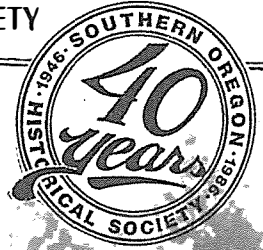


THE TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY



This issue of the *TRS* leans heavily towards photographs of unidentified people. The Peter Britt photographs make up a priceless collection and apparently Britt made an effort to keep his negatives, but unfortunately he neglected to identify them. Artifacts soon fade into history and become treasures, but portraits become less identifiable with the passing of time and fail to realize their total value and interest. If any SOHS member recognizes an Uncle Ferdie or Aunt Philomena, please holler. An identification would be an invaluable contribution.

The unknown gentlemen on the cover were interrupted as they worked their sluicelox. Since there are no half-concealed landmarks--such as a church steeple hidden in the trees or a milepost pointing the way to the Last Chance Saloon--we do not know where they are digging. They could be anywhere along any creek. They are well-fed and appear happy so we assume they are successful sourdoughs.

The two young men above, dressed in classy outfits, have very trim hairdos and have assumed a pleasant expression for the camera. The fellow with the mustache is wearing a good penmanship medal on his watch fob. They certainly aren't prospectors. They may be participants in a wedding; the one on the right looks groomish, but why isn't he pictured with his bride? One can only assume she is so modest and shy she'd rather have her new brother-in-law stand-in for her. Who are they?

THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Jacob & William WIMER

THE WIMER FAMILY CONTAINS MANY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, COUSINS AND GRAND-CHILDREN. EACH OF THESE PEOPLE HAS HIS OWN TALE TO TELL BUT SPACE WILL NOT PERMIT A FULL CHRONICLE IN ONE ISSUE OF THE TABLE ROCK DIVINE. THIS VERSION, THEREFORE, IS LIMITED TO HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIVES OF JACOB WIMER AND WILLIAM JORDAN WIMER, HIS SECOND SON.

WILLIAM JORDAN WIMER was born in September, 1848, at Mehaska, Iowa. He was one of eleven children:* 4 girls and 7 boys. His father, Jacob Wimer (1816-1889) of German stock, was born in Pennsylvania, but later migrated to Ohio where he married Catherine Markle in 1836. A few years later they moved from that state to Iowa, where, as a builder, farmer, developer of industry and energetic citizen, he became part of its history.

As a skilled millwright, he was responsible for the construction of many

Mary Ann (Chastain) b. 1837, Seneca Co., Ohio
Adam Aron b. 1839, Marion Co., Iowa
(twins) Isaac & Jacob b. 1841, Washington Co., Iowa. (Died the next day)
George W., b. 1843, Washington Co., Iowa
(twins) Catherine & Elizabeth, b. 1845, Keokuk, Iowa (Elizabeth died 1846)
William Jordan, b. 1848, Mehaska Co., Iowa
John H., b. 1850, Mehaska Co., Iowa
Hanah, b. 1854, Keokuk, Iowa (died 1855)
James W., b. 1856, Ray Co., Missouri.

(In addition to these children, Jacob and Catherine adopted and raised four others.)

grist mills and sawmills in the state. Soon after his arrival in Iowa he built the first mill in the country in 1842 on the Skunk River. Upon its completion, he sold it and moved with his family to a mill-site on the North Skunk River, where he erected a second mill, which he soon sold, and moved for a third time to Mehaska County where he built the Union Mills on the North Skunk. When it was in full operation, he sold it and returned to Keokuk County to build a fourth mill, the Wimer Mill, said to be at that time the best grist mill in all of Iowa.

In keeping with his by now established patterns, he soon sold this mill, moved to Missouri and set about erecting a fifth mill while he operated a large farm. This mill and farm complex he soon sold and returned to Keokuk County. After a couple of more construct-sell maneuvers, he took his family to Lancaster and announced his intention of retiring from the milling business and moving to the Oregon country.

His departure from Iowa caused a feeling of deep regret by the citizens of Keokuk County, because Jacob Wimer, becoming a gentleman of substance from all his financial moves in building and selling, had been a generous friend who made many liberal contributions to all kinds of public enterprises, churches, bridges or any other thing that enhanced the general good.

THE WIMERS CAME WEST by prairie schooner during the Civil War,* and upon their arrival in Oregon Jacob and his older sons at once began looking for a profitable activity to pursue. The exact dates for the Wimers' business enterprises in their early days in Oregon tend to be confusing, and there is some conflict as to whether they settled first in southern Oregon, in the Willamette Valley or in the Tillamook area. As with many stories of large families, each generation has its own version, and the researcher must select the most practical.

William Jordan Wimer's obituary, which should certainly be an accurate report, states that Jacob Wimer at first operated the Eagle Mills just outside of Ashland for a number of years "after which he and his two sons, George and William, managed the Phoenix Flour Mill where the town of Phoenix now stands. This was the first mill constructed in the Rogue Valley."

Following this, in 1865, the Wimers moved north to McMinnville where they lived for a number of years and were engaged in the mercantile business and owned and operated a sawmill at Yamhill. In 1866 Jacob bought a Donation Land Claim on the North Yamhill River on which he constructed a flour mill which he soon sold.

In 1866 William Jordan Wimer was a young man of eighteen, and he was certainly affiliated with his father in his business efforts, although he had to take out some time for his education.

* In addition to his farming endeavors, his building sawmills and gristmills, he also bought and sold land and livestock. There is a record that he purchased a slave woman and her two children in 1853. The mother was made a free woman by Jacob Wimer in 1859, and before the war he probably freed any other slaves he may have purchased. He made the statement that the Civil War had nearly ruined him.

His literary endeavors demonstrate that he was considerably more than a self-taught student. Census records of 1870 show he was living in Lafayette, Oregon, with his wife Drusilla (Randall) and his mother-in-law. In that same year he and his young bride moved to southern Oregon and lived there for a year or two before they returned to McMinnville where William J. again joined in the operation of the family-owned general store.

The Wimers undoubtedly found advantages to living in southern Oregon for eventually they sold their properties in the Willamette Valley and moved to Josephine County. William appears to have broadened his interests, for shortly after this move, he purchased an interest in the Butcher Gulch mining property a mile or so from Waldo. Jacob and his sons George and James filed three adjacent homesteads on Murphy Creek where they began construction of a grist mill, a project which will come as no great surprise. A store and stage stop was built on James' claim and a sawmill was erected on George's land.

In 1877 they purchased the A.B. McIlwain mercantile store in Waldo.* At the time Waldo boasted a population of 5,000 hardy souls, and was one of the largest and most active placer mining camps on the Pacific coast. There were vast and deep deposits of gold in the gravel beds surrounding the city, and Wimer and Sons held one of the most important claims. The Waldo store, called the Settlers' Store, was the largest and most profitable business in southern Oregon at the time. A two-story building, it had been built in 1863 of hand-made concrete brick and was covered with plaster. Heavy iron doors and shutters provided security. Years later, after the building had collapsed, these doors were removed and installed in the American Legion Hall at Cave Junction.

In addition to his interest in his mill, his mines and the store, William served as Waldo postmaster from 1877 until late in 1886. A paper,** giving detailed information about the family,

* Today nothing exists of the once busy and prosperous town of Waldo, the earlier county seat of Josephine County. To mark the spot the Josephine County Historical Society has erected a plaque along the highway.

** Edwin E. Collom: "Early Wimer Families in Oregon."

reveals that William, Drusilla and their children, lived in Oakland, California, from 1884 to 1887. The duties of postmaster must have been carried on by his father and his brother during his absence.

In 1878 the Wimers bought a half interest in the Simmons mine. After working it for about five years, they obtained the remaining half and renamed the plant, calling it The Wimer Mine. By 1885 this mine was highly successful; there were four shifts of men working, and operations continued night and day. It was the most extensive claim in Josephine County.

In addition to the mine and the Waldo Store, J. Wimer and Sons owned the Mountain House property at the head of the Rogue River Valley which consisted of a hotel, stage barns, farming land and farm buildings and, at one time or another, Jacob and his sons owned distilleries and dealt in land and livestock.

