

TABLE ROCK

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SENTINEL

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The
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of the
Southern
Oregon
Historical
Society

Eighty Years Ago



One of the prettier customs to survive through the ages has been the celebration of May Day, marking the renewal of life as winter passes to spring. Such spring festivals have been enjoyed by ancient Egyptians, Romans and Indians. The Maypole dance itself is a medieval ritual. Villagers wove ribbons and streamers around a Maypole until it was covered with bright colors. Other traditional May Day activities include gathering spring flowers and making baskets, singing, dancing and crowning May queens. These enthusiastic southern Oregon Maypole dancers at Dardenelles near present-day Gold Hill continued the tradition in 1908.

SOHS #3137



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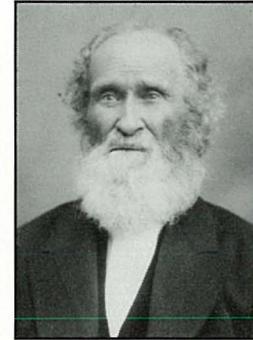
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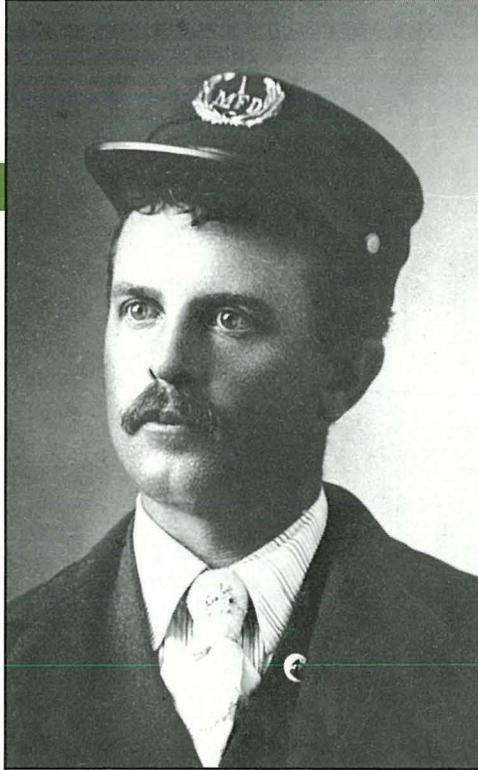
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Front cover: Ashland volunteer firefighters were among the first to organize in Jackson County. SOHS #6313.



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Fred Fredenburg, former Medford fireman (left) SOHS #8695. Bystanders watched Ashland firefighters (right) try to control the blazing Ganiard Opera House fire in August, 1912.

SOHS #6515



By Dawna Curler

Red Flannel and Flame

Fearless, friendly, and benevolent, the volunteer fireman has become a folk hero in America. Along with the cowboy, the lumberjack and the astronaut, he has taken on a glamorous and charismatic image. By the mid-1880s, his likeness adorned weather vanes, clipper ship prows, bandboxes, and even money, while songs, plays, and other literary works praised the exciting, dangerous, and patriotic job of the fireman. Though Johnny-come-latelies, the firemen of the Rogue Valley have contributed a colorful local chapter to the story of these American volunteers.





At first, American colonists had very little with which to fight fires. Leather water-buckets, ladders, and swabs on long poles were their primary weapons. Eventually, the larger cities acquired “engines.” These were primitive wooden wagons equipped to hold water that could be pumped through nozzles. But lack of experience with the equipment and disorganization at fire sites led to tragic losses. To combat these problems, local governments appointed fire wardens (city officials) to be “in charge” and direct firefighting operations. As supervised volunteer companies began to meet regularly and train with the new equipment, the romantic era of the volunteer fireman got underway.

Ben Franklin deserves credit for organizing the first volunteer fire company in 1736. But his Union Fire Company was actually patterned after Boston’s then twenty-year-old mutual aid societies. Members of these organizations fought fires and salvaged property for fellow mutual aid society members. Franklin’s Philadelphia company took this concept one step further, extending emergency assistance to the general public.

Besides Franklin’s, the familiar names of American patriots show up on the rolls of early firefighters. The motto, “In war, militiamen, in peace, firemen” described men such as Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and George Washington. These and other American revolutionaries shared a deep commitment to community self-reliance and mutual interdependence. They recognized their duty toward their fellow and found it a matter of course to set private business aside when battle against fire or human enemy was required.

Once firmly rooted, the volunteer fire department became a popular and successful American institution. Volunteers found a sense of fraternity among their ranks. Each company fostered pride of membership, which helped develop a healthy sense of competition between groups. Many companies adopted colorful names such as Knickerbockers, Eagle, Independence, and Good Will. Firemen brightly painted each piece of fire equipment they acquired, sometimes with remarkably detailed classical or patriotic scenes. Their equipment and their smartly tailored uniforms identified firemen at community celebrations.

At first these uniforms were unique to each company, designed in a variety of colors and styles. But after 1840, red flannel shirts worn by the Old Honey Bee Company in New York City, caught the public’s fancy. More and more groups throughout the country adopted the style until it became the volunteer fireman’s trademark and added to the mystique.

Firefighting equipment grew more sophisticated as the industrial revolution advanced. Shiny new hand pumpers were more powerful than before, although still not capable of containing fires in larger buildings. Steam engines became a part of the American firefighting arsenal in the

“The motto, ‘in war, militiamen, in peace, firemen’ describes men such as Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and George Washington.”

1850s and ’60s. Volunteers in the major cities resisted the change, but because it took more skill and fewer men to operate the new steam engines, big city governments converted to paid professional fire departments. This also was a convenient way for city fathers to disband some volunteer fire departments whose spirited competition had degenerated into riots and brawls, and whose organizations had become the instruments of well-oiled political machines.

It was the end of a glamorous chapter of firefighting in our nation’s larger cities. But the tradition of the volunteer fireman survived in many smaller and more rural communities as well as the West, which was just beginning to be settled.¹

Merely a trickle at first, the great Western migration brought thousands of pioneers and gold-seekers to California and Oregon. While Eastern cities reorganized their fire departments around magnificent steam engines, young communities in southern Oregon’s Rogue Valley depended upon old-fashioned buckets and ladders for fire protection—much like the early American colonists. Families in outlying areas had only themselves and distant neighbors to rely on should a fire break out, but when fire struck in early Ashland, dutiful citizens scrambled for the red and green buckets stowed beneath the steps of two saloons near Ashland Creek.²



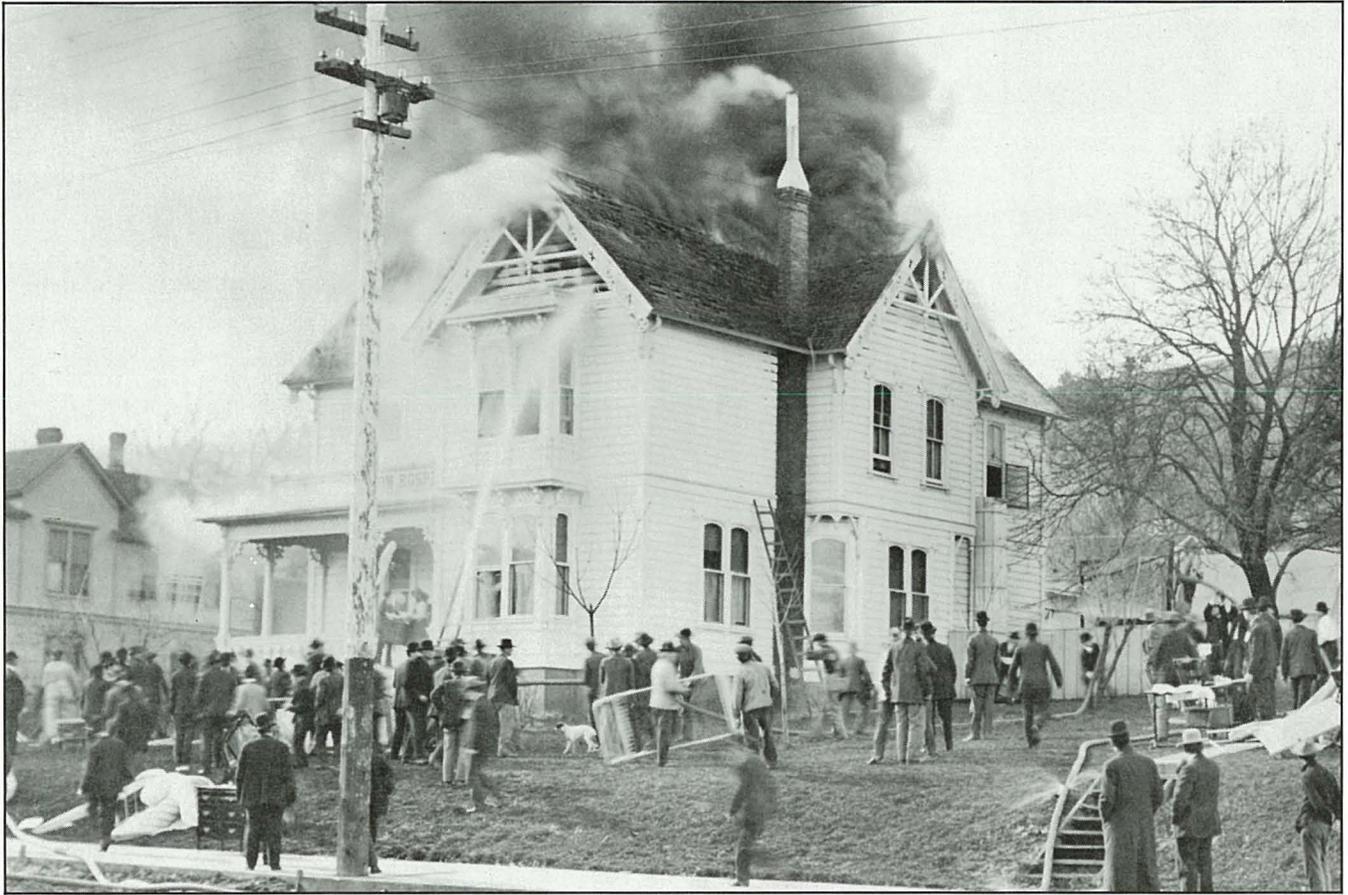
Medford's fire department sported a shiny hook and ladder truck and a flashy matched team (possibly "Tom and Jerry"), ca. 1910.

SOHS #8668

Jacksonville, southern Oregon's major population center at the time, was the first local community to purchase any real firefighting equipment. Early in the 1860s, city trustees bought a hook and ladder truck. This was a wooden, hand-pulled wagon for transporting firefighting tools. In 1861 the Jacksonville Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was authorized, and two fire wardens were appointed.³ Notices in the *Oregon Sentinel* indicate the Hook and Ladder Company was active at least for a couple of years, but by the mid-1860s direct references to the group cannot be found. Although dedicated in their efforts to extinguish flames, the people of Jacksonville still lacked leadership and direction when it came to firefighting.

Following a lumber kiln fire in February 1867, the *Oregon Sentinel* suggested a few changes:

"Our citizens, as usual, were active and persevering in their endeavors to save property, and the only loss sustained was the kiln and its contents—estimated at two hundred dollars. In this connection we are lead to make a suggestion, which, if carried out, we think would be of great advantage in subduing fire.



