

By ANN ADAMS

One of the early day families associated with religion and education on Camas Prairie is the Chase family who came to this region from Oregon.

A son, John H. Chase, 88, has resided in the same district for 78 years. He was born in Oakland, Ore., near Roseburg, Dec. 8 1872, and migrated to the prairie Aug. 6, 1882. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Chase brought a pre-emption right seven miles northwest of Grangeville and later filed on a timber culture.

In 1884 his father got a petition for the eleventh school in the district. No. 11 was finally established in a cabin belonging to Mr. Chase's brother, Oliver. The first teacher was John Gilback of Michigan.

Cabins for School

Three Chase brothers supplied cabins for schoolhouses and John Harriman supplied a granary also used for a school. Oliver Chase married one of the pioneer teachers, Nora Stevens.

Mr. Chase said the 12x16-foot rough rooms were "little corrals to hold the kids."

Later, a rustic frame building was constructed. When the school was discontinued, the building was moved into Grangeville where it became the Seventh Day Adventist church.

His father and six other persons organized a Christian group at Fairview, 1884, and used the school for services. The first Christian church on the prairie was established at Winona in 1910.

Flax Major Crop

Mr. Chase recalls when flax was an important crop on the prairie, weighing 56 pounds to the bushel and selling for \$1.50. It was grown, he explained, because all products had to be hauled to Lewiston and flax was more easily transported than other grains. When the railroad came, farmers turned to wheat and other crops.

Mr. Chase is recognized for having accomplished some "firsts." In his youth, he realized the value of feeding home grown feeds to stock. He sold hogs to settlers "out of the pen, at 3 cents a pound on the hoof, or 4½ cents dressed."

When gold was discovered in '98 at Buffalo Hump and meat was in demand, Mr. Chase had steers and hogs to meet the needs.

Good Teamster

Mr. Chase's friends claim he was one of the prairie's finest teamsters. He owned a 20-horse combine and used several teams hitched together to haul his grain to warehouses.

He had reverses, too, such as in July of 1908 when a hail storm started in the Blue mountains, crossed the Snake river and swept across the country into Montana, leaving a six-mile wide path of destruction in its wake.

In 1901 he was married to Purna D. Rush. The couple settled on the Nezperce reservation, three miles from his old home.

In 1912 Mr. Chase was the first man in the county to produce more than 25,000 bushels of grain.

With Forest Service

He retired from active farming

in 1929, and worked for the forest service and packed for hunting parties using 15 saddle horses and a 20-mule pack string.

He helped suppress the big forest fire of 1934 which 5,000 men fought in the Lochsa-Selway area. Chase handled pack strings in rugged trail-less areas.

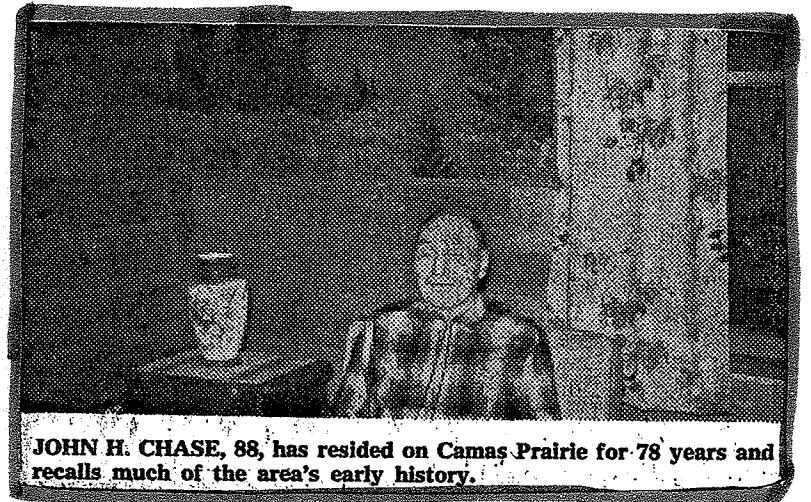
He retired from packing for hunters when he was 72, although he continues to hunt and has only missed one season.

For many years he maintained a cow-camp in the Nezperce forest and still has a cabin, known as "John's cabin" in the American river vicinity.

Mr. Chase is known for his splendid memory and recalls almost-forgotten incidents told to him when he was a boy. Historians have called on him for information concerning an obscure Indian battle of 1804.

He has two daughters, Mrs. John Hazelbaker of Kooskia, and Mrs. Raymond Droogs of Kamiah.

From Cabins and Granaries Patrons Once Built Schools



JOHN H. CHASE, 88, has resided on Camas Prairie for 78 years and recalls much of the area's early history.

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