

3/82

THE TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Cordelia Stryker Ankeny, page 20

Director's Corner

In January of this year the Southern Oregon Historical Society embarked on a new project: the funding of a county-sponsored proposal to research and compile an inventory of the works of Frank C. Clark (1872-1957). This distinguished architect came to southern Oregon in the early part of the century and continued his work until 1956. A compilation of his many contributions to architecture in the Rogue River Valley will be a most valuable addition to southern Oregon's historical and cultural records.

Kay Atwood of Ashland and Gail Evans of Jacksonville, both of whom are experienced in historic preservation and cultural resource surveys, have joined forces on the project, which was initially begun several years ago by members of the SOHS staff.

The inventory will require approximately three months of concentrated effort and will require study of at least 250 buildings. An important resource person to this project is Mr. Robert J. Keeney, also an architect, who began his professional association with Mr. Clark in the depression days of the thirties and worked with him in many of his constructions.

All the buildings included in this compendium will be photographed and the history of each one will be researched in depth. The findings will then be available in the Society's research library. It is hoped that additional funding may be found for a follow-up project to produce a publication about Mr. Clark and his achievements. This printed material, along with a program featuring photographic slides would be available to schools, organizations and interested individuals.

Mr. Clark was unique; he produced a vast quantity of work over a 50 year period in one geographic area. As the major architect in that area, his efforts dominated the architectural scene for many years. Important also is the fact that many of his buildings are still in use today. He did it all, from small residences to large structures such as the Medford Hotel and the Elks Temples in both Medford and Ashland.

I am personally very enthusiastic about this project and I hope you join me in wishing Kay and Gail great success in their research. If you have information about Frank Clark, the man, or know significant facts about his buildings, please send it to us, addressed c/o Frank Clark Project, and we will be delighted to pass it on to our researchers.

Bill Burk

Note:

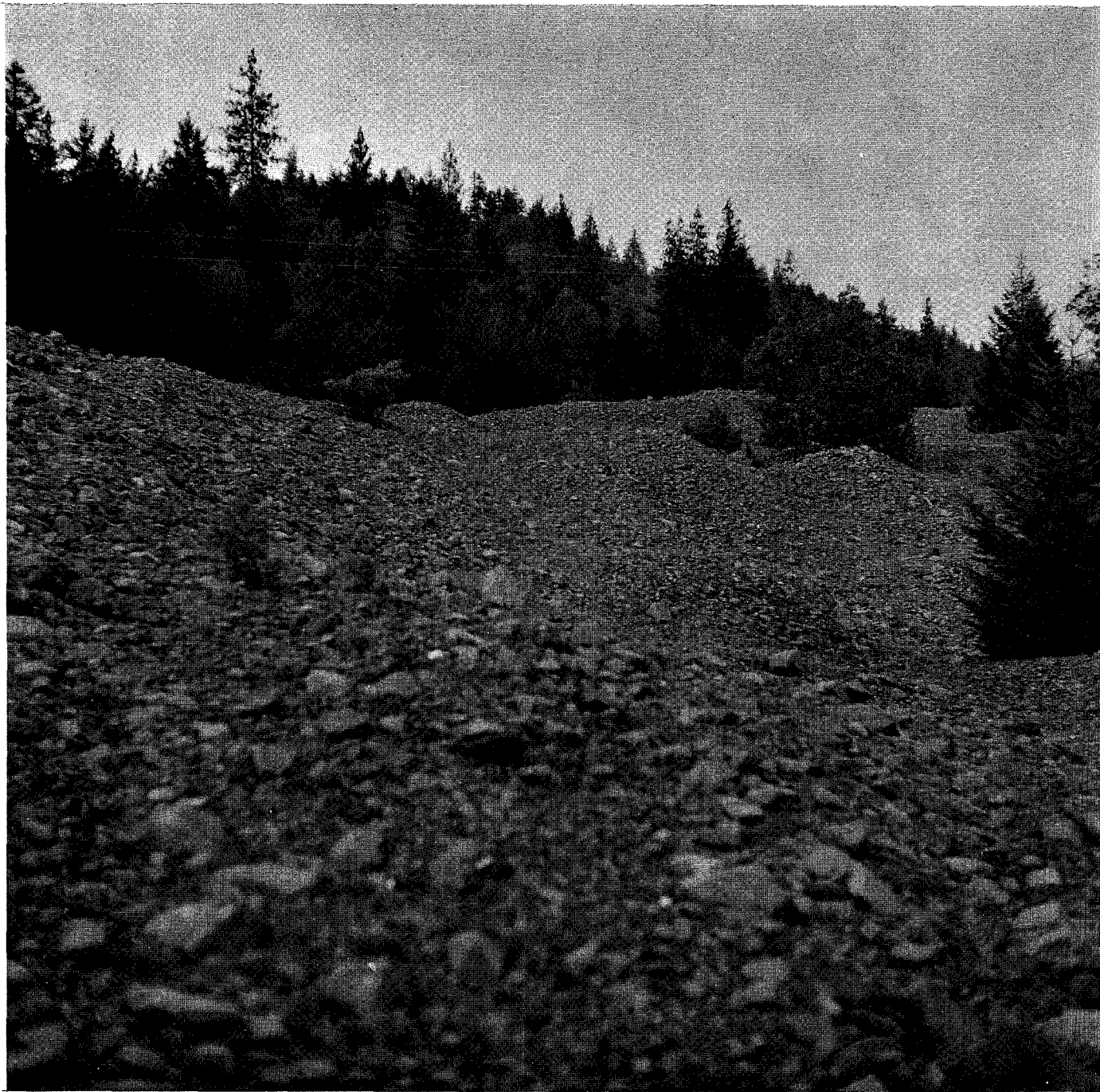
The realization that many, many people are unaware of the existence of Sterlingville, a rambunctious little mining town which existed for several years just a few miles from Jacksonville, encourages us to devote an entire issue to its sudden birth and almost as sudden disappearance. Tom Emmens of Eugene and Mrs. Bon Cordier of Jacksonville, descendants of the Ankeny family, supplied accurate information and valuable assistance. We are grateful to them. The sketches on pages 6 and 9 are imaginative. No pictures of Sterlingville exist.

THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

L. Scott Clay	President
Richard Orr	First Vice-President
Marge Muncie	Second Vice-President
Al Thelin	Secretary/Treasurer

STAFF OF THE JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM

Director	C. William Burk	899-1847
Administrative Assistant	Dottie Ellen Bailey	899-7222
Librarian	Richard Engeman	899-1847
Restoration Coordinator	Ruth Preston	899-1847
Historian/Newsletter Editor	Marjorie Edens	899-1711
Newsletter Features	Raymond Lewis	899-1711
Registrar of Collection	Greg Gualtieri	899-1847
Curator of Exhibits	Jime Matoush	899-7522
Programs Director	Joy Nagel	899-8203
Photographer	Doug Smith	899-7522



Sterling, today. Photograph by Margaret Nesheim

"Willows and brush are growing up now to cover the scars of a century of placer mining. They only hide the scars they don't heal them. No land ever recovers from placer mining on a large scale."

Dr. Francis D. Haines, Jr.

SUNRISE TO SUNSET AT STERLINGVILLE

After gold was discovered in Jackson Creek prospectors in the first wave of the rush claimed the richest spots while those who followed had to spread out into neighboring regions. Thousands of gold seekers from the played-out mines in California as well as from the north and the east tried their luck at any likely-looking spot they could find. With each disclosure of a promising vein or a rich streak of paydirt a new settlement threatened to pop up as the avid prospectors rushed to be first in line. Some of these boom towns lasted

only a few days, some existed for several years and a few weathered it through the bad times and became permanent communities.

The brand spanking new mining town of Jacksonville was a lively and energetic place in 1854. Emigrants and miners thronged the streets and a full complement of saloons was in operation and doing a brisk business. It certainly seemed that the thriving little capital would become permanent; a couple of substantial brick buildings were already under construction on Oregon Street. Ashland Mills--a flour and a lumber mill a few miles to the south--promised to develop into a robust city and the Colver brothers and their neighbors were establishing a settlement at Eden, later Gasburg, and later yet, Phoenix. But many of the mining camps shown on early maps of Jackson and Josephine counties are all but forgotten. Buncom, O'Brien, Rush, Takilma and Waldo were rip-roaring towns while they lasted but they died abruptly when the gold dust gave out. Sterlingville, only a few miles from Jacksonville, had just such a history.

