

Thomas Clark Jr.

Pioneer of 1848, 1851 and 1853

compiled by Stephen Clark



1848

**FIRST TRIP TO OREGON:**

In the year of 1848, Thomas Clark Jr. immigrated to the Oregon Territory from Illinois. The only thing that is known about that trip was that he had Joshua Jackson Vandervert with him and they traveled by horse.

After arriving in the Oregon Territory, they drifted south, in 1849, to the gold fields in California and it is here that Thomas took sick with malaria near Nevada City. He was eventually discovered by his brother, James, who had come to the gold fields with two nephews, and nursed back to health.

There is no record to show that any of the Clarks became overly rich from mining but there is evidence that they took stock of the type of country where they were in (Oregon) and decided it would be a good location for the Clark family.

1851

**SECOND TRIP TO OREGON:**

Thomas returned east in 1850, by way of Cape Horn and landed in New York. On his way back to Illinois from New York he began buying good horses and pure bred Durham cattle with the idea of bringing them west. This fact would indicate that the Clarks had done, at least, fairly well in the California gold fields.

Upon his return Thomas evidently was the head of the family, his father, Thomas Sr. having

been killed in a reaper accident in 1842. As such he (Thomas Jr.) had the majority of the family organized to travel to Oregon by the spring of 1851.

Four of the Clark brothers were in the 1851 Clark party (Thomas, James, Charles, and Hodgson) as well as their sisters Sarah and Grace, and their mother, Elizabeth Hodgson Clark. Elizabeth was a large woman so a special "hack," a buggy or spring wagon with a rocking chair nailed to the bed, was obtained for their mother to travel in. Some accounts put Hodgson as driver and others put Grace with the reins and Hodgson as a herder of the horses. The older brothers in the caravan were Thomas, Charles, and James. The Clarks had a fine bunch of horses as well as cattle when they started out for the Oregon Territory.

It was a good-sized train and Captain Thomas Clark was in charge. Apparently nothing other than ordinary trail hardships were encountered the first part of the journey. The travel was slow, as many of the teams were of oxen.

The usual procedure was for Captain Thomas to scout the trail ahead with his mother and Grace in the hack plus two or three boys, including Hodgson, driving the loose stock along with him. A camping spot would be located and then these leaders would wait for the slower moving caravan to arrive. They came by way of Nebraska, up the North Platte River, through Wyoming into Idaho and down the Snake River.

#### THE CLARK MASSACRE:

It was in Idaho where the Snake River makes its most southerly bend that the Indians attacked the vanguard of the wagon train. This vanguard was proceeding as usual with the wagon train about two miles behind.

Captain Thomas Clark had spied some geese along the Snake River and, telling the others to stop and make camp, he took the only gun in the advance party, a muzzle loading 12 gauge shotgun, and went to kill some of the geese.

As soon as he was out of sight the eight "Indians" (possibly white criminals dressed as Indians) swooped down on the small party who could make no resistance as they were unarmed.

Grace told the two boys with the group to run but they refused to leave, so Hodgson and the Miller boy were killed during the first volley. Elizabeth Clark was also killed and Grace was shot the bullet passing from one armpit to the other. She fell over a bank and one Indian was about to finish her off when he saw Thomas Clark coming in a cloud of dust caused by his horse and a bunch of hounds that he had.

The Indians had attacked because they wanted the horses, which they did get away with. Not too much is said about the cattle and it seems that it would be hard to travel fast enough for the Indians to get away with the cattle due to the lay of the land.

The men of the party pursued the "Indians" that evening and managed to kill one. The robbers had fortified themselves well in a rocky peak, and since there were too many to deal with successfully, the pursuit was abandoned. Charles later told his son, William, that some of the horses were recovered.

Charles stated that he would have been also killed except for the quick shooting of a friend with him.

The dead were wrapped in blankets and buried where they died. Rocks were placed for a marker, though in a later year (1853) Thomas Clark took a monument back to place on the

grave.

Grace Clark was nursed to recovery - spending part of her convalescence by the Deschutes River where now stands Pioneer Park campground at Bend, Oregon. The next year she married Joshua Jackson Vandervert and went on to raise a family in Cottage Grove, Oregon.



