

It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.

Thomas Frank Berry (1819-1866)

From: "An Historical and Biographical Study of the Descendents of Thomas F. Berry, 1819-1866, by Lawrence W. Berry, October 20, 1960."ⁱ

There is evidence that the Thomas F. Berry family lived in at least four counties in the State of Indiana. These were: Clark, Crawford, Morgan and Shelby.

The ancestral home in Clark County was on the bank of the Ohio River, not too far from Bethlehem, Indiana, at a spot known in the early days as "Berry's Landing". (Martha Jane Berry relates that captains of river boats were known to sing out in the night over a megaphone "Yo Ho, Berry", and when Grandfather Berry replied to this call, he would be asked for needed information for directions, or where to leave supplies at the various river landings.

Two or possibly three of the Berry children were born down river in Crawford County. Louis Philip Berry stated that he was born at Leavenworth, and George T. Berry, in a brief sketch of his life, states, "(he) was born near the city of Indianapolis, on July 17, 1844".

The struggle for survival was hard, and there was never more than just enough food for a bare subsistence. With the restless hope that the soil would be more fertile and living conditions easier, the family moved north to Morgan County.

The farm in Morgan County was approximately 33 miles southwest of the capitol of Indiana, while the farm in Shelby County, where the family next lived, was between 15 and 20 miles southeast of Indianapolis. An I.O.U., dated Nov. 2, 1848, made out to Thomas Berry, gives the post office as Pleasant View, Indiana. This place and date offers a definite time for his being in Shelby County.

Finally comes the first evidence of a settled community life. The entire family joined the Methodist Church in Shelbyville, and there were box suppers and school house debates. (One of the subjects up for debate was: "Resolved, that there is more pleasure in the pursuit of romance than in its attainment.")

The two main reasons for the decision to cross the plains to the Pacific Northwest were economic and religious. Both of these motives entered into the family's prolonged discussions. Always there was the hope for betterment. Seven children had been born, of whom one had died. A complaint known as ague was enervating some members of the family. (This could more properly be interpreted as malaria, since the father felt that his children would be better off away from the unhealthy soils and marshes.)

*As an added incentive, copies of *The Christian Advocate* were telling of the need for settlers in the Oregon Territory. The thrilling story of Dr. Marcus Whitman taking wagons all the way to Fort Boise was repeated from many pulpits. The element of adventure was*

irresistible and possibly Thomas F. Berry thought in his heart, "I want to live where Marcus Whitman lives. I will go where he is."

Two wagons with six children and extra oxen for relief, driven by T.F. Berry and Mr. Dilts, left Shelbyville, Indiana, in April, 1853, and reached Tumwater on Puget Sound, on September 20th of that year.

FINDING A RECORD OF THE JOURNEY

(Perhaps the high point in the preparation of this genealogy was the discovery of the name T. F. Berry in "The Journal of Patterson F. Luark". Until this discovery was made, it was not known whether or not a written record existed of the trip across the plains made by T. F. Berry and his family. All of the quotes taken from this journal are copies from Herndon Smith's book, "Centralia - - The First Fifty Years ", published by the Daily Chronicle and F.H. Cole Printing Company, Centralia, Washington.

Much indebtedness is owed to Herndon Smith, the former teacher in the high school at Centralia, Washington, for enlightenment on the statistics of the number of persons traveling over the Oregon Trail, during the season of 1853. Miss Herndon quotes, for instance, from Volume One of the "Luark Journal", dated Thursday, May 19th: "There had already passed on the southern side of the Plat this season (besides what had passed on the north side) and before us, 1360 wagons, 450 head of cattle, 1754 horses, 742 families, 3344 men, 905 women, and 1207 children". This was at Fort Kearney. At North Platte, on June 13, 1853, was written, "Here I learned that 905 wagons had already crossed this season".

Granting that the larger proportion of these wagons turned southwest at Fort Bridger, it would seem that there was almost a steady caravan of wagons and teams on the Oregon Trail throughout the summer of '53.

Following are excerpts from Patterson Luark's journal:

"Tuesday, August 9 - got in company of T. F. Berry and Mrs Dilts today.

"Thursday, August 11 - Eighteen miles today brought us four miles into the Grande Ronde Valley. This is a beautiful valley, partly surrounded by mountains covered with yellow and other pine and fir, and etc.

"Saturday, August 13 - Ten miles today in the mountains and camped on a ridge guarding stock in the valley to the left. There is water and lots of wolves.

"Monday, August 15 - Eight miles again and we emerged again into the open country (Emigrant Hill). Eight miles more and camped on the Umatilla River, here where the road to Walla Walla leads off.

"Tuesday, August 18 - Twenty miles today. Left the river (Umatilla) at the Indian Agency and passed fifteen miles of sandy road to Butler Creek. Good Camp. About sixty wagons on creek tonight.

"Monday, August 29 - Passed the famous Barlows Gate and commenced to ascend the mountains. Here I came very near losing my wagons and mules and myself over a precipice.

