

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # OH-298, OH-349 #1, OH-349 #2

Date: 12/14/1979 & 4/3/1980

Place Hickman Ranch

3915 Hickman Rd, Palisade, CO

Length: Approx. 28 min.

Interviewee Virgil Hickman

Phone: _____

Interviewer Joe Schwarz

Phone: _____

This summary is taken from the following sources:

Cassette tape recording and audited transcription of Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Hickman, done by the Museum / Mesa County Historical Society 12/14/1979

Audited transcription of cassette tape of Mr. & Mrs. Virgil Hickman (two parts) done by the Museum / Mesa County Historical Society 4/3/1980.

Email message dated 10/15/2015 from Shirley Hickman to Priscilla Walker, providing genealogical information on the Hickman family.

(The written material in parentheses and italics is additional information from Palisade Historical Society records and other historical sources, such as US Census records and online genealogy records.)

Summary of Cassette Tape #OH-298, recorded on 12/14/1979

Family:

Frank Hickman was Virgil's grandfather. His family were coal mining people. Frank was born in England and Virgil's grandmother, (*Mary Ann Lloyd*), was born in Wales. (*According to a later oral history in 2011 by Virgil's son, John "Jack" Hickman, Virgil's grandmother was Mary Ann Lloyd*). Both came to America to seek a better life. Frank first came to Pennsylvania, where he engaged in coal mining, and then he moved to the Western Colorado area. His grandmother and her brothers followed a similar path. Virgil's grandparents met and were married in Crested Butte, Colorado.

Frank worked in a number of mines in Western Colorado and started the first coal mine in Mesa County. He operated the Cameo Mine for several years and then opened the Mount Lincoln Mine.

Early Life:

Virgil's parents, (*Henry C. and Grace E. (Osborn) Hickman*) were married in 1903 and settled on a small ranch east of Cameo. Virgil was born in 1905 and lived there with the family until he

was seven years old. Then, they moved to the Island Ranch (*known to many as Island Acres*), which was owned by Virgil's grandfather. (*This location is now a part of the James M. Robb Colorado River State Park.*)

They lived at the Island Ranch owned and operated by Frank for seven years. Virgil recalls high water, sometimes as much as twenty-three feet deep, would separate the house from the other ranch property. At times, the house was completely surrounded by water, so they used a raft to get across the water to where their car was parked. On one occasion, the raft separated and Virgil's mother went overboard into the water and "got a dunking!" Virgil recalled that one time the bridge across the river at Cameo washed out. The nearby PV Mine, which is now the Jacks property, had a cable bridge used for transporting coal across the river to a tipple, where the coal would be loaded into railcars. They had to use this cable bridge to get across the river until the main bridge was repaired. It was about a 3 ½ mile walk to school in Cameo, but when the bridge washed out, it made the walk to school about a mile longer.

Virgil's family moved to Palisade in 1919, living 1½ miles east of town on what was known as the B.N. Bancroft property in a house built by Frank. Virgil attended grade school in Cameo but went to high school in Palisade. He has lived in the area continuously all of his life. He and his wife, (*Edithe Eakin*) were married in 1931 and lived there until about 1996. They have two children and six grandchildren living in California and Virginia.

Virgil recalls the start of the "Highline Project" (*the building of the Grand Valley Diversion Dam and Government Highline Canal*). There was a dedication ceremony for the beginning of the project at Tunnel No. 1 east of Cameo. Virgil's father took his horses out to plow the ground to loosen it up for the groundbreaking ceremony. A dynamite blast was to be set off after the ceremony. As the horses were being brought back to the ranch, the dynamite blast went off, scaring the horses. Virgil's sister, Evelyn, fell off a horse and broke her arm, which she ended up losing as a result of the accident.

The Cameo power plant was built or increased in size, in order to accommodate the electrical needs of the project operations. A lot of the work was done by pick and shovel and by blasting. They also used a motor tram to pull rock from the tunnel. After the rock was outside the tunnel, it was hauled away by horses. Much of the work on the dam was done during the winter months. Oil shale rock was gathered from the river bed to make fires to keep the workers warm.

