

# **CAROLYN BAJEMA**

## **Concerning Cape Horn Pioneers and Cape Horn School in particular**

### **Interview: April 24, 1979**

**Interviewer: Tom**

Tom: Cliff Crawford tells me that you're an expert on Cape Horn School and Cape Horn in particular. I've been poking about in the area and I ran across a barn last week that is, I think it's north of Cape Horn School, it's up on the hill with a big meadow that slopes down and whoever built it drilled in 1914 on the gable end. The old rock foundation for the house is still there and the remnants of a garden. Beautiful barn, fantastically well built. Do you know anything about that?

Carolyn: I'm not quite sure.

Tom: Maybe if you have a few minutes later on, we could take a swing up there and take a look. What particularly do you remember about Cape Horn School?

Carolyn: Well, I think it was built in about 1910 and 1911, the present one, or I mean the old building that's still standing up there. It was the first school I went to and later I taught there.

Tom: Was there a school before that?

Carolyn: Yes, I could show you the places if you're interested in locating where they were. As I understand it, the original or the first school was a log structure right there by Canyon Creek. Then they built another one, we had an old timer's picnic association but it's getting to the point that we don't have any old timers anymore. I have a couple of pictures, maybe you've seen them already.

Tom: I have some of them, nope, none of these.

Carolyn: This is down at the Cape Horn Landing, this was before the railroad, the railroad came through in 1907 and up until then everything was by steamboat and this is some of the original buildings down there.

Tom: This house is still there?

Carolyn: No, none of these buildings. These are all gone and the house sets about here. The man that owns this store, a lawyer built this house, George Bresslin. (sp.?)

Tom: Bresslin, yes, in fact I talked to the lady that lives there now and she had quite a lot on Bresslin. He was a commissioner and the house was built in 1914.

Carolyn: He also was in the Legislature. This sailboat, this is John Stevenson's and he was, I think, the first person who settled at Cape Horn.

Tom: Now that would be the grandfather of John Stevenson. Now, Cliff Crawford mentioned, the great-grandfather of John Stevenson was a guide for, I thought, he was a guide for Watkins when he left Vancouver to come up-river.

Carolyn: I don't think it was his great-grandfather. Let's see, John's father was Emory and Emory's father was Jessie and I swore that it was this gentleman here. But have you ever talked to John?

Tom: I stopped by twice and he's either feeding cattle or unavailable.

Carolyn: Oh, John is quite a boy! Well here is the old school.

Tom: Is that the one that's here now?

Carolyn: No, this is the one, this was the 2nd one as I understand it.

Tom: Ok, so we're really talking about three schools and one that's there now is the third. Is that right?

Carolyn: Uh huh. Now this is the old Grange Hall.

Tom: This is the Cape Horn Grange?

Carolyn: This is the Cape Horn Grange.

Tom: Where was it located?

Carolyn: Well it's up past where the old school house, I can show you that place too. This was the gathering place for the 4th of July and the Harvest Home that

they had, these are some of the people that attended.

Tom: I've had several conversations with Della Miller about the Mt. Pleasant Grange and that's pretty rich in history.

Carolyn: This is older though than Mt. Pleasant.

Tom: Well, they have the distinction of Mt. Pleasant being, I guess it's the oldest continuous building.

Carolyn: Yes built. That they're still using the original. This was a silly thing, I think. I'll tell you the history of this. Mr. Nevins was the founder of the Cape Horn Grange and he was one of the first officers in the State Grange as I understand it. Mr. Akkerman gave them information why to build the Grange hall on this particular spot and he said that they could use that as long as they used the building. So they used it for years and then you know how people pass away or move away and so finally the grange dwindled down and there weren't too many people left. The people that were still members of the Grange lived farther away, lived down this way, so they thought it was kind of far to go, a couple of miles! So they bought an acre of land down near the Cape Horn School and instead of still meeting in this building until they could raise money to build one, they met in the Cape Horn School. So this building stayed vacant for I don't know how many years and finally Mr. Akkerman said, well if they weren't going to use it, he would just dispose of the building. So then they were without a hall but they had this acre and they never could get enough money to build a hall. So that went on for a long time and then the membership changed and dwindled and my folks belonged to the Grange and I joined the grange too and my husband joined the grange. There were about maybe 15 of us still left in the grange. Well about this time, the membership at Skamania had dwindled so they only had about three active members left so if they didn't hold grange meetings for a certain length of time, the property goes back to the State Grange, so these three men that were still members up there, they came to the Cape Horn Grange and said, well we're both in about the game straits, you have a few more members than we do but you don't have a hall, so how would it be if we consolidate. So, alright, but since the Cape Horn Grange was the oldest, it would still be called the Cape Horn Grange. So they agreed and so then, course that hall needed things too, it needed rewiring and it needed a new roof so this acre that belonged to the Grange adjoined my folks place, in fact it took a corner out of it, so they said well they would buy that and then that would give the grange money to put a roof on. So they bought the property and then they used the money and we put the roof-on and wired it and all this time no one from Skamania came to join, they waited until they got all the work done. Then after we got a new roof on and the wiring done and all that then they started to come in