Emigrants intending to make permanent homes acquired land claims and were eager to farm them but during the wet winter there was little they could do in their muddy fields and with farming operations at a standstill, they turned temporarily to mining. Among these farmer-miners was James Sterling who held a Donation Land Claim in the Eden precinct.

GENESIS

Sterling, originally from Pennsylvania, left Illinois in 1853 and with his mother, a sister Lucinda and a younger brother Richard, crossed the plains to the Oregon Territory. Unmarried at 26, he worked his acres in partnership with Aaron Davis. They had previously established a mining claim near Jacksonville and after their crops were in and the winter rains provided water to enable them to pan for gold, they decided to resume their mining operations.

Upon arrival at their claim they discovered it had been jumped. The accepted law was that claims ceased to belong to those who didn't work them so Sterling and Davis could do nothing about the loss of the site. Disappointed but deferring to the claim jumper's legal demand on their property they decided to return to their farm, intending to do a bit of prospecting on the way back. They investigated Jackass Creek (now Forest Creek) and checked possibilities at Union Flat and Rebel Flat. Finding the promising spots taken, they resolved to return by way of Little Applegate to the old Indian trail that led across the mountains to the Eden precinct.

In a little valley--later to become Sterlingville--they stopped for their noon meal. Jim Sterling decided to wash out a panful of dirt which he had scooped out of a hole made in the earth by an uprooted tree. In a short time he had panned out an astonishingly rich showing of gold. After Davis, who also tried his luck, was equally successful, they realized they had made an extraordinarily rich strike. Not equipped to develop their claim at that moment and fearful of Indians camped not far away, they continued on their return journey, determined to come back at a more practical time.

In June, with three men in whom they had confided (George Rockfellow, J.P. Burns and John Bonum), they set out for additional exploration of the area. Wishing to determine the extent of the goldfield and to locate the richest parts for their own claims, they tested the dirt in various spots. One panful contained a nugget weighing an ounce. That would have brought a staggering sum on today's market and it was not insignificant then. But before they could work their claims efficiently, they had to lay in provisions and collect the necessary tools and mining equipment. Since the spot was destined to become a bonanza, they wanted to make adequate preparations. The men posted no notices lest they give away their secret find and each took an oath not to reveal the site or even talk about it to others. A time was set, several days later,

when they would meet again at the claim and begin operations.

No one has satisfactorily accounted for their delay or has ever explained why they did not leave two or three of their number to hold their claims.

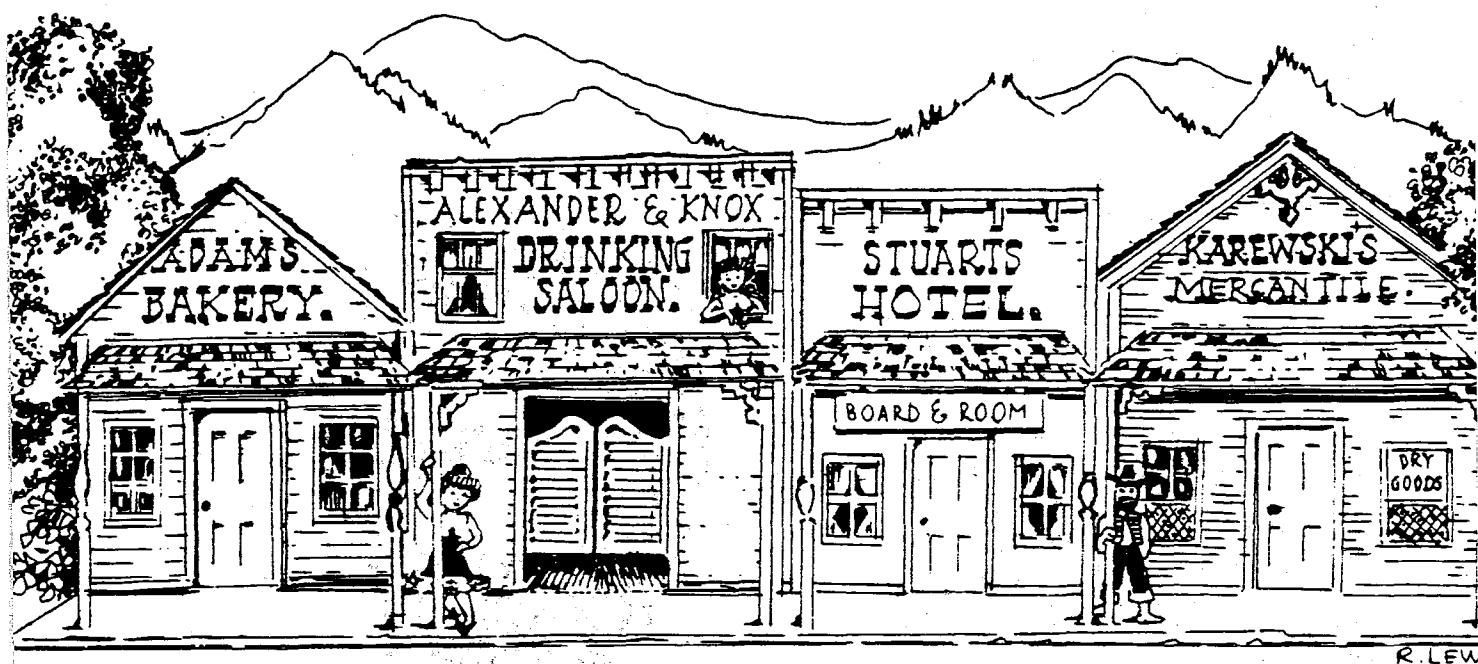
Dr. Francis Haines, the noted historian, wrote, "Gold fever is a disease that strikes hardest at the reasoning faculty, usually rendering it completely inoperative." This statement seems to be the best explanation of their failure to protect the discovery. There have been, as always, many rumors and conjectures: a) Ab Giddings, a close friend of Aaron Davis, noticing his curious behavior, wheedled the story out of him; b) one of the men, going to Jacksonville to vote, drank too much and blabbed the secret; c) all five, on their way back, stopped to help at a cabin-raising and divulged the information; d) Jim Sterling casually told several people. No matter. The secret leaked out.

Sterling arrived at the site of his discovery at the appointed time. He found blanket-tents everywhere and the creek staked out and occupied by a horde of bustling miners for its full length from bank to bank. He went to the spot where a claims office had been set up and there he found his erstwhile great and good friend, Aaron Davis, who, in partnership with Ab Giddings, had already been mining for several days. Davis had, as an afterthought, secured half a claim for Jim Sterling. Legally and ethically a discoverer's portion was from one and a half to two claims. The difference between the share reserved for him by Davis and his legitimate allotment was a matter of ten acres against forty; one-hundred yards of creek footage as opposed to four-hundred yards. Even though a fraction of a loaf might have been better than none, Sterling, angered at the betrayal, bitterly rejected the offer, abruptly left the area and returned to his home.

After two or three stints of farming at various locations in association with his brother--he had apparently had it with partnerships--he bought a house in Cottonwood (now Henley), California, for himself and his mother. At her death he returned to mining and had considerable success with the fortunate discovery of a quartz vein at Hungry Creek. In 1900 he sold his mining developments and moved to Yreka where he died in 1903 at the age of 76. He is buried there in the old cemetery. His estate, left to his sister, amounted to \$1165.80, surely a small sum for a man who had discovered the fabulous treasure at Sterling. His true legacy is the creek that bears his name and the now defunct town of Sterlingville. Is that sufficient compensation for the loss of a fortune?



Jim Sterling



EXODUS - BOOM TO BUST

The unmistakable richness of the ground insured further development at Sterling Creek, but mining operations require a constant stream of water and during the dry summer the miners were idle, marking time until the rainy season. Gold is of course the precious undisclosed treasure, but a prospector cannot wash it from its hiding place without water; water, therefore, becomes the priceless element. The rainy season at Sterling Creek is completely unpredictable. One year it will bring floods; the next year, drought. It seems to hang on the capricious whim of an obstinate and heartless rain god. Nonetheless by the early fall of 1854 the settlement boasted an El Dorado Saloon, a hotel, a bakery, a butcher shop and a grocery. A second hotel, another grocery and a couple of boarding houses were under construction. With the approach of winter it became necessary for the miners to seek shelter in something more sturdy and weatherproof than a blanket propped-up under a tree and a smattering of slapdash cabins soon appeared. Several cookshacks were built to take care of company men although beans and bacon cooked over a campfire and supplemented with bread from the bakery provided the steady diet for prospectors.

