

1/83

THE TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Glorious 4th 1908

Eugene Bennett
 Photograph by Doug Smith

Director's Corner

The SOHS Golddiggers Guild is at it again. These ladies, who raise money for our special needs, act as hostesses at our public functions, and provide receptionists for the Armstrong House during the summer months, are embarking on a new venture. They are going to publish a book--a catalog, to be more precise--for the SOHS sponsored Eugene Bennett retrospective exhibit to be held from August 9 to September 9 in the ballroom of the U.S. Hotel. Since over 140 pieces will be shown, and because of the significance of this artist, the need for a comprehensive catalog soon became apparent. It was a practical idea but no money

was available in our budget. The Golddiggers came to the rescue. They will underwrite the printing costs which will be high because of the number of full color reproductions of Mr. Bennett's paintings that will appear in the catalog. This catalog will be on sale at the exhibit and at the Jacksonville Museum Sales Shop. It should prove to be a fund-raiser for the Golddiggers. Mr. Bennett and the staff are spending many hours to make the retrospective a success. The catalog will add to the quality of the show. You can help make it a success by attending the show and buying a catalog. You will be getting a special invitation, but you may want to mark your calendar now so you will be certain to attend the special reception for Society members, Monday, August 8, 5:00-8:00 p.m., U.S. Hotel, Jacksonville. Refreshments and entertainment will be provided and members of the Golddiggers will serve as hostesses. A reception for members of the Rogue Valley Art Association will be held on Sunday, August 7, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

On another matter, the Society seeks a special volunteer. We need the assistance of someone who knows how to take care of orchids in a greenhouse. Mary Hanley has been raising orchids at the Hanley Farm for over forty years. Lately she has been unable to spend as much time in the greenhouse as she would like, and the flowers are in need of some additional tender loving care. If you are interested, let me know.

Bill Burk

Note: The Museum Sales Shop is now in its new location on the first floor of the Museum.

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The Table Rock Sentinel is a monthly publication issued as a benefit of membership in the Southern Oregon Historical Society. For information on how to become a member, call Maureen Smith, membership secretary, 899-8203.



CHARLES NICKELL

HIS RISE AND FALL

CHARLES NICKELL, the oldest of the three Nickell children, was born in Yreka, California, in 1856. When he was still a boy in school, his father died, and after a decent mourning period, his mother, Minnie, married again. Her second husband, Henry Pape, had immigrated from Germany, just as the Nickells had done, and the children were raised in an environment of old world discipline and economy. Young Charles, as a child, learned the importance of thrift and industry and the

Minnie Pape



practicality of putting a little money aside for an emergency.

He was a precocious young man--to day he would be called a gifted exceptional--and he assisted his teacher by instructing the younger pupils. In 1870, at the age of fourteen, he entered the office of the *Yreka Journal*, completing his apprenticeship in twelve months.

Shortly after the conclusion of his journalistic training, he and the Nickell-Pape family moved to Jacksonville, where, over the years, Minnie and Henry Pape had



Henry Pape

five children, half-brothers and sisters of Charles, William and Sophie Nickell. They lived on Oregon Street in a two-story residence next to the historic Helms' home. The Pape house eventually burned, but several early pictures of the Helms property show it in the background.

In Jacksonville Charles at once secured a place as compositor and reporter on *The Reveille*, a paper representing the Democratic committee. *The Reveille*, which operated chiefly on voluntary contributions from politicians, soon died of malnutrition, leaving Jacksonville with the Republican *Oregon Sentinel* (formerly the *Table Rock Sentinel*) and the *Democratic News*, published by J.N.T. Miller. The *News* had been overshadowed by the *Sentinel* and was operating in the red. Shortly after the *Reveille* folded, J.N.T. Miller closed shop and put the *Democratic News* up for sale. Charles Nickell, who had frugally saved as much money as he could manage from his salary, joined forces with P.D. Hull and the two of them bought the defunct *News*. In 1872 they reopened the office and issued a new weekly *Democratic News*.

The newfledged publication, staffed with two enthusiastic editors, started off auspiciously enough, with a growing list of satisfied subscribers and the promise of considerable journalistic and financial success. But in 1873 Jacksonville suffered the first of two disastrous great fires, and the office of the *Democratic News*, along with the original U.S. Hotel and many other businesses, was swept away in the raging, unchecked flames.

When the inferno had burned itself out and Mr. Hull, the partner, looked upon the smoking remains of his high hopes, he gave up in despair. Disheartened by the calamity, he left town for rosier opportunities elsewhere, and Charles Nickell became the sole owner of a badly damaged press and an almost worthless collection of charred equipment.

Still a teen ager with the impetuous enthusiasm of youth, he was less easily discouraged than his erstwhile partner, and with the help of his younger brothers, he managed to salvage some of the material and to re-

pair parts of the printing press. Perhaps he offered enough security to be given a loan--by this time the Beekman Bank had been in business for eighteen years--or perhaps his stepfather was able to lend him money. Henry Pape, Sr., was a substantial citizen who, before his death in 1892, had served two terms as county treasurer, several years as city treasurer, and three or four terms as postmaster, having been given the appointment during a Democratic administration, and having been retained by the succeeding Republican administration, positive evidence of his ability and popularity. In addition to his other interests, he operated a saloon in the Masonic building at the corner of California and Oregon Streets.

In less than a year the *Democratic Times* was on the presses as lively as the *Democratic News* had ever been. Charles Nickell, at the age of seventeen, was sole proprietor. From that time on, right down to the twentieth century, the paper served as the official organ of the southern Oregon Democratic party, and as a source of local and national news, advertising and incidental reading. Under young Charles' management it became a very remunerative property, having a circulation of 2,500 which was second to no other paper outside of Portland.

A SOHS member who was once a neighbor of the Papes remembers Charles fondly. She said he was extraordinarily kind to the Nickell-Pape clan, and frequently went beyond a reasonable generosity in helping them with their financial and family problems, which, with that sizable troop of adolescents, were not few.

In his youth he developed an appreciation for expensive textiles and fine tailoring, and his clothes were always a cut above the apparel of his fellow-citizens in style and quality. In an era when a man dressed most often in overalls, Charles Nickell was considered a dandy, a term not always meant to be complimentary, but, throughout his life he maintained high standards in his wardrobe and was certainly a trend-setter for the young men of southern Oregon.

As a writer, his style was "aggres-

WILLIAM M. TURNER

This picture, enlarged slightly from a colored tintype, was discovered recently in the SOHS files. It is probably the only picture in existence of Turner who alternated his duties as editor of the SENTINEL with making surveys of the northwest. He was extremely active in early civic affairs and he ran Charles Nickell a close second in importance as a journalist.



sive, clear and succinct, never aiming at brilliant figures of speech nor straining after effect, but appealing directly and understandingly to the minds of all." His simplicity must have been refreshing to his readers who were used to the flowery prose and luxurious bathos which many writers of the period delighted in composing. Since Nickell was a Democrat in his politics, his editorials heralded party principles in unmistakable terms. In some instances, such as his reporting of President Rutherford B. Hays' notable visit to Jacksonville at which time Charles Nickell refused to call him President and pointedly referred to him as *Mister* Hays, he was guilty of political intolerance, but a faithful party member shouldn't be condemned for being loyal. When he became carried away in his partisan editorializing, he was taken to task by his competition at the rival *Oregon Sentinel*.