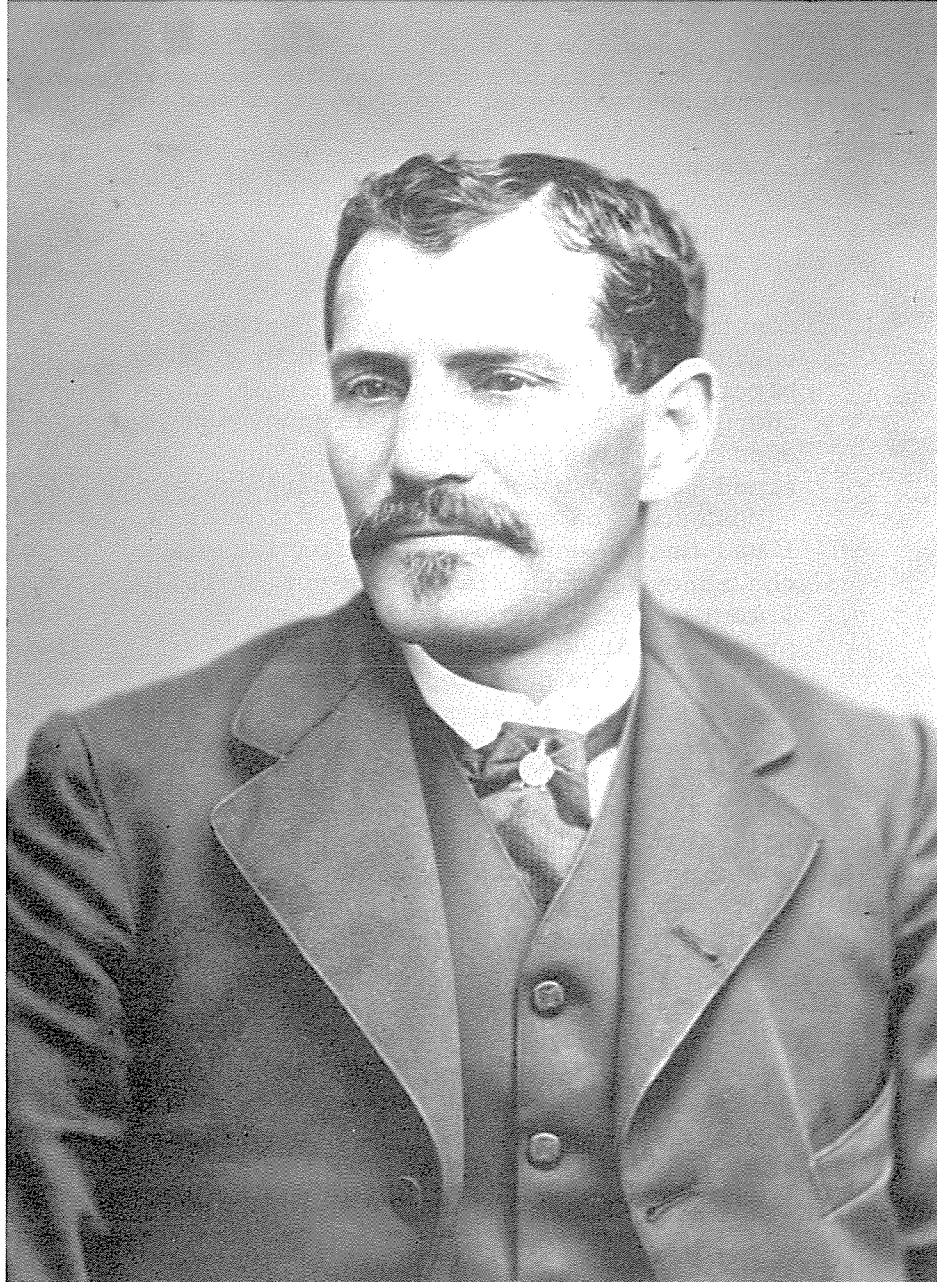
Perhaps Jacob was super-acquisitive of material possessions because he had faced complete ruin more than once: a prairie fire destroyed all his possessions in 1839, and the Southern Oregon flood of 1877 left him with nothing. Recouping after this last disaster, he sold his store to Charles Decker and his mining interests to his sons, George and William, and retired to Coos County two years before his death at the age of 74.

On his return to Oregon after his stay in California, William Wimer purchased the *Grants Pass Courier*. He published his reasons for the investment in an early edition of the paper. The story is told in his own words.

BY W.S. WIMER

Before J.H. Stine established the *Grants Pass Courier*, he and his wife came to Waldo where I lived. The first time I ever saw him he drove up to my yard gate and introduced himself and wife, got out of his buggy and remained overnight.

Somebody had told him that I might back him with the necessary funds to start a paper in Grants Pass. He had some



William Jordan Wimer

temporary aid...but it had to be met on time and he stated that unless he got an [additional loan] he could not pack the load.

I did not know why he had been directed to me unless it was because I was one of the firm of J. Wimer and Sons, and had just expended \$20,000 building a wagon road to the coast.* [He must have thought if] I would spend more than two years, winter and summer, in these mountains on that venture, I might also back a weekly paper in a country with but 500 voters in it, many of whom were not interested whether the country had a paper or not; and this, too, in the face

* The Wimers owned and operated the 65-mile Crescent City Toll Road which they had built at a cost of \$20,000.

of the fact that our old time hustling Charley Nickell of the *Jacksonville Times* practically owned Josephine County in the publishing and printing business body and soul.

I heard Mr. Stine's newspaper proposition and was greatly pleased that the county was to have a paper. I therefore told Mr. Stine that if he would keep the paper out of politics and devote it to the upbuilding of southern Oregon, and especially Josephine County, I would stand between him and the sheriff...

Meanwhile on account of his drinking I had become doubtful about loaning him the money, and to find a way out of it, I went to an attorney for advice. He promptly told me I could not safely lend Mr. Stine anything. Acting upon his advice and to keep my promise to Mr. Stine, I bought a half interest in the *Courier* for \$800. It was then a seven column sheet with but three and a half columns of news matters and editorials, a broken Howe hand press and no jobber.

Our article of agreement made Mr. Stine the editor, and I became the business manager. Stine was obligated not to drink. Mr. Stine went to Portland and bought [new type, a jobber] and material sufficient to do the work that was coming our way.

Things went lovely for just 30 days when Stine entered the office "listing heavily aft," and between breakers declared that I had better buy the other half of the *Courier*. I agreed upon condition that he let me pay his debts among the business firms of the town so that the paper could obtain their good will.

The purchase price then showed some \$1500, whereas a better plant could have been bought new for a little over half that much. I now had a plant that was not saleable at the price I must ask for it.

I knew nothing about the newspaper business and the support the paper was getting did not justify hiring anyone outside of the mechanical department. I took the train for Ashland to confer with my dear friend Leeds of the *Tidings*. Mr. Leeds, seeing my predicament, let me have one of his best men, B.A. Stannard, who immediately moved to Grants Pass, wife, babies and cow...But for these two men this history might read

entirely different. With their aid the *Courier* never missed an issue.

I did not like the name of my paper, *Grant's Pass Courier* because it was misleading, the town being in a beautiful valley. One day I met Hon. H.B. Miller, new consul general to Ireland...and asked him what name he would suggest. He studied for a minute and replied, "Well, it is in the Rogue River Valley, why not call it the *Rogue River Courier*?"

William J. Wimer, as editor, wrote many stories of local life. One was the retelling of a humorous episode that occurred when the Methodist church board wanted to get a replacement for the minister in 1886. A business meeting was held to study means of acquiring a railway ticket for the gentleman of the clergy who was to be replaced. After every possibility was considered, the congregation discovered they were still short \$30 of the sum needed.

At this point a well-known deacon of the church arose and in a melodramatic voice announced: "Of course we cannot expect any assistance from the sinners in Grants Pass."

Professor H.L. Benson, an ex-judge who was then principal of the school, got hold of the remark and decided to remedy the situation. Starting with William Wimer, he said, "Give me a dollar and be quick about it. I've got to raise thirty of 'em in a hour. No halves or quarters. I want a big dollar." Then he added, "I've got mine up," and he raised his hand, holding his dollar aloft.

"You're going to leave town?" Wimer asked.

Benson just looked at the editor, not deigning a reply to the question.

"Reluctantly I hunted for one," Wimer wrote, "rather hoping that I would not find it, but I did, and handing it to him, I went my way sadly wondering how far \$30 would take him."

Pocketing the money the professor headed for the courthouse to find twenty-eight more men with a dollar.

"Later he landed in my office," Wimer wrote, "and explained what had been said at the church business meeting the night before, declaring that his sole purpose in soliciting the money was to refute an unjust insinuation cast at the sinners

of Grants Pass."

The professor went to the parsonage, laid the \$30 on the table so the astonished preacher could see the big pile of silver and presented it with the following speech: "Reverend, the sinners of this town have learned that you need \$30 to help defray your expenses. On behalf of these sinners of Grants Pass I have the honor to present you these thirty big dollars."

Later, reporting the story to William Wimer, Professor Benson said, "The old gentleman was completely overcome, and tears as big as peas chased each other down his face. When he had recovered sufficiently to talk, he replied, between sobs, "G-o-d bless the sinners of Grants Pass."

A year and a half later William Wimer sold the *Courier* to G.G. Wickson Co., a dairy machinery firm in San Francisco. Mr. Wickson's brother-in-law, A.A. Allworth, became editor. Mr. Stine, who was probably a great newspaperman when he was not crapulent, started half a dozen or more newspapers in various parts of the state. Unfortunately he was shot and instantly killed near McMinnville while on a spree.

IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 1880s William and his brother George returned to the Waldo placer mines and engaged in hydraulic mining. In 1890 A.Evan Reames became associated with them in the ownership of the mine and additional property was acquired. The association took the name of The Deep Gravel Mining Company. A head office was established at Jacksonville. William Wimer was president and manager; Reames was secretary. Some years later brother George retired to go into stock raising, but for 26 years William was manager of the mining operations.

WILLIAM WIMER WAS ALWAYS DEEPLY INTERESTED not only in methods for producing gold and diversifying into a variety of endeavors, but in following politics and the affairs of state. Edwin E. Collom wrote:

He was a lifelong Democrat but in local--and even National Affairs--he was a strong believer in placing the public good above political requirements. For many years he was an impor-

tant factor in Josephine County politics although he never sought or accepted office...He was a friend of William Jennings Bryan and for more than two decades the two carried on a correspondence.

...William Wimer wrote and read a great deal. The *Oregonian's* [editorial] pages frequently contained contributions from him. Sometime in 1905 he wrote the following letter to the *Observer* on the subject of naming the towns of Grants Pass and Wimer:

Editor, *Observer*: In your last issue you give the supposed origin of the name of Grants Pass which I do not believe is correct. In the *Courier* of December 3, 1886, was the following letter from Walter Croxton:

Editor *Courier*: In the *Courier* of November 12, 1886, I saw an article by H.L. Benson, speaking of the name Grant's Pass for your town, and that he wants something more appropriate. He says he has not been able to find anyone that can give him a satisfactory explanation of the name. Some say there is a pass through the mountains north of Grants Pass through which General Grant once passed. This is not the case, neither is it from this it took its name.

In the year 1864 or '65 the neighbors opened a new wagon road from the Wheeler place to Jump-off-Joe, and at that time we wanted a post office established at the stage station. So there were several names proposed, and as General Grant was very successful in the army at that time, it was decided to call it Grant's Pass in his honor.