Coal Mining:

After high school, Virgil went into coal mining. At one time there were four active coal mines on the north side of river and four more on south side of river. Some were wagon mines (*which sold coal locally*) and some mines shipped coal via railroad mostly to Kansas and Nebraska. The Garfield Mine had a tram that ran between the railroad tracks and base of the mountain. The tram delivered coal to a tipple, where it was loaded onto railcars. The Palisade Mine, the Midwest Mine on south side of river, the PV Mine, and the Cameo Mine all shipped coal by rail.

The Midwest Mine, which was directly south of Virgil's property, had a tram across the river, and the tipple was down at the railroad tracks. A cable was used to pull the cars from the base of the mine to the hill across the railroad tracks. It was an "endless" cable, so after the coal cars

were emptied, the direction of the cable was reversed to return the empty cars to the mine. The Midwest Mine had a reputation for being one of the most hazardous in the area. There was an excessive accumulation of gas in the mine. One time, the motors set off an explosion and seven miners were killed. A few years later, there was another explosion, which killed four people. Not long after that, part of the mine was closed off, and a new opening was made further to the south. At that time, they discontinued loading coal from that mine into railroad cars for shipment.

Growing Peaches:

In addition to working in the coal mines, Virgil was able to purchase a 20-acre tract of land (later expanded to 28 acres) on East Orchard Mesa. At that time, it was mostly desert. They had to level out the prairie dog holes, remove rocks, and use horses to plow and till the ground to make it suitable for farming.

In the early days the supply of water on Orchard Mesa was unreliable. Originally, water came out of the river from a dam above the Highline Dam (*Grand Valley Diversion Dam*). A wooden flume went alongside the river for about three miles, then through an open ditch of about the same length. Then from Cameo Flats down to Rapid Creek, the water was carried by another open wooden flume and was finally pumped up onto Orchard Mesa. Because the water supply was not adequate, arrangements were made with the Bureau of Reclamation to build a siphon from the Highline Canal under river to divert water into a cement flume on the south (*actually, east*) side of river. This increased the amount of water available, so after that, there was enough water to develop Orchard Mesa. Billy Ladin had a large hayfield out there, and other orchards were started by the Browns and Reeses.

Ed Fidel and Henry Knudsen held large acreages of land on Orchard Mesa, which they divided up and sold in ten-, twenty-, and forty-acre parcels. Virgil bought his original twenty acres in 1926. Raymond Peebles and several others planted tracts of orchard the year before Virgil started his. After that, several other places started peach orchards. At the time, the going price for undeveloped land was about ninety dollars per acre. When Virgil first planted his orchard, he bought fruit trees for ten cents each, but now he pays \$2.50 - \$3.00 per tree. He bought the trees from a nursery near Provo, Utah, which supplied trees for this area. The new trees were shipped to the area by the carload. When Virgil and Edith were first married, they got eighty-five cents per box for their peaches. In the winter, Virgil worked at picking apples for two-and-a-quarter cents per bushel, and was paid fifteen cents per hour for sorting apples. In the peak years, Virgil's orchards yielded between twenty-five and thirty thousand boxes of peaches per year. In 1967, Virgil sold the twenty-eight acres on East Orchard Mesa and moved all of his ranching operations to the present location on Hickman Road.

In the 1940s, much of the valley was in planted peaches, and they could be grown almost anywhere between Palisade and Fruita. Prior to that time, there were many apple and pear orchards, but these succumbed to the codling moth. After DDT and some of the newer pesticides became available, the apple and pear orchards saw a comeback. A few hard winters saw the end of some peach orchards, so they were replanted in apples and pears.

For the most part, Virgil and others did not smudge their orchards in the spring to keep the peach blossoms from freezing. The air current coming out of DeBeque Canyon kept the peaches from

freezing out. Following colder springs, those who did not smudge had just as many peaches as those who did. With the increase in the valley's population, peach growers have seen a lot of agricultural land sold for residential development.