so then finally, well my husband and I moved away and some of the other members moved away and finally it dwindled down to mostly Skamania people that belonged to it.

Tom: Well I thought it was curious that the Cape Horn Grange would be in Skamania but that explains it. When were you at the Cape Horn School as a student?

Carolyn: Now you want to know how old I am! I went there in 1913.

Tom: Was the school from 1st grade through high school?

Carolyn: It had 3 rooms at that time. They had 3 teachers and they taught, well I suppose the first two years in high school or something like that.

Tom: What was the student population?

Carolyn: Oh I'd say about 30.

Tom: The bell tower is really curious in that building. Did they actually use the bell?

Carolyn: Oh, yes. They tolled the bell, they rang it at 8:30 and then they rang it at 9:00 and then they rang it at the end of the day. That's kind of sad, too. There was kind of a squabble over that, too. They kept using that building and they consolidated with down at Skye and they said that they were going to take the bell from it and then they closed the Skye School, too, the old Skye School, and built a new one down by the Steel Bridge. So they said they were going to take the bells from both schools and put them on the gate posts but it never came about which I thought was too bad.

Tom: Although from my viewpoint in trying to resurrect and record historic places, it's nice that the building is reasonably intact. There are people in there now converting it.

Carolyn: Uh huh. Reudes bought the property and they lived there for awhile and they're making as I understand it, three apartments. Well there was an apartment in the school, after awhile they built a small apartment in the basement for the teacher and the teacher lived there. Then the Reudes bought it and they fixed it up a little bit more and as I understand it they are making three apartments.

Tom: But there is no one living there now?

Carolyn: Oh yes.

Tom: The Reudes still?

Carolyn: Uh huh, the Reude's daughter is living there.

Tom: Do you suppose there is very much of the interior left as it was or is it

Carolyn: Well, as I say, I don't really know how much they've done in the last year or so but up until then it was pretty much the same as it had been. They had the two rooms downstairs and then a room upstairs and then the basement.

Tom: Do you suppose they'd be friendly enough that we could take a look.

Carolyn: Oh I think so.

Tom: I've driven up to the back but there was obviously no one there.

Carolyn: As I say, I don't know if there is anyone there during the day or not.

Tom: The school property itself, there is a stair that leads up off the road, concrete steps which got you into the front school yard.

Carolyn: Yeah, there used to be two trails or whatever, they used to have a fence all the way around it and it had an iron gate and then they had a walk up and every so often they'd landscape it and plant different things and for different times it looked real nice, had daffodils all over the paths but as time went on people moved there that had cattle and let them run in there. I always thought it was too bad that they moved the school because it was a beautiful piece of property. The school there and then they had the ball park and they had the big gym and the fir woods out in back. For years that was the place for community gatherings too and they had a grandstand out in back for the ballpark and always had a big thing for the 4th of July. It used to be that they'd kind of alternate with Skamania for the 4th of July. They'd have races and a ball game and a dance at night and they kind of alternated with Skamania. I remember when it was a big thing to have ice cream. The 4th of July they had a big 5-gallon containers and they'd be in a big insulated bag and they'd have that sent up from Portland. Then everybody brought things for the noon lunch or sometimes they just had their own picnic lunch but they always had the ice cream and that was really something.

Tom: The community as you were growing up, you say your folks had a place up near where the grange

Carolyn: Right near the school.

Tom: Up the hill from the school?

Carolyn: No, it's right along the highway. The house is gone, it's just the orchard and the field.

Tom: Were there quite a lot of thriving farms around here at that time?

Carolyn: Most people had farms and then they worked out too. But they had cattle and shipped milk and cream and stuff like that.

Tom: This barn I was asking you about earlier, obviously was a dairy barn or at least for cattle. It's a very interesting structure. You see a lot of holly, in fact you're a holly rancher, what is it the climate and soil are just perfect for growing holly?