You, dear editor, also say that the post office, Wimer, was named in honor of James Wimer, an early pioneer of this district. This is also wrong. I can give you the facts. In 1887 while canvassing for the *Rogue River Courier*, while on upper Evans Creek, I discovered that the people of that valley had to go to Woodville [Rogue River] for their mail, and that a goodly portion of the winter they were without mail facilities when the waters were up. I made inquiry...in reference to this and was informed that there were about 80 school children in that

vicinity, that some of them were quite grown, and that a post office was badly needed. I volunteered to secure it for them. I had the site located and the post office established with Simon Simpkins as postmaster, my own name appearing on his bond. Binger Hermann, then in Congress, assisted me in all matters at Washington concerning the post office.

When the papers were forwarded to the post office department, I intentionally left the name blank, knowing that there is much confusion there on account of names. Then when the name came out, I suppose that either Mr. Hermann or the department itself gave the office the name of "Wimer."

Yours,

W.J. Wimer, Former Editor of the
Rogue River Courier

This letter also appeared in the *Rogue River Courier*:

Editor, *Courier*:

In your last issue you say: "For a number of years past the placer miners of the western Josephine districts have been finding an unknown metal in their sluices at clean-up time. The metal was mixed with the black sand and the miners, being ignorant of its identity and value, threw it from their sluices."

For 22 years we have been finding considerable quantities of platinum in our annual clean-ups and that without making any special effort to catch it; and all of that time we knew that it was platinum. Until recent years there was no market for it. About 18 years ago we sent about nine ounces of it to San Francisco and never received a cent for it. They did not consider the matter of sufficient importance to report to us what they did with it. Twenty years ago the Joe Smith gulch yielded nice lots of it, but as you say,

we threw it away. We knew what it was, however.

Very respectfully,
W. J. Wimer

The Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905 awarded Wimer a diploma and bronze medal for his processes for saving platinum, said to have been the only distinction of this kind up to that time conferred on anyone in this country.

WILLIAM WIMER AND HIS WIFE, DRUSILLA, had five children: daughters Orrie and Eva; and sons Mark, Ward and Evan. Mark and Ward both died when they were boys. In the late 1880s William and Drusilla were divorced. At that time divorce was almost unthinkable, and a poor wife -- or husband -- had to be desperate to consider such a step, so one's curiosity is piqued to learn the story. Any titillation however has been expurgated from the Wimer story. In 1889 when he was 41, William married Annie E. Dawes of Josephine County and a daughter Mary was born to them.

In April, 1917, the *Medford Mail Tribune* announced the death of William Jordan Wimer of Waldo who had died at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Grants Pass, after an illness of two months. The obituary noted:

He leaves a widow, Annie Dawes Wimer, and four children: Mrs. William Falline, Mrs. W. J. Maloney and Evan Wimer of Grants Pass and Mrs. Mary W. Peacock of Crescent City.

He was a man of very high principles and very strong convictions as to right and wrong and was ever ready to defend his position. He was of the sturdy type that helped to bring this country out of the wilderness and his loss will be mourned by a very large circle of friends and acquaintances.
Raymond Lewis

Sunday Social

STRAWBERRY LAWN FESTIVAL TO BE HELD AT SWEDENBURG

The Southern Oregon Historical Society invites you to the Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum in Ashland on Sunday, June 22, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

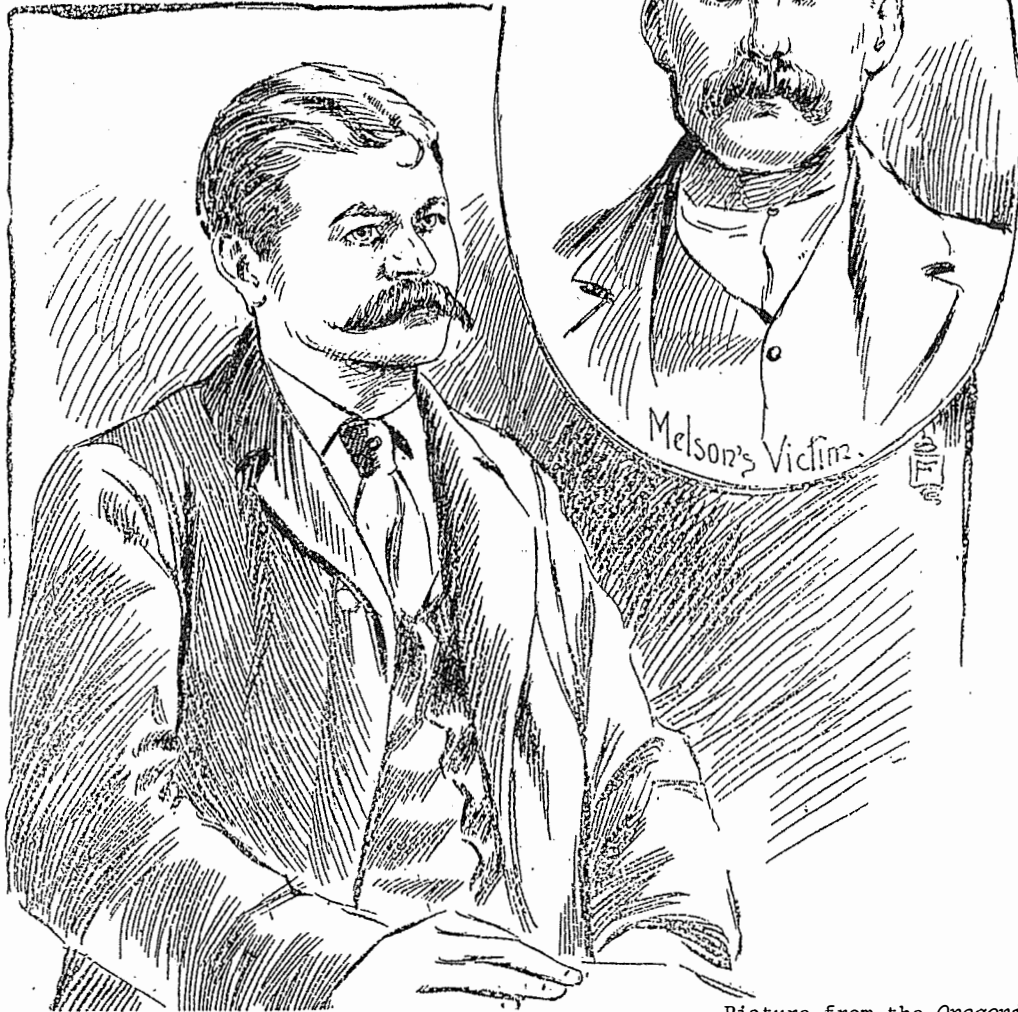
June's Sunday Social will celebrate the Society's first forty years. Enjoy a strawberry sundae while you listen to music by the Rogue Valley Jazz Misfits.



MURDERER AND VICTIM.

Lemuel Melson and the Man he
Murdered as he Slept.

The Story of the Crime.



Picture from the *Oregonian*

The First Judicial Hanging in Josephine County

SHERIFF HIATT had the scaffold put up by June 20th, and the jail yard was cleared to make as much room as possible for the spectators. It seemed as if everybody was eager to view the hanging and see that no-good Melson get what was coming to him. Well, after all, it was Josephine County's first judicial hanging and some of the folks were even

letting their youngsters attend. Not everybody held to that, but it just might be a good lesson to the youngones if they ever got greedy for someone else's pocket-book.

On June 28, 1897, the *Grants Pass Courier* declared:

The arrangements for the execution on Friday are complete, the scaffold has

been erected and the knot is tied. A dozen low steps reach from the jail porch to the platform, through which sticks an iron pedal, that, when sprung, will loosen the trap and send the murderer into eternity. Melson preserves a solid silence, and will probably go to his fate without making a confession.

It's strange that people are always hoping for an accused murderer to repent, dissolve in tears and blurt out the whole sordid story with embellishments and variations. Then everyone can figure that the sheriff didn't make a mistake which would be hard to rectify after the poor thing had slipped through the hole and snapped his neck, and that, with a sincere confession, the penitent sinner might be allowed through the pearly gates after all.

But there wasn't much likelihood of that with Lemuel W. Melson. An article in the *Jacksonville Democratic Times* said, "Melson has evidently resigned himself to his fate. He takes things as matters of fact, and to all inquiries he says he has nothing to say." The editor decided, "He apparently feels no remorse and no fear." Not much chance that he would erupt in an emotional storm of regret.

Now there's a cool customer for you. He lies on a cot in his cell reading trashy yellow-back novels. You wouldn't expect a killer to read uplifting literature like Keats and Tennyson, but when he's about to meet his Maker, he could certainly spend his time on something better than *Deadwood Dick*.

Of course, just after he was arrested he asked for a Bible and poured over it sanctimoniously, but that was all put-on, just a sham, when he was claiming to have killed his victim in self defense. After his attorney told him that nobody would be taken in by his story, he gave up the pose. But even when he was turning the pages of the Book and looking prayerfully heavenward, he received precious little sympathy. He was a man who didn't generate any compassion.

LEMUEL MELSON gave his age as 42, which would indicate he was born in 1855. He didn't reveal any of his early life, or tell when he came

to the west, but that information wouldn't change anything anyway, although it might give a few clues as to why he became a murderer. For a number of years he lived in Del Norte County, California, and spent sometime working the mines in the southern part of Josephine County. According to rumor, he had often been in trouble, but had always managed to avoid meeting the law head-on. It was said a couple of other murders could be laid at his door, but he steadfastly denied the accusations. He was a married man and the father of two or three children.

Melson and Charley Perry were acquaintances. In March, 1896, they were both employed at the Illinois copper mines in Josephine County, and were both paid off and discharged on the same day. Charley Perry, who had worked for a longer period of time, had considerable money coming to him, and Melson commented on his nice little windfall.

Both of them were without prospects, but Melson had an ace up his sleeve. Earlier he had discovered some rich quartz, so he said, in the coast range of northern California. He had wisely kept the exact location a secret but now he would share his find with good old Charley, and they would both go down to Bain's Station, near the line between Josephine and Curry counties and the state boundary, and try their luck.