During the time Virgil was growing peaches, there was always plenty of help at harvest time. People came from Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and elsewhere to work in the harvest. Many came after harvesting their own grain crops in the Midwest and returned every year to work and took fruit back home with them at the end of harvest. During World War II, German and Austrian Prisoners of War were brought to the area to work. Migrant workers from Mexico also came to work during peach harvest. On average, workers could pick about fifty bushels of peaches per day, but some were able to pick upwards of seventy bushels. Not many of the local high school kids wanted to pick peaches because they did not feel they could make enough money to make it worth their while. They did work at other harvest-related jobs. Young women sorted and packed peaches during harvest, and made good money. Some came from other Western Colorado towns, such as Cedaredge, Delta, Paonia, Mesa, and DeBeque to work

Mexican Nationals, commonly referred to as "wetbacks" in earlier days, sometimes came to the area illegally to work in the harvest. The growers never questioned whether they were here legally or not because they were happy to have the help at harvest time. In 1978 or 1979, this changed when the Immigration Department instituted a new program which allowed them to enter the country legally to work under certain conditions. After that, it seemed there was never enough labor to work in the orchards.

When Virgil lived with his parents, they used a horse-drawn wagon to haul the fruit into town for shipment. When they moved to Palisade, they had a Ferguson tractor with iron wheels. They cut the tongue off the wagon and pulled it to town with the tractor. It was a rough way to handle the fruit, because in those days, the roads were not paved and were full of chuck-holes. Trucks came along later, and all of the fruit left the valley via rail. When Virgil's orchards on Orchard Mesa began producing fruit, he hired a man and his truck to haul the fruit into town. Later on, he got his own truck to do the job.

Virgil sold very little of his fruit locally. He belonged to the United Fruit Growers' Association, and they handled almost all of his fruit. In the late 1930s, growers were getting about a dollar per bushel for their peaches. The association charged anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five cents per bushel for handling costs, depending on the year. Many years, they were lucky if they got the cost of packing out of it, so profits were slim. During the war years in the 1940s, growers got three to four dollars per bushel for their peaches. Everyone was able to pay off their debts and sometimes bought more land. New people came in and bought land, too.

Other Memories:

Virgil recalled an occasion in about 1924 when the Post Office in Palisade was robbed. He was working at the Palisade Mine at the time. It was suspected the robbers hid in the Palisade Mine, so guards were posted there for several days. Finally, with no one being apprehended, they gave it up as an unsolved crime, but later they found the safe, where it had been taken along the railroad tracks and forced open.

Virgil's grandfather was personally acquainted with Bill Cross, who owned the Cross Ranch (*now Cross Orchards, a historic site which is now part of the Museums of Western Colorado*). In the early days, the ranch was planted mostly in fruit trees, but later became a hay ranch with some fruit. It was always considered to be one of the better ranches in the valley. Another old-timer, John Reeder, pioneered a lot of land development. Reeder and Virgil's grandfather were in partnership on some of the properties close to Virgil's current home. They owned other retail businesses, including the J. W. Hugus Mercantile, a bakery, and a hat shop, and they also had a bank.

A movie theater in town showed silent films. There was a dance hall above a garage in the building that is now the fire station. (*Probably the Bower Garage on East Third Street, which was torn down and is where the current Municipal Building stands.*) There were two hotels in town – the Jordan Inn, which burned down (*lot was empty or made into a parking lot until the Town Plaza was built*), and another hotel, (*the Midland, later named the Carolyn Hotel*) which is now a parking lot to the east of the bank building. It was rumored there were several valuables, diamonds and the like, that were never recovered from the ashes of the Jordan fire. Virgil remembers other businesses, including a pool hall, restaurant, clothing store, and drug store. From the early 1900s into the 1930s, there must have been about twenty businesses on Main Street, but they began to fold up in the 1940's.

The Hickmans recalled at the end of peach harvest, they had a ball and a dance on the platform. Prizes were given for the largest peaches, best-packed boxes, etc. They also elected a Peach Queen. Juanita Strong was the first Peach Queen.

