

TABLE ROCK

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# SENTINEL

SPECIAL SUMMER  
EDITION 1992

**B** AN ARTIST'S  
**BRIEF BLOOM**  
TRAGIC STORY

**C** **CLAN**  
**C** **OF THE**  
**CAVEMEN**  
GRANTS PASS'  
BOOSTER CLUB

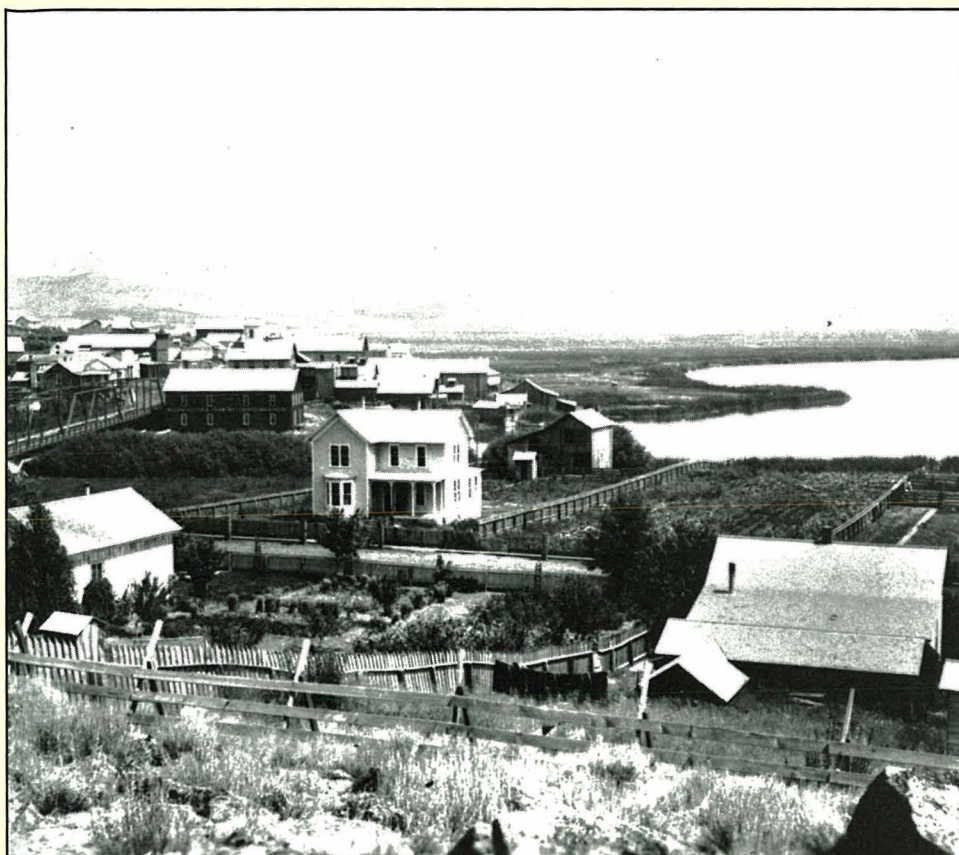
**DICK FOSBURY**  
FLOPS TO FAME

**C** THE SPARK THAT  
**CHAUTAUQUA**  
IGNITED ASHLAND

The  
Magazine  
of the  
Southern  
Oregon  
Historical  
Society



# One Hundred Twenty-five Years Ago



Linkville, later renamed Klamath Falls, in 1886. SOHS #14081

Traders looking to do business in a remote area almost 100 miles east of Jacksonville found a natural meeting place at a ford on the Link River, where the stream connected Klamath Lake with Lake Ewauna. George Nurse, who had been trading with local Indians and soldiers, settled there and built a one-room store and a modest hotel. In 1867 Nurse founded the city of Linkville on the site. The remote community gained notoriety during the Modoc War, as the area was an important staging place for soldiers, supplies, news correspondents and government officials. Linkville became the temporary seat of Lake County in 1874, and eight years later, when Klamath County was carved from a section of Lake County, the town was named as its seat.

Steep hillsides to the north and swamps to the south and east hindered Linkville's physical growth. Many buildings and residences were clustered near the Link River bridge in an area which was often referred to as "Bunch Town." Structures lining the narrow road winding eastward became known as "String Town." "Swamp-grabbers," land speculators who seized large blocks of marshy land to the southeast and held it for high prices, further impeded the community's growth. The present-day reluctance by Klamath Falls' suburbs to incorporate into the city is often attributed to these early divisions.

In 1893 a city charter showed Klamath Falls as the community's new name. Many residents felt "Linkville" carried the connotation of a small town and that the new name suggested proximity to water power. The actual falls was a cascade where the Link River dropped about fifteen feet. Klamath Indians referred to the spot as *Tiwishkeni*, or "rush of falling waters place." In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hydroelectric projects diverted much of the water into a canal, drying up the falls.



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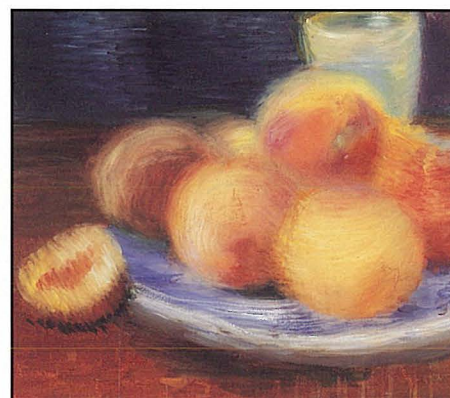
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**Back cover:** Dorland Robinson's siblings, Mary Leah and Willie Cecil Robinson, died of diphtheria at ages five and six in 1890. SOHS #4121.