By early October the town had a population of over 1000. It was sometimes called Sterling City, sometimes, Sterlingtown and, most frequently, Sterlingville or, simply, Sterling. Growth was consistent with that of any new fledged mining town as it began to show signs of permanence. During the second year, 1855, a town plat--which, if it was ever recorded, was lost--was laid out and streets were named. Deed records of Jackson County show that the Alexander and Knox Drinking Saloon--first in line, naturally--was located next to Stuart's Boarding House on Water Street. Included later with these business houses were Adam's Bakery, the Braman and Rood Warehouse, a gambling salon and Karewski's Mercantile Store. Gustav Karewski (*Table Rock Sentinel*, Vol.1, No.12) foresaw financial opportunities at the onset. He acquired a string of pack animals and freighted in merchandise from Jacksonville--and later from Yreka when he found

he could acquire goods there at lower prices. He opened a general store so he was able to make a double profit on his freight costs and his retail mark-ups. He cleared \$20,000 in his first year. Farms in the Rogue River Valley were productive, Ashland Mills provided flour and Jacksonville supplied the other necessities. There was no shortage of basic needs. Only the lack of water for the mines plagued the citizens.

The fall and winter seasons of 1855 were exceptionally dry. Many miners abandoned their claims and unceremoniously departed to seek, at the rainbow's end, pots of gold that could be unearthed with less unproductive delay. Only two large mining companies remained in operation. Sterlingville went into hibernation. Adam West, a newcomer, decided to remedy the situation. He took some unclaimed ground near the mouth of Sterling Creek and, with some other inactive prospectors, dug a ditch which brought a little water from the Applegate River to the dry bed of lower Sterling Creek, the least productive part of the stream. Eventually the men decided that their returns weren't equal to the cost and the efforts required to maintain the water flow and the project was given up. This was the first attempt to solve Sterling's water problem by ditching. It was not to be the last.

Ultimately the belated winter rains came and brought another surge of prosperity. When it seemed that the creek would again support a large population of miners, construction was resumed on several buildings. The Jackson County Court, which had already appointed a Justice of the Peace for the city, named a constable and ordered the establishment of a Sterling election district.

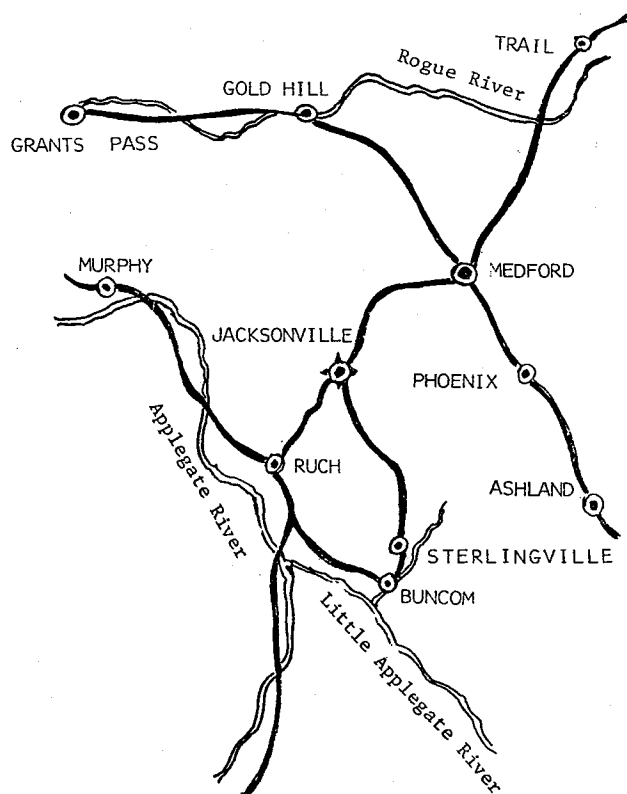
Despite occasional flare-ups between the Indians and the whites, resulting in the murder of several citizens and a like number of Indians, and the brief occupation of the town by a volunteer militia, the steady growth of Sterlingville continued. During the final battles of the Indian conflict the miners stuck to their search for nuggets and spent their take in the thriving little town. The shooting action was far from Sterlingville.

At the beginning of 1856 the town was again booming. The population had stabilized around eight hundred. In addition to the businesses established earlier there appeared another gambling house, a bowling alley, two more boarding houses, a blacksmith shop and a livery stable--a total of thirty buildings. The claims continued to yield a rich supply of gold. Records show that in one day in March a group of miners washed out more than \$300 each. The average for all other prospectors was not far below that figure. The citizens could see nothing but roses in the future for their youthful prosperous town.

Sadly the late fall and winter brought another crippling dry spell. A group of idle miners joined forces in an effort to survey a new route for a ditch which would bring a constant flow of water to the mines--this time from the west fork of Applegate. Their investigation proved to be a disappointment. The length of the ditch and the complicated construction of the necessary flumes frightened away the investors. The second project was scuttled.

This failure marked the beginning of the end for Sterlingville. The Alexander and Knox Drinking Saloon was sold for \$689. One of the general merchandise stores was closed for debts. By the beginning of 1857 the population had dropped to 500. The miners began to run shafts near the town and some of them actually undermined the buildings--a certain sign that Sterlingville was on the skids. Much of the top soil had been panned out, but untold wealth still lay in hiding on the bedrock. The miners decided the treasure would never be brought to light; such a marvel could be performed only by the supergod who controlled the thunderbolt. The remaining prospectors departed.

This exodus of all but a handful of miners brought a change in the character of the town. Booming mining camps, for the most part, were composed of boisterous, rowdy young unmarried men. As they left they took their horseplay



and humor with them. When the farmer-miners moved in with their families, the school house began receiving more attention than the saloon. This period marked the arrival of men whose names are still associated with Sterlingville: Tod Cameron, George Yaudes, Joseph Saltmarsh, Riley Phillips, Ed Graupner, the Pearces, the Gibsons and the Armstrongs.

To confirm the fact that the town wouldn't die dead before sundown, some of the newer settlers in 1858 made another proposal to bring water into upper Sterling Creek. The third project included a proposal to continue the ditch into Jacksonville which frequently had insufficient water also. The surveyors, however, concluded that in order to flow a distance of 28 miles over that terrain, the stream would have to start with an in-

credibly powerful force. To accomplish this, according to the report, the ditch would have to commence at an altitude not far below that of the upper Squaw Lake region and, at the beginning at least, to resemble a miniature Erie Canal. Its cost would be astronomical. The total wealth of Sterlingville and Jacksonville thrown together wouldn't come near it. During the wet season the farmer-miners had no time for ditch talk anyway; they were busy taking advantage of the rainfall. When the summer arrived, hot and dry as usual, the area returned to its somnambulistic state.

In 1860 the census taker at Sterling found at least thirty buildings unoccupied. He registered a total of 123 people including some Kanakas and Chinese. The presence of the Chinese was an obvious sign of decline; they would not have been permitted to pan for gold unless there was a large number of deserted claims. Only three or four businesses remained in operation; even the saloons had closed although the Saltmarsh brothers had acquired a license to sell liquor in quantities less than a quart. They may have conducted a saloon in combination with another business--possibly their own blacksmith shop and livery stable.

In that year a fourth attempt was made to construct the ditch from Applegate. This time the effort was more successful; a small stream of water finally flowed into the lower part of Sterling Creek. The completed ditch was the result of the concerted labor of fifteen men who banded together under the leadership of the Gallagher brothers. These men lived together, worked together and shared joint ownership in the endeavor. They even divided the returns from their mining operations. The completed project became known as

the Gallagher ditch. The water unfortunately reached only as far as the lower creek bed.

In 1861, while the east and south were rushing into the Civil War, Sterlingville continued on its gradual downward slide. Winter arrived with a vengeance and heavy rains swelled the streams and brought severe flooding in Jackson County. In Sterling makeshift reservoirs were constructed and, in an effort to reach bedrock, ground sluicing began on a large scale. Those still panning for gold were jubilant. But, true to form, gains made by a wet season were cancelled out by the ensuing dry spell. The ditch had to be the answer but, except for the Gallagher project, steps in that direction had always ended back at the starting point.

