

Whispers Of The Past

There is a large cement pad of headstones with several of the Reames family. It's covered in part by lilac bushes. I've walked around it many times, wondering about their story and how it fit into the history of our area. I didn't find any information in Broadwater Bygones but as I dug deeper into the family using Ancestry, Archives, and digital newspapers, something clicked in my little brain, now that I've been doing this for a while.

The connections have generally come through the women in the family, specifically the girls born to the parents who made their way to the valley. Their married names may be familiar to some of you or even be related. Bridgewater, Wall, Mellot, Diehl, Green.

I'm getting ahead of myself. Edward (Eddie) Orfellow Reames and Myrtle Elizabeth Carrel Reames came here from Newburg, Michigan, by way of Ft Benton and Helena. They had 7 daughters, five of whom were born in Michigan and another in South Dakota. Why they left there and what made them stop here is lost to time. The only hint I could find was in the obituary for Adelaide, who drowned in the Missouri River just after arriving by wagon from Sandpoint, Idaho, where they had lived for a couple of years.

They were moving to eastern Montana, but I wouldn't call Townsend eastern Montana. Anyway, they stayed, at least some of them, forever. Who built the big cement pad and had the headstones placed is also something I couldn't find any record of. I hate it when the trail goes cold.

Anyway, there are headstones for Eddie (1863-1942), Adelaide (1904-1916), Myrtle E. (1882-1918) and baby Myrtle F. (1918-1918), along with Doris Bridgewater, Ruby and George's 4-month-old daughter who died in 1924. Both

Myrtle, the mother and Myrtle, the baby, died of pneumonia in 1918. Eddie and his daughters remained in Townsend and joined the schools, church, and community. Because I am nosy, I tracked the daughters' lives.

Ruby Reames married George Bridgewater in Helena. She probably met George at school in Townsend, as he was born and raised on a ranch on Gurnett Creek. They lived on a ranch on Ray Creek before moving to Raymond, Washington, where he worked as a crane operator for a logging company and she, a millworker in a veneer factory. Both were buried in Raymond. They had a daughter, Grace Marquerite (Peggy), who grew up here, became a nurse, and travelled and worked in Portland, Oregon, where she married Haskell Bailey. After he died, she moved back to Townsend, married Jack Huth and when he died, she moved to Washington to be closer to her now grown-up children. I made myself stop following this family or I would never get done chasing rabbits.

Florence Reames married Harry Mellot Jr. He was from Butte, she was from Townsend, and they married in Waterloo in the Whitehall area. As far as I can tell, they had three daughters and lived in Waterloo, Butte, and ending their days in Hamilton. Harry worked in the automobile industry as a mechanic and car salesperson. Florence was the glue, keeping house and raising their kids.

Leah Mary Reames married three times and may be remembered by current Townsend residents because this girl was active in the community. She was first married to Frank Diehl, Winston and had one son, Robert. Then she married Paul Green, first a miner and then a grocery store owner. They had one daughter, Pauline. Leah was active in Eastern Star and many other community groups. She had a lot of friends. After Paul passed, she married Roy Hellender in 1980. She died at the age of 93 and is buried in Helena at Sunset Gardens.

Lucille and Claire Reames married brothers from Bozeman. Lucille married William 'Bill' Wall, and they lived in many places, including Townsend, before settling down in Clancy. She was very active in Eastern Star. They adopted 2 daughters and spent over 30 years ranching and traveling. She died at 101 in Helena of Alzheimer's. Both she and Bill are buried in Sunset Gardens in Helena. Claire married Carl Wall and they went on to have two sons, Richard and Donald. It seems they stayed in the Helena area but are buried in Bozeman at Sunset Memorial Park. She was also 101 when she died. Wow.

The reason I put in these little factoids about the families of people interred at Centerville have more to do with curiosity than anything else. Chasing through family trees and learning how people came to be here, why they came, why they stayed, and what happened to those who left is a little bit addicting. From what I can tell, the connections throughout the state is kind of amazing. From Townsend to Waterloo, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Hamilton, and beyond, makes the Reames family come alive, even though there isn't much about Eddie or Myrtle in the records to really know them as people in our community. Their children more than made up for it.



The nice thing, at least in my mind, is that someone cared enough to build the cement pad and put in place the headstones of the family that stayed. The lilacs covering part of the pad are a nice touch and I'm always amazed at how hearty they are, although they didn't bloom this year, like any of the other lilacs around our area. Was it because of the open winter or a late frost? I don't know.

That's it from Centerville. Until next time, when I randomly pick on some other family or person.