁵² It is a credit to the endurance of those families who did stick it out that they persevered for as long as they did.

Gladys Dunsire's family was one of the last hold outs. She described her family leaving in August of 1924 when she was just four years old. They sold everything they could and managed to scrape together \$300.00 in order to move. They sold their horses, furniture, everything. The family kept only one cow which they pulled behind their wagon in a cart. They drove their wagon through the dust, a foot deep because of road construction, over the pass at Snoqualmie.⁵³

The outward migration which started almost immediately after the first settlement, continued until, by the middle of the decade of the 1920s, there were few settlers left on the slope. With a few exceptions, they were all gone. Low Gap and most of the other settlements were ghost towns.⁵⁴

The inability of this central desert area to be able to support a prosperous farm economy was destined to last just a short time longer. In fact, one wonders how many of the settlers from that first major wave of emigration might have hung on for a few more years if they had only known for certain then how short the time would be until abundant water was supplied by the Columbia Basin Project.

⁵²Morris, p. 306.

⁵³Dunsire.

⁵⁴Morris., p. 306.

THE COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT PERIOD OF PIONEERING ON THE ROYAL SLOPE

In 1919, farmers in the United States were struggling. In spite of a stock market boom and general nation-wide prosperity, farm prices were low. While nearly all farmers were affected, people who had chosen to settle in the more marginal farming areas, like those in most parts of Eastern Washington, were especially hard hit.

The reasons for this farming depression were many. Those who adopted new methods and used mechanical equipment became more productive. This increased productivity, while good for consumers, created a surplus of basic commodities, thereby driving prices down. This made survival difficult for many farmers, especially those with little capital and who farmed on a small scale. Conditions on the Royal Slope were so marginal that even during times of booming prices most farmers would have failed, and the problems were exacerbated by the general depression in farm prices.

Throughout the Columbia River Basin, progressive thinkers worked to come up with solutions to the region's problems. In Wenatchee, one area where the farm-based economy was stagnating, the editor of the Wenatchee World, Rufus Woods, conceived the idea of damming the Columbia River at the Grand Coulee and using the water and electric power generated to make the 3,000,000 farmable acres in the Columbia River's Big Bend fertile and productive. On July 18, 1918, Woods ran his first

article in support of the idea of building a dam at the Grand Coulee.⁵⁵ Initially the idea met with mixed reviews. However, using his newspaper as the organ, he kept the matter regularly before the public. In this way, Woods succeeded in wearing down some of the opposition until gradually other proposals were scrapped and enough people in the region got behind the idea of a great dam at the Grand Coulee to make it the popular solution to the area's problems.

After decades of dogged persistence, and considerable help from the Washington congressional delegation led by Clarence Dill, and aided by the great depression and the Democratic administration's desire to create work projects, Rufus Wood's idea began to be a reality. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, seeing the economic and political advantages of a project like the dam, threw his support behind it.

As far as today's residents of the Royal Slope are concerned, the ensuing series of events did more to transform the slope into its present-day productivity than anything else. The abundant water and cheap power that resulted from the Columbia Basin Project would combine to transform the Royal Slope from a marginal area good only for grazing, into one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world. Today, agriculture is the hub around which nearly everything on the Royal Slope revolves.⁵⁶

⁵⁵The Wenatchee World. "Formulate Brand New Idea For Irrigation Grant, Adams, Franklin Counties, Covering Million Acres or More." July 18, 1918.

⁵⁶Royal City Chamber of Commerce, from a pamphlet promoting The Royal Slope.

RESIDENTS ON THE SLOPE BETWEEN THE 1920'S AND THE ARRIVAL OF COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT WATER

At the time construction began on the Grand Coulee Dam, the thriving communities that had sprung from the optimism of railroad promotion after the turn of the century were, for the most part, dead. Nearly all signs of life were soon covered over by the blowing sands. The community at Low Gap was a ghost town without a single resident. The sole occupant of the east end of the Royal Slope, who had moved in after World War II, was a sheep or goat herder.⁵⁷ Only the Crab Creek area to the extreme south, which had water year round, supported a community during the period between the 1920s and 1955. Along Crab Creek were a few families who had succeeded in making a go of farming. The Stewart and Razor families had managed to hang on since the boom of the "teens" using water pumped from Crab Creek to irrigate crops and provide water for farm animals.⁵⁸ A few others, notably O.F. Gilbert, the Chadbournes, and the Morgans, who had railroad or post office jobs to pay their bills, and who homesteaded in the area to supplement their incomes, managed to survive in the Crab Creek area. Aside from that, there were only a number of eccentric bachelors and refugees from civilization seeking a remote outpost away from other people who hid out in this desolate area.

⁵⁷Many of the people I interviewed remembered this man. Some couldn't remember his name, but Frank Niessner remembered him as Newt Holstead. However, Ted Christensen remembered that his name was Newt Holstein. Although he couldn't remember his name, John Yearout described his experience with this sheep or goat herder on the slope before people began coming back.

⁵⁸Frank Niessner, interview by Ellis Wayne Allred dated November 22, 1995 in possession of the author. See also Ted Christensen, Gladys Dunsire, and others.

Isolation was one thing that the Royal Slope could provide. One resident of the time, O.F. Gilbert, speaking of life along the Crab Creek, noted, "When it came to unsophisticated aberrations, there were more weirdoes per square mile doing their "thing" than anywhere I had ever been."⁵⁹ Two of these reclusive "bachelors," Paul Vincent and Billy Klehm, were described by Gilbert as follows:

Another of the most unforgettable characters we neighbored with was Justice Paul Vincent. He had a homestead back on the hill and worked on the (railroad) section at Smyrna, walking back and forth each day, at a dollar and fifty cents a 10 hour day. His main aberration was that God and he were going to build a railroad. He had grubbed brush from the west side of his homestead for the right of way, and from his meager earnings he had paid for the printing of some bonds. While in the process of finding potential investors, he was picked up for trying to sell unlisted bonds When the judge talked to him, he explained that he and God were going into partnership. So the judge reminded him that what he was doing was awfully naughty, and if he didn't stop he would have to put him in jail In his more astute moments of sober reality, at least in this instance, he seemed to figure out that the judge had the edge in the dialogue. Soon after he moved over to the coast and we heard no more of him or his railroad.

About Billy Klehm he wrote:

⁵⁹This was in a letter from O.F. Gilbert to students of Royal High School, which was part of a project by the students to celebrate the bi-centennial of the United States. It was edited for publication in a booklet called "Rain Shadow" dated March, 1976. Mr. Gilbert, who had been a resident of Smyrna from the 1920s until the 1960s, was, at the time, living in Yakima. He entitled his letter, "A partial resume of the history of Southern Grant County, Washington, particularly south of The Frenchman Hill, A.D. '13-'63'."

His pattern of life differed somewhat from the usual run.

He worked in the Coeur d' Alene mines in the summer time and holed up on the homestead during the winter months. As he was sitting in his cabin one night, a woman walked right through the wall into his presence and informed him that great treasure was buried on his farm, and if he would go so many feet north and some west and sink a shaft, he would hit it. She appeared many times with the result that he had five shafts sunk to a depth of 80 feet--and all of them were joined at the bottom. Although they were dug by hand, they were symmetrical, as though he used some type of mechanical device. But there was no treasure. The nightly visitations of his informer that supplied the action, form, and drive for his venture only personified the thoughts that he had been toying with for a long time. What happened, of course, was that--while sitting those long hours--he would doze off and his subconscious mind provided the woman and the information he wanted to receive. Had he been a religious man, his informer would have been an angel and he would have had that whole back yard dug up and a veritable Sunshine mine. Her last visit, at least as far as he was concerned, was when she told him that he should go twenty feet deeper. So he bought some dynamite and was tamping his first charge when it went off. The tamping stick entered under his jaw and came out the top of his head. What was left of his mortal remains were tied up in a blanket.⁶⁰

Along with this handful of eccentric bachelors, sheep herders, and cattlemen lived a small group of families. As mentioned earlier, most derived their living from a job with the

⁶⁰Gilbert pp. 8 and 9.

railroad or post office, and homesteaded to supplement their income.

With the small population left in the area, providing school for the few scattered children of that age was a challenge. Bud Stewart remembered the Smyrna school house and teacher cottage,

The teacher would have to build a fire early in the morning at the school, return to the cottage to get ready for school, and then go back to begin classes. In the evenings, immediately after school, she ran home and built a fire in her stove, and returned to the school to correct papers. By the time she was finished, her cottage would be warmed up.⁶¹

Because there were only nine to twelve students in any one place in the area, (even Smyrna ran completely out of students for a while) the teacher was compelled to travel back and forth between Beverly and Smyrna to teach. As the children grew older, they were usually boarded out in an area which had a high school⁶² which caused them to grow up absent from their families.

RE-SETTLEMENT OF THE ROYAL SLOPE AS THE WATER ARRIVES

During the 1930's, as people in the area grew more and more optimistic about the prospects for construction of the great Grand Coulee Dam, there naturally began to be some land

⁶¹Stewart, p. 24.

⁶²Gilbert Morgan, from an interview by Jenny Lott and Marie Adams published in Rainshadow, a compilation of interviews by students of Royal High School to celebrate the bi-centennial of the Declaration of Independence of the United States, published in 1976. p. 20.

speculation on and around the Royal Slope. Since the earlier homesteaders had failed, most people considered the ground there to be virtually worthless. It had been owned during this period either by those who had bought it decades earlier, by their heirs, or was still owned by the federal government. The exception to this was the land owned by railroads, which had acquired it in grants from the federal government. They had not succeeded in completely selling off all this land in the earlier decades. A few people who had been following progress on the Grand Coulee Dam began to try to pick up property that had been sitting idle. Others made trips to the area inspecting the slope for investment opportunities or for the best ground,⁶³ and some, such as the Dunsires planned to return to farm claims which had been in the family since earlier times.

At the start of World War II, the government began using much of the area as a bombing range, which gives an idea of the value the government placed on it. Army planes flew out of Moses Lake and Navy planes out of Pasco.⁶⁴ The regular bombing practice runs caused brush fires to rage along the slope during most of the war.⁶⁵ Residents of the area noted that, "Sometimes the bombs started fires, and the people from the valley had to put them out. Occasionally the fires were so bad that they spread from the west side of the slope far to the east--near Othello. At times a person could see ten bombers at one time."⁶⁶ Mrs. Morgan

⁶³Ted Christensen also Frank Niessner.

⁶⁴Chadbourne, p. 17.

⁶⁵Chadbourne, p. 17

⁶⁶Ibid. p. 20.

told of a terrifying incident that occurred during the Second World War:

There was a time when a plane went down, throwing the pilot completely clear of the wreck. A few people went out to search for the man. Some thought they saw him in the distance, still sitting in his seat. But how could he be alive after such a brutal landing? Slowly they advanced closer, only to find out that he had hit so hard he was just a mass of jelly.⁶⁷

Because the Grand Coulee Dam and Columbia Basin Projects were built in phases, with a low dam first, water and the agricultural and commercial development which went with it spread systematically, but slowly, through the Big Bend. The Royal Slope area was one of the last places to get water, and therefore one of the last to be resettled and developed. The first signs of life on the slope were the workers on the irrigation project's system of ditches and power lines, who began to arrive in the mid-1950s. When activity began, the Royal Slope was almost completely devoid of human life. At the time, there were no roads, only a trail over Frenchman Hills through the Low Gap, and another one over the hill on the east end, connecting the O'Sullivan Dam with highway twenty-six, which was still a dirt road.⁶⁸

Among the first workers in the area was John Yearout, who worked for his father's construction company which had been granted the contract to install the concrete head gates in the

⁶⁷Ibid. pp. 20-21.