Although we have no organized fire department in this place, we have hooks, ladders, buckets, axes, etc. all placed conveniently and compactly on a truck; and it seems to us that the first and most sensible thing to be done in case of fire, would be to run the truck to the scene of action, instead of going there without anything with which to work.”⁴

By necessity, firefighting at that time focused on prevention and containment. Able Helman headed a committee in 1859 to inspect the flues of Ashland chimneys⁵ and Jacksonville’s fire wardens were required to examine “all dwellings, tenements . . . (and) remove hazards.”⁶ Most original buildings in Jacksonville were built of wood. Many of these tinder-dry structures burned like matches during two disastrous fires in the early 1870s. To avoid future fire hazards, in 1878 the town fathers outlawed new construction of wooden buildings (excepting wood sheds or privies) in certain sections of town. Ashland’s city council passed a similar law in 1884 and Medford followed suit a few years later.⁷

Once fire broke out, burning structures were frequently lost. Firefighters concentrated on saving property inside and nearby buildings outside. That’s what hooks were for. A burning wall could be “hooked” down before it toppled into the building next door. Even buildings not yet afire were torn down to create a fire break if necessary.

Originally built as a private residence, Southern Oregon Hospital housed Ashland’s sick from 1906–1909 when a flue fire destroyed its upper story. Following restoration, the building was moved by horsepower to its present location at Second Street and Hargadine where it stands as the Winchester Inn.

SOHS #5812

“There being no fire engine in the town,” reported a Jacksonville newspaper recounting a blaze on April 3, 1873, “the only way of battling with the fire was to tear down those buildings which could not be saved—for which purpose the hook and ladder machine was called in requisition.”⁸

When, in 1882, Mr. and Mrs. Hill’s Ashland home burned to the ground “in less than half an hour,” neighbors took less drastic action to save the house next door. “The two houses were but thirty feet apart,” the *Ashland Tidings* stated, “and the Skidmore house would have burned anyhow, if the end next to the fire had not been kept covered with carpets upon which cold water was constantly poured.”⁹

Rogue Valley residents talked of the need for better-organized firefighting systems, but it was years before any substantial action was taken. Newspapers kept bringing the problem up, but nothing seemed to be done about it. "After lines of bucket men had been formed from the creek to buildings endangered, water was passed about as rapidly as it could be used, but, as usual, it required the loss of some time at the start to bring men into positions where they could work to the best advantage," reported an 1879 *Ashland Tidings* news article, "and the need of a fire company with a capable captain was very apparent."¹⁰ In July 1883, the *Tidings* again editorialized at the end of a fire report, "Probably there'll be talk of a fire company now for a few days—not longer, and nothing more than talk, judging from the past . . ."¹¹ But things really were about to change. The formation of Ashland's first volunteer fire company was only four years away, and two months earlier, on May 14, 1883, the citizens of Jacksonville reorganized their fire department into Fire Engine Company No. 1.

By November 1883, Jacksonville had a new fire engine, a shiny red and black Rumsey hand pumper from Seneca Falls, New York. The machine was not easy to work but it was a vast improvement over the old bucket brigade. While a dozen men pumped hand rails up and down, the engine sucked water from cisterns located about the city.

When fire struck in early Ashland, dutiful citizens scrambled for the red and green buckets stowed beneath the steps of two saloons near Ashland Creek.

Other firemen manned the hose directing pressurized water onto steaming flames. Gus Newbury, who joined the department in 1899, claimed the men "expended more energy in half an hour than it takes to pitch hay all day."¹²

Other Rogue Valley communities organized their first fire departments around hose carts and water hydrants. At long last in 1887 the Ashland city council invested \$7,200 for a system of "water pipes, fittings, hydrants, gates and all necessary fixtures," that would provide water for fire protection. They also purchased a hose cart from the Goodyear Rubber Company along with 500 feet of rubber hose and organized the Ashland Hose Company No. 1.¹³

Medford's Protection Hose Company No. 1 was next to be formed on April 11, 1890. Two and a half weeks later, the city council authorized the purchase of hose, hose cart and nozzles. It was to be a fire department with style. Like Jacksonville and Ashland, Medford would outfit each man in the traditional red shirt. Less than a month after first meeting, the company was ready to order uniforms of eight-ounce flannel at \$3.75 each.¹⁴

Gold Hill's Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 formed in late 1898. Within the next two years a water works was built and a city ordinance stated that "all waters used from the city water plant shall be sold, except for fire purposes . . ."¹⁵ Central Point also tried to organize fire protection, but like so many other communities, its department evolved over time. The city built a shed to house three ladders for \$5.00 in 1894. Sixteen years later, the Central Point Volunteer Fire Department adopted a constitution and its first fire chief, Rodrick Easley, was appointed. The city purchased two hose carts and erected a structure of corrugated metal behind the town hall to house the new equipment.¹⁶

Populations grew rapidly in Medford and Ashland at the turn of the century. A second team of firefighters soon was required in both communities. Ashland established Hose Company No. 2 in 1890.¹⁷ But it wasn't until 1908 that the new company got its own fire house, built in the Railroad District on Fourth Street.¹⁸ Protection Hose Company No. 2 was organized in Medford in 1903. For a while folks talked of a second fire hall for these boys, but a few months later additions and improvements made room for all at the original hose house at Sixth and Front Streets.¹⁹

Medford began paying a few of its firemen in 1912. On March 15, 1912, Ordinance 659 set monthly pay rates at \$85 for chief, \$75 for assistant chief, and \$65 for each of four firemen. The rest of the force remained volunteer.²⁰ This practice became common and is the way many of the volunteer departments operate today. About 1913 Ashland also began paying its fire chief \$112 and two other firefighters \$85 per month while twenty "volunteers" earned \$1 per fire call plus \$1 per hour while fighting a blaze.²¹

The first decade of the twentieth century came and went. By 1912 nearly all established communities in Jackson County had at least a hose cart for combating fires. Volunteers in some towns saved their energy and quickened response time when they hitched horse teams to hose carts or wagons. Central Point firefighters used horses, but they didn't own their own team. "In 1911 Central Point had two livery stables," explained Merv Gleason during a 1960 interview. "The city paid the team that pulled fire equipment to a fire, so when the fire bell rang there was a mad scramble to get a team to the fire hall first." The winning team — the one that got a hose cart to the flames first — received a healthy \$5.00.²²

Ashland's fire department replaced its hose carts with hose wagons in 1908, and leased their teams just as Cen-

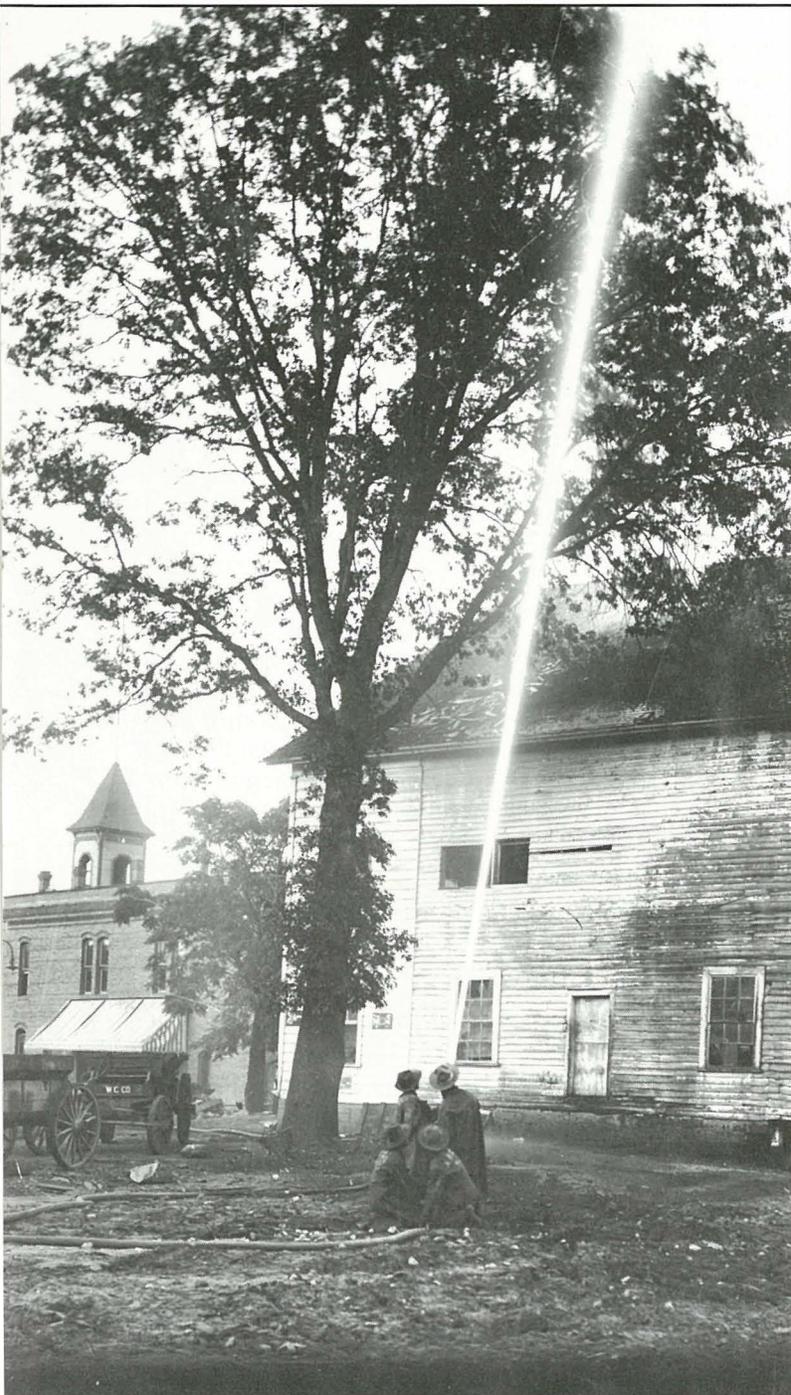
tral Point did.²³ In contrast, Medford's department apparently owned two teams. "Skinny" and "Rastus" were first to join the force.²⁴ "Tom" and "Jerry" served later, although it is not quite clear if they ever served at the same time. The handsome quadrupeds retired after 1912 when the department acquired a Pope-Hartford pumper, the first of Medford's motorized fleet.²⁵

An undocumented, but fun to tell, story about that retirement still circulates around Medford's fire stations. During their tour of duty at the fire house, the horses were trained to respond unhesitatingly to the fire bell. After purchasing one of these horses for farm work, a west Medford farmer was plowing his field when the clanging fire alarm sounded. There was no stopping this horse, who headed on a dead run for the fire house at Sixth and Front Street. It is said he plowed a furrow all the way to the railroad tracks.²⁶

Firefighting in Jackson County passed directly from the era of hand pumpers and hose carts to the era of the automobile, missing the steam engine period completely. The year after Medford acquired its Pope-Hartford, Ashland purchased a 1913 American La France fire truck that carried 1,000 feet of hose, two 35-gallon soda and acid tanks, and six firemen. Although the new truck did not have a starter (its driver relied upon a pressure crank), once it got going it could top out at speeds of 45 or 50 miles per hour.²⁷ A 1921 Model T was the first motorized addition to Jacksonville's equipment, although the volunteers had added a hand-pulled soda and acid engine in 1908.²⁸ As some of the better-funded fire departments upgraded their equipment during the next few decades, some of the smaller departments adopted the earlier vehicles second-hand. Talent bought Ashland's first American La France truck in 1938²⁹ and from 1948 until 1964, volunteers in Butte Falls relied upon a 1920s-vintage fire truck purchased from Medford for a sum of \$1,200.³⁰ Medford's first truck, the Pope-Hartford met a patriotic end when it was sold for scrap metal during World War II.³¹ A later acquisition, Medford's 1924 Stutz pumper, is now on display along with Jacksonville's first hook and ladder truck and hand pumper at the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History.

