

SEXTON FAMILY HISTORY IN HUGO, OREGON

Written for the Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society
June 5, 2004
By Karen Rose

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Prior to the 1800's, the Northwest was home to numerous Indian tribes. The Takelma Indians raised their families, hunted, fished and gathered food in this area dating back 10,000 years. There was some Euro-Americans in southwestern Oregon early in the nineteenth century exploring and fur trapping. In the spring of 1827, a Hudson Bay Company exploration was lead by their chief trader, Peter Skene Ogden into the Rogue River Valley. The U.S. Navy Exploring Expedition of 1841 and James Clyman in 1845 traveled in this area prior to the discovery of gold in 1851 near Jacksonville, Oregon. In 1846, Jesse and Lindsey Applegate and Levi Scott lead an expedition through Southern Oregon while laying out the southern immigrant route. The Applegate Trail came through Hugo and up over Mt. Sexton to the settlement of Leland.

Early immigrants to this area, prior to 1850, struggled with land claims. This was all about to change. On September 27, 1850, the United States Congress passed the Donation Land Act. This act set down the rules for acquiring land in the Oregon Territory. By the conclusion of the Land Act in 1855, it had resulted in some 30,000 new immigrants to Oregon and a total of 7,437 patents granted covering about 2,500,000 acres.



Hiram Niday

(Courtesy of the Josephine County Historical Society, Grants Pass, OR.)

An early 1852 pioneer, Hiram Niday applied for a donation land claim in the Hugo area in the spring of 1853. He and his wife, Caroline (Stumbo) Niday had crossed the plains and arrived in the Oregon Territory by covered wagon via the northern Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley on September 15, 1852.

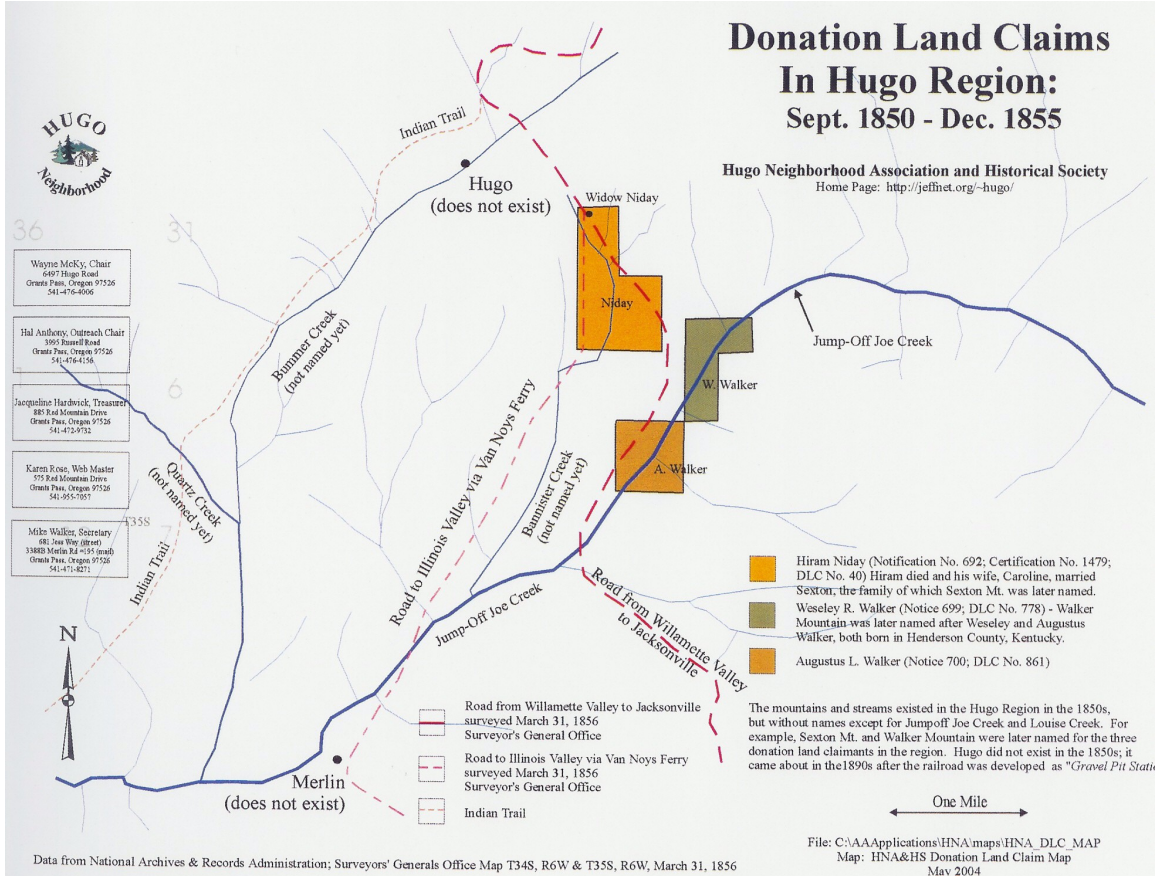
Caroline Stumbo was born May 1, 1826 in Lwrne, Ohio. Hiram was born in 1822 in Lawrence County, Ohio. Caroline married Hiram in Mahaska, Iowa on March 4, 1847. The Niday's located a farm in Josephine County, Oregon near Jumpoff Joe Creek where they settled down and began raising their family of three children, Nellie, Hiram Frances and Mary Niday. Hiram bought some mules and began packing supplies to the gold mines in the area.