⁶⁸John Yearout, Ted Christensen and others.

lateral ditches and canals. To provide some idea of how little activity was going on there, John told the following story of his father, who had been running his tractor all day clearing sagebrush.

We had a little R.V. Cat that we used to use all over doing things. A lot of times, if we'd got a truck stuck, we would just run that out . . . and pull him out. Dad had this thing out somewhere doing something with it . . . on a day when there wasn't anybody else out there, just him . . . He had his pick up and this Cat and he wanted to get it back to the pit. So how is he going to do this with only one person? So he starts the Cat up, it had a hydraulic load on it, so he lifted the blade up and aimed it for the pit. He got off of it, put it in gear, put the throttle on a slow throttle, aimed it toward the pit, got off of it, got in the pick up and started to head toward the pit and sort of waited for it to come. He ran into somebody, I don't remember who it was, somebody out there getting ready to clear ground. They were asking him questions about the area and so forth. And he got into this conversation and forgot all about this cat taking off across the country. 'Oh my goodness!' He probably didn't use those kind of words . . . He took off, he realized that his cat was on the loose. So he started following the tracks wherever he could and then he kind of lost it in the sage and he couldn't drive the pick up. So he got out on the O'Sullivan Dam Road and he found where it had crossed back so he just started to try and follow it on it's tracks through the sage brush out there. There was nothing out there so he finally found it. It was stopped. It had been turned off and stopped and he noticed this sheep herder. He had a bunch of sheep out there. My dad went over and talked to him and he said this guy was just beside himself. He thought somebody was on that Caterpillar, got thrown off and run over and it killed him. He was just thinking of all these terrible things that

could have happened. My dad said, 'No, no, it's okay. It was nothing like that.'
And he told him what he had done.⁶⁹

THE FIRST NEW SETTLERS, WHY THEY CAME

Columbia Basin land was advertised in a number of national campaigns. The government put up billboards throughout the Midwest promoting the project.⁷⁰ One billboard in Illinois urged people to: "Come to the Columbia Basin and improve your lifestyle." This campaign seems to have met with limited success. The biggest share of settlers encountered in this project did not respond to ads from the Midwest.⁷¹ The majority were from elsewhere in Eastern Washington especially from earlier-developed places on the Columbia Basin project where their land had been poorer. They moved relatively short distances to get better ground.⁷²

Word of mouth was another common way that induced people to move to the Royal Slope. The Hoings were typical of those who had a friend or relative who lived in Eastern Washington, who lived on the Royal Slope, or who had seen or heard good things about the opportunity there. The fortune of farmers had declined in South Dakota, where the Hoings lived. Jerry's brother moved to Yakima looking for work and had become a real estate agent. Jerry then explains, "He wrote us a letter, which I should have

⁶⁹John Yearout interview by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 24, 1995 in the possession of the author.

⁷⁰Dewayne Winder interview by Ellis Wayne Allred dated August 6, 1994, in possession of the author.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

kept and framed to put on the wall, because we were just going to come out here and pick money up off the floor and the trees. Well, we sold what little bit we had and moved out here and like everybody else, we damn near starved to death the first three or four years."⁷³

Among the first to return to the Royal Slope in response to the opportunity to buy cheap ground where the water would soon come, were Ted and Jean Christensen. As early as 1953, three years before water was actually on the slope, Ted had made regular trips over from his home in Ellensburg to look things over, hoping to find a good place for he and his young bride to homestead. He was motivated by the belief that the ground was less expensive there than in Quincy and other areas, and that there were no rocks like there were in Ellensburg. Jean insisted that it was the pioneering spirit that motivated her to want to move; "It sounded exciting."⁷⁴

At roughly the same time that the Christensens were looking over ground, Frank Niessner was also exploring possibilities on the Royal Slope. He had been farming in Quincy and was the first one to draw out in the G.I. drawing for federal land.⁷⁵ At the time, he was two years out of college with little experience in farming. In retrospect, he considered this lack of experience an advantage because, in spite of what everyone told him, he didn't

⁷³Jerry and Betty Hoeing interview by Ellis Wayne Allred dated November 24, 1995 in possession of the author.

⁷⁴Christensen.

⁷⁵First preference for federally owned land in the Columbia Basin Project was offered to veterans of World War II. Drawings were held wherein those former GIs who were interested could put in. Then, if they were one of the few who drew out, if they could meet certain financial requirements, they could acquire a homestead for very little money. A number of those interviewed referred to these G.I. drawings.

know it couldn't be done.⁷⁶ It was also the cheap land which attracted Frank and Kay to the slope.

Gladys Dunsire, and her husband, Harlan had another motivation to return. Like Frank Niessner, they had little practical farming experience, although Harlan had grown up in the orchards. Their reason for coming was that, as noted earlier, Gladys' family had homesteaded in the earlier boom period and ultimately failed. Her father had passed on in 1933 leaving their 160 acre homestead to Gladys' mother. She had remarried and since her new husband didn't want the property, it was divided among the surviving children. Gladys had 40 acres on the slope free and clear. She married Harlan Dunsire in 1938, and they talked about returning to farm the family homestead. Since she and Harlan figured that they needed at least eighty acres to make a living, they bought forty more acres in 1939 when they knew the water was coming from the Columbia Basin Project. Then, in 1956, they moved on to their Royal Slope land. Her sister, who had kept the forty acres that she had inherited, also came to the Royal Slope in 1956 but didn't stick it out.⁷⁷

GETTING STARTED FARMING ON THE ROYAL SLOPE

Frank and Kay Niessner got the \$5,000 necessary to comply with the terms of the G.I. bill from farming their in Quincy. For two years before moving to the Royal Slope, they

⁷⁶Frank Niessner interview by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 22, 1995, in possession of the author.

⁷⁷Dunsire.

raised 30 acres of beans, 30 acres of seed peas, and 30 acres of potatoes. As luck would have it, they hit it big in the potatoes and wound up with enough cash to get themselves started on the Royal Slope where there was more room to expand and where prices for land were better. They began farming ground near the middle of the Royal Slope and they also developed land for others on lease. During their third year, many farmers had problems with dry beans. However, Frank was lucky enough to have his certified as seed, which gave him another boost.⁷⁸

Unlike the Niessners, many homesteaders either met with no luck or bad luck in getting started. Gladys Dunsire described the battles they had in 1956 with the wind to get a crop of beans as follows: "We had a stand of beautiful beans, 15 acres, but we wound up having nothing but problems. The neighbor's field blew in on the beans and we were unable to harvest hardly anything. At that time, nearly everyone had that experience."⁷⁹

The new ditches were a problem in the early years as well. Ditch breaks were regular and could cause some real problems. Mrs. Dunsire remembers,

That first year was a really rough one because of the ditches." She describes the experience of trying to set tubes when, "the water didn't come and it didn't come. Finally, I walked back up the ditch and here it was going right down a hole. The whole thing, one foot of water going down that hole. I grabbed some bails of straw and shoved that in there, with the gunny sacks

⁷⁸Niessner.

⁷⁹Dunsire.

and tried to fill it. Finally, Dewane came home from school and he tried to help me and we didn't make any headway. Finally, it was about 7 o'clock and I went down to Royal Camp, no telephones, . . . and I begged the ditch rider, 'Wouldn't you please come up and turn the water off?' I was close to the end of the ditch anyway, so he did. Thank heaven.⁸⁰

Jerry Hoing explained that, "many a wife would sit in the ditch break while their husbands shoveled sand around them to plug it up."⁸¹

LIVING CONDITIONS ON THE ROYAL SLOPE

When the first of the homesteaders arrived at the Royal Slope to live, there were not any roads.⁸² This was especially inconvenient when people needed to get from their place to Royal Camp, which was roughly 15 miles west of Othello on road twelve. Royal Camp was the closest thing to a town beginning to grow up on the Royal Slope and the first area to become a community. The early workers on the Royal Slope at first used old war surplus army barracks moved there from nearby military bases.

Conditions were "pioneer" at best in the early beginnings. Although water was diverted from the Columbia River at Grand Coulee to irrigate crops, culinary water was in short supply for the pioneers of the Royal Slope. Virtually everyone hauled water in order to live in the early days. Gladys and Harlan Dunsire

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Hoing.

⁸²Christensen.

hauled water from Crab Creek or the well at Royal Camp for the first seven years that they lived on the slope. After seven years they finally were able to drill a well which is still in use.⁸³

Frank and Kay Niessner brought in a 5000 gallon cistern to store the water that they hauled in. They then used barrels and a truck to haul from the new well at Royal Camp in order to fill the cistern.

The Niessners hauled water in this way for eleven years when a neighbor offered to "witch" a well for them. Since Frank's neighbors, the Millers, had recently drilled for 700 feet without reaching water, Frank was not optimistic. After witching, the neighbor insisted that he would hit water at thirty-two feet. Frank told him to go ahead, but he would only pay for 75 feet of drilling. The neighbor was so certain that he would hit water that he took him up and began to drill. At thirty-two feet, he hit a big rock. Underneath that, he hit water and installed a pump nine feet down. After only a day of use, the pump burned out from silt. The man came back and fixed the problem and then died the next day.⁸⁴

THE WIND

No history of the Royal Slope could possibly be complete without considerable attention given to the problems brought about by the wind. While wind can come up any time, springtime,

⁸³Dunsire.

⁸⁴ Niessner.

the time when ground is being plowed and otherwise broken up in preparation for planting, and at the precise time when seeds are most vulnerable to being "blown out" is the season when the wind is most constant and especially troublesome. According to Ted Christensen, "you had to plan your life around the wind and blowing sand."⁸⁵ Jean agreed and described how the dirt would pileup in their house when the wind would blow, and how it was impossible to even eat a meal because inside the houses the dust would be so bad that it would ruin the food on the tables at meal time.⁸⁶ Early on, a person could only travel from the communities on the Crab Creek, Corfu and Smyrna up the Red Rocks road during the winter because the rest of the year "fierce summer winds would fill it with sand drifts."⁸⁷ Early workers for the irrigation company used government equipment, road graders, to scoop dirt from roads constantly in order to try to keep them cleared.⁸⁸ Hoings complained that, before the ground got tied down, "when the wind blew, you couldn't see the house across the street."⁸⁹ Bud Stewart described the wind as sometimes nearing "hurricane force'." And further "it's not at all uncommon for a wind to be hard enough to blow a boxcar off the track."⁹⁰ Dewayne Winder claimed that in the 1950s and 1960s, the biggest challenge for those who worked for the water district was keeping the ditches from filling up with sand when the wind blew.⁹¹ Although the

⁸⁵Christensen.

⁸⁶Ibid..

⁸⁷Morgan p. 21.

⁸⁸Winder.

⁸⁹Hoeing.

⁹⁰Stewart, p. 27.

⁹¹ Winder.

wind still blows as hard and as consistently as it ever has, after decades of farming the ground and improving the quality, those who live on the slope today don't experience the blowing sand and dirt to the extent of those who pioneered.