In autumn of 1863 members of an organization known as the Southern Oregon Water Ditch and Mining Corporation announced they would take over the project and construct the ditch. This time there'd be no fooling around. This company meant business from the auspicious start to the sure-to-be-successful conclusion. The citizens of Sterlingville could just sit back and wait and see!

Since construction of wooden flumes and trestles over the ravines and the lower valleys would be unavoidable, the company purchased a saw mill so they could provide the necessary lumber themselves. A steam sawmill, shipped from Crescent City, was set up and soon it was in full production. Suddenly the Southern Oregon Water Ditch and Mining Corporation found themselves making so great a profit on their lumber that the ditch project was tabled and forgotten. Sterlingville had a new industry but the rich middle and upper creek areas were still bone dry.

The vast treasure of gold remained hidden in the veins and on the bedrock and a lifetime of pick-and-shoveling wouldn't unearth it. Like the water in Sterling Creek mining in southern Oregon slowed down to a trickle. The prospectors had long since departed, searching for new strikes and new bonanzas. Sterlingville drifted into limbo. If the town were ever to be revived, something new would have to be discovered.



THE COMING OF THE GIANTS

During the next ten years Sterlingville dozed. The farmer-miners continued their operations--mining in winter, farming in spring and summer. Occasionally heresay of rich finds floated around, but most often the stories were about repeated attempts--and just as many failures--to reach bedrock. There was a flurry of interest over a quartz vein but it failed to produce much gold. The Gallagher ditch continued to provide the lower creek with water but the rich middle and upper creek regions were still dry much of the time. Productivity in the mines required more extensive development than the claim holders could afford. A group of citizens formed an amalgamation and hoped, by joining forces, to be financially able to tackle the problem. But from time to time members of the company dropped out and the others were unable to raise the necessary capital.

The only notable event is found in the tale of the lost mine of Sterlingville. In 1870 Jake Roudebush, a long time resident of the mining community, became critically ill from "long consumption." The only known cure was for the victim of the disease to take long walks and get lots of rest. Day after day Jake trudged over the valleys and hills but he failed to respond to the treatment and finally became bedridden. Cap Saltmarsh proved he was a true friend by nursing and feeding Jake. In gratitude, Jake one day revealed a cache of exceptionally rich quartz specimens hidden in a box under his bed. He had discovered a fabulous strike on one of his walks in the hills. Afraid that someone might stumble onto it, he had carefully hidden his find.

As Jake slipped into his final decline he was taken to Jacksonville and put in a nursing home at county expense. He lingered for three months before expiring from long consumption and he died without revealing the location of his discovery. The strike had surely been made; Cap Saltmarsh had seen the ore samples. But where was the ledge? Hundreds have searched for the lost Sterling mine but the secret location is buried with Jake in the Jacksonville cemetery. The story must take its place with the legend of the blue bucket mine and other tantalizing tales of lost treasure troves.

By 1870 the buildings of the once promising town had largely disappeared. Those still standing were empty derelicts. Business activity had moved to the flat below the cemetery and the town now consisted of a general store and a school house. To keep the citizens in touch with the outside world, Joe Saltmarsh drove a hack to Jacksonville and back once a week.

The natives were intrigued by a report from California that an astonishing new rig had been put to work to strip the ground. Operators of the apparatus could get to the bedrock with a high pressure jet of water. That was just the thing for Sterlingville, but it required water, a lot of water. A little ribbon in the creek wouldn't do the trick. Cameron and Hayden, both of whom still owned potentially rich claims, decided to have another try at the ditch.

They hired J.K. Howard to make a survey. Not surprisingly, his finding showed the construction would be too costly an undertaking for only two men, even though they were having considerable success in finding gold at bedrock which they had reached via a tunnel they had laboriously shoveled out.

In 1875 the two men sold their mining property to a Portland alliance for \$25,000. The association, incorporated as the Sterling Mine Company, undertook a new development of the region. The motivating force and general manager was David P. Thompson who had just completed a term as Territorial Governor of Idaho. Although he had come west with little money, he had retired from politics with a small fortune--familiar pattern?--and had become a prominent figure in Oregon's financial affairs. Hoping to have the mine in full operation by the winter mining season, he began action without delay. Before the end of June the company called for bids for construction of the

ditch, offering contracts for various lengths, from one to five miles. In July there were 300 men working on the project. After the Irwin Lumber Mill was moved from Sams Valley to Sterling to save on costs, the crew was increased to 400. The plans called for a stream bed seven feet wide at the top, tapering to four feet at the bottom and three feet deep. It twisted along the hillsides and over the ravines for 23 miles.

In mid-November the long awaited day arrived. When the gates were lifted what a huzzah there must have been although no celebration is recorded. It's a pity there wasn't enough town left to hold a parade featuring a local Miss Sterling and her court of buxom also-rans, a school band of adolescents playing a stirring march a little off-key and a little off-tempo, and a jovial mayor flourishing a new pair of honorary scissors as he jubilantly snipped the ribbon. Oh, well.

For the first time in Sterling's history the mines had a constant supply of water. Two hydraulics were installed and the combined water pressure was powerful enough to unearth a boulder the size of a double-privy and push it up hill. At last Sterlingville was again awakened, this time by a giant blast of water pressure.

By early January, 1878, the mine was operating at full capacity. Governor Thompson returned to Portland, leaving Frank Ennis as superintendent in charge of operations. This was a position of responsibility and the company demonstrated its deep appreciation to Ennis by paying him \$200 a month. Stripping began on the hillsides and the extent of the exposed bedrock was impressive. The clean ups of the overburden exceeded anything ever taken out before.

Thompson had gone into the mine as a promoter rather than as an operator. Soon he began receiving bids. One report alleged that he had refused an offer of \$450,000. In 1879 the property was acquired by Captain A.P. Ankeny of Portland. Some sources state that Captain Ankeny had a financial interest in the mine before he bought the entire operation and had worked with Thompson from the start. The sale price of the Sterling mine cannot be ascertained because the actual deal was a trade. Ankeny received the mine holdings in exchange for an extremely valuable block of land in downtown Portland which included business buildings and the most lavish theater in the northwest, the New Market Theater. An evaluation of that block today would probably reveal a representative value of the Sterling mine at that time.

THE ANKENY YEARS

Captain Alexander P. Ankeny had first crossed the plains to California as early as 1848, a year before the big rush for gold, but he had returned to West Virginia, via the Isthmus of Panama, in 1849. His first trip was apparently a scouting trek to determine the truth of the stories of the golden opportunities to be found in the west. He must have been persuaded because in the early spring of 1850 he set out on a return journey, this time bringing with him his wife Ruthanna, their children, his brother and sister-in-law and three hired men.

The little party started with an immigrant train, but they fell behind the others in Wyoming when Captain Ankeny assumed the operation of the ferry over the Green River and ran it at considerable profit for six weeks in July and August. He appears to have been unable to resist an opportunity to make money. When they returned to the trail for California the favorable traveling season was nearly ended. They discovered the grazing lands were dry and depleted and good water was almost impossible to find. The road to Oregon was a far better route so Captain Ankeny changed his point of destination and the group arrived in Portland in the late fall of 1850.

In December of that year, not long after they had arrived, Ruthanna Ankeny

died. The following year, 1851, Alexander Ankeny married a second time, to Mrs. Smith whose husband had died on the Oregon trail. She had a young son, Levi, who was raised as a brother with the Ankeny children, Henry and his sister.

An abundance of free land, a rapidly expanding population and the demand for all kinds of goods made it a time when a shrewd investor could realize quick and handsome returns on speculation. Shortly after his arrival Captain Ankeny took a donation land claim of 600 acres in Yamhill County, purchased cattle and began raising wheat. Even as this enterprise was in a developmental stage, he began looking about for fresh opportunities. He visited mines in southern Oregon and northern California and established the first general store in the Eugene area. Ankeny remained in the Portland-Yamhill area and supplied merchandise for the business which was located on a claim owned by Eugene Skinner. One of the hired men who had come west with the Ankeny party was in charge of the selling end of the business.

In addition to these activities Captain Ankeny helped open a pack trail to eastern Oregon gold mines via the Columbia Gorge--later to become the Columbia River Highway--and maintained an interest in the Wells Fargo Express Company. As he embarked on these new and demanding projects, he managed to find time to enter county politics.

