

HORSE LAKE COMMUNITY FARM CO-OP

Story of Betty's Place

As told by Betty Johnson, June, 2007

Betty's place, it is 133 acres on the north-east end of Horse Lake. It was left to me by my father when he died in the fall of 1989. He was nine months short of his 100th year.

He always called it "The Mable Place", as it was formerly owned by Mable Sandberg, a sister to brothers Ben and Oscar Sneve, early pioneers in this part of the country. Records from the Land Registry state that in 1933, Lord Maurice Edgerton conveyed to Mable M. Sandberg, in her name, Block "B" plus two other pieces of land. That was a while ago indeed, and the year in which I was born.

The house that was on the property then had been skidded across the lake in the winter time on the ice from the south side by Mr. Sandberg by team and sleigh, all in pieces, numbered carefully and put together on the new place, but I have no idea what year that was, many years before my father acquired the land.

In the spring of 1997 in the windy days of March, a spark from the chimney set the roof on fire and the old house burned to the ground in a few minutes. This was the fate of many of our old wooden buildings, which when once caught, couldn't be put out. The Lone Butte Hotel, Captain Watson's house, the Clinton Hotel, we all know of one that went up in flames.

In the year of 1955 after much litigation, the place finally became my father's (Victor Furrer). Mrs. Sandberg had moved away by then and was pursuing other ventures.

In due time, Dad then acquired water rights on the little creek that ran through the property. The government called it Longbow creek, but the lovely old native woman who lived on the place with her husband declared, "It's Rabbit Creek". So very appropriate, I thought.

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He set about digging some half mile or more of irrigation ditches so he could get water on the hay fields and he re-fenced it, in its entirety.

He always wintered some of his cattle there every winter and always kept his team of horses there, and a spare, as he called the third one, and used them to haul hay to the cattle and for cutting and raking hay in the summer and for many other odd jobs. Although he owned a tractor, he used it very little. He never felt at home with machinery so his son, Allen, did the baling.

In 1991, I engaged CEEDS to farm the land for me and they continued to care for The Betty Place up to the present time. I have since sold it to The Land Conservancy and it will remain in a farm state for perpetuity but CEEDS continue on as stewards of the land.

The old barn remains useable, still standing in spite of all. It has been re-floored and the sheep use the stable while the loft holds the hay, nice and dry.

There are still many pieces of well-used old machinery around the place, a two horse “slip” used for moving earth, mowing machines, hay rakes; all these powered, and a horse-powered hay baler which bound the hay with wire, not twine. A home-made elevator for scooting hay bales into the hay-loft and an antique fanning mill for cleaning grain of weed seeds and chaff, and the remains of our two-horse buggy made from the rear axel of a Model “T” Ford, which we used to go back and forth to Lone Butte for supplies and to picnics at Lone Butte and Roe Lake and other places when it was too far to walk.



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