EXTREME WEATHER

As if the weather was conspiring to defeat the new homesteaders, the summer of 1956 was as unusually hot as the winter of 1955-56 had been bitter cold. By the first of June, temperatures were at one hundred degrees and they stayed over one hundred degrees for the most part until September.⁹² Then, the following winter, while not nearly as cold as the previous one, was one of the wettest on record. The slope received more snow than ever before or since.⁹³ This extreme and unpredictable weather was one of the principle complaints which drove the first wave of homesteaders from the Royal Slope after the turn of the century. They had been unable to control the elements sufficiently to be able to predict with any certainty what crop would grow in any given year. Now, however, with the farmers able to apply virtually unlimited water to a crop during hot weather, risks had been reduced.

⁹²Winder.

⁹³Ibid.

THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING ISOLATED

For the first few years after the water came to the Royal Slope, there wasn't much to do socially except to work. As Jerry Hoeing put it, "No one could survive on just one job. In our case, both husband and wife had to work two or three jobs. There [was] no T.V, and no radio, just work. If we had enough money we would have left."⁹⁴

Most insisted that life was hardest on the women who had come with their husbands to farm on the Royal Slope. Isolation, including an absence of telephones before 1958, combined with the dirt, the wind, and an almost complete lack of social life, drove many pioneers away before they had a chance of succeeding.

Activities that could be carried out with things that were already at hand and didn't cost any money were the favorite of most of the pioneers of the slope. Jean Christensen explained that taking her children to the ditch near their house to swim was one of the favorite forms of summer entertainment.⁹⁵

Jerry Hoing described how good the pheasant hunting was in the area early on. Most years, he would turn the service station over to Betty for a couple of weeks and disappear to hunt pheasants.⁹⁶ Many pioneers used their spare time to fish at either Potholes Reservoir or in the Columbia River and with

⁹⁴Hoing.

⁹⁵Christensen.

⁹⁶Hoing.

increased prosperity, families bought boats and spent time water skiing.

Not only was isolation unpleasant for many settlers, but it was sometimes also dangerous. Some of the dangers of being so isolated and away from emergency services are illustrated by the experience of Frank and Kay Niessner which occurred soon after they moved into their new place on the Royal Slope. They had prepared to move during most of 1955. Finally, on New Year's Eve of 1956, they were able to do it. At first, they had planned to live in their machine shop, but since they had had such good luck with their potatoes in Quincy that year, they decided to bring a house in. That winter happened to be one of the coldest ever, with temperatures at a steady twenty six degrees below zero. After living in the house for only three weeks, one night they began to smell a fire. They found that a fire had progressed quite a ways burning inside one of their outside walls.

Since there were no phones yet, Kay jumped into her car and drove to Royal Camp, leaving Frank behind to do what he could to fight the fire. The roads were treacherous and it was bitter cold and windy. She drove to the Meyers place outside Royal Camp. They had watched her coming, trying to figure out who would be driving on a night like that. When they realized who it was, they met her at the door.

Kay and the Meyers got what help they could and hurried back to the house. When they got there, they thought Frank had flipped. He was up on a ladder with a bucket of water and a cup. He was tossing the water a cup at a time onto the hot parts of the

house. The weather was so cold that the water would freeze almost immediately around the fire and thus slow down its spread. Pretty soon, the Royal Camp volunteer fire department arrived to find the area around the fire under ice; almost completely frozen. They could see that the fire was pretty much out and so they all just went into the house and had coffee.⁹⁷

Many people were discouraged by the isolation and lack of many of the comforts of civilization. Frank also noted that it seemed like everyone on the slope those first few years had just moved from somewhere else. "They all wanted it to be like their previous home."⁹⁸ But, according to Frank, it wasn't the same, and often the stress of trying to make it so caused friction.

As time went on a social life did begin to take shape. Many people recalled that one of the main activities was softball, which became very popular.⁹⁹ Eventually, after a year or so, a Community women's club was begun by the extension office. They had card parties and dances which tended to ease the loneliness and provide a social outlet. The various church groups were also a major source of social contact with neighbors. On days when there was time, people would drive the distances to nearby towns where they could get back to civilization. Jerry Hoeing explained, "At the time you could get hamburgers for 19 cents. We could get the kids 19 cent hamburgers and me and Betty, we'd get the deluxe for 29 cents."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Niessner.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹From an interview with Madelyn Sanchez by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 24, 1995, in possession of the author.

¹⁰⁰Hoeing.

The community club was instrumental in finally getting telephones to the Royal Slope in 1958.¹⁰¹ When the phones first arrived, there were only a few lines, so those who had phones were on party lines with as many as ten other customers. Gladys Dunsire remembered being on the same line with LeGrand Christensen, who was the Mormon Bishop at the time. They were often awakened in the middle of the night and usually had difficulty making or receiving calls because the line was always busy.¹⁰²

THE SCHOOL CONTROVERSY

Nearly everyone who lived on the slope at the time remembered the great school controversy. Since settlement pretty much began at Royal Camp, and the first temporary schoolhouse was located there, those people on the east end of the slope figured that when it came time for a school to be built, it would be built there. However, momentum for the town was beginning to favor the new town of Royal City which had recently been established ten miles to the west from Royal Camp just off from highway twenty-six. Sam Poarch, who also became the first mayor of Royal City, had started the first grocery store that year (1956).¹⁰³ And a combination gas station, post office, and restaurant had also been built.¹⁰⁴ Royal City was located just off

¹⁰¹ Dunsire

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Morgan, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

from the newly paved highway which carried the majority of the traffic. And most of the new businesses were setting up there. Those living near Royal Camp knew that unless the new school were to be built there, that their area would decline in comparison to Royal City. Accordingly, they felt that it was very important to many people living there that the school be built in Royal Camp. On the other hand, many people could see that the town was going to be at Royal City ten miles away, and there were a large number of people who, partly for their own convenience because they lived on that end of the slope, and some because they could see that it made more sense to put it near where the town was apparently going to end up, wanted to put it in Royal City.

It was a bitterly fought battle with the school board in the middle. It finally came down to the vote of one man, J.C. Freeman, who lived closer to Royal Camp, and who would have personally benefited from the schools being built near there. He ultimately voted in favor of placing the schools in Royal City.¹⁰⁵

COMPARING TURN OF THE CENTURY SETTLERS TO THOSE AFTER GRAND COULEE

Those who settled the Royal Slope in the period after the Columbia Basin Project was announced shared some characteristics with those who had pioneered earlier. But they also possessed some obvious and important differences.

¹⁰⁵Niessner.

Similarities include the fact that they were there for agriculture, to homestead small farms. A survey of those who were living on the Royal Slope in 1994 revealed that almost two out of three heads of households still listed themselves primarily as farmers or being involved in farming in one way or another.¹⁰⁶ Settlers of the teens and twenties were also almost exclusively homesteaders who farmed for all or part of their income.

Another similarity is that in the beginning, nearly all were small operators who bought small parcels of land; original homesteads averaged around 60 acres. And they were purchased for relatively small amounts of money, which meant that in the beginning, those of modest means were able to have a shot at their dream of a homestead on the slope. One resident who was interviewed, who moved to the Royal Slope in 1962 paid only \$2,000 under the G.I. bill for two one-hundred and sixty acre parcels.¹⁰⁷

However, here is where the similarities end. The earliest wave of immigrants included for the most part, people who moved to the Royal Slope from far away, from areas that were vastly different from the desert of Eastern Washington. Most had been lured to the region from Europe or the Midwestern United States by an aggressive advertising campaign carried out by the railroads. They had scant knowledge of the area before they moved to it, and their expectations were distorted by

¹⁰⁶Survey of 1994 residents of Low Gap in possession of the author.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

exaggerated claims in the advertising or by their own unbridled optimism.

Those who settled the Royal Slope after the Columbia Basin Project were different in important ways. For the most part, as one can see from those people interviewed, they were almost universally American citizens who were Caucasian and who spoke English as their main language. Although there was some advertising intended to attract homesteaders from other areas of the country after the completion of the Columbia Basin Project, there were relatively few people who responded.¹⁰⁸ Decades of time elapsed after announcement of the project, allowing people within the region to build their interest in the land. These homesteaders, having lived nearby, had many opportunities to come and look over the slope, identifying the best pieces of ground. In the process, they were able to recognize that with water and power chances for success were good. Most were familiar with farming conditions in the area and went into the proposition with their eyes open.

Of course, the biggest difference was the fact that now the new settlers knew that they would have plenty of water and inexpensive electric power, giving them an equal or greater chance of succeeding than they could expect in nearly any other part of the country. It was inevitable that some would succeed on the Royal Slope because of new economics. It's also possible that the reason why the majority of the modern day residents had a familiarity with or connection to the area before they moved is

¹⁰⁸ Winder.

because local people recognized the potential of the area because of the water and power. And because they lived close by, they usually beat those from outside the area to the punch in taking control of the most attractive pieces of land.

As has been noted earlier, the turn-of-the century wave of settlers to the Royal Slope included a high percentage of foreign-born immigrants; twenty-two of sixty-five adults listed in the census of 1920 were foreign-born, mostly from Scandinavia and Russia, with a smattering from elsewhere around Europe.¹⁰⁹ From the previously mentioned survey of current residents and from the author's interviews, there is a relative absence of people, in fact, only one interviewed, who lists himself as foreign-born.¹¹⁰ Most of the people in the post-Columbia Basin Project wave of pioneers moved from over the hill at Quincy, Yakima, or Ellensburg, or somewhere else relatively close by, which also had farming conditions similar to those on the Royal Slope. This made adjustment to the area easier.

¹⁰⁹ 1920 U.S. Census.

¹¹⁰ 1994 Low Gap Survey. It should be noted that the picture painted by this survey is distorted in one significant way. The area surveyed was the former township of Low Gap. Low Gap is no longer a town and has no temporary rental housing, shopping, schools, or other facilities. Looking at the entire Royal Slope, one would definitely get a different picture of foreign-born immigrants. At this time (1995), nearly 40% of the residents of the Slope are foreign-born from Mexico. Most of these immigrants, live near the town of Royal City and commute to their places of work. Although there were a few settlers on The Slope from Mexico who came early on, notably Luis Ortega and his family, and Larry and Madeline Sanchez, who we interviewed, they represented a small percentage of the early pioneers to the region in the early beginnings. Although the numbers of Hispanic settlers has grown geometrically during the 40 years since water from the CBP reached the slope, their impact has been felt more recently. Since our focus is on the early pioneering of the Slope, discussion of this large Hispanic migration will not be covered here.

THERE WERE THOSE WHO FAILED

In spite of abundant water and power, and sometimes in spite of decades of farming experience, there were many who failed. There were many reasons why some didn't succeed.

For starters, there were the stresses on marriages and families that naturally occurred as a consequence of living in an isolated, pioneering environment. Because of the shock brought about by radical changes which occurred in the lives of so many who came early on, the stress of coping with those changes caused many to give up. Even with this stress, many stayed, either because they had no choice, they were too busy trying to make a living that they didn't have time to feel sorry for themselves, or because they were just plain stubborn.¹¹¹

Many of the people interviewed mentioned the fact that a good number of the small farmers who came here were badly undercapitalized.¹¹² This was a major reason some failed. Gladys Dunsire, who, with her husband succeeded in homesteading on the slope, gave the following tip, which many who succeeded shared. She insisted that it was necessary to over-estimate a families' needs by ten or twenty percent when providing figures for the Farm Bureau loans.¹¹³ This was essential in order to cover unforeseen events such as being forced to hire extra help to weed, or to re-plant when seed blew out and so forth. Many were

¹¹¹ Hoeing.

¹¹² Niessner.

¹¹³ Dunsire.

unwilling to do this, and, when unforeseen things came up, they had no way of paying for them.

