

Whispers Of The Past

In this edition of our little cemetery in the cactus and wind, I've decided to write about another early pioneer family, the Marks. As you can tell from the picture on the headstone, they really did come out here in a covered wagon but not together. I have tremendous respect for these people as I have tried to imagine what a trek across the country like this would entail and I'm pretty sure I'd be one of the unknown graves along the trail somewhere.

Back to our story. James Rufus (J.R.) Marks traveled out here after service in the Union Army, 95th Illinois Infantry, during the Civil War. He bought merchandise to set up shop and joined a commercial group that included about 500 men and 100 wagons for the Montana Territory on a route to Laramie, Wyoming and then the Bozeman Trail. He arrived in Bozeman on July 1, 1866, having lost his goods in an accident on the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone River. From Bozeman, he headed to Confederate Gulch as a gold prospector. When that didn't work out, he set up a bakery in Diamond City. Being an enterprising young man, he saved his money and bought a couple of mules and a wagon and began freighting goods. By 1872, he had six 10-mule teams and moved goods from Utah to Montana. With that money, he bought a ranch in the valley and also married Mary Ann Maples Frost.



Mary and husband, Harvey Frost, along with their son Mark, had come west on a different wagon train with a group of pioneer settlers in 1866. The family settled in the valley and farmed and ranched. They had a daughter born here, Vernie, but Harvey didn't like Montana and for several reasons, Mary ended up divorcing him. She and the children stayed and Harvey moved back to Illinois.

J.R. and Mary Ann started their own family and had five children, of whom only two lived into adulthood. The three children, Hallie, Vera and Hattie, are buried near their parents in Centerville. The surviving children were James Parbarry and Veva Ethel. Over the years, J.R. was a business partner with the Tierneys and McCarthys. He also acquired several ranches and at the time of his death in 1908, he owned eight ranches, had mining interests and was involved in the Masonic organization, city council and others. Not bad for a guy who basically arrived here with nothing.



There are many Marks family heirlooms and documentation in the Broadwater County Museum. One of the things that has struck me, ever since I moved here in 1989, is I almost feel like I need to create a family tree to understand the dynamics

of the pioneer families here. Sometimes, there is a lot of information and other times, I just hit a brick wall.

One of the graves near the entrance of the cemetery is for Oliver W. Marks, a child born in 1906 and died in 1908. According to his death certificate, his parents were James W. Marks and Mary Ann Perkins Marks. I could not find out how they are related to J.R. and Mary Ann Maples Marks. So, we have J.R., J.P. and J.W. Marks, all named James. I can hardly wait to get to the Johnsons, McFaddens, McMahans, Dohertys, and Barkers, to name a few. My eyeballs are crossing just thinking about it.



If you have any information on this or any other article I've written, please feel free to contact me at rangebabe56@gmail.com. So far, I only have 2 people interested in the headstone cleaning workshop I could do sometime in June. It sounds kind of grim but it's pretty interesting and feels good. Who doesn't want that?