Carolyn: Well yes, it's good and we had the land so we just decided that holly would be good for our retirement so that's why we kind of got into the holly.

Tom: You must have quite a market for it every Christmas?

Carolyn: Uh huh. Pretty good.

Tom: Is that a tough thing to harvest?

Carolyn: Well, it's in a bad time of the year.

Tom: Was there a lot of fruit grown?

Carolyn: Everyone had their own, well I'll tell you one time Mr. Prindle and another man over here, they had big orchards and they raised apples and cherries and they sent them by boat to Portland.

Tom: You'd think the climate would be too severe for apples and cherries. I know an apple needs some dry weather.

Carolyn: Well they did alright. Right here at Prindle, it's rather mild right here. Oh it isn't what I'd call "apple country" but in those days they did pretty good.

Tom: I keep searching for old buildings. My charge is anything before 1920, of any kind of significance and Della Miller's been awfully good about some houses back off of Belle Center Road. The Zenniker house, Turk house and the Wing house and the Chandler house. Do you know of any others, that

might be worth surveying.

Carolyn: Well, now there is the Miller house, the Henry Millers. The old Prindle house over here I think would have been built before then.

Tom: Is that on the road just past your place?

Carolyn: It's right over here, they've been remodeling over there and cut some fir trees. I hate that when they cut the fir trees! I'm sure that was built before 1920. You'll have to go over and talk to Mr. Montchalan and he can tell you about the Prindles because he's the Prindle's son-in-law. Maybe the Martell's, when we go up that way I'll see if that old house, and Nick has built a new house and whether he tore down the old house, I don't know, but that would be real old. Then there is, used to be the Taylor and that would be an old house. Over on the highway near the school, that used to be the Anderson house and I'm not sure of the name of the people that live there now, they just bought it about two years ago.

Tom: Cliff put me onto Nick Martell who lives \_\_\_\_\_ and the highway and I guess the house is still there, it's down hill from where he lives. I spotted that last week. They say he's quite knowledgeable on the history of that farm.

Carolyn: And the Anderson house up at Cape Horn. I don't know exactly the year that it was built but it's old.

Tom: How old is your barn?

Carolyn: I really can't tell you that. Well, this little house right down where you turned in the road, that's an old house too.

Tom: The little frame house?

Carolyn: Yeah, the one about ready to tumble down.

Tom: Ok, that's not the Prindle house.

Carolyn: No, that was built by Mike Koski. And over here, the house that Mays lived in, that was built by, well I'm not sure but I remember that Workmans lived there. We can drive by that one. Then right above that, on the same road is the Gorys. There were two Gory families, Walter and Julius.

Tom: When the Cape Horn school that's there now, which you finally taught in, when it was built, was that a community effort or was it designed by anybody or was it just a place folks got together and built.

Carolyn: We weren't here when they built that so I really don't know how that came about. Now this Prindle School over here, it's now the Legion Hall, it was built about the same time too, but it's been remodeled.

Tom: As I made the turn, has the two doors and a big window on the highway side.

Carolyn: Uh huh. It was built as a one-room school and that was designed by Lily Miller and she taught there and she also was the School Superintendent. In fact at one time there was two schools in the Prindle District.

Tom: What's an approximate date?

Carolyn: I suppose it was about the same time as the Cape Horn School.

Tom: 1910 to 1913.

Carolyn: Yes

Tom: It's amazing how long wood holds up.

Carolyn: I'm afraid the one they're building now won't.

Carolyn: There is a house up on that Smith-Cripe Road, they call it High Valley now. Mr. Cripe was the carpenter and he built that, he built the Prindle School and they had a farm up the Smith-Cripe Road and I think the old house is still on top of the hill there. You know, they lived up there when they were building the highway on the Oregon side and after that was built, course in those days you didn't have radio and TV so they used to sit there some evenings and they had a piece of wood and they'd make a notch when they'd see a car go down the highway, on the Oregon side. That was the traffic in those days.

Tom: The community here in Prindle and Cape Horn, did they relate much to each other?

Carolyn: Yes, well they didn't do too much here in Prindle, they had their school program and so forth but usually for dances, picnics, ballgames and things like that.

Tom: You mentioned the gymnasium in the back. There is a big building there now that's kind of used as a barn and storage room, that was the gym?

Carolyn: That was the gym, a big building for those days.



Tom: Was there a landing?