Some of the homesteaders who didn't make it were just unlucky. At times, national market conditions made it nearly impossible for them to succeed despite every other condition favoring their success. For example, in 1959, the third year after land on the Royal Slope was opened up, after a relatively large group of farmers were beginning to make a serious go of it, some bad conditions came about nationally. That year saw prices drop to such low levels for most commodities that it didn't pay to harvest some crops. That next spring, Ted Christensen explained, there was developed ground that didn't even get farmed. Prices were so low that people who had developed the ground couldn't get anyone to farm it even if they offered to lease it at no cost.¹¹⁴ Many people were forced out that year, and again in subsequent years, such as 1967, when land rented for \$10.00 an acre if you could get anyone to take it. That year wheat entered a bad market cycle and sold for only \$1.25 a bushel. Only those who had enough capital to hang on until the prices got better could make it through those lean years.

Ted went on to describe how, although there were down cycles, there were also boom markets as well, such as the one that occurred in 1973 when the Russians were allowed to come in and start buying up all of the wheat. During this period of time, the market went to new heights. Everyone went out and bought new equipment. But even this wave of prosperity had its

¹¹⁴Christensen.

downside. Many successful farmers had money to invest and had to pay considerable taxes. In their efforts to avoid paying high taxes, or to earn high returns on investments, some got caught up in risky tax shelter investing and got themselves in trouble with the I.R.S. and the banks. There were a number of people forced out then.¹¹⁵

For all of the reasons listed above, and others too, people didn't make it work. It often just took time and persistence. As one pioneer put it, "What we had kind of seen with farming was that several people come and started farming and would get to a certain level and go broke, then they would leave and then the next guy would come in and pick up where they left off, and then maybe he would make it or maybe he wouldn't make it either, and it would take a third guy."¹¹⁶

The fact is, that many of the homesteaders who moved to the Royal Slope after completion of the Grand Coulee Dam were successful, in spite of bad luck, bad market conditions, under capitalization and everything else. A large number of families have succeeded to the extent that most of their second generation is still on the slope and experiencing relative prosperity as of the date of this writing. Although the realities of farming today dictate that most farms operate on a much larger scale, agriculture is still the occupation of most residents.

Another recent demographic trend is the dramatic increase in the foreign-born population of the area. Although, this time

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Hoeing.

around, the immigrants aren't from Europe. Madalyne and Larry Sanchez and Luis Ortega, who came in 1959 and 1960, were among the first of a steadily increasing number of Mexican Americans moving to the slope who have found it a prosperous place to live and a good place to raise a family.¹¹⁷ The first few families came to work on the farms. A few homesteaded their own ground. It should be noted that the Hispanic population of the Royal Slope has increased dramatically since the 1950's, the main lure being plenty of jobs. During the earlier days when most land owners were small homesteaders, children and family members often did this seasonal and contract work.

AN OVERVIEW OF LIFE ON THE SLOPE DURING THE FOUR PERIODS MENTIONED

This study has concentrated primarily upon the pioneering during the modern era immediately following the completion of the Columbia Basin Project on the Royal Slope, but it has also placed this period within the context of the four earlier periods of settlement.

During the first period, the area was put on the map by trappers and others seeking it's isolation. During this period, the area was inhabited exclusively by reclusive men characterized by the Frenchman of Frenchman hill fame.

In looking at the second period, which began when the railroads arrived in Eastern Washington during the last quarter of

¹¹⁷ Sanchez.

the nineteenth century, it was noted that railroads got close enough to the region that cattle could be driven to connecting points and shipped to coastal markets. This period was characterized by cycles of success during years when weather provided conditions tolerable to the livestock, and was interrupted by years when ranchers got wiped out by extreme weather. Succeeding as a cattleman was a tough proposition on the Royal Slope.

The third period observed began around the turn of the century, when the railroads built lines and spurs directly into the Big Bend and then heavily promoted the region in far-flung areas. This promotion served both as a means of selling the vast amounts of land they had acquired from the federal government and as a way to provide reliable markets for the railroads. This period is marked by the arrival of emigrants from Scandinavia, Europe, Russia, and the Midwestern United States to homestead small parcels of land. It ends in the early 1920s with the nearly universal failure of these homesteaders who suffered without adequate water in harsh, unpredictable weather conditions. Incidentally, this depopulation of the Royal Slope is in contrast to settlement patterns of the rest of the Pacific Northwest where, during the same period, a moderate population increase occurred during the 1920s to be followed by an extraordinary jump in the 1940s because of the War.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸Olson, Joan. Washington Times and Trails. (Grants Pass, Oregon, Windyridge Press. 1970), p. 260.

This widespread failure brought about the fourth period when, except for a very small group of families and reclusive bachelors in the area of the Crab Creek, The Slope was empty again. During this period, it was desolate enough to have been used for a bombing range during World War II.

This era of isolation was brought to a close by the announcement and completion of the Columbia Basin project and Grand Coulee Dam, which brought water to The Slope beginning in 1955. This period, the principle focus of our primary source research, has been characterized by struggles early on, and many memorable stories and events. It has led to the present time when the Royal Slope is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world.

SUMMARY

While those who pioneered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the Royal Slope would have viewed with envy the advantages enjoyed by the pioneers of the 1950s, pioneering still provided all of the challenges that a family could usually want. As described above, the pioneers of this Columbia Basin Era experienced isolation, extreme weather, problems with the water distribution system, economic uncertainty, and many other hazards. Those who survived have fascinating stories to tell.

While we ended our project with information mainly concentrating on the period of the mid 1950's, we acknowledge

that significant change has occurred on the slope since then. This period of growth and change will provide additional life experiences that will make up another era in the history of the Royal Slope that will need to be written about.

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Appendix A:

Transcription and notes to an interview with Ted and Jean Christensen by Ellis Wayne Allred dated November 23, 1995. The original cassette tape is in the possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah.

Wayne: What brought you here?

Ted: We lived in Ellensburg and the closeness, for one thing, attracted us and we knew that they were going to be getting water here in 1956 so we started looking in 1953 and 54. The ground was much more available. The ground in Quincy was already taken and it was much more expensive. We had a pioneering spirit. No rocks! In Ellensburg there were lots of rocks. So this was just one of the areas that we looked at

* Note, at this point, the sound became so weak on the auditory tape that transcription was extremely difficult. We have substituted the notes that were taken at the time by Ellis Wayne Allred.

Notes: no rocks, pioneering spirit... Rocks in Ellensburg
Newt Holstein lived on the slope.. raised goats -goat man
Jim Harris and Ervin Hardman had moved here before 1955.
Nov. 6, 1955 moved here

Lived in 8X27 trailer

No water or bath Hauled water at first from Ellensburg

No road to Royal Camp

Extremely cold that winter that we moved here. Moved where Jay lived

Bro., Dee moved here too.

We had a little outhouse used ditch water to fill washer Throw heater

The biggest thing was the wind. you had to plan your life around it.

Reasons why they came was the ground. Jean thought it sounded exciting.

A lot of people didn't make it...They weren't farmers.

Many marriages didn't survive.

Many people bought their farms from the people who drew them from the government lottery. Murphys and others

1959 prices for commodities were so low that you couldn't even get people to farm for free. If you gave them the land.

We did potatoes from the beginning...also started with cows.

there were no roads except through Low Gap and Smyrna there were dirt trails, rough roads.

During the fall of '56 Hwy 26 was paved. Dodson road was also put in in '56.

People just had to decide to make it work. Background was also a key.

Lack of equipment and knowledge caused people to fail. Farming got tough for a few years. Having enough money to see things through got people through those years.

We rented a unit for \$10.00 an acre. It was tough for everybody for a few years. \$1.25 per bushel for wheat until 1967. that fall the price went to \$1.75 that increase brought the area out of it. then in '73 the Russians bought up all the wheat. It went nuts
Even then, some lost because of taxes. they did things that got them in trouble, tax shelters. A number of people had to leave then. We pay our taxes then we do with what's left.

Also equipment went up in the good years. The price of a tractor doubled between '72 and '74. expenses and prices went up and then came back down.

At first we irrigated with ditches and drop boxes. Because of the soil, there were a lot of ditch breaks everywhere...

For recreation, we had this great swimming pool right by the house. Big irrigation ditch. the kids swam.

Unbelievable pheasant hunting in the early days because of the sugar beets.

School was really important. There was an argument about putting the school in Royal Camp vs. Royal City. The school vote was a very big deal because the growth went where the school went.

School has always been the main item. The community has always supported the school.

Talent shows were a big deal.

Maler put orchard in in 1956. Inspector.

Went back to Ellensburg when medical attention was needed.

Also there were clinics here from time to time. Getting the wives there for the babies was tough.

Wayne: What is your opinion, more people have come and not made it than have come and made it. What do you think was the difference?

Ted: Mostly, the case of those who drew the ground was pretty much back ground. Those who grew up on a farm and were on a farm all their lives did okay. But those who had very little equipment and very little money and very little experience. That was really tough. So that was the biggest drawback. Farming really got tough there for a couple of years. So I think the biggest difference was capitalization and experience.

Like I said, all that ground that you could have bought or leased for nothing and there were lots of farmers out there. They couldn't afford it. Even us, we had some bad years and we couldn't go out and buy ground. You could have bought all kinds of ground for around less than \$10,000 a unit, a little over \$100 an acre. Eighty acres were between \$5-10,000. It was already cleared.

Wheat was around \$5.25 a bushel until 1967, then it went up that fall by \$1.75. That's what kind of brought it out of it. Then in 1973, that's when the Russians came in here and bought the wheat.

In 1973-74 the price of a tractor doubled. The tractor that we paid \$18,00 for pre-73, exactly the same tractor in 1974 was \$36,00.

But what you got for your crop more than doubled. Fertilizer went up.

Wayne: Do you have any memorable experiences those first few years you were on the Slope?

Ted: Everybody remembers, over the period of time, the first ditches that had drop boxes. Ditch breaks happened all the time. Everybody has stories of ditch breaks.

Windstorms were bad. We couldn't drive. We just had to stop. The nature of the soil has changed so the wind storms are not as bad now. It is not as light. When we first farmed it, it was just light flour. When you just take it out of sagebrush, it doesn't have humus in it. We thought it would only take about 10 years, but it took about 20 before it actually changed it enough. Mother still had the all-time record for dust storm in 1958.

We had a three foot drift of sand and inside there were six inches inside the door.

Wayne: I'm interested in recreation. What you did with the kids.

Ted: Not a lot the first few years. We had a great swimming pool. The irrigation ditch. The kids spent 100's of hours in there.

Appendix B:

Interview with Gladys Dunsire by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 21, 1995. The original Cassette Tape is in possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah.

Her experiences in the Columbia Basin and before.

Gladys: Do you want me to go ahead before I was born?

Wayne: I would love to hear anything you could tell me, especially your own experiences about the Slope, what it was like before the Columbia Basin Project and who was here and what they did.

Gladys: I have gone to a lot of meetings when they had the Centennial, I was on the Centennial Committee for the 100th year of the state of Washington, or was it Grant County. I think it was the state. They said this was Douglas County. Grant County and Douglas County were all one big county and they decided to cut it off. They didn't want all this sand down here so they discarded that and formed Grant County.

So that is why we are in the desert. -

My folks came here in 1906. They were married in 1904 and they didn't own any property. They wanted to own land and that's why they came out here. My dad came out here in January of 1906 and him and two of his neighbors came out here. It was cold, it was in January and they got a guy from Quincy to take them out and show them the land. They picked their land and they were on their way

home. They left Quincy and drove as far as Moses Lake, this was in a wagon with horses, it was around 0°. It was cold, they had a little covered wagon and they built a fire in a bucket to cook their breakfast and they ate their breakfast with their gloves on. It was cold. Then they were on their way.

