

Voices From the Past

EMORY GILBERT ADAMS

By Emory Gilbert Adams

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Tape #163

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

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(Oral History of the Upper Snake River Valley)

Forbush: The date of this interview is October 6, 1956, at Driggs, Idaho. I welcomed into the office and old timer who I understand has been a school teacher, a farmer, and really one of the early residents of our valley here of Teton Valley in Teton County. I am very, very happy to have him with us. He is going to tell us a little something about the early days. Now will you first tell us your name?

Adams: My name is Emory, E M O R Y, Gilbert Adams.

Forbush: What is your age and what year were you born?

Adams: I was born in 1870, October the 6th.

Forbush: Where?

Adams: About twenty miles south of the White Sulfur Springs in West Virginia.

Forbush: Did your father and your mother immediately upon your birth move out to Idaho?

Adams: Well, practically so. I am not right sure that they moved in 1871 or '72, but it was one of the two that they took the train north for Idaho. Now they couldn't have taken the train all the way. They went part way down the Ohio River to St. Louis on a boat. Then they took the train for, not for Idaho, but eventually they got to Idaho. But they got off the train at Corinne, Utah. Then there wasn't any more train up to Idaho. It was all by stage at that time. So they took the stage for Idaho stopping at Market Lake, which is now called Roberts.

Forbush: Now, in 1872, what was Roberts like or what was Market Lake like? Was it quite a big place?

Adams: No, it was a very small place. It had a post office and a saloon or two and a stage station. What little commerce was carried on was carried on with the upper country there with teams.

Forbush: In other words, if I get you right, an individual living in say Rexburg or St. Anthony, he would ship in his supplies from Market Lake. Is that correct? He would go out there to get his supplies?

Adams: Yes.

Forbush: It was quite a supply center?

Adams: Yes, my uncle, John Adams, had a store there at Market Lake and he supplies a few of the necessities of life there in that store. But when it comes to shipping out stock

of any kind they weren't shipped there because the stage line didn't go into that kind of business.

Forbush: Now there was another town over there on the falls of the Snake River. What was the name of that one? Eagle Rock, wasn't it?

Adams: Yes, south of there, there was another stage station called Eagle Rock. Because there was an old eagle that always made their nest there every year and raised their young. That's how it came to be called Eagle Rock.

Forbush: Do you know how large that town and community was in 1872?

Adams: It wasn't very large. That's a sure thing. Because Anderson Brothers had constructed a poll bridge there at the narrows of the Snake River and they had a store, a commercial business. I don't think there was very many families living there at that time, just a few. The stores got their main business from trappers and prospectors and things like that. I know you had to pay plenty just to walk across that poll bridge.

It is claimed that my half brother, John Wright, was the first white child born in Eagle Rock.

Forbush: Now what year would that be?

Adams: Well, that would probably be about 1876. Not sure of that date.

Forbush: You people weren't affiliated in any way with the Latter-Day Saints, the Mormons, were you, coming out to Eagle Rock or Market Lake?

Adams: No. We weren't affiliated with the church, in fact with no church at all. We were just free booters.

Forbush: Well, what induced your dad and mother to move out here to the territory of Idaho?

Adams: Well, in the first place, my ancestors were interested in stage driving. Granddad, my granddad, Ezekiel Adams, drove stage through old Virginia and West Virginia and I think he ended up in Missouri. Uncle Bill and Uncle John took up the stage driving later. They drove stage during the Civil War. In 1866, of course the war was ended then, they heard from prospectors and people who had been here about conditions out here and they made up their minds to come west. They learned about Market Lake in the year 1866, I understand.

Uncle John continued to drive the stage from Corrine, Utah, to Butte City and finally he went into the freight business from Corrine. He drove a sixteen mule team hauling freight from Corrine, Utah, to Butte. In the meantime he filed on land at Market Lake and went into the cattle and horse business. He stayed in that until he died, practically. Because he died before I came to Market Lake. Two or three years before I came here. Heirs took over his business. He had a store. He had quit freighting, I

believe, and was interested mainly in cattle and horses. At one time he had 2500 head of cattle.

Forbush: In the Market Lake area?

Adams: Yes. I don't know how many horses he had because they ranged on the desert from Boise almost to the Park. I doubt if he knew how many horses he had. But I got here in 1895, up here to Roberts. They were just cleaning up the last of the range harvest, at that time.

