

Article taken from "Pioneer Trails", Vol. 16, No. 3, Fall 1982, a publication of the Umatilla County Historical Society

The Raley Pruett Connection

Much has been written, and deservedly so, about Col. James Henry Raley and his son, James Roy Raley, "The Father of the Round-Up."

Pruett Branch of the Family Tree

The Colonel's wife, Minerva, belonged to another distinguished family in the annals of Oregon history - that of James Higgins Pruett and his wife Elizabeth Ringo. In 1847 they came from Kentucky by way of Missouri and settled near Gervais in Oregon's Willamette Valley. There they were co-founders of the pioneer French Prairie Baptist Church.

Upon the parents' early deaths, their three young daughters were left in the care of their older brothers. All six children were educated at McMinnville College (later Linfield), and all were in Umatilla County in the early 1870's.

William H. Pruett was born in Missouri in 1844 and came to Oregon with his parents as a child of three. He became a circuit-riding Baptist missionary who settled in Weston in 1871. He devoted his life to the ministry, serving as pastor in the Baptist churches of Weston, Athena, Helix, Pendleton, and Heppner, Oregon, and Dayton, Washington. He died at his farm home near Weston in 1902 and is buried in Kees Cemetery beside his wife, Barbara, and three infant children. His son, Hugh, was a professor at the University of Oregon.

Dr. John Alvin Pruett (1846) and Dr. James Madison Pruett (1849) were charter members of the Pendleton Baptist Church. J. A. (John) signed as a witness at the 1873 wedding of his sister, Martha (1855) when she married William Whitman at the home of her brother W. H. Pruett in Weston. In 1880 John moved to California. Church records show that James M. Pruett, his wife, Precious, and their sons, Ralph, Clifford, and George, moved in 1898 to Oakland, California, where he died in 1922.

Mary Louisa Pruett, born in 1851, was married in Weston in 1871 to Henry Pinkerton. She died a year later, leaving a baby daughter also named Mary Louisa. One of her descendants living in Umatilla County today is Laura Jean White of Athena.

Minerva Pruett Raley was the youngest. Born in 1857 near Gervais. she came to Umatilla County in 1872 and taught in the schools of the region. Minerva was a charter member and the first clerk of the Pendleton Baptist Church at its organization by her brother Rev.. William H. Pruett in 1876. The present church historian has said, "Our church had six charter members, and four of them were Pruett's."

Two years later, according to her daughter Adna, Minerva was one of the group barricaded behind sacks of wheat and flour at Byers' Mill during the Indian uprising of 1878. At the time she was the fiancée of James H. Raley who had just set off on horseback as a volunteer messenger

from the ambushed band to seek help from Fort Walla Walla. A year later they were married in Portland and returned by river boat and stagecoach to Pendleton to spend the rest of their lives.

As newlyweds, James and Minerva's first home was some distance from Pendleton, reached through a grove of cottonwoods and alder. James Raley's long public career began as County Surveyor, ran through several terms in the Oregon Legislature, and included visits to the White House during President Cleveland's administration. He lived to see three generations of Raleys in the law firm which he founded in Pendleton, as his son and grandson joined him in the firm.

Minerva devoted her life to the welfare of her husband and children. She proved more than equal to the task of being her husband's helpmeet and hostess. As the family grew, three moves brought them to the home across from the Umatilla County Courthouse still known as "The Raley House", where the Raleys lived, entertained, and contributed to the life of the area.

The first child in the family was James Roy Raley, born in 1880. He joined his father in the family law firm, and further distinguished himself as one of the founders of the Pendleton Round-Up and creator of the Happy Canyon show. His story was told in a 1980 Pioneer Trail article by Mildred Searcey. His wife, Eva, is remembered for her fashion-able hats, and also for her good works which earned her Pendleton's First Citizen Award in 1957. For many years she taught in the Episcopal Sunday School, and her niece, Ellen Samuelson, declares, "Aunt Eva made an Episcopalian out of me." Eva and Roy had one son, James H. Raley, II, who served with distinction in World War II.

James H. and Minerva's second child, Adna, was born in 1881. After the death of her first husband, Arthur Harlow of Bellingham, Washington. Adna married Judge John A. Kellogg and remained in Bellingham with her daughter, Helen, until her death in 1961. One of Adna's many accomplishments was serving as Grand Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star for the State of Washington. Her 1942 memoirs about her parents provided much of the information for this article.

The next child was Agnes whose death at the age of two years brought the first sorrow into the happy family circle.

Daughter Edith, born in 1891, played on a championship girls' basketball team at Pendleton High School and then went to Whitman College. She married Lester Hurst in 1915. They farmed in the South Reservation area, raising dairy cows, wheat, and alfalfa. The old-fashioned art of tatting was Edith's favorite form of relaxation from this busy life. She also made time for the Thursday Club, P.E.O. and Colonial Dames. Edith and Lester Hurst were charter members of the Kill Kare Dancing Club in 1911. Edith spent her entire life in the Pendleton area, passing away in 1980.