Carolyn: Oh that's a sad story too. Yes there was a landing down there and that was built by the community and the boats landed there regularly and then the railroad came and the river traffic dwindled away until finally they didn't use the dock anymore, they didn't use that road. Then Mr. Prindle sold the property on that side of the road that went down to the dock to Mr. Sweigart but the road was still there and then later on some other people who sold property on this side but the road was still there, it was still a public road. Then my mother thought well, because my granddad had helped build that and everything and my dad and my mother they thought well it was too bad not to have a place to get down to the river, the places were dwindling away with, people buying land and everything and nobody could get to the river. So this was about 20 years ago or so, she tried to get the people, or she went to the Commissioners and asked if they couldn't keep that road as a way to get down to the river. So finally one of the Commissioners said, well, it hasn't been used for so long but if you can get a petition, he says, we'll keep it open, we'll do some work on it. You know she couldn't get the people to sign the petition to keep that road open!

Tom: For petes sake. They just weren't interested?

Carolyn: They weren't interested. Then afterwards, oh well, I guess we should have, they said. So eventually Sweigart's bought on both sides of it and they closed the road.

Tom: And that's the road that says private road, that's quite a development down there.

Carolyn: Yes, course. Mr. Sweigart is present owner of Hyster Company and the son-in-law is with the Cascade. Mrs. Warren, Mr. Sweigart's daughter, owns the place on this side of the road, well I mean it's all theirs but I mean, their house is on this side and Sweigart's is on the other side. She's on the Columbia Gorge Commission. I suppose you've seen up at the St. Cloud Ranch where the house burned?

Tom: No.

Carolyn: Oh, well, I'm interested in that because that belonged to my grandparents, they were the first ones that lived there and there was a little part of the house still of the original part of the house that my grandfather built and it just burned this winter. I hate to go by there now.

Tom: Your maiden name was what?

Carolyn: Mackey. My grandparents owned the place before the railroad or the highway went in, just a county road.

Tom: Were you around when the Cape Horn blasting was going on?

Carolyn: Oh yes, I saw that.

Tom: Cliff and I were looking at the before and after photos of that mess and I had been down the week before to the Cape Horn Landing and was talking to the lady that lives there and she was saying she had taught off and on there. The Stevenson's said that when the powder monkey came in to blast the thing supposedly upward, they gave them 30 minutes notice to get out and they got out and the thing blew down instead of up and they came back and some of their livestock was gone and the house and everything. I don't know how much of that is fact.

Carolyn: Well, I think they knew what they were going to do and seems to me if somebody is going to blast right above me, they more warning than that but anyway, it was a terrible thing. They didn't expect it to come down. Nowadays I suppose Engineers would know that but they thought it was more solid rock but as it turned out, it was looser or something. It shoved the railroad track right down, the rails and everything went right down into the river and rocks came down where the dock was.

Tom: It's kind of hard for me to understand. Maybe they saved a few miles by doing that. Are your photographs duplicated anywhere?

Carolyn: Well, I think Cliff might have some of them, I don't know.

Tom: I've seen those particular ones and most of the ones that he has are from the Oregon Historical Society.

Carolyn: Well I'll tell you, some of these came from, this man that took most of these that I have, he was a camera nut years and years ago before hardly anybody thought about taking pictures. That was one of the great things about our old-time picnics, he'd bring all these pictures and everybody would say, oh yes I remember who that was, etc. Eventually he passed away and I saw his wife at the funeral and then I didn't hear from her for a long time and the next thing I knew she'd given the pictures to the Oregon Historical Society and she'd gone off to live with her daughter in New York. Well those pictures don't mean anything to the Oregon Historical Society and I guess Cliff went to them and ask for the pictures but I guess they don't want to give them back. I'm just sorry that you came two years too late. There was one man that, an old timer and he and his brothers had logged in Skamania

County and all around for years and years, knew all about logging in Skamania County. I tried to get get Cliff and I tried to get several of these people around and get the story and they never did go and the man passed away. Now I don't know anyone that would know what those men knew and would know the locations of all of these logging places. See logging was one of the main things. Now Mr. Wall could have told them the history of logging from way back. These logs were logged after the Yacolt burn. My grandfather came here in 1885 and they had been logging way out in here up the Washougal River. They had been logging with oxen and he came and was the caretaker. They hauled the logs with the oxen to the shute, then they went down the shute into the Washougal River, then they rafted them down.

Tom: But they actually built a shute to carry the logs?

C.B: Uh huh.

Tom: Why don't we take a tour up around these old places.