What did Charley have to lose? He agreed to go, and the two men packed a grubstake and set forth on their horses for the end of the rainbow. Charley Perry was well-liked and a group of miners were on hand to see them off and wish them good luck so, although the location of the quartz vein was a secret, it was no secret that the two of them rode south together.

SOME TIME LATER--about five months--Lemuel Melson showed up in Del Norte County, California. The two men had apparently been successful for Melson was obviously in the chips and was flinging his cash around as if he'd struck it rich. When he was asked where Charley was, Melson casually revealed that he'd gone to Humboldt County. A little later he changed his story and said that they had found no rich vein at the Bain's Station mine, and Charley had gone back to the mines in Josephine

County. Melson was not the world's best liar and the men who questioned him became suspicious and decided a search was in order. They recruited a deputy or two and a couple of men who were hanging around town, and they all rode up to Bain's Station to see what they could unearth.

In a little glade they found a dilapidated cabin where Charley and Melson had stayed. The door hadn't been secured and the place was a shambles where varmints had run in and out as they pleased. There was no sign of Charley there, and the fellows decided to split up and search the woods in the immediate vicinity.

One of the deputies walked up an overgrown path leading to an abandoned well, which had been dug many years earlier. It was a primitive structure with some decaying timbers and unused stones lying around the gaping hole. The deputy expected to see nothing, but he edged up to the side and glanced over into the depth of the well. The water had receded and a body was exposed to view, only partly covered in the dark pool.

The other men were called and, in their efforts to dislodge the body, discovered it had been weighted down with large stones tied to the feet. They cut the ropes, hauled the cadaver to the surface and stretched it out on the ground. It was sadly decomposed, but it was certainly Charley. In a wallet tucked into one of his pockets was a promissory note for \$30 signed by Melson, which he had no doubt overlooked in his haste. One of the men accidentally jarred loose a stone and discovered Charley's watch which had been carelessly hidden by his killer. For a premeditated murder it was certainly a botched-up job. The men wrapped Charley's remains in a blanket, balanced the load over a pack mule and returned to Del Norte County.

A CLOSE EXAMINATION of what was left of Charley revealed that the wound corresponded with the bullet carried by Melson's revolver, which he had bought in Crescent City. A cartridge shell found in the cabin also fit the gun. The evidence was conclusive, and a warrant was made out for the arrest of Lemuel Melson, who, in the

meantime, had left Del Norte County and had gone to Smith River where his wife lived. Constable Davis of Smith River made the arrest, and the authorities of Del Norte County had the prisoner in charge for awhile, but when they discovered that the crime had been committed in Oregon, they turned him over to Sheriff Hiatt of Josephine County. It was afterwards discovered that the well was just across the Curry County line, but the officers of that county refused to take hold of the matter. There really weren't any welcome mats put out for Lemuel Melson at any of the jails in southern Oregon, but finally Circuit Judge Hanna decided that his court in Grants Pass had jurisdiction and the accused was indicted and his trial was set for the next term.

Court had to wait on Judge Hanna's schedule, and Melson lay around the jail in Grants Pass, under pretty heavy guard for several months. Shortly after he was locked up, he came up with his "confession." He figured self-defense was the only way open to him to escape the noose, and he incorporated that into his story. He called in Sheriff Hiatt and Mr. Dawson, the deputy, and told them he was ready to talk and offered his version of the *whole truth*.

YES, HE HAD KILLED CHARLEY PERRY but the killing was certainly not done in cold blood for the money. Charley had been his friend. When they were on their way to Bain's Station, a drifter joined them and the three of them rode along together. The third man was a stranger to Melson, but Charley and the fellow had known each other before, and they laughed and joked about earlier times.


The stranger had a bottle of whiskey with him and he and Charley Perry shared it until they'd downed it all and tossed the empty into the bushes. Melson didn't join them in the drinking. He wasn't much for strong spirits; a man had to keep his wits about him. When it began to grow dark and they stopped to make camp, both Charley and the drifter were under the influence of liquor and were pretty noisy.

Melson went out and collected some wood for a campfire and requested Charley to help him carry a heavy log.

Charley was a mean drunk. Without warning, he grabbed the axe and came at Melson. And he meant business! They grappled a few minutes but Melson couldn't get the axe away from Charley who made a couple of pretty close swings with it, and, in order to save his own life, Melson had to shoot and kill his friend, Charley Perry.

The stranger then came up to Melson and said they'd better get rid of the body and the evidence. He handed Charley's blankets to Melson and told him to go hide them. Melson, who was in a state of shock, took the blankets across the road, dug a hole and buried them.

Disposing of the bedding took considerable time. When Melson returned to camp, he found the stranger had already robbed the body and thrown it into the well. Then the two men separated; Melson went toward Bain's Station, and the drifter went back the way he had come. Melson said he didn't find out what the stranger's name was and he had no idea where he went. He had questioned some of his acquaintances but they had never seen or heard of him. The fellow could have ridden into the Willamette Valley or even drifted down into southern California by now.

 On May 9 the trial opened. District Attorney Jeffrey and G.M. White conducted the prosecution and William Crawford presented the defense. The jurors who considered the case were: Jas. Mansfield, Fred Miller, W.C. Wilson, S.D. Bristow, R.M. Robinson, W.B. York, R.W. Rogers, M.E. Stockbridge, Walter Jordan and J.H. Hickox. Although they may have been pretty sure from the beginning how they would cast their votes, they listened intently as the trial progressed.

For three days a number of witnesses were examined and a strong and complete chain of circumstantial evidence was woven about the accused who showed a bold front throughout and occasionally appeared indifferent to the net of guilt being drawn around him. The editor of the *Democratic Times* wrote: "On only a few occasions did the prisoner evince any signs of the struggle going on within him."

He fell back on his unbelievable confession and firmly maintained the truth

of his statements although the falseness of his story rang out in the courtroom. No part of the fable tallied with the evidence. When witnesses swore that Charley Perry never took a drink and was known to be a teetotaler, Melson's "whole truth" was blasted full of holes, and when the coroner testified that Charley was shot in the back, the defense fell apart. The *Times* reminded the reader that Melson's "countenance is not a particularly good one," and that "the attempt of his attorneys to prove his excellent character [was] a mistake." As a client, he appears to have had little that could be said in his defense, he even looked suspicious and any attempt to whitewash his character was a joke.

The prosecution showed how Lemuel Melson, knowing that Charley Perry had a few hundred dollars in his pocket, had enticed him with a story about some rich mines to a spot near the California border and had murdered him in cold blood. "While they were in bed, the murderer killed his victim with a pistol he had purchased for that purpose," wrote Charley Nickell. "He then dragged the body to an old well--which was full of water--and, tying heavy stones to the feet, dropped it into the depths below. [Five months later] the old well was accidentally examined and, the water having receded, the body was exposed to view."

The money that he had taken from Charley's lifeless body, Melson had carelessly spent in the saloons and gaming rooms of Crescent City. When he was broke, he returned to his family in Smith River where the sheriff finally caught up with him.

There was never any doubt that Lemuel Melson was guilty. The jury was out less than four hours, and on the first ballot it stood ten for guilty of murder in the first degree to two for second degree. A second vote showed a gain of one for the majority, and it was not really difficult to persuade the remaining juror to change his mind. The third vote revealed a unanimous decision.

After the members of the jury had finished the suppers that were sent in to them, they filed back to the courtroom. The judge ordered Lemuel Melson to stand, and the foreman announced: "We find the accused guilty of murder

in the first degree."

"The verdict gives general satisfaction," declared the *Jacksonville Democratic Times*.

On the following Friday, three days later, Judge Hanna made his declaration. Once again the courthouse held a standing-room-only crowd; everyone wanted the satisfaction of hearing the death pronouncement. The judge asked Melson if he had anything to say why the sentence of death should not be passed on him, and he answered by reasserting his innocence. His honor then ordered him to be hanged by the neck until he was dead, by the sheriff, in the courthouse yard at Grants Pass, on Friday, July 2, 1897.

Melson showed little emotion but those in the front row noticed that he trembled perceptibly when judgment was pronounced and they thought it would be a great satisfaction if that killer would break down and tell the real truth before he climbed the thirteen steps.

Melson's wife and some of her relatives and Attorney Crawford made an effort, at the eleventh hour, to have him reprieved by Governor Lord, so that his case might be appealed to the supreme court, but the attempt was futile. Judge Hanna could see not the least ground why the execution should be stayed. The court firmly opposed the attempted delay of justice.

IF THE EXECUTION CAME OFF AS SCHEDULED, Lemuel Melson had less than two months to atone for his transgression, tie up loose ends, and depart for a better land. Now if you yearned to do a good deed for mankind, just what could you accomplish in two months, give or take a day or two?

Try these on your Edison Electric:

People think I shouldn't lie on my cot in my cell and read books. They think I should be of service to the world during my last few weeks on earth. Could I work in the library?

So what could you do in the library? In two months you could maybe shelve a few books if you could learn the Dewey Decimal. But we're a county jail. We don't have a library.

Well, perhaps I could be of service to my fellow man. May I work in the infirmary?

So what could you do in the infirmary? In two months you could maybe learn to do bedpans. Besides we're not the state penitentiary. We don't have an infirmary. Better you should read a book.

PEOPLE, EAGER TO GET A SIGHT OF THE CONDEMNED MAN, and see the law vindicated, began to assemble in the courthouse yard long before the hour set for the hanging. By ten o'clock several hundred were milling about the scaffold. Sheriff Hiatt had distributed a hundred invitations, but many more had crashed the gate and in a grand gesture the sheriff ordered some of the boards surrounding the enclosure to be cut away so the top of the gallows could be seen and those outside the fence could witness the affair.

It was said that the Episcopal minister, the Reverend Isaac Dawson, had worked with the condemned man with great success. Melson had professed penitence for his crime and had been baptised at his own request. Rumor also had it that Melson would acknowledge his guilt and express his repentance in a last minute confession. The atmosphere was taut with anticipation and below the surface were scarcely restrained hysteria and nausea.

