

In case you are wondering why I'm not more timely in getting these articles done, let me tell you about how hard it is to decide who to write about. There are so many graves out in Centerville and I have a list of no fewer than 150 names and my ADHD brain cannot focus very well. This time, I thought I'd write about the Willcox family who are located in the Raymond/Willcox plot. This little fenced off area seemed simple enough. There are 5 graves in it. How hard can it be?

After several hours scouring the ancestry records and the historical newspapers, I got thrown in so many directions, I had to stop and regroup. The problem is mainly how interesting the various nearby newspaper articles are, especially pre-1900. The first Townsend newspaper was called the Townsend Tranchant. It is sprinkled with all kinds of reporting with news from all the little burgs around Townsend including Diamond City, Hassel, Canton, Bedford, Winston, Claisoil, Toston, Radersburg, and more and it beyond fascinating to me. I spend an inordinate amount of time skimming pages of factoids from the late 1800s. This has got to stop!!! Focus!

Back to the Raymond/Willcox plot with the Willcox and Raymond families and another anomaly, the grave of Grandma Austin. Help me.

Daniel and Frances Gates Willcox, often spelled Wilcox in the newspapers, came to Bedford from Canada by way of Wisconsin in 1869 and went into the hotel and grocery business with Albert Doughty. This was during the nearby Hog 'Em, Cheat 'Em, and Beat 'Em mining area days and was going full swing for those more independent miners who didn't want to be part of the Hassel mining company workers. All of these places were north of Indian Creek in the foothills of the Elkhorns. The Cheat 'Em area was about where the old county dump was in the 1980s. I've walked a lot of Indian Creek and the side drainages, which are mostly intermittent stream courses that were placer mined leaving piles of rock the length of them. The remnants of miles of old ditches run through them told me these drainages were never ephemeral (yearlong water) reinforcing my belief that these people were hard, hard working folks. Gold was not only a lifeline to any kind of prosperity, but almost an addiction. History has shown it time and time again. Our area, both in the Elkhorns and the Big Belt ranges, are sprinkled with hopes and dreams. And graves.

Anyway, Dan and Albert didn't fare well in their business so they sold it and did much the same up in Helena for awhile before returning to Springville/Bedford. Albert helped with the building of the Bedford mill and Dan did a few things like run the Indian Creek ferry. Later Albert moved to Radersburg and Dan and Frances bought the hotel again and improved it making it a stage stop known for good food and a clean, nice place to stay. They had two children, Leslie and

Jeanette (Jennie). Leslie was born in Wisconsin and Jennie, in Montana. Daniel died in 1878, two years after getting a successful business up and running.

Frances continued to run the hotel with the help of Leslie and Jennie. Like Centerville, the railroad changed the landscape of little towns close to Townsend and Bedford and Springville are gone. I have yet to figure out the difference between these two little places so if anyone knows, I'd appreciate the information. rangebabe56@gmail.com

In my next article, I will tell you what happened to Frances and the children. By then, I hope to solve the mystery of Grandma Austin and introduce you to three other people in the Raymond Willcox plot area. Stay tuned.