In 1856 after serving as captain of a troop of volunteers in the Yakima Indian War--where he acquired his title--he sold his Yamhill property, opened a meat market in Portland and built a splendid, richly furnished home for his family. Acquiring property throughout the city, he soon owned portions of several city blocks of valuable real estate. Speculative investments in mining projects throughout the Columbia River region also brought rich returns.

He was one of the first to arrive at the site of Lewiston, Idaho, the gathering point for miners en route to the goldfields. Seeing at once the vast potential, he opened the first store in that place, appointing his step-son Levi as manager and his son Henry as his assistant. He then returned to Portland, bought the goods in demand by the miners and shipped them to Lewiston to be sold at his store. As mines in Idaho began producing, the business, which was the prospectors' only supply center, grew rapidly. Levi soon made a fortune and invested his money in Walla Walla where he became a banker, one of the richest men in the state and a United States Senator. Henry remained with his father.

Captain Ankeny's most ambitious project was the construction of his theater and market complex. Portland at that time boasted a population of 10,000 and the city fathers were justly proud of the streets, homes, stores and hotels. Portlanders were ready for an extensive public market and Ankeny was the guiding force of the project. A massive brick building was erected and its many stalls were furnished in taste and great style with an emphasis upon marble counters and fixtures. It proved to be extremely successful and was a great asset to the city. With the addition of the New Market Theater, Ankeny's block was the most impressive section in the business district and served the citizens for many years. Most of the complex is still standing although a north wing of the center was demolished in the 1950s. The remaining part has recently been sold to a group of developers who wish to restore it as part of Portland's heritage.

There were times when Captain Ankeny dangerously over-extended his assets and occasionally his entire fortune teetered precariously on the outcome of a gamble. But he was a master of the big bluff, had the Midas touch and always emerged as the winner. As his holdings flourished he became active in Portland political circles. He served on the city council and, in 1858, made an unsuccessful bid for the position of mayor.

The Sterling Mining Company operation was an exciting new challenge to Ankeny, still a man of boundless energy at the age of 56. The first years of

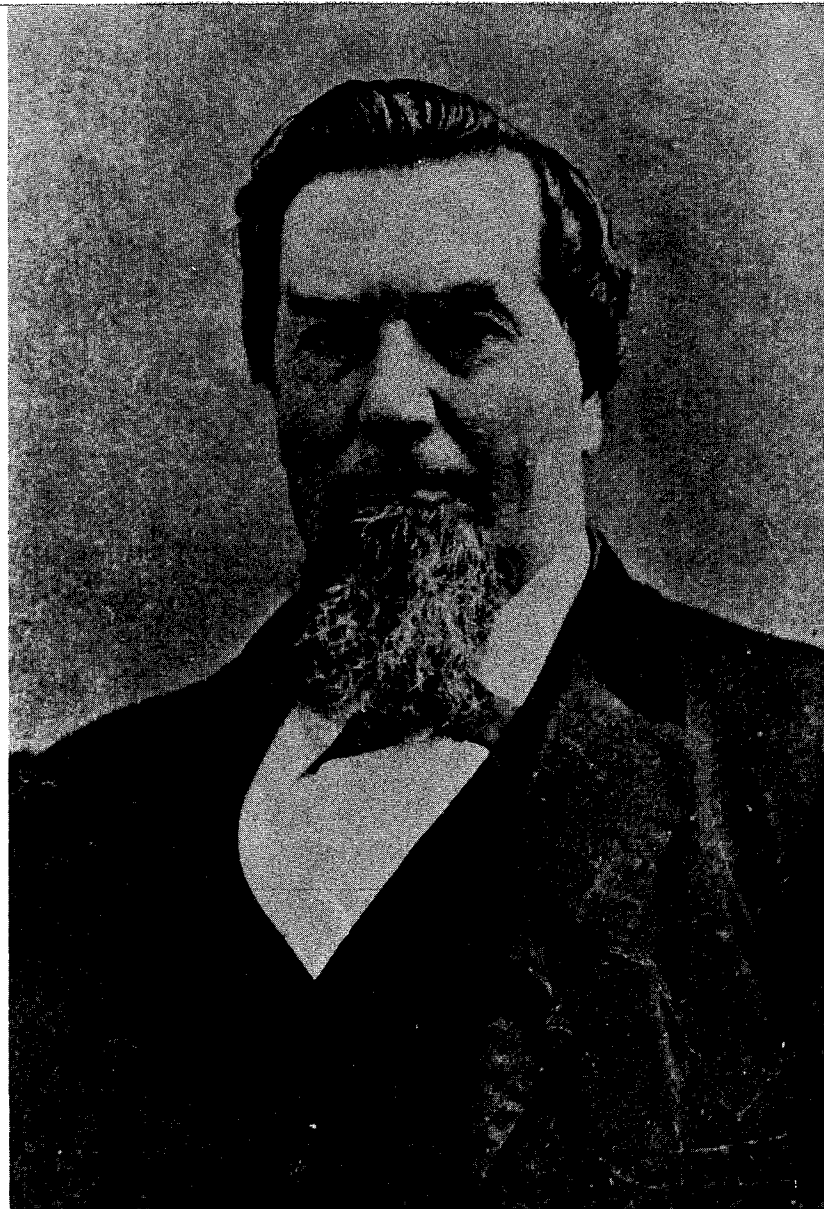
operation were not particularly successful. In order for the men to work the rich upper creek region, the company had to extend the ditch. Other developmental needs made expenses heavy, and substantial salaries had to be paid to a constant work force: blacksmiths, hydraulic operators and ditch walkers as well as a large crew of unskilled workers who were, for the most part, Chinese.

The third and fourth years brought more profits. The amount of gold sold to the mint in San Francisco was satisfactory and money was made by the company's subsidiary operations; a general store, a boarding house and a farm and stock ranch (cattle and pigs).

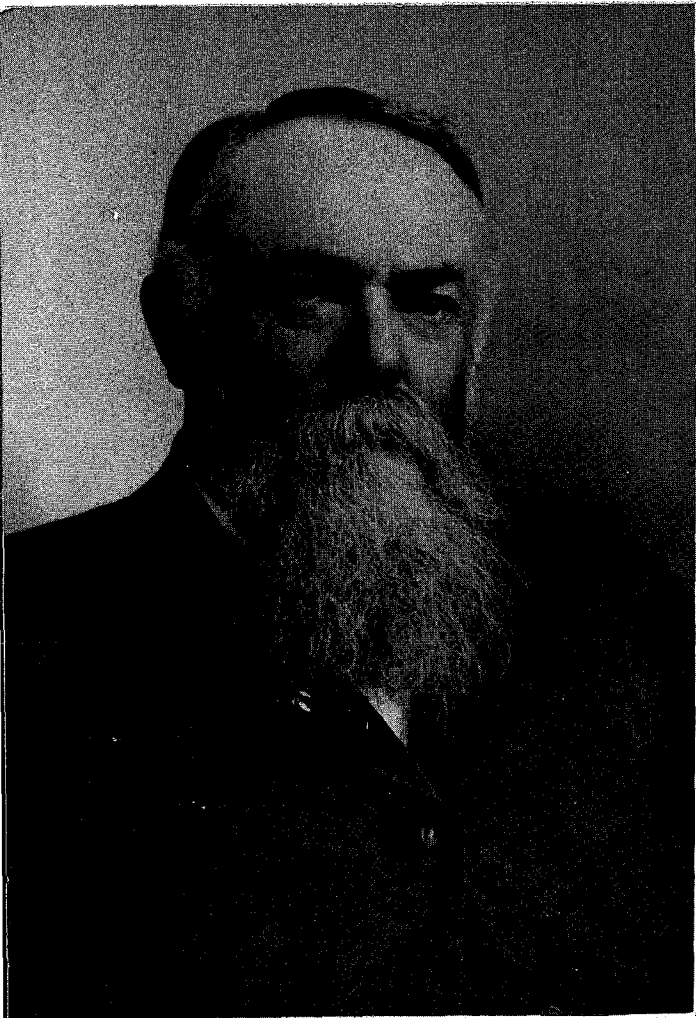
The gold field was no longer a place for casual prospecting. The men were hired for specific tasks and they accomplished them with energy and purpose. The huge hydraulics slashed away at the earth and washed the dirt into gullies where a gang of men with heavy mining equipment washed out the gold. A crew of Chinese laborers cleaned the newly exposed bedrock, painstakingly probing the crevices with small-bladed knives and camel hair brushes.