With fierce  
demeanors and  
clubs to match,  
the Oregon  
Cavemen spread  
Grants Pass'  
fame by initiating  
presidents, movie  
stars and sports  
figures who came  
to town. Today's  
clan (*opposite  
page*) has  
dwindled from  
its glory days,  
but members still  
meet regularly.

Left photo courtesy  
*Grants Pass Daily  
Courier*, opposite  
photo by Timothy  
Bullard





# Clan<sup>of the</sup> Cavemen

by Russell Working

Grants Pass' boisterous prehistoric boosters have initiated visiting dignitaries for seventy years.

**R**ichard Nixon only had twenty minutes for a Grants Pass whistle-stop speech in September 1952. While the locomotive hissed and the crowd pressed closer, the Republican vice-presidential candidate praised Dwight Eisenhower, knocked President Truman, and glad-handed the local mayors and county commissioners. Nixon was ready to answer questions about the dubious \$18,000 expense fund that he had accepted from supporters; at a stop in Medford an hour earlier, a heckler had brought up the money, and the issue was serious enough to threaten Nixon's position as Ike's running mate. But no one in Grants Pass mentioned the gifts.

If the young senator hadn't been so distracted by his first major political crisis, he might have wondered why the crowd kept grinning and glancing expectantly around. But he had no way of anticipating the Oregon Cavemen. Like dozens of other candidates and celebrities before him, Nixon was about to discover that a visit to southern Oregon could mean a rude welcome from the nation's most notorious civic booster club.

At a sign from "Chief Bighorn" George Hall, a mob of Cavemen clad in coyote pelts and shabby wigs surged through the crowd and leaped onto the back platform of Nixon's train, growling and



**John F. Kennedy, then senator of Massachusetts, and wife Jacqueline received a Caveman welcome at the Medford Airport in 1959.** SOHS #14066 (courtesy Grants Pass Daily Courier)

shaking the jawbones of cattle. Nixon raised his hands in mock surrender. Hall stepped forward in his ceremonial fur-and-horn hat and presented the California senator with "the traditional jaw-bone and passport to the Caveman realm."<sup>1</sup> A cameraman photographed Nixon shaking the bone while his wife, Pat, grinned, edging away from Hall.

In 1988, I wrote to Nixon about the Oregon Cavemen, and he responded by saying he had good memories of the initiation. In fact, he gave the Cavemen partial credit for the success of his September 23 Checkers broadcast, in which he would defend the gifts he accepted and thus save his political career.

Nixon wrote: "In a subtle but nevertheless very significant way, my unexpected initiation into the Cavemen . . . contributed to the success of the broadcast. As you can imagine, I was pretty discouraged at that time since not only my partisan Democratic critics but also prominent Republicans were calling for my resignation from the ticket. As you can see from the photograph on the front page of your September 20, 1952, issue, Mrs.

**Lest the clout of the Cavemen be scoffed at, consider: their membership roster has included four presidents.**



Nixon and I were enjoying one of the few good laughs we had during a very difficult period of my political career.”<sup>2</sup>

The effect of a Caveman initiation on a politician’s career has been debated. Nixon says it helped. As he toured the Northwest in 1952, he was dogged by the charges of unethical contributions. As the controversy broiled, he came under increasing criticism. A few days after his initiation into the Cavemen, he left the campaign train and flew back to Washington to deliver a broadcast in his defense. An hour before he went on the air, Nixon later recalled, he received a phone call from fellow-Republican (and fellow Caveman) Thomas Dewey. The New York governor said party leaders, including Eisenhower, wanted him off the ticket.

Instead, Nixon fought back in the best Caveman tradition. He took to the airwaves to deliver his now-famous Checkers speech. Telegrams of support flooded in. A *Daily Courier* editorialist confessed he had wept during the broadcast. Nixon stayed on the ticket. Eisenhower and Nixon went on to win that year.

**F**ormed seventy years ago to promote the region, the Oregon Cavemen have reveled in welcoming (and humbling) the high and mighty. Their honorary members include such celebrities as Shirley Temple, James Stewart, Babe Ruth, Henry Ford, Art Linkletter, and boxing champ Jack Dempsey.<sup>3</sup> But it was during political campaigns that the Cavemen earned their greatest notoriety. For decades, the club ambushed and initiated candidates who happened through the region—the bigger, the better. Herbert Hoover, Thomas Dewey, Nelson Rockefeller, Harold Stassen, Wendell Willkie, John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and Ronald Reagan have all involuntarily joined the snarling prehistorics. Lest the clout of the Cavemen be scoffed at, consider: their membership roster has included four presidents.

In an initiation that includes eating raw meat and drinking “the blood of the saber-toothed tiger” (Snappy Tom, served in a Coke bottle wrapped in a skunk skin), the Cavemen have welcomed governors, senators and state attorneys general to their ranks.

The Oregon Cavemen first burst onto the scene in March 1922, when five

“good ol’ boys” dressed in coyote skins hurled open the door of a Chamber of Commerce meeting and growled that the proposed Redwood Highway would inundate the Oregon Caves with tourists and destroy their home.<sup>4</sup>

The group didn’t organize as a separate entity until September 1922. One wonders if the chamber grew tired of their table-thumping and boasting about pterodactyl hunts. At any rate, the Oregon Cavemen held their first official meeting in Grants Pass’ Oxford Hotel. Iris Burns (now Turpin), a sixteen-year-old blond beauty, was invited to entertain the club. The girl danced for the men in her ballet tutu. Entranced, the men named her princess and demanded a repeat performance. At the next meeting, the love-smitten Neanderthals promoted her.

“At that meeting they crowned me queen,” said Turpin. “And I was queen for three years. And I went to parades all over the state, and I was heard on radio.”<sup>5</sup>

(Of course, the Cavemen didn’t mention the dancing girl in their report to the *Grants Pass Daily Courier*; evidently they didn’t want their wives to get the wrong idea. For her part, Turpin emphasizes that she was chaperoned by her mother in all her travels as Cave Queen.)