Over the years the *Sentinel* had many editors, but Charles Nickell's chief critic and censor was Editor William M. Turner, who was as strong-willed a Republican as Charles Nickell was a

Democrat. Turner exercised his jurisdiction over the *Sentinel's* policy and news coverage for, on and off, a period of twelve years, until his departure in 1882. During that time he continually chided "Bro. Chas.," frequently growing waspish and vehement in his accusations. In one issue he went so far as to call Nickell a liar and dubbed his paper the "smut pipe" of the Democratic party. At the time Turner must have been a constant irritation, but viewed today, from this far away, he appears to have provided a valuable service in keeping the youthful, exuberant Charles Nickell within temperate limits in his reporting and editorializing. Turner also was a dedicated writer, and stories in the *Sentinel* were often more interesting and stimulating than those written by Charles Nickell on the same topic. William M. Turner had a colorful past and played a significant part in the development of southern Oregon so he mustn't be written off merely as Nickell's competition. It is well to remember these facts when Turner ruthlessly

:- SMOKE :-

La Belle Creole Cigar

2 for 25cts, 10cts, straight, 3 for 25cts.



Tired Women
Hood's Sarsaparilla



PRAISE ONLY

FROM ALL WHO USE

AYER'S
Hair Vigor

RUPTURE

Instantly Relieved
and Permanently

CURED

WITHOUT

Knife or Operation.

Treatment Absolutely Painless



Blood Poison
THE BANE OF HUMAN LIFE

attacks the hero.

During the seventies and into the eighties newspapers made few changes in format. Techniques which Charles Nickell learned as a boy were still in practical use two decades later. Some papers had six columns, some had eight. There were always a couple of columns of advertising on the first page, editorials and regional news appeared on the second page, the third page was principally local and personals and the last page was made up of stories, borrowed or purchased from news services, and more advertisements. The ads were often ingenious and made clever use of eye-catching tricks. A headline, such as **ROBBED THE GRAVE!** introduced the thrilling news that if one swallowed some liberal swigs of Electric Bitters he'd have a long and healthy career; **PREVENTED A TRAGEDY!** revealed the fact that many happy citizens were still able to work today only because they faithfully relied on Bucklen's Arnica Pile Cure. Patent medicines like these paid the rent and kept the presses rolling.

Headlines were, for the most part, pretty insignificant--some pages has none--and much of the type was tiny and strained the eyes; perhaps a hundred years ago people had super vision. Photographs weren't used because they

reproduced badly but occasionally a line-drawn portrait appeared and added some interest; however, most papers had the same unimaginative appearance, issue after issue. The pleasing layouts, graphic pictures and headline variety in today's papers, which will make future historic research a piece of cake, didn't appear much before the turn of the century. But southern Oregon historians must be forever grateful to Charles Nickell, and others like him, who documented an era and preserved the country's heritage.

Charles Nickell's youth didn't keep him from joining in local and state affairs. Shortly after he became editor of the *Times*, he began his faithful attendance at Democratic conventions. By 1902 he held the record for having been present as a delegate at more state conventions than any other man in Oregon. From 1878 to 1902, he missed only once. Over the years he accepted responsibility for hundreds of local activities; lodge committees, Fourth of July assignments, cemetery maintenance, community entertainments and benefits and membership in the Town Trustees. He appears to have been Jacksonville's most dedicated and public spirited citizen.

In October, 1881, Charles Nickell and Ella Prim were married. Ella, the

older daughter of Judge Paine Page Prim, was a capable and accomplished young lady, and the wedding was the social event of the year. Charles was twenty-five; Ella, one year younger.

William M. Turner, who was graciously invited, announced the fact in the *Sentinel*.

We acknowledge the receipt of an invitation to attend the wedding of Charles Nickell and Ella Prim next Wednesday evening at 8 o'clock P.M...We extend congratulations in advance and hope that they will never be out of coin.

Since Charles Nickell couldn't very well print a glowing story of his own wedding, Turner obligingly reviewed the fashionable affair.

Sentinel, Oct. 8, 1881. HYMENEAL. The marriage of Chas. Nickell and Ella L. Prim on last Wednesday evening was an event of unusual importance in our social world. Notwithstanding the fact that the weather was exceedingly unpleasant, a large and elegant assembly of invited guests filled the audience room of the Presbyterian Church, and anxiously awaited the approach of eight o'clock. Promptly at that hour the organist touched the keys, the soft, sweet strains of Mendelssohn's wedding march filled the room [probably it was *Lohengrin*] and floated upon the evening air and the bridal party swept gracefully up the aisles, and took their place before the altar, before which stood the venerable form of the Rev. Moses A. Williams. And then according to the beautiful and impressive forms of the Presbyterian church Charles Nickell and Ella L. Prim were made man and wife.

The bride was attired in a beautiful dress of cream colored satin, over which was worn a flowing veil which fell over her shoulders and billowed along the floor. The groom wore a black suit and a snowy white tie and gloves. The bridesmaids, Miss Carrie Beekman and Miss Ellen Pape, were dressed in most elegant taste, and displayed great refinement in the selection of their



Ella Prim Nickell

toilets. The groomsmen were George W. Love and Henry Pape, Jr.

After the service the wedding party and guests adjoined to the residence of the bride's father, where the reception was held. Supper was announced and all repaired to the dining room, where a row of tables, weary with their weight of delicacies, invited everybody to eat, drink and be merry.

It was customary to publish a list of the wedding presents and their donors, and the *Sentinel* story featured a full column of opulent gifts. A few:

a diamond ring set with rubies from the groom

a set of silver serving spoons,

Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Beekman

a silver butter knife, Carrie Beekman
(no fewer than a hundred silver tea-



Charles Nickell at the time of his wedding

spoons were given to the happy couple)
 a picture of Crater Lake in an inlaid
 frame, Mr. and Mrs. Judge Hanna
 a silver sugar bowl and cream pitcher,
 Judge and Mrs. P.P. Prim
 a silver sugar spoon, Mr. and Mrs.
 Charles Prim (bride's brother)
 a black walnut rocking chair,
 Ida Prim (bride's sister)
 a second black walnut rocking chair,
 Theo Cameron
 red damask table cloth and napkins,
 Mr. and Mrs. J. Nunan
 crystal vases and cut glass ware
 Mr. and Mrs. Max Muller
 one hog, Sheriff William F. Bybee

Even before his marriage, Charles Nickell manifested an urge--almost a compulsion--to make money. In spite of his heavy schedule of civic interests, political activities and business routine, he found time to enter into a variety of schemes and investments. Before he was 23 he had acquired considerable land and had bought an interest in a couple of general merchandise stores. Six months

before his marriage, at the Executor's Sale of property belonging to U.S. Hayden, deceased, he purchased an attractive house located near the present site of Beekman Square. The property, costing \$900, eventually became part of St. Mary's Academy.

Announcements that Charles Nickell was foreclosing or was taking someone to court for non-payment of debts repeatedly appeared in many issues of both papers. All of the citizens apparently approved of the lawsuits as proof of the young man's worthy desire to get ahead in the world--all of the citizens, that is, except the ones being hailed into court and William M. Turner.

One may wonder how Charles Nickell found time for his extracurricular money-making activities, but one must also marvel at how Turner found time to monitor those activities. Any deal by Charles Nickell that bordered on the shady side was soon exposed and featured in the *Sentinel's* editorial column. No hint of dirty work was too insignificant to be overlooked.