Captain Ankeny reinvested his profits. He bought the Kleinhammer claim which adjoined the mine and he widened and deepened the ditch. He also added a third hydraulic giant. With these improvements the Sterling mine became the largest hydraulic operation in Oregon and possibly the largest in the entire west. A huge headlight from a locomotive enabled the men to work at night.

As he had anticipated the ups and downs, the severe winters and dry summers, and the occasional flooding and freezing which damaged the flumes, Ankeny was not taken by surprise when a year of great profit was followed by a year of small return. His faith in the enterprise was unshaken. In an 1885 interview with a reporter from the Portland *Daily News*, who intimated that he had "been taken," he said, "I want nothing better as a legacy for the Ankeny family than the Sterling mine." As evidence of his belief in its future, he ordered the construction of a large reservoir so that sluicing could begin on the higher ground, and he bought the Saltmarsh claim. He now owned almost all of the land from the old town site to Buncom. Of all the early farmer-miners at Sterling, only Ed Graupner held on to his claim.



Captain Alexander P. Ankeny



Henry Ankeny

paper editor, Henry wrote of his early experiences:

We had rough trips sometimes; streams were not bridged as now and many times...we would have to ride the old horse in and swim them...Then again we would encounter snow storms and cold weather...(Once in) the winter of 1852, I left Eugene in a snowstorm and it kept up until by the time I got to Luckiamute it was about two feet deep and in crossing that stream which was frozen over...my horse broke through the ice into the water which was about mid side deep to him, consequently I got my feet wet. From there to Rickreal it is about 13 miles, the way the trail went mostly across a prairie and it was bitter cold. After intense suffering from the cold, I felt easier, but tired-like, and tried to get off my horse. The fashion was to use heavy wooden stirrups in those days and after I got out of the water in Luckiamute my feet were frozen solid in the stirrups.

I could not get off which was lucky for me for if I had accomplished my object right then, I would have frozen to death. I do not remember anything after that until I arrived at "Grandpa" Goff's. Thanks to the good old horse, which on arriving at the farm house...walked right up to the porch. The old gentleman, hearing something, looked out to see what it was...Getting a hatchet and splitting the stirrups in two pieces, he took me off and into the house. He then got a large barrel and set it in the chimney corner, drew water enough out of the well to nearly fill it, then I was stripped of my clothes and put into the barrel of water. He held me there until the frost was all drawn out. I can remember it yet! The old gentleman told me afterwards that I used pretty strong language for

The mine became a sight-seeing attraction. Visitors were taken on special tours and everyone was awed at the sight of the giants violently tearing away the hillsides and at the manner in which massive boulders were forcefully moved out of the way. For ages the earth at Sterling had successfully resisted men's efforts to pry into it; now the incredible machines were simply washing it away. It's no surprise that people came from far away to see it. The little town which had lain dormant for years had at last awakened just in time to witness its own annihilation.

After nine years of operating the mine, Captain Ankeny was joined by his son Henry. Born in Virginia, Henry was only six years old when he came west. He apparently had inherited his father's dedication; as a boy he and his step brother Levi carried orders on horseback from the store in Eugene to Portland. Making the arduous trip on a regular schedule, they often were given the responsibility of delivering large sums of money even though each of them was eight years old at the time.

In an unfinished diary, started at a much later date at the request of a news-



Henry Ankeny Family (Front row, left to right): Frank, Mrs. Ankeny, Gladys, Henry Ankeny, Dolly. (Back row): Nannie, Cora, Dee.

a boy. However it thawed me out all right, the frost coming out in the shape of a water blister. I was in such a fix that I could not travel for several days.

In 1866 Henry married Cordelia Stryker who with her family had crossed the plains in 1852. Her father, a physician, was ill with tuberculosis and he had come to the West seeking a more beneficial climate. The family settled in Portland for a few years and then moved to Vancouver where, in a short time, both parents died.

"Immediately after my marriage," said Cordelia in an interview which appeared in the *Oregon Journal* in 1925, "my husband and I started on our wedding trip for the mines in Idaho. Captain Ankeny, my husband Henry and Levi Ankeny ran a store at Lewiston and also bought gold dust and ran an express office."

After living in Idaho for two years, Cordelia and Henry returned to Portland. In 1868 he purchased a ranch of almost 6000 acres situated a few miles south of Salem. He cleared a part of this land and cultivated it. "Before long we had the largest dairy in Oregon," said Cordelia Ankeny. "We milked about 200 cows and made butter and cheese. We lived on this ranch for

19 years." Ankeny Hill still bears the family name.

In 1887, summoned by his father, Henry sold his farm holdings and moved his family to Sterling where he became supervisor and manager of the mine. Families along Sterling Creek had kept the school house in operation although sometimes all the pupils had the same last name. With the arrival of the Ankeny children the enrollment doubled. A daughter, Cora, became teacher for one term.

Almost as soon as Henry assumed his duties he faced problems. A heavy cloudburst washed a farm house, a fence and tons of topsoil into the company's diggings, and several miles of ditch were filled with slides. Captain Ankeny was undiscouraged. He ordered complete repair of the damages, at considerable cost, and the year ended with a deficit.

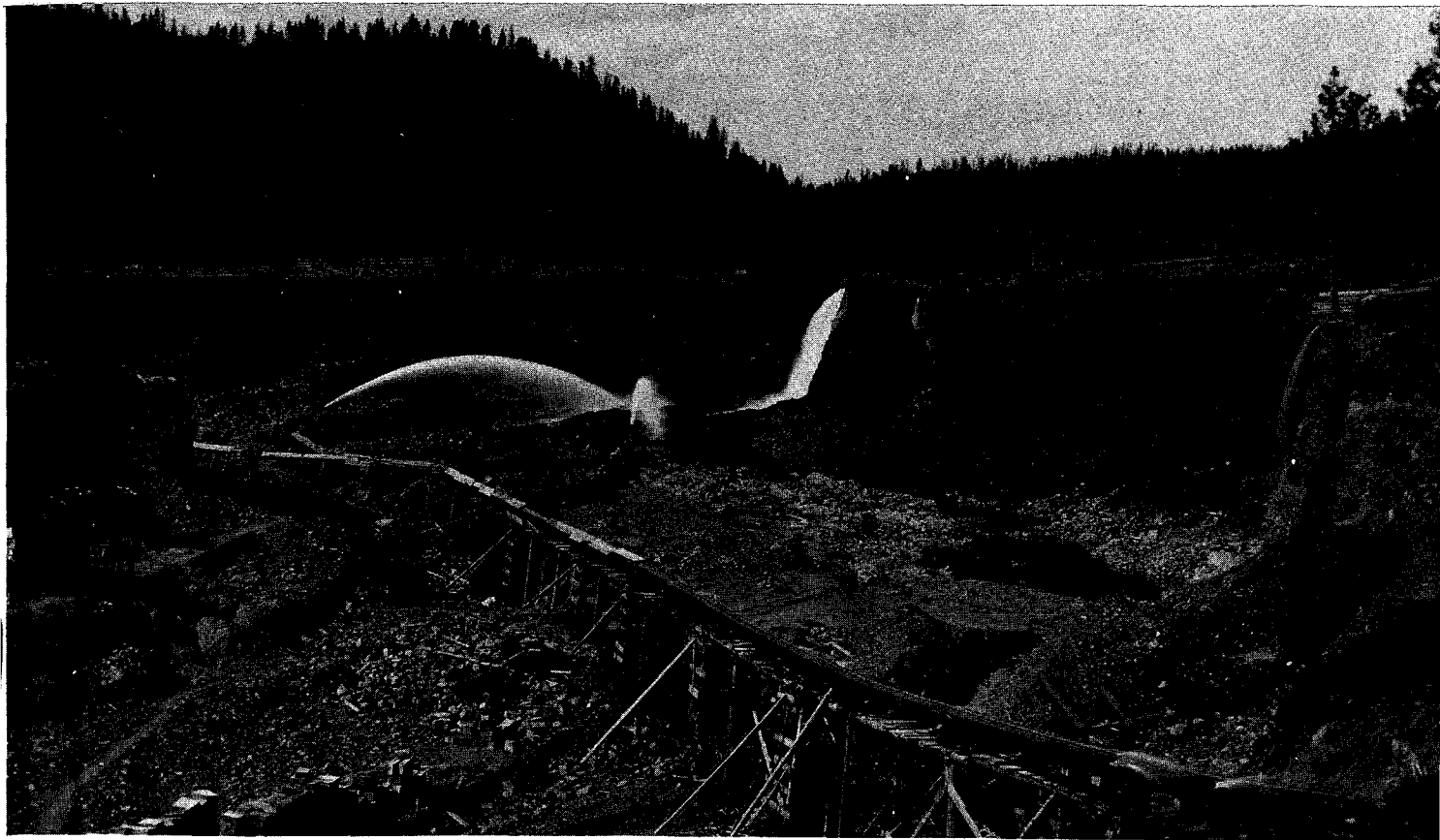
One problem which may have contributed to the loss was solved with less expense. The Chinese crew was under the supervision of a boss who saw that his workers were fed and clothed. He also paid them their small salaries. As contractor for the crew he reimbursed himself by collecting their wages and he made a little extra on the side by gambling and by a couple of other undercover activities. This tender-hearted overseer bought a new pair of trousers for each man in his gang. By some chance all of the trouser legs were too long and the men had to roll them up from the bottoms. Eventually Henry became suspicious and, one evening as the Chinese laborers were heading for their shacks, he ordered them to roll down their trouser legs. The mud scraped from the cuffs was panned out on the spot and revealed that each man was carrying out of the mines every day an average of \$1.50. From then on the Chinese worked in pants which were a little more neatly tailored.

