

Brief history of
FLOYD ALEXANDER and
SADIE ANNA MACK RITTER
who owned the large photos of the
Columbia Gorge area, a donation to the museum.

Floyd and Sadie Ritter lived in Ashtabula Co., Ohio; were married in Lenox, Ohio. In the spring of 1905 they traveled by train from there to Portland, OR. Sadie was very impressed with her first view of Chicago, on that trip. With them was their 8 year old son, Clifford Mack Ritter.

They stayed in Portland for perhaps a year, while Floyd, a carpenter, worked on the construction of the reknowned log Forestry Building. They moved from there to Mill A, in the valley above Cooks, where Floyd logged. They were living there when the mill burned entirely, including their tent and most of their belongings, while they (and others) took what little they could and huddled on rafts in the mill pond to escape that fire.

From there they moved to somewhere in the area of Husum, WA, which may be where they lived when Floyd worked on a (“the”) bridge across the White Salmon River. Their second son, Earl Keath Ritter was born there in 1909. Sadie worked for a bit at what sounded like a big hotel or resort, answered the phone there, and proudly told me, her little granddaughter, that “she was the ‘Hello girl’ there”.

They must have moved back to Mill sometime in there, because Clifford went sometime to the one-room Mill A school, where my mother taught in maybe 1926-27. Earl was one of her pupils then. I attended that same school, unchanged, my first two years. In the spring of 1912 they moved to Colville and then to Northport. Perhaps Floyd worked in the large smelter there. Before then, Sadie’s mother, Kate E. Mack, moved west to live with them. She died and is buried in Northport.

They returned to Cooks — actually, to Mill A, before 1920, but I don’t know what year. They bought a nice piece of property there, and Floyd

built a comfortable, small, 2-story home, with a garage, a workshop, big garden and so forth. Since that valley had been logged so few years before, they had a beautiful view out over part of it from their front porch.

I don't know where it fits in, but Floyd also worked on the construction of the Bridge of The Gods. I don't know where, time wise, this fits in, either, but at either Mill A or a school somewhere down on the river — maybe during work building the bridge?? Clifford went to a one-room school where one Indian boy also attended. The children's seats were built for two. The Indian boy was seated alone, and when any of the boys were naughty, the teacher sent them to sit with the Indian boy as punishment. Cliff, my father, told me about it, saying that the teacher never did catch on why he was so naughty so often — the Indian boy was his best friend! That boy's father one day took his son and Cliff out on the river in his boat, before the dams, and at one point told them to look down in the water. Cliff said it was so clear, and many, many trees were visible down in the bottom.

Then the father told them of the stone, earth bridge, with trees, that once crossed the river there, and pointed out where it had broken off on the north side — very obvious, above, just west of Stevenson — and the less visible area on the south. He told them that “his pappy's pappy's (I don't know how many pappys) pappy had ridden his horse across that bridge”. I have never doubted the bridge after hearing that. The Ritters lived in Mill A until Floyd died in 1943, after which Sadie sold their home and bought a tiny house in Stevenson, where she lived alone until her death in 1947.

Written by their granddaughter, Barbara Jean Ritter Smith, born at Cooks, 1927.