Forbush: Well, now, what schooling did you have? You have told us that you were born in 1870 and you came out here in '71 or '72 to Market Lake. Then you lived, how long did you live around Market Lake? How old were when you left Market Lake? How old a boy were you?

Adams: I must have been about three years old.

Forbush: When you left?

Adams: Yes.

Forbush: Where did you go then?

Adams: After father and mother came out here and he took stage station to tend. It was a very lonely place. There were hardly any women in the country. Mother got dissatisfied and she left. She went down to the town now called Firth, no Shelley. I don't know whether to tell that story or not.

Forbush: Go ahead.

Adams: Some stage driver told my father that she wasn't coming back. But father was taking care of me and he had the horses to wrangle everyday. He had to cross the slough over to the meadow to get the fenced horses and he couldn't take care of me. He was afraid I would wander off and get in the slough. So he tied me up in the manger, in the horse stall with a rope. He said many a time he'd come in there and the shed would be full of Indians and they'd be playing with me, patting me on the head. Said, heap papoose so good.

My father thought it would be a good idea to send me down to mother. So he asked the stage driver if he would take me down. He said yes, he would take me down there because the family she was with was keeping a station there too. So he took me down there. Then pretty soon word came up with the stage that they were going to kill my dad and uncle if they come down to get the kids. They didn't do a thing but buckle on their six shooters and go on down. So for the house. I was out in the yard playing with a little girl, who was Dutch's. I run to dad as soon as I saw them coming. Uncle John said we came for the kid Dutch. We heard you was going to kill us for coming. We're here now your gonna get us. If you're going to kill us you better be at it. He said,

no, that's all false reports. I never said anything of the kind. He said, go ahead and take the kid.

So I went down to the wagon. Mother came down and told me to get back. She didn't see me again until I was twenty-four years old. Father took me back to West Virginia to stay with grandmother for a while. He sent me to southern Ohio and I stayed with an aunt, father's sister. Now I was four years old or five. This happened pretty fast. Then he married a widow and she had a girl nine months older than I. I stayed there in Ohio, went to school, until I got able to teach school myself. I taught school there in Ohio for five years before coming to Idaho.

When I came to Idaho I landed in Market Lake, now Roberts. I had two months school there to teach. Joe Steely had to go back on his ranch so he could work and so he turned the school over to me. That was in 1895. April 5, 1895, I began to teach in Idaho. And I have been teaching there off and on, mostly on, ever since.

Forbush: When did you first come to Teton County?

Adams: Teton County wasn't thought of for a long time. But there was a girl that had my same name, Adams. She come up to apply to a school over here to Bates. I'd been up here once. I drove a drummer up here from Roberts. She asked me if I'd bring her up here. So in 1895, in the fall, I brought her up to get her school. And I landed one over in Victor. I taught in Victor that winter.

Forbush: How many students did you have that winter?

Adams: Oh, I don't know.

Forbush: What kind of a building did you meet in, a school house or a church house?

Adams: It was a log school house that they used for school and church and everything. So I believe I taught there three months.

Forbush: What happened then?

Adams: Well, I went back down to the lower country. Stayed at Idaho Falls for a little while. Then I went out to my mother's place for a time. Then I got another school down there for the next winter. I think that was the Hayden School.

Forbush: Down in the Valley near Tetonia?

Adams: It was a little school out by Ririe near Willow Creek. Then I taught at the Buck School house. That is on Sand Creek a little further down. Then I went over to Annis. I taught two terms there. Then I came back up here. I'd filed on my ranch in 1899 and taught school in the surrounding territory. In every district, I taught in nearly all of them. Then I could board at home and still hold on my ranch.

But it go so, I proved up on my ranch and then went out below to teach again. It was about 1911 or '12. I taught at Rigby. I went from Rigby to Lorenzo. I taught two

terms there. From Lorenzo I went to Roberts. I taught nine years at Roberts. It was the same place I taught when I first came to the area.

Forbush: By then it was called Roberts too huh?

Adams: It was called Roberts because a man of quite importance had that name. He was interested in the land deal around there. When they changed the name to Roberts, they had the idea that Market Lake was known all over the country as a mosquito den. And it was, terrible with mosquitoes. They wanted to name it something else so foreigners, immigrants would come. Mosquitoes were so bad in Roberts that the freighters wouldn't go through there with their big teams, mule teams and that. They camped above and then would go through in the night.