The Niday donation land claim Notification #692, Certification #1479 of 321 acres is located mostly in Section 35 of Township 34 South Range 6 West of the Willamette Meridian. A small amount of the claim overflowed into sections 26 and 27 on the north and section 34 on the west. By today's road structure, this property roughly borders the following roads: Western border is just west of Oxyoke Road.

Southern border is Monument Drive.

Eastern border is almost to Interstate 5.

Northern border is Hugo Road.



Their land was ideally situated 6 miles south of the settlement of Leland. It had Bannister Creek running through it and Jumpoff Joe Creek nearby, foothills for good hunting, lumber and firewood, and was at the junction of the 1850's road from Willamette Valley to Jacksonville and the road to the Vannoy Creek-Rogue River crossing.

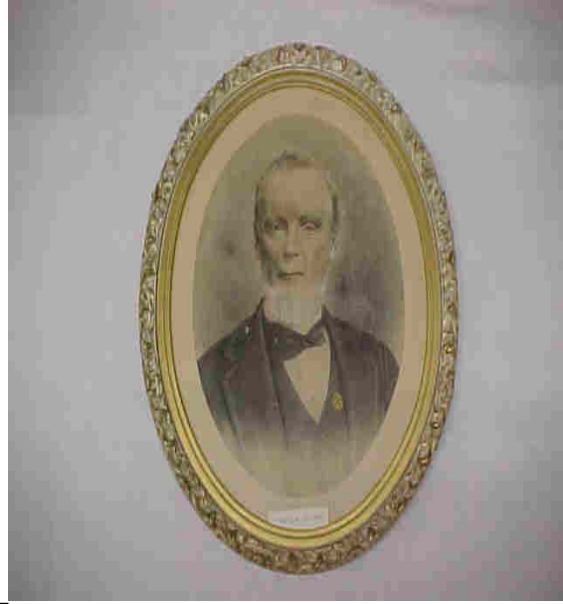
During the next few years, the early pioneers and the Takelma Indians were at great odds resulting in much bloodshed on both sides. The bloody Rogue River Wars of the 1850's reduced these people from 9,500 to 2,000 in six years before they were removed from their homeland to the reservations in the north in 1857.

On several occasions, Mr. Niday had to escape with his family to the protection and security of several forts in the area. In October 1853, they rushed to Fort Vannoy and later Fort Halstead for safety. These were dangerous times indeed. In the spring of 1855, Hiram Niday died. Caroline was left to run the farm, carry-on the mule packing business and raise her young family of three.

An excerpt from "A Few Notes of the Life of Caroline Sexton" by their later son, Charles D. Sexton gives a glimpse into life in the Hugo area during these times.

"My mother and family had just finished their breakfast. Mother came to the door looking south along the Jump off Joe valley. She saw smoke arising from the scattered farm houses and knew the Indians had broken out and were killing the settlers and burning their property. She commenced immediately to prepare for defence, gathering together her guns and barring the doors and preparing to sell her life as dearly as possible. About the time she had every thing completed four men who had gotten away from the Indians came running by and she asked them to help her away. The indians had shot ones hat off and anothers bridle reins into. One of the mens name was Judge Walton of Eugene the other men I do not know their names. Mr Walton said to my mother have you any way to get away from here, and whe said no all I have is my race mare in the barn. So he said to her so much the better you will need a race horse to out run those Red Devils. The other three men began to get uneasy and scared and started to go on. Mr Walton seeing this drew his six shooter and told them to halt. I will shoot the first man who attempts to leave. Now there is three of you and here are three little children, each one of you take a child and go and it will not be good for the man who fails to take the child to the fort . I will bring the woman with me or the Indians will get my scalp."