In the fall, there was a fair in Grand Junction where Lincoln Park is now located. The Hickmans always took their peaches to the fair. They recall a man with a bi-plane and a racecar driver named Barney Oldfield, who raced the plane and the car together around the track where horseraces were held. Top speeds were about sixty miles per hour, which was unheard-of in that day!

Summary of Audited Transcription of Cassette Tape OH-349, recorded on 4/3/1980

Part One:

Probably, the highlight of the Lincoln Park fair was Lincoln Beachey and Barney Oldfield. Beachey had a bi-plane that he used for stunts. He and Barney Oldfield, a racecar driver, ran a race around the racetrack. The plane was a big attraction because very few people had ever seen one in those days, and a car that would go sixty miles per hour was a rarity. Of course, Lincoln Beachey won the race, but not by very much. He then demonstrated a bombing technique, dropping some faulty bombs on a model battleship they had staged on the far end of the field. You could see smoke, but no one actually knew if he hit the target. Lincoln's plane was quite a contraption. As Virgil recalled, Lincoln just seemed to be sitting out on a platform with nothing around him, except for a couple of stick controls in front of him. There was a motor mounted on the wing above with two little bicycle wheels sitting there on the sides. They heard Lincoln and his plane went down in the ocean when he was performing in San Diego, California.

The fair in Grand Junction was an annual event, with livestock and farm produce. It was always something to look forward to, and was one of the better things that happened in those days. This happened sometime around 1910 or 1911. Virgil recalls they rode the passenger train from Cameo down to Grand Junction. Then from the railroad station, which was located where it still stands today, they would ride the trolley car out to the park. The train was a whistle-stop, so at any crossing, you could get out and flag down the train to stop for you.

Virgil's parents had a small piece of ground near Cameo. When they started work on the Grand Valley Diversion Dam in 1912, Virgil's father worked on the project. He remembers there were nearby tent houses and a big mess hall for the workers. They took over or enlarged the Cameo Power Plant to make it big enough to generate electricity for the motors to haul rock out of the tunnels. They crushed rock from the cliffs and used it along the river for gravel to mix into the concrete. It was all mixed right on the jobsite. This was the only time Virgil ever saw rocks burn. In the winter, the workers went up and down the river to gather oil shale rocks, which they piled up and lit on fire, in order to warm themselves.

They used "dump wagons," which emptied from the bottom. There was a ratchet with a chain attached to the guard at the bottom. When they wanted to unload, they would trip the latch and let the bottom of the wagon drop out. Steam shovels were used to load the wagons, as they did not have diesel or gas motors. The steam shovels had big legs and feet that they would throw out ahead to inch forward.

Much of the work in the tunnels was done with hand drilling and blasting, since there was no compressed air for drilling tools. The rock was shoveled into the ore cars and hauled out by electric motor to the dump site, where a horse and dump wagon would finish the job. It was a slow process, compared to what we now have. It took three or four years to complete the tunnels, and there were a lot of canals to be built.

The original dam for the Orchard Mesa canal system (*about a mile upstream from the current Roller Dam*) was a splash gate dam. Cables were strung across the river and splash gates were attached to the cables. The splash gates were like boards, about twelve inches wide. These were put in place (to dam up the water) or were knocked loose to regulate the water flow. During high water, the splash gates were loosened to allow the water to go on downstream, but as the water level got lower, the splash gates were put back in place. The splash gates nearer the river banks were left in place, but those in the center of the river were knocked loose. This was all done by hand, because there was no mechanical means to slip the gates back in place. There was no walkway over the dam, so the work had to be done from underneath. It was a wet job. This was the first dam above Cameo that took water out of the Colorado River. The water was mostly carried through a wooden flume along the mountain side. The flume had to be caulked every spring. Sometimes rocks came down off the hill and knocked out a section of the flume, so the canal would have to be shut down to rebuild it. After the Highline canal was built, a siphon was built across the river (*in 1923*) to bring irrigation water in a cement canal through the Vineland area to East Orchard Mesa.