Shortly after ten o'clock there was a rattling of the lock on the front door of the jail, the door opened, and an instant hush fell upon the throng. Sheriff Hiatt led the way and Lemuel Melson, his hands tied behind him, followed him. The last two men in the procession were William Fallin, the deputy, and the Reverend Isaac Dawson. Melson had been given a hearty drink of brandy to stimulate him for the ordeal and he stepped firmly up the narrow stairs to the platform and took his place on the center of the trapdoor.

"Do you, Lemuel Melson, have a final statement?" asked the sheriff.

"I have nothing further to say," said Lemuel Melson. Sheriff Hiatt stepped forward and placed the noose over Melson's head.

"But," said the Reverend Isaac Dawson, "you promised. You must keep your promise."

The sheriff stood behind the doomed man, his hands holding the black cap poised over Melson's head. Melson seemed to shrink a little, and in a voice, hardly audible, said, "I die a guilty man; may God have mercy on my soul."

The mesmerized people in the crowd strained to hear. "What was that? What did he say?" they whispered to their neighbors who were aware only that he had mumbled something.

"What is he doing, mama? Is he confessing?"

The sheriff lowered the black hood, the crowd caught its breath, as the sheriff exclaimed, "Good-bye, Melson!" and kicked the spring that held the trap in place. Melson fell through the hole and his neck broke with an audible crack.

It was a tidy hanging. Charles Nickell wrote:

The act was skillfully performed; in fact it could not have been more so. The murderer's neck was broken by the fall, and he died without a tremor.



This news story appeared in the *Medford Mail Tribune* on March 16, 1930. A reunion of the first volunteers of the Medford Fire Department was the occasion, and those who attended reminisced about primitive fire fighting with little equipment and less water power.

Skinny and Rastus, the two speedy bays who formed the first team purchased by the Medford Fire Department, did not attend the reunion of the first volunteers' squads. Their names were frequently called, however, and highlighted in all bull fests held around the stove, where 26 members of the volunteer squad of 1910 enumerated events growing out of Medford's "first flames."

Skinny and Rastus joined the department in 1910. They weren't volunteers. They were drafted. They knew nothing about so hot a life when they entered the employ of the city. They soon learned the meaning of the hurried ding-dong of the city bell and dashed to burning structures until 1912 when the old Pope-Hartford auto took their places.

In those days Medford didn't have a reservoir. A water tank, similar to the one located in the outskirts of Central Point, towered above the trees on the lot where the City Library now stands. When the fire bell rang, the pumps started working to store up water for the coming campaign. Even then,

At 10:21 he was pronounced dead by the attending physicians, and the body was cut down and turned over to the undertaker for burial in a solitary spot near Grants Pass.

Although the *Times* had found Melson somewhat ill-favored in life, his countenance seems to have improved in death. "He was remarkably natural," wrote Charles Nickell. "His eyes and mouth were both closed, and but for the mark of the rope and the lividity which overspread his countenance none would believe that he died from violent causes. The crowd which swarmed about after the execution were allowed to view the remains."

One may appreciate such a ship-shape ending. The story winds up with the leading character looking better than ever (although considerably less animated), the citizens of southern Oregon cheering because justice had been done and the county officials swelling with pride because the first judicial hanging was such a marked success.

It would have been a good time for a parade.

Raymond Lewis

the supply of water was very inadequate. Dwellings frequently burned down because of lack of water to put out the flames.

Before Skinny and Rastus came into the fire department, the volunteer squad pulled the hose carts around the city. Man power was also used to rush the ladder to the scene of the fire. The sides of the carts were lined with buckets, which waked the few sleeping citizens with their continued jangling as the department scurried down the streets.

Events of early days in Medford, subject of each session of the firemen's reunion, were not all recalled by volunteers. John Demmer, member of the city council in 1910, added to the list of reminiscences.

Three members of the first squad, organized in 1890, attended the meeting. They are D.T. Lawton, J.W. Lawton, and Ernest Langley. Other veteran fire fighters, who claim to have saved the town from burning at one time or another, are ex-chief Eugene Amann (?), Jeff Fredenburg, W.J. Fredenburg, J.H. Butler, H.D. Lingi, J.J. Osenbrugge, F.E. Redden, P.C. Bingham, C.F. Lindley, C.A. Hamlin, George Eads. Horace Roberts, Chas. Bossun, H.L. Wilson, Everett Eads, H.D. Haswell, Victor Danielson, Harry Young, Jim Bates, Herman Fredenburg and Tom Merriman.

Heritage Sunday Planned



Ashland's Heritage Committee is sponsoring Heritage Sunday on June 29. This year's theme will be Lithia Park, and activities will begin in the park at 11:00 a.m. with guided tours of the grounds. The tours will last 45 minutes, will be led by six guides, and will continue until 1:00 p.m. Linda Ryan will also be giving tree tours of the Granite-High-Bush streets area at the same time, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Terry Skibby, an Ashland photographer, will present a pictorial exhibit of the park at the Lithia Water Pavilion during the tours. An open house will be held at the CHAPPELL-SWEDENBURG HOUSE MUSEUM in the afternoon from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

An Ashland historian, Lawrence Powell, will offer a slide show on the development of the park and an exhibit of the history of the park will be displayed.

Lithia Park has been chosen also as the theme of Ashland's Fourth of July parade this year.

Gold Beach, Rogue River Cruise to Agness for Dinner

July 9 and 10, 1986, Wednesday and Thursday (two days, one night).

Day One Depart Jacksonville at 8:00 a.m. on our private motorcoach (restroom equipped and air-conditioned) and arrive in Gold Beach around noon.

Our overnight accommodations are at Jot's Resort in Gold Beach, and we will have time to get settled and have lunch before our departure up the Rogue River for dinner this evening in Agness.

Day Two Depart Gold Beach at 10:00 a.m. for our return to Jacksonville by way of Brookings for lunch and some sightseeing. We will arrive in Jacksonville at approximately 4:30 p.m.

PRICE: \$92.00 each, double occupancy; \$126.00 single. In case of cancellation, \$10.00 not refundable. Tour includes transportation, lodging, boat trip, and dinner at Agness.



Please clip and return this portion with your check (made out to the Southern Oregon Historical Society, Bus Tours, P. O. Box 480, Jacksonville, Oregon 97530) for the Gold Beach Tour, July 9 and 10, 1986, Tour #3.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____ NUMBER OF SEATS RESERVED _____

AMOUNT OF CHECK ENCLOSED \$ _____ (\$92.00 each, double; \$126.50 single)

Your reservation will be confirmed after receipt of payment in full.



These frontiersmen went to no trouble to have their picture taken. Well, maybe the fellow on the left put on his clean overalls and the one on the right dug out a fresh shirt.

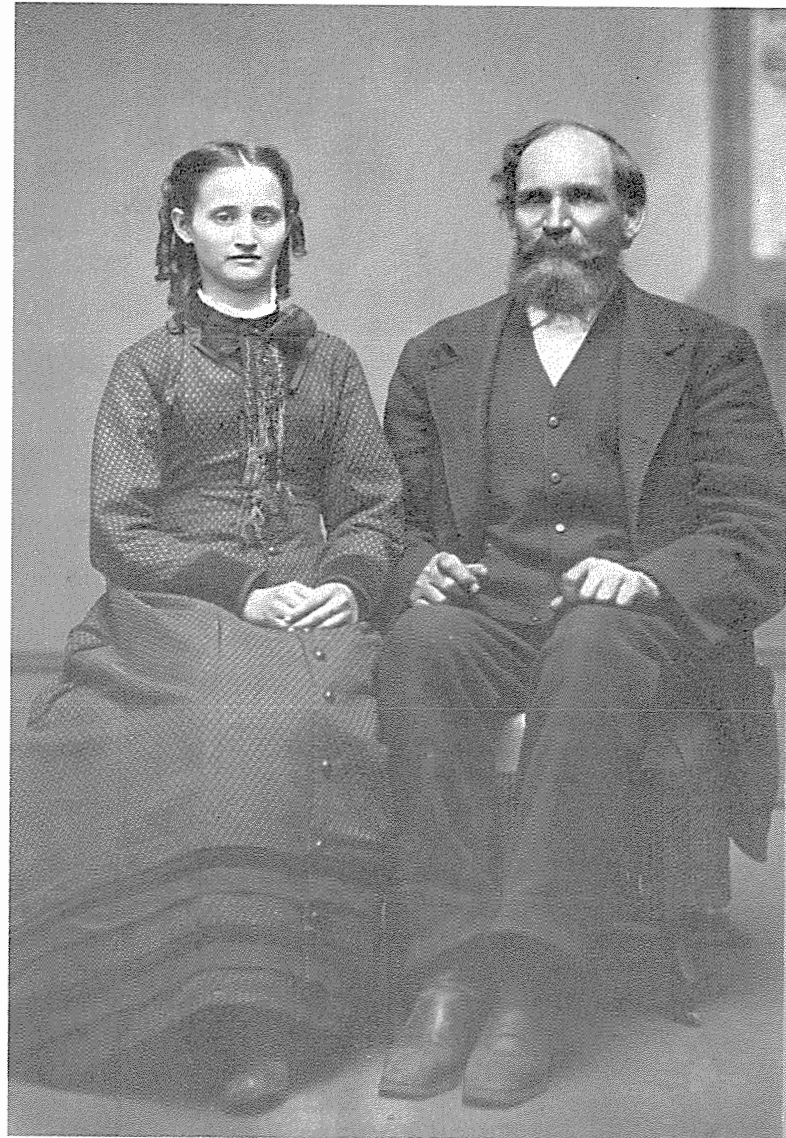
The shotgun is formidable. If they're going out hunting for doves, they'll blast them to bits with that fire arm. Wash the two of them off and put them in a three-piece Sunday suit, and you'd have a pair of good-lookin' dudes.