Firefighting skills aside, volunteer fire departments exemplify traditional values of community spirit and involvement. Potlucks, parades, dances, Independence Day celebrations and other local festivals frequently revolve around the efforts of department members. Citizens register to vote and cast their ballots at fire stations; fire trucks and emergency vehicles stand by at high school football games; and a visit to the firehouse develops second-graders' understanding of "community."

Civic participation by local volunteer firefighters is a tradition as old as the departments themselves. Members of Jacksonville's Engine Company No. 1 turned out in full dress uniforms for at least two hangings in the 1880s,



Members of Jacksonville's Engine Company No. 1 turned out in full dress uniforms for at least two hangings in the 1880s.

and as early as 1862 that town's hook and ladder truck was decorated for the Fourth of July. Early photographs show fire wagons and trucks draped with bunting or flowers during a variety of parades. Another important civic event was the fireman's ball.

Fire department-sponsored dances have traditionally been used to raise funds. When Medford's Protection Hose Company No. 1 held its first annual ball, the company raised enough money to order 22 leather belts, six spanners and a torch for their foreman.³² Protection Hose Company No. 2 made no pretenses about its motives when it ran the following advertisement just one month after the new company organized:

"Please do not forget about the dance to be given by Protection Hose Company No. 2 . . . Suppose you do not dance, that fact will not protect your home should it take fire. The members of this hose company want you to help them to get ready to protect your property. You do not have to dance if you do not want to— unless the request is made by a man with a gun, then it is safer and more conducive to good health to dance, but the fire boys have no gun; in fact there are a great many things needful in protecting property from fire, which they are no possessors of. If your religious scruples tell you that it is not right to dance, you can avoid any possible contamination by giving the boys the price of a ticket: as an installment on services to be rendered at the first fire which may happen your way."³³

One can only assume the dance was a success.

Ashland's Fire Chief John Morgan tests new hose nozzle (opposite) on a practice burn in 1909. SOHS #174

Jacksonville's volunteer firemen (right) pose with wagon in front of the Masonic Building, ca. 1885. SOHS #5799



Historically, men played the major role in fire-fighting, but women made their contributions too. From the early days, women have been willing to wield buckets and wet blankets or lend necessary support when crises struck. During Jacksonville's April 18, 1874 fire, "The ladies were promptly on hand," wrote the *Oregon Sentinel*, "with coffee and other refreshments, which were freely used and strongly relished by those working for several hours amidst heat, smoke and falling cinders. Several of the ladies took places in the lines and passed the buckets of water as long as their services was [sic] required."³⁴ Mary Mee, Mrs. K. C. Gibson and Mrs. A. A. Whiteman, representing the Ladies Benevolent Society, presented the Central Point fire bell to the town's board of trustees in 1894,³⁵ and in 1973 Ruth Capello, of Butte Falls, made history when she became southern Oregon's first female fire chief.

Still an active member of the Butte Falls Volunteer Fire Department, Capello has been on the force for 25 years. She and her husband Charles, along with several other dedicated citizens, organized the department in 1964 after the Capello's own home burned because the fire truck wouldn't start. Before the department was formed, residents relied upon the city's outdated equipment and untrained neighbors coming to their rescue.

"Fighting fire is something women should know how to do," said Capello in a 1978 newspaper interview. "In a town like this, men are often working out in the woods in the daytime. If women don't know how to put a fire out, that leaves the town unprotected."³⁶

From time to time other women have joined Capello on the fire lines. Other fire departments have also had feminine help in recent years, including the Medford

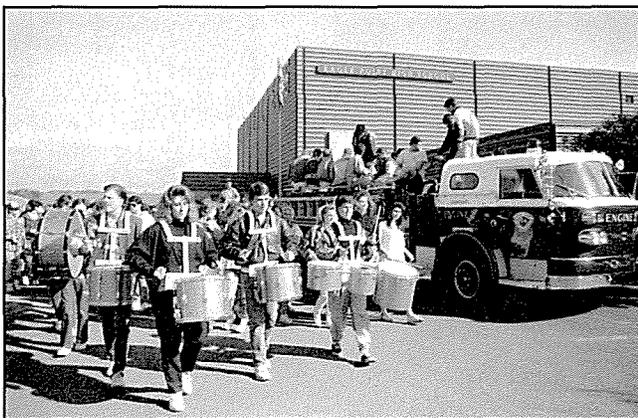
"In a town like this, men are often working out in the woods in the daytime. If women don't know how to put a fire out, that leaves the town unprotected."

past twenty years. Among the most recent are Lake Creek Rural, which received its tax base only two years ago, and Fire District 9 which has added three new fire stations in the Applegate area during this past decade and plans to build a fourth this year.³⁷ With the opening of each new station, the sense of community is strengthened or renewed. As neighbors and friends band together, giving their time and risking their own safety for the benefit of others, they join a fraternity steeped in tradition and pride. As they go about their daily duties, doing what has to be done, they open the next chapter in the rich heritage of American firefighting.



ENDNOTES

1. Paul C. Ditzel, *Fire Engines, Fire Fighters* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1976) and Donald J. Cannon, *Heritage of Flames* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977).
2. Bob A. Gouley, *The History of the Ashland Fire Department*, Southern Oregon Historical Society, 979.5281, 1959, p. 1.
3. *Medford Mail Tribune*, November 9, 1952.
4. *Oregon Sentinel*, February 16, 1867.
5. Gouley, *History of the Ashland Fire Department*, p. 1.
6. *Medford Mail Tribune*, November 9, 1952.
7. Jacksonville Ordinance 66, Ashland Ordinance 39, and Medford Ordinance 91.
8. *The Sentinel*, April 5, 1973.
9. Eugenia Atkinson scrapbook 1877-1937, Southern Oregon Historical Society Library, Jacksonville, Oregon, p. 44.
10. *Ibid*, p. 29.
11. *Ibid*, p. 55.
12. *Medford Mail Tribune*, November 9, 1952.
13. Ashland Ordinances 33 and 36.



Eagle Point's fire department parades the 1989 champion high school wrestling team through town. Photo courtesy Upper Rogue Independent

department which had a woman on its team about ten years ago, and the Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department and the fire departments of Fire District 9, which count several women among their ranks today.

The legacy of our local firefighters continues to unfold. Several new fire departments have been established in the

14. Excerpts from *Protection Hose Company No. 1 Minute Book and Minute Book of the Medford Board of Trustees*, Medford City Hall.

15. Linda Morehouse Genaw, *Gold Hill and its Neighbors Along the River* (Gold Hill: self-published, 1988).

16. *History Volunteer Fire Department Central Point 1894-1960*, Southern Oregon Historical Society Library, Jacksonville, Oregon.

17. Gouley, *History of Ashland Fire Department*, p. 5.

18. *Ashland Cultural Resource Inventory*, Southern Oregon Historical Society Library, Jacksonville, Oregon.

19. *Tribune*, February 6, 1903, and *Medford Mail*, August 14, 1903.

20. *Medford Ordinance Book 6*, p. 234, Medford City Hall.

21. Gouley, *History of Ashland Fire Department*, p. 9.

22. *History Volunteer Fire Department Central Point 1894-1960*, Appendix C, p. 1.

23. Gouley, *History of Ashland Fire Department*, p. 8.

24. *Medford Mail Tribune*, March 16, 1930.

25. G. D. Orndoff, *City Hollar*, vol. 1, no. 4, June 1972.

26. Interview with Medford Fire Marshall, G. D. Orndoff, March 27, 1989.

27. Gouley, *History of Ashland Fire Department*, p. 9.

28. *Medford Mail Tribune*, November 9, 1952.

29. Gouley, *History of Ashland Fire Department*, p. 9.

30. Interview with Butte Falls Fire Chief John Capello, March 29, 1989.

31. Orndoff, *City Hollar*.

32. Excerpts from *Protection Hose Co. No. 1 Minute Book*, personal files of Marshall Lango.

33. *Medford Mail*, March 13, 1903.

34. *Oregon Sentinel*, April 18, 1874.

35. *History Volunteer Fire Department*, Central Point, p. 2.

36. Interviews with former Butte Falls fire chief Ruth Capello, Butte Falls fire chief John Capello, March 1989, and *Medford Mail Tribune*, February 23, 1978.

37. Interview with District 9 fire chief Ron Yarbough, March 24, 1989.

Curator of Interpretation, Dawna Curler researched and wrote the text for the Historical Society's firefighting exhibit. Her interest in firefighting history goes back to a slide program produced while earning her master's degree in museum studies at Cooperstown, N.Y.

From the Collections

This spring the Society will officially open a "new" exhibit on the history of firefighting in southern Oregon. Inside the Hanley Building behind the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History, patrons will be happy to find the 1924 Stutz fire engine on display again, along with a hook and ladder wagon, an 1883 Rumsey hand pumper and other firefighting apparatus.

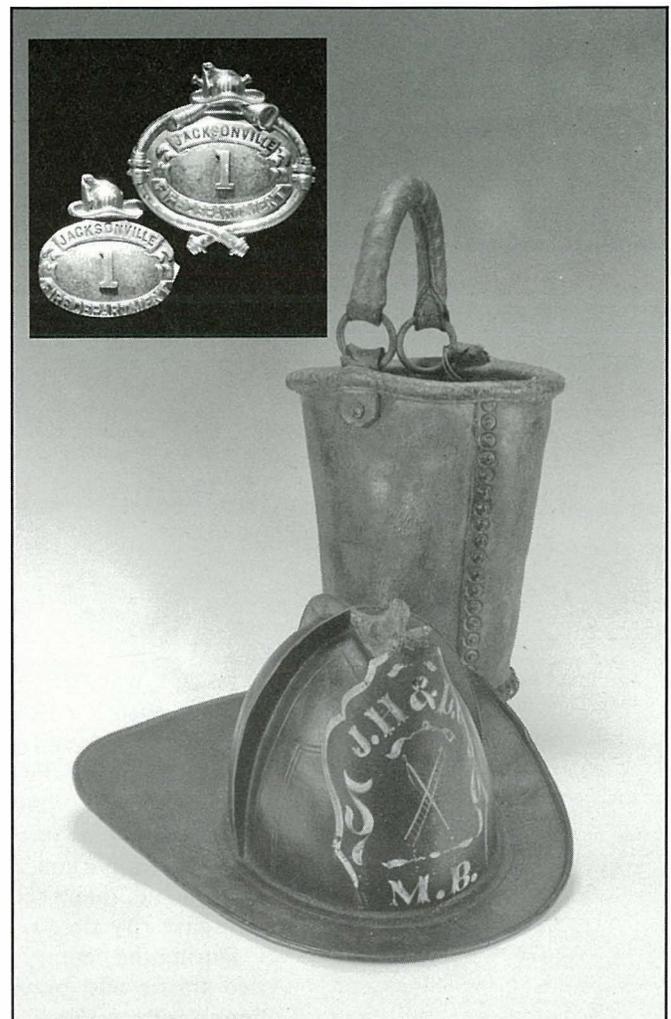
Due to the need for controlled environmental conditions, some related equipment will not join the exhibit. We offer them here for your interest and enjoyment.

Leather water buckets were used "in the very early days" (stated in the Society's records from 1950) by the Jacksonville Fire Department. They hung from hooks on the side of the hook and ladder wagon.

