

Hugo School, Petersons, & Tunnel #9 Road

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Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society

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I, Mary Ellen Ritchie, was born October 30, 1912 in Medford, Oregon. At the time my folks were living on their homestead off the Ahern Road within a mile of downtown Hugo, Oregon. In 2000 this road joined the Hitching Post Road which itself joins the Hugo Road right across from the Hugo Elementary School that closed in 1967.

My grandfather, John Ritchie, was a Union soldier serving right after the Civil War. He eventually came west to Hugo and died here. He was buried about 200 - 300 feet down the hill from my husband, Mike, and my Hugo home. In those days families buried their family members on their own property as it was too far to go into town.

My folks first came to Hugo in 1910. Sister, Marge, was three weeks old at the time. My family stayed with the Petersons for awhile until they moved to the Holgate house (got their home built up on the hill off Ahern Road). Our family was not rich. I remember the kids felt they were pretty poor. She had an elder sister Margaret and two younger sisters, Elaine and Pat Calaba.

The road to our early home site and our present home was always called the Ahern Road as it went up to the Ahern's place. It was a well traveled road when I was born 87 years ago. At one time the road went to the Peterson's place and was connected to a road that went to Leland, Oregon. The road was built by Dave and Clable Triplett who originally owned the property well over a hundred years ago.

My dad built the family's first home way down below our present home in Hugo. Then he decided he wanted a view so during the worst time of the year he built a new home higher up in the woods just below our present home. "In those days you could tear down one shack and build another shack, you didn't built houses." Later there was a terrible storm and a tree crashed in the corner of the second home. My dad was in the hospital in Portland, Oregon at the time so the family just closed the door and left it and never came back.

My family moved to Wolf Creek in 1920 and then to Salem, Oregon in 1924, but the family always retained property and friendship ties in Hugo. They started having reunions of Hugo people who had birthdays in October and I have been returning Hugo in October ever since. I have so many wonderful stories of Hugo. A little about the Hugo School, Petersons, and the Tunnel No. 9 Road follows.

"Hugo School" I attended the one room Hugo Elementary School. In 1917 I was a five-year old student in the first grade. One of my teachers was Miss McCallister. I just loved her because my own mother was away sick in the hospital. Miss McCallister would have me come up to her to read and she would put her arm around me and I thought it was so nice to have Miss McCallister's arm around me when she was reading. Mrs. McChristian was my second grade teacher, and Helen, another of my teachers, I can't remember her last name.

There was a little side building where the Hugo High School was located. Miss Philpot (sp.?) was a teacher at the high school. Some of the high school students were Danny Peterson, Irma

(surname was people who lived in the Dickerson's house before the Dickersons), Wright girl, some Three Pines people, etc.

“Petersons” One Peterson die before the 1909 Leland depot picture was taken. Wayne McKy knew Roy and Henry, and John Peterson best. The Petersons were of Swedish origin and moved from Leland to Hugo around 1910 or a little sooner. They were almost late comers to the Hugo area. The Peterson girls were beautiful, especially Louisa. Helena was pretty also. Ivy (Iva?) was older and left before I really knew her.

The Petersons had a new baby at the time my family arrived in Hugo (baby born in 1909 or 1910). The Petersons were pretty well established at the time as they had a fine producing orchard. Their original home of wip-sawed or hand-sawed lumber was held together with wooden pegs.

The Petersons used to have old pictures that hung on the wall that somebody eventually stole. I and Wayne McKy remember an old black powder 44 and Civil War sword that the Petersons had. They also had a wonderful exhibit of Indian artifacts.

In later years Henry Peterson thought his folks' old home was jinxed. He either tore the old home down or Mike Batnitch tore it down. The roof was all gone when Wayne and Janet McKy finished tearing it down.

“Tunnel # 9 Road” At one time there was a road that went up and over the saddle above the railroad's present Tunnel # 9. The road was built because of the railroad was being built in the late 1870s This road went from the Peterson's place to Leland, Oregon. The Petersons had quite an orchard. The Peterson's would take wagon loads of peaches to sell. Everything was moved by wagons when I was a child.

Several men that worked on the railroad in the 1870s in northern Josephine County liked the area and eventually came back and acquired land. Mr. Pirzer and Mr. Peterson were some of these men.

Walker, Michael L. April 26, 2000. *Mary Ellen (Ritchie) Fitzpatrick's Hugo Memories*. Education Chair for Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society. Hugo, OR.