When Nickell drew a warrant of \$26.40 for services to the county court in March and, apparently by error, drew it again in April, Turner reveled in the smell of corruption. He emphatically declared in his column that Charles Nickell should make a refund at once. In addition, he chided the board for their careless accounting and advised them to be wary of fraudulent drafts upon the county treasury when dealing with "Bro. Chas." He wrote, "It is the duty of the District Attorney to see this matter is straightened up." When Charles Nickell returned the overpayment to the court, Turner asserted that this action was an admission of guilt.

When his continuing investigation revealed that Sheriff Jacobs had also drawn several of the same warrants more than once, Turner almost gleefully announced that the sheriff and Charlie Nickell were in cahoots and had probably covered up far more foul play than had ever been discovered. Sheriff Jacobs, aside from this obvious trickery, was incompetent anyway. Didn't he once fall asleep when he was in charge of a prisoner on

the stagecoach and let the crook wander off wearing an expensive pair of handcuffs? Turner could recognize "scurvy and scoundrally transactions" aimed at swindling the county, and he strongly recommended that a thorough investigation be made. The court and the citizens were indifferent. This was only envious sniping by a rival newspaper man. Charles Nickell was too trim and tidy and successful to do anything fishy.

In 1882 a daughter Marie was born to Charles and Ella Nickell. William Turner relaxed a little and reported the grand event in a jovial manner. "Chas. Nickell," he wrote, "issued an extra this week. He's stepping high now-a-days. It's nice to be a father, ain't it, Charlie?"

The dapper young man, his dainty wife and the beautiful new baby were certainly assets to the community. When he wrote an editorial shaming some thoughtless boys who had purloined Dave Crone-miller's blooded chickens and sold them to the hotel kitchen, he cautioned them:

Don't let this happen again, boys; of course it was done in fun, but it is a species of sport that you cannot look back to with pride, and should the injured party have seen fit to push the matter, it would have been exceedingly humiliating to yourselves and relations. Take the *Times* advice and quit such practices at once.

A man who so wisely reproved those mischievous boys and advocated honesty in such a gentle manner couldn't be guilty of rascality, and you could bet your boots on that, yet William Turner continued carping and snooping. Charles Nickell, occupied with his political affairs and his investments, rarely responded to Turner's charges.

When the treasury of tax monies became exhausted, people working for the county--handymen, stenographers, office holders, deputies, witnesses, jurors and others--were paid with script. This script could be sold to investors at discounts ranging from two percent to as high a percentage as the seller would tolerate. The buyer would save script until the treasury was replenished and then turn

in the "protested" warrants for their face value. Many citizens, including C.C. Beekman, profited in this manner, and Charles Nickell, early in his career, began collecting script whenever he could get it.

Over the years the great profits he realized from these transactions were noted by William Turner and his successor, Mr. Krause, who continued with Turner's policy of supervising Nickell's financial activities. A *Sentinel* editorial began by calling Bro. Chas. a ghoul who chased "every witness or juror like a lunatic to get his proscriptive script." The attacks became more aggressive as the rival editor accused Charles Nickell of collusion with Sheriff Jacobs, who was allowed to receive tax payments half in script, half in coin. "A buyer," wrote Mr. Krause, "who is too sharp to be decent" secretly slips a handful back into the "sheriff's sack as a little accommodation" and he is then allowed to buy all the sheriff has collected. "Tax-payers, who should have the advantage of the discount, cannot find a piece for sale. Mr. N. gobbles them up, although if you ask him about this, he will lie." The *Democratic Times* ignored the attack. Editor Nickell was in the Willamette Valley buying an extensive tract of farmland.

In July 1884 a second daughter, Bessie, was born. The *Sentinel* took time out to offer congratulations to the new father and then renewed the offensive.

Harvey Oatman of Phoenix decided to run for election against Sheriff Jacobs. The *Sentinel* of course promoted Oatman; Charles Nickell backed his friend Jacobs. Stories in the *Sentinel* promised that when Harve Oatman was elected sheriff, there'd be plenty of warrants for everybody; he'd cut off Charley Nickell's monopoly. A follow-up story announced that "Nickell's frantic and all-but insane efforts to secure Mr. Jacobs' reelection shows that a bargain of some kind exists between them by which Chas. is to have and enjoy certain privileges in which there is some sort of profit."

Chas. had no time to defend himself from the charges; he had entered the



Bessie and Marie

the political race as a candidate for not one but three offices: Postmaster, Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue and U.S. Storekeeper.

The outcome was unpredictable. In spite of the *Sentinel's* campaign against him, Sheriff Jacobs was re-elected with a safe majority, but Charles Nickell lost all three places. He was pitted against formidable opponents: Thomas G. Reames, Henry Pape (his own step-father) and E.D. Foudray, and the voters certainly had an obligation to elect those venerable elders of the city. If Charles Nickell had run for one office only, he may have fared better. It's a bit greedy to want everything all at once.

The *Sentinel* was ecstatic about his defeat, and crowed:

Our friend Nickell is not content with a store in Grants Pass, one in Gold Hill, and a store and printing office in Jacksonville, but is hawking the Democratic Party about and offering it for sale. Of course the proceeds will go into Nickell's pockets. He will keep the truth back everytime there's a quarter to be lost by telling it.

Anything that is said in his paper should be regarded as a falsehood and perfectly unreliable.

In another issue the editor charged that Nickell had "grown from a penniless type into an arrogant aristocrat--not as a result of his financial or literary ability--but through his greed. He is dangerous to the people [because he is a] gigantic monopolist with his immense democratic publishing house, stores and farms and his various other interests while his country under democratic rule has been going helplessly into debt and future bankruptcy."

It seemed there would be no end to this flood of abuse, but, in 1888, when Charles Nickell learned the *Sentinel* was for sale, he bought it, lock, stock and printing press. The deal completed, he happily fired the staff and padlocked the doors. That was, he felt, a deed well done. But in eliminating his opposition he had removed essential restraining controls on his ambition.

In 1899 Ella Prim Nickell gave birth to a little boy. The parents were delighted to have, at last, a son and heir, and they named the baby Charles Prim Nickell. Sadly, Ella, who had never been strong, failed to recover from the birth. A fever developed, probably from an infection which the doctors had no means of fighting, and Ella weakened rapidly. She was taken to her father and mother's house where she received constant attention, but in June, a little over two months after the baby's birth, she died.

Her funeral was held in the Presbyterian church where less than eight years before she had married Charles Nickell. Most of the town went into mourning, and a long line of people followed the horse-drawn hearse up the dusty road to the cemetery. Tributes written in her memory were lengthy and emotional. In August, two months later, the baby Charles died.

During the next ten years, from 1899 to 1909, the *Democratic Times* continued to serve southern

Oregon. There were few changes in the paper; it was printed in the same format and with the same policy as that of the previous fifteen years. But significant changes were taking place in Jacksonville. The failure of the railroad to come through had stopped the town's growth; in fact, several businesses had moved to Medford, and many of the young men had left town to find employment elsewhere. Charles Nickell, still a spokesman for the Democratic party, continued to attend the conventions as a delegate, and still assumed his civic and social duties. He maintained his policy of investing in real estate, and towards the end of the century he owned about 6,000 acres of choice land in southern Oregon, including an extensive tract in Medford which he sold as building sites. These lots made up much of the residential section along West Main street. He held considerable property in Multnomah County, had an interest in several stores in Jacksonville, and was identified with many of the principal enterprises of southern Oregon.

In 1900 he was a delegate to the convention in Kansas City, and enthusiastically supported the Democratic candidate for president, William Jennings Bryan. Nickell proclaimed that "all the money in the universe couldn't keep Bryan from becoming president," but apparently Bryan's victory required something more than money; McKinley was elected easily. Without seeking office, Charles Nickell, by his faithful participation in political affairs, became an able party manager. He served on congressional and legislative committees, and was held in high esteem by the party bosses.