Forbush: Well, were you married at the time when you first came out from Virginia? Where did you meet your wife and so on?

Adams: In Teton Basin. A girl from Nebraska, a German girl.

Forbush: What was her name?

Adams: Ella Rudolph. You know the Rudolph's.

Forbush: Sure, they moved away a few years ago here.

Adams: But they had a ranch over there.

Forbush: It was one of their daughters.

Adams: I don't want to go into that too deep.

Forbush: Is there anything else you would like to tell us that would be interesting to the Valley, for example, what was it like when you first came up here? What was your impression of the Valley when you first saw it?

Adams: The first time I saw it, I was driving a drummer up here to Don Driggs' little store. He had a store over here on the creek, a log building. When I got up here on the hill and looked over and saw the willows down there, I thought it was an apple orchard. It looked to me like an apple orchard. I thought it looked pretty nice. But the drummer said that's not apples. He said that's willows.

All in all it looked like a country that could be developed and would be. When we got to Driggs, I kept wondering all the time, where am I going to sleep. So the drummer did his business until bed time. Don Driggs said you can sleep over there in the barn in that upper loft overhead of the horses. Well, I'd had a few experiences in sleeping out and I thought that would be pretty good. So I went over there and there was a great was a great big bed roll all rolled up ready for bed. I got in it, one side of it. I hadn't gone to sleep yet because I didn't know if it would be safe or not. Along about ten

or eleven o'clock some fellows came along. They had been out working on a hay job and had been out to the saloon. And all of them were drunk. They come in there and dumped over the bed. They said who the hell is in our bed here. They fooled around there for a while and asked if I wanted a drink. I told him no, I wasn't thirsty. So they cooled down and went to bed. I had a very nice sleep that night.

Forbush: What individuals do you remember of knowing here in 1895 on your first trip? You mentioned Don C. Driggs. Are there any other individuals you recall having met at that time who were living in Driggs or Bates or any other place in the Valley?

Adams: Yes, the ones who stand out in my memory the most was old man Drake. He lives over on the west side there.

Forbush: Ted?

Adams: Ted Drake's father. There was Ted Drake and Will Drake and Mary and Rat they called him. Ratchet was his name. Another one live over near Victor was Rite, RITE. Then there was Ben Driggs.

Forbush: Did you know Sam Woods?

Adams: I'll say I did. He lives over in Bates there. He's the best fellow to go to dances with to have a lot of fun. They had a big family.

Forbush: Did you know Tom Bates?

Adams: Tom Bates was one of the trustees of the school when I taught over there. He was quite a man in the early days. He played the violin for nearly all of the dances in this country. I knew Charlie Foster.

Forbush: He lived over in Cedron.

Adams: Yes.

Forbush: Did you ever know a fellow by the name of Sam Forbush?

Adams: Yes.

Forbush: Over in Cedron. How well did you know him?

Adams: Well, he came in a little later but I knew him.

Forbush: He was my grandfather. Now how about some of the early settlers in the Tetonia area, Hayden, Richville?

Adams: Well, old John Davis, I knew him. He came down here from Canada and he had a ranch right over close to Breckenridge's. I knew old man Dave Breckenridge well. He was one of my neighbors.

Forbush: How about Daniel P. Leatham?

Adams: I knew him.

Forbush: Very well, I guess.

Adams: Yes. I knew all the Leatham's, there was the old man, and I even knew him. I knew that notorious fellow, Ed Trafton. He was my neighbor for a while.

Forbush: What happened to him?

Adams: What happened?

Forbush: He was a criminal, wasn't he?

Adams: He spent more time in the pen than anybody I ever saw.

Forbush: I've heard of him. Tell us something about him.

Adams: I might get in trouble. The first trouble he got into was with Lum Nickerson. They got in the pen for stealing horses. The pen at that time was in Blackfoot. So when Lum Nickerson was put in the pen down there, they were holding him for trial. When the trail would come off they would either go to the pen that was just a kind of jail there in Blackfoot. But they didn't go. They got connected some way with the outside and Lum Nickerson's wife and some of the other neighbors down there. She saw the boys in the pen. She got permission to go into the cell to talk with them. The turnkey at that time gave them permission. Well Nickerson's wife had a young baby, maybe a year old. They concealed a six shooter in that babies clothes. So when they took it in, Lum sneaked the six-shooter out and stuck it in his pocket. Then when the turnkey came in to take them to breakfast or something they just held him up and went out and put him in jail and locked the door.