My dad raised wheat in Idaho that year and what they made off of that, they moved over here in August of 1906.

Do you want me to tell you about the experiences they had? There was Indians around then. They camped on Crab Creek, over here close to where the dam is now. Her and her neighbor were there with the children while the men went to Cunningham to get their equipment off of the railroad car. They had put all their equipment and everything on one railroad car. So they went back their to get it in their wagons and while they were gone the women were cooking and the cowboys worked for, what's the name of the guy that had the farm up there, where the dam is now? I can't remember. Anyway, they were camped about a mile away and they were rounding up the horses and everything. In the middle of the night the men heard a noise and the dog started growling and this one gal, she wasn't my mother, she was the other one and she went outside and took this big long pistol, like this, and shot it up in the air, to scare whoever it was away. The cowboys heard it and pretty soon they heard these voices. They circled the camp and the next morning they said, "What was the matter with you gals, what were you shooting at?" And they said they had heard a noise. Then the next day, here came a couple of Indians and they demanded food. So my mother fixed the food while this women stood with the gun under her apron so the Indians

wouldn't see it. And she fed them. Then my dad and the other gal's husband came and then it was okay and then they went on out to their home sites and dumped off the lumber. They had brought lumber, green lumber, and when they nailed it up it had split and had spaces and mom would take rags and newspapers and anything else to stuff in the cracks. That was 1906. My brother was just a baby, he was a year old when they came over

My dad filled a big railroad rail with about six horses and railed the sagebrush down and then turned around and came back and broke it off. Then people would come and pick it up and that was all people had for firewood was sagebrush. He did that a lot for the neighbors and they paid him for it. You plant a crop and you didn't know if you were going to get a crop or not. In fact, the first good crop he had was in 1915, we had a lot of rain and he got 30 bushel of wheat, which was just unheard of. But the worst of it was that he was in partnership with two of his brothers and they only had 30 acres, so he had to share it with them, but they got along fine.

My other brother was born in 1909 and my sister was born in 1911. So there was three of them and then in 1915, when they had the big record crop of wheat, he bought a car. It was the first car on Royal Slope, the second car in Grant County. The first car was owned by a fellow in Ephrata and I think he was a Superintendent of schools. I'm not sure.

Anyway, he learned how to drive. He wanted my mother to learn how to drive. She got in the car and started out okay, but then she didn't know how to stop it. She ran into a fence post and that is what stopped the car. That was it, she never drove another bit.

Also, in 1915, they had a well drilled. One of the neighbors had a well drilled and every time the wind blew, because they had a windmill, that was the only way they had of pumping water, and every time the wind blew the neighbors would line up with their wagons and barrels and my dad had a big long barrel, I don't know how many gallons it held, but it must have been 100-150 gallons and that was mounted on the chassis of a wagon, with the horses pulling it. When he had his well drilled, he had sagebrush stacked up higher than the house because they used the steam engine to pump and to make the well thing go up and down. He went down 190 feet and they got water. So save money, he was going to lower the pipe down himself and he got two sections tied together and something happened and it dropped clear to the bottom. He spent two weeks trying to fish that thing out and couldn't do it so finally he just left it there, so it's still there, but they covered over the well so it isn't being used now. They used up that whole pile of sagebrush trying to drill that well. That was 1915. After they got the well drilled, then they had plenty of water. Before that they were either going to the neighbors or clear down to Crab Creek. So they couldn't have very many cattle. They did have, of course, their own milk cow and they had horses?

Wayne: Was there a dam on Crab Creek?

Gladys: No

Wayne: So in the fall that pretty much dried up?

Gladys: No, there was water running all year round. It would get ice on it, of course, and you would have to break the ice on it to get water and they would have to bucket it.

The first year after they had the well, they decided they would have pigs because they had lots of water. There were lots of Russian thistles and grass and stuff like that. Not a lot of grass, but anyway they figured they could feed pigs. So they had pigs. I don't remember how many they had, but the pigs were so dumb. They would have their pigs out in that hot sun and then mama would have to go out there and use her apron. Women always wore aprons and they used it for everything. She would pick up the baby pigs and haul them over to a shady spot and put them down. And they made enough money on the pigs when they sold them that fall to pay for the well. That was in 1916.

Then the war came along in 1917 and my dad had three children and so he didn't think he would be called. Besides that, he was a farmer. It was in November in 1918 when he got notice that he was to be drafted. So they made plans and everything and about the time he went down to catch the train, word came over the telegraph that the war was over. So he didn't have to go.

Then I was born in 1919 and the only time my mother had a doctor was with the first boy and with me. And either one of us, if we hadn't of had a doctor, probably would have died. But my grandmother was a midwife. She had had a lot of experience with delivering babies and taking care of the mothers. She never lost a mother and she never lost a baby, that was normal.

Most people were starting to move away about then, because times were tough and crops were not good. The last good crop they had was in 1919 and they didn't make a lot of money, but maybe enough to live on.

Wayne: Even people that had wells?

Gladys: Yes, my mother had a big garden, but my dad was working out for other people, but when they started moving away there wasn't anybody around. He worked on the railroad in 1908 and 1909 when they were building it down here. He hired out his teams. He had teams of horses. At one time he had 22 head of horses. We had a big barn and when people came to look at the land, to prospect on it, they would see that big barn and think, well there's a place I can go and sleep in the barn. Mom said they used to have about six guys laying on the floor in the kitchen with quilts and blankets over them and they would say "shift" and everybody would turn over. Then my folks built on a bedroom so we had a bedroom off of the kitchen. That was about 1920, that grandma's house, they had built it about a mile away from our place. They moved and leased the land about five miles west of us.

Wayne: Where was this? Where was your original property?

Gladys" Right down here, four miles from here. South and west a little bit. Unit 135, I think it was.

They moved grandma's house then and attached it to my folks house in 1920. There was a bedroom and a big living room and they attached it to our house, so the old part of our house was the kitchen and dining area and then they attached a bedroom for my folks on to that and then they moved grandma's house over which made the living room and a bedroom for us girls. The boys slept up in the attic. We had a small basement, it wasn't cement, it was just dirt. Then we had the big barn.

When they drilled the well, dad put a base under it. The base was probably walls about 10 foot tall, then he put a cedar tank on top of that. Then he pumped water from the well up into that and we would have gravity flow into the house and we had water into the house. But, of course, you didn't in the winter time. I don't remember how we got water into the house during the winter time. Oh, we had a cistern built for the cattle and he would fill that from the well and then we had to bucket it from there into the house or bucket it from there to the cattle.

I remember one Christmas, probably the last one before we moved. We had a real tree. Before that we would have a piece of sagebrush or a great big Russian thistle. But this was a real tree. My dad got it down at Corfu. The railroad men threw off a bunch of them or else they fell off, but anyway, anybody that was down there, grabbed a tree. The school was down there too then. Before that, we had a little one-room school house on our property. That was called Hope Land School. In 1915 they consolidated all the small schools and they had a big school in Corfu, two room big school, with wood heaters in each room.

We brought the tree home and decorated it. We used colored paper, in fact we use to get a lot of old cans of food with colorful outside paper on and we would take that paper off and cut it up and make chains out of it. So we decorated it with paper chains and popcorn chains too.

On Christmas Eve we had our big dinner in the kitchen and the door to the living room was froze. Before Santa Claus came, my brother said he had to go out to the outhouse, so he left. Pretty soon we heard a banging on the front door and the front door opened and I said "Oh papa, that must be Santa Claus. Let's go see him." I wanted to go see him. Papa grabbed me and said, "Oh no, we might scare him away. Let's wait here just a minute." Then when we opened the door into the living room after he had left, he said Merry Christmas and went out the door. We opened the door into the living room here and we had wax candles on the tree and they were all lit. It was just beautiful. All these boxes underneath. I didn't know what it was for. Then when we started opening the presents, I remember I got a pair of black rubber boots with a red top around the top, Oh I loved them. Then I got a pair of wool knit stockings my grandma probably made and I got a little horse about six inches tall and about four inches long and he was on a platform and you could pull it. It had a mane and tail and I got a doll, a china doll. But I think the one that I loved the most was a stuffed homemade doll that Gail, not Gail, Katie Lotty made. Katie Lotty was my mother's best friend and they lived over on the North side of Frenchman Hills. It was this rag doll and I loved her. Her name was Molly. Katie's son was my age and she made one for him and he named his Molly. Mine was Polly and his was

Molly, or something like that. But I loved that rag doll and when we left it was so dirty and old and ripped up and mama left it. I didn't miss it until we got to Vantage, we were in a wagon. We had two wagons, covered wagons. They had four horses on one wagon and two on the other and then we had two spares. The reason there was four on one was because that was the one that my dad had all his farm equipment, he had taken it all apart and laid it in the wagon so he could haul it. That was in 1924. We left in August of 1924. The first part of August. My dad had harvested evidently everything he could and they didn't have a very good crop. My mother raised turkeys that year and sold them and she made more than he did and he had 200 acres of wheat. It was dry wheat. They had no irrigation. They had \$300 when they moved in cash.

When we started out, we sold all the cattle and all the horses and everything and we sold a lot of the furniture because we couldn't take everything. We started out the first of August and we went to my Grandmothers, which is where John Murphy lives and that is where my grandmother had her house. We stayed there over night and they tied up our dog there because they thought they better keep the dog there because my dad didn't have any cattle and it was strictly a cattle dog. So we went on and ran out of water. We had a barrel of water for the humans to drink and we watered the horses before we left. Well, we had one cow that they pulled in a cart behind the wagon and that was so we would have milk. We got down to the ferry at Vantage and we saw our dog coming and she was awfully slow, she was usually fast, but she was walking through that hot sand and I was crying "Wait for pup." Her name was pup. And mama

said "Oh no, when the ferry man is ready to go, we are leaving." I was bawling my head off and the ferry man wanted to know what's the matter with her and mama said "Oh she wants to wait for her dog." He says "Well, we will." So when the dog got there her feet were bleeding and they were sore from that hot sand and her tongue was hanging out and she wouldn't even go down to the river for water. The ferry man felt sorry for her and he took his own dipper and dipped it in the river and let her drink out of it so she could drink some water.

When we got on the other side of the Columbia River and we started up the old road, the switch backs up there, one of the iron, steel rims came off of one of the wagons, so they had to stop. The steel rim took off and it went clear down a great big ravine. My dad and brother went down and got it. Those things were heavy. I guess they took the other wagon and went on into Ellensburg to some people that we knew and my dad went too with the wheel and got it fixed in Ellensburg. We were laid up there for three days. Then we went

Wayne: What ever happened to the car?

Gladys: The wagon?

Wayne: No, the car, you mention you bought.

Gladys: Oh, that was an old one and he traded that for a big old Buick and we left that on the homestead and he went back later

and got it. That was the old fashioned, fringe-on-top, the first one he had.

I'll never forget the first trees I saw. Those big fur trees. I just couldn't get over looking at them. They were so big and I had never seen them before. That was one of the highlights and then when we got up in the pass, we camped and it was raining and my mother built a fire to cook on and my brother and my sister were quite a bit older and my brother was 10 years older and my sister was eight years older than me and they started going for a walk. They didn't know it, but I followed them and we came to a creek and here was a log about that wide, 18 inches wide, and they walked across it and they walked across it and I walked across it and when they got to the other side they looked back and saw me and they just about had a fit.