**The Caveman initiation may have proved a blessing for Ronald Reagan, who became an honorary Neanderthal while speaking to the Knife and Fork Club in December 1977. The former California governor and movie star went on to become president of the United States three years later.**

SOHS #14051





**Legendary baseball player Babe Ruth joined the Caveman ranks in 1924.**

SOHS #14070 (courtesy Grants Pass Daily Courier)



Grants Pass automobile dealer Ross Roe, who has researched the Cavemen, said the group was desperately trying to save the region's business after the main north-south railway line cut through Klamath Falls and skipped Grants Pass. In the days before Interstate 5, this threatened the economic survival of Grants Pass.

"From what we can gather, the Caveman was a valiant attempt at that time: 'Hey, we need tourism,'" Roe said.<sup>6</sup>

The Cavemen promoted a region graced by the Oregon Caves, which had recently been designated a national monument. In that mission, the group was similar to other booster clubs at the time. Coos Bay had the Pirates, Medford the Craterians, Eugene the Radiators. But they lacked that *je ne sais quois* of men in coyote skins. Besides, just how would a Eugenian dress to look like a giant engine part? Somehow the Cavemen (whose membership was largely drawn from leaders of the business community) struck an outrageous chord that would one day win them worldwide, and occasionally invective, attention.<sup>7</sup>

They elected officers such as Chief Bighorn, Clubfist (sergeant-at-arms) and Dinosaur Thrower (publicity chairman). They reveled in pure audacity, staging events wild enough to make a fraternity bash seem like a high school Brain Bowl

competition. The Cavemen towed a cage in parades and captured women and children along the route. (They released them after a few hundred yards.) And the meetings were conducted in a way that satirized the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs that so many of the members belonged to.

Former Chief Bighorn Carl Rhodes said, "If a person happens to inadvertently use the word 'Medford,' they are immediately reprimanded by the chief and fined. That's one word that we don't dare use during the meeting. We have to refer to it as 'Jacksonville Junction.' If they walk in wearing a tie to the meeting, it's immediately cut off and they're fined. You know, that sort of thing."

The Cavemen don't dress in furs for their meetings (they save those for the parades). Instead, they wear fake leopard-skin vests or blazers.<sup>8</sup>

At a recent meeting, eight or ten Cavemen gathered in a Grants Pass restaurant. Marion Prim, an elderly man in a vest covered with Caveman buttons, sat watching the proceedings. While the Cavemen planned another celebrity induction, Prim regaled me with stories of his prowess. Prim walks with a crutch, the result, he said, of an old injury.

"The reason I lost my leg is, I wanted some fresh meat, so I went dinosaur hunt-



**A club member tells a motorist he'll have to take it easy while the new \$125,000 Cavemen Bridge over the Rogue River is being completed. The bridge's 1931 opening was accompanied by a publicity stunt that drew the Cavemen—and Grants Pass—nationwide attention.**  
SOHS #14063 (courtesy Grants Pass Daily Courier)

ing," he said. "He got my leg, but I got him."

Flamewatcher Hank Geiske carried a myrtlewood burl with a candle stuck in it. "If the meeting gets out of order, I put the flame out, and I fine 'em," he said. "If I put the flame out, they've had it."

From the earliest days, the Cavemen terrorized stray celebrities. Claiming to be the first inhabitants of the Rogue Valley, they said no outsider could enter the region without a "passport" granted by the group—either a piece of hide or a jawbone. The group inducted Babe Ruth in 1924, not long after the *Daily Courier* sent fledgling reporter Iris Burns to interview him. The full-time reporter was sick that day, and so the young Cave Queen, who was by now working for the newspaper, grabbed a note pad and pencil and dashed over to meet the famous outfielder.

"I was so nervous," Turpin said. "I think really he interviewed me."

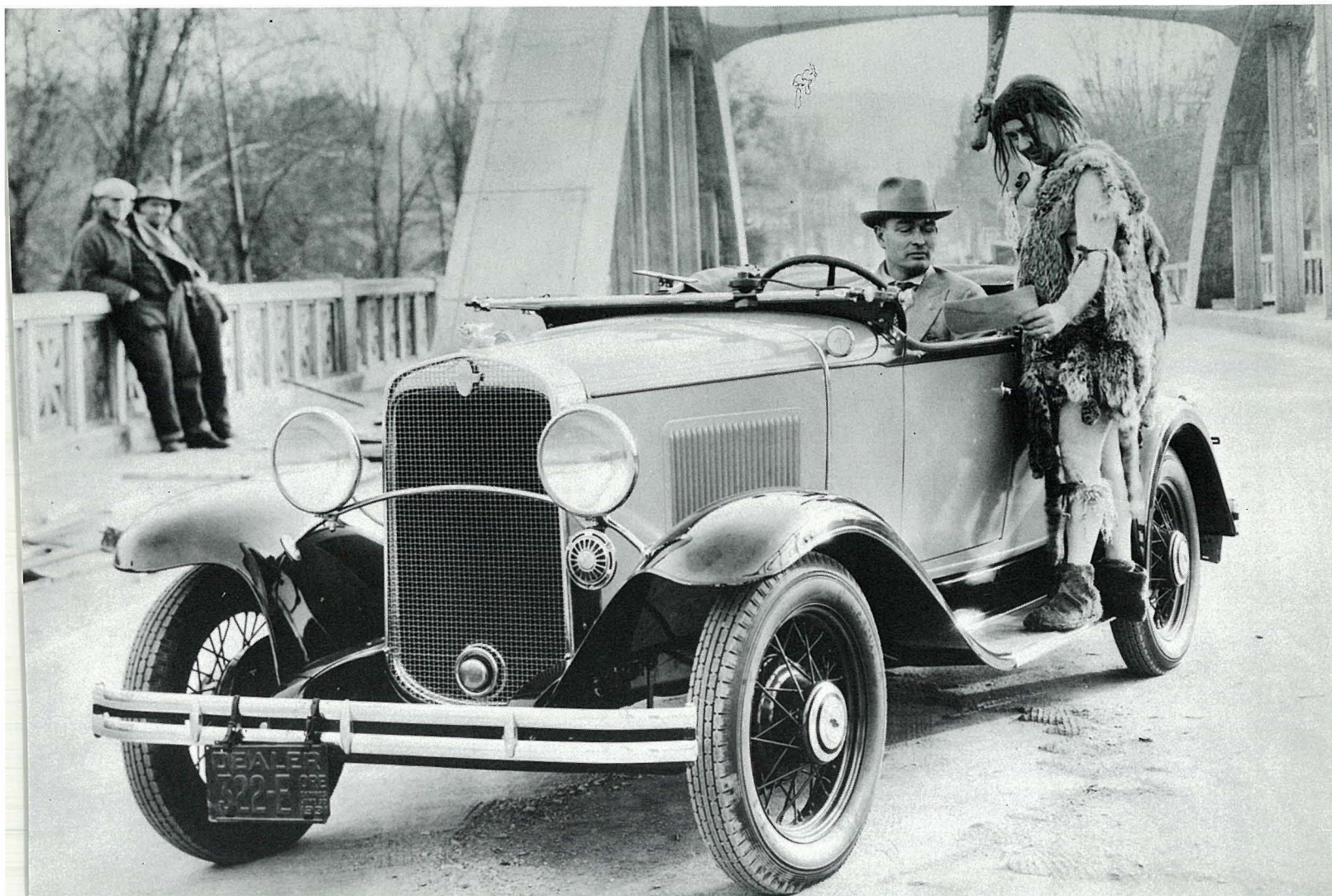
In 1931, the Cavemen excited media attention nationwide with their publicity stunt for the opening of Grants Pass' Caveman Bridge. They walked into the Post Office with a sheep's jawbone and