Hiram Niday's donation land claim #692 of 321 acres was divided on July 19, 1876 by the General Land Office: Caroline Niday (widow) and her heirs the North half and unto the heirs at law of Hiram Niday (deceased) and to their heirs the South half.



CAROLINE NIDAY

DAVID H. SEXTON

(Courtesy of the Kerbyville Museum, Kerby, OR.)

In 1857, Caroline married David H. Sexton whom she had met during the Rogue River Indian Wars. He was from New York and crossed the plains arriving in the Willamette Valley in October of 1847. In the spring of 1852, David Sexton moved to Jacksonville, Oregon. The next year he joined a company of volunteers under the command of United States Army Captain Lamerick to protect settlers against the Indians. He fought the Indians at the mouth of Williams Creek on the Applegate River. For David, this was the beginning of many battles he would fight in our region lasting up until 1857 when the Takelma Indians were forced onto the reservations. After their marriage, David joined Caroline on the farm in Hugo and on September 27, 1859 was born to them their only child, Charles D. Sexton. Mt. Sexton is named after his father.

David Sexton applied for a new post office to be named the Lucky Queen Post Office in December 1876. As was the custom, the nearest post office's postmaster, Sam Harkness, of the Leland Post Office, certified the site location report form. The application stated that a population of fifty was to be served by this new post office. The Lucky Queen P.O. was located at the Sexton Stage House on the Niday donation land claim #40. David H. Sexton assumed charge as postmaster on December 13, 1876.

Several Sexton/Niday family members, subsequently became postmasters:

Frank H. Niday, son of Caroline & Hiram Niday, assumed charge – 7/7/1879.

Charles D. Sexton, son of Caroline & David Sexton, assumed charge – 10/25/1886.
Charles D. Sexton, again assumed charge on 8/31/1895.
The Lucky Queen Post Office was discontinued July 24, 1896.

In the ensuing years, David and Caroline acquired some mining claims and mining properties on or near Jumpoff Joe Creek along with other properties located in the Hugo area.



SEXTON HOUSE in 1898

(Courtesy of the Kerbyville Museum, Kerby, OR.)

(From Left to Right – Caroline (Stumbo) (Niday) Sexton, Ranch hand, Tarris Sexton, Ranch hand, Ada Sexton, Charles D. Sexton, Diadama Sexton as a baby, Frank Sexton)

David and Caroline Sexton were very community oriented. On April 13, 1892, School District #22 of the Lucky Queen District was the recipient of two acres of land granted by Caroline Niday Sexton. A one-room schoolhouse was constructed. Josephine County school records indicate the district was officially recognized in 1894 and the building served as a school until 1912. It was called the Lucky Queen School and later was renamed Hugo School. Currently, this building located at 6050 Hugo Road, Hugo, Oregon is occupied by the Hugo Ladies Club and is home to the Schoolhouse Quilters.

In 1910, Caroline granted a parcel of land with the stipulation that a Baptist Church be built there. A church was constructed and on May 14, 1913, fourteen members established the First Baptist Church of Hugo, Oregon. In 1946, after one of several re-organizations, the church was renamed the Hugo Community Church. The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior on September 15, 1990.



OLD SEXTON RANCH HOUSE: 1932
(Courtesy of Joyce Austin)

An article in The Grants Pass Courier of May 21, 1900 states:

“A serous accident occurred today at the Jumpoff Joe bridge, nine miles north of town. Mrs. Sexton, who lives about two miles beyond, had just driven, with a team and buggy, on the north approach to the bridge, when it collapsed and fell with team, buggy and occupants. Mrs. Sexton was very seriously injured and was taken to McCaslin’s place, not able to endure being moved to her home. The buggy was completely destroyed and one of the horses was killed.”

An article in The Rogue River Courier of July 2, 1909 states:

“Mrs. Caroline Sexton, of Hugo, is the guest of Sheriff Russell’s family this week. Mrs. Sexton is one of the oldest “Indian fighters” in Josephine county, she being 81 years old, and in the early days had her home burned three different times by the redskins. Wednesday, Mrs. Sarah York, mother-in-law of Sheriff Russell, and Mrs. Sexton took their first automobile ride, Cap. Verdin taking the two old ladies for a long ride in the country.”

David H. Sexton died February 3, 1908, aged 80. Caroline continued to reside on her old property until her death May 20, 1911, at the age of 85 years and 20 days. They are both buried on their property.