The fireman's helmet is an example of the type worn into the twentieth century and is still used today in some parts of the country. This one bears the emblem of "J.H. & L. Co./M.B." referring to Jacksonville Hook and Ladder Company. (It is unknown what M.B. means; perhaps someone's name or rank.)

Like law officers, firemen wore badges which indicated their company and rank. According to Society records, those in the photograph were given as awards of merit. The larger one is similar to the type worn today by the Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department. The badges were donated to the Society in 1951 by Ed Kubli.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society houses numerous objects that, owing to limited exhibit space, are not often seen by visitors. We hope that featuring items in each issue of the *Table Rock Sentinel* will provide an enjoyable and educational view of the scope of its collections.



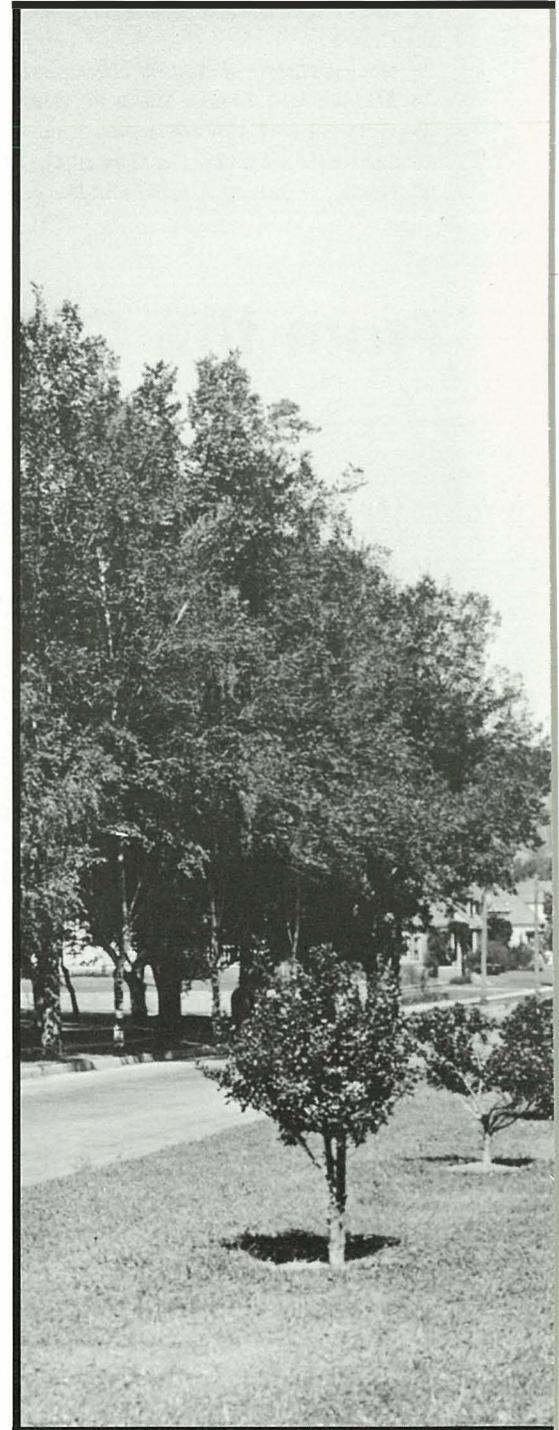
Ballots and The Bo

The Centennial of Ashland's Showcase Street

By Edmund Dews

Once described as “the street that went nowhere,” Ashland’s boulevard was opened a hundred years ago after delays overcome only by the decisive city council election of 1888. Since then “The Boulevard” has become one of the most distinctive and important routes in southern Oregon and, many believe, one of its most attractive city streets.

During the century in which it has carried traffic and provided good sites for homes and schools, The Boulevard has had



ulevard

By 1950, growing ornamental trees provided graceful shade along the Ashland street. Numerous species of trees still line Siskiyou Boulevard, including American elm, birches and silver maples. SOHS #5440



more than its share of local political controversy. Even an abbreviated list of the successive issues involved would be a long one: how to raise tax money for its improvement and upkeep; whether to provide footpaths along its borders (first plank and later concrete sidewalks); when and how to pave it; how to light it; how to divide responsibility between city and state when it became part of Highway 99; how to divide it into multiple traffic lanes; whether to prohibit

limits was being comprehensively surveyed and platted. Ashland's notoriously poor roadways²—even Main Street was crooked and narrow—were being improved, and new roads were being opened, often with landowners dedicating rights of way as gifts to the city. H.B. Carter, a banker and one of Ashland's leading citizens, was soon to contribute a large strip of land nearly a third of a mile long for this purpose. His compensation was one dollar.³ In addition to new roadways, other city improvements were being talked of: piped water and sewers, and even electric lights.

In fact, 1989 marks another centennial in the history of Ashland. A hundred years earlier, Ashland skipped the era of gaslights and proceeded directly from candles and oil lamps to hydroelectric power and incandescent lights.⁴

Outside southern Oregon, the attractions of the area were becoming widely known; not only was the Rogue Valley a promising site for prosperous farms and orchards, but because of its healthful climate, pure water, and natural beauty, a destination for travelers. In February 1888, Oregon's Senator Dolph proposed the creation of Crater Lake National Park, and the director of the U.S. Geological Survey told congress that the beauty and impressiveness of the lake area was "of the same order as that of Yosemite valley or the finest parts of Yellowstone park."⁵

This was the situation when, probably in the same month of February 1888, a California investor, R.A. Bowman, and an Ashland orchardist, A.C. Helm, began planning the creation of a European-style spa at the Tolman sulfur springs.⁶ But the springs were located some four miles southeast of Ashland's plaza, and no convenient route reached the springs either from downtown Ashland or from the new railroad depot. Much of the intervening land was planted with apple and peach orchards, some of them among the oldest in the Ashland area.



Horsedrawn and motorized vehicles share The Boulevard's wide unpaved lanes in 1910.

SOHS #5665

parking except in special parking bays; how to adapt it for bicycle use; and most recently, how to deal with increasingly heavy traffic and protect from destruction or removal the many historic landmark homes that cluster along it and along the adjoining streets.

But here, during The Boulevard's centennial year, we are concerned with the story of the street's beginnings.

The last years of the 1880s were a period of rapid progress for southern Oregon and especially for Ashland. In December 1887, the rail link between Seattle and San Diego was completed at Ashland, opening up distant markets to southern Oregon produce and bringing in new settlers, men with money to invest, and a new entrepreneurial spirit.

Ashland was already the largest town in southern Oregon, and its population was increasing by more than 10 percent a year.¹ For the first time the land within the city

To solve this problem, Helm and Bowman proposed to create a broad, tree-lined avenue, cutting through the orchards and undeveloped land and ending at the Tolman springs, near what is now the junction of The Boulevard and Crowson Road. This avenue would begin where Main Street, Hargadine, and Gresham came together.⁷ Nearby Fourth Street would provide easy

The *Ashland Tidings* predicted that the city's attractions would bring in "hosts of visitors . . . both in summer and winter."

connection to the depot. The roadway would be one hundred feet wide, nearly level, and almost exactly three miles long: a recognizable description of The Boulevard as it is today.

This was indeed a bold conception, "Something new for southern Oregon." But, then as now, some Ashland residents had doubts about the city's pace of growth and development. The *Ashland Tidings* told such doubters that "they may just as well accept the fact" that the attractions of Ashland would be bringing in "hosts of visitors . . . both in summer and in winter,"⁸ some of whom would want to stay and build homes in the city. It proved a prescient prediction.

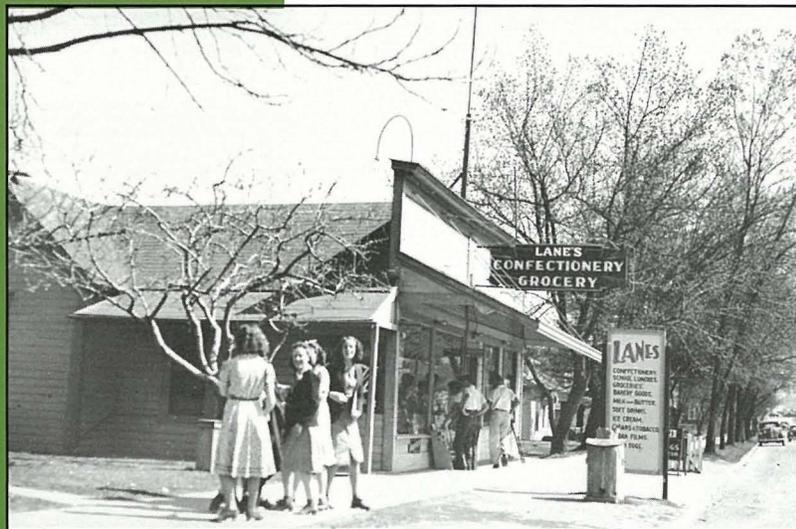
The Boulevard thus had its origin as a project of private enterprise, undertaken with eventual profit in mind, and materially supported by many—although, as will appear, not all—of those owning land in the southeastern part of the city. The promoters appear to have had little difficulty in persuading almost all of those who owned land on the proposed route to grant the needed rights of way for modest or nominal compensation. Like H.B. Carter, most of the landowners sought no immediate profit from such transactions. Indeed, some owners contributed money as well as land, expecting an eventual appreciation of land values.

Built in 1912, the Ashland Public Library heads a residential block once termed "Bankers' Row." Here lived bankers C.H. Vaupel, Otto Winter, Henry Gale and H.B. Carter, among others. Following the deaths of these prominent men some decades later, the block was renamed "Widows' Row." SOHS

#12479



C.E. Lane's confectionery store served sweets and treats from its location south of present day Safeway. The business was sold numerous times and later became Little Sweden's, a popular restaurant. The building was demolished in the late 1970s. SOHS #1622



Having arranged for their own survey, the promoters started to clear the route in April 1888 at the northern end of The Boulevard, near the present location of the Ashland City Library.⁹ This was pushing things a bit. Work had begun before an official survey of the proposed route had been made by the city surveyor, and it was not until July 1888 that the city council adopted an ordinance accepting the city surveyor's report and establishing The Boulevard as a city street-to-be.¹⁰ Almost certainly, however, the mayor and members of the council had informal knowledge of the project and gave it their tacit approval at the time land clearance was first begun. City government planning and approval procedures thus appear to have offered no hindrance to the creation of The Boulevard, but neither did city hall play any significant role in the conception of the project or in providing initial financial support.

The really serious impediment to the creation of The Boulevard was the fact that one of the principal landowners involved was withholding the right-of-way across his property. This was the San Francisco-based

investor E.E. Miner, who owned some seventeen acres, located roughly between Morton and Morse streets north of the present location of Ashland High School. If the route was to be built as planned, it was essential to obtain a right-of-way through his acreage.

