

Charles Durham

Grizzly: 1877-1902

The story of Charles Durham is intricately tied to the stories of C.C. Maling and John (Jack) Dee. In about mid-August 1937 or 1938, Evada R. Power wrote a series of articles for the *Redmond Spokesman* based on interviews with Jack Dee, Milo Elkin, and Joel McCollum. I'm including large excerpts here from Mrs. Power's articles because the information is not available to the general public, because the information is not found elsewhere, and because Miss Powers wrote so well. In her honor, large sections of her stories are included here.

Excerpts from Miss Power's article, "Elkin Reminisces About Long-Gone Days When Saw-mills Came to Jefferson County," begins the story of Charles Durham.

East of Hay creek and south of Blizzard ridge, the second sawmill to be set up in Jefferson county was owned by Charles Durham, An Englishman who came from England to central Oregon in 1877 with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mailing¹ and Charles Cooper [an uncle of Mrs. Maling].² About 1890 Durham and Jack Dee's father [John W. maybe], who was a brother of Mrs. Maling, picked out the site for the mill on a tributary of Trout creek which later became known as Durham's Mill.

This mill, and its employees, have played an important part in the settlement of all central Oregon, for from this mill went lumber in four and six-horse teams to the established hay creek ranch, Shaniko, Antelope, Ashwood, and Madras, besides to homesteads far and near....

Power quotes Mr. Elkin:

On Monday morning October 29, 1898, my folks loaded all of their belongings and children, an organ and five cattle, three milk cows and two yearling steers and one saddle horse on a steam boat named *The Dalles City* at Camas, Washington, and started to central Oregon via The Dalles. There things were transferred to a wagon with a California rack with four horses owned by Hall Brothers of Grass Valley, and driven by Art Hall, arrangements having been made beforehand for the team and wagon to meet us at The Dalles and haul us to Durham's mill nine miles east of Hay creek in Crook county. My Dad had a logging contract for Durham....

We reached the edge of the pine timber just at dusk. Dad said it was only two and one-half miles farther and a safe road, mostly down grade. We went on and got to

1. The correct spelling is Maling, but often, even in census records, it was spelled Mailing.

2. The year, 1877, makes me curious. Did these folks fall under the spell of Wallis Nash, British lawyer and Oregon promoter? Nash plays an interesting role in the settlement of Oregon. Nash was an energetic recruiter and moved his own family to Oregon in 1879. He settled in the Eugene area and became involved with the Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University). More about Mr. Nash can be found in another chapter of this book. Nash, Wallis. *OREGON: There and Back in 1877*. Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1976; originally printed in 1878, Macmillan and Co., London, England. See also *Reports on Land in Benton County ... (etc.)*, H.N. Moseley, MA, FRS; Francis E. Kerr, and Wallis Nash. Edward Stanford, 55, Charing Cross, S.W., London, 1877. This second reference is difficult to find. I was able to obtain a photocopy from Oregon State University's Valley Library where a helpful librarian found it hiding in a basement vault. Unfortunately the part of this report pertaining to central Oregon has been lost. A search of the Archives at Cambridge University were fruitless. In fact, the University was very pleased to receive a copy of the material held by Oregon State University. You will read more about the importance of this report in the chapter on Wallis Nash's impact on Oregon.

Durham's mill about six o'clock just before dark. After a little supper the beds were rolled out and I think everyone slept well.

Next morning we were up early to have a look at this new country, and it wasn't much to look at, it had been logged off pretty close for about three-fourths of a mile,³ and then it was beautiful, just like a park *with no underbrush* [emphasis provided]. You could have seen a jackrabbit running for a half mile. There were many miles of open range in the timber as this was the edge of the Blue Mountain range. Also on the prairie there were miles of tall bunch grass....

Eighty-seven-year-old Joel McCollum worked at Durham's mill around the turn of the century shortly after he and Lydia Dunham were married. Joe worked there for six years logging with horses. Other employees recalled were Howard W. Turner, Lees and Gus Kibbee, an uncle of the movie actor, Guy Kibbee, and Ad Black. In fact Joe stated he was the one who encouraged Kibbee to file on a homestead nearly 70 years ago. Durham also was in partnership with Jack Dee's father in a sawmill at Grizzly. Once Durham entrusted Joe with \$1500 to deliver to Dee to pay the help.

