

Hillcrest Farm
Ovid, Idaho
Oct. 29, 63

I have talked to
the land
not
but
Curtis
did

Dear Morris & June,
Your nice letter was so welcome. Also the book. I hope you enjoy it. I was disappointed in some of it. I am wondering why Mr. Pich, if he had to dig up that old trial about the land between Heber's father and New Austin, Heber's father told the whole story. That J. W. Phelps did ~~but~~ and rather than have trouble and go on living by the Austin family who owned a large ranch he left and moved up to Sheep Creek Valley. There he found a much better ranch. He was a blessing to the Oregon emigrants who used to camp near his home in Sheep Creek Valley. He built part of the rail road that came through Bear Lake Valley. He built a reservoir in the north end of the Sheep Creek Valley to store water and two canals from the river to his meadows. All this water he shared with other people who settled near him.

Grandpa Morris was the first Postmaster in Montpelier. The first Patriarch and the first representative to the legislature. Uncle Hyrum built the first sawmill in Montpelier Canyon. His mother was the first midwife. Heber's mother made the first flag and the first temple and burial clothes. She and Aunt Harriet laid out and dressed the dead. Aunt Harriet gave birth to the first child born in Montpelier. Why do none of them mention these things? I feel bad when they write histories that either ignore the Phelps family or worse tell untruths about them.

No, Birdie would not be surprised when you asked for Birdie. We all call her that. Even her grand-children. However I put her real name on the paper I gave you Mary A. Parker, that is the way she signs her name. It is Mary Ann Parker. Maybe you could not read it. I wrote it in a hurry. I had a letter from Lucretia yesterday and was surprised at the improvement in ^{my} writing since the last one I received about

a year ago. You know I could see an improvement in her eyes and legs too when she left here. I am wondering if the mineral water did it or the elevation or all the things we found to enjoy and laugh about. Anyway she writes a real legible hand.

I do hope you folks will come again when we can see more of our beautiful Valley and get better acquainted. All I know about your children is the number of them. I would love to meet them. So please bring them next time.

Maurice, my son-in-law, and my daughter Virginia, took me to Lake town yesterday to visit their daughter Arlene Weston and her family. The lake and trees and shrubbery were so beautiful it was breathtaking.

My people moved from Smithfield Utah to Montpelier when I was eighteen years of age. They remained here until 1907 then moved to Payton Idaho. I got

married and stayed in the Valley. I lived in Sheep Creek Valley on the first ranch and the second one that Heber's parents owned. Then on one that Heber and I owned. I love the place I live now. I have never wanted to go back to Cache Valley. Neither would I like to go back to Sheep Creek. They have changed the name now to Elton Flat, or Elton Valley. Heber's father lived and died in this valley years before any of the people mentioned in this History lived there. He owned two large meadows there before either Ezra or Martin, who are his sons, were born.

When the property was divided Martin's mother (also Lottie's mother) was given one ranch and Heber's mother the other one. Aunt Margaret Birdie's mother, was given a farm near Montpelier.

While other people enlarged the reservoir it was there and Heber's father built it.

Well I suppose in the next world we will know the truth about these things. Until then there doesn't seem much that I can do about it.

Love & best wishes

Mary Inez Phelps

Centennial History Of Alton Valley

Within a score of years after the original pioneers entered in the Bear Lake Valley, settlements had filtered into the lucrative valleys throughout the present confines of the county.

By 1883, as the railroad entered the valley, the first settlers were locating themselves in the Alton Valley where prior to this, only the Indians and the cattle, owned by Grandison Raymond were familiar with the area.

Among the earliest were Lucious Bingham, Arnold Zumbrennen, Jake Hirschi, John Wuthrich, John Moni, Marian and Jess Perkins, Ezra and Martin Phelps and Albert Kunz. In 1902, John Eschler moved to the area.

At this time the general location was referred to as Sheep

Creek. An Indian trail wound its way through the mountains from Bear Hollow through the valley and on to the river where it turned upward into the Cokeville area.

A branch of the LDS Church was organized in 1903 with John Eschler as the presiding elder. A meeting was held by the settlers and a community herd was proposed. Thus it was that Alton Valley entered into the dairying business. Cheese was made and readily sold to the railroad crews and bartered with the migratory bands of Indians for furs and horses.

The first dairy was soon abandoned as a community project and individual farmers established their own. At the lower end of the valley, near Bear

River and the railroad, the Kunz and Phelps families operated successfully. In the northern end of the valley John Wuthrich and Gottfreid Eschler began large commercial projects. The men boarded cows for the smaller ranches during the summer months and gave in exchange of the milk, calves and a percentage of the cheese. Men and boys served as the cowherders, but women completed the milking and tending the vats under the experienced eye of the cheesemaker.

By 1906, a combination church and schoolhouse was constructed. Between 25 and 30 children were enrolled with one teacher.

A small store and a postoffice was established on the John Eschler ranch two years later. The first mail was brought in from Raymond by horseback and

snowshoes. The carrier was Alma Eschler.


In the early 1920's the people incorporated and built a large reservoir for the storage of irrigation waters. Ditches were constructed and the raising of alfalfa and irrigated wheat crops was begun.

By 1914 the majority of the free range had been usurped by large sheep concerns and the dairying business dwindled to a standstill. At this time, many of the families left the area. Today, only five families remain, with approximately 26 members. Domestic stock is fed and fattened on irrigated acreages.

The school has long been closed and was torn down in the late 1950's. Highway 30 crosses the flat valley area and its people commute to Montpelier, some 13 miles away, for their needs.

1966 Iris R. Collings

PARIS, IDAHO — Mrs. Iris Collings, 76, Paris, Idaho, died of natural causes Aug. 25 at 11 p.m. in a Salt Lake hospital. Born Nov. 23, 1889, Auburn, Wyo., to William L. and Almira Holmes Rich. Married to Mahonri M. Collings Jr., June 6, 1912, Salt Lake LDS Temple. Survivors: husband; sons, daughters, Clifford R., Salt Lake City; Wayne R., Lincoln, Neb.; Mrs. James (Almira) Hawkes, Paris, Idaho; Mrs. Wayne (Rita) Haddock, Tucson, Ariz.; 11 grandchildren; brothers, sisters, Lyman H., Idaho; Mrs. Zula Cole, Mrs. Hazel Shepherd, all Logan; Clarence, Mrs. Gertrude Price, both Paris; Mrs. Naoma Earl, Provo; Mrs. Lois Gunderson, San Francisco; Mrs. Edith Rich, Salt Lake City. Funeral 2 p.m. Monday, Paris, Idaho, First LDS Ward Chapel. Friends call Mathews Mortuary, Montpelier, Idaho, 4-6 p.m. Sunday, Monday 9 a.m. until services, home of James Hawkes, Paris. Burial Paris, Idaho, city cemetery.




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