

CARL WELTY

ONE OF THOSE REMARKABLE MEN

Carl Welty drove his Model A Ford to the bench overlooking Paradise Valley. He and his wife were trying to decide. Should they buy that 160 acres of sagebrush near Pavillion, or should they go back to Nebraska?

It was 1938 and Welty remembered the fate of his father in Kansas where for seven out of 10 years there has been no crop whatsoever because of drought.

Before them stretched the patchwork of fields in Paradise Valley just below Airport bench near Riverton. They could see grain, hay, beets, beans and pasture lands. It was all green, thanks to the reliable flow of irrigation water from the Wind River Range of the Rockies they could see back over their shoulders.

"Let's try it. We know we'll have water," said Welty. It was lack of water that had driven so many from Nebraska and Kansas against the wall.

Buy Patch of Sagebrush

The Weltys drove to Riverton and bought from Miss Lucille Connaghan the 160-acre patch of sagebrush a few miles from Pavillion. Maps showed 104 acres of it was irrigable.

Miss Connaghan, a realtor, had picked up the place at a tax sale after the original homesteader, James O'Brien, had proved up in 1906-10, but had never broken out an acre of ground. A little down, a few hundred dollars a year, were the terms.

The Weltys drove back out toward Pavillion and rather sheepishly told the Everett Hutchins, whom they had just bade goodbye, that they'd decided to try it on Riverton project. The Weltys are still there.

"We knew you'd be back," said Hutchins to his sister, Mrs. Welty. The Weltys said it was the view of Paradise Valley that did it.

Water Is the Difference

"It's the water that makes the difference," Welty said.

Hutchins broke out a few acres of ground for Welty that fall.

To get ready for the spring work, Welty decided to try a little fall irrigation of the sagebrush, so it would be easier to plow.

"How much water do you want turned in?" asked the ditch rider when Welty a man who had never irrigated before, turned in his order.

Welty didn't know, so the ditch rider gave him a whopping big head—about six-tenths—and down it came in the new, soft, main ditches.

Barefoot Irrigators

Mr. and Mrs. Welty met it, both of them barefoot for lack of even a pair of irrigating boots. The water broke out here, washed a gaping hole in the bank there, overflowed hither and yon. The Weltys, carrying gunnysacks, fought until exhausted to try to keep the water in the new ditches, but finally Carl went to the ditch rider and said, "Turn it off. We can't handle it yet."

Welty went to Wyoming Tie and Timber Company and ordered a few loads of rejected railroad ties. He had worked on the railroad and like so many other early project settlers, ties were the most promising building material in sight.

They poured a concrete foundation and laid up their first small house out of ties, using borrowed tools and paying for the materials with a \$150 loan from Farm Security Administration.

The crude house up, they went back to Nebraska, loaded their few things on a truck, hitched a trailer behind their Model A, and came back to stay.

Sickness in a Blizzard

January, 1939, was mild. But arriving with the Weltys on February 9, 1939, was a blizzard and subzero temperatures.

"We had brought the windows for the new house with us," Welty recalls, "and we put them in, one a day, during that bitter cold."

A half mile down the road lived the Clair Days. Mrs. Day recalls her first visit to the Weltys.

"They had all the extra bedding they own hung up over the open doors and