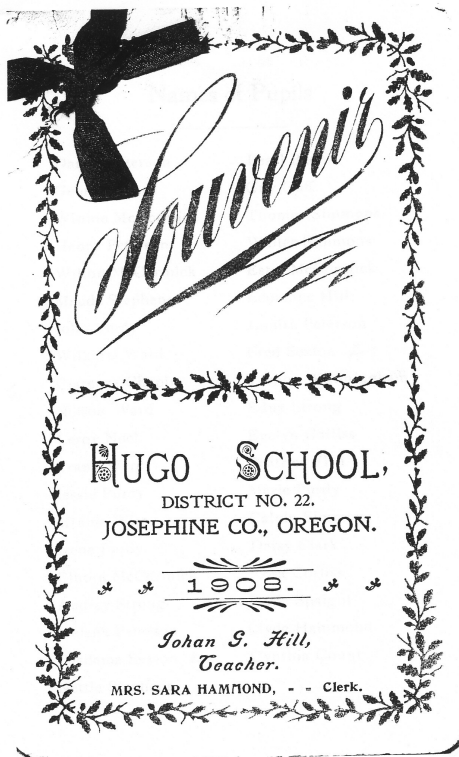
CHARLES D. SEXTON



TARRIS SEXTON

(Courtesy of the Kerbyville Museum, Kerby, OR.)

Charles D. Sexton, son of David and Caroline Sexton, married his first wife, Mary Adams of Salem, Oregon in 1884. They had two children, Frank H. Sexton born December 16, 1885 and Ada T. Sexton Everton born March 2, 1890. Mary Adams died in 1892 and on June 13, 1897, Charles married Tarris Drayer of Nevada. They had two children, Diadama(Dama) T. Sexton born August 15, 1898 and Fred Fay Sexton born May 4, 1900. Charles was active both in farming and mining.



Names of Pupils

Daniel Peterson	Pearl Baer
Georgia Ward	Guy Goff
Winnie McCormick	Thomas Simmons
Henry Peterson	Walter Simmons
Wilton McCormick	Ester McCormick
Maude Stephens	Leonaine Hill
John Purdy	Louisa Peterson
Wilburn Ward	Fred Sexton ✓
Clarence Chapin	Vernon Winningham
Nelson Ward	Edna Strong
Leroy Noel	Evelyn Corliss
Frank Ward	Beatrice Fish
Jessie Purdy	Marie Purdy
Minnie Wise	Calvin Simmons
Irene Purdy	Daisy Clark
Elnora McCormick	Rosa Corliss
Audrey Strong	Jessie Spaight
Helena Peterson	Clyde Hammond
Diadama Sexton ✓	Cynthia Count
Nettie Stephens	

1908 HUGO SCHOOL SOUVENIR LISTS DIADAMA & FRED SEXTON

(Courtesy of the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society)

The Grants Pass Courier states on March 18, 1897:

“Charles Sexton Saturday, brought in a 4-ounce vial nearly filled with coarse gold from the Wines places at the head of Jump-off Joe. They have been running two monitors during the wet spell, but the water has given out for the present.”

The Rogue River Courier states on January 3, 1931:

“Mr. Sexton was stricken with paralysis on Christmas Day, while eating his Christmas dinner with several of his friends. He fought for life with an amazing vitality. Although he was unconscious several days before his death, he was able to rouse himself at times to recognize his wife and children, who throughout his illness remained almost constantly at his bedside. He quietly passed away at 10:30 AM January 3, 1931. He is survived by his widow, Tarris, two sons, Fred Fay of Portland and Frank Holden of Corvallis; and two daughters, Diadama Tennan of San Diego, Cal., and Ada Clines of Corvallis. All his children were at their father’s bedside when he passed away.”

Charles Sexton’s obituary in the Grants Pass Courier on January 3, 1931 and Volume IV of the “Centennial History of Oregon” states:

“He received a good common-school education and a college course. He was a democrat and he served as school director and road supervisor, besides taking an active part in grange work. He is one of the public-spirited citizens of Josephine

county, taking a lively interest in public affairs, and lending his aid and influence to the furtherance of those projects which in his opinion are likely to prove of benefit to the community. He is a capable business man, honorable in all his dealings, and has the respect and esteem of a large number of people in the county and elsewhere with whom he is acquainted.”

Charles is buried in the Pleasant Valley Cemetery near the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Monument Drive, Merlin, Oregon.