Miner was willing to grant the right-of-way, but at a price.¹¹ He wanted the substantial sum of \$1,200¹²—the cost of a

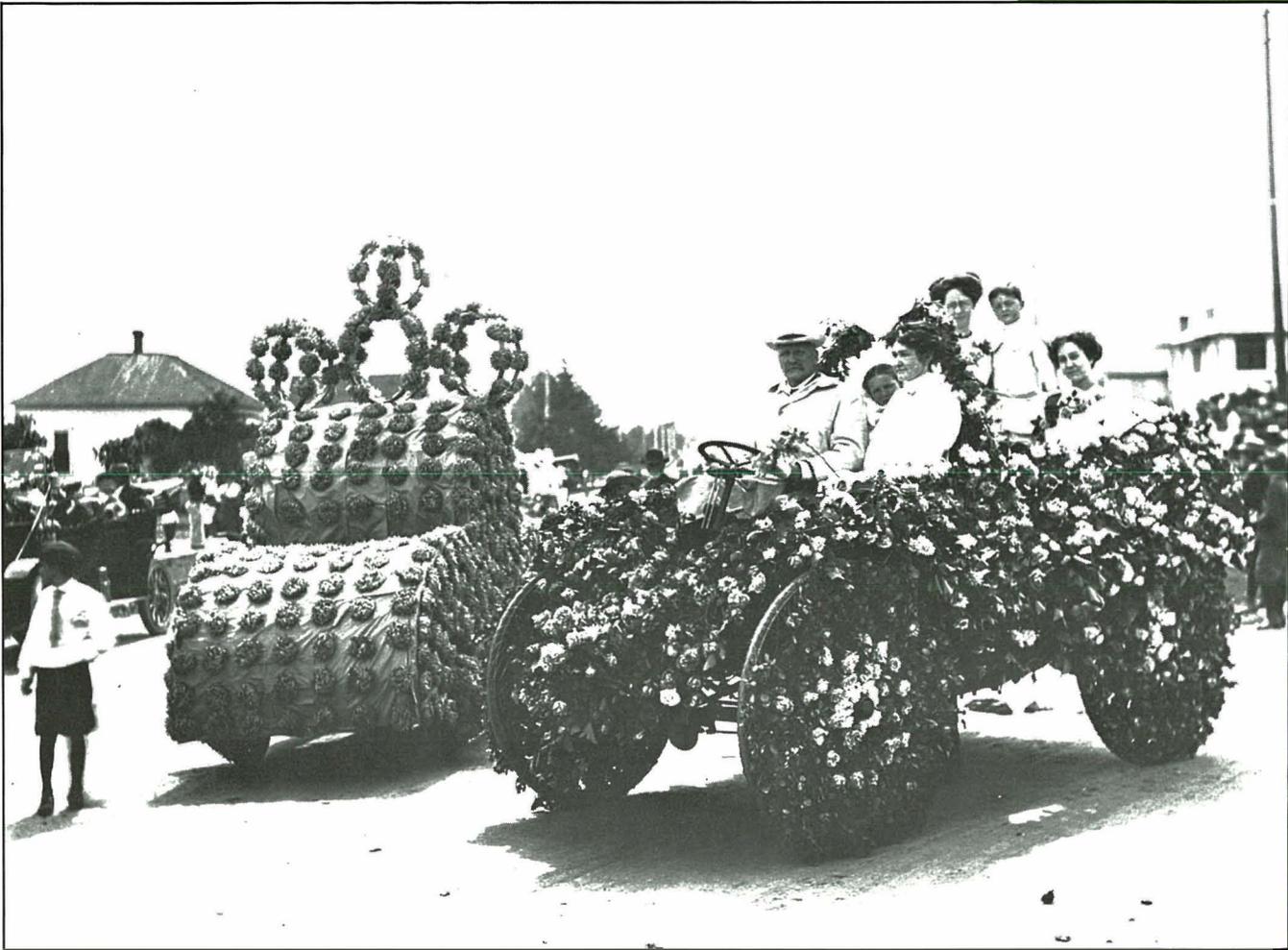
house in those days. When his price was not forthcoming, Miner, through his attorney, Edward DePeatt, filed a complaint in May 1888 with the city council requesting that appraisers be appointed to assess the damages due him for opening up the right of way. The city council complied and appointed appraisers, who assessed the damages as zero: apparently because of some irregularity in their appointment, a second set of appraisers was named; these assessed the damages at \$100.¹³

Miner refused to accept so small a sum, and appealed their decision to the circuit court in Jacksonville. After two successive trials and much publicity, the court raised the assessment—to \$200. Miner refused this also and instructed his attorney to carry an appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court.¹⁴

This was the state of affairs as the summer wore on and the general election of 1888 approached. The city of Ashland had formally approved the establishment of The Boulevard, and work was advancing along the route from the north. In May, clearance had progressed beyond the first block and Union Street had been opened. Soon after, what were to be Sherman and Harrison Streets had been reached. The workers were now approaching Miner's property, where the issue of right-of-way compensation had still to be resolved.

As the date of the election came closer, political fever ran high in Jackson County, at least so far as county, state, and national offices were concerned. The presidential contest was particularly hard fought in the county, with the Republican supporters of General Harrison being especially strong in Ashland, and the Democratic supporters of incumbent Grover Cleveland strong in the rest of the county. Foreshadowing the presidential contest a hundred years later, two of the hottest issues in 1888 were similar to those in 1988: the competition from Asiatic manufacturers and the unbalanced Federal budget—except that in 1888 the budget problem was how to deal with a surplus rather than a deficit.

Oddly enough, however, city politics seemed to generate little interest in Ashland. With less than three weeks remaining before the polls were to open, no nominations for mayor or city council positions had been filed.¹⁵ But at the last moment, the pot began to boil.



On October 26, 1888, the *Tidings* published an editorial and a long letter signed "Progress" warning readers that Ashland had arrived at a crisis in her history. The existing council, the *Tidings* said, was on the side of progress and civic improvement. It had surveyed and platted most of the town, opened new streets, and, in particular, it had approved the establishment of what its critics called "this awful boulevard."

The choice, said the *Tidings*, was between progress and stagnation. Those who felt that the old narrow roads and cow tracks were good enough were mistaken. The present mayor and council should be re-elected. With a metaphor appropriate to The Boulevard issue, the *Tidings* argued:

Our city has started upon the high road of progress and prosperity. We cannot afford now to turn aside into the byways of petty prejudice, of obstruction or stagnation.

Within a few days the mayor and members of the expiring council were renominated, but almost immediately they were faced by an organized slate to opponents headed by Miner's legal representative. The same attorney DePeatt, who was then carrying Miner's boulevard right-of-way appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court, was Miner's candidate for mayor. As the *Tidings* saw it, the DePeatt ticket was created to oppose the incumbents on one specific issue, the handling of Miner's claim for compensation.¹⁶ In short, The Boulevard was the issue.

The election itself, the *Tidings* declared afterward, "was the most exciting that has ever occurred in the city."¹⁷ Not surprisingly, it was characterized by much bitter feeling. The incumbents, however, won a clear victory, scoring more than double the votes cast for the opposition. The proponents of progress had won out over the supporters of stagnation.¹⁸

The Boulevard has long been the site for community celebrations. The 1911 Fourth of July parade contestants gathered on the corner of Sherman and The Boulevard, in front of the East Side School. SOHS #10113

Or so the *Tidings* would have it, and this may have been so. But the reality was probably more complex than the newspaper accounts suggest. E.E. Miner could certainly not be described as an enemy of progress as such. He was not a long-established Ashland resident happy with the *status quo* and opposed to development. He was a newcomer from San Francisco who had bought Ashland land expecting it to appreciate in value and who had moved his home to the city only after work on The Boulevard had begun.

It is possible that Miner was genuinely convinced that the compensation offered

for his right-of-way was grossly inadequate, or that, as a sophisticated investor from the big city, he could not tolerate the appearance of having been bested by small-town operators. Or, there may have been some strong personal animosities at work that do not appear on the public record.¹⁹

However they may be, the city election of November 1888 turned out to be decisive for The Boulevard. Miner accepted the defeat of his ticket and quickly cut his losses. By the end of the month, he sold his lots in the disputed area, agreed to the \$200 in damages awarded by the circuit court, and bound himself to the opening of The Boulevard.²⁰ He remained an Ashland landowner, and no doubt profited from the appreciation in land values resulting from the surveys and new streets opened up by the city administration he had opposed.



Heritage Sunday on “The Boulevard”

On Sunday, June 18, the Ashland Heritage Committee will offer the public numerous events during the sixteenth annual Heritage Sunday focusing on historic Siskiyou Boulevard. Activities celebrating the Boulevard’s Past include:

- Historic photographs exhibited at the Ashland Public Library and the Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Free.
- Narrated walking tours of Siskiyou Boulevard led by Rod Reid, 1–4 p.m. Free.
- Open house at four historic Boulevard residences: Colin Martin’s home at 658 Siskiyou Blvd., Royal Carter House Inn at 514 Siskiyou Blvd., Dr. David Brown’s home at 534 Siskiyou Blvd., and V. Voegel’s office at 550 Siskiyou Blvd. Open 1–4 p.m., adults \$3, children free.

Further information on Heritage Sunday can be found in local newspapers or by contacting Ashland Heritage Committee Chairman Terry Skibby at 482-2805.

In the spring of 1889, work went forward with the clearing and grading of The Boulevard, apparently reaching at least as far as the present site of Southern Oregon State College near Indiana Street. At what date the work reached the planned terminus of the project at Crowson Road is not clear, although this also may have been achieved in 1889. In any event, the broad, tree-lined avenue extending from the library to the college, the section Ashlanders think of as the heart of The Boulevard, came into being just one hundred years ago.

The reader may ask why this account has referred to “The Boulevard” rather than to “Siskiyou Boulevard.” For this terminology, there is a good historical basis. When Pracht’s Addition to the city of Ashland was platted and recorded—and it was in Pracht’s Addition at the northern end of The Boulevard that work on the project began—the name of the street that appeared on the plat was simply “Boulevard.” Noting this in its issue of April 27, 1888, the *Tidings* concluded that the avenue was to be called “The Boulevard.” And this is the name that was used for nearly fifty years, appearing thus in city ordinances, local directories, postal addresses, and *Tidings* articles. Indeed, except for formal use and postal addresses, it is generally

referred to by Ashlanders in this way, as any reader of the real estate pages of today's *Tidings* can easily confirm.

How did it come to be called Siskiyou Boulevard? That is another story from a much later period, although the direction of the route and the bold outline of the Siskiyou looming to the south make the connection obvious. Occasionally, it is true, in 1888 and 1889 the street was referred to

**The choice, said the
Tidings, was between
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stagnation.**

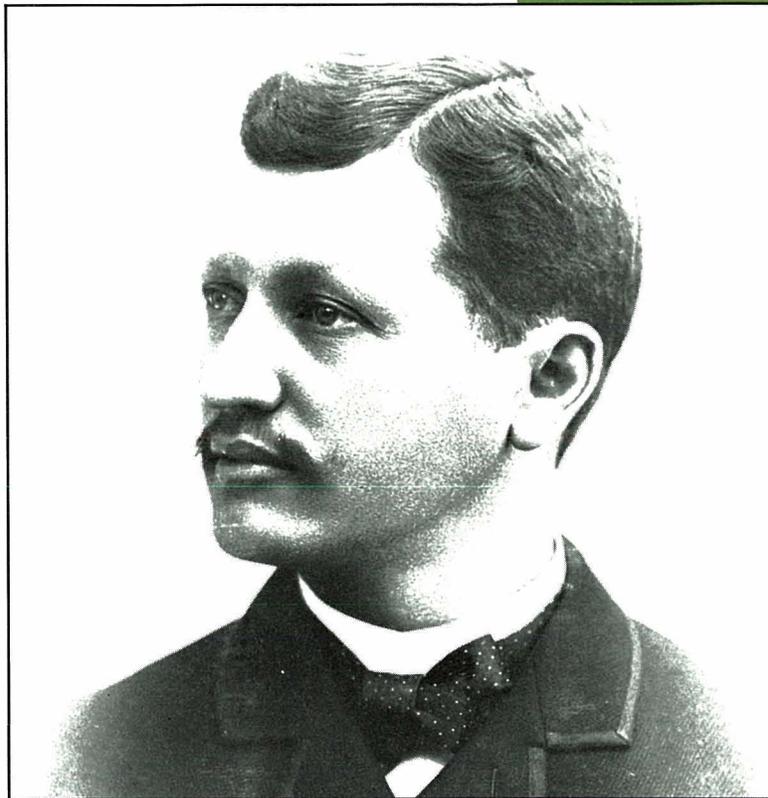
in city council minutes and *Tidings* articles as "The Boulevard Siskiyou" after the French manner.²¹ But this foreign usage quickly fell out of favor.