Durham always had cash on hand to run his business and often buried it. One day Joe dug up a baking powder can in front of the blacksmith shop less than eight inches deep, with more than one thousand dollars in it. When he turned it over to Dunham he gave him two 20 dollar gold pieces.

[part of the original article is missing⁴]
...after the mill was moved Durham was found dead in bed. He was buried in the Maling plot in Prineville.

Before Charles died⁵ he had at least run-in with the Federal government. In the September 10, 1903, issue of the *Prineville Review* we read:

Uncle Sam's agent shut down the Derham⁶ saw mill one day last week, because it is alleged that Mr. Derham was cutting and sawing government timber. It is to be hoped that Mr. Derham will soon get out of this trouble, as one would think he already had trouble enough to fill to overflowing one's cup.

We gain some insight into Durham's problem with the government in an article appearing some months later, June 2, 1904 (*Prineville Review*) where we read:

Chas. Derham, who was in the city Tuesday from Trout creek, tells of a new hardship that is being worked upon the people by Secretary Hitchcock, of the Interior department. Mr. Derham has a saw-mill on Trout creek, and in getting timber for it he has had to buy from parties who have a final receipt but not a patent issued to them. The secretary of the interior, through his Inspectors, has issued orders that such procedure must be stopped at once. Doubtless forfeiture of claims would follow refusal to listen to Hitchcock's order. If the orders are followed, the available timber is so scarce on patented timber

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3. This was a common practice of the time; take everything that was close enough to the mill—within a reasonable skidding distance.
 4. But in another of Miss Power's articles, "Joel McCollum Comes to Midstate in 1875, Traveling in Covered Wagon," this appears: "Durham decided to move his mill to Cole's orchard [on the Deschutes River]. The mill was moved but never set up, as Durham was found dead in bed shortly after he moved. No money was found although both places were dug up and searched as he was known to have had considerable cash. Joe thinks he knows what became of the money and will tell the story later."
 5. August 31, 1905. Certificate of Death. It is interesting to note that the Certificate of Death says "Probably Married." No mention of a wife is contained in any of the materials existing on Durham. Yet Joel McCollum married a Lydia Durham.
 6. This is the first time this spelling has appeared. We assume it was intended to be DURHAM. There is a DERHAM listed in the 1900 Crook County Census but from all of our investigations it appears that the Census spelling is also in error as no DURHAM showed in the 1900 census. Charles Durham died in 1905.

lands that the mill will have to be closed down before long. Surely the congress that passed the act of June 3, 1878, did not intend that the manufacture of timber should cease when timber became scarce.⁷

None of the information now available reveals anything about Durham's mill so we do not know the type, source of power, or production. But the mills of this time were usually a single circular saw powered by either water (not too likely in this case) or steam (more probable). Logging would have been done with horses and the lumber transported by wagon and team. (Some photographs do exist. They are found in *The History of Jefferson County Oregon 1914-1983*, published by the Jefferson County Historical Society (1983) and reproduced below with permission.)

Because of the shortage of timber near Durham's mill, he used his initiative and found logs further afield. By July of 1905 Durham was getting logs from the Metolius area. On July 13, 1905, the following appeared in the *Prineville Review*, repeated from the *Madras Pioneer*:

Charles Derham [sic] was in town on Sunday on his way to Antelope. He says that work is progressing nicely at the sawmill and that they will soon be turning out lumber at the rate of ten or twelve thousand feet per day. They now have their planer in position and as soon as the lumber has dried out enough, will begin to turn out dressed lumber. They have a good many logs in Matoles [sic] which will be driven down to the mill as soon as the boom is in place. The boom is about 800 feet long, and is being placed in position in the river now.

When Mr. Durham died on August 31, 1905, the *Prineville Review* covered the event in this way:

Chas. Derham, the veteran sawmill man of Trout creek and Madras, at which latter place he was lately interested with U.S. Cowles in the sawmill business, was found dead in his bed, Wednesday night at Madras.⁸ He had been complaining much for sometime while at the mill on the river, and while he did not think he was in danger thought it best to move to Madras to obtain medical treatment. His death comes as a shock. Mr. Derham was a native of England and was about 60 years of age. He left no relatives in this county. The remains were brought to Prineville and the funeral took place Friday afternoon.