In 1902 he became president of the Oregon Press Association, and the Jacksonville *Democratic Times* was praised throughout the northwest. In the same year he moved his plant, which had been in Pat Ryan's brick building (now the Jacksonville Inn) to the new Times building on the corner of Third and C Streets and celebrated thirty-three years of publication.

Charley Nickell raised his daughters by himself and did an exemplary job of it. The older, Marie, was a vivacious

and talented young lady, who completed her education at St. Helen's Hall in Portland. Bessie was a skillful pianist, often appearing in programs as a soloist or an accompanist. Both girls were popular and in the center of the town's social activities. By 1902 Ella Prim Nickell had been dead for thirteen years, and Charles Nickell had become weary with single-blessedness. In October of that year he and Belle Potter were married in Oakland, California. The new Mrs. Nickell had lived for some time in Jacksonville and had been a teacher. This was her first marriage. Eventually a daughter, Helen, was born to the couple.



Belle Potter Nickell

In 1903 Charles Nickell was appointed U. S. Commissioner. Such a position was considered a great honor, but his commission came about in a singular manner and was made by District Judge Bellinger. Mr. Blinton, a Medford publisher, had noticed that the office of commissioner presented many advantages to the publisher of a newspaper, and he therefore requested Judge Bellinger to appoint him. The usual recommendation of a prominent citizen was secured, and Bellinger made the appointment. Charles Nickell, in due course of time, appeared before Judge Bellinger and explained to his honor that Mr. Blinton was a rival publisher and that his appointment practically gave him a monopoly on a large amount of lucrative business in connection with the advertising of timberland notices. "This," said Nickell, was "a great and material wrong and injury" to him.



The Times Building The Democratic Times and printing office occupied the top floor.

Nickell made it plain to Judge Bellinger that the only course open was either to remove Mr. Bliton or to appoint him also. Judge Bellinger, eager to oblige, yielded to the demand to give Nickell an even break and made the appointment. This indirectly led to Charles Nickell's undoing.

With his new appointment he was soon receiving substantially increased revenues, particularly from legal notices and timberland advertisements. Much of his business, no longer confined to Jacksonville interests, was conducted at Medford which was becoming more and more a financial and commercial center.

Nickell could see the day approaching when Jacksonville could no longer support a big printing operation; in fact, that day may have already arrived. Even though he had been in his new Times Building for only a few years, he moved his plant to Medford. To increase his field of influence and attract more subscribers, he founded the *Southern Oregonian*, a bi-weekly paper with considerably different editorial policies from those of the *Times*. Simultaneously

publishing both papers, he ingeniously used the same features and news items in both publications and changed only the masthead and the editorial page.

Basking in the prestige of being a U.S. Commissioner, Charles Nickell now was in control of two newspapers and a thriving printing office and an abundance of healthy investments. He had reached a pretty exhilarating elevation; there seemed to be no way ahead but up.

When Oregon was admitted to the Union as a state, she was given 61 million acres lying within her borders. A remaining 58 million acres were held by the government as national public domain lands.

As railroads became a necessity, Congress offered the railroad builders fabulous empires of public domain land to tempt them to build in the western lands. The Oregon and California railroad was given a strip 60 miles wide and 682 miles southward into California --the most populated and desirable land in the west. The money the railroads acquired from the sale of these lands, it was supposed, would reimburse them for construction costs. Much of the

land, however, was sold to the timber and cattle barons and some was given for homesteading although the new owners at once fraudulently sold the land to the timber interests. Prices soared to unheard of levels and presented a golden opportunity to greedy investors.

In 1812 Congress had created the General Land Office which was charged with the responsibility of surveying, managing, and disposing of the nation's public lands, but this federal agency became corrupt and fostered a campaign of corruption throughout the northwest. The railroad tycoons, timber and cattle men and the U.S. General Land Office formed a three-way combination and over a long period of time, ruthlessly looted the public lands. Crooked politicians, small and large investors and big and small time thugs joined in, all eager to get on board the gravytrain.

Just about this time the following announcement appeared in the *Democratic Times* and the *Southern Oregonian*:

Chas. Nickell, U.S. Commissioner for the District of Oregon is fully equipped to receive applications under the timber and stone and homestead laws. Final proofs taken and all business connected with the U.S. Government lands transacted.

It doesn't take a Delphic oracle or a palm reader to guess just about where that little paragraph will lead.

Finally, when millions and millions of acres had been gobbled up, President Theodore Roosevelt decided to act. He sent agents to investigate but they were dealing with experienced and enterprising thieves, and the agents were soon recruited by the land racketeers. Finally Roosevelt sent Francis J. Heney, an honest young attorney, to investigate. The U.S. Department of Justice solicited John Hall, the District Attorney for Oregon, to assist Heney, but Hall was deeply involved in the conspiracy and used every device to frustrate the investigation, as did members of Oregon's delegation in the U.S. Congress and hundreds of other local, county and state officials.

Heney finally made arrests, picked a jury and started suit, but the members

of the jury had become intimidated, and Heney was check-mated on every move. To escape detection, the guilty shielded and protected each other and the investigations inevitably dead-ended in the higher offices of government. Heney was at an impasse.

But S.A.D. Puter, self-styled "King of the land fraud ring," suddenly decided he was getting the dirty end of the stick from his associates and turned state's evidence. He named names, identified those on the take, explained procedures and exposed the entire putrid business.

With a new grand jury of strong and courageous farmers and businessmen, Heney bought forth 1,026 indictments. "The array of the names of conspirators read like the honored guests at a White House ball."* They included the U.S. General Land Office Commissioner Binger Hermann, U.S. Senators from Oregon, Representatives, the mayor of Albany, the Medford City Attorney, the U.S. Surveyor-General, and U.S. Commissioners. The list goes on and on, including U.S. agents and clerks and hundreds of prominent, respected citizens. The charges were: fraud, perjury, falsifying surveys and public records, destroying public records, intimidating witnesses, bribery, forgery and many more. Most of the influential managed to escape but Heney secured more than a hundred convictions.

Among those tried were Henry W. Miller and Frank E. Kincart, timber cruisers. They were charged with being "arch conspirators" in a voracious swindling scheme and, in the United States Circuit Court of Portland, Judge William Hunt sentenced each of them to one year at hard labor. Investigation revealed they had ripped off thousands of acres of public domain and timber land and held vast tracts which they had secured by fraudulent homestead claims.

The *Democratic Times* of August 8, 1906, on its front page, headlined

The book, *Looters of the Public Domain*, contains detailed accounts of land fraud schemes and identifies many of the guilty conspirators.

One by One, by Robert Bradley Jones is a shorter version.

A PATHETIC SCENE. Charles Nickell wrote with an eloquent pen.

Henry W. Miller and Frank Kincart ... were taken from the Multnomah county jail...put on the train and started on their way to the lonely prison at Puget Sound.

A broken-hearted woman with a babe on her breast met them as they descended the jail steps. With pitiful cries and tears she threw her arms around Kincart and clung to him as if to hold him back from the fate that awaited him. But there was no time to lose. She was pushed quickly aside and with a passionately spoken goodbye she hurried away. The woman was Kincart's wife and the babe was his child.

