

PROFILES OF THE FOUNDERS

They came from the east where opportunity to succeed was becoming more ridicule as the population increased; they came from the south where returning Civil War veterans found desecration of their farms and homes and scattered families; and they came from varied backgrounds and many foreign countries; each searching for a place to call home and to raise families in safety from persecution and bigotry. These were, for the most part, young men who braved the hardships of the west, in general to build this western country and, in particular, this town. That they succeeded beyond their fondest dreams is evident as we record their feats 130 years later.

ALBERT L. BRADLEY , a farmer and stock raiser, son of Eli N. and Elizabeth Bradley, was born in Roxbury, Litchfield County, Connecticut April 23, 1847. He was reared on a farm and educated in the local public schools. When twenty-one years old he went to San Francisco on the steamships Henry Chauncy and Constitution, spending forty days on the trip. He remained in and near San Francisco for two and a half years, employed on a farm and later by the Market Street Railway Company. He then came overland to Oregon where he worked for a year. Subsequently he moved to the site of Rockford in November, 1877, but there was no town here then, nor any settlers, and he passed one winter without seeing a human face. (This is where the known facts disagree with this account. His homestead was within sight of the residence of Charles F. Hecht and M. O. McCoy and Mr. Hecht's story, elsewhere in this book, refutes the statement made in *The History of Spokane County*.) His farm is located two and a half miles southeast of the town and consists of three hundred and twenty acres. Mr. Bradley produced crops of wheat and oats and raised high-grade horses. He was married in December, 1885, to Martha S. Johnson, and they had a family of three children: Frederick and Seth, twins, and Frederick. Mrs. Bradley died in January 1891.

MORDECAI O. McCoy, farmer, a pioneer of 1877, was born in Jackson County, Michigan, October 16, 1844. In his infancy he was taken by his parents to Ohio, and grew to manhood and was educated there. In 1872 he moved to Kansas and began teaching, but soon went to California and then in Jun, 1873, to Tacoma, Washington, from where he later moved to the Willamette Valley. He taught there two years, also spent considerable time on the coast in various occupations. In October 1877, he came to the vicinity of Rockford and homesteaded one hundred and sixty acres of land and commenced farming. He later sold his homestead and farmed sixty acres of land three miles east of Rockford. Mr. McCoy, did not, however, give his entire time to farming. But was engaged as bookkeeper and in the lumber business for a number of years. He, at one time, filled the office of county assessor. During the Civil War Mr. McCoy served for more than three years, participating in many important engagements. He belonged to the Third, Eighty-sixth and the One Hundred Fifteenth Ohio Volunteer Infantry. His father, Colonel Lewis McCoy, entered the army as captain of the One Hundred Fifteenth Ohio, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel of the Fifth United States Army.

CHARLES F. HECHT arrived in Spokane County before there was a settlement at

Rockford. He was the third settler in that part of the Palouse country and the Rock Creek valley. He was born in Oberwohren, Germany and came to the Rockford area in the fall of 1877. When he first arrived, and for nearly a score of years afterward, Colfax, the seat of neighboring Whitman County, was the nearest settlement and Walla Walla was the nearest source of supplies. Charles F. Hecht bought a horse in Walla Walla on his way to what was to become his homestead. He paid \$100 for the horse that he later found he could have bought in Rockford for \$10. He packed the horse with food, bedding and a small tent and walked to Colfax, a distance of about 100 miles. In Colfax he learned of Rock Creek Valley and that there were settlers there, so he traveled by a wagon road and later on an Indian trail that led him by the two homes of earlier settlers, Martin McCoy and Albert Bradley. Charles R. made a decision that this place was to be his 160 acre homestead. That winter the three men lived in Bradley's cabin. The next winter, the Hecht cabin was ready with two rooms, a bedroom and a kitchen containing a big (approximately 7 foot high) stone fireplace with a Dutch oven. This was where the men spent the second winter. They believed it was better located against Indian attacks. However, they had not trouble with Indians.

The three men, in 1878 went to Walla Walla where Charles F. bought an ox team, wagon, wheat for seed, and a 12-inch breaking plow. As part of his supplies, Bradley bought a sow and some piglets. With the plow Charles F. Hecht broke out about an acre that he sowed to wheat. This was lucky as the men ran out of food and ate nothing but boiled wheat and pork during the next winter. They shoveled snow so that the horses could eat the bunch grass underneath. It was probably a winter without mail, as mail came only two or three times a year to Colfax. It is almost certain that when Charles F. traveled the 60 miles to Colfax, he found letters from Elizabeth Desgranges.

In 1879 Elizabeth came to be Charles F. Hecht's bride. They had known each other in Waverly, Iowa, where he had been a clerk. She came with her sister Louisa and Louisa's husband, Fred Hahn, and their daughter, Sophia. They had traveled from Iowa by immigrant train to San Francisco, then up the Pacific Coast to the mouth of the Columbia River, then up the Snake River and landed in Almota, their destination in Washington Territory.

When Charles F. and Elizabeth met again in the new country, they were married October 12, 1879 at Colfax.

ALEXUS LA SHAW was born in Jefferson County, New York, March 12, 1846. On August 3, 1862, he enlisted in Company C, Tenth New York Heavy Artillery. He was on guard duty at Washington D.C., for eighteen months, was then sent to the Shenandoah Valley, where he took part in the battle of Winchester and the famous Sheridan ride. He heard the renowned words of that general, "Boys, come on, we'll take it back before the night." They did win back the lost position and the company camped that night on the same ground it had occupied the night before. In this battle Mr. La Shaw was severely wounded, but instead of retiring to the hospital he took a position on the mountain back of Winchester and guarded the signal station until his wound was healed. For three years he was a defender of the flag and his war record is excellent. Upon being discharged he returned home for a visit, then started overland for the state of Washington. The wagon train to which he belonged was frequently in danger from Indians, but got through safely. Mr. La Shaw lived at Pendleton, Oregon nine years, engaged in farming until 1877 when

he came to Rockford. He was married July 22, 1886, to Annie Fuchs and they had three children: Carl, born September 7, 1887; Joseph, born 22 July 1891, and John. Mr. La Shaw was a member of the J.R. Wyman Post No. 41, G.A.R., of Washington and Alaska.

Of the four men who were the first settlers of the Rock Creek Valley in 1877 the Descendants of Alexis La Shaw and Charles F. Hecht are represented in the Rockford area in 2009 as this history is being written. The families of Albert Bradley & Mordecai McCoy moved from the area and there are none of their extended families living near Rockford at this time.

Others soon followed: **David M. Vess**, a farmer arrived later in 1877; **Dewitt C. Farnsworth** arrived in early 1878, and in the spring of that year, along with his cousins, **Albert M. Worley** and **John I. Farnsworth**, built a sawmill near the junction of Mica Creek and Rock Creek. The Farnsworth sawmill was the first building within the confines of the present town and is generally considered to be the beginning of the town of Rockford.