handed it to the clerk. *Oregonian* writer Parris Emery later recalled:

The postal clerk looked at the bone in which several teeth were imbedded and laid it disdainfully on the counter. "What is it?" he inquired. "It's a sheep's jawbone," came the reply. "Why, you can't send that through the mail," the postal clerk snapped. "Why not?" "It's against postal regulations." "That's just what I want to find out—what regulations?" "Well, ahhhh." "Let me see them."

The postal clerk searched vainly through pages of printed regulations and came up with the information that he could find nothing to prevent a person from sending a bone through the mail if proper postage was attached. So several hundred sheep jawbones were ordered from a packing company, costing a penny each.

The first was addressed to the president of the United States. Others were to go to members of his cabinet and to governors of various states . . . The Oregon Cavemen called it a passport, and it read as follows: "OREGON CAVEMEN PASSPORT FOR YOU AND FRIENDS TO THE BRIDGE DEDICATION AND ALL PACIFIC COAST PUBLICITY CONFERENCE AT GRANTS PASS, SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1931. By order of Chief Bighorn." (His X mark.)





Several governors showed the bones to the press, and photos were printed in papers all over the nation.

Frightened children along parade routes today might identify with Shirley Temple's feelings during her welcome by the Cavemen in 1936. Now the U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Shirley Temple Black said through a press aide that she was too busy to discuss the Cavemen with a reporter. But she does tell about her initiation in her autobiography.

Temple's introduction to the Cavemen couldn't have come at a worse time. Her family was driving to Canada, and in Eureka the studio phoned her father to warn that someone had issued a death threat for her, and demanded \$25,000 from the family. She wrote:

"By dawn the sun was shining, and my parents had decided to press on. Passing through Grants Pass, Oregon, we were startled to suddenly be surrounded by several dozen men dressed in pelts of deer and bearskin. Prehistoric figures, they leaped up and down around our auto, brandishing gnarled wooden clubs, grimacing and grunting. My parents quickly rolled up the windows and locked the doors. Nobody had forewarned us about this traditional local society of Oregon Cavemen, who only wished to present a scroll of welcome. Already funk and foreboding, my parents saw ominous portents in everything, as a distant creak on the staircase stimulates frightful imagining. Father drove on, his glance constantly flickering up in the rear-view mirror."<sup>9</sup>

Heavyweight boxing champ Jack Dempsey, for all his toughness, barely survived his encounter with the Cavemen—or so it seemed. He arrived in Grants Pass in 1942, bursting with patriotic zeal, to promote the sale of war bonds. He must have left wondering whether he had stumbled back into another epoch. The Cavemen invaded a dinner in Dempsey's honor. They menaced him with papier-mâché clubs that would have shattered like eggshells had the great fighter decided to take them on. But he was in

uniform. He was representing the flag. The war effort demanded sacrifice on behalf of all citizens. He gamely submitted to the initiation. Given a strip of limp, bloody beef the size of a lamprey, the boxer turned green and tried his best to choke it down.<sup>10</sup>