Elizabeth Clark  
killed in Clark Massacre



Grace Clark  
wounded by Indians in Clark Massacre



James Hodgson Clark 1851



Charles Clark 1849 & 1851

1853

### THIRD TRIP TO OREGON; THE LOST WAGON TRAIN; AND THE FREE IMMIGRANT ROAD:

In 1852 Thomas Clark journeyed east again in 1852 and came back to Oregon with the rest of the family in a train in 1853 (The Lost Wagon Train). He brought stock with him this time also. It was a large train with over a thousand people. Near the end they had much trouble with food

shortage.

One man, a Mr. Blanding, was sent on ahead on a flea-bitten gray mare. He forded the Willamette River one evening and camped. When he woke next morning he found the mare had given birth to a dead foal. Being without food he cut off a hind quarter of the dead foal and cooked some of it. He had a real hearty breakfast. He was found the next evening by Pat Gordon at the foot of Mt. Disappointment still roasting colt. Word was spread to the settlers in Cottage Grove that the train was lost in the Cascades and they who sent much food to the train. Charles Clark went out to meet this train a short time before the above episode of Mr. Blanding. He was traveling with some other men, scouting a "Free Immigrant Road" and they also became lost. One account says that once they traveled a week only to come back to the same spot.

Charles and another man made a raft during the night and floated down the river, arriving back in the Willamette Valley and getting help for the lost party of explorers. The Clarks settled on land near Cottage Grove (DLC #542).

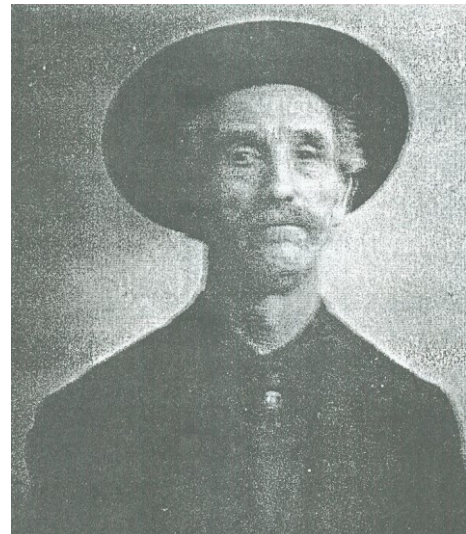
Today, between Cottage Grove and Eugene, is a beautiful roadside rest spot that is situated on land once owned by Charles Clark. There is a small river (The Row River) that meanders through the property.



George Clark  
s/o Elizabeth & Thomas Clark



Mary (Horrell) Clark  
w/o George Clark



Thomas A. Clark  
s/o George and Mary Clark

members of 1853 Lost Wagon Train

#### NAMING OF THE ROW RIVER:

The Row was once called The North Fork of The Middle Fork of The Willamette but the name was changed to The Row River in honor of the death of George Clark, brother of Charles, who was murdered in 1868 by his son-in-law near Cottage Grove in a dispute over land and stock.

The following affidavit from the files of Circuit Court, Case #1120, April Term 1868; State of Oregon vs Joseph, John & Benjamin Southwell - State of Oregon, County of Lane contains Charles Clark's testimony concerning the event:

I, Charles W Clark, being duly sworn \_\_\_\_\_ and say that on the 27th day of March 1868 in the Lane County and the State of Oregon that one Joseph Southwell and one John Southwell and one Benjamin Southwell and one Edwin Southwell purposely and deliberate and of premeditated malice killed George Clark by shooting him with a gun loaded with powder and leaden ball as this affiant is informed and verily believes and affiant further says that I saw the Shooting on the said 27th day of March 1868 in said Lane County and State of Oregon. Charles W. Clark

#### LATER DAYS IN OREGON:

Charles Clark married Martha Adeline Alexander in Lane County, Oregon on July 31, 1853. Martha Alexander's father was a prominent man in Lane County at that time. Robert Alexander's Donation Land Claim was east of Cottage Grove, Oregon. It was dedicated by Alexander and is on the old Alexander claims. The location was chosen by Sarah Martin Alexander and her grave in 1852 was the first there (now the Sears Cemetery).

After Martha's death Charles moved to Humboldt County, California. The three brothers, Thomas, James and Charles, established a partnership, in Petrolia, California, to drive cattle from Humboldt County to Marin County and sold the meat to the people of San Francisco.