Virgil did not think the Vineland area was ever considered a separate town from Palisade, but it was first known as Poverty Flats. The Seventh Day Adventist Church had a school over there at one time.

In the fifty years Virgil was in the fruit business, there was only one time when they had a crop failure due to freezing. This was caused by a winter freeze, not a spring frost. In 1963, (*nighttime*) temperatures plummeted to around twenty-three degrees below zero for the entire month of January. Virgil lost over 400 trees, and the orchards never recovered. That year, there was severe damage all over the valley. The younger trees, those six to eight years old, fared better than the older trees, but there were still a lot of split limbs. Eventually, the trees were phased out or replaced.

In the Orchard Mesa area, the ditches were originally dirt bank canals which were later lined with cement. There were cement head ditches in many places as well as underground pipe. There was no surplus of water, so every means was employed to conserve it. The water was lifted from under the Orchard Mesa canal by means of a hydro-plant. The weight of the water forced it up the hill, so it did not require electric motors to assist with the pumping.

Water was allocated amongst the ranchers, and as the population grew, there was more demand. The Orchard Mesa project allocated water at a half-inch to the acre. It was supposed to be continuous flow, but there was not enough water to provide everyone with that much water, so beginning in about 1940, it was pro-rated. In many cases, the amount of water was doubled for half the length of time. This made it possible to irrigate over a shorter period of time. The system allowed owners of adjacent properties to work out their watering programs amongst themselves. The system worked.

During the Depression, growing fruit was not very profitable, and it was a losing proposition to sell the land, as bankers did not want it because it took too long to grow trees to the point they could produce. Ranchers tended to stay with their orchards and weather out the bad times. Sometimes they only got fifteen cents per box or a dollar per bushel for the peaches they grew. Prior to that time, seventy-five cents per box was considered a good price, and bushels never went above \$2.50. Labor was about twenty-five or thirty cents per hour, and the boxes cost seven to eight cents each.

There was a barter system in place. Many people had garden plots and would trade back and forth. Also, others would come for the harvest, bringing lumber or other things to trade for fruit. Hunting during the Depression years was crucial, as it supplied small game, deer, and even bigger game. Sometimes this was about the only meat you got. Deer meat was usually processed (*cut up into steaks, roasts, or ground and wrapped*). Sometimes the remaining bones were put into a big pot to make a stew. Virgil hunted mainly around Grand Valley (now Parachute, which was the town's original name) and in the Piceance Creek area.

There was always a problem with insects in the fruit industry. Originally, there were only two sprays that were used for insects. One was lime and sulfur, and the other was an arsenate of lead and Black Leaf 40, a nicotine sulfate spray which was very toxic. No one died, but it could make you quite ill. The lime and sulfur would burn your skin. The burn could be eased by applying

vinegar. A horse-drawn spray machine was pulled through the orchard rows. The machine had a one-cylinder gasoline motor, which would produce a maximum of about 125 pounds of pressure. A long pipe with a butterfly valve on the end of it was used to apply the spray to the trees. It was a slow process.

If everything worked, at least ten percent and maybe even twenty percent of the fruit was unmarketable. After some of the more toxic sprays were developed, you could grow ninety percent clean fruit. It was the only way to stay in business, and it lessened the cost of producing.

In the early days, fruit was separated into a lot more sizes than we have today. The smallest were referred to as "pie peaches." The larger peaches were packed in boxes, ninety, eighty, seventy, and sixty to a box, with the lower number indicating the larger peaches in the box. Peaches were graded by quality, but most of what was grown could be sold somewhere.

In the early days, ladders and later stilts were used to get up into the tops of the trees to prune them. Later on, hydraulic shears and compressed-air shears were used, and workers stood on platforms pulled by tractors or even trucks and trailers. These newer machines and methods were more convenient and easier on the workers.

In the earlier days before the more toxic sprays came onto the market, it was necessary to "tanglefoot" around the trunks of the trees, in order to keep cutworms from going up the tree to eat the buds in the spring. Growers bought boxes of tanglefoot, a sticky substance that was heated and applied by hand with either cotton gloves or a brush. Oftentimes, this work was done by school kids after school or on a Saturday.