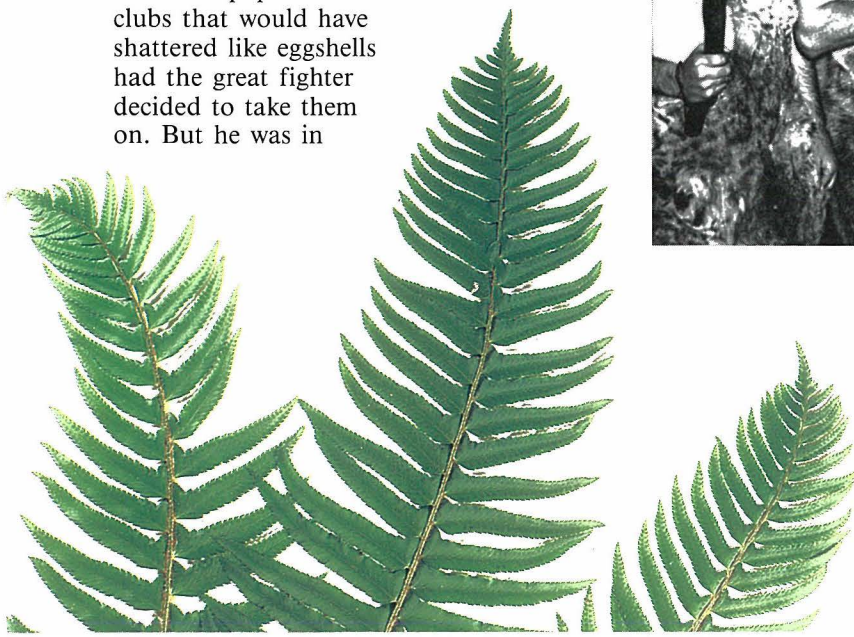
The men in furs now tend to stick to parades and civic events within Oregon. In the past, with the backing of Grants Pass'

## For decades, the club ambushed and initiated celebrities who happened through the region—the bigger, the better.

wealthier merchants, they were more ambitious. In 1949, they flew to Washington, D.C., inducted the entire Oregon congressional delegation, and posed for pictures with secretaries slung over their shoulders. When they burst into the office of senator Guy Cordon, his secretary phoned the Capitol Police. (Ever since then, they have made a point of warning someone of their arrival.)<sup>11</sup>



Heavyweight boxing champ Jack Dempsey nearly fainted during his initiation in 1942. Shirley Temple (*opposite*) during her encounter with the Cavemen in 1936. SOHS #14067 and #14064





Nazi propaganda during World War II portrayed the Cavemen as Roosevelt cabinet ministers cavorting with fan dancer Sally Rand. Courtesy Grants Pass Daily Courier

The most audacious Caveman stunt earned them international media coverage. When Republican presidential candidate Thomas Dewey came through town in 1948, the Cavemen ambushed his campaign bus. In an era of less stringent security, the Cavemen were able to pull the bus over at a gravel pit north of town. They initiated the candidate while newsreel cameras rolled and reporters gleefully scribbled. The Cavemen induced the iron-stomached New York governor to eat raw meat.

"Oh, my God, he just thought that was the greatest thing in the world," said D. D. Dahl, who was Chief Bighorn that year. "He really got a kick out of it."

One of the Cavemen was a Greyhound bus driver, and when Dewey prepared to push on to Grants Pass, the group substituted their driver.

"Dewey's bus, when they got ready to shove off and head back to town, we just kept the driver with us," Dahl said. "And here this guy with skins climbs in and takes the bus. Oh, my God, they were so shook up—the F.B.I. and all those guys they had with him. And he just reached down into his skin and shows them his

card and says, 'I am a genuine grade-A bus driver.'"<sup>12</sup>

The images of Dewey were a hit not only in America, but as far away as the Stalinist Soviet Union. In 1951, a Foreign Service diplomat, who had once lived in Grants Pass, wrote home to say the Soviet government was displaying pictures of the Cavemen and Dewey as anti-American and anti-religious propaganda in Leningrad's former cathedral.<sup>13</sup>

The diplomat wrote to the Grants Pass Chamber of Commerce: "The Cavemen of Grants Pass are quite well known in the West and have been known to shock staid Easterners at various times, but I'm sure that your organization little dreamed that its notoriety would filter behind the Iron Curtain and be the instrument of a part of the current communist hate program."

The diplomat was startled by the Russian caption, which was translated for him thus:

In the U.S., the power of the church is synonymous with the power of Wall Street. The down-trodden masses are forced to sustain the wealthy priests and hierarchy in kingly splendor while they themselves are forced to scrape the garbage pails behind the churches for something to eat. Resentment has been growing in the U.S. toward this religious feudalism.

Recently, a group of peasants have formed a new organization to return to



the old pre-church days. They say that they return to the pre-historic conditions, hence the attire worn by these Americans. This is a picture of this organization protesting against the cruel and vicious Wall Street-backed church. Pictured with them is T. E. Dewey, a known anti-religious leader and once candidate for president of the U.S. He was defeated by the Wall Street industrialists.

This Caveman organization is making him an honorary member of their group. Part of the initiation is performed by drinking blood and eating raw meat. While the group's anti-religious campaign is noteworthy, their appearance can only bear out the savage and barbaric character of Americans as a whole.

The letter writer added, "I'm sure that, if the Coos Bay Pirates get wind of this, they probably will want their picture hung in the Kremlin."

When Dewey (who happened to be a vestryman in his Episcopal church) learned of the story, he sent the Cavemen a tele-

no meat, either raw or cooked, is available."

Stalin wasn't the first despot to see the propaganda potential in the Cavemen. During World War II, a Nazi broadsheet printed in German, Italian, and Spanish said the Cavemen were a decadent club of Roosevelt's cabinet ministers and American millionaires—men who liked to cavort as primitives with burlesque fan dancer Sally Rand.<sup>14</sup>

(As a matter of fact, the Nazis didn't have it all wrong: The Cavemen *had* inaugurated the naughty showgirl during her appearance at the 1939 World's Fair in San Francisco. The Neanderthals invaded the stage while Rand was dancing in a skimpy outfit of bandanas and cowboy boots. She was photographed taking refuge atop a wooden fence on the set while a Caveman pawed at her leg. At the same World's Fair, Miss America took one look at the brutes, and fainted.)<sup>15</sup>

The first Caveman to be elected president was John F. Kennedy, who had been initiated as he and Jacqueline arrived in Medford in 1959. The primitive men surged forward to greet the couple at the Medford Airport, surrounding them before