There is a story, passed down among descendants of Judge A.P. Hammond, that as city recorder in 1888 he had argued for the new avenue to be called Siskiyou Boulevard.²² No documentary evidence to support this has been found, although it has a certain plausibility. As one of Ashland's first postmasters, he would no doubt have felt that a street should have a name. But "A.P." need not have been concerned. There has never been any ambiguity. A map of Ashland will show avenues, courts, circles, drives, lanes, places, roads, streets, terraces, and ways, each needing a name for identification. But in Ashland to this day, a hundred years after its opening, the only street called a boulevard is The Boulevard.

ENDNOTES



1. *Ashland Tidings* (hereafter cited as *Tidings*), January 4, 1890.
2. *Tidings*, letter from D.F. Fox to the editor, February 24, 1888.
3. The deed dedicating the land for a city street is now in the possession of H.B.'s descendant, Esther Merriman (Mrs. Lee Merriman) of Ashland. I acknowledge her kindness in identifying this document.
4. *Tidings*, March 15, 1889.
5. *Tidings*, February 24, 1888.
6. *Tidings*, April 20, 1888.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*



9. *Ibid.*
10. Formal city approval was given on July 16, 1888. This seems clear, but the *Tidings'* reports of earlier city council proceedings are somewhat contradictory: see *Tidings*, May 25, June 22, and July 20, 1888.
11. *Tidings*, April 20 and April 27, 1888.
12. *Tidings*, November 16, 1888.
13. *Tidings*, "Statement about The Boulevard," letter to the editor from Ashland City Recorder A.P. Hammond, November 2, 1888.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Tidings*, October 19, 1888.
16. *Tidings*, editorial, "The City Election," November 2, 1888.
17. *Tidings*, editorial, "Ashland City Election," November 9, 1888.
18. *Tidings*, editorial, "City Election," November 9, 1888.
19. *Tidings*, hinted at in the "Statement about the Boulevard," November 2, 1888.
20. *Tidings*, November 30, 1888.
21. *Tidings*, May 25, 1888, for example.
22. Personal knowledge of the author.

Edmund Dews was born in southern Oregon into a pioneer family that settled near Jacksonville in the 1850s. He lives in Ashland on "The Boulevard" in a house built in Pracht's Addition by Mrs. H.B. Carter in 1900. A.P. Hammond was his great-grandfather.

E.V. Carter built two houses in the Pracht's Addition, the first in 1886. This residence was later moved across The Boulevard, where it still stands as an art gallery. He then built a second residence on the vacated lot in 1912, now remodeled as the Royal Carter House Bed and Breakfast.
SOHS #6235

Central Point Stories

“Medford’s always tried to put one over on us.”

—Della Tex, Central Point

One hundred years have gone by in the life of Central Point, a town sometimes half-remembered as the metropolis that might have been Medford if it weren’t for a pair of stubborn farmers.

But Central Point isn’t a might-have-been to its 7,000 residents, who celebrate a century of community this year. It’s a fine place with good people, they say, beginning with its founder, Isaac Constant. Constant and the pioneers who followed him in the agricultural town’s first decades set the pace and the tone of Central Point’s life.

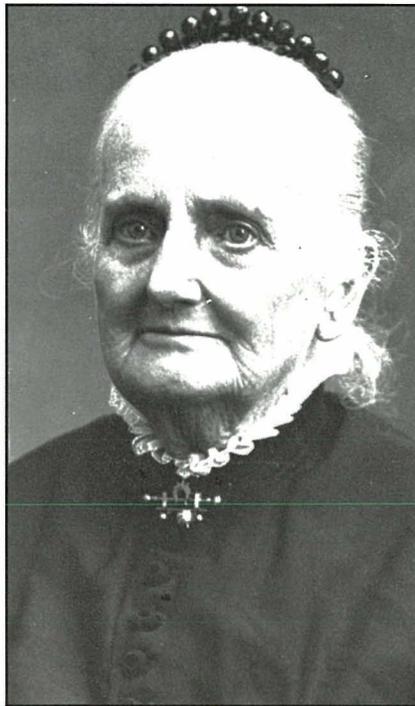
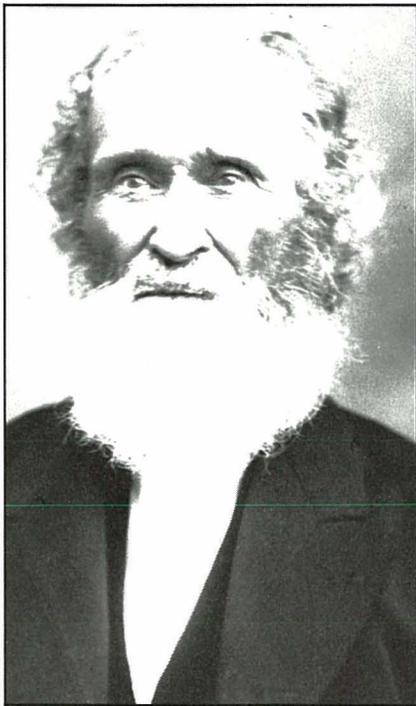
But before the first settlers arrived in the Rogue Valley in the mid-1800s, Native Americans of several tribes enjoyed the natural fruits of the valley soil. The native peoples gathered huckleberries, blackberries, salmon berries and manzanita berries. Women wove baskets tight enough to cook food in, and they ground acorns into flour. The men hunted deer, elk and antelope with bow and arrow, then smoked the meat.

“The rivers at the time were so full of salmon that they could stand along the banks of the streams and spear fish as fast as they could take them out of the river,” said Lettie Magruder, daughter of Constantine Magruder, one of Central Point’s first merchants.²

But the peace known by the hunting and gathering peoples of southern Oregon ended in 1851 with a ferry across the Rogue River at Woodville, now called Rogue River. Settlers trickled in, including Isaac Constant.

By Joseph G. Follansbee





Isaac and Lucinda Constant (above) were among the first to settle the Central Point area. (below) Central Point's main street was bustling in 1915. SOHS #227, 229, 1985



“Your father had to go somewhere for his health, but he needn’t have gone to the ends of the earth.”

Born in April 1809, Constant had already seen the Rogue Valley before the ferry at Woodville was constructed. In 1849, he left his Illinois farm on account of poor health, and traveled to southern Oregon. Excited by what he saw, this father of eight children returned to his wife Lucinda and suggested they move.

“You wait a year and if your health begins to fail, we will go and never say a word,” Lucinda said, according to Constant’s daughter, Lavinia. Constant later sold his farm and made preparations for the trip to Oregon Territory.

Like all those who walked the Oregon Trail, the Constants met their share of danger. At one point, they arranged for a steamboat trip up the Missouri River, a common highway west in those days. They found the first boat too crowded, so they waited for the next one. Later, they heard the first boat had blown up, killing several passengers.

Made “captain” of a wagon train of twenty-five including his family, Constant started for Oregon in the spring of 1852 from Independence, Missouri. According to Lavinia, the trekkers ate buffalo meat cooked with buffalo chips, and circled the wagons at night for protection.

“Sunday was always to be considered a day of rest for the families and livestock,” Lavinia said.

When they reached the Snake River, the party met with some natives and traded with them.

“The Indians did good business; everyone appreciated their friendship as well as the eating of good fresh salmon, this being the first salmon most of the travelers had ever seen,” said Lavinia.

As someone who had already been to Oregon, Constant often scouted ahead. As the party approached the Cascade Mountains, he came to a fork in the trail. He took the older trail, but as he rode, a voice told him to turn back. Seeing no one, he rode on, then heard “Turn back!” a second time. Perhaps a little puzzled, Constant rode on a bit more and heard the voice a third time. “He paused, looked, and listened — nobody,” Lavinia said.



But this time he obeyed the warning and later discovered from a party of soldiers that natives or thieves had attacked an emigrant train along the older trail the previous night.

"Father always claimed that [*the voice*] was certainly a warning from On High," Lavinia recalled.

In September 1852, after six months and 2,210 miles, Constant and his family arrived in the Rogue Valley. They stopped at Jacksonville, bought a donation land claim from a fellow named Walker,³ and built a large log cabin at what would later become Central Point. During the next winter, Constant shared a supply of potatoes with local natives. The grateful chief promised to protect him and his family from angry whites.⁴

Though the land already held riches for the natives, to the settlers' eye the plains around Table Rock were

barren, covered only with scrub brush, manzanita, and the occasional oak tree. Constant planted an orchard with trees brought from the Midwest. a Constant cousin, Con Leever, later said grasshoppers destroyed the first setting. Armyworms destroyed the second.

"But the unconquerable spirit of the pioneer enabled him to try yet again, and he succeeded in establishing a fine orchard," Leever said.

The pioneer spirit was not Isaac's alone, however. His wife Lucinda also struggled with the duties of keeping a home in a wild place. ". . . [A]nd every day the children would see her wiping away tears, saying, 'Your father had to go somewhere for his health, but he needn't have gone to the ends of the earth.'"

Isaac died in 1890; Lucinda died six weeks later.⁵

Mollie Britt and friend (above) enjoy a day of fishing on the Rogue River at the base of Table Rock near Central Point. Central Point High School's class of 1898 (right) poses for their graduation portrait. SOHS #1255, 12114



Though the land already held riches for the natives, to the settlers' eye the plains around the Table Rock were barren, covered only with scrub brush, manzanita, and the occasional oak tree.

Settlers trickled into the region around Constant's farm, which happened to be near the crossroads of two important highways: the road from the Willamette Valley to California, and the road from Table Rock to Jacksonville. Noting their location in the Rogue Valley, Constant dubbed the crossroads "Central Point." In 1870, two settlers set up a store at the crossroads, which became the nucleus of the town.⁶ Farmers came from many miles away to trade with the Magruder brothers, Constantine and Theophilus, who supplied them with everything from tools to candy.

By 1883, Central Point was one of fifteen settlements in the Rogue Valley, including forgotten towns such as Brownsboro, Barron and Pilot Rock. Central Point boasted seven homes, a store, a blacksmith, a saloon, a post office, a hotel, a feed stable, a school, and a wagon shop.⁷

George Hibbard owned the wagon shop, and one day built a toy wagon for one of the Magruder children. It was large enough for two children to sit on the seat while the other children pretended they were horses. The wagon was passed on from parent to child, and may still exist.⁸

The children also attended school, beginning in the Manzanita School District, the Rogue Valley's first school district. Lettie Magruder remembered that the first log school was located on the Merriman farm southeast of Central Point. Children walked to school over trails through timber and thick brush. In the community's earliest years, school was held during the cold months only:

Lettie remembers the school's first teacher, Jasper N. Hall, the brother of Ann Beall, herself of a pioneering Central Point family. Lettie became the "teacher's pet" during Hall's tenure. He eventually moved East, though he often returned in the summers to visit his sister. When he saw Lettie, he always gave her fifty cents. At his last visit, he gave her his picture.

