

CFR 1039

Mr. and Mrs. Byars Deardorff

*(Application missing)*

Aug. 20, 1999  
Grain City  
OR 97869

Century Farm/Ranch Program  
Oregon Historical Society  
1200 S.W. Park Ave.  
Portland, OR 97205

Dear Sir,

I believe I talked to a man called Bob. I've buried the letter in paper, mile of paper, but I hope you'll give him this.

Anyway I called & ask about this ranch, if it was a century ranch? He looked & couldn't find the paper work. He asked me to try to find proof, newspaper article etc.

So I have enclosed a newspaper article. I believe it should prove this was a century ranch.

The family I'm researching this for: Steve Dearborn, Box 653, Wamic, OR 97063. They would like to have a copy of all the material. Steve bought this ranch & later sold it.

Thank you for your help in locating these papers.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nadia Schultz  
P.O. Box 82  
Grain City,  
OR 97869

Enclosed: Oregon Journal 85  
Monday, Oct. 27, 1969 titled  
"Grain City Ranch 'Century Ranch'"



Mrs. Nadia Schultz  
P.O. Box 82  
Prairie City, OR 97869



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AUG 26 1999

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# Prairie City Ranch 'Century Ranch'

By ELEANOR BOXX  
Journal Staff Writer

A century is a long time — even for a ranch.

When such a property remains in the hands of one family for the entire 100 years, it is eligible to become a Century Ranch, with recognition from the Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon State Department of Agriculture.

Sunday, the Byars Deardorff ranch, southeast of Prairie City, was hailed by friends and relatives from throughout Oregon as being a Century Ranch. The celebration was held at the Deardorff home with luncheon served by Ladies of Farmers Organization.

SEVERAL oldtimers took a nostalgic look back when they heard "fiddling" like it used to be, and when they saw guests taking a horse and buggy ride. John Sharff, author of "Steens Mountains," was the featured speaker.

The Deardorffs' life would make an exciting western movie script, for there were unimaginable hair-raising events in the early days. Death, illness and suspense rode on the wagon train with the original Deardorffs. Mrs. Deardorff was Sara Manwaring before her marriage in 1870 to Flem Deardorff. She came to Oregon in August, 1869 with her parents and met her future husband when they went through a tollgate he operated on his ranch.

WHEN Mrs. Deardorff, mother of the present Byars, was 72 years of age in 1926 she wrote the story of her trip in the wagon train to Illinois. Two years later she died. Many of the older ranchers knew her story, but it took the Prairie City Women's Club to edit it and the Blue Mountain Eagle to present it so the public knew it, too.

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MR. AND MRS. BYARS DEARDORFF were honored Sunday at Prairie City when their ranch became "Century Ranch," for having been in same family for 100 years. Byars Deardorff's father bought out squatter's rights to original 160 acres, Oct. 14, 1869. Byars and May Cardwell Bowe, from Long Creek, were married in 1921 and have made their home at ranch ever since. (Photo by Marlys S. Ketchum)

never being found; of a woman suspected of being a spy who joined the wagon train under mysterious circumstances and leaving the same way. There were runaway horses, lame horses and stolen horses, each causing inconvenience, delay and tragedy.

Heartbreaking events are recounted in the story — Sara, the young girl who led

a team of lame mules for three or four days; the wagon train being entertained by soldiers and their brass band, but the same little girl crying her heart out because her missing brother still had not been found; the birth of a baby and two or three accidents from gun shots.

THERE were numerous river crossings, all of which

were tedious and some which took a full day. At one of the crossings the water came up and over the wagon beds, soaking several boxes of crackers. The soggy mass was divided among the wagons and resourceful women fried them for breakfast; others separated and dried them.

As the party neared Blue Mountains, Sara's mother was ill and "took the mountain fever." At the summit they met a man who told them they would soon be in the Day Valley and could get provisions and help at a tollgate at the head of the valley.

Six months later Sara and Flem Deardorff were married. They lived together the same ranch until his death in 1911. They had five children. Byars is the youngest child.

The original ranch of 160 acres has grown to 2,200 acres and is now leased by Sara Deardorff's nephew, John. Flem and Sara lived there for three years of their marriage, then it was replaced with a bigger one. For the next 80 years it was "home" to the large Deardorff family. Then it was torn down and the present house built. Part of the old house, however, was saved and came to be a part of the blacksmith shop.