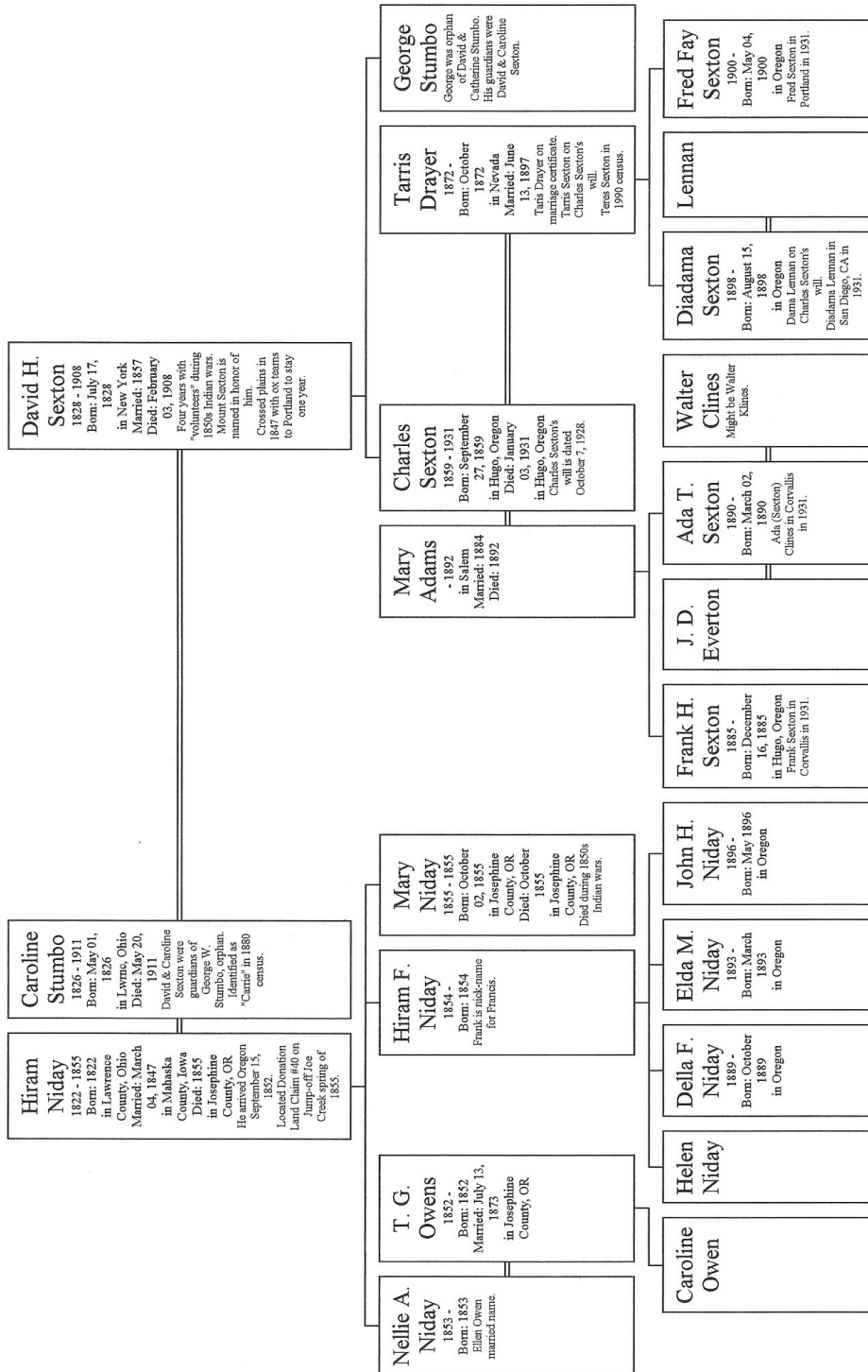
PHIL LENNAN & CHARLES SEXTON at OLD SEXTON HOME: ca. 1930
(Courtesy of Joyce Austin)



CHARLES D. SEXTON – WITCHING WATER: ca. 1930
(Courtesy of Joyce Austin)

This is just one of many stories of courage, steadfastness, determination and resilience. These pioneers came looking for land and an opportunity to forge a new life.

Descendants of Caroline Stumbo, Hiram Niday, And David Sexton



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Michael L. Walker of Hugo, Oregon. Secretary, Hugo Neighborhood & Historical Society. (Charts of Donation Land Claims in Hugo Region: Sept. 1850-Dec. 1855 and Descendants of Caroline Stumbo, Hiram Niday, & David Sexton and other miscellaneous materials)

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