

History of Nevada

History of Esmeralda County

SETTLEMENT OF MASON VALLEY.

In 1854 N. H. A. Mason, in company with two brothers, was driving cattle from the Western States to California, and passed through the country, now known as Mason Valley, along Walker River. Their cattle were stampeded, and in collecting them they had a good opportunity of learning something of the value of this section as a grazing range. In 1859 Mr. Mason again visited the place, and, after making a thorough examination, located what has since been known as Mason's Ranch. The fall of that year a large band of cattle from the East was wintered there, and, in 1860, he drove from California (Stanislaus County), what cattle he had there to the Nevada range.

In October, 1859, Wm. H. Dickson located on what is now the reservation, up the river, about fourteen miles from the lake, where Campbell, or Wasson, later built the reservation house. He is still a resident of the valley.

During the Indian troubles Mason and Dickson drove their stock to Antelope Valley. In July the former returned to his ranch, but Dickson's claim was lost to him because of its being on reserved Indian lands, and he did not return until 1862.

The first house built in the valley was by Mr. Mason in 1860, 16x24 feet in dimensions, the walls being eight feet high, and were of willows and adobe. The roof was of tules, and the sides were made by placing poles in the ground, then nailing willows to them, and filling in between with mud. It was built near the center of section thirteen, township fourteen north, twenty-five east. The structure was maliciously burned in 1866.

Tom Wheeler and brother settled about eighteen miles south of Mason's Ranch, on the west fork of Walker River, in the fall of 1861. The place is now owned by D. Wilson. The next settlers were Angus McLeod, Charles Sneider, and — Clement, who came in the fall of 1862, and took up what is now known as McLeod's Ranch. The same fall A. J. and C. D. Lane and W. K. Johnson, in connection with John R. Bradley, purchased a part of the Mason Ranch, and drove cattle in from California to the place. The same fall William, George and Richard Alcorn, three brothers, settled between the McLeod and Lane ranches. In 1863 Jesse Woodcock and — Porter settled on the east side of the river, opposite McLeod's, and during the same year Sprague, Kimball and Buler took up the ranch now owned by Mason where his house is built.

Mr. Mason, in 1861, sowed about one acre of barley and planted some potatoes on the bottom across the river from the old original house. The second effort in this line was in 1863, by Angus McLeod and another, who both raised barley that year. In 1864 several parties had fields of grain.

In 1861, Mason run a portion of what is now known as the Mason Ditch, for irrigating purposes on his ranch. It is now about four miles long, and has cost about \$2,000. The next was the Joggles Ditch, taken out in 1863, that being connected with a slough, has a total length of about six miles, and cost \$3,000. The Lane & Johnson Ditch was also taken out in 1863 on the opposite side of the river, and is about three miles long. This was followed by the McLeod Ditch in the same year. It is two and one-half miles long. The Sprague, Alcorn, and Buler Ditch was dug in 1864, and is now one of the main ditches of the valley. In addition to the above are several that have been constructed since, among which are the Greenwood and Fox ditches, on the East Walker, and the Mickey, Weston, Nichol, and Merritt ditches on the West Walker.

A tragic incident transpired in Mason Valley, in the winter of 1865-66, in which William Johnson, who came to Mason Valley in 1862, lost his life. He came in company with Charles Lane, from California, and they brought an Indian with them. This son of the desert was accustomed to amuse himself by butting heads with a ram belonging to Messrs. Lane and Johnson, and during one of his trials of hard-headedness, the ram used a little too much force and knocked the redskin out of time. This so enraged him that he seized a club and commenced pounding his victor, when Mr. Johnson interfered, and in order to make his arguments effective slapped the Indian across the face.

During that night Johnson was murdered, and suspicion was at once attached to this Indian, who had taken a horse and disappeared. A party immediately started on his trail and found him in a mining camp, in Peavine District, near where the town of Reno now stands. On their way to the valley, those having him in charge, concluded that the surest plan for making a good Indian, would be to hang him, which they proceeded to do. He was accordingly hanged to the limb of a tree, on the banks of the Carson River, below Dayton, near the place now owned by Mrs. Newman and Mr. Honeyman.

The valley runs nearly north and south, is eighty miles long, with an average of nine miles in width, the Walker River running through its entire length.

The statutes make four counties corner on Mason's Ranch, but the point of contact has never been determined by survey, although a strict construction of the statutes would seem to carry the line about six miles north of his present home, and take the whole valley into Esmeralda County. This is not the construction now given, however. There are at present 260 voters in the valley, thirty-one of them voting in Lyon County.