"Saturday, September 3 - Traveled one and one-half miles to foot of Black Bone, in climbing of which we left another ox. Working the wheel mules, hitching on two yoke of oxen at hills; and at steep ones, doubling teams. Twelve (miles) thence to brow of Soap Hill, a dangerous place when wet. Took our wagons down by hand. Hundreds of logs lay around towards the foot of this hill, that have been hitched behind wheels of wagons descending. This hill was so slick that the teams could not walk down in the track.

"Wednesday, September 7 - Two miles east of Portland. Here we fed wild hay at 75 cents per hundred until the 12th (Sept.). Glad to rest a little.

Friday, September 9 - Today Berry and Dilts went to Portland with William Cock, Esq., to make arrangement for going to Monticello in a barge of Henry Windsor's. I went to Oregon City on business.

"Monday, September 12 - I sold my ox wagon for 89 dollars. The freight and storage on the same was 30 dollars. After putting our things aboard, the families in care of Dilts, I and Berry returned to stock.

"Tuesday, September 13 - Took our stock out of pasture at Sangs. Cost me 2 dollars Drove to Switslers, Berry going ahead to make contact for ferriage.

"Friday, September 16 - Traveled twenty miles, swimming stock over Vancouver slough, and stayed in a house on the banks of the Lewis River, leaving stock on opposite side.

"Monday, September 19 - In the afternoon we swam and ferried the cows, and camped opposite Monticello (Longview) and went over and stayed with our families all night.

"Tuesday, September 20 - Started up the Cowlitz River and camped nearly opposite the boat with our families in it. "Thursday, September 22 - Drove out to Cowlitz Prairie and united our families.

"Saturday, September 24 - About nine o'clock our goods landed and I found myself in debt for the passage (shipment costs) \$65.

The constant scarcity of money during the trip made it necessary to establish credit. When T. F. Berry ran out of money near the city of Portland, he took his Masonic Apron, which he carried in a metal tube, and looked up certain Brother Masons in that city. From them he received a loan of two hundred dollars. T. F. Berry remained in good standing with the Masons, for there is in extend, paid-up receipts of his membership in the Olympia Lodge of A. F. and A. M..

According to the Luark Journal, that party consisted of the father, Patterson F. Luark, a brother Michael F., a teenage son, Matyiellus, and three younger children. Since this party started on the Oregon Trail from St. Joe, Missouri, as did that of Thomas. F. Berry, attention should be called to their approximate time of starting and the huge number of wagons counted on the way west.

The Luark's were in St Joe on April 25, 1853. From that city, they traveled up the left bank of the Missouri River approximately 26 miles, to a crossing called "Wolf River". Here reference is made by Mr. Luark to his use of "Walter's Guide", which emigrants in that day used to refer them to conditions on the road and various watering and feeding stops.

The Oregon Trail was essentially a wagon route paralleling a series of rivers and streams. When the relationship of these various rivers is studied on a topographical map, it will become apparent how dependant the emigrants were on the sources of water supply which the following rivers afforded: the Missouri, Big Blue, Platte, Sweetwater, Big Sandy, Green, Bear, Snake, Boise, Grande Ronde, Umatilla, Columbia, Cowlitz and Des Chutes. These fourteen rivers designated the route of the Oregon Trail.

THE DONATION CLAIM

The granting of land to settlers was based upon an act of Congress, approved September 27, 1850, entitled: "An Act to Create the Office of Surveyor General of the Public Lands in Oregon, and to Make Donations to Settlers of the Said Public Lands".

Study of the records of the former General Land Office, now in the National Archives, reveals that Washington Donation Certificate 178, was issued to Thomas F. Berry, II. . . all in Township 18 north, range 2 west". Thomas F. Berry moved onto his claim on May 1, 1854, and remained until 1864.

In order to properly qualify for two quarter sections of land, he addressed a letter to the Registrar of the Land Office, Olympia, W.T., under the date of February 3, 1861, making the following request: "Sirs: you are requested to divide our donation land claim as follows: give the north half to Martha J. Berry and the south half to Thomas F. Berry. (Signed) Thomas F. Berry". Then an interesting detail is acted in the next signature. Thomas Berry signed his wife's name "Martha J. Berry", with a "X" under the words, "Her Mark". (This was the first time the author knew that Grandmother Berry could not sign her own name, however, she is remembered to have possessed an ability that far out-shown her inability to write, namely, to quote from the Bible. Louisa Jane Pierce often repeated words which her mother had taught her: "To God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect". Hebrews 12:23.)

Mima Prairie in Thurston County did not have good soil. It was characteristic of these clearing to be practically devoid of trees and generally rippled in a series of hummocks. Even the grass dried out earlier on these prairies than in the nearby woods.

George Waunach, who later settled north of Centralia, has offered a feasible explanation for the early settlers choosing to settle on the poorer prairie land instead of clearing away the forests where the richer soil lay. Mr. Waunach said, "The settlers chose this open land so that they might (more quickly) build log cabins, plow their land and pasture their cattle with the least amount of effort".