Most of the old buildings may be gone, but the wagon train planted in 1873 are still there — an important reminder that Sunday was a proud day at Deardorff — Century Ranch.



OREGON JOURNAL  
*home and family*

with  
**MARY CULLEN**  
to  
SERVE YOU

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1969

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By **ELEANOR BOXX**  
Journal Staff Writer

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Sunday, the Byars Deardorff ranch, southeast of Prairie City, will be hailed by friends and relatives from throughout Oregon as being a Century Ranch. Weather permitting, the celebration will be held at the Deardorff home with luncheon served by Ladies of Grant County National Farmers Organization. If it rains, everything will be moved to Prairie City School.

SEVERAL oldtimers will take a nostalgic look back when they hear "fiddling" like it used to be, or when they see guests taking a horse and buggy ride. John Sharff, author of "Steens Mountains," will be the featured speaker. Eula Morris, program coordinator for the Prairie City Women's Club, announces festivities will start at 1 p.m.

The Deardorffs' life would make an exciting western movie script, for there were unimaginable hair-raising events in the early days. Death, illness and suspense rode on the wagon train with the original Deardorffs. Mrs. Deardorff was Sara Manwaring before her marriage in 1870 to Flem Deardorff. She came to Oregon in August, 1869 with her parents and met her future husband when they went through a tollgate he operated on his ranch.

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The original ranch of 160 acres has grown to 2,200 and is now leased by Byars Deardorff's nephew. The tink log cabin, in which Flem and Sara lived the first three years of their married life, was replaced in 1873 with a bigger one. For the next 80 years it was "home" to the large Deardorff family. Then it was torn down and the present house was built. Part of the older one, however, was saved to become a part of the ranch blacksmith shop.

Most of the old buildings may be gone, but the willows planted in 1873 are still there — an important reminder that Sunday will be a proud day at Deardorff — Century Ranch.



John dry  
Spive Mt.  
Eagle  
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1969

## 1869 Wagon-Train Trip Recalled

In the year 1926, at the age of 72, Sara Manwaring Deardorff, wife of Flem Deardorff, mother of Byars Deardorff and 11 other Deardorff children, took pen in hand to commit to history a record of her eventful wagon-train trip to Oregon as a young girl in 1869. On Oct. 14 the Byars Deardorff ranch becomes a Centennial Ranch and on Oct. 26 family and friends will gather to honor the Deardorffs in celebration.

It seems a proper time to publish Sara's story that holds all the thrills of the fictional Westerns. The account has been edited and wording changed but the dates, places and events are as Sara recorded them. The telling of the story will run over several weeks in continued story fashion.

—Prairie City Women's Club

On the 12th day of April, 1869, a small covered wagon party left Edgenwood, Ill. John Manwaring, his wife, Amy, and their family were headed toward Oregon. By this date hundreds of pioneers had made the trek. Manwaring himself had made the trip to California in 1860, accompanied by one of his sons. But for all its familiarity, the trip would hold its share of hardships and heartaches, especially for 14-year-old Sara.

Sara was born Oct. 15, 1854, in Mendota, La Salle County, Ill., the youngest of the nine living Manwaring children. Her mother was a native of Utica, N.Y. Her father was a native of Staplehurst, England. Sara's beloved brother and his wife, also named Sarah, and her sister, Ann, and husband were

in the party. In the account she speaks of the brother as her only brother. Another brother had been killed by lightning in 1859.

The party headed west across the Midwest and at one point camped beside the Big Blue River. Vividly Sara recalled a "very mean looking man" who came to the wagon train and tried to persuade her father to take a certain route, but Manwaring declined. One wonders at the motives of the "very mean looking man."

On a Monday morning the small train hooked-up and traveled until Tuesday evening without mishap.

A strange woman happened into camp that evening, inquiring if she could get in with one of the wagons. She joined Sara's brother-in-law and wife. All went fine on Wednesday and Thursday. May 23 started in like manner.

A herd of antelope was sighted near by. Sara's brother decided to take his carbine and get one. The other boys in the train followed suit. This left Manwaring, a 16-year-old boy and the girls and women to proceed with the wagons and stock. All of the boys returned from their hunt except Sara's brother. Just as they returned, Ann looked out of the wagon and saw lots of men on horseback. She told her father she saw soldiers. She must have taken a second look for she said, "Soldiers be d— Indians!"

