

What was I thinking when I decided to research the Raymond/Willcox plot? For some dumb reason, I was thinking it would be simple. This is going to be the second in a three-part story. In our last article, I talked about the Willcox part of the plot, specifically Daniel Willcox who was very busy at Bedford until he unexpectedly died leaving his wife, Frances, and two children at the age of only 47. They had a son, Leslie and a daughter, Jennie. Jennie married Heman Starkweather and eventually moved to Bell, California. She is the only Willcox family member not buried in the Raymond/Willcox plot.

Frances holds things together at Bedford until Henry Raymond comes along and the next thing you know, they get married. Everything I found about Henry made me want to marry him. In other words, he was a good guy. Born in 1836 in Pennsylvania, he made his way west to Fort Benton and then Last Chance Gulch, chasing gold fever. He must have done well enough to then make his way south to Bedford, where he bought and ran the Indian Creek ferry in 1886. There is a story in the paper about an accident he had with the ferry during high runoff and broken cables. No one was hurt but after he got the ferry back in operation, he advertised free trips across the river for those who suffered from the brief calamity. He purchased property on the northwest side of the Missouri River, ranched and farmed and worked several mining claims on the flats west of Bedford. He also helped Frances run the hotel and store at Bedford until the railroad and subsequent creation of Townsend left Bedford more or less high and dry. Kind of like Centerville.

He sold the property where the current highway 287 bridge is located in 1907. He and Frances moved into Townsend. He was instrumental in getting a decent road from Townsend up through Indian Creek to Hassel and if you've ever been on that road, you know it was a feat of man and beast to get through the limestone narrows. He sold vegetables from what must have been a big and productive garden and was a member of the Old Settlers Society (1893). He was referred to as 'Commodore' so I'm guessing it had to do with the Society.

He and Frances were very active in the community and were well thought of. Frances began to have health problems and tried everything in her power to get better. A description of her ailment included jaundice leading me to believe she had kidney and liver failure issues. She tried restorative treatments like a trip to Hunter Hot Springs but nothing helped and she passed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1909 at the age of 66.

Henry, died a couple months later on September 21 after a freakish accident in town just before a parade was about to start. Standing outside the Gillogly and McDonald's blacksmith shop, a single rig buggy and horse came around the corner and knocked Henry down. He didn't lose

consciousness, but didn't feel well and was taken to the doctor. He passed hours later due to shock. He was 73.

I don't know who set up the Willcox and Raymond fenced plot but it has held up pretty well for being over 100 years old. The gate no longer works so you have to step over the fence. I'm hoping to reset a couple of the headstones in there because they are tippy and I don't want them to fall over and break. Stay tuned for how successful I'll be at that endeavor and in my next article, I'll tell you about the other inhabitants of the plot. I solved the mystery of Grandma Austin!