In the winter of 1889 over three feet of snow fell on Sterling. All mining activities stopped. A heavy rain came after the snow and the flood that followed brought disaster. The derrick which lifted the large boulders was smashed. Hydraulic pipes and the giants were buried in mud and rocks, and the walls of the reservoir were washed out. The ditch was damaged all along its length. Before the mine could be put back into operation, the productive season had passed.

In August 1890 Captain Ankeny became critically ill. He was taken to Portland to be treated for "softening of the brain." He did not recover and died in March 1891. The mine was left to Henry and his sister. This brought no change in operations; Henry continued to act as manager assisted by his brother-in-law, Vincent Cook. In the years following, the weather was more favorable and profits came up to expectations.

In 1894 proof of the success of the mine was revealed by Henry's sending 50 ounces of nuggets to Salem to be put on display at the state fair. Indication of prosperity was also shown by the great number of rumors alleging that the company was to be sold for fabulous sums of money. In addition to this evidence, a Portland banking house put on exhibit in a gold pan nuggets weighing 350 ounces, ranging in size from \$1 to \$400--all from the Sterling mine. A year later another showing of \$10,000 worth of gold dust and nuggets was featured in a Portland business establishment. Henry Ankeny, visiting San Francisco in 1896, told reporters that his mine "was conceded to be about the best placer property in Oregon." The *Ashland Tidings* estimated that the 1897 take was \$75,000.

In her interview Cordelia Ankeny added, "After each clean up my husband melted the gold dust and nuggets into gold bricks, which he gave to me for safekeeping. I had a large number of flower pots. I used to put a gold brick in the bottom of a flower pot and transfer a living plant from some other pot into it. I doubt if a robber would ever have thought to look under a growing and blooming geranium for a gold brick."



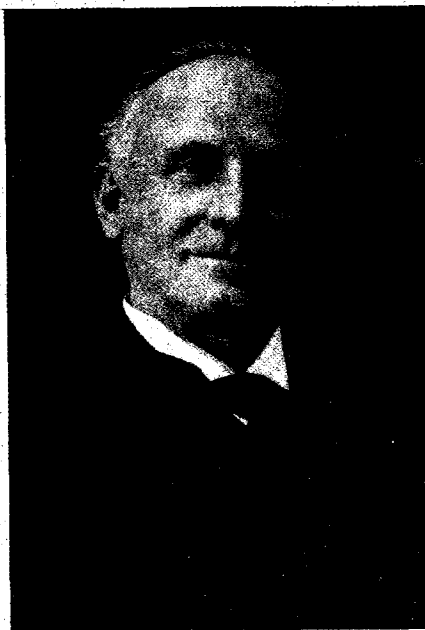
The season of 1900 was spectacularly successful. In April the sluice boxes produced seven nuggets valued at \$17,000. There were even larger takes in July and August. As the mine became more and more productive, Henry Ankeny began to extend his interests into other activities. In 1904 he was selected as a member of the Republican delegation chosen to inform Theodore Roosevelt that he was the party's nominee. He was president of the Medford National Bank and he became intrigued with the development of irrigation systems in the Klamath Lakes region. As he began spending more time on his other interests he turned the operation of the mine over to his son Frank, who became manager.

At last Ankeny and Cook began negotiating with a Roseburg promoter, Fred J. Blakley, for sale of the mine. Arrangements were completed in 1904. The amount the Ankenys received was not revealed, but from his half share, Henry was able to invest \$50,000 in Klamath irrigation projects. The new owners took over the property in early 1905, bringing the Ankeny ownership to an end after a quarter of a century.

Henry and Cordelia had nine children; three of them, Alexander, Ruby and Roland, died in early childhood. After leaving Sterling the family moved to Eugene where the younger children could complete their education. The five daughters were Cordelia, who became Mrs. John Orth; Nana, Mrs. Roscoe Cantrall, Cora, Mrs. Frank Crump; Dolly, Mrs. Alfred Miller; and Gladys who remained single. Frank was the only son.

Henry Ankeny did not live to complete his work with the Klamath Irrigation project. The federal government interceded and moved to acquire the water rights of all the companies there. The controversy was involved and lengthy and Ankeny died in 1906 before any settlement was reached. Cordelia Ankeny, a lady of great elegance and poise, remained in Eugene until her death in 1932. She was a deeply respected Christian Science practitioner and an admired and honored citizen. The Ankeny grand children are: Justine Miller Emmens, Peggy Miller Klett, Eleanor Orth Robertson (deceased), Deedee Orth Barnes, Jack and Harold Crump, Howard, Roland and Cordelia Cantrall. Edward Cantrall is deceased and a daughter Mabel died at birth.

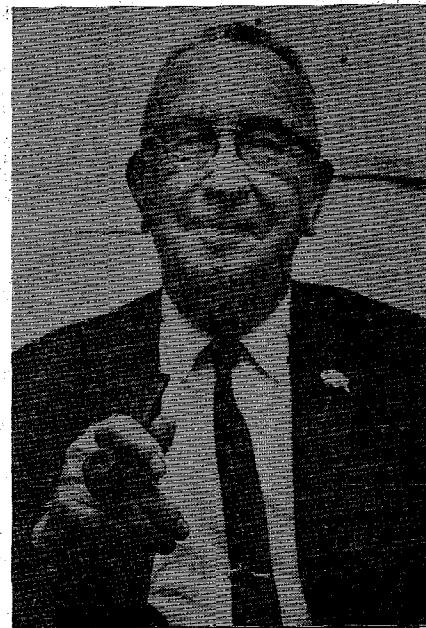
LONG SHOT, DISSOLVE AND FADE OUT



Spencer S. Bullis

The new owner continued to operate the mine and even added 800 acres to the area but did not maintain repairs and upkeep. It became sadly worse for the wear.

Mining in 1910 no longer commanded the excitement it had once held. Medford was gaining nation-wide attention with its pear boom and that industry attracted most of the investment capital. In 1911 Blakely sold the mine to Spencer S. Bullis and T. N. Barnwell.



Seth Bullis

Although these men made necessary repairs and continued mining activities, Bullis had other interests: the Southern Oregon Traction Company, the Medford Trolley Line, the Rogue River Valley Railroad and its electric train, and the Bullis Logging Company. The Sterling mine thus became part of a larger development scheme.

In 1911 rising labor costs and wartime priorities forced the temporary closure of the mine but it reopened in 1914. The costs continued to mount until 1919, when the owners leased it to a speculator who, in 1920, realized a profit of \$323.60--certainly a depressing return for a mine that had produced \$4 million in revenue.

After this fizzle, mining at Sterling on a colossal scale came to an inglorious finale. Spencer Bullis devoted himself to the other enterprises; his greatest concentration was on the Rogue Valley Canning Company. When he died in 1928 the control of the mine passed to his son, Seth. He had little interest in mining and became associated instead with the California-Oregon Power Company, eventually becoming District Manager.