In spite of what has been said earlier about Durham not getting the Deschutes River mill operating, it appears that it was operating. In an article that John Campbell wrote for a book of history about Jefferson County,⁹ he wrote:

...In 1906 a sawmill was moved from Foley Creek to the Deschutes River and located at the present highway crossing and operated there for a number of years. Most of the homestead cabins on the Agency Plains and surrounding country were built from lumber cut at this mill, owned by Charles Durham and U.S. Cowles. The logs were floated down the Metolius and Deschutes Rivers; logs were also floated down these streams to a mill close to the mouth of Tygh Creek near Tygh Valley.¹⁰

7. The mention of "Secretary Hitchcock" is in reference to the land fraud problems that had run rampant in Oregon. The land fraud situation, which played a large part in the history of the timber industry in central and eastern Oregon is only lightly touched upon in this book.

8. Oregon did not require the recording of deaths until 1903. Prior to 1903 Portland seems to be the only location that recorded deaths. Death records for the period 1903-1917 are retained in the State Archives in Salem.

9. John Campbell, "Vanora," *Jefferson County Reminiscences*, Binford & Mort, 1957, Portland, Oregon, Section 3, p. 203.

10. This is not the only operation that floated logs on the Deschutes River. Coverage of the Deschutes Lumber Company appears elsewhere in this book.

A still for the manufacture of whiskey was built by Mr. Cowles near the sawmill, but a U.S. license was never issued and the still never opened for business.

Some exciting happenings took place in and around the old mill which was powered by a steam engine fueled with slabs from the logs. Howard Turner was bookkeeper, salesman, sawyer, engineer, and all-around helper. He tells of two of the loggers whose task it was to work the logs down through the log pond to the mill. They settled a long-standing argument by a man-to-man encounter on the floating logs in the pond. These logs are hard to ride without interference, and with someone ruffing you up, it is almost impossible to stay on top. These river men were too eager to show the other who was the best man to take time to get out on firm ground. So they threw each other off the floating log and settled their differences by holding each other under water until there was no fight in the one who ran out of air first.

Sol Masterson was king of the river drivers and could not be surpassed in riding a log down the many rapids of the Metolius¹¹ and Deschutes rivers or rowing a small boat with provisions, bedding and camp outfit when following the log drivers which numbered six to eight men.

A boom was built across the Deschutes to divert the logs from the river to the mill pond. This boom was built from large sawed timbers and was about 150 feet long. It was tied to the west bank of the river and extended down and across the stream to the entrance to the millpond. Fins were bolted to the downstream side of this boom, with hinges and operated with cables and windlasses to cause it to bow up against the current with the curve upstream. After the mill was abandoned this boom was pulled loose by high water, floated down the river, and was broken into many pieces as one would hit the bank and buckle. Later, driftwood fires burned it and no trace is left.

And that is all I can tell you about Charles Durham; regrettably, not a great deal. Which is sad because he, along with the other early timbermen of the Grizzly-Ashwood area made significant contributions to the settlement of the area—Dee, Maling, Compton, Smith Brothers, and still others. Had it not been this group, it would have been others. Just about anywhere pioneers chose to settle, timbermen were not far behind.

The only know photographs of Durham's operation are found as indicated above. Those photographs are reproduced on the following pages.

11. John Burns, in "Additional Notes on Matoles River and Camp Sherman," written by Rod Foster & Ruth Burns, in *Jefferson County Reminiscences*, Binford & Mort, 1957, Portland, Oregon, p. 238, "credits the railroad with the change in spelling from Matoles to Metolius. Matoles is an Indian term meaning 'white fish' or 'spawning salmon.' He asks, 'whoever heard of an Indian word ending in *ius*. That's Latin.'

GREEN GOLD



Dunham's site in 1887. Location not known. Sure was 'near the timber.'



Dunham logging crew circa 1905. Obviously a posed scene. That log isn't so large that it needs seven men with peaveys and a supervisor to turn the thing.



Loaded Endicott Longing trucks parked at Post General Store, late 1940. Logs were probably from Maury Mountains.