**Dewey said he was sure the Cavemen would be "delighted to learn they are now portrayed throughout Russia as the starving victims of American imperialism."**

they could get down the gangway. Acting Chief Bighorn Elmer Tedrick shook the senator's hand, but he couldn't resist a glance over his shoulder at the lovely Jackie, as the *Daily Courier* gleefully noted in its caption:

Acting Chief Bighorn Elmer Tedrick appears to be more interested in Mrs. Kennedy as he greets senator John F. Kennedy before the senator from Massachusetts could alight from his special plane which landed nearly an hour late at the Medford Airport Friday. The Cavemen presented the senator with a passport to the domain of the Oregon Cavemen which permitted him to make a speech to southern Oregon Democrats. Kennedy revealed later that he remembered pictures of the Cavemen greeting




**The Cavemen kidnapped Republican candidate Thomas Dewey in 1948 after ambushing his bus. The stunt gained them international media coverage.**

SOHS #14071  
(courtesy Grants Pass  
*Daily Courier*)

gram saluting his "fellow peasants," the *Washington Post* reported September 21, 1951.

"The Soviet propaganda machine has admitted you to the exclusive club of the downtrodden masses of America," Dewey wrote.

Dewey said he was sure the Cavemen would be "delighted to learn they are now portrayed throughout Russia as the starving victims of American imperialism. You can now put your show on the road. I am sorry you can't take it to Moscow, where



Governor Dewey when he was a Republican candidate for President of the United States and was pleased to have had a similar experience. The Medford visit is the Democratic presidential hopeful's only stop in Oregon at this time.<sup>16</sup>

JFK's brother was another Caveman candidate. Robert Kennedy stopped at Grants Pass May 27, 1968, the day before the bitterly contested Oregon Democratic primary. Before a crowd of 2,500 at Cave-man Shopping Center, a mob of Cro-Magnon Cavemen compelled him to swig from the skunk-skin bottle.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, RFK lost Oregon to Senator Eugene McCarthy (who was also initiated by the Cavemen during the campaign). A week later, an assassin murdered Kennedy in Los Angeles as he left a party celebrating his victory in the California primary.

McCarthy recently said he remembered stopping in Grants Pass but didn't recall the Cavemen. Decades on the campaign trail and innumerable small town photo-ops seem to have erased his memory.

McCarthy said, "I don't think you got a picture of me in the fur hat." But he added, "Maybe I should've caught up with them (the Cavemen) again. It might've made a difference."<sup>18</sup>

The Cavemen haven't limited their political victims just to presidential hopefuls.

Governor Mark Hatfield chomped on a bone during an initiation in the 1950s. The Cavemen grabbed New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller in 1964, and California Governor Pat Brown—Jerry's father—in 1965. And former Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer paid dearly for an old political insult during a "roast" in October 1988.


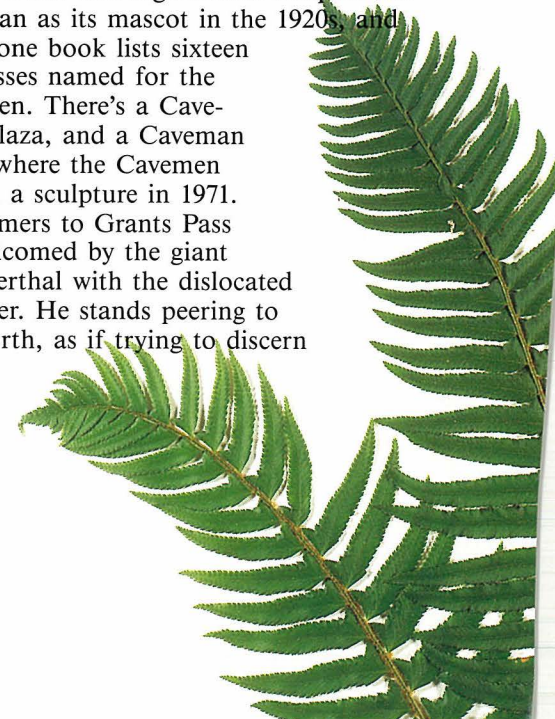
"The person roasting me said I had once called him a Neanderthal in the Legislature," Frohnmayer said a few weeks after the induction. "So he wanted me to meet some real Neanderthals."<sup>19</sup>

The kitchen doors flung open, and several Cavemen came growling into the banquet room. They looked around the room and settled on Frohnmayer. And they approached him with a strip of red slimy stuff in hand. "I received the toughest piece of raw meat I'd ever seen," recalled Frohnmayer. "He wouldn't swallow the meat," former Chief Bighorn Rhodes said in amazement. "He just wouldn't do it. It was good meat. It came right out of the Red Lion's kitchen."

The Cavemen ordered the attorney general to let out a roar. Frohnmayer bel-lowed at the top of his lungs. "I knew that if I didn't do it loud enough, they'd make me do it again," he said.

Not everyone recalls his encounter with the Cavemen fondly. But Nixon, at least, was moved to list the Cavemen among the highlights of his career: "Due to the offices I have been privileged to hold over the years, I have been made an honorary member of many organizations. I can assure you that none means more to me than to be a member of the Oregon Cavemen."

The Cavemen have made their mark on Grants Pass. The high school adopted the Caveman as its mascot in the 1920s, and the phone book lists sixteen businesses named for the Cavemen. There's a Cave-man Plaza, and a Caveman Park, where the Cavemen erected a sculpture in 1971. Newcomers to Grants Pass are welcomed by the giant Neanderthal with the dislocated shoulder. He stands peering to the North, as if trying to discern



**Perennial presidential candidate Harold Stassen receives a jawbone of welcome during his initiation by the Cavemen.** SOHS #14068 (courtesy Grants Pass Daily Courier)

what incomprehensible danger might be approaching, wondering whether to fight or flee. The Cavemen are angry that trees have been planted around the statue to shield it from view.