Sara's father waved his hat for her brother to return but the brother rode on over the hill out of sight.

The strange woman told Manwaring to hang out a flag of truce and give the Indians some sugar so they wouldn't hurt anyone. Manwaring thought little of the idea and told the woman to shut up or out she would go. The little train traveled on and so did the Indians. They circled the train three times but did not touch the train or its occupants.

The saddened little train continued on until late afternoon when they stopped at a wood choppers' camp. The morning's tragic events were recounted to the eight wood choppers. They showed surprise upon hearing of the Indians, for they had not seen any in some time. They suspected the strange woman of being a spy.

The wagon train had been at the wood choppers' camp three days when six soldiers rode into camp looking for a like number of deserters. The loss of young Manwaring was recounted to them.

When the deserters were found, the soldiers joined the woodchoppers in hunting for

PIONEERS — Sara Manwaring Deardorff and her husband, Flem Deardorff, parents of Byars Deardorff of Prairie City.

the missing brother. They were without luck. All they found was an Indian medicine bag. They surmised that one of the Indians must have been hit when the party of young men had been out hunting antelope.

In the meantime 14 more wagons had joined the train making a total of 19 wagons and surely a more secure feeling among the members of the saddened train.

(continued next week)



OCT 23 1969

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 1888

Grant

## 100 Year Deardorff Ranch Event Sunday

by the Prairie City  
Women's Club

PRAIRIE CITY—On Sunday at 1 p.m. festivities honoring the Deardorff ranch of Prairie City as an Oregon Century Ranch will get underway. It was 100 years ago this month that Flem Deardorff, born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1842, bought out the squatter's rights to 160 acres southeast of Prairie City from a Mr. Douglas and his Indian wife.

In August of that same year, Sarah Manwaring, daughter of John and Amy Manwaring of Illinois, arrived with her family by wagon train. It had been an arduous crossing of the Oregon Trail that saw her brother killed by Indians and Sarah and her mother racked with Mountain Fever. Her family settled near Flem Deardorff and on Jan. 1, 1870, she and Flem were married.

The tiny cabin that Flem built that year housed seven people in its tiny rooms. Her parents finished their home in the summer of 1870 and her sister and brother-in-law, the Charles Cooleys, moved into their home in 1871. In 1873, the home that was to serve the Deardorff ranch for the next 80 years was built and dedicated at a little dance for all the neighbors. The willows planted in front of the house April, 1873, are the majestic trees that still provide shade for the present home. The original 1870 log cabin served a variety of purposes over the years until finally taken down and some of its logs used for the ranch blacksmith shop.

In 1873, the Dalles Military Road swindle forced Flem to re-establish his claim to the ranch. The 160 acres had grown to 2,200, of which about 100 acres are of lush, irrigated bottom lands. Originally, the ranch raised much grain, particularly oats to feed the horses upon which the country depended. The grain also fed hogs for which the ranch was known. The Chinese miners would often come from Prairie City to buy hogs with their little bags of gold and then herd them back to Prairie City.

Of the 12 children born to Sarah and Flem, the last surviving one is Byars, who has spent virtually all of his 78 years on the ranch. He and his wife, Mae, are a delightful couple—active, alert, interesting, witty and with more zest for life than many couples half their age.

Byars' schooling was similar to that which most young buckaroos received at the turn of the century. He attended the Vinegar School near the present Darrell Johnson ranch. Book learning was usually taught in the single-room edifice by some recent 10th grade graduate to an assortment of 20 or more hardy youngsters for a three-month term in the spring and again in the fall.

R. D. and Molly Williams, parents of Lee Williams now of Canyon City, were the teachers when Byars' folks packed

him off with his older brothers and sisters when he was but 4 years old. Byars suspects the reason for the tender age of his early schooling was simply to get him out from underfoot at home.

He can recall learning his ABC's from large charts along with Lee Williams, who was still young enough to be attired in the dresses little boys of that era were sometimes subjected to. It was in the Riverside School (across from Billy Drinkwater's ranch) that Byars graduated from the eighth grade in the school's first graduating class in 1906.