Washington's great historian, Edmond Meany, points out that there were so many up and downs in the economy of Washington Territory that business crises were like waves beating upon the seashore. He wrote, "The year 1855, saw the Territory of Washington enshrouded in gloom, food was growing scarce, ordinary business was out of the question; starvation, flight or the tomahawk seemed the only alternatives.

INDIAN HOSTILITIES

For ten months, beginning during the fall of 1855 and lasting through the summer of 1856, most of the settlers left their farm homes and moved into the towns peoples' homes. The family who befriended the Berry's was that of Mr. Ira Ward of Tumwater. This family literally stretched their small home to take in the eight extra people. Moreover, Mrs. Jane Ward presided as mid-wife during the birth of Ira Ward Berry on October 20, 1855. It was out of gratitude that the baby was named Ira Ward, in honor of his generous "protector".

By trade, Mr. Ward was a tanner. It is probably that he made the harness for many of the settlers' teams of horses and oxen. Mr. Ward is better remembered, however, for building the blockhouse at Tumwater, located near the old Ward Mill, on the site of the present city hall.

There were numerous Indian scares. (Mrs. Jane Ward later recalled taking a lantern whenever there was some fresh alarm that Indians were near and climbing up the path to the safety of the blockhouse.) Basically, the settlers' worries and fears stemmed from the overwhelming superiority of number. There were not over three hundred and fifty white families in the scattered communities west of the Cascades and north of the Columbia, as against five thousand Indians occupying the shores of Puget Sound at that time.

As an indirect result of these Indian hostilities of 1855-1856, both Fort Walla Walla and Fort Boise were temporarily abandoned. This created a vacuum, so to speak, into which more settlers were to pour, both as adventurers and home seekers. Ultimately, it was this balance of population which tipped the scales in favor of U.S. control of these territories.

HON. T.F. BERRY REPRESENTATIVE 1860

Excerpt:

In the above census, Thomas listed himself as a surveyor. Probably the first surveying which was done in Thurston County was the "viewing of roads", or making preliminary surveys along already established trails. Such trails led from Cowlitz Landing to Budd's Inlet on Puget Sound, from Grand Mound to Gray's Harbor, and later, from Steilacum north to Puyallup.

Governor Isaac Stevens, being himself a surveyor, developed a company of 243 men in various surveying parties. T.F. Berry was one of these men, doing considerable work in Lewis County.

The only specific mention of Thomas Berry is the signature of the surveyor, given simply as: "Berry". For years there was in the family, an ivory scale transposing feet to tenths - or the meter system. This scale was lost in a fire in 1935, at Lind, Wash.)

Thomas F. Berry served as Representative in the eighth Legislative Assembly of Washington Territory in 1860. The legislature, which met in 1860, was the first to take an interest in settling up county organizations east of the Cascade Mountains. The eastern boundary of Washington Territory was not clearly established, and due the short-sightedness

on the part of the Legislatures, northern Idaho was taken from Spokane County two years later.

TO WALLA WALLA COUNTY 1864

In 1864, Thomas F. Berry moved his large family from the Donation Claim on Mima Prairie, Thurston County, to Walla Walla County. This farm was located one-half mile west, and three and one-half miles south of the Whitman Mission site. At that time, the land was being farmed by Rev. Cushing Eels.

In the words of Mrs. Louisa J. Pierce, daughter of T.F. Berry, "No one had better friends than they (Cushing Eels) were to us." In 1929, Marion S. Berry wrote to the President of Whitman College, Walla Walla, offering a book given to Mrs. Thomas F. Berry in 1867, by Rev. Cushing Eels. The book had been given to him (Cushing Eels) by Dr. Marcus

Whitman, and was believed to be the only book possessed by Dr. Whitman. This book had been rescued after the massacre of 1847. The college issued a letter of appreciation to the Berry family for the gift of this historic book.

During their stay at this farm, tragedy struck suddenly. Heman S. Berry, a boy of fourteen, was starting to hitch up a team of horses when his arm became entangled in a halter and the team started to run. The mother looked out the window in time to see her son being thrown in the air and forcibly slapped to the ground as the team ran away. Heman died on March 19, 1865.

One year later, typhoid fever was the cause of the death of Thomas F. Berry. He was forty-seven years old at the time of his passing. No other circumstances are known. He was originally buried in a small cemetery located somewhere near the Whitman Mission; however, twenty years after his interment, his coffin was exhumed by his son Ira and other men, and moved to the cemetery at Milton, Oregon.



Figure 1. Gravestone of Thomas F. Berry and Martha J. Berry at Cemetery in Milton Freewater, OR. from: (freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com)



ⁱ **“An Historical and Biographical Study of the Descendents of Thomas F. Berry, 1819-1866, by Lawrence W. Berry, October 20, 1960.”**

<http://www.museum.bmi.net/Pioneer%20Trails/Berry%20Story.htm>