Forbush: So they never did go to jail, at least that time?

Adams: These folks that came to see them had brought saddle horses for them to make their get away on. So when they got out and took their saddle horses quietly up the street. They got their breakfast at Idaho Falls and come on up the South Fork up to the rush beds. By that time the posse was on their trail. When they got out of jail, they took with them a fellow by the name of Williams. He was to be hung in a little while. He was a murderer but he went with them.

The posse got close to them at the rush beds on the South Fork that they took refuge in the jungles of the rush bed. The posse kept shooting in. Finally they shot old

Ed in the foot. They kept hollering back and forth. Old Ed did the talking. He asked the posse if they would have protection if gave up and come out. They said yes, we'll protect you. We won't kill you. We'll take you in. So they went in.

Ed always played the smart one. He went to the judge's office and he said, Judge, you'll have to excuse us fellows for a little while, and we have business over in Jackson Hole. He said if you want to see us you can come over there and get us. That made the judge mad. When he passed sentence he passed twenty-five years on them.

They didn't spend all that time before old Ed; he knew how to get along. He got a job of training the warden's dogs. And pretty soon he got out of there.

Forbush: Well, now, going just a few more minutes, do you recall when the railroad came in and when some of the roads were built here in the Valley? Some of the canals, can you tell us a little about those events?

Adams: Well, in 1911, the railroad had reached Tetonia. Of course, the people all around there had to celebrate. So they celebrated that event. I have a picture of the scene up there at home. Up to that time, our closest railroad was St. Anthony. Then they built this spur up here in 1911.

Forbush: Do you remember anything about the freighting going over Jackson Pass? Was there freighting going on over Jackson Pass at the time with horses and so on?

Adams: Nothing very particular. When I was teaching at Victor in 1896 they carried the mail and some light freight by man power over the mountain. A man by the name of Victor, the man the town was named after, George Victor. He had the charge of carrying that mail over there. His son, just a small boy, about sixteen years old. He was the best snowshoer over the hill. He could just about beat anybody.

Forbush: Now do you remember any particular Indian scares since 1872 when you were just a baby or so up to your experiences here in Idaho? Do you remember them talking about or participating in any so called Indian scares?

Adams: Yes, I can remember. In about 1878, along there sometime, my mother and one of her friends made a run for the fort at Ross's Fort. The Indians were on the warpath and they beat it down to Ross's Fort for protection. Then there was another time when the scare came up and they had to go to the fort.

Forbush: Where was that fort located?

Adams: Pocatello, close to Pocatello, near to Fort Hall. But that isn't where it is right now. It was down closer to the river. Later on, I don't know if it was that time or later on, up in Roberts, old Market Lake where Uncle John lives, there was a bunch of Indians got the smallpox and they quarantined them. That was right up above Uncle John's house. Right in the bend of the river there, the Indians didn't dare to leave there. But they gave Uncle John the job to feed them. He'd take a critter up there every day or so and kill it and pile up the meat and then go home. The Indians could come and get it but

Uncle John was not to go over where they were. About all of those Indians died. Their bones are being washed out there right today.

Forbush: Near Market Lake?

Adams: Yes, then when the Indians got on the warpath they took Uncle John as their best friend Uncle John told the Indians, he sent word to their chief, if you folks get hungry just kill some of my beef. And they rode back and said we won't kill anything of yours. We're not mad at you. They said for him to stay home. All the other fellows beat it to keep the Indians from catching them.

Forbush: Well, now, to bring this thing down to date, I want to first thank you for coming up here today and sharing with me a little about the early experiences of your life and I can assure you that I will treasure this tape and it will be played by other people who enjoy knowing a little about the past history of this whole Upper Snake River Valley. To bring this thing up to date and to close I understand that you still spend the summers up here in the Valley in your home west of Tetonia.

Adams: West of Cache.

Forbush: West of Cache. In the wintertime, the last winter or so, you've spent with your son.

Adams: Yes.

Forbush: At Spokane, Washington. Well that's really wonderful. I think that's really grand.