Mrs. Hickman was active in the work on the ranch, too. She drove the tractor for various jobs in the orchard, such as putting out fertilizer. During harvest, they ran a cook shack and hired a cook to prepare meals. They served as many as thirty-five men and women. Mrs. Hickman did the planning and buying for the cook shack. She and the children made as many as twenty-five thousand boxes prior to the harvest for shipping peaches, and she supervised the packing shed.

Mrs. Hickman washed clothes on a washboard for a long time, before they got an old Maytag washer in 1932. It was at first run by water power and later with an electric motor. Sometimes she put the clothes in boiling water and stamped them up and down, but even with all of that work, they never came out nice and white. With two children, doing the laundry was quite a lot of work, summer and winter.

In the 1930's the Hickmans had apple trees, but they replaced them with peaches because worms (larvae of the codling moth) got into the apples. They put as many as ten applications of arsenate of lead on the apples to try to keep the worms out, and then had to remove the arsenic with an acid bath before they could put the fruit on the market. It just was not profitable to continue raising apples then. Pear orchards were prominent, as were apricots, but they were not in as much demand as peaches.

At one time, they had Delicious apples, which were popular because of their red color and ability to stand cooler temperatures. Making apple butter was a yearly event. The day before they made

apple butter, they peeled about three or four bushels of apples. The next morning, the apples were put in a huge copper kettle to cook outdoors on an open fire. Mrs. Hickman's parents brought the kettle with them when they moved here from Pennsylvania in 1902. The year when they first moved to Palisade, they were making apple butter in the backyard and the marshall saw it and thought they were making booze! He just kept wandering around all day long and finally came up and asked what they were doing. They started cooking the apple butter at about seven o'clock in the morning and just kept stirring the kettle all day long, using a long pole with a paddle on the end of it. When Mrs. Hickman's parents made apple butter, her father put two or three silver dollars in the kettle. This kept the apple butter from burning on the bottom, as the coins would get moved around when the batch was stirred. Then in the evening, the beautifully red-colored apple butter was put in gallon jars with some cinnamon on top.

Mrs. Hickman told of a time when they sneaked into the Lincoln Park fair to see Barney Oldfield. She and a girlfriend and her mother all went in her friend's grandfather's car to Grand Junction. They did not get to Grand Junction often, so when they went, they did their shopping first. When they got to the fair, they found that it was too expensive for all of them to go, so Mrs. Hickman and her girlfriend got on the floor of the car. They put a blanket over the top of them and put their packages from shopping on top of the blanket.

Part Two:

Virgil remembers weekly band concerts were held in the summertime. The band was comprised of local people who could play instruments. At first, the concerts were held on Judge Hoke's fruit platform near the railroad tracks at about Second and Main Streets, where there was sort of a town square. Judge Hoke bought and sold fruit, so it was convenient for him to take it over to the depot to be loaded onto express rail cars to be shipped to Leadville and other mining towns and to Colorado Springs. Later, the summer concerts were moved down to the park, which was a more comfortable place for people to sit around and enjoy the music.

Mrs. Hickman used to have a piano, which was brought out here from the East Coast by Mr. John L. Oliver. He was the person who moved the Post Office from Harlow up on Rapid Creek to Palisade. That is when Palisade got its name. There is a monument on the Harlow Ranch where Mr. Harlow is buried. Mr. Oliver brought the piano here for his wife to play. She did not live long, so he gave it to the Hickmans. They, in turn, gave it to Bill Eversol, so their children could take music lessons.

There was a Yeager family in Palisade – Oliver and Frank. Frank flew an airplane in about the 1920's and used to fly the mail in an open-cockpit plane covering the area from Cheyenne, Wyoming to Western Colorado.

