

# The Traveling Orchard

Henderson Luelling has a true pioneering spirit. He was a man who was always ready for the next adventure. He had left his home in Indiana in 1837 for Iowa when it was the new frontier. He lived there for ten years. He and his brother worked in a successful nursery business. Then Henderson heard tales of the free, rich land of the Oregon country. Like so many others, he caught the "Oregon Fever." With his wife and eight children, he prepared to leave their home in the spring of 1847.

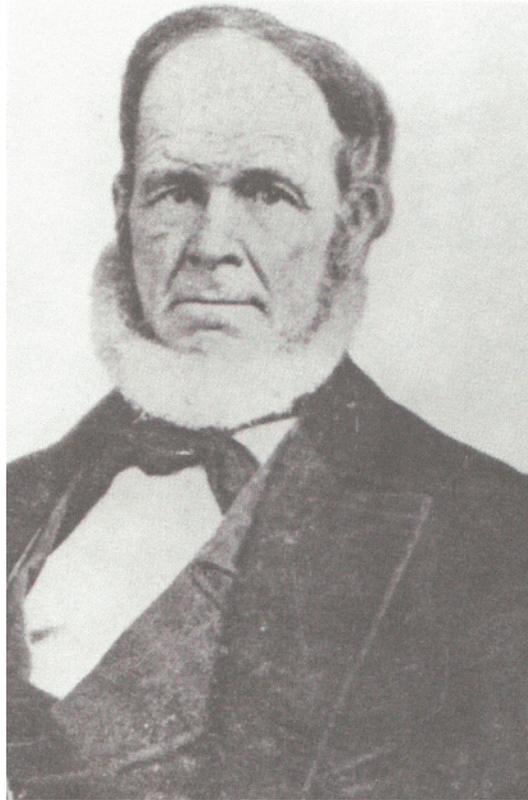
Henderson Luelling would not leave Iowa without taking his nursery business with him. His friends and neighbors warned him that his plan was foolishness.

"You're crazy, Henderson," they said. "Those trees will never live. And besides, the wagon will be too heavy. The cattle will die trying to pull it all the way across the country."

But Henderson Luelling didn't listen. He chose 700 of his best fruit trees and berry bushes. He tried to pick the healthiest ones so that they would survive the long journey. Then he packed them in the wagon in a mixture of charcoal and earth. The plants filled one wagon. He hitched three yoke of cattle to the heavy wagon. He believed that he could get his trees to Oregon. And so they began a journey that would last almost eight months.

One of the biggest problems was water. The trees had to be watered every day. This meant that not only did they have to carry enough water for the family's needs, but a great deal more for the trees. In later years, Henderson's daughter, Elizabeth, said that her father took better care of the trees than of the family on the trip. The trees were always watered first! The trees did well. Some even leafed out and bloomed in the wagon. Some of the bushes bore berries.

Although the heavy tree wagon slowed down the pace of the journey, a Christian Native American told them later that it might have saved the lives of the family on the journey. The Luelling wagons were traveling alone when they met groups of unfriendly Native Americans. They believed that



**Henderson Luelling**

the Great Spirit lived in trees. When they saw the wagon load of trees, they thought the Luelling family was under the special care of the Great Spirit! They rode away without harming them.

Finally, the Luelling family reached Oregon in December and settled across the Willamette River from Portland. Henderson began a search for the best land for his orchards. While they were in Portland, Mrs. Luelling gave birth to their ninth child. They named the baby boy Oregon Columbia Luelling.

The land that Henderson Luelling claimed was heavily wooded. He and his family began work to clear the land before spring. Every morning at 4 am, they began work cutting trees and clearing away the brush. A huge fire was kept burning all the time.

Every day they worked until 10 pm, only to get up and start again early the next morning.

Finally, they were ready to set out their first orchard in Oregon. Carefully, they unpacked the trees and planted them in the rich earth. They planted plums, grapes, pears, apples, cherries, peaches and one prune tree. Henderson Luelling's dream had come true.

The Luelling orchard flourished. In 1850, Henderson's brother, Seth, came to Oregon. He started a nursery too. Seth liked to experiment with trees. He developed a new cherry. It was large, dark and sweet. When it was time to name the cherry, Seth Luelling said: "That was Bing's row. Bing's a big man, and the cherry is big, so Bing shall be its name." Ah Sit Bing was a large Chinese man who had worked in the Luelling nursery for thirty years. The Bing Cherry tree still carries his name today.

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