Another teacher was not so kind, Lettie said. This scholar, one William Harrison, was missing his right arm, "but he was very handy with his left arm." One day, Harrison overheard some school boys joking about his one arm. The boys claimed Harrison could not discipline them.

The next day Lettie said, "he had the boys stand in a circle holding hands, then tied a rope around them and tied the rope together so none could get away. . . . He then proceeded to whip each boy with a switch he had brought for that purpose. Two of the boys, who were brothers, were whipped the hardest. As they were in their shirtsleeves, their arms were cut in stripes down the arms and the blood flowed freely. . . ."

"He whipped all in order to get the right one who did the talking. I remember each one cried as they got their share of the whipping."

Harrison was later forced to resign.⁹



Schools improved in Central Point in the 1880s, especially after the coming of the railroad. When the Oregon and California (later Southern Pacific) announced its plans to come through the Rogue Valley, the townspeople must have celebrated, since they knew the flat land around their town was perfect for railyards. Central Point had the potential of becoming the leading city in the valley, and an important freight and passenger stop on the West Coast.

But the railroad needed land for trackyards. Two Central Point farmers, Haskell Amy and Thomas Beall, refused to sell the small portions of their property the railroad required. Angry at the farmers, the powerful railroad superintendent dropped Central Point from consideration and built the yards at the new city of Medford in 1884.

"He also caused the papers not to print the name of Central Point on maps of Jackson County and for years people never knew much of Central Point," Lettie said. "Superintendent Koehler . . . did all he could to kill our little town."

Despite the bad luck, Central Point enjoyed a measure of prosperity with the railroad's arrival. At the corner of what is now Pine Street and Highway 99 stood a three-story hotel. On the lower floor was a saloon, which kept all its windows boarded up so ladies and children could not see inside.¹¹ Every Saturday night during the winter, townspeople enjoyed a dance in the dance hall above the saloon. Friday nights often brought an all-night dance, which featured a midnight supper. Bedbugs eventually became the only guests, and the hotel was torn down.¹²

The annual Jackson County Fair just outside of Central Point also provided some entertainment. The fair attracted people from all over the valley, including Jesse L. Helms and his grandmother Mrs. C.T. Payne. Helms lived four miles east of Phoenix, in an area where a trip meant going through farms instead of around them on roads.

After breakfast one day, the pair set out on horseback, packed lunch in hand. Helms' grandmother told him not to get lost and not to spend all the twenty cents given him by a neighbor. They arrived at the fairgrounds, which sported a high board fence and a grandstand.

The morning featured a number of speeches, including one by a local judge. Afternoon brought races between penny-farthing bicycles, the ones with the huge front wheels and the small back wheels. The iron tires rattled even the spectator's bones.

Afraid the horse might be frightened by the four o'clock train, grandmother then packed up the boy for home. The pair arrived just before dark.

"I might add I didn't get lost and still had ten cents in my pocket," Helms said.¹³

If the boy had stopped in Central Point, he might have spent his last dime at Mary Ann Mee's pharmacy. Townspeople called her "Aunt Mary." The *Medford Mail-Tribune* called her "Central Point's Angel of Mercy."



**On the lower floor
of the hotel
was a saloon,
which kept all its
windows boarded up
so ladies and
children could not
see inside.**



The Central Point Hotel, now just a memory, used to stand at the corner of what is now Pine Street and Highway 99. SOHS #12473



Mary Mee, pictured here with her brother Frank, worked at and later owned a Central Point drugstore. SOHS #19857



“When no one was looking, you could give the lazy Susan a whirl and watch all the glitter of glass and jewels.”

Born in Applegate in 1862, Mee went to work at age 18 for Dr. Jesse Hinkle, Central Point’s only doctor. Hinkle owned a drugstore, and gave Mee the responsibility of running it. The doctor taught Mee all he knew about pharmacology, and willed the store to her when he died.

After Hinkle’s death, a doctor from Medford held office hours two hours a week in her store. She frequently opened her store in the middle of the night to give out medicine. Sometimes, she never saw payment.

Mee’s appearance may have disguised her warm heart. A nephew remembers that “she wore a long dress to her shoe tops, [and her] hair was brought severely back and wrapped around the back of her head. Her glasses were so thick it was hard to divine what mood she might be in.”

“She always listened and learned,” said Mrs. Austin Lewis of Medford. “She read every book she could get her hands on, even though her eyesight was quite poor. . . .”

Mee was a staunch Republican whose opinion was respected. She once gave a dedication speech for a bridge over the Applegate River. She also took her business seriously, once commenting that “to succeed in business you must know how to buy as well as how to sell.”

“I patronize the Portland wholesale houses,” she told her nephew Fred Lockley, “because it is to their interest to have you succeed, for they grow and prosper with the growth of their customers. They try to protect you in place of imposing on you.”

Mee also supported her local business community by buying large amounts of space in the *Central Point Herald*, a town newspaper. She advertised in small, personalized columns on each page and in one large ad, which announced her stock of medicine and spices.

“We manufacture in our own laboratory, from the vanilla bean,” one ad said, “pure, full strength extract for flavoring. Try it once and you will always use it.”

One relative remembered that one of Mee’s liniments “did us a lot of good.”

Children were frequent customers, and they sometimes brought out Mee’s devilish streak. One day, she tossed a rubber knife at Lockley to see how he’d react. The knife was a novelty she’d just purchased for the store. Lockley also remembers a lazy Susan in Mee’s pharmacy.

“Gracing the middle of the store, it was high, probably to discourage small fingers from exploring, and contained a huge tray laden with perfume. When no one was looking, you could give it a whirl and watch all the glitter of glass and jewels move around in a fascinating way.”¹⁴



Della Tex worked alongside her husband, Central Point postmaster Guy Tex, at the post office. SOHS #5343

By the early years of the twentieth century, Central Point had grown into a prosperous farming community. In 1910, the Central Point Commercial Club published a pamphlet that summed up how far Central Point had come and where the town hoped to go.

Filled with photos of orchards and panoramic views of the Rogue Valley, the pamphlet sings the praises of a town with electricity, a municipal water system, a new \$20,000 school house (for which townspeople held dances to raise funds), and oak trees that offer “grateful shade during the summer season.” The pamphlet notes an estimated 22 billion board feet of timber in the surrounding forests, and “mineral wealth beyond the wildest dreams of the most ardent ‘49ers,” including coal, oil and natural gas “in paying quantities.” The Rogue River is a source of “almost limitless electrical energy,” the pamphlet says.

But the pamphlet spends the most time extolling the virtues of Rogue Valley agriculture, still a mainstay of Central Point life. The valley’s farmers grew peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, prunes, figs, almonds, walnuts, and a variety of grape the pamphlet claimed was far superior to California grapes.

“The Rogue River Valley is . . . the home of the most luscious pears produced anywhere,” the pamphlet boasts.

The pamphlet reassures the prospective resident that “cyclones, cloudbursts, earthquakes, and other natural disturbances are unknown, and in point of healthfulness, the valley is unexcelled in America.” Central Point and the Rogue Valley seem an Eden, since newcomers find “not only the general air and balmy sunshine, the fragrant flowers and luscious fruits, the noble river and majestic mountains, but they also find a field for profitable investments and business opportunities unsurpassed in any other part of the country.”¹⁵

Some might say but for a pair of stubborn farmers, Central Point might have been something. It might not have fallen under the shadow of Medford. But to resident Della Tex, Central Point has its own identity. For a time, Central Point shared a zip code with its larger neighbor.

“I don’t think that’s right,” she said. “I like the separate number.”¹⁶



ENDNOTES

1. Kay Atwood, *Jackson County Conversations* (Medford: Jackson County Intermediate Education District, 1975), p. 164.

2. MS 462. Southern Oregon Historical Society, Jacksonville, OR, n.p.

3. “Indian Wars of Southern Oregon.” Address by William Colvig at reunion of Indian War veterans at Medford, July 26, 1902, in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* (1902), pp. 227–240.

4. Thomas Robinson, “A Brief Review of the Life of Isaac Constant, as told in part by his daughter, Lavinia Jane (Constant) Robinson.” MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

5. As told to Thomas Robinson. MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

6. William Pierce Tucker, *The History of Jackson County, Oregon*. Master of Arts thesis (Seattle: University of Washington, 1931), unpublished, pp. 94–95.

7. Tucker, *The History of Jackson County*, pp. 6, 94–95.

8. MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

9. MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

10. MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

11. “Central Point, OR—History.” File in Southern Oregon Historical Society archives, n.p.

12. MS 462, Southern Oregon Historical Society, n.p.

13. Jesse L. Helms, “Trip to Fair at Central Point was Excursion in 1890.” *The Mail-Tribune*, June 20, 1954.

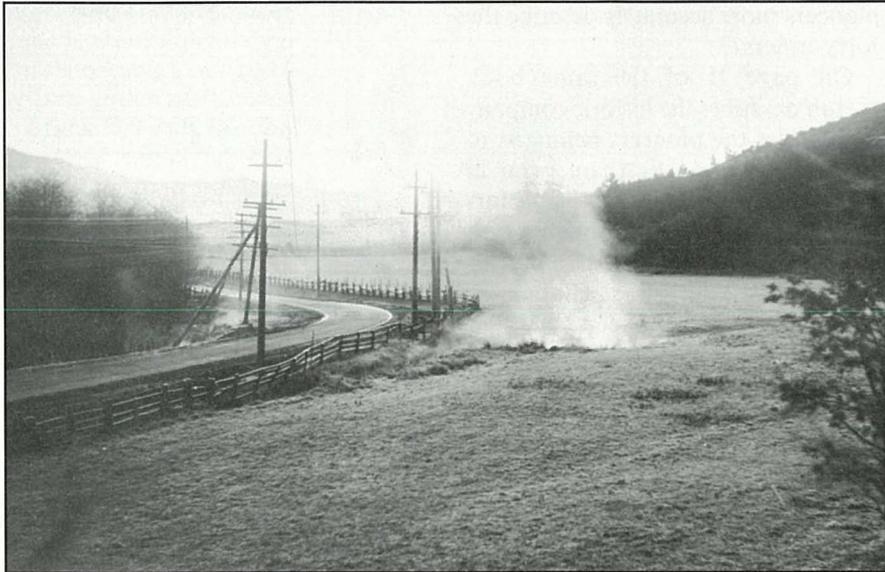
14. Charleen Thomas. “Mary Mee: Central Point’s Angel of Mercy.” *The Mail-Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1968.

15. “Central Point.” Central Point Commercial Club, 1910, photocopied pamphlet in Southern Oregon State College library, Ashland, OR.