What kind of a heartless government would tear a young father from the arms of his weeping wife and baby? The United States government, that's who, and they weren't fooling around handing out suspended sentences or listening to appeals. No one wondered why Charles Nickell felt the sorry plight of Miller and Kincart so keenly. Investigation had also revealed that their false affidavits of ownership and phoney land titles had been forged and published—for a goodly sum and a percentage of the take—by U.S. Commissioner Charles Nickell.

The statement, "Everybody's doing it and it's perfectly safe," is of course no excuse for defrauding the government but it would have taken a stronger and more virtuous man than Charles Nickell to resist it. He was arrested, handcuffed, put into a steel cage on the train and hauled off to Portland for trial. On July 6, 1906, he was found guilty of the charges of subornation of perjury and sentenced to thirteen months in prison at the federal penitentiary at McNeill's Island in Puget Sound. The extra month was added to his sentence possibly because a U.S. Commissioner should be beyond temptation.

He may have been mercenary, but he was no fool; he knew that a dismissal of his sentence was a hopeless pipe-dream, but, through his attorney, Judge Thomas O'Day, he took a number of exceptions to the ruling and appeared before the court of appeals at San Francisco. Judge Hunt's decision was sustained, but the delaying action had given him time to close his affairs, bat down the hatches and prepare for exile.

The following announcement appeared in the *Times*:

NOTICE

Those indebted to us are expected to call and settle at once as all accounts not settled shortly will be placed in a lawyer's hands for collection. Our books must be balanced with no further delay.

Publication of the *Times* continued for awhile, but, without the editor who had steered its course for so long, it had lost its spark. Perhaps the twentieth century had ushered in a new age in which the people no longer were interested in the stuff that had made the *Democratic Times* such an indelible part of southern Oregon's history. In any case, Jacksonville, drying up on the vine, could no longer have afforded the *Times*, and most of the people whose names had filled its pages were dead or departed. The paper had outlived its time. It was absorbed by the *Southern Oregonian*.

On September 7, 1907, a short item headed CHARLES NICKELL RETIRES appeared on the editorial page:

Charles Nickell, who engaged in the newspaper business at Jacksonville in 1872 and who has continued without interruption in the harness in this county ever since, has disposed of his printing plant. Mr. Nickell, who retires, is perhaps as widely known as any resident of Oregon. His paper, the *Jacksonville Times*, was at one time a prosperous and influential publication and Mr. Nickell was formerly prominent in Democratic politics of this state.

After his thirteen months in prison, Charles Nickell returned to southern Oregon and moved his family to a ranch in the Applegate valley. His daughter Marie had married Lewis Ulrich, Jacksonville's favorite baseball player, and Bessie was soon to become Mrs. F.A. Bennet of Seattle. Charles Nickell was only 52, an age considered today as a time of prime accomplishments, but his conviction had destroyed his prestige, and the Democratic party was no longer an outlet for his energy and enthusiasm. With the *Democratic Times* already only a memory, he may have welcomed his freedom from deadlines, but he surely must have keenly missed the discipline and pattern of his life as editor.

In 1914 he, his wife Belle and his little daughter Helen moved to Oakland, California, where he lived for the rest of his life. In 1922, after a cruel struggle with cancer,



The End of an Era

he died. The *Medford Mail Tribune* generously gave him, as a pioneer newspaperman, a three paragraph obituary, neatly tucked away on page six.

He was buried in the Jacksonville cemetery, ironically just a stone's throw away from the grave of William M. Turner.

It is sad that his indiscretion could bring about the total eclipse of

a productive career. Charles Nickell's tragedy is our tragedy. He faithfully recorded a day-to-day history of southern Oregon and left us a living record of our origins. His legacy is beyond measurement, and there is no way to repay our obligation to him. We can, at the very least, halt his drift towards oblivion, and return to him, in part, his deserved status as one of Oregon's most honored citizens.

Marie Nickell Ulrich Continued Her Father's Contributions



MARIE NICKELL ULRICH was a great lady. Her contributions to southern Oregon are countless. In the 1917-1918 period she helped found the Jackson County Health Association, and as a board member, she helped form and guide many of the public health programs in the county, including the Jackson County Public Health Department. She was also one of the founders of the county March of Dimes.

In 1968 she was awarded a plaque naming her as Jackson County Woman of the Year. Her work with the Democratic Party was monumental. Under the inspired direction of Marie Nickell, Mary Kelly, and Marie Bosworth, the party reached its heyday in southern Oregon, presenting at their annual dinners such speakers as John F. Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt and Robert Kennedy.

Mrs. Ulrich died in 1971. She is survived by a son, Russell Ulrich, and two granddaughters.

When she was a student at St. Helen's Hall, she wrote, as an assignment, MEMMO, AN INDIAN MAIDEN. It would probably receive no literary awards, but it is nicely punctuated and it clearly shows Marie Nickell's desire to follow her illustrious father's footsteps. Charles Nickell, her devoted parent, proudly printed it in the DEMOCRATIC TIMES.



MEMMO, AN INDIAN MAIDEN

Marie Nickell

A little Indian maiden sat alone upon the beach. Her feet were bare, and her long black hair was thrown loosely around her shoulders. Her eyes were black and piercing, and the lashes that veiled them long and glossy. As she sat there on a drift log she looked the very picture of desolation. She was tracing figures in the sand with her toe, and was so intent on her work that she did not notice the little canoe that glided so swiftly over the water. Nearer and nearer it came to her; still she did not look up. At last the dipping of the paddle reached her ears and she glanced about her with a sudden start. There, standing but a few yards from her, was a tall, graceful Indian boy.

"Good morning," he said; but the greeting was only acknowledged by a lowering of her eyes.

"Ah, Memmo, you do not say, 'Good morning.' Are you not glad to see me?"

"Yes," came the reply in a frightened voice.

"Then why not greet me?"

"I have greetings for no one this morning. I am sad. I am lonely. Memmo is alone," she sobbed.

"Poor Memmo!" and he sat down beside her. "Come, tell Watto what it is that troubles you."

She entwined her long, slender fingers in his, and told him how her father, the chief, was not pleased with Watto, because he let the Englishman escape, and had beaten her when she said it was her fault, and had told her to go, and never return to his wigwam--so Memmo was all alone; and she sobbed bitterly.

Watto knew the haughty chief, so said nothing, only patted her little wet cheek; but he was thinking--thinking how he could have his little Memmo. At last, with a sudden resolve, he said, "Memmo, let us go; let us go away forever."

The girl raised her head, and there was a frightened look in her eyes. "No," she sobbed, "I will stay. I will not go."

"Brave little Memmo. I will go now, but will come back soon."

"Very soon?" she asked.

"Yes, very soon." He stepped into his canoe and in a minute was skimming over the water.

All day the little Indian girl wandered up and down the beach, waiting for Watto; but he came not. It was dark, and she was shivering, for the November air was cold. She did not know where to go for shelter, so threw herself on the beach to think.

At last she fell asleep on the hard sandy beach, a sleep from which she never awoke, for early in the morning, when the tide came in, it took the little Indian maiden and gave her a bed in its blue depths.

And thus it was, when Watto came back from interceding with the chief to claim his Memmo, he could not find her.

All day he wandered up and down the beach, just as she had done the day before; and when night came he went back to his wigwam, desolate and alone.





SOUVENIR PROGRAM

Opening of THE PAGE THEATRE

Medford, Oregon, Monday Evening, May 19, 1913

MAUDE ADAMS in "PETER PAN"

As the new century got underway, the flickering flicks arrived. Pictures of Niagara Falls and Old Faithful that actually moved were so fascinating that everyone was eager to see them and when an alert entrepreneur put chairs in his poker parlor, installed a projector and drew the window shades, he was in business. Realistic pictures of the world's wonders were available to just about everyone for a nickel.