He buckaroosed in several places then before taking over the ranch after his father's death. In 1921, he met a young widow, Mae Cardwell Bowe (of the Long Creek Cardwells—her brother, Arthur, has a school in Bates named for him). Her husband, Alva, had died leaving her with three small children to raise who were but 2, 4 and 6 years old.

Byars claims he ran as hard as he could from her for five years before she finally caught him and they were married in his mother's Prairie City home (the present Cecil Bradford home) in 1926.

Byars recalls that he enjoyed baseball as a young man, though he doesn't admit to being much of an expert. He drove his first car, a Buick, in 1910 and bought his first one, an Overland, in 1917.

Horses always played an important part on the ranch and the Deardorffs sometimes kept as many as 14 head. His wife gently chides that Byars would have gotten lots more done if he could have done it all on horseback. In the early 1940's the ranch got its first tractor.

He served as county commissioner for four years starting in 1942.

The winter of 1916-17 was a particularly severe one, they recall. Snow stood four feet deep on the level for a considerable time. Feed and hay brought in by the Sumpter Valley Railroad saved the cattle that year.

The huge picture albums and old records that Mae and her mother-in-law kept down through the years are treasures indeed. One set of records includes the road takes collected in 1870 from every man in that end of the county. Each had to pay \$4 for using the roads of the district or contribute two days work in their upkeep. Minutes of School District number 15 from 1875 to 1880 seemed mainly to consist of calling the meeting to order and getting the directors elected.

The Deardorffs built their present comfortable spick and span home in 1953 after Mae and Preacher Kelly tore down the one that had served for 80 years. Each morning, Byars and Mae eat breakfast cooked over the wood half of her combination wood and electric range. Food just somehow tastes better cooked over a wood stove, they speculate.

Mae preserves a prestigious

amount of fruit and vegetables each year, most of which are grown on the ranch garden which is often spared from the early frosts that hit other parts of the valley. The ranch once had a large orchard and many of the trees still produce. Deer have frequent lunches in the garden and orchard and bobcats have often been seen over the years. The time that Mae came upon a bear in the garden, Byars didn't know which was more surprised. He didn't put it quite that way exactly, but it was what he meant.

As the long line of visitors to their ranch home will attest, the Byars Deardorffs are a delightful couple. They have been good and industrious citizens of Grant County, as have been the many descendants of Flem and Sarah Deardorff. Most of Flem and Sarah's 46 grandchildren settled in Grant County. The Deardorff Century Ranch Celebration on Sunday will be a proud day for all the Deardorffs and for Grant County.



John Day, Oregon  
Blue Mountain Eagle  
(Cir. W. 2,345)

OCT - - 1969

Allan's P. C. B. Est. 1888

## 1869 Wagon-Train Trip Recalled

5067  
The John Manwaring wagon train, headed toward Oregon, had lost one of its members, Sara's brother. A strange woman, suspected of being a spy, had joined the train just before the loss of the brother. To date no word had been received of his fate.

—Prairie City Women's Club

Quoting from Sara's account, "Well, on Monday morning, we all got ready to start on again, but just as an old gentleman was hooking his mules up, one of them kicked him just above the temple, and so they had to start right out for the fort. We were 25 miles from Fort Kerney and the rest didn't get there until about 3 in the afternoon. When we got there we were met by some soldiers and they told us that the old gentleman was all right, but came very near bleeding to death. They told us not to camp within a mile of the fort and we told them that we had a woman we wanted to get rid of. They wanted to know if she could cook, and she said yes. So they came and got her. The next morning they came to see if she had come back to the train. They said she was gone. They wanted to know if we had seen anyone cross the Platte River, and we told them yes, that we had seen a man with a six-ox team go by where we were camped. They said that was how she got away then. That night the soldiers came with their brass band and played, but oh! my heart was broken and I went in the tent and cried until I could not cry any more."

It's a guess that at this time they were in Nebraska. The train was no longer plagued by the strange woman so they continued on to Platte City, crossing the river there. The trail west was strewn with tragedy. At the river they met an old lady whose husband had been killed by Indians. She wanted to go to California but her folks wouldn't let her. Her fate is not accounted further. The trek continued well a-

cross the plains until the crossing of the South Platte somewhere in Nebraska or Colorado. There is mention that the wagons had to cross quicksand. Whether or not this was real quicksand can only be guessed but the account states, "If the wagons stopped a minute the wheels would become stuck sufficiently to stop turning." The horses could not be used to pull the wagons across as they would stop in the water. Therefore, Manwaring's mules were used to take nearly all 19 wagons across. The mules

would not stop midstream. It is accounted that a man had to be at each wheel to start the wagons.