Peach Days in Palisade was an annual event that included a fair with various displays, a Peach Queen, and a dance on one of the fruit platforms to end the celebration. Part of the entertainment involved a water fight. The Town's Water Department had a team and would get another team from outside to oppose them. Lines were drawn behind each team, and two men would handle the nozzle of each hose. The water had considerable force, since the Town's water pressure ran at about ninety pounds. The team that was able to force its opponent over the line behind them

was declared the “winner.” The participants wore rubber coats and fire hats, but they still took quite a physical beating from the water, so one or the other team usually just gave up. Later on, the water fights were done using a tin barrel or a ball on a wire, on which the teams would play the water to move it along the wire. Of course, they still got wet, as did the nearby spectators. There was a contest and prize awarded for the largest peach, as well. Juanita Strong was the first Peach Queen, June Coleman was Peach Queen in about 1953 and Celeste Brown was also queen (*in 1959*). There were several others in between, whose names the Hickmans could not recall. A point system was employed, based on people buying items from local businesses and awarding points to a particular contestant, to decide who would be Peach Queen. Other events included sack races, three-legged races, stilt races, a women’s nail-driving contest, and hose cart races. The latter involved a manually pulled fire hose cart with the hose rolled up on a reel. The hose had to be unrolled, connected to a fire hydrant, and the water was then turned on. The team with the fastest time on the clock was the winner. Sometime around 1955, the Peach Days celebration came to an end, and it was incorporated into the Town’s Independence Day celebration.

Virgil did some work building the Skyway Road on Grand Mesa. He worked on the south side of Grand Mesa for a Forest Ranger whose last name was Boone. The work camp was at Island Lake, and Virgil worked on the section of road from Ward Lake to where the Land’s End Road intersects with Highway 65. The work was done with blasting powder, picks and shovels, and scrapers drawn by horses. No large machinery was used in the construction of this section of road. When the two sides met at the Land’s End Road in about 1922 or 1923, there was a rodeo to celebrate the completion. The celebration was well-attended by people from Grand Junction, Delta, Collbran, and other small towns in the area. Virgil recalls it was autumn when the road was completed. There had already been one snowstorm, so there was a chill in the air on the day of the celebration. For quite some time, people had looked forward to the road being completed, so one could travel by automobile, rather than on horseback, up to the lakes. There were resorts on Island Lake, Alexander Lake, and Baron Lake, but one had to go up from the Delta side of Grand Mesa to get there before the connecting road across the top was built. There was a resort at Mesa Lakes, first owned by Mr. Sisacs. The Mesa Lakes resort was in operation before the road was completed across the top. Mud in the spring and during rainy periods made travel on these roads quite difficult.

In an email message to Priscilla Walker on 10/15/2015, Shirley Hickman clarified the Hickman genealogy. Shirley is married to Jack Hickman, who is Virgil’s son.

Jack’s grandmother was Grace Ethel Osborne (born 1883, died 1946). She lived in the Plateau Creek area, near the Harris Ranch.

Grace married Henry Charles Hickman (born 1881, died 1950). Henry was born in Cardiff, Wales as Henry Charles Steele. Henry immigrated to the United States of America as Henry Charles Steele with his mother, Mary Anne Lloyd-Steele. Mary Ann re-married Frank Hickman. Frank adopted Henry after he and Mary Anne married. Henry always went by the Hickman name.

Jack's great-grandfather by Mary Anne’s marriage was Francis “Frank” Hickman (born in England in 1861). Frank died in 1939.

Franks wife, Mary Anne Lloyd-Steele (born in Cardiff, Wales in 1863) is Jack's great-grandmother. Mary Ann had divorced her first husband (Steele) and met and re-married Frank. Mary Anne died in 1945. Both Mary Ann and Frank lived in Palisade until they died.

Shirley tried to research the Lloyds and Steeles of Cardiff, Wales. There are many Lloyds. It is hard to do when a person is adopted and the mother re-married. They lived in Cardiff when Henry was about 1 mo. old. He had a sister, Elizabeth, who also immigrated with him and Mary Ann.

Shirley kept seeing the name Davis on some of the old mine claims of Frank's, and he was on some of the Davis mine claims, and Shirley thinks Elizabeth might have married a Davis. Jack's name would have been Steele, if Henry had not been adopted.

Summary written by Gary Hines, 10/16/2015