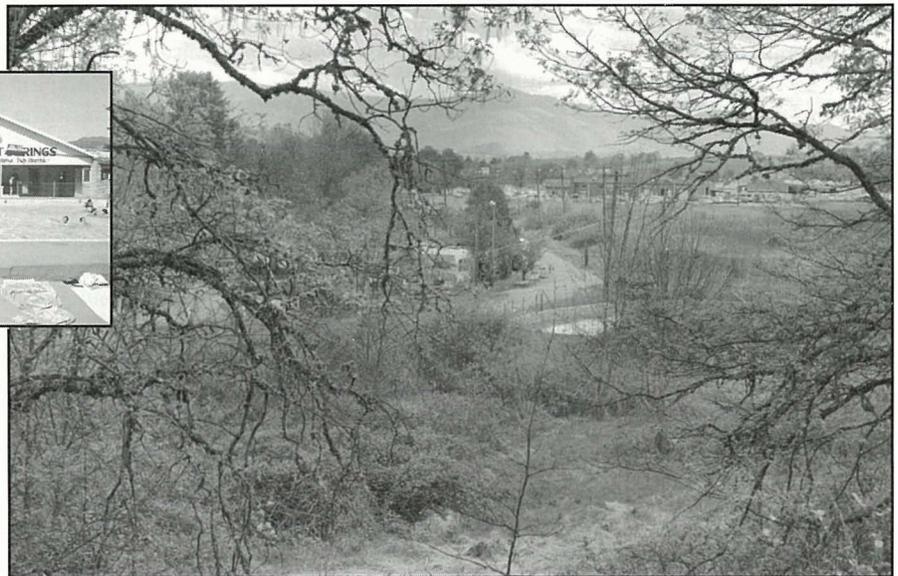
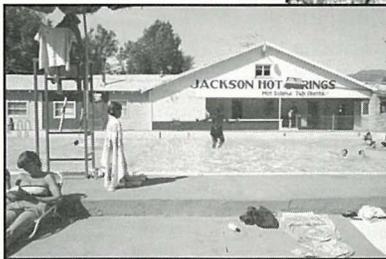
16. Atwood, p. 164.

Joseph G. Follansbee is an Ashland free-lance writer and journalist. He has contributed numerous articles to the Table Rock Sentinel, including “Liquor and the Law: Prohibition in Southern Oregon,” published in the May 1988 issue.

Then and Now



Jackson Hot Springs, located about one mile north of Ashland, was still undeveloped by 1910 (left, SOHS #4724). The artesian waters are no longer used for swimming, but feed the mineral baths and public pool situated just west of the spring. After North Pacific Highway replaced the old Highway 99, the developed facilities obscured viewing the actual historic spring. But campers and visitors can still see the remains of the winding old road and historic spring once believed cleansing to Native American Souls (below).



Jackson Hot Springs has seen many changes. Once a spiritual cleansing place for Native Americans, it soon was claimed by the influx of white settlers. Although privately owned at least by 1862 (water rights were granted to Eugenia F. Jackson in that year for irrigation, supplying stock and natatorium purposes), Rogue Valley boys are said to have enjoyed swimming and splashing in the warm mineral waters.

After the turn of the century, promoters began to consider the commercial value of the property. The *Ashland Tidings* mentions plans in April 1912 for a resort hotel on the site. "The hotel in contemplation is to be an elaborate one, costing in the neighborhood of \$50,000 and will be supplied with all the appointments

necessary to a fine, up-to-date summer resort," the *Tidings* reports. Owners D.H. Jackson and investor A.J. Lupton of Portland hoped to enlarge the spring and bring thousands of tourists to Ashland.

The resort hotel was never built, but other improvements were begun at the site. Around 1923 the public swimming pool was installed facing old Highway 99. Numerous cabins were constructed around that time to encourage lengthy

medicinal visits by area residents and tourists.

Today the Hot Springs still offers public swimming and camping, plus permanent mobile homes, motel and RV park. Manager Ken Johnson plans upgrading the facilities with outdoor mineral tubs and clearing of overgrown brush, and improving and remodeling various structures. Perhaps Jackson Hot Springs has yet to see its finest heyday.

Letters

Other Oregon Pioneers

We look forward to each issue of the publication—the story about George Tweed in the current issue is especially interesting. I am glad that he could see it in print. In another article “For Better or Worse,” I take umbrage at the paragraph quoting a sociology professor who describes Oregon pioneers as “deviants from the mainstream culture. They were black sheep, spinsters, religious outcasts, criminals, drifters, alcoholics, visionaries and missionaries.” In fact I think it is distasteful to learn that students at SOSOC may be subjected to this teaching.

My mother’s father came to Oregon in 1852; her mother, also as a child, arrived in 1865. My great-grandmother, a Huguenot, died from cholera and was buried near the Platt River—a fire built over the remains to disguise the grave. They were farm people whose ancestors arrived in America in the seventeenth century. Why they moved to Oregon I can only speculate. That none of the reasons outlined by the professor apply, I am positive.

The *Washington Post* newspaper describes John D. Unruh, Jr.’s book, *The Plains Across* (University of Illinois Press) as “the best book yet written on the California Oregon Trail.” On page 7 he writes: “It is now increasingly recognized not only that the legendary forty-niners and their even more numerous followers of 1850 comprised a disproportionate percentage of all the overlanders between 1840 and 1860, but also that they stood against the grain of those overlanders in motivation. Most came not to settle or build but to plunder and with a stake for the future to return to their homes and families back in ‘the civilized state.’ The gold rush, it has been argued, was thus an interruption of the traditional westward movement, an aberration and not a climactic culmination.” Can the professor’s definition of Oregon

pioneers more accurately describe the forty-niners?

On page 11 of the same book Unruh describes the historic company he believes the pioneers belonged to by quoting E. L. Eastham, who in 1886 wrote “Truly it was a performance of which all mankind may well be proud. Time is yet too young for the story to be fairly told. The descendants of Oregon pioneers shall yet hear their ancestors’ glories sung as we now teach our children to glorify the heroes of the past.” No iconoclastic expression there.

Since I have good reason to view my pioneer ancestors not as “deviants from the mainstream culture” but as participants in one of the truly great epics of life, I choose the view of a historian, not that of a sociologist. I am sure that the greater proportion of pioneers planned to make their homes here—why else would they have subjected themselves and their families to such hardships? I view the migration as a triumph of social and economic cooperation. Looking at it from an “ivory tower” we are “Monday morning quarterbacking.” I am sure some Oregon pioneers—and gold seekers—were not the epitome of greatness and there were weaknesses, but making a generalization that Oregon pioneers be described as miscreants is not factual.

Thank you for listening to another side.

M. W. Williams
Ashland



We want to hear from you! Send your letters to: Southern Oregon Historical Society, P.O. Box 480, Jacksonville, OR 97530

Through 1990

Making Tracks: The Impact of Railroading in the Rogue Valley The Society’s major exhibit at the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History traces the coming and going of the railroad, how it changed people’s lives and the Rogue Valley economy, its local role in the nation’s battles overseas, and the introduction of the railroad worker as an important member of the valley’s communities.

HANNAH: Pioneer Potters on the Rogue This exhibit features the wares and pottery-making techniques of the 19th-century Hannah pottery works (once located near present-day Shady Cove) and focuses on pioneer methods of food preservation and preparation. Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History.

May 9 Through September 1989

There’s No Place Like Home: Ashland Residential Architecture This panel exhibit traces the evolution of architectural styles in Ashland from the pit houses of the native Americans through the log cabins and early framed buildings to contemporary homes including geodesic domes. Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum.



May 10

During A Gift to Mom from Me, moms will enjoy watching an old-time movie while their youngsters, ages three to six, are busy making very special gifts for Mother’s Day. Admission will be free to Jr. Historians, \$1.00 for non-members. Call (503) 899-1847 by 5 p.m. Tuesday, May 9, to pre-register. Time: 3–4 p.m. at the Children’s Museum.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 13

Children ages 7 to 12 also will get their chance to create something special for mom at **Hats Off to Mom!** Because we don't want moms to know what they're getting, we can't give any details! Admission free to Jr. Historians, \$1.50 for non-members. Call (503) 899-1847 by 5 p.m. May 12 to pre-register. Time: 10-11:30 a.m. at the Children's Museum.

May 14-20

National Historic Preservation Week For events and activities that celebrate the preservation of our history's treasures, consult your local newspaper.



May 20

The Society and the Red Lion Inn have joined forces to present a **Come As You Were Party** to raise funds for the History Center project. Members and the public are invited to pick a decade and come as they were in the 1930s, '40s, '50s, or '60s! No-host cocktails starting at 6:30, followed by dinner (traditional roast turkey or roast center-cut pork loin) and musical entertainment. Then dance to the swinging tunes of the Savoy's from 8:30 to midnight. Tickets: \$20 per person, \$40 per couple. Reservations and tickets must be purchased no later than 5 p.m. Wednesday, May 15. Call (503) 899-1847 for additional information.

May 18

International Museum Day: Show your support of your local museum or historical society—visit one today.

May 21

Society members are invited to be special guests from 1-2 at the grand opening of **Waverly Cottage**, an 1898 private residence that is now a bed and breakfast inn at 305 N. Grape Street, Medford. Memorabilia from Charles Lindburgh's 1927 visit to the West Coast and of Joseph Shone who built the house as a show piece of his craftsmanship will be on display. Special dedication at 2 p.m. by Society Executive Director Sam Wegner and Medford Mayor Jerry Lausmann. Refreshments. Call (503) 779-4716 for details.

May 24

The **Southern Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees** will hold its monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Civic Center, corner of 1st and Oak Streets, Rogue River. Members and the general public are invited.

The Society's first bus tour of the season begins with the **Portland Rose Festival**. See the April/May issue of *ArtiFACTS* or call Membership Coordinator Susan Cox at (503) 899-1847 for details.

June 13 and 14

What better way to explore our history than by literally **Digging into the Past?** Boys and girls ages 9-14 will investigate archaeology, the study of mankind. Participants will meet near an excavation site for a slide presentation, proceeding on to the dig location to search for even the smallest clues to southern Oregon's prehistory! Pre-registration and prepayment of the \$2.00 fee (*\$1.00 for Jr. Historians!*) are required by 5 p.m., Friday, June 2. Call (503) 899-1847, Ext. 227, for details.

June 13

We haven't forgotten you dads! During **Father's Day Surprise**, preschoolers ages three to six will make a very special secret gift to give their dads on June 18th. Pre-registration and prepayment of the

All offices and departments of the **Southern Oregon Historical Society**, except the Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum, may be reached by calling (503) 899-1847. The telephone number for the Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum is (503) 488-1341.

Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History, P.O. Box 480, 206 North Fifth St., Jacksonville, OR 97530. Open Tues.-Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Research Library in the Jacksonville Museum, P.O. Box 480, 206 North Fifth St., Jacksonville, OR 97530. Open Tues.-Fri., 2-5 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Children's Museum, P.O. Box 480, 206 North Fifth St., Jacksonville, OR 97530. Open Tues.-Sun. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Chappell-Swedenburg House Museum, 990 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland, OR 97520. Open Tues.-Sat. 1-5 p.m.

Administrative Offices, Armstrong House, 375 East California St., Jacksonville, OR 97530. Open Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Other Jackson County organizations associated with the Southern Oregon Historical Society are:

Woodville Museum, First and Oak Streets, P.O. Box 1288, Rogue River, OR 97537. Phone: (503) 582-3088. Open Tues.-Sun. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Eagle Point Historical Society Museum, North Royal Ave. (near the Antelope Creek Covered Bridge), P.O. Box 201, Eagle Point, OR 97524. Open Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Gold Hill Historical Society, P.O. Box 26, Gold Hill, OR 97525

\$1.00 fee (no charge for Jr. Historians!) are required by 5 p.m., Friday, June 9. Call (503) 899-1847, Ext. 227 for more information. Time: 3 p.m. at the Children's Museum.

June 24

Plan to attend the **Historical Society annual meeting!** With so many positive comments about last year's event, we are returning to the grounds of the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History for another pioneer picnic—a barbecue this time! Dr. Joseph Cox, president of Southern Oregon State College, will be our guest speaker. Details will be forthcoming, but mark your calendars now.

June 28

The **Southern Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees** will hold its monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the U.S. Hotel in downtown Jacksonville. Members and the general public are invited.



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