On top of the pass they were working, making roads and the dust was this deep. The horses, they had horses, they were pulling big scoops, there was no machinery, you know, automatic machinery and the dust was almost up to the hubs of our wagons. We got through that, then when we were going down, we were going towards Redmond. My folks bought a farm that was up on Hollywood Hill, that was between Redmond and Woodenville. We got down on the highway and it was a brick highway and those iron wheels on the wagon sure made a clatter, but we made it. We had a little bitty house, I think it was a kitchen, one bedroom, a living room and kind of a hall. That's were my sister and I had our bed. Then my dad added onto that house.

Wayne: What brought you back?

Gladys: I married a city guy from Seattle. I met him over there. In fact, I met him while I was still in high school. The reason we came back was because we had 40 acres. My dad died in 1933 and mother remarried in 1935 and my step-dad, he didn't want anything to do with this property over here. It was just a pile of sand, so he said "Well give it to the kids." There were four of us and they had 160 acres, so we each inherited 40 acres. In 1937 that's when they did it, they turned it over to us. Then they said, you can't make a living on 40 acres, you have to have 80 acres. They didn't know what they were talking about. Anyway, when Harlan and I got married, that's when we decided to buy another 40 from the government. It was available. It was in 1938 or 1939 that we bought the other 40 acres. Then we had this and pretty soon there was water coming we thought "By gosh, the land of opportunity. It's all new everything." and my sister says, "Well, we'll come over too."

Then her husband who was a tool and die maker and had a real good job and so he went over to the sugar beet factory so see if he could get on there. The wages were so much lower than what he was making in Seattle that they didn't want to chance it, so they didn't, they gave up. But we stuck it out and Harlan came over here and went to work and then we moved over here in 1956. We leased the place out to a farmer and they developed it. We had it leveled and the ditch paths put in and then they drew the ditches and put in all that stuff. I think they were going to lease it for three years. But after the first year, they were hauling all their equipment from over

there by Othello to come over here to farm and having to drive back and forth and change water and all that stuff and meanwhile, we were learning and in 1958 they quit. So we said "this is our opportunity. Shall we do it?" So we decided to go ahead and do it. See Harlan had never even lived on a farm. I had lived on a farm, but it was all horses and stuff. I didn't know anything about setting a tube. I did know how to use a shovel and so did Harlan. But that's how we started out.

Our first piece of farm equipment that we bought was a wheelbarrow. That first year was really a rough one because of the new ditches. I remember of one time I was waiting to set tubes down in the field and the water didn't come and it didn't come. Finally I walked back up. Harlan was at work, the kids were at school. I walked back up the ditch and here it was going right down a hole. The whole thing, one foot of water going down that hole. I grabbed some bails of straw and shoved that in there, took the gunny sacks and tried to fill it. Finally, Dewain came home from school and he tried to help me and we didn't make any headway. Finally it was about 7 o'clock and I went down to Royal Camp, no telephones, I went down to Royal Camp and I begged the ditch rider, "Wouldn't you please come up and turn the water off." I was close to the end of the ditch anyway, so he did. Thank heaven. It just went down a hole. It could have been an old badger hole or something. I don't know. There was so much sand that it would just absorb it.

We had to haul water from Royal Camp. We did that for seven years. I witched wells. And the formula, I worked on the post when we lived over on the coast, but I didn't think the same formula would

work over here, because I knew all the wells were about 200 feet, this one is about 585. But anyway, I had witched it many times and it said 65 feet, but we didn't think that was possible. So after seven years, we decided to go ahead and drill. And we drilled the well and got down, well it was sand and he had to push his pipe down to keep the sand from falling in and he got it down and anchored to rock and he started drilling and pretty soon it had a different sound. So both of us ran outside when we heard it and yelled "Stop, stop your rig, pull it up. Let see what you got." And he had water. Then he started looking at the stuff he had bailed out and here was pieces of glass like stuff. It was hard as a rock and it was like glass. He said, "You know the only place I have seen that stuff was 400 feet deep over by Othello. And it was in sandstone." And he hit the claw underneath that. Well see, that seals it, so we said, "Don't go any further than that. That's it." There's still water we could pump there, day and night and it would still be okay. They are still using the well. We sold that place and moved about 1/2 mile from there. Then we sold that place and moved up here. Well there isn't any water. We didn't have to worry about irrigating We thought we would have plenty of water at 585 feet. They said we had 30 gallons, so we bought a pump that would pump 30 gallons, thinking that we could irrigate a little bit. We burned a pump out in about a year and a half and that was an expensive pump. So we checked it out and we only had about 6-1/2 gallons a minute, enough for a house. We didn't have the money to drill deeper, in fact we had sold 10 heifers ready to breed and two beautiful young bulls in order to finish paying off the well. Now we have got a good neighbor, Mr. Richard Scone, he owns all this

land around, all the apple orchards, anyway, he is giving us water, because we were the first ones here. We could either force him to drill our well deeper or furnish us water. He decided to furnish us water, because all we need it is in the summer time to water the garden and flowers and stuff.

We farmed down there on that first place that we had for 19 years. We lived up on the other hill up here for seven years and then we have been here since 1977 and we have lived here ever since.

Wayne: Where did you live in the first place? Did you bring a trailer?

Gladys: No, my sister built a cabin on her place, which was right next to ours and it was 12 X 12 and we had a kerosene stove in there and they had a well, an old well from the first homesteaders, so we had water, but we hauled our drinking water from Royal Camp in a 10 gallon can and then Harlan and I pitched a tent outside and that was our bedroom and we had the two kids sleeping in the cabin. That's how we started out. Then we stayed there in her cabin until we built, we built a double garage and workshop and it was 30 X 24. The workshop wasn't very big. Anyway, with the full intention of using it as a house, because we couldn't have borrowed the money to build a house that size, but we could to build a garage, so that's what it was. That's what we lived in at first and it was block. And we had three very small bedrooms, a small living room and a kitchen-dinning area and, of course, our outhouse was outside. We

took baths in the round tub, just like we did on the homestead when I was a kid. But we started out the hard way.

Wayne: How fast did the Slope fill up?

Gladys: The test year for water was 1956 and then the regular water came in 1957, where we were anyway. I think it was the winter of 1957, my sister and her husband brought my mother over to see what the place looked like and I was so proud of all the lights and the neighborhood and I took my mama outside and said "Look mama, see all the lights." and she said "Where, back in 1915 there was a lot of lights around. You could see lots of neighbors." But every other section was railroad land and there was nobody living there. So what she was talking about was probably pretty good.

Wayne: So the railroad didn't sell their ground?

Gladys: They didn't start selling their ground until in the 30's.

Wayne: Who was buying it in the 30's.

Gladys: People that were investing their money.

Wayne: Oh, that was when word of the Columbia Basin Project came down.

Gladys: Yeah, right. See, they got the dam built and then the railroad started selling their land. Hjeon, they bought their land about 1937, and they each bought 80 acres, because Uncle Sam said 80 acres was enough to make a living on. So they bought 80 acres right next to each other. And then they came out here in about 1957 or 58 and they drilled a well up on top of the hill. One brother lived up on top of the hill and the other one lived, there was a gully there, and the other one lived down there and they drilled the well up there, I don't know why and they had oodles of water.

Wayne: So the 80 acres wasn't enough ground?

Gladys: No. The farmers that moved here leased land from other people or leased it, or leveled it, for instance, for five years for nothing and then they would turn it back to the owner. There was a lot of people that were absentee owners. My two brothers had a unit on the east side of us and my sister had a unit on the west side of us and we were in the middle. Then my two brothers leased theirs out to Clarence Herrod and he leveled it. We tried to get the same thing with my brothers, but they said "Oh, you're no farmers." I didn't have any help at all from my brothers or my sister. You'd think they would want to help us a little bit to get going.

Wayne: What kind of crops did you grow to start out with?

Gladys: Beans. The fellow that cropped it before us had put in about 15 acres of alfalfa and we kept that and we put in peas and we

had nothing but problems. We had beautiful beans and then the neighbor that was leasing my sister's place had let his land get dry and the wind started blowing and started blowing in on our beans and then when we had to get our beans cut and wind rowed, the wind came up and blew out shelled out beans all over the field. I think all the farmers had that experience. When we sold our crop and got everything straightened out, we had enough money left over to buy a deep freeze. That's all the profit we had. Harlan was working at Boeings and his wages went into raising the family and helping on the farm.

We got a milk cow in 1958 because we had our own hay. We sold hay for \$15 a ton and we had to hire people to cut it for us and bale it for us, because we didn't have the equipment. We bought a tractor and we bought the plow and the disc and the things to take care of the ground and we bought a cultivator that hooked onto the tractor. We also got a packer, but his wages went into the farm and raising the family.

Wayne: I had questions about recreation.

Gladys: From what my mother use to tell me, they had more darn fun than we ever did.

There was a Women's Society started by the Extension Office, out here on the Slope. They would meet once a month and then the Community Club met once a month. We finally started having card parties and dances. I don't ever remember having a basket social. We use to have basket socials when I was a kid over on the Coast,

but I don't remember having a basket social here. The Community Club helped up get phones out here. We didn't get a phone until we had lived here about three years, about 1958 or 59. They were 10-party lines. We had Mr. LeGrand Christensen on our line and he was the bishop. We had phone calls in the middle of the night. It was terrible. Anyway, he got a private line, I'm sure. Then they shortened it to 6-party line and we finally got a private line.

Wayne: Did you start right off using tubes when the Columbia Basin came in or did you do with a shovel for awhile?

Gladys: We used a shovel and tubes.

Wayne: What are the secrets of making it work on the Slope?

Gladys: I think they had farmed before, they had experience before they ever came here. A lot of our neighbors came from Idaho and Utah and they knew how to figure things. We found out when we went with FHA, that you figure out, we always figured out exactly what we needed to barely get by with. That's all we applied for. We found out that you are suppose to pad it. Put about 10% more than what it will cost you, because you never know what you're going to run into. And when we would run into problems like one year we had beans and, they were beautiful bean, pintos, and they were just great, we needed some help to get the weeds out. And they said, "You didn't apply for that, we can't get it." So here the weeds got like this, it was just Harlan and I then, the kids were gone. Then Ken

Murphy came and cut the beans for us and he just had one heck of a time. But he's whistle and get off and knock the weeds off and keep going, but then the wind came up and it would pick the beans up and when the FHA guy came out and looked at the ground he says, "How come you got so many beans on the ground?" We said, "You wouldn't let us have any money for labor and they were cut and the wind blew and shelled them out." "Oh my gosh," he said, "we could have found something someplace." But it was too late then. So it's the ones that had experience and knew what they were doing. We survived for 19 years, I don't know how we did it. And we are one of the few people that are still here from 1956. Kwak's are still here. Robbins came the next year.

For school, my daughter was 13 and my son was 16 when we came here in 1956 and the only grade school we had was down at Royal Camp and it was a 2-room grade school. It was two of those army barracks buildings put together and you could throw a cat through the walls, so when it was real cold and windy, the kids stayed home. Mr. Peas was a teacher. I didn't like him very much. He had a poor reputation. Kendall was the name of the Superintendent.

Wayne: When did Kallenberger come?

Gladys: He came when they got the High School done in Royal City. My son had to take the bus to Othello to go to high school. My daughter was in the first graduating class at Red Rock School, when it was finished, the old Red Rock. I think there were eight kids in her class. Duwain graduated in 1960 and her in 62.