There were some disadvantages. No really modest young lady would go into a darkened room where lascivious males were lurking, waiting to steal a kiss--

or a pinch. Of course she had her hatpin, and, at the approach of a masher, she could scream her head off, but the risks were too titillating to consider. She might go with a beau who would protect her, but a nickelodeon was certainly no place for an unescorted female. Aside from that, the gentry ignored the picture houses, and the clientele was none too fragrant. With daylight blacked out and doors and windows closed, after a few reels the make-shift auditoriums were inclined to become a little goaty. But in time these objections were overcome. The more enterprising showmen cleaned up their theaters, aired them out between showings and assured the demure maiden that her virtue would be secure. With the showing of *The Great Train Robbery* and pictures that told a story such as the one-reel version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, most folks could no longer resist and when Sarah Bernhardt appeared in a four-reel production of *Queen Elizabeth* even the hoity-toity succumbed. The movies became respectable and in nearly every town and hamlet in the nation a picture house or two sprang up overnight.

Film makers at first decided that audiences would get bored watching a feature which lasted longer than ten minutes, and in fact the flicks were such a novelty that a patron, who wanted to see a little something from everywhere for his nickel, was inclined to get a little restless after ten minutes with the Statue of Liberty. Exhibitors therefore showed several unrelated reels, usually four, which took about ten minutes each.

A business which requires only a small investment and little, if any, operational experience, soon faces keen competition. To lure audiences away from the rival houses, managers added special attractions to the program. The scenic wonders were more effective if they were accompanied with sound effects so pianists and drummers became part of the bill. The introduction of music led to the presentation of a singer or a violinist who could perform a number or two while the operator changed the reel. Occasionally a program included a vaudeville act --a mind reader, a magician or a ventriloquist who didn't require troublesome scenery or properties--and the programs offered as much variety as the exhibitors could afford.

BRIEF HISTORY (PRE-1920) OF MEDFORD THEATER



Medford's first movie theater was the Bijou located in the rear of the Bates Brothers Barber Shop at 126 West Main (the Union Club). The projector was cranked by hand and the story was narrated by the operator. There were no titles or captions. Although it was a penny-ante operation, ticket sales were brisk as long as it was the only picture show in town, but when competition arose, the Bijou faded from view. The Grand on Front Street fared no better. For awhile in 1910, Seeley Hall had a movie concession in the Natatorium, but he didn't operate it as a full time project, and it soon ceased operations.

By 1911 Medford was supporting four movie houses. The Star at 272 East Main and the Isis at 210 East Main, were only a few doors apart. The It and the Ugo were on the West side. Two of these picture houses were converted from retail stores, one of them had been a pool room, but the Ugo had earlier been remodeled into a small theater to show live performances. In 1911 the Kenworthy Players were appearing there in such thrillers as *The Penalty*, *Thou Shalt Not Kill* and *Lena Rivers*, and the Ugo was charging adults a stiff 30¢ per ticket. With the growing demand for films, however, the owner of the Ugo realized that with one or two reelers he could stay in the entertainment business and not have to contend with tempermental actors and awkward stage scenery so he acquired a projector, sent the Kenworthy Company on its way, lowered his prices to a more reasonable five and ten cents, and joined the competition.

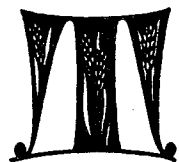
A typical program is shown in an advertisement for the Star, taken from the files of the *Medford Mail Tribune*.

STAR THEATRE
The Only Real Motion Picture Theatre in the City.

An Unusual Program
 "BLOOD WILL TELL"
 A Southern boy shrinks from whistling bullets, but in a crisis he goes through a series of thrilling incidents during marvelous scenes of warfare. Unsurpassed.
 "A TEMPERMENTAL HUSBAND." A Rattling Good Comedy.
 "OLGA THE ADVENTURESS"
 "THE DEACON'S TROUBLES." A Scream from Start to Finish.
 Coming: Sarah Bernhardt in "QUEEN ELIZABETH"
 Al Sather, the Singer
 Best Music and Effects
 Admission 5¢ and 10¢

At the same time the Ugo, the "Most sanitary Motion Picture Theatre in the City," was showing a similar bill, but the Ugo had secured a special in-person act with Scenes of Life Behind the Bars in Joliet Prison with an accompanying lecture by Mr. Roderic L. Wane. Mr. Wane was especially talented; after the lecture he rendered a couple of baritone solos. The singing seems a little incongruous--rather like the presentation of a reel and lecture on Grisly Battle Scenes from the Civil War, after which the lecturer executes his own snappy version of the Turkey Trot--but if it attracted an audience, who's to complain?

With the exception of the little Ugo and the Wilson Opera House, the Medford theaters had no facilities for complete stage revues or musical extravaganzas, and soon, as vaudeville became the most popular form of entertainment in America, Medford had no really suitable theater. In 1912, when the legitimate stage acquired an all-time high of activity with more than 400 stock and touring companies carrying entertainment to the hinterlands, most of these travelers bypassed southern Oregon. The Wilson Opera House, a large wooden building which stood on the south side of Eighth Street between Front Street and Central Avenue, had a full stage and the management booked road shows starring such headliners as Edna Wallace Hopper, Lillian Russel, Victor Moore, May Robson and Kolb and Dill. The backstage area and the dressing rooms were pretty primitive, the decor of the auditorium was a step or two removed from Victorian splendor, and the house was not exactly suited to smart first-nights and theater parties. The Opera House closed with the opening of the Page. The Angel Opera House, on the second floor at the corner of Main and Central, had a stage described as the size of a rowboat, and the auditorium was used for social gatherings and had no history of theater. The Natatorium booked some big time stellar attractions, but as a concert hall it had little charm and less comfort. A well-appointed elegant show palace which could gracefully present both films and the legitimate theater was long over-due.



he announcement that Dr. Frederick C. Page, for an investment, would build a handsome new theater in Medford was met with great enthusiasm and appreciation by southern Oregon. The new structure, designed for films and touring shows, would cost a staggering \$30,000, positive assurance that it would be a theater of comfort and refinement. The selected site was convenient and stylish, just west of the Bear Creek bridge on East Main Street. The groundbreaking ceremonies were held on November 2, 1912.

Dr Page announced that the foundation would be in before winter rains could interfere with the work, and that he confidently expected to have the building ready for opening by February 15, 1913--at the latest--so Medford would not lose all of the season's attractions. Construction would take extra time because plans were ambitious: it would provide every modern innovation and seat 1200 people.

