

Early Harris Ridge Settlers Revolved Activities Around School House

BY ESTHER RANTA
HARRIS RIDGE
 The earliest homesteaders of the Harris Ridge were: Fred Hovey, E.D. Meeker, Gus Fitting, one armed Spanish Am. War Vet., Lewis Fitting, are brothers, Sam Harris, Mortimer Tinney, Doc Wholenberg, Ed Squires, Bill and Al Squires all brothers, Sam and Bob Calder, Matt Sanders, (a Spanish Am. War Vet.), Andy Williams, V. Landon, C. A. Brown, Nils Odette, A.H. Hendrickson, Chester Talcott, Felix Ranta, Andy Kalita, John Deputat, Oscar Laine, Tom Gilroy, Jim Tinney, Gus Ranta, and Herrman Ranta, brothers, Emil Laine, Henry Harri, Jacob Louma, Tony Mattson, Tom Fitting and Bob Fitting brothers, Pat Kelley, Bill Mosher, Henry (Hank) Bimmerick, Early Day retired Forest Service, Will Wilmott, John Kleinschmit, J.C. Baldwin, Hank Bray, Frank Turner, and Milton Watson.

The first school house was built out of logs about the year 1907. The quarter acre of land was donated by Doc Wholenberg. The school was located on the center or middle of Harris Ridge.

The second school house was built on the same site in or about 1912. It was built by

George Trenary. It still stands empty. Wallace Engle, who owns Doc Wholenberg place, now does store hay bales in it some years.

The Harris Ridge graveyard ground was donated by Sam and Bob Calder. The pioneer site is on a knoll.

The Harris Ridge dance Hall was built on the southeast corner of Oscar Laine's farm about 1911. My grandfather and most of the neighbors donated their help to build it. It's gone now as Tony Mattson bought the lumber for a machine shed in the 1950's.

There were many good times had there. People came from Kidder Ridge, Kooskia, along the middle fork to dances there. There were various kinds of music. As a child we lived about 1/4 mile from it. Dad used to take our phonograph (crank kind). Oran Squires played guitar, Onnie Ranta fiddled and played ukelele, Della Calder played organ and piano. Hank Bimmerick played the harmonica for parlor dances, "Skip To My Lou", etc.

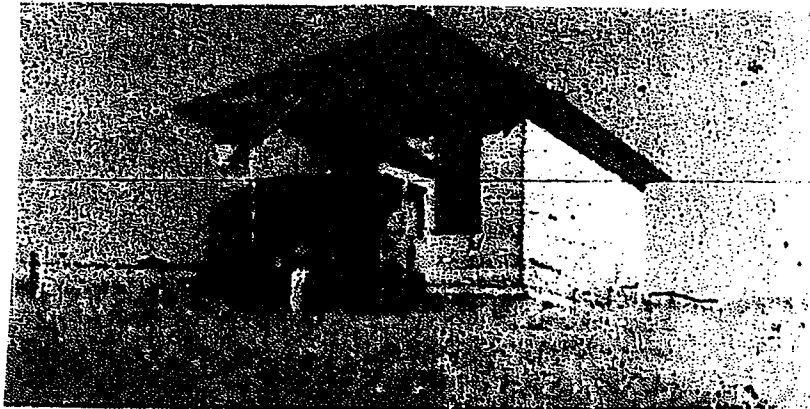
Sam and Bob Calder had a small saw mill as did V. Landon. Landon's Mill was the first saw mill up here. Felix Rahta got his lumber from it to build an addition to his log house.

The electricity "R.E.A." came to our Ridges in F.D.R. Franklin Roosevelt's presidency in the 1930's and the rural mail route in 1970's. The children were first bussed to schools in Kooskia from here in 1950. I remember crank-style wall telephones, too.

In the early days you couldn't see from one farm to the other for the virgin timber, huge yellow pines and fir. Now, from School House hill and Brown's hill and Hall House hill, you can see most of the top farms, even the Kidder Ridge farms. The trees have been logged and brush is gone. From our top most field we can see the lights of Grangeville and 4th of July fireworks and Woodrat Mt., the lighted Cross on Mt. Idaho, Cottonwood radar station, Winona Butte, Tahoe and Kidder Ridge, the Middle Fork of Clearwater river and several of the

Lookouts that used to be (Forest Service).

This Ridge was named for Sam Harris, one of the first pioneers. Most of the homesteads were small 160 acres and mostly only 40 acres and some 80 acres. In The Homestead Act of the 1860's, you could prove up in five years, and pay \$15.00 filing fee. Later, one could



The Harris Ridge Grade School, built about 1912, now stands vacant, except for an occasional storage house for hay. Photo courtesy of Esther Ranta