Appendix C:

Transcription of an interview with Jerry and Betty Hoing by Ellis Wayne Allred dated November 23, 1995. The original cassette tape is in possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah.

Wayne: You have been here since when?

Jerry: 1959. Basically, we were farming in South Dakota and farming got really bad and my brother had moved out to Seattle and went to work for Boeing and then my other brother moved to Yakima, looking for work, and he went to work for a Real Estate Office, and consequently this Columbia Basin was the land of opportunity, he told us. He wrote us a letter, which I should have kept and framed to put on the wall, because we were just going to come out here and pick money up off the floor and the trees. Well, we sold what little bit we had and moved out here and like everybody else, we damn near starved to death the first three or four years.

We arrived in Royal City and bought the old service station that was a block west of where we are at now. The business was so slow at the service station and we had three little kids to feed and I went all over town and I told them, "Hey, I'm not very smart, but I am strong enough to do whatever there is to do and so anybody needing something done for a day or two or a week, call and I can work for you." Betty would run the station. So, I run tractor, I

burned weeds, I drove truck, I did about anything there was to do. I got a job driving the school bus.

When people first come to the Slope, you couldn't hardly survive on one job. You and your wife both worked or you had two or three jobs. So we run the service station, drove the school bus, and worked nights. Survival of the fittest.

What we kind of seen with the farming was that several people come and started farming and would get it to a certain level and go broke, then they would leave and then the next guy would come in and pick up where they left off and then maybe he would make it or maybe he wouldn't make it either and it would take a third guy.

There was a time when you could pick up this ground for just paying the water. There wasn't anything to rent, all you had to do was pay the water.

Wayne: Where did you guys live when you first came?

Jerry: We lived right there at the old station. They had moved in some barracks houses from Vantage. It was a converted barracks house. It was one of those houses that was 20 feet wide and two bedrooms and three walls, cause you know how big the bedrooms were, and we had two or three kids in one room with a bed and a dresser that was about it. There wasn't much room.

Wayne: What did you do for recreation?

Jerry: We didn't really do much recreation. We was pretty active in the church. At that time you could get hamburgers for .19¢. We would get the kids .19¢ hamburgers and me and Betty, we'd get the deluxe for .29¢. But with some members of our family here we would get together. Until later on, we just went to school activities. Basically, that was our recreation.

We did join a square dance group in the early 60's.

I think the first couple of three years, if we would have had enough money to go back home, we would have gone, but we didn't have enough money to go back. We were really lonely. It was harder on the women, because, myself, I would get out and be around people all day and then I would come home at night and I was tired and she wanted somebody to talk to.

Wayne: Did you guys have a well? Where did you get your water?

Jerry: The city. It was the one down at the park, that was our water system. We had septic tanks. There wasn't a sewer system.

If you talk to some of the farmers, when they first started developing this land, the silty sand ditch banks would break, many a wives would sit in the ditch break while their husbands shoveled sand around them to plug it up.

Wayne: I am curious to know why you choose Royal City instead of Royal Camp.

Jerry: Well, like I said, this is where the business was and the houses around the business. In 1959, I think Royal City had the advantage on Royal Camp. At that time they had one of the schools built, the Post Office was here. This is where the business was and the house was right behind the business so I never really had any contact with Royal Camp.

If we got a customer, off the highway, he was probably a good one, because he was about out of gas. With the little bit of knowledge I brought with me from the farm, machanicing was pretty simple then. I remember the first tire I changed. I didn't have a whole lot of equipment, but I took the tire off of the car and I hot patched it. Fixed his tire, put it back on the car for .50¢. That has come quit a ways.

Wayne: Do you have any kind of pioneering stories. Any things come to mind about being isolated?

Jerry: We were going to have company. We got ready for them and the people came and that just happened to be one of the days that the wind started blowing. We had a lot of dirt, so they only stayed about 20 minutes. I said "Let me call the Highway Patrol and make sure the road's not closed." They didn't even wait for that. They thought I was kidding, but I really wasn't kidding. So they stayed about 20 minutes and got in the car and left.

There was a house kitty-corner from us and I tell people that when the wind blew you couldn't see that house. They don't believe that, but that was actually true. All you could do was just wait

until it quit. It didn't do a bit of good to try and dust, until the wind was gone.

A lot of hard work. Ringer washer and no dryer.

Being family people, we were looking for someplace to raise our kids that sort of resembled the outdoors and the farm life, that is what I grew up on, a farm, and we put them all through school and higher education and we don't feel like they have to take a back seat to anybody.

Wayne: Why didn't you farm? Why did you choose to run the service station.

Jerry: I didn't have any money. We dry land farmed and this is irrigating and I didn't know a thing about it. I really wasn't much of a gambler. My brother stumbled onto this deal and he knew that I basically had enough knowledge to make it work and probably his ulterior motive was, he got me out here, I was the baby of the family and if he got me out here, my mother would probably move out and that's what happened. After I moved out here for a couple of years then she moved out here.

I really, really never give farming a thought as far as doing it on my own.

Appendix D:

Interview with Frank and Kaye Niessner by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 22, 1995. The original cassette tape is in possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah.

Wayne: What brought you to the Royal Slope?

Frank: We were farming in Quincy. We drew out and we were #1.

Wayne: How did you finance getting started?

Frank: We were just two years out of college and we had bought a home in Quincy and we had a small equity in a home and we had a car and a TV and we needed \$5,000, cash. We were farming in Quincy and we were farming with dad and we wanted to take off on our own. We had 30 acres of beans, 30 acres of potatoes and 30 acres of peas and we hit big on the potatoes.

When we first come to the slope we primarily developed land for other people for wheat.

We farmed the ground, that's how we paid the rent. We would get about \$100 an acre to develop the land. The land owners were all absentee owners. They couldn't live here. They tried to homestead, but they couldn't.

At this point the tape recording became too difficult to hear for transcription. The following is from Ellis Wayne Allred's notes he was taking at the time.

The third year here, we were heavy into dry beans... We were lucky enough to have ours certified for seed which gave us another boost. We had what amounted to a corner on seed.

We developed ground for absentee owners. It cost \$100.00 an acre to develop. Many were previous owners who had been here before. We developed the ground where Carter farms.

Standard oil Guy.

Frank: Grandview, Yakima Valley, Graduated Washington State University.

Farmed for 2 years then drew piece of ground.

5000gallon cistern of water Millers drilled 700 feet and got no water.

We hauled water for 11 years. Only had to haul for 11 years. Old guy wanted to witch a well...He said there was water down at 32 feet, more than 20 gallon a minute. I said O.K., but I was only paying for 75 feet. At 32 feet he hit a big rock. Underneath it was water.

We put the pump in at 9 feet...a three horse pump...and the next day we ran it for 1 And a half hours. It filled with gravel and sludge and burned out the pump. I called him to come back and fix it and we bailed out the pump. He said that this was normal and he fixed it. He had been sick with heart problems. A few days later he died. this was one of the last things he did.

Those who were successful were stubborn. 90% were grossely underfinanced. they spend what money they have developing their ground and then they don'e have nay money to proceed.

Also, many city peoople didn't know what they were doing. Many who put in for the drawing didn't have agricultural background.

Therewas a bad wind storn that first year. We had to scoop the sand away from the garage to get our car out. Blew dust and wind. the first year in Quincy, Sand-blasted glasses and windshield '53, '54, '55 we were in Quincy. In the fall of '55 we came and developed ground. We moved New Years Eve of '56.

We were going to live in the machine shed, we planned to live there, then we hit the potatoes crop.

frank had no agricultural background, had been in the services, had college degree. He thought this was an advantage. he had no dad saying "it won't work."

Sheepherder the only person living in the area. Newt Holstead, sheepherder. there were only goat trails, one over Low Gap, where Jerry and Chris live. the trail would round and round. The road was used for the bombing range. Harrises, Twila and Floyd, Cattleman over by Wells on the north side of the hills. bought land for 25 cents and acre. there were also Stewarts and Razors and Crab Crek.

Most blew out. had to haul water from Crab Creek.

All telephone companies ended at Royal. Long distance to call across the road. we had to appeal to get one telephone district.

lived in house 3 weeks. 26 below We had a fire caused by the vaporizer...There were no phones...Meyers met at the door...

When Kay arrived, she thought Frank had flipped. He was standing on a ladder dipping water out of a bucket and ladling it onto the fire. Because it was so cold, the water froze instantly and retarded the spread of the fire.

The Royal Camp fire department got there everything was frozen and the fire was out. They all just came in and had coffee.

Three or four guys with vision of the area: Bell from Ephrata, Senator Dill sold the idea of a dam at Grand Coulee to The President. Grand Coulee Dam was developed for irrigation not electricity, smaller dam at first

Old People: Archie Razor, Ed and Millie Spaulding
ladies community club

The Slope was a melting pot for people from all over. All wanted it to be like home (Like Scottsbluff Nebraska) but it wasn't like home.

The School...School board was the bottle neck Only Royal city was logical for the school. Controversy whether or not to consolidate the schools. When the high school was built in Royal City, J.C. Freeman voted to decide. Good school system.

We have had 5 addresses while living in the same house.

Appendix E:

Transcription of an interview with Madeline Sanchez by Ellis Wayne Allred dated November 22, 1995. The original cassette tape is in possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah. Larry Sanchez

Madaline: It was very dusty

Wayne: What brought you here to the Royal Slope?

Madaline: Larry and my brother use to come and thin beets for the Christensens. That was in 1959-60. Luis decided to move here in 1961 when we got married. We use to come visit him then. We were not living here, Larry just came to thin beets. Anyway, we use to come visit him on and off and in 1968 Jay Christensen ask Larry to work for him. I loved the area. There was nothing, it was dusty, no pavement, but I liked it. That brought us here.

Wayne: When you first lived here, where did you live?

Madaline: At Jays, behind Jay's house.

Wayne: What did you do for recreation and fun?

Madaline: We did softball. We use to go camping. We went up by Vantage. And we went to Red Rock. We took the kids irrigating.

Wayne: Give me some names of people you were friends with early on.

Madaline: Joe Delgado, Ken Murphy, Schroms, some of them are not here anymore like Jones, Dan and Darlene Jones, Seltzers, Verheys, Garzas, and Garcias.

Wayne: A lot of people have come and gone and I am interested why those that stayed, have chose to stay.

Madaline: The schools. The School District is a very good school district. I don't like metropolitan life. I like a quiet rural area so I like raising my family here. There is not a lot of drugs and bad influences.

Wayne: Do you have any real memorable experiences from when you first came here?

Madaline: There has been a lot. The thing I like about Royal City is mostly the people. We have a closeness. Especially, when you have trouble, people are there for you. And that is one of the things I learned to appreciate about Royal.

This is when people just started coming into Royal City and so Byron was fixing a car for this man and I was pregnant and father came and said "Magdalina, help take one of the cars to Sunfresh." and I says "okay". I was washing dishes, Larry had just left to work and

I said "Okay, let me just turn everything off." Supposedly I turned it off. I took off. I got into father's car and he drove the other car and parked it at Sunfresh. And when I came back and parked in front of my house I saw smoke coming out of the house. We had just built our houses, this was in 1975. It was about a month and a half after I had bought the house. I looked at my house and said "Father, my house is burning!" So I ran into the house and it was full of smoke. He was trying to get me out of there because of all the smoke. He opened the windows and turned the burner off. Instead of turning it off, I had turned the burner on high. There was smoke coming out of there and it had started to burn my cabinets on top of the stove. So I grabbed the dishwater and with a rag and just put it there. I didn't even feel it, the fire. So he took me out of the house and aired the house and got all the smoke out and cleaned my walls for me and tried to get me to his house for some chicken soup and I said, "I don't want no chicken soup, my house is burning!" He came back and brought things from his house and the church and started airing my house. I remember when Larry came in I said to him, "I almost burned our new house." We had just barely moved in about a month or so before. I was scared. Then in November I lost my baby. For doing something good, I almost burned my house after only being there a month.