Ever traveling west the train next forded the North Platte at Fort Fredsteel. This crossing was a little easier although it took all day. The wagon boxes were removed and run across on handcars on the railroad track. The account states that the wagon train followed the Union Pacific railroad tracks most of the way. The men swam the horses across the North Platte. Some of the boys would cling to the horses' tails and make the horses pull them across.

Sara recounted that several of them crossed on a foot bridge on the railroad track which made her dizzy. The morning following the crossing the soldiers saw Indians on the hills and they rode after them. A wave of uneasiness must have passed through the wagon train.

(continued next week)



NOV 6 1969

Allen & P. C. B. Est. 1888

# Century Ranch Celebration Recalls Wagon Train of 1869

(SPECIAL TO THE RECORD-COURIER)

PRAIRIE CITY — In the year 1926, at the age of 72, Sara Manwaring Deardorff, wife of Flem Deardorff, mother of Byars Deardorff and 11 other Deardorff children, took pen in hand to commit to history a record of her eventful wagon-train trip to Oregon as a young girl in 1869. On Oct. 14 the Byars Deardorff ranch became a Centennial Ranch and on Oct. 26 approximately 250 family and friends gathered to honor the Deardorffs in celebration.

It seems a proper time to publish Sara's story that holds all the thrills of the fictional Westerns. The account has been edited and wording changed, but the dates, places and events are as Sara recorded them. The telling of the story will run over several Record-Courier issues in continued story fashion. — Prairie City Women's Club.

## Trek By Wagon

On the 12th day of April, 1869, a small covered wagon party left Edgenwood, Ill. John Manwaring, his wife Amy and their family were headed toward Oregon. By this date hundreds of pioneers had made the trek. Manwaring himself had made the trip to California in 1860, accompanied by one of his sons. But for all its familiarity, the trip would hold its share of hardships and heartaches especially for 14-year-old Sara.

Sara was born Oct. 15, 1854, in Mendota, La Salle County, Ill.

the youngest of the nine living Manwaring children. Her mother was a native of Utica, N. Y. Her father was a native of Staplehurst, England. Sara's beloved brother and his wife, also named Sarah, and her sister, Ann, and husband were in the party. In the account, she speaks of the brother as her only brother. Another brother had been killed by lightning in 1859.

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A herd of antelope was sighted near by. Sara's brother decided to take his carbine and get one. The other boys in the train followed suit. This left Manwaring, a 16-year-old boy and the girls and women to proceed with the wagons and stock. All of the boys returned from their hunt except Sara's brother. Just as they returned, All looked out of the wagon and saw lots of men on horseback. She told her father she saw soldiers. She must have taken a second look for she said, "Soldiers, by d—, Indians!"

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## Indians Scout Train

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The saddened little train con-

tinued on until late afternoon when they stopped at a wood choppers camp. The morning's tragic events were recounted to the eight wood choppers. They showed surprise upon hearing of the Indians, for they had not seen any in some time. They suspected the strange woman of being a spy.

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When the deserters were found, the soldiers joined the woodchoppers in hunting for the missing brother. They were without luck. All they found was an Indian medicine bag. They surmised that one of the Indians must have been hit when the party of young men had been out hunting antelope.

In the meantime 14 more wagons had joined the train making a total of 19 wagons and surely a more secure feeling among the members of the saddened train.

(continued next week)

# Century Ranch Celebration Recalls Wagon Train of 1869

## PART II

(SPECIAL TO THE RECORD-COURIER)

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(continued next week)

NOV 13 1969

Est. 1888

Allen & P. C. B.



NOV 20 1969

Allan S. P. C. B.

Est. 1888

Grant

## Century Ranch Celebration 5064 Recalls Wagon Train of 1869

### FINAL INSTALLMENT

(SPECIAL TO THE RECORD-COURIER)

PRAIRIE CITY — Young Manwaring has, as yet, not been found. Whether he will be found remains uppermost in young Sara's mind. The strange woman is gone from the wagon train and to date a couple of difficult river crossings have been managed. What lies ahead, with Indians again nearby?