In recent years, the Cavemen have dwindled in their influence. Active membership has dropped to about a dozen. When vice president George Bush visited southern Oregon in May 1988, security was too tight for the Cavemen to get near. Bush found time to talk Iran-Contra with reporters and show them a scar on his finger where a bluefish once bit him. He let network cameramen film him casting for salmon on the Rogue River. But somehow, there wasn't room for raw meat on Bush's image-making agenda.

**"We used to butt into the room and take somebody and give them the blood of the saber-toothed tiger; you can't do that now."**

Debbs Potts, former president of the Oregon Senate and a past Chief Bighorn, said, "We used to butt into the room and take somebody and give them the blood of the saber-toothed tiger; you can't do that now."<sup>21</sup>

The problem isn't just the candidates. The Cavemen themselves have lost some of their fervor. When Jerry Brown came to Medford this year, the Cavemen missed the event. And the public at large is less receptive to the Cavemen. Rhodes, the former Chief Bighorn, sadly explained: "Of course, you have the animal-rights people that throw barbs at us because of our skins during the parade. Church people get on us because it speaks of evolution rather than creation. You know, that sort of thing. It just sort of went downhill . . . Times change. Then it was strictly a gimmick to bring attention to the Rogue Valley, now the Chamber of Commerce does that, with all their media hype. It slowly went down, and people got to the point where they really didn't want to go through the initiation and dress up in those wild things and parade around. It was kind of demeaning to people, so it's just kind of going by the wayside."<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the Cavemen are throwbacks to a more naïve age, when civic buffoonery

and cornball boosterism weren't embarrassing, when the public had meaningful access to celebrities and national candidates. It may be inevitable that their influence wanes in a slicker, more sophisticated era of prepackaged television candidates. The famous are increasingly unapproachable compared to when Nixon, the Kennedys, and even Reagan were initiated.

But if today's election campaigns are hollow, if candidates are perceived as lackluster or dull, don't blame the men in furs. Nobody every accused a Caveman president of being a wimp.



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2. Letter from former President Richard Nixon to the author, November 1, 1988 (unpublished).
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4. "Grants Pass home of 'savage' clan," the *Portland Oregonian*, page E3, August 30, 1978.
5. Iris Turpin, interview, May 16, 1992. N.B.: The menu that night was enough to turn anyone's thoughts from food to other affairs. According to the *Courier's* Oct. 19, 1922, edition, the Cavemen listed the following selections: "Snake soup a la scarface; Oak Moss salad with snail dressing; roast breast of Jack Ass, with nut dressing and gravy flavored with hummingbird tongues; watercress pie with goat cheese. Drinks: Goat Milk and Cave Creek water." The Oxford Hotel added a disclaimer: "The management is not responsible for acute indigestion or foundering of any individual."
6. Ross Roe, interview, May 22, 1992.
7. Carl Rhodes, interview, May 20, 1992.
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9. Shirley Temple, *Child Star: An Autobiography*, McGraw, 1988.
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15. *The Oregonian*, page E3, August 30, 1978.
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17. "Campaigning Hectic; RFK in GP," *The Grants Pass Daily Courier*, page 1A, May 27, 1968.
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19. Former Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, interview, November 1988.
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*Caveman chronicler Russell Working, a fiction writer and a reporter for the Grants Pass Daily Courier, swears by Snappy Tom.*



# FLOPPING

## An interview with Olympic gold medalist and southern Oregonian Dick Fosbury

by Robert Heilman

*It is perhaps the oldest sports cliché: the emergence of a young athlete who quickly rises to the top of his field and then, just as swiftly, is gone. It is a common occurrence in the highly competitive arena of world class athletics, where only a few achieve preeminence and fewer still leave a legacy greater than the fading memories of a few fans and a line of agate type in a record book.*

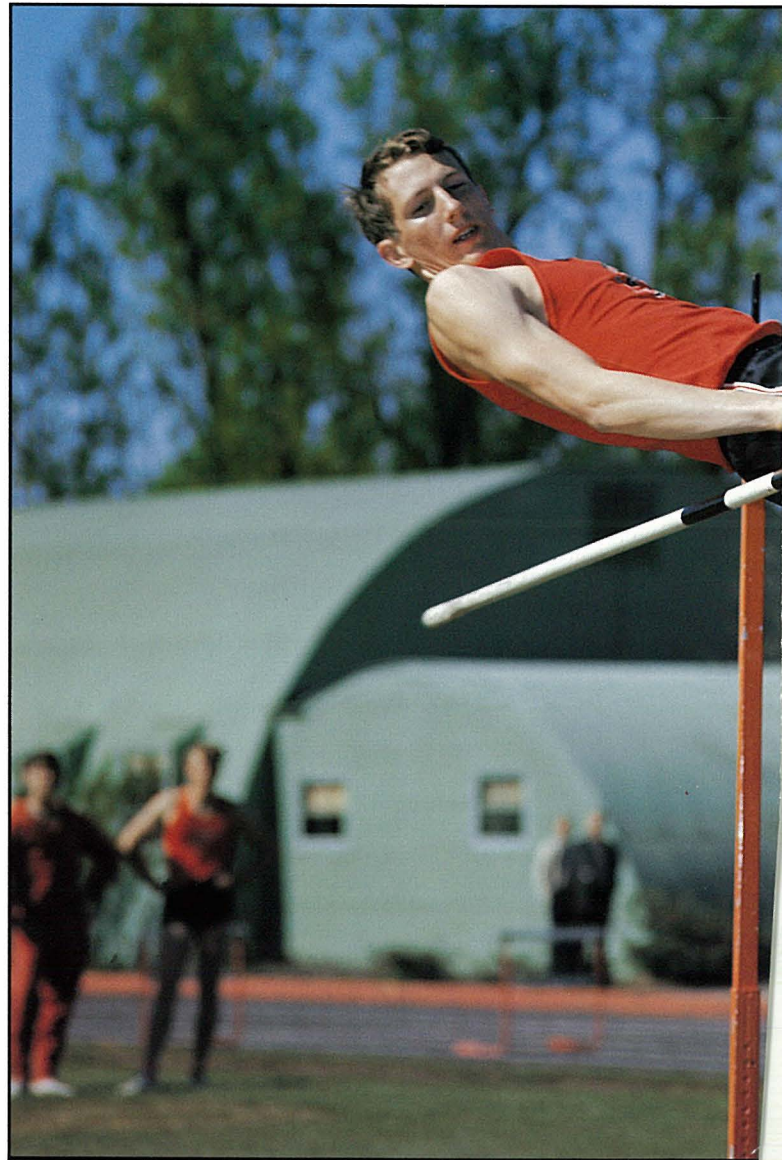
Olympic gold medalist Dick Fosbury was doubly blessed at Mexico City in 1968 when he set an Olympic high jumping record of 7'4¼" and, by introducing his unorthodox "Fosbury Flop" style to the international track and field scene, changed the sport forever. In 1968 every Olympic high jumper, except Fosbury, used the belly-down straddle style; in Barcelona this summer every high jumper was "flopping" over the bar back first.

