

January 14, 1975

MEMO

To: Dr. A. D. Martinson
From: Richard D. Osness
Subject: Parkland Historical Project: Interview with Leo A. Mahon, 9910 Pacific Avenue, 531-1609.

Mr. Leo A. Mahon is a grandson of Christopher Mahon, who settled on Clover Creek in 1852 on a one mile square land grant. Leo was born on this acreage on April 3, 1892. My initial interview with Mr. Mahon was conducted on October 29, 1974. He talked about his grandfather and early days in Brookdale and around Pierce County. (C. Frank Mahon, Leo's brother, was the architect for Parkland Grade School, and - with I. J. Knapp - was architect on the conservatory at Wright's Park and the Catholic Church on Tacoma Avenue.) Leo was acquainted with the Rosso's, who came to Parkland in the 1890's and operated a drug store; and the Brottems, an early grocery store proprietor.

Christopher Mahon enlisted in the Army for 5 years and served 2 years in the Mexican War. After the War, the Army sent him and his family around the Horn to the Puget Sound country. When the ship arrived at the Straits of Magellen, the wind died and the crew pulled the boat through. On the Pacific side the wind came up and blew the ship to the coast of China. The travelers came back through the Hawaiian Islands.

In the fall of 1849, the ship dropped anchor at the mouth of Chambers Creek. Christopher helped build Fort Steilacoom. Discharged from the Army in 1852, he obtained a land grant from the government for a 640 acre section of land on the banks of Clover Creek. This land is where the present Brookdale Golf Course is and the adjoining residential section. The Mahon family cemetery is in the S. W. corner of the golf course.

Christopher built a log cabin and he and some Indians cleared the land and planted seeds. For their help, the Indians received a 50-50 split of the crop. The land, at this time, abounded with elk, deer, and timber wolves. In 1853, Military Road connected with the Mahon homestead to help Pioneers on the Naches Pass Trail. This same year, the Longmire party came over the pass and stayed with the Mahon family. The Indian War came soon after and Mahon sent his family to Fort Steilacoom for safety. Christopher stayed on the land and plowed for spring crops. He was friendly with the Indians (both he and his wife spoke Chinook, as did their children), and they would warn him if any problems were forthcoming. Chief Laschi was also a friend of Chris'.

Leo talked about the Indian wars and stated, from talks he had had with Peter Burke, a guard at Fort Steilacoom, the reasons for the

outbreak of hostilities. It seemed that a preacher in Auburn raised pumpkins, which the Indians of the White River Reservation would steal. Infuriated, the preacher put strychnine in some and three Indian families perished. Retaliating, the Indians killed the preacher and his family, with the exception of one young girl. The girl was saved shortly after the incident.

In 1860, the Mahon log cabin was replaced by a two-story English Colonial home. The home was torn down when the golf course was built.

The following miscellaneous notes were also received from Leo:

Old military road - first school was at Clover Creek.

Vigilanti committee was formed to protect settlers along Military Road between Brookdale and Steilacoom. Three claim robbers were subpoenaed by Chris and told to report to court in Steilacoom, but they failed to do so and were shot or hung.

Peter Burke said he wounded Chief Laschi when he was attempting to kill General Grant, when Grant was at Fort Steilacoom.

Leo's grandmother was Elizabeth (Ustice) Mahon, born in 1820. Family left Ireland during potatoe famine of 1830's and came to New York.

Indians and whites played well together.

Indians never bothered Chris during the hostilities.

Leo's mother was a school teacher and lived with families for a week in exchange for schooling. Taught at Clover Creek School.

Whiskey Point, Military Road. Mahon family, Meyers family. Clover Creek Road - Brookdale Road - Harmony Hill.

Mathew Mahon, Leo's father, Born 1860. Leo's mother was Lena Gano. Her family settled by gravel pit near McChord.

Cattle for Chris received from Hudson Bay Company. Americans were told by the HBC to settle on the north side of the Nisqually River.

Two week stopover at the Mahon homestead by Naches Pass travelers. Then on to Yelm and the Bald Hills.

Families known were; the Bill Storaasli's, Bill Swanson's, Tom Wrights, Sam Hedley, Carlsens, Rosso's.

Leo's neice, Mrs. Dorothy Ellingson, has key to cemetery
- off 13th green. Used to be a hop field in front of where
the club house is at the golf course. Leo has an early
1890 picture of this field.

Clover Creek was water supply for Tacoma.

Tallentires gone by 1892.

Additional data is on the enclosed tape of an interview with
Leo during November, 1974.

Very truly yours

Richard D. Osness

RICHARD D. OSNESS

*filed in
tape file
April 1975
RDO*

Marker - Brookdale
131st St. and Chesney Road E.

Oregon Trail Memorial
October

1853 1913

Commemorating

the 60th Anniversary of the arrival of the
First Emmigrant Train coming Direct to the
Puget Sound via - the Naches Pass - They made
their last camp Oct - 8th - 1853 on the banks
of the Clover Creek Three Fourths of a mile South
of this monument.