The little boy sitting on the fake rock pile is not certain he wants to wear a dress like the one his sister is wearing. It's a handicap when he wants to climb a tree and it's awfully hot for summer. But children are seen and not heard. And, dear mamma, who dressed the children, was less concerned for their comfort than for making them look like picture book children.



UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHS

Here's a pair of subdued children--
 surely a brother and sister.
 It seems Photographer Britt never had
 much luck with,
 "Smile for the camera."
 The little girl wants sympathy.
 She is saying,
 "I got a splinter in my wittle thumb."
 Her brother is comforting her.
 Aren't they well dressed?



The young lady
 in the corkscrew curls
 is surely married to the gentleman.
 He is really not much older than she,
 but the bald spot is deceiving.
 He's a little rigid
 because he's self-conscious
 in front of the camera
 and he's held his breath
 until he's blue in the face.
 She is not certain she couldn't have made
 a more romantic marriage.
 But her other suitor was such a rascal,
 a real scapegrace,
 but such a charming one.

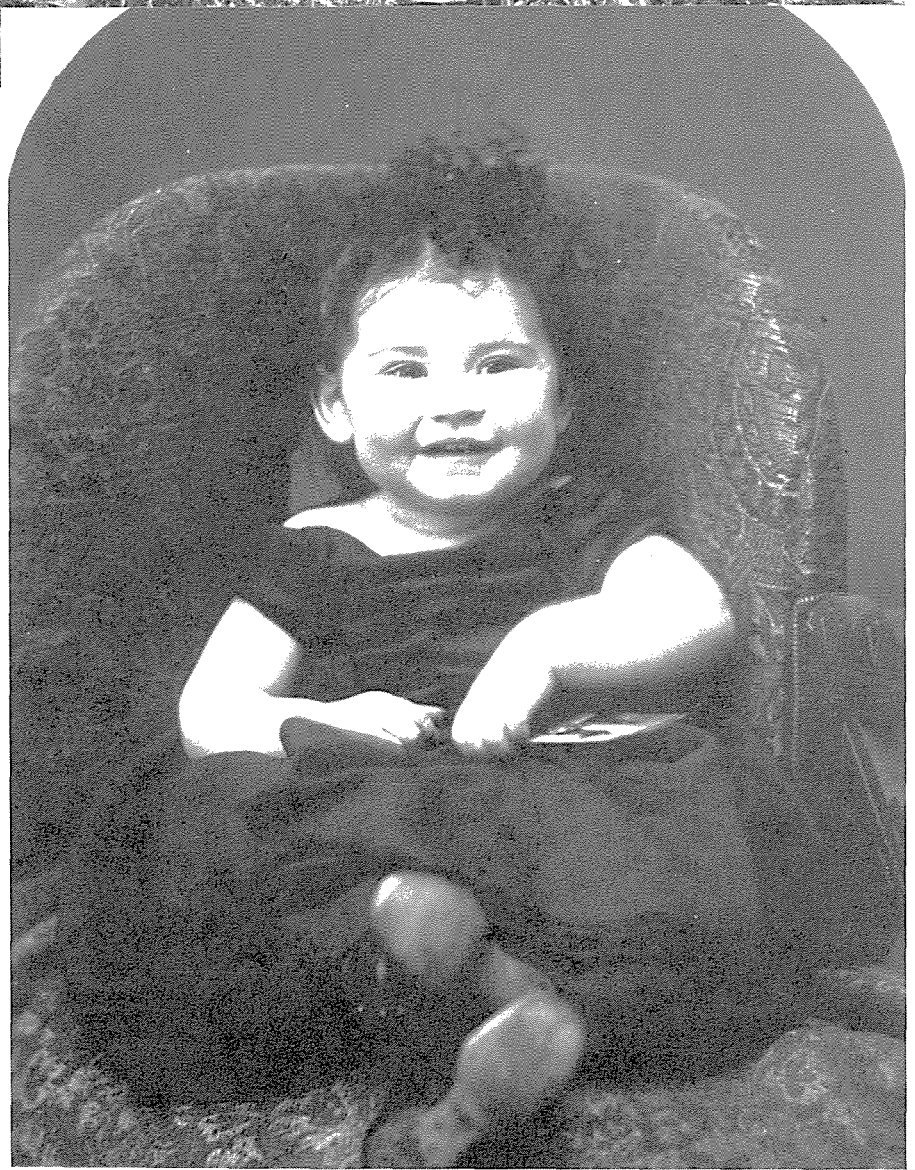


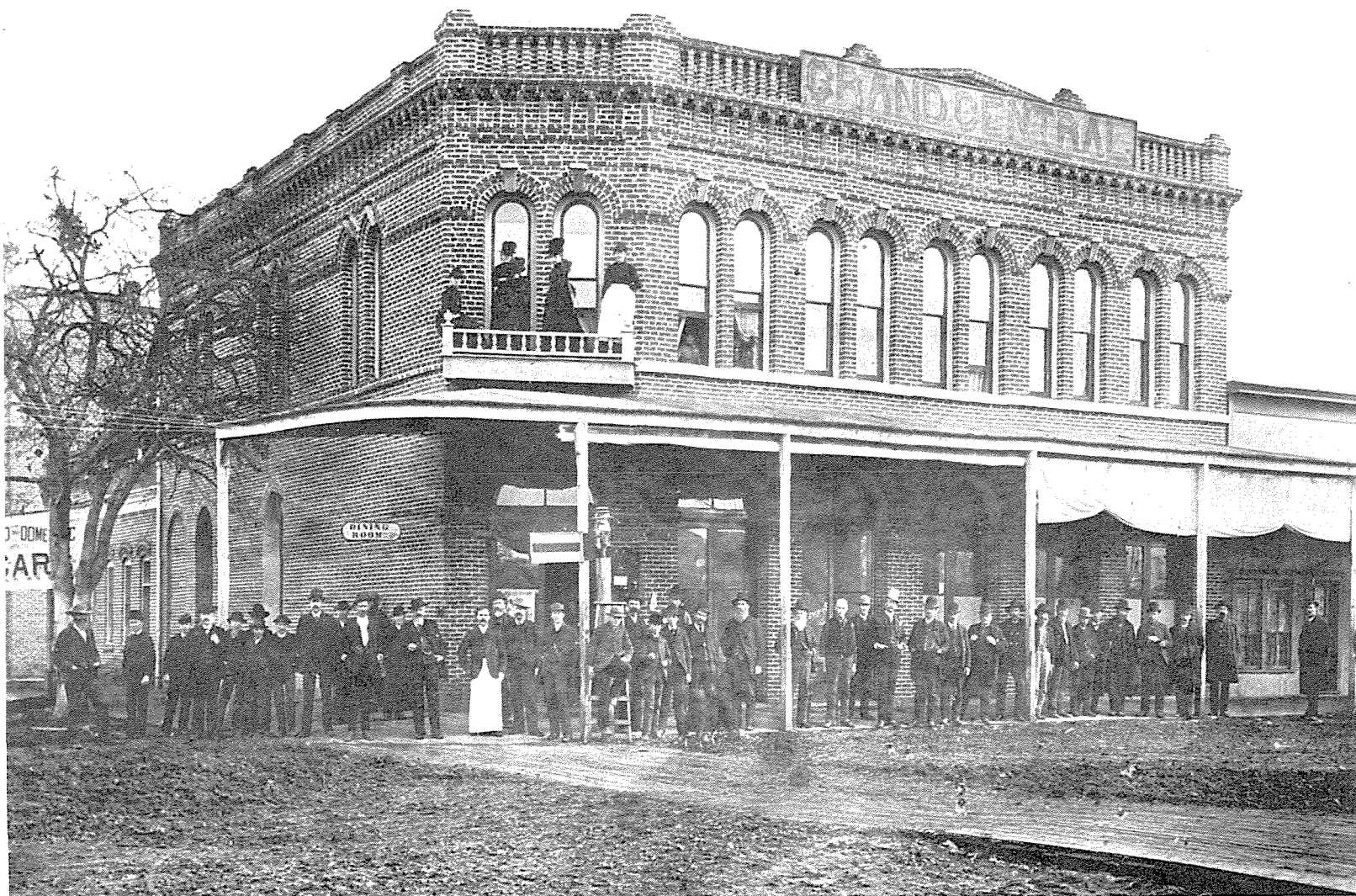
UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHS



The picture above was taken of the Britt gardens in late summer. Notice the broad-leaved trees not indigenous to this area, and the lush growth of flowers and shrubs. The garden must have seemed a wonderland to those whose own yards were scorched by the sun. Happily the subjects in this picture were identified before we went to press. The little girl on the left in the pinafore and the Spanish hat is Agnes Love, the gardner is the very young Emil Britt and the little girls on the right are Gertrude and Helene Biede, who were earlier pictured on the cover of the TRS with their fascinating hand-carved wooden doll.

The little girl, on the right, has such a sunny nature that even the deadly serious business of picture taking doesn't suppress her smile. She has her hair neatly frizzed and is wearing her new linsey-woolsey dress for the camera.





Practically all the businessmen in Medford have lined up in front of the Grand Central Hotel for their pictures. There are butchers and bakers and candlestick makers and a few drummers and drifters. Some of the domestic help have even left their posts to pose prettily for the cameras. The Grand Central was a predecessor of the Nash Hotel, named for Captain John T.C. Nash, and it stood for years at the corner of Main and Front Streets. The Nash was a proud and elegant public house for a generation or two before it ran into hard times. In May, 1978, it burned in a spectacular blaze which destroyed the old hotel, Robinson Brothers store, and for an exciting hour or two, threatened the entire block.

Captain John T.C. Nash

John T.C. Nash was born in Knox County, Maine, on March 31, 1833. Living on the rugged New England coast, he was a member of a family who had a tradition of ships and sailormen, and when he was only ten years old, he put to sea as a cabin boy on his father's ship. The father, Captain Thomas Nash, was also a

native of Maine, and, like his son John, had begun his career as a cabin boy. Thomas Nash's first ship was a sailing vessel and, with the adventurous life of the sea in his blood, he soon advanced to a position of able seaman, boatswain and finally captain of the ship.

