

Hillsboro's Jackson Clan

The patriarch of the Jackson clan was John Jackson, of Ulster, Ireland. He met and married Elizabeth Cummins of London and immigrated to Maryland in 1748. They eventually settled in West Virginia. They had several children, but the branch we are concerned with was their son Henry, who was born in 1774. Henry married Mary Hyer and they had 13 children. When Mary died, Henry married Elizabeth Shreve. At that time Henry was 62 years old. He and Elizabeth went on to have 12 children of their own.

Five of Mary's and Henry's children immigrated west on the Oregon Trail. The first to leave was John Henderson Brake Jackson in 1843. In 1848, after a disagreement with his stepmother who was 12 years his junior, Ulysses followed. Daughter Rachel Cecilia married Lewis Miller and when he decided to go to Oregon, seeking his own Donation Land Claim (320 acres for a single man, 620 for a married couple), Rachel's brother Edward decided to come along. They struck out in 1852. They suffered disaster along the trail when their party was attacked by Indians. Rachel's oldest daughter was attempting to run with the baby to the nearest party about 1 mile ahead when she was set upon and wounded. She survived the ordeal. The nearby settlers heard the attack and came back to help, minimizing the party's losses. Sadly, Edward was killed in the attack.

Finally, inspired by the advice of his brothers and the knowledge the Oregon Land Grants were set to expire in 1855, Hyer Jackson gathered his wife, Elizabeth Craig, and their eight children and began the trek to Oregon in 1854. Hyer Jackson's party kept a very complete account of their travels, recounting everything from Hyer's disregard of the advice of more experienced travelers and driving his team into quicksand, nearly drowning, to daughter Mary Jane's discontent at being forced to gather buffalo chips for fuel to protecting their camp from stampeding buffalo. Just before reaching Fort Boise, the party on the trail behind them was attacked savagely by Indians. Hunters from the Jackson party were scouting behind them and came upon the grisly scene, including one surviving 14-year old boy suffering from the shock of the torture and murders of his family. Later, another boy from the party was found wandering around with an arrow still protruding from his body.

When Hyer arrived in the Washington County area, he settled in the foothills north of the Tualatin Valley. He attempted farming for a while. His political ambitions were quickly realized, and he was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1856. Understandably, after his own experiences on the trail and those of his family, Hyer earned a reputation for voting against any measure favoring the Indians. Later, Hyer was nominated to and was elected as prosecuting attorney of the 3rd District. He finally decided he was not a farmer and purchased a tract of land abutting the Tualatin River just south of Hillsboro. The land was low and prone to flooding, but Hyer planned to take advantage of the budding steamship industry. He built a warehouse on the land in anticipation of the goods to be delivered up- and downstream. Unfortunately, the rail system caught on in lieu of the unpredictable navigability of the Tualatin River and its tributaries, and Hyer's warehouse sat empty most of the time. The land, known as Jackson's Bottom, became a joke among townspeople.

In the 1860s, Hyer served as a Washington County judge. He and his brothers were usually prominent in local politics. When the county decided to build a new brick courthouse, Ulysses was on the County Commission. Hyer was awarded the contract to tear down the old wooden courthouse. Townsfolk noticed the nepotism, but no action was taken.

On June 11, 1873, while serving as County Treasurer, Hyer suffered a sudden heart attack. His last words were to his political duty: "The money is in the safe and the key is in my pocket." He was 67. He was buried in the Hillsboro Union Cemetery.

Hyer's name was ingloriously perpetuated as his home site was first the failed steamship operation, then for a time the Hillsboro Waste Disposal. Only more recently has the site become the Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve and Education Center.

Hyer's brother Ulysses was a successful landowner at the time of his death in 1882. He owned 2,680 acres including all or parts of 11 Donation Land Claims and town lots in Portland, Glencoe and Hillsboro.

Ulysses' son John Wesley cared for the land and was successful in his own right. As each of his children married, he gave them a farm. He donated the land for the Jackson School, the second school established in Washington County.

Structural/Geographical Namesakes of the Jackson Family in Washington County

1. Jackson School House: across from the home on the land they donated
2. Jackson Bottom
3. Jackson Rock Quarry—donated to Washington County
4. Jackson Creek and Jackson Falls—on the site of the grist mill and sawmill
5. McKay Creek—named after Isabella McKay

Farms still owned by the Jackson Family in 2009:

1. The Hahn Farm on Hahn Road
2. The Dersham Farm on Dersham Road
3. The Crocker Farm on Mountaindale Road.