

Farmers & Photography

In the last issue of Home & Harvest I described how Dan Lorang of the 3rd generation at the Ranch; decided one day to simply spray the entire 1873 section of the Farmhouse, the Washroom and Kitchen, with foam. Two or more inches of foam, that we had to remove before painting the Farmhouse. It was quite a chore and not so sure we shouldn't have left it, because I have a woodpecker hole to repair today on the Washroom wall.

Why?.....why did these 3 generations of Lorangs work so hard to preserve everything on this Ranch? The first is that every person in 3 generations, almost 30 people; were very serious historians. Then the second reason is that they were very serious photographers and preserved and labeled each and every photograph. The third reason is that they were very serious writers and preserved and labeled thousands of letters and journals for over 160 years. I wanted to write about the 2nd reason today.

Photography was a passion for all 3 generations here and also for the scattered descendants who help preserve this site. Each photo is described on the back; the photographer, date and a short note of the reason for the photo.

John & Mary Lorang were the first, with John taking most of the pictures. But Mary stepped in when John asked to be in the photos. He photographed the Ranch in the 1890's, Genesee in the 1900s and took over 300 photos during his trip to Europe in 1910. He then came home to take hundreds of 1910's Agricultural photos. Men harvesting and working in the fields. He took pictures of the children at play and at work and instilled in them the appreciation of this art that carried on throughout the following years.

When John had built his fountain, son Henry Lorang was exploring working in California. In 1914 he writes to Henry,

“I wrote you all the news I know in the letter and put in the two postal pictures of the fountain.”

----John Lorang

John Lorang went out of his way to get interesting photographs. He would take a close up of a crowd of people or climb a building, hill or pole. One time it looks like he could have been run over by horses in a finish line photograph of the horse race at Grangeville Border Days in 1916. But he made it, and lived for another 10 years, taking photos of daily life on the Palouse.

In 1898 John took a photo of his wife Mary trying to help Peter ride a bicycle. My grandfather Barney Lorang is helping push the bicycle, but unfortunately, they don't realize yet that trying to bicycle on the grass is not the best way to get started. Then John turned to his younger brother Thomas Lorang and had him riding a racing buggy. Thomas had taken the first photo of Genesee in 1890.

In 1910 John was in Brindisi, Italy hoping to find the right photograph. He stood in front of the villagers gathering water from the town pump and you can see the looks of wonderment on the faces of people trying to figure out what he was doing there. This worked out very well, so John found another well in Brindisi and tried again. This group of men had the same look of wonder on their faces. Now preserved for 122 years.

In 1911 John was experimented with developing his own photographs and left some glass negatives with us. One shows the Genesee Horse Show and how much the town had grown in 21 years.

In 1912, John took a photograph of the young Genesee High School students just finishing a rehearsal for a play. Young daughter Martha Lorang is on a middle step, holding onto her braids. He also took several dozens of very good agricultural photos, planting, harvesting and casual photos; which I will describe in another issue. It's quite a lot to keep up with.

In 1916, John climbed to a roof of an early building and captured the line of the new fangled automobiles driving West in the Genesee 4th of July parade. Then he made a hurried run to the opposite end of the street and up the steps to the roof of another building and photograph the automobiles from the other direction.

A “Tug of War” game had started with the men of Genesee and John handed his camera to one of his children, so he could be in the photograph. He is standing on the left side of the game, sporting a nice long beard.

John captured the Genesee Band taking a break after the Parade. Again their reaction has been preserved for 106 years.

Also after the parade was over, the Base Ball game had started. So John went to the field and recorded a batter in a 1916 game with Genesee and Lapwai teams.

For these and several hundred more photographs that we are trying to record and share, you can check our Facebook page or our website at www.WhiteSpringRanch.org and of course stop by in Genesee for a visit of this amazing historical site.