Through the ensuing years there have been sporadic bursts of mining on Sterling Creek. The depression brought a minor gold rush and Sterlingville, dead and buried, had a brief revival. A cooperative store was built to supply the new crop of prospectors. On Saturday night dances were held there, and, to provide a little old-timey spirit, the local bootleggers lurked outside in the bushes at the back door, pushing their domestic moonshine which packed a wallop even if it didn't carry the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. Some of the miners wore guns on their belts, either to protect their diggings or to offer a bit of local color.

The mine was sold again in 1934 to E. Ford McCormick of New York. He organized the Sterling Mines Incorporated and brought in gigantic bulldozers and earth movers. Though the heavy equipment was obtained for free as demonstrating models, the mines failed to produce. McCormick gave up in 1937.

All plans for a rich future for the mine have dribbled out. The Sterling Mining Company and Sterlingville have faded into history, and a rerun on the late, late show is unlikely. The boom time has left its reminder in the fields of naked tailings and bare rocks where there used to be grass and spring flowers. It is a barren sight, but then it takes a lot of buttercups and dog-tooth violets to amount to four million dollars' worth.

Richard Engeman, SOHS Librarian-Archivist

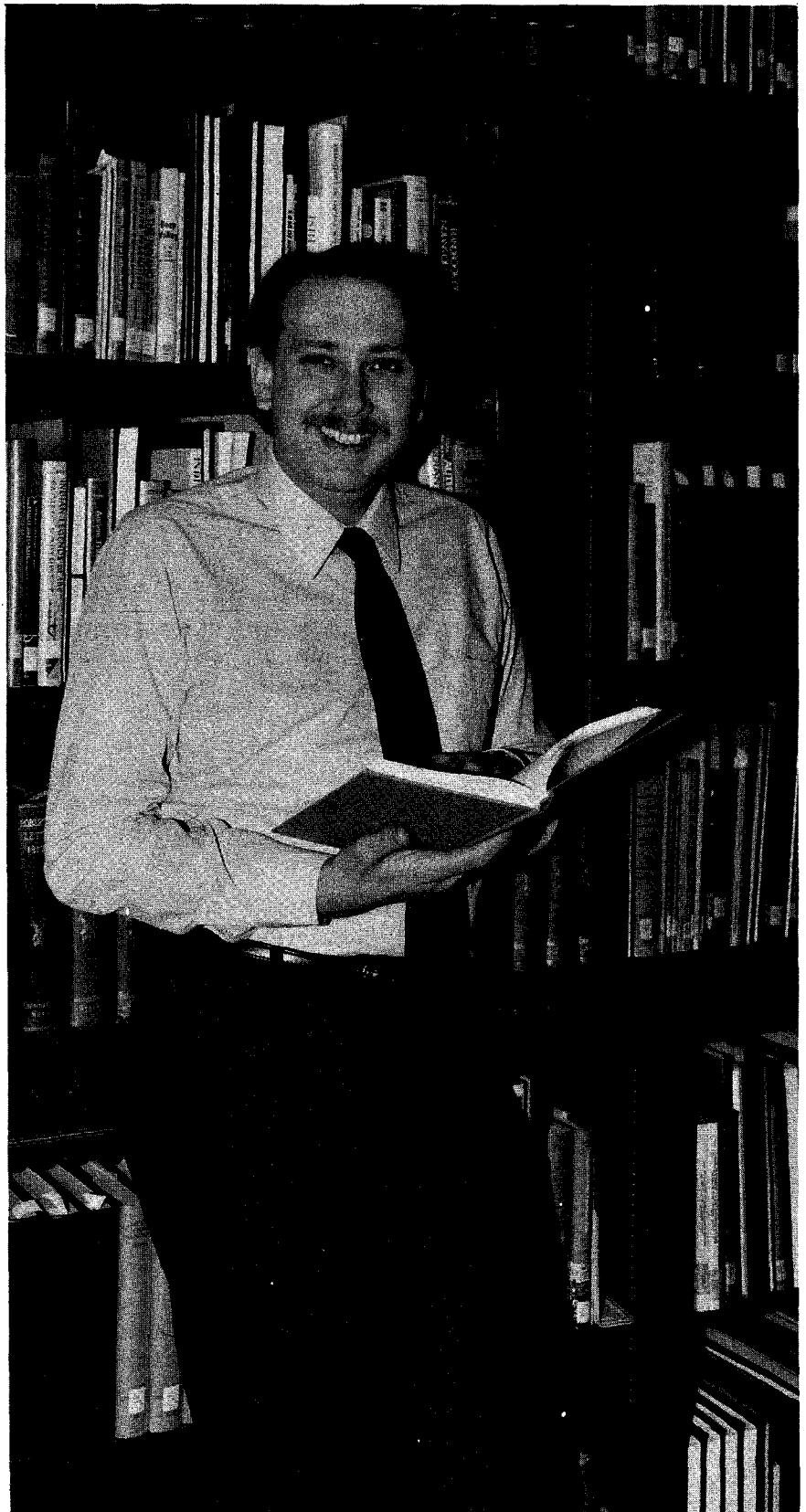
RICHARD ENGEMAN has recently returned to SOHS from a leave of absence during which he attended the University of Oregon where he was working toward "an interdisciplinary masters degree in history, geography and historic preservation."

A native Oregonian, he grew up in Portland and Warrenton. In 1969 he graduated from Reed College where he majored in American studies, writing a thesis on "The Influence of Street Car Lines on the Development of Portland."

After leaving Reed, he entered the University of Oregon and received his masters in librarianship. For a time he served as microfilm technician for the Northwest Institute of Ethnic Studies, later becoming Photograph and Maps Librarian at the Oregon Historical Society.

In 1976 he moved to Oakland, California, where Bill Burk, SOHS Director, contacted him and offered him a position in the SOHS library.

His book, "The Jacksonville Story, a brief history of Jacksonville, was published in 1980.



Cordelia Stryker Ankeny Appears on Cover

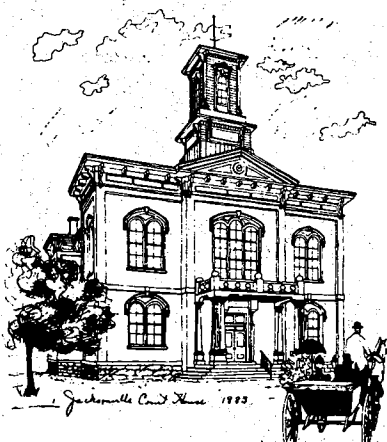


The gracious young lady on the cover of this issue, Cordelia Lydia Stryker, is wearing a gown especially made for a grand occasion--the formal ball which was held at Fort Vancouver in 1865, a year before she became Mrs. Henry Ankeny. The gown is now in the SOHS collection, a gift of the family. The original invitation, addressed to Miss C. Stryker, is in the collection of Tom Emmens of Eugene, her great-great grandson. It states: "The Officers of Fort Vancouver request the pleasure of your Company at a Hop to be given Monday the 9th of January, 1865." The announcement was signed by Brig. Gen. R. Alvord, Col. R. F. Maury, Captain W. M. Knox, Lt. J. W. Hopkins and Lt. J. M. McCall. That's a lot of gold braid. Cordelia did not note the identity of her escort for the evening although she did leave a large picture collection of unidentified beaux.

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

206 N. Fifth St., P.O. Box 480, Jacksonville, Oregon 97530, (503) 899-1847
Volume 2, Number 3, March, 1982

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 13
Jacksonville,
Oregon 97530



JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM ■ CHILDREN'S MUSEUM ■ BEEKMAN HOUSE ■ BEEKMAN BANK
ARMSTRONG HOUSE ■ CATHOLIC RECTORY ■ ROGUE RIVER VALLEY RAILWAY STATION
U.S. HOTEL ■ RESEARCH LIBRARY ■ MUSEUM SHOP

ESTHER HINGER announces two new publications now on sale in the book shop in the Museum Annex: *Eden Seekers* by Malcolm Clark, Jr. (Houghton Mifflin - \$15.00) The story of frontier Americans who claimed Oregon as their Eden and who, for the best and the worst of motives, made the land their own. A true to life history of shrewd merchants, calculating ministers, ambitious generals and families looking for a new start. *The Indians of Western Oregon* by Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham (Arago Books - \$10.00. This book has been out of print for several years). The book emphasizes the integrity of Indian civilization and covers Indian literature, attitudes toward nature, Indian society, religion and Indian-white relations.