John Nash's mother, Rebecca (Elwell)

Nash, was also a native of Maine, born into a family of New England fishermen. Rebecca and Thomas Nash had four sons and three daughters, and John was the second child. True to his father's teaching and the example he had set, John appeared to court danger and adventure and took to the freedom loving life on the sea.

When he was fifteen, he became mate on the *William Jarvis*, and the following year when he was but sixteen, he was the quartermaster on the steamer, *Philadelphia*. He first touched the shores of California as quartermaster of the sailing bark, *Illinois*, having rounded the Horn. The mining excitement was just at its highest point, and in 1850 young John quit his ship in San Francisco and went to the Yuba River where he engaged in placer mining. The large nuggets eluded him, and, homesick for the New England coast, he soon returned to San Francisco and shipped out for home.

In 1851, when John was eighteen years old, his father, Captain Thomas Nash, was killed in a tragic collision. Death in a tempest at sea was no stranger to the Nash family, and the loss of his father did not discourage John from continuing his career with ships and shipping. He became captain of the steamer, *Lyon*, which sailed the Mississippi River. In an unfortunate accident his ship was blown up, but he escaped injury and became captain of the *New Guatemala*, which sailed between New Orleans and Havana.

At this time the rumors of riches found in California were still rife. Young John Nash, like other unmarried fellows, was constantly reminded that he was free to join the ones who had gone ahead and were daily striking it rich. Even a dedicated mariner, such as Captain John Nash, was once more intrigued. Perhaps he had not really given up the idea of sudden wealth and, thinking he had not been diligent enough in his mining activities when he had tried the first time, he joined the parade to the far west.

Following others, he made his way to Minnesota, California, where vast fortunes were supposed to await all who raised their picks and brought them down into the rich earth. John Nash didn't seem to know the magic word. After several months of giving the region

around Minnesota the raised-pick treatment in vain, he went with undiminished confidence to Gold Lake. His luck was no better. Fortunately, unlike so many others who devoted their entire lives in a futile search for gold, he did not succumb completely to gold fever. Perhaps this immunity was a result of the failure to strike a rich vein rather than the saltwater in his system. But he soon returned to the sea, and had charge of the steamer, *Patagonia*, plying between Valparaiso and London. The thoughts of sudden wealth in the gold fields persisted, however, and after a run or two, he returned to California for a third time. His enthusiasm for mining was again easily discouraged and he went back to the east to take command of the clipper ship, *Silver Sea Wing*, running from Valparaiso to Manila. He made two voyages.

The editor of *Portrait and Biographical Record* wrote:

The captain had many narrow escapes from a watery grave. At one time he was off Cape Horn in a terrible storm, during which the ship was dismantled and the rudder lost. Later the ship came into port with nothing but her lower sails and a jury rudder (temporary replacement) which had been improvised from a barrel of water.

He had another narrow escape in a violent storm off Cape Hatteras. Everything above deck was swept into the sea, and the crew would have drowned except for the timely arrival of another ship which fortunately answered Captain Nash's call for help as his ship broke apart and sank in the angry sea.

The year 1855 found him again in Maine, where he purchased a sailing craft called the *Shenandoah*, of which he became commander and contracted to carry rock to Staten Island for the government. This assignment lasted for two years, and in 1857 he sold the *Shenandoah* and came west for a fourth time, this trip by way of the Isthmus of Panama.

Stopping at Monte Cristo, California, he decided that as long as he was in the gold fields he might as well wash out a few colors. Luck is an unpredictable lady, and again she teased him. He found no spectacular lode at Monte Cristo, or, the following year, at La

Porte, but in 1859, at Bald Mountain, when he was no longer expecting a Bonanza, Luck decided to surprise him. Scraping around in the mud and shale, he suddenly discovered a very rich vein, which he called the Yankee mine. Erecting a mill there, he hired a crew of men to work his claim, and wandered off into northern California, to Siskiyou County, looking for another strike. Lady Luck capriciously bestows her favors, and once again he struck it rich. This time he called his find the Black Bear mine and proceeded to sell both the Yankee and the Black Bear mines for a handsome profit.

Never able to stay long in any one place, in 1859 he again went through the Isthmus and returned to the east but by 1860 he was back in the mines of California. This time he wasn't so fortunate and headed for the Boise Basin in the Caribou district of Idaho. Although mining had just got off to a start in that region, and there were many untried areas, he made no earth-shaking finds and wandered around searching for likely-looking spots in other parts of the northwest.

With a party of five other men he went on a prospecting tour in the Green River country. There they routed out a band of about a hundred Indians who were spoiling for a fight, and exchanged insults with them. Aware that these natives weren't making empty threats, they prepared for an attack. In a sudden scurry the Indians--the Loos--hid behind trees, bushes and boulders and crept closer to the little band of five who held their fire. When the Indians were within two-hundred yards, the miners suddenly opened fire upon them, causing a lively retreat. About thirty braves and an equal number of horses were killed in the onslaught.

The unexpected blast from the five guns and the murder of the men and horses incensed the Indians and they regrouped at once and renewed their attack, killing one of the party of miners. The men could see the futility of standing their ground and fighting to a finish, and, hastily picking up their dead comrade, they spurred their horses and made tracks away from the battleground.



H. L. Nash

Owing to the fleetness of their American horses, they were able to escape. Out of danger at last, they buried their dead companion in the Idaho wilderness.

Continuing his search for gold in Idaho, he was successful beyond his expectations, and in 1865 returned to California and mined in Trinity County until 1886. When one finds the pot of gold not once, but several times, he should be satisfied and give up the constant pursuit. But eventually the quest becomes the important part of prospecting, not the discovery.

With his bank accounts bulging, Captain Nash resolved to go into farming. He purchased 400 acres of land near Riddle in Douglas County, Oregon, but he soon found life more enjoyable when he hired



There has been a little smattering of snow, but it hasn't congested the bustling traffic on Main Street. There is some building activity in progress on Front Street, but the gentlemen in the visiting delegation aren't particularly excited about it. The Nash Hotel, in its Golden Age, dominated downtown Medford.

farm hands to do his work and he continued his mining activities. His luck prevailed. Prospecting on Cow Creek, he once again found a rich lode, which he named the Victory Mine and turned into an Eldorado.

By 1895 he was sixty-three years old. He had been in many, many places and had made several fortunes. There comes a time, it seems, when rheumatic pains do more than give an occasional jab, and the unpleasantness of wading around knee-deep in cold water becomes more nagging. Then it's time for the sourdough to sit back with his earnings, if any, and reminisce and lecture. Captain Nash retired from his farm and moved to Medford, a rapidly growing little metropolis in southern Oregon.

Medford had several hotels which served the traveling public adequately, but

there was no grand, imposing structure with a lobby where the elite might meet, a dining room which would please the local epicureans, tidy guest rooms within easy reach of a bathroom and patent water closet, one to a floor, and a spacious bridal suite, exquisitely furnished for the couple on their honeymoon. As an investment Captain Nash decided to provide this luxury for the city.

A two-story brick building stood on the corner of Main and Front streets. Built in 1884, it was, in fact, the first brick building in Medford, and had originally been a saloon. By 1892 the structure was enlarged and was known as the Grand Central Hotel. A photograph taken at this time shows an elaborate balcony around it. Under different ownership, the hotel had changed its name several times. It was known, at one time or another, as the Riddle House,



There is no explanation for the parade of horse-drawn vehicles which makes its way down Main Street. The formation is too neat to be made up of Saturday shoppers. The picture was taken a little later than the view on the preceding page. The First National Bank has been added, the hotel has a new sign on the tower, and someone has installed some striped awnings.

the Grand Central, the Medford and the Grand. As a hotel, it had seen better days, and it offered few luxuries, but it was an adequate overnight stay for prospectors and farmers in town for the night. Captain Nash bought it.

On January 11, 1895, the *Medford Mail* printed a story headed "A Grand Hotel That Is To Be -- The New Nash Will Be the Finest Hotel in Southern Oregon."

The story revealed:

Many of those who thought the Grand Central was a pretty sleek affair are here still, and when they see the new hotel, the expression *immense* will be their utterance.

...The new name is given the house in honor of its owner, Capt. J.C.T. Nash, and a fitting tribute to the gentleman it is...The hotel will be 75 by 100

feet in size and three stories high... The entire third story will be built of steel, surmounted with galvanized cornices...Over the office entrance will be a tower 78 feet in height, from the sidewalk to the finial. A copper weather-vane of a miner's pan, pick and shovel, emblematic of Mr. Nash's former vocation, will be placed at the top of the tower. [The weather vane, which attracted so much attention, was made of the original shovel and pick which Captain Nash used to dig the gold that built the Nash Hotel.

The main entrance will be surmounted by a Grecian balcony, terminating in a bay. This bay opens into the bridal chamber...and is to be 16 by 18 feet in size. There will be 61 sleeping rooms in the house. The building will be provided with electric lights, something like 100 in number, also electric call bells. The laundry room will be on the

first floor and will be provided with the Montgomery Complete Laundry outfit.

The building throughout will be first class, and while any amount of credit is being bestowed upon Mr. Nash, we must not forget the part which the master hands of Architect J.W. Bennet has taken in designing so beautiful a structure. The finishing of the house will be beautiful and in keeping with the general grandeur of the building itself. The bridal chamber will be a little palace.

Incidentally let us mention that Captain Nash is still an unmarried man, and let us further state, there is a possibility of there being two events to celebrate--and one of them is a wedding.

At last with the prospecting and the seafaring behind him, and the construction of the hotel in able hands, Captain Nash found time to think of romance. On October 14, 1897, he was married. The *Democratic Times* announced:

Captain J.T.C. Nash, the well-known mining man, surprised his friends last week by quietly getting married at the U.S. Hotel [in Jacksonville]. The bride was Miss Ella Brown, recently of Indiana, and the wedded

couple are now in California spending the honeymoon.

