

## **An Old Stopping Place, Then a Homestead**

When we traipse up the Lewiston Hill today or even the old Hwy, it is so much more convenient than it was for the determined pioneers of 140 years ago. Before the old Hwy. was built in 1915, there was the Silcott Rd. The Silcott Rd. was the first white settlers' road, easier for the wagons than the Native American trail which went almost straight up the hill and had been in place for centuries.

At the top of the Lewiston Hill in 1884, there sat a stopping place called the Ruddy/Collins Stage Stop. Here travelers could get a rest for the horses or oxen, a hot meal and night's rest for themselves before continuing on. According to "Early Pioneer History" in the May 1, 1936 Genesee News that we found here at the ranch, "the home was used as a Stage Station from 1871-1885 where travelers could get lodging and meals. Mail was also left at the home to be called for." The Ruddy/Collins stop and home was listed on the Historical Registry in 1966, but after years of sitting just beyond an overpass bridge of Hwy. 95; it has just recently been torn down.



After we left John and Mary Lorang in the last "Home & Harvest" they, along with their group from the train trip West; finally made it up the hill to the Ruddy Stage Station. After a good rest for the oxen and horses and ready to move on, the families traveled toward Uniontown, where a Catholic community

they knew was trying to build a church; later the beautiful St. Boniface church. John and Mary Lorang and their traveling companions, Sebastian and Mary Dahm, joined forces and rented an old cabin with a loft next to St. Gaul's Church in Colton, Wash. Both Mary Lorang and her friend, Mary Dahm, were pregnant at the time and there was only a ladder in the old cabin to the loft. The two families drew straws to see who would get the upper loft and have to climb the ladder. Mary and John Lorang lost that one and their first child, Peter, was born in this cabin in the winter of 1884. Mary Dahm had a daughter Rose in this same cabin.



Now these two young families were looking for a homestead to settle, in the surrounding area. John Lorang had been earning money for the family by traveling to the Moscow mountains and making wooden rails for the railroad. He would take off with the only wagon they had, the same one they used to climb the Silcott road and spend some days in the woods chopping rails. After delivering his rails, John would camp near Genesee, Idaho at the William White residence, which had a spring. He became good friends with William and Mary White, who had patented their Idaho homestead in 1875. While camping and enjoying the company of the White family, John saw that just north of the White homestead there was a very small beautiful home with a bay window. It had been lovingly built by an experienced boat builder, William Dillingham. The house had just been finished and was for sale.

John Lorang was excited of the prospect of buying this little homestead, but Genesee was booming. According to Mary Gesellchen Lorang "in the Genesee Proper, 'There were tents all over the place and all was blooming.....it was thought Genesee was going to be a big city. ...' Someone else was able to buy

the small homestead before John could and the homestead went to a pioneer by the name of George Jameson.

John continued his trips back and forth to Colton, with his hand hewn railroad ties. But in just a few short months, he heard that the little homestead was for rent. The current owner George Jameson was a blacksmith by trade and had built a shop on the homestead. But when he took to breaking the sod in his field, he had realized just how difficult it was to plow the tough ground cover for the first time. Jameson ended up unhitching his horse and leaving the plow in the field, then moving to Genesee to become the town's blacksmith. John and Mary Lorang immediately rented the homestead and then bought it the next year. It was now 1886 and young Peter was 2 years old.

John continued to hew or square rails for the railroad in the Moscow mountains to support his new family of now four, with another son born the summer of 1886.



Here in their new homestead, the journaling and photography began. John and Mary Lorang started the documentation of almost every day of their lives, as their young family grew up. The photographs are quite artistic and the writings are full of stories. The most amazing thing is the quantity of journals and photographs that were found. John was also a little dismayed at the lack of trees compared to his Wisconsin childhood. He planted his first trees and didn't stop planting for 40 years. The homestead still exists, with its pretty bay window. Two doors from the old cabin in Colton, Wash. have been found and preserved. My great grandfather John Lorang was very seriously interested in history. He saved the abandoned plow, the oxen yoke and the seat from their only wagon; which can be found at the Lorang homestead, now the White Spring Ranch Museum and Archive Library in Genesee today.

More information can be found online at [www.facebook.com/pages/White-Spring-Ranch](http://www.facebook.com/pages/White-Spring-Ranch). (To be continued....)  
Photograph of John and Mary Lorang, c.1890.