Edith and Lester Hurst's daughter, Ellen Samuelson, attended the Indian Grade School about four miles from their home. She often enjoyed the pleasure of three or four days' holiday with Grandfather Raley at his mountain retreat, "Tamarack Temple," where one of her assignments was the annual repainting of the sign. Every summer Lester Hurst brought his gentle milk cow Bonnie up to the cabin in his wagon, so the Colonel and his guests could enjoy fresh milk and cream. A refreshing insight into the accomplishments of James H. Raley is his granddaughter's assessment that he made very good custard pudding. Their close relationship was further

advanced during the years of Grandmother Raley's illness, when Edith and Ellen spent much time at the Raley home while Edith cared for her mother.

The last child born to Minerva and James H. Raley in 1893 was Claire. She attended the University of Oregon and worked for the East Oregonian for a time before her marriage to H. Sherman Mitchell, editor of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin. She was a talented artist, producing many beautiful works. She was active in P.E.O. and Colonial Dames. Claire had two sons, Sherman who died young, and Judge James Mitchell¹ of Walla Walla. Claire died in 1985.

Minerva died at her home on July 11, 1926, after an illness of five years. Her front-page obituary in the East Oregonian spoke of her pioneer heritage and commented upon her sweetness of character and kindly nature. The list of pallbearers, both active and honorary, reads like a roll call of the most prominent men of Umatilla County. James H. Raley survived his wife by ten years, living in his own quarters in the family home after it was turned over to Roy's family. Adna wrote, "Always the staunch Jeffersonian Democrat, the Colonel never gave up the goatee and "Prince Albert garb of his Kentucky ancestors. Red roses and cigars were his traditional delight." A blanket of red roses covered his casket at his funeral in October, 1936. Olney Cemetery was the last resting-place of Colonel Raley and all his family.

Raley Branch of the Family Tree

James H. Raley's forebears were Oregon pioneers from Kentucky by way of Nebraska. James was born in 1855 to Jonathan and Rebecca Birchfield Raley and was believed by his parents to be the first white child born in the Nebraska territory. James had a brother, Benjamin, two years older than he and five younger sisters - Alice, Aura, Laura, Lulu, and Aura Morse Goodwin Raley, Birdie May. The family also included grandmother Rebecca Raley, who crossed the Plains with them in 1862. Coming to Umatilla County in 1864, they built a log cabin near Swift's Station, a pack-train rendezvous spot on the site of the present Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, and later moved to "The Meadows" near Stanfield.

Jonathan Raley died on April 25, 1877, at the age of 48, causing James, to return home from the University of Oregon. James had been "batching" with another student in a log cabin near the school in the first year of its existence. James went into the cattle business and also assisted his aunt, Aura Goodwin Raley, in operating The Goodwin House, Pendleton's first hotel.

Aura Morse Goodwin Raley, known as the "Mother of Pendleton", is famous in her own right, and has been widely reported upon. Almost everyone has heard how she and her first husband, Moses Goodwin, built the first house on the present site of Pendleton, a log structure that later became a hotel. How Moses Goodwin built with cottonwood timbers the first bridge across the Umatilla River [where the Main Street Bridge now spans the river] and named it Goodwin's Crossing has often been told. Moses Goodwin died in January, 1871, after a hard, but productive life.

Enter Henry J. Raley, the 36-year-old bachelor brother of Jonathan Raley and uncle of James H., a carpenter by trade. He had come to Oregon in the late 1850's, writing letters back home which prompted his brother to make the trip. In May, 1872, the widowed Aura Goodwin married Henry J. Raley. He then became the genial host of the Goodwin Hotel, a position he held until his death in October, 1876, at the age of 40.

Aura Goodwin Raley was again a widow, this time with a baby daughter, Cozbi Anne, named after Aura's mother. She continued to operate the hotel for a time with the help of her nephew. During the Indian outbreak of 1878, Aura Raley and little daughter were barricaded with the other settlers in Byers' Mill while James Raley made his dash to Fort Walla Walla for help. After General Howard and his soldiers arrived and routed the attacking Indians, the General stayed for a few days at Mrs. Raley's hotel.

Cozbi Anne Raley had an exceptional education for a girl of that period. After graduating from Portland High School, she entered the Boston (Massachusetts) Conservatory of Music, graduating with honors. On December 30, 1903, she married William Curtis Earl Pruitt. (The names Pruitt/Pruett seem to be variant spellings of the same surname.) They were united in marriage by Rector W. E. Potwine of the Church of the Redeemer with Miss Adna Raley as witness and Maid of Honor. They had no children.

Aura Goodwin Raley died in July, 1913, and on the 15th anniversary of her death, her daughter presented a beautiful stained glass window to the Church of the Redeemer in her mother's memory. The Rev. Ralph V. Hinkle in his dedication of the window said it was appropriate that the window depicted Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha for "Mrs. Raley was the epitome of hospitality, and one of the most devout in the parish of the Church of the Redeemer."

After her husband's death in 1920, Cozbi Raley Pruitt spent the last years of her life in Portland, dying there in November, 1929.

(Note: The above article was compiled by Helen Barrett Woodroffe from material written by Adna Raley Harrow Kellogg, interviews with Ellen Samuelson, and state and county histories and records. A list of sources is filed with the article at the U.C.H.S)