As with most events which are eagerly awaited, there were many hold-ups in schedule. The Grand Opening wasn't just delayed, it was almost six months past due, but the first night audience agreed it was worth waiting for. The Page was built as a well-appointed tasteful theater, at least a decade before picture palaces became enormous opulent Egyptian tombs, Chinese temples and Renaissance cathedrals. Carpeting at the new theater was plush and thick, the folding seats were comfortable and cleverly arranged so that everyone had a

THE MOST GLOSSAL SUCCESS
IN THE HISTORY OF MUSICAL COMEDY
The Vanderbilt Producing Company Presents

Alice Blue Gown
IRENE
Every record for long runs broken

Book by James M. Hargrave
Lyrics by Joe McCarthy
Music by Harry Tierney
Staged by Edward Royce

"THE GREATEST GIRL IN THE WORLD"

PAGE Monday Night, Oct. 29th

KILBOURN GORDON Inc. Presents
The **CAT AND THE ANARY**
Thrilled LONDON, PHILADELPHIA & CHICAGO

THE GALA EVENT OF THE SEASON

WERBA & LUESCHER PRESENT
AMERICA'S PRIZE LAUGH-MAKER

EDDIE **FOY**
AND THE SEVEN LITTLE FOYS
IN THE SMASHING MUSICAL SUCCESS
"OVER THE RIVER"

WITH ORIGINAL SENSATIONAL "CABARET" SHOW
NEW YORK COMPANY OF 100 INCLUDING
THE FAMOUS GLOBE THEATRE BEAUTY CHORUS

SECOND ANNUAL REVUSICAL COMEDY OF
LATIN QUARTER

GREENWICH VILLAGE FOLLIES
ORIGINAL GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE

MARC BLAU INC. PRESENTS
ELSIE FERGUSON
(IN PERSON)
IN THE LONDON AND CHICAGO SUCCESS
THE WHEEL OF LIFE

PASSING SHOW
of 1921
PRESENTING
WILLIE and EUGENE **HOWARD**

PAGE THURSDAY NIGHT MAY 11 8:30 Curtain
KOLB & DILL
SPECIAL COMEDY HOFFMAN
TAKE
BASED ON
LABOR
PHONIC CHESTRA

RGE M. COHAN
PRESENTS
THIS LONDON!
by ARTHUR GOODRICH
LAUGH OF TWO CONTINENTS
SIXTH ANNUAL
Elks Minstrels

BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER
with
50 -- PEOPLE -- 50
MUSIC -- STUNTS -- JOKES -- SONGS
Medford Lodge No. 1168, B. P. O. E.
PAGE THEATRE
FEBRUARY 26-27
TICKETS NOW SELLING
PRICES—Lower floor \$1.65; balcony, first four rows, \$1.65; balance \$1.10, including war tax.

MARCUS Presents
LATEST MUSICAL
COMEDY SENSATION
IN WHICH LAUGHTER
AND MUSIC PREDOMINATE
HELLO PROSPERITY
An Exhilarating
Orchestration of
Tune-Girls Music
with CHARLIE ABOT
and a 12 Cylinder Cast
of Principals.
The Greatest Singing
& Dancing Show
ever Organized
LOOK AT THESE PRICES
SEATS
Night—\$6. \$1.10

PAGE Seats Now Selling
MATINEE AND NIGHT, MAY 21ST
The Biggest Musical Event in Southern Oregon's History
THE MINNEAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
TWENTY YEARS OF UNPARALLELED SUCCESS
HENRY VERBRUGGHEN, Conductor

STRUTTIN' ALONG
THE
WORLD'S GREATEST DANCING SHOW
MAMIE SMITH | RUCKER

THE SHEIK

From the Novel by Edith M. Hall

WITH
AGNES AYRES
AND
RUDOLPH VALENTINO

SEE TOPIC in his greatest Epic, with Love and Laughter, "LOVE AND DOUBT"
PLAYS MUSICALLY INTERPRETED BY GENE HOWARD in the Rights WOLFEER

PRICES ADULTS 50c; CHILDREN 25c
MATINEE DAILY

PAGE



**POLI
NEGRI**
IN
"PASSION"



*Norma
Talmadge*



**'THE
GILDED
LILY'**
With **MAE
MURRAY**

A Paramount Picture

**'THE
GILDED
LILY'**
With **MAE
MURRAY**



ONLY
TWO
DAYS
MORE



THE BRANDED WOMAN



**JACKIE
COOGAN**
IN AND AS
**OLIVER
TWIST**

BEGINS
TOMORROW
MATINEE!

EIGHT
GREAT
REELS
THAT
MAKE
YOU
ASK
FOR
MORE



**"Buried
Treasure"**
with
**Marion
Davies**

HAROLD LLOYD
in
"Safety Last"

First seven reel comedy
ever produced. More
and bigger thrills than
any circus you ever saw.
More startling than the
most exciting drama.

Adults 50c; Kiddies 25c;
Includes tax.

PAGE

**"DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS
IN ROBIN HOOD"**



PENROD AND SAM

PAGE



**GLORIA
SWANSON**
IN ELINOR GLYN'S
"THE GREAT MOMENT"

a full view of the stage, and the decorations didn't intrude on the performance. There was a well furnished cry room provided for the mother whose baby was cutting a new tooth, neat functional restrooms and lots of plate glass by the entrance. The ushers were personable young men in natty uniforms.

For the gala opening night, the managers Messrs. Fuson and Gordon, who had leased the theater, booked the young and bewitching star, Maude Adams in *Peter Pan*. Ed Andrews, who served as the *Tribune* reviewer for theatrical occasions, gave the theater and the performance a rave review. He declared:

Every seat was occupied and the receipts exceeded \$3,500. The graciously appointed auditorium has absolutely perfect acoustics, thanks to C.O. Powers, the architect. Builders have not yet mastered the science of sound waves, and it is not until the auditorium is finished and filled with people that the real test is applied, and perfection is a matter of chance rather than calculation. Dr. Page has won this game of chance. The voice of a child in ordinary tones can be distinctly heard from the top row of the balcony.

The managers, who are polite and courteous, handled the large audience without a hitch. The Chief Usher, Con Cady, is in command of a troop of Medford's brightest and best young men, and the other attaches of the house are well chosen from the little lady in the box office, Enid Hunt, who greets you with a smile, to the Electrician, D.C. McAlpine, and the Stage Manager, J.W. Antle. A really professional orchestra, under the baton of Prof. Beach, played charming music for the overture and between the acts.

And Maude Adams! She was so ethereal that her performance was a spiritual experience. Those lucky enough to have been in the audience will never forget the enchantment that she brought to Medford.

The editor, George Putnam, brought forth an editorial for the opening, but he was considerably less enraptured by *Peter Pan* and the star;

Maude Adams in *Peter Pan* can scarcely be called a suitable production for the occasion. The management, however, had little choice, it was so late in the season. *Peter Pan* is a child's play...a commonplace fairy story, well acted and elaborately staged, but not particularly entertaining except to the juvenile mind. [What a stuffy remark.] Maude Adams herself is perhaps the most striking example of a trust manufactured star now before the footlights--an instance of what money can do with mediocrity. [Didn't the silly goose realize that a trust can't create stars? People who buy tickets create stars.] Strong support, elaborate settings, resplendent scenic effects and above all plenty of printer's ink--here you have the formula of creating a modern stellar attraction. Ability makes no difference to the commercialized Hebrew dictators of the theater. [Let's hope that a multitude of more sensitive citizens cancelled their *Tribune* subscriptions at this point.] It's all a matter of advertising and accessories. [Do you suppose the opinionated editor later dined on crow when Maude Adams was declared first lady of the theater and the play which he dubbed as infantile became synonymous with her name?]

But notwithstanding the nitpicking editor, Monday evening, May 19, 1913, was a memorable event for the Page and for southern Oregon.

