

OSCAR CAMERON WHITTEN

1851 - 1948

by

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I dearly loved this old man. I well remember sitting on his lap several times and remember looking up at him and seeing a tall man with thick gray hair and mustache. At the time he was 96 and I was 3. I remember seeing him also in the bunkhouse after he fell and broke his hip. On one occasion my parents took me to the hospital in Baker City to see him. As we walked in his room, the first thing he did was look at me and say, "Who is that little fellow down there?" I was impressed that he noticed me first.

Later I saw my Mom on the phone talking to someone about Grandpa Whitten. She got off the phone and told me to watch out the window because a truck was going to go by with his body because he had died. I asked Mom why he died and she just said he was old and worn out.

I've often wondered why he lived through the hardships of the Oregon Trail when his family came west in 1852. His older brother Edward died young and his father drowned after they got there, in June of 1856. His father, Richard Franklin Whitten, was born in Pennsylvania in 1824 and joined the army in 1846 to fight in the Mexican-American War. After the siege at Vera Cruz he was discharged on a medical disability. In 1848 he met and married an English girl, Miss Sarah Davey, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Oscar was a quiet, gentle man. He loved to hunt and fish and he loved his family. I'm sure he also loved and missed his wife, Harriet Newell Phillips. She died in 1891 at the age of thirty-three from a fall in her kitchen while putting up wallpaper. They had five children. The third, born in 1883, was Grandma Zena Belle.