In 1899, when the captain was sixty-nine, a son, Elwell Crawford Nash, was born.

For many years the Nash Hotel served Medford as a smart meeting place. In the early days at the change of the century, it was patronized by the socialites from the east who came west to make their fortunes in the orchard boom. It boasted a small ballroom and an attractive saloon for the gentlemen. The lobby was comfortable and well-furnished although it never matched the luxury of the early Medford Hotel when its lobbies were furnished with powder blue upholstered pieces, soft carpeting, shining tables and desks and a comfortable fire in the fireplace. The outstanding feature of the Nash Hotel was its dining room. In a 1976 issue of the *Mail Tribune*, reporter Betty Miller described a holiday dinner which had been advertised in the *Medford Daily Mail* in 1906. She wrote:

It was a pretentious 12-course meal, served New England style, with many side dishes made elegant by having their names printed on the menu in bad French, *Lobster en Caisses l'Newburg*.

...The long meal began with oysters served with horseradish, and proceeded to the soup, a choice of *terrapiin a la Baltimore* or *consomme a l'Imperiale*, accompanied by salted almonds, celery and *caviar a l'astrachan*.

The first course followed. It offered a choice of salmon or sole in butter sauces with spiced walnuts, olives and pickles.

Then came the entree... boiled beef tongue with spinach, lobster, chicken, sweetbreads *l'Monglas*

or lamb cutlets *l'jardiniere*. Next appeared the *piece de resistance*, the turkey stuffed with chestnuts and ac-



A well-appointed hotel at the turn of the century offered completely equipped stables for coaches and buggies driven by patrons. The Nash Livery was a tidy place of business with none of the deteriorating walls, dirt floors and offensive odors of the village smithy.

accompanied by side dishes of corn on the cob, asparagus, green peas, potatoes and cranberry sauce. For those who did not care for turkey, roast beef or suckling pig was available.

The roll was carefully tucked in the diner's napkin. Polite society did not use bread and butter plates for formal dinners.

There came a pause for recuperation at this point. Kris Kringle punch was served. It was likely that the punch was alcoholic in those pre-prohibition days.

[But on with the simple dinner]

A choice of roast mallard duck or breast of squab was followed by shrimp or lettuce salad...

Dessert also arrived in courses. First was the traditional plum pudding with brandy hard sauce or a selection of pies, cakes and ice cream. Fruit in season or a *macedoine* of preserved fruit was next, then dates, Smyrna figs and mixed nuts, and finally cheese wafers and coffee.

A toast to the occasion was given in private stock champagne, vintage 1880, and the ladies retired while the gentlemen blew smoke rings from Havana or Key West cigars, courtesy of the management.

In 1906 no one would have thought of asking for a doggie bag.

The Nash family, in keeping with the captain's wanderlust, moved about considerably. They lived for a large part of the year in San Francisco and frequently traveled to the east coast. They spent almost as much time away from Medford as they did at the family home on South Oakdale Avenue. In 1903 the captain moved his family to Berkeley, but they often made trips back to southern Oregon. The captain was active in the Jacksonville lodge, and he had a host of friends. He maintained his ownership of the Nash Hotel until his death. The editor of *Portrait and Biographical Record*, in telling the captain's story wrote:

Fraternally the captain is widely known and is associated with Blue Lodge, No. 103, A.F. & A.M. and the Royal Arch Chapter of Jacksonville. In national politics he is a Republican, and in religion is a member of the Presbyterian Church. Hale and hearty and good natured, Captain Nash is a typical pio-

neer, broad minded, liberal and humane, and with a fine capacity for making and keeping friends. In his travels Captain Nash has been around the world once by water, has visited all the large cities in the world, and has been in all the seaports from Alaska to Cape Horn on the Pacific, and from Cape Horn to Prince Edward Island on the Atlantic. The last ship which he sailed was the clipper ship, *Pride of the Ocean*, in the service of the East India Trade.

There appears to be small wonder that Medford had not enough delights to hold Captain Nash, a world traveler and adventurer, for full twelve months of the year.

In 1918 the *Mail Tribune* carried the headlines, "Captain Nash, Pioneer Miner, Crosses Divide," and the story announced his death:

Captain John T.C. Nash, aged 85 years, former well known prominent citizen of Medford, pioneer sea captain, California and Oregon [and Idaho] miner, and builder of the Nash Hotel, died at his home in Berkeley, California, Sunday evening...Ella B. Nash, the widow, stated that the remains will arrive in Medford Tuesday evening. The funeral will be here on Wednesday afternoon.

Captain Nash only returned home to Berkeley last Friday after two weeks spent in Medford. He seemed exceptionally hale and hearty for one of his years while here, though close friends observed that his health was failing. At the depot last week while waiting for his train...Captain Nash was seized with a bad heart attack, and had to be assisted on board the train. At that time he thought he would be all right after leaving this climate.

The life of Captain Nash was one of robust action and adventure, both on land and sea. During his hardy career he had many narrow escapes from death on the ocean and on the land. He was a pioneer miner in the fifties and through his successes in mining adventure he accumulated much wealth.

A man of genial personality and possessed of public spirit, he had a host of friends who will mourn his passing.

Raymond Lewis

40th BIRTHDAY A SUCCESS

About 2,300 visitors enjoyed the 40th Birthday Party of the Southern Oregon Historical Society on May 3, 1986.

Shown at left is a group of school children participating in the winding of the May Pole. Nearly 300 children participated in the Children's Heritage Fair held the two days prior to Saturday's main party. Ten classes from Jackson County were invited to participate in the fair, which will become an annual event.



An important part of the Birthday Party was the re-dedication of the Jacksonville Museum. First opened in May of 1950, our museum has received more than 2,000,000 visitors.

Shown cutting the ribbon are Mrs. Margie Fixott, representing the SOHS Board of Trustees; Jackson County Sheriff C. W. Smith and his daughter Christen; Jacksonville Mayor Frank Carter and Jackson County Commissioner Jerry Barnes.

Mayor Carter "stole the show" by presenting two numbers on his harmonica to the pleasure of those attending.

Approximately 2,000 pieces of cake were served following the ceremony.

Photographs by Doug Smith.



Leslie Gould, curator of the Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum in Ashland, shows school children how to paint rocks.



THE TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

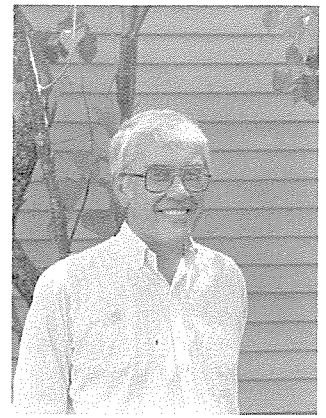
DONALD McLAUGHLIN NEW SOCIETY PRESIDENT

Mr. Donald McLaughlin, a resident of the Rogue Valley since 1940, has been elected president of the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

A 1954 graduate of Medford Senior High, McLaughlin received a degree in Industrial Engineering from Stanford University in 1959. After serving as an officer in the United States Army until 1961, Don returned to the Rogue Valley where he has been engaged in the plumbing and heating business since. He is currently president of Western Mechanical, Inc.

Don has a long history of public service in the Rogue Valley and became a member of the SOHS Board of Trustees in 1985. "As a Valley resident, I am very interested in our history and I want to make certain that the Society maintains its reputation as a professional caretaker of our heritage," said McLaughlin.

Married in 1958 to Susan Barnes, they have three children: Michael who along with his wife practices law in Anchorage, Alaska; Charles who is a graduate of University of Oregon and is employed by Hewlett-Packard; and Kimberly who will graduate from the University of Washington this year.



Mr. Donald McLaughlin

SOCIETY SCHEDULES REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Southern Oregon Historical Society will hold its regular meeting on June 17, 1986 at 7:30PM. The July meeting will be held on July 15, 1986 at 7:30PM. Both meetings will occur at the United States Hotel in Jacksonville. Members and the public are encouraged to attend.

Photographs by Natalie Brown

THE ANNUAL DINNER

The 40th Annual Dinner and Meeting of the Southern Oregon Historical Society was its largest in history. More than 300 members and friends crowded the Red Lion Inn to enjoy the evening.

Shown at left is Society President Robert Butler and Peggy Rubin of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival who did a masterful job of "weaving" Shakespearean characters and events into association with the anniversary of our Society.

Honored at the meeting were

Mr. Donald Rowlett, owner of Ross Clothing Stores, who was made a life member in recognition of his donation of the Applegate Store to the Society. Also honored was Mrs. Mary Tooze, who was unable to attend. Mrs. Tooze donated a 75 horsepower steam engine to the Society for use at The Willows Farm Museum.

Photo by Doug Smith

A BIG CAKE!

Visitors to the SOHS Birthday Party on May 3 were treated to a huge birthday cake.

The 16 square foot cake was devoured by the more than 2,300 visitors---in very short order.

The white cake, decorated in the burgundy colors denoting 40 years, was prepared by the Jacksonville Bakery and required four men to carry its bulk.

Our beautiful birthday cake surely helped make our special day more memorable!

WILLOWS TO REMAIN CLOSED IN JUNE

Although the Society's Conditional Use Permit is under consideration by the Jackson County Planning Department, no permission has been received to open the farm for June. Therefore, we will hope that the farm museum may be opened in July. We'll be sure to keep you informed. The Willows Farm Museum (The Hanley Farm) will not be opened on June 21 and 22 as had been earlier planned.

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JUNE SPECIAL EVENTS

"Picture That" an exhibit of children's books and illustrations, will be the theme of an exhibit which will open June 16 in the Children's Museum, Jacksonville. The exhibit will continue through September 28.

Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum in Ashland will be the scene of an old-fashioned "Strawberry Lawn Festival" on Sunday afternoon, June 22 at 2:00PM. We'll have musical jazz band entertainment and lots of strawberries, cake and ice cream so don't miss out on this special Sunday Social!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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