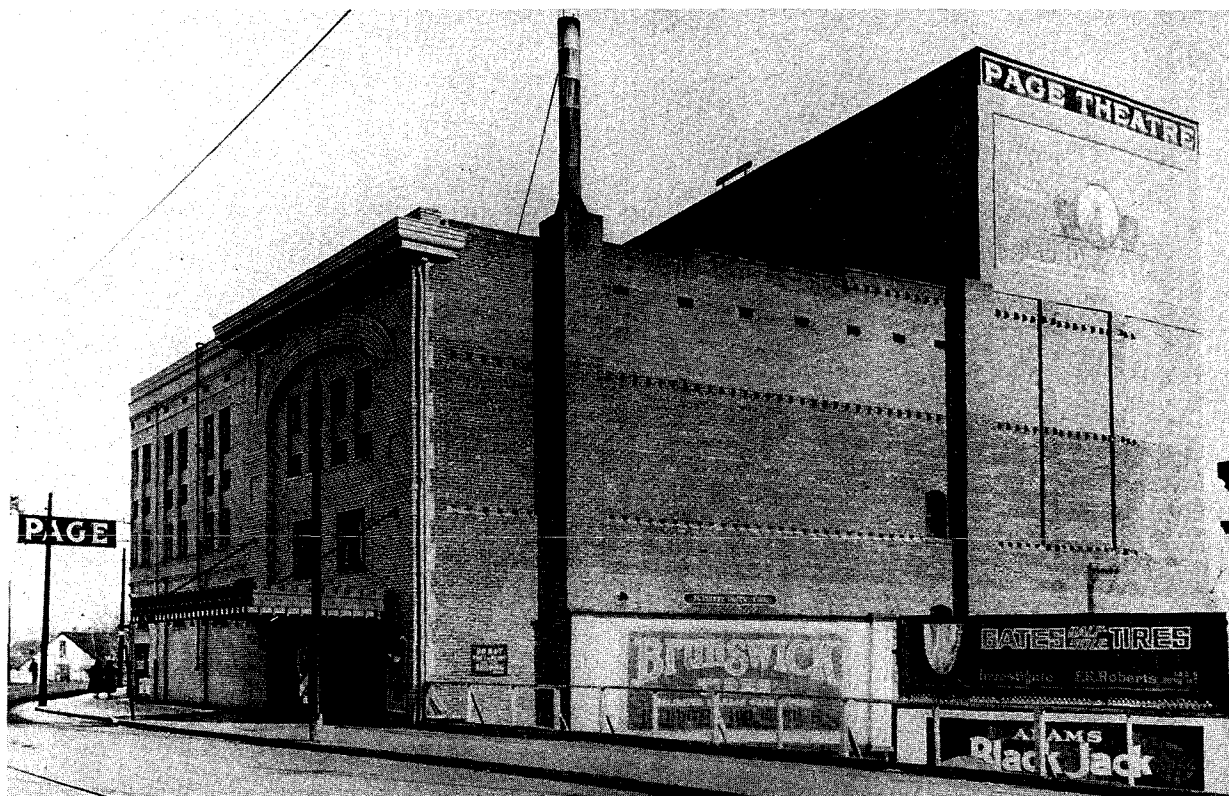
A theater is an inanimate thing. When the footlights are turned off and the stage is dark, it sits there with not much more character than a warehouse. But at matinee time and at dusk, it comes alive with glitter and excitement, and it develops a personality all its own. At such times the Page became a lady. No one can calculate a theater's real significance and influence. For ten years the management presented the magic of Broadway, the verve and color of vaudeville, and the indescribable glamor of the silent films, and offered them all with a flourish and professional polish. People who know only the starkly functional boxes that pass as theaters today with their noisy, popcorn-chomping audiences, have been badly cheated. And those who have seen only the naked

realism of violence and sex on the screen cannot fathom the breathtaking splendor of a subtly lighted love scene between an ever-so-suave gentleman and a satin-clad lady with her hair caught up in a couple of pounds of pearls, or a swashbuckling hero who slides down about a mile of draperies to escape the insidious villains.

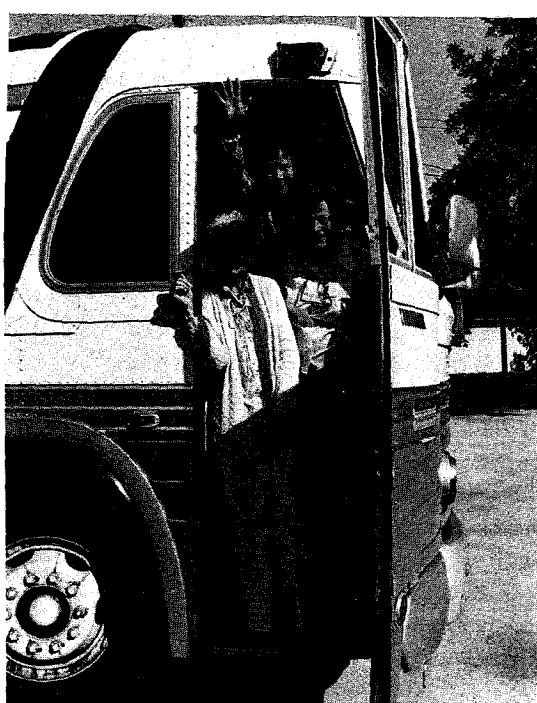
Like so much that was great in early-day Medford, the Page was not to last forever. It wasn't remodled into ugliness as was the deplorable front facade of the Ace Hardware; the Page disappeared overnight. On the last day of the year, December 31, 1923, the *Tribune* printed on its front page a picture of the proud theater. The caption was NOW A MASS OF RUINS. The lead story, "Playhouse Completely Destroyed by Fire," reported the sad fact that the building had gone up in a spectacular blaze. A fire of undetermined origin had started in the middle of the night, most fortunately hours after the last of the audience had gone home. But an even greater tragedy was that Amos R. Willits, a popular young business man, who was serving as a volunteer fireman, was instantly killed when the stage fire wall collapsed and fell on him. Fire Chief Roy Elliott was also badly injured in the crash, but he survived. Ironically at the time, the men were checking to see if the fire had been completely extinguished.

George A. Hunt, who had replaced the original managers, and R.S. Antle, his co-partner, announced that if the walls were still intact, the Page would be rebuilt at once. Plywood was nailed to the blackened doors and windows, Keep-Out signs were stuck around on the walls, the rats moved in, and that's the way the abandoned Page Theater remained for seven years.

By 1930, the city council, after repeated requests to the owners to rebuild or remove the unsightly shell, lost their patience. City Superintendent Fred Scheffel declared the building had been condemned and must be removed as soon as possible. In March the walls were knocked down and the offensive rubble hauled away. It's a pity that something which produced such pleasure and beauty, should end up as an eyesore, but, given the opportunity, time and tide will do that to just about everything.



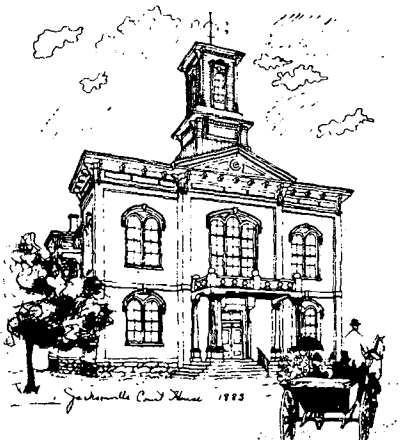
Oregon Historical Society Photograph, Oregon Journal Collection



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Top: Marion Grundy (waving), Dorothy McDougall and Rosette Hamm on the recent Ashland bus tour. 2. Putting up the plaque for the Logtown Rose ceremony. The three ladies are McKee descendants. Below: Jime Matoush sparks up her associate's make-up. 4. Milo Lacy, who installed and maintains the model train in the children's museum. Photographs by Doug Smith and Jane Cory-Van Dyke.