Appendix F:

Notes from an interview with DeWayne Winder by Ellis Wayne Allred on August 6, 1994.

Settlement on the Slope followed available water. It started at block 42, by the old sugar factory just off from I-90.

People raised sugar beets, wheat, spuds and beans

Early settlers: Floyd Winder, Melvin Jorgensen, Theron Baker...many of these moved from elsewhere on the Columbia Basin project where their ground had been poorer. They moved short distances to get the better ground. Many came from Mae Valley.

Bakers and Winders came from Idaho, Fletchers from Oregon.

The government put up billboards throughout the midwest promoting the project. An example was Illinois...the billboard said: Come to the Columbia Basin and improve your lifestyle. John Calder responded to one of these.

The big problems were wind and dirt. Dirt wasn't tied down. Used government equipment, road graders to scoop dirt from roads constantly.

Demand for water began very low compared to now.

Each canal or system had a test year. Most canals have lasted for 50 years without a break.

Royal Slope farming began around Royal Camp because that's where workers on the system lived. Quanset huts moved in to live in. The first school was built there.

Smyrna settlers were there before the project came. They had dammed lower Goose Lake to control water. Limited but kept them going if they were careful.

Other Royal Slope founding families: Jay and Ted Christensen, Clarence Herrud, Homer Dixon, the Piercies. All of these families have made it and have children farming now. An amazing percentage were successful.

The pump plant at Low Gap was one of the last places on the slope to get water. The last place was block 81 toward the river. Development happened from East to West for the most part.

During the 50s and 60s everyone used "Rural Irrigation." This means that they made ditches and every farmer packed a shovel. The land that could be farmed this way was more limited than modern methods.

They would assign you so many inches of water and you had it continuously all summer. You didn't have to order it on and off.

After the dirt ditches, most farmers improved on that when they put in concrete ditches and tubes. Around 1965 this was the popular way of doing things.

The tubes were improved on with hand lines and wheel lines and then finally the ultimate improvement so far were the circles.

Sandy ground is best for circles because it drains and doesn't get deep ruts. If you have clay, circles don't work well.

There have been two major canal breaks

Last year was the most unusual weather occurrence so far that he can remember. We got over 3 inches of rain in 24 hours. That amount is unheard of in the basin.

1956 was also an unusual year. It was an extremely long and hot summer. By the first of June temperatures were at 100 degrees and they stayed over 100 degrees until September. Then that winter the Slope got more snow than ever before or since.

Appendix G:

Interview with John Yearout by Ellis Wayne Allred on November 22, 1995. The original cassette tape is in possession of Ellis Wayne Allred, Ogden, Utah.

John: My father and two brothers had a construction company, based in Moses Lake and I was a High School student at that time. Their construction company was a sub contractor and they did the smaller jobs for larger companies. They sub-contracted all of the spreading of gravel on the ditch rider roads on the Royal Slope. Also, in the ditches, wherever there was a structure for the head gate, where the water pours out into the next ditch they had the stone that you put around it, it's called rip-rap. They got contracts to do all the stone work, all the rip-rap on the structures on the ditches on the Slope, as well. It was called P.H. Yearout and Sons. We did all that rock work before there was even any water in the ditches. That was in about 1955-56. These were what they called the lateral systems, the smaller ditches.

Wayne: What kind of equipment?

John: We had four dump trucks, dad was a Ford man, he had all Ford dump trucks. They were F-600, I think they were 5-yard capacity boxes. He had about five trucks. He had a small portable with wheels on it, you could just hook on it and haul it down the

road. We crushed rock at a pit that was at Highway 26 and the O'Sullivan Dam Road. We set our system up right down in the bottom of that pit. We had a little R D-4 Cat. We had also a link belt drag line. It was a 1940's model.

We would crush all the rock right there. We had it set up so that it would crush rock into a bunker and then as the trucks came in, they would load out of the bunker. We could have just crushed right there into the truck, but that would have been a slower process. If we crushed into the bunker, we could crush rock all the time.

We were the ones the and rocks in these roads. We did this same kind of work all over, Quincy, Othello, clear down to the Clarkston area. It was kind of the same story as we moved around and the system was being developed. We had a real niche and we had a good system that worked to do that type of work. As a kid going through high school, I worked in construction, making real good money. I was making, back in the 50's, I was making around \$250-300 a month. For a high school kid, that was really good money. I bought all my own clothes and always had plenty of money for gas. I had to pay for my gas, even though my dad had a gas tank and bought bulk, I had to account for any gas that I used.

Wayne: What do you remember being on the Slope?

John: On the Slope, at that time, was a lot of nothing. It was interesting, we would come over here and work and it was really hot and dry in the summer time. We would go over the hill by MarDon and

down the road past MarDon, up that way to get home. We drove one pick-up. So here are my two older brothers and my dad, they had seniority rights, so they road in the cab, I was always in the back. But it was interesting, as you drove over the hill and you started to go down the hill on the O'Sullivan Dam Road, it was like somebody just turned a cooler on, because there was sprinkle irrigation going on already on that side and it was just like stepping into a room with an air conditioner. And you could feel it in the back of that pick-up, you would be riding around and it would be hot, like being in a blast furnace on one side of the hill, drive to the other side of the hill and it was like somebody had turned the cooler on. Just because of the irrigation. That was one of the interesting little phenomenon's, because this was really air dry country. There was no water out here, it was sage brush and sand. It was common for us to get our trucks stuck out in this stuff because it was so bone dry.

There were no roads, just trails. The only road was the road over the hill to O'Sullivan that is now called the O'Sullivan Dam road. Highway 26 was a gravel road. Those were kind of the main roads that came across. I believe there was a road over what's called Low Gap, the Adams Road. But other than that, there just wasn't anything out here. There were a few that were being cut, because the land was being divided up and sold and so forth. So there were a few roads that were being cut. We would just take off across the desert with our loads of rock and make our own roads.

Wayne: Was there evidence of any of the homesteads that were here at the turn of the century?

John: Not that I can remember. I don't remember much in the way of homesteads. Now there were a few people, starting to break land out here. They were just starting to clear the sage brush. Some of the early, early settlers were here, Ted Christensen, the Kwaks and some of those guys.

I had an experience and thank goodness they were out here, because I got stranded out here all by myself. It was kind of funny, because now, you drive down Highway 26 and there are just lights all over the place, like a town out in the country, because there are yard lights everywhere. What had happened, this was right at the end of a job. And in our process of starting rock on the ditch rider road, we had broken one of the head gates and had to take it into Moses Lake to a welding shop to fix it for us and then we had to re-install it. Well, that was the last thing that had to be done for the inspector to approve the job and pay us for the work. This was on a Saturday. My dad said, "John, take the pick up, take that head gate out and install it and come home." He just wanted me to come out and install this thing all by myself. I think I was a junior in high school. So I took this gate out, got it all installed. It weighed about as much as I did. I was a straggly, skinny kid and there was this big massive head gate and I am forcing this thing into the pick up and putting it on. I got it all bolted down and everything and decided I would just turn around on the ditch road and head home. I would have had to back up about a mile and so I decided to just turn around on the ditch there. It was kind of precarious, but I did it anyway, but I shouldn't have because I went over too far. It was all new soil and

it was loose and that pick up just buried itself. It was getting dark. It was probably about a mile away, there was this guy out here, I could see the light where his house was. There was one light out in the desert and he was running his tractor, clearing the sage brush and so I just started walking, following that light. I was just going across country that was cleared or anything, it was just sage brush. I finally got there and I said, "Hey, I've got a problem. I've been out working on this ditch installing a head gate and got my pick up stuck. Is there a possibility that you could help. He came over with the tractor, hooked onto it and pulled me out of there. He was really nice about it. I don't even know who it was. I offered to pay him, but he wouldn't take any money. To find people out of the Slope, at that time, was hard.

This is a funny story on my dad. We had a little R.V. cat that we use to use all over doing things. A lot of times, if we got a truck stuck, we would just run that out someplace and pull him out. Dad had had this thing out somewhere doing something with it and he came out on a day when there wasn't anybody else out there just him. Well I shouldn't say nobody, because there was another person out there. He had his pick up and this cat and he wanted to get it back to the pit. So how is he going to do this with only one person? So he starts the cat up, it had a hydraulic load on it, so he lifted the blade up and aimed it for the pit. He got off of it, put it in gear, put the throttle on a slow throttle, aimed it toward the pit, got off of it, got in the pick up and started to head toward the pit and kind of waited for it to come. He ran into somebody, I don't remember who it was, somebody out there getting ready to clear the ground. They were

asking him questions about the area and so forth. And he got into this conversation and forgot all about this cat taking off across the country. "Oh my goodness!" He probably didn't use those kind of words, because that was just before we joined the church. He took off, he realized that his cat was on the loose. So he started following the tracks wherever he could and then he kind of lost it in the sage and he couldn't drive the pick up. So he got out on the O'Sullivan Dam Road and he found where it had crossed back so he just started to try and follow it on it's tracks through the sage brush out there. There was nothing out there and so finally he found it. It was stopped. It had been turned off and stopped and he noticed this sheep herder. He had a bunch of sheep out there. My dad went over and talked to him and he said this guy was just beside himself. He thought somebody was on that Caterpillar, got thrown off and run over and it killed him. He was just thinking of all these terrible things that could have happened. My dad said, "No, no, it's okay. It was nothing like that." and told him what he had done. This thing was far from where it was suppose to be, it had taken a few turns along the way and that sheep rancher was just fit to be tied. We use to razz my dad about that, turning his cat loose out in that. But where else could you do that. You would have to be out in absolutely nowhere to just turn a Caterpillar loose and let it take off on it's own. On purpose!

Wayne: Is there anything else notable?

John: One of the other things that we really had problems with collichee. In this country you don't have to go far down to find collichee. We dug a drain ditch. I couldn't even tell you where it is now, it has changed so much around here. All I know, it was along 26, out here somewhere. We did this drain ditch and ran into collichee. We had a heck of a time getting through that stuff to get down to the drain where the bottom of the ditch was suppose to be. We tried a big ram-rod type thing, we tried to break it with it, it wouldn't break. We tried drilling. We would drill it with a jack hammer and load it with dynamite and try to blast it. It is like inter-laced. We would blast this stuff and it would go "boom" and it would just fall right back together again. It wasn't very thick, it was like three feet or so and then it was soft sandy stuff underneath it. So if we drilled through it and put your load it, it would just cushion out under the sand and it wouldn't even hardly lift it. It was so far down into the ditch that if we wanted to get another piece of equipment in it, we would just have to make the ditch wider and put a cat with a ripper in there and we could rip it out and then rebuild the ditch again. It was just a real pain. Actually, half the time the drain was half way through the collichee. As a mater of fact, on one of the last jobs, my dad said that job did more damage to his company and put him in the hole. He ran into problems that he never thought he would have.

That same ditch we had a lower and an upper section that had basalt. I had to run a jack hammer drilling holes. That wasn't a problem like that collichee.