The soldiers that had ridden off to check on the Indians soon returned with word that the Indians were only on their trails in the woods, and nothing came of it.

There were reports of meeting a man whose wife had been killed by an accidental gun shot, one woman of the train being accidentally shot but recovering and water shortage.

Then all went well for a time. Upon reaching another river, the account recalls, "the men folks were all sick with a slight bilious spell and we women folks had to do all the work. Just as it happened, there came a doctor traveling through the country and he gave the men some medicine and they were ready to start on the next day. In the meantime there was a baby born on the train." What was a bilious spell and why were only the men affected?

At this particular river the men thought the river not deep. One man ventured through with wagon and provisions. By the time he was at mid-stream, the water was running into the wagon bed. It was his luck that he was carrying several boxes of crackers and the

inevitable happened; they got soaking wet!

The crackers were laid out to dry after the wagon train crossed the river. By evening the crackers were still soggy fare. So the possessor of the crunchless crackers divided them among the train. The resourceful women fried them and a delicious breakfast was reported.

The train continued on to a place called Weber Canyon and another accident. One of Manwaring's horses became tangled in a telegraph wire and lamed her leg. It became Sara's task to lead the lame horse three or four days a-foot.

The wagon train was not without those of lesser character. One man stole a span of mules from someone in Weber City. This irked the rest of the men in the train and they made it plain that if the man continued his bad practices he would have to leave the train.

A little farther on, Sara's father traded a light wagon and a side saddle for a span of mules the man had and the man departed the train.

The train traveled on until they came to a place where the road divided. On sign said "California" and the other "Oregon". At this point Manwaring bought a two or three pound piece of bacon for \$2.00.

The night they camped at the Divide was the first time they heard coyotes. The horses did not like the sound and pulled up their picket stakes and broke their ropes and headed back up the train about midnight. Sara and another

girl had to go help get the horses back.

At each fort along the way, word was left that the soldiers still had not heard anything of Sara's brother. After leaving the railroad, word was sent with other emigrants and word continued until the Manwarings reached the John Day Valley. Sadly the news was always the same. Sara's brother was never found.

Problems were beginning to mount when the little train topped at Emmigrant's Corral at Salt Lake, Utah.

One of Manwaring's horses had become badly lamed in a railroad crossing so that the others were out-traveling the Manwarings. When the Malheur River was reached two of their horses were lost. One horse was choked to death because a "careless young man" forgot to take a rope off her neck. The other horse, "A fine Percheron mare," drank too much water from the Malheur River, below some mineral springs, surely proving that water from the Malheur was worse than water from the John Day.

Provisions were becoming scarce. Finally they came to a ranch on Reynolds Creek that would sell vegetables. Sara's father bought \$30.00 worth.

As the party ascended the Blue Mountains, Sara's mother was sick and Sara accounted that she, herself, was "taking the mountain fever." At the summit they met a man who told them they would soon be in the John Day Valley and could get provisions at the toll gate at the head of the Valley. The weary party traveled on until 4 in the afternoon.

They left one horse to die in a little meadow (a few days later they found the horse alive and recovered, which was lucky as they had suffered many losses to their stock).

At last they reached the toll gate and the end of the long journey. Sara's father and brother-in-law got work in the valley the following day.

Sara was very sick. Her father took her to the hot springs to bathe her but she couldn't stand it. The family camped at Mr. Douglas's and Mr. James Westfall's places but Sara was too sick to walk into a house unaided so she laid in a tent.

A Mrs. Gillenwaters, finally took Sara and her mother to her place and nursed them back to health. They then returned to the James Westfall place to live and begin a new life in the John Day Valley.

On Jan. 1, 1870 Sara Manwaring and Flen Deardorff were married and settled on the ranch above Prairie City, Oregon. To this marriage 12 children were born. Byars Deardorff, the last surviving member has spent virtually all his 78 years on this same ranch. He lives here with his wife Mae.

On October 26 of this year, the Prairie City Women's Club honored Mr. and Mrs. Deardorff with an afternoon of special events to celebrate the 100 year old ranch. Approximately 250 relatives and friends were on hand to offer their congratulations.