

JOSEPH MICHAEL FRANKLIN ELLER, HIS JOURNEY FROM NORTH CAROLINA TO IDAHO

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"Frank" Eller was born March 11, 1835, in the Reems Creek section of Buncombe County, North Carolina, being the fourteenth and youngest child of Joseph and Sarah (Stephens) Eller. It is assumed he is one of the two males under the age of five in the Joseph Eller household on the 1840 Buncombe County census.

Frank's mother, Sarah, died September 25, 1846, when Frank was eleven years old. His father, Joseph, married a second time to Elizabeth Clorinda Hamilton, daughter of John and Rebecca (McVey) Hamilton. Elizabeth was about 20 and Joseph was 55. Frank did not get along with his step-mother and left home before he was fifteen. He clerked in a grocery store for three years in Georgia, then returned home to North Carolina for a few months. He left again and went to Tennessee, probably to visit his brothers, Jacob in Macon County, and Robert in Smith County. He then went to Brunswick, Missouri, where he appears in the household of A. Jackson on the 1860 Chariton County, Missouri, census as a laborer. His brother, John, may have been in Sullivan County, Missouri at this time.

When the Civil War broke out, Frank was said to have fought for the Union Army first. He was a member of a detail that was sent to the home of a Southern officer. They expected to find the officer home and take him prisoner. When they didn't find him home, they took his young son out to a nearly frozen creek and kept dunking him in the water, trying to force him to tell where his father was. This incident caused Frank to desert the Northern forces and join the Confederate side. On July 4, 1862, he enlisted at Benton County, Arkansas and fought for the Confederacy in Company C, 2nd Regiment, Cherokee Mounted Riflemen. He served under Sterling Price and took part in the battle at Pea Ridge, Arkansas as well as other battles. He may have also served in Company G, Fain's Regiment, Georgia Infantry and Company H, 1st Regiment, South Carolina Artillery. He was captured several times and wounded four times. He was discharged from service December, 1864, at age 29.

After the war, he went to North Carolina to visit his family. When he got there, he found out his father, Joseph, has died September 25, 1863. His stepmother and family said they didn't recognize him. They told him all Ellers had the same walk, and if he walked like an Eller he could stay. He turned towards the gate and out of their lives forever. In later years, when his children asked about his family, he would start to cry and asked them to please not ask questions. Research in North Carolina has uncovered the reason for his rejection. His father's estate, which included over 3,000 acres of land, was in the process of being settled and was to be divided equally among the thirteen living heirs, and his stepmother didn't want him to receive his share, which he never did.

After his rejection, Frank went back to Brunswick, Missouri, where he married Susan Elizabeth McFerran, daughter of James and Tabitha (Ashby) McFerran, on February 7, 1867. Susan and her twin sister, Julia Ann, were born June 14, 1852, at Brunswick. They had three brothers, James, Jasper and Thomas McFerran.

Frank and Susan Eller had fourteen children, nine of whom reached adulthood. At least three children, Allie Arnecie, James Nathan and William Hendren, were born in Chariton County, Missouri. Frank moved his family south to Gravette, Arkansas, in Benton County in 1876. Seven more children were born while in Arkansas; twins, Mattie Catherine and Joseph Franklin (my grandfather), John, Henry Jasper, Charles Washington, Roger and Fannie Vance.

In March, 1886, thirty Arkansas and Texas families, including Frank, Susan and family, came west by emigrant train. In 1886, the train ride would have taken them through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and here to Portland, Oregon. Emigrants paid about \$40. for a transcontinental trip. Immigrant cars varied from railroad to railroad. In the 1880s, immigrant sleeping cars were introduced. They consisted of two tiers of boxlike wooden cubicles built along each side of the car, which could be used for sitting or sleeping. They had to furnish their own bedding. A cooking stove was in the cars to prepare their own food during the long journey. The immigrants were treated as freight rather than humans.

From Portland, the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company followed the, Columbia River east to Wallula Junction where it left the river and continued east to Walla Walla, Washington and the end of the line at Riparia, Washington on the Snake River. At Riparia they boarded a steamboat for the 70 mile trip to Lewiston, Idaho. At Lewiston the emigrants camped on the banks of the river for three weeks while waiting for the weather to open up enough for them to continue their journey. Their destination was the Camas Prairie near Grangeville, in Idaho County. Frank purchased a horse and wagon in Lewiston for their remaining journey over the mountain to the prairie.

The last of Frank and Susan's children, Thomas Jefferson Eller, was born in 1887 after their arrival.

In 1891, Frank took up 160 acres by homestead near the present town of Fenn, Idaho. His land was former NezPerce Indian land and within two miles of a campsite the Indians used at Tolo Lake.

Frank was a farmer and rancher by trade. He also had the stage route between Cottonwood and Kamiah delivering the mail. In 1902, he opened a livery barn in Cottonwood. Susan was a mid-wife for her neighbors.

Frank and Susan moved their family to Cottonwood in 1903, where they had built a new home. They only lived in their new home about a year and a half when, at age 52, Susan died on December 14, 1904. Frank remained in Cottonwood for a while, then moved to his oldest daughter, Allie Eller Hashagen Baker's home in Grangeville, where he died February 13, 1906, at age 70. Both he and Susan are buried at Cottonwood City Cemetery. Thus ended Frank's journey across the U.S..

Janine Rae Eller Porter (7), Clarence Dale Eller (6), Joseph Franklin (5), Joseph Michael Franklin (4), Joseph (3), Johann Jacob, Jr. (2), Jacob, Sr. (1), Casper (a)