Richard Fosbury was born in Portland, Oregon, on March 6, 1947, and grew up in Medford where, despite the efforts of his coaches to correct his style, he taught himself to jump the "wrong" way.

In this article, taken from two interviews with the author, Fosbury tells his story:

**W**e moved down to Medford when I had just started the first grade in '54. I was pretty active. I really enjoyed playing and always have. And always enjoyed any kind of physical activity—playing games. I was outside a lot.

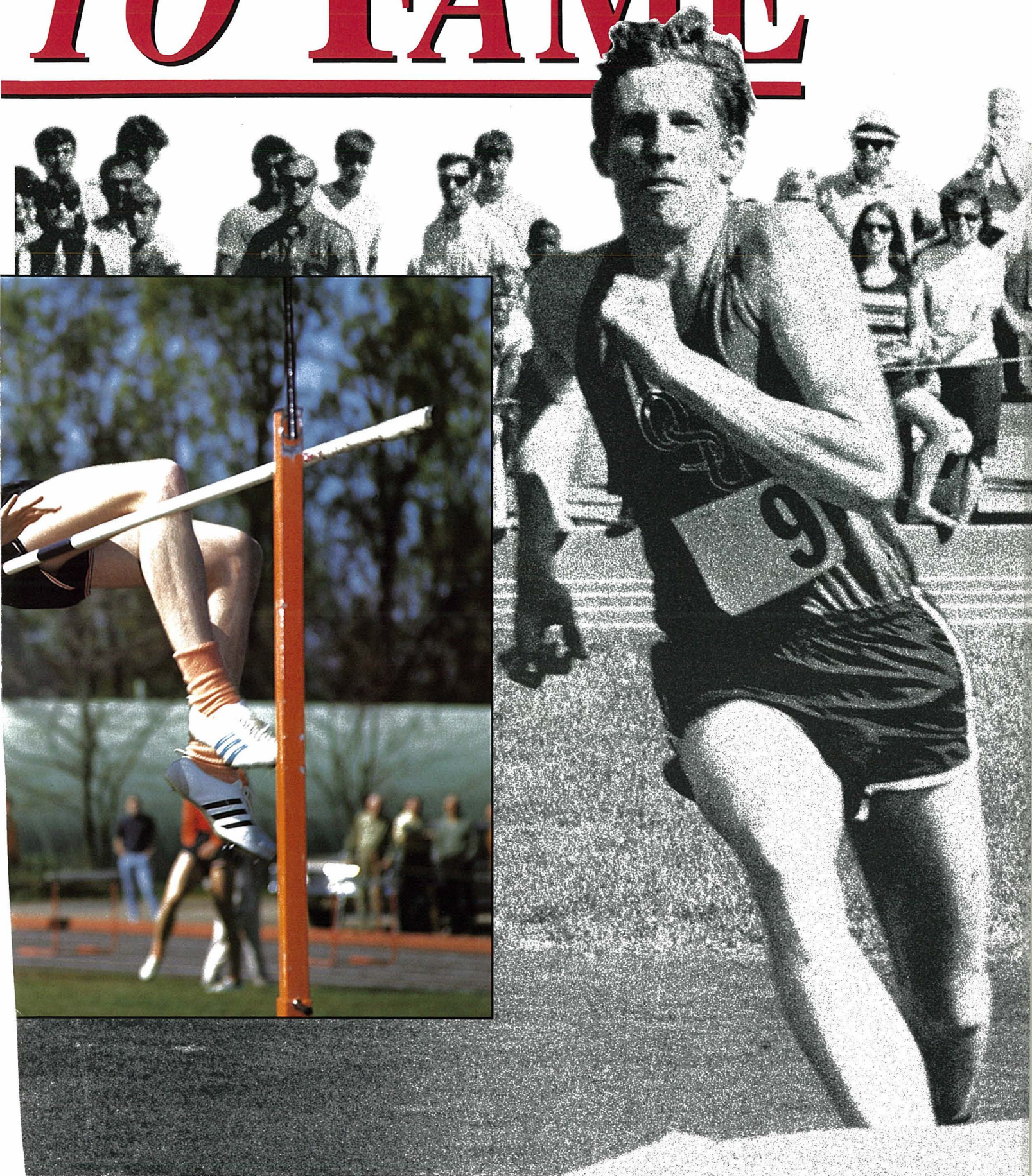
When we moved down to Medford we had a small house that was on Ridge Way, and there was a large field behind the house—to a kid it was just heaven. And so we'd go play "Cowboys and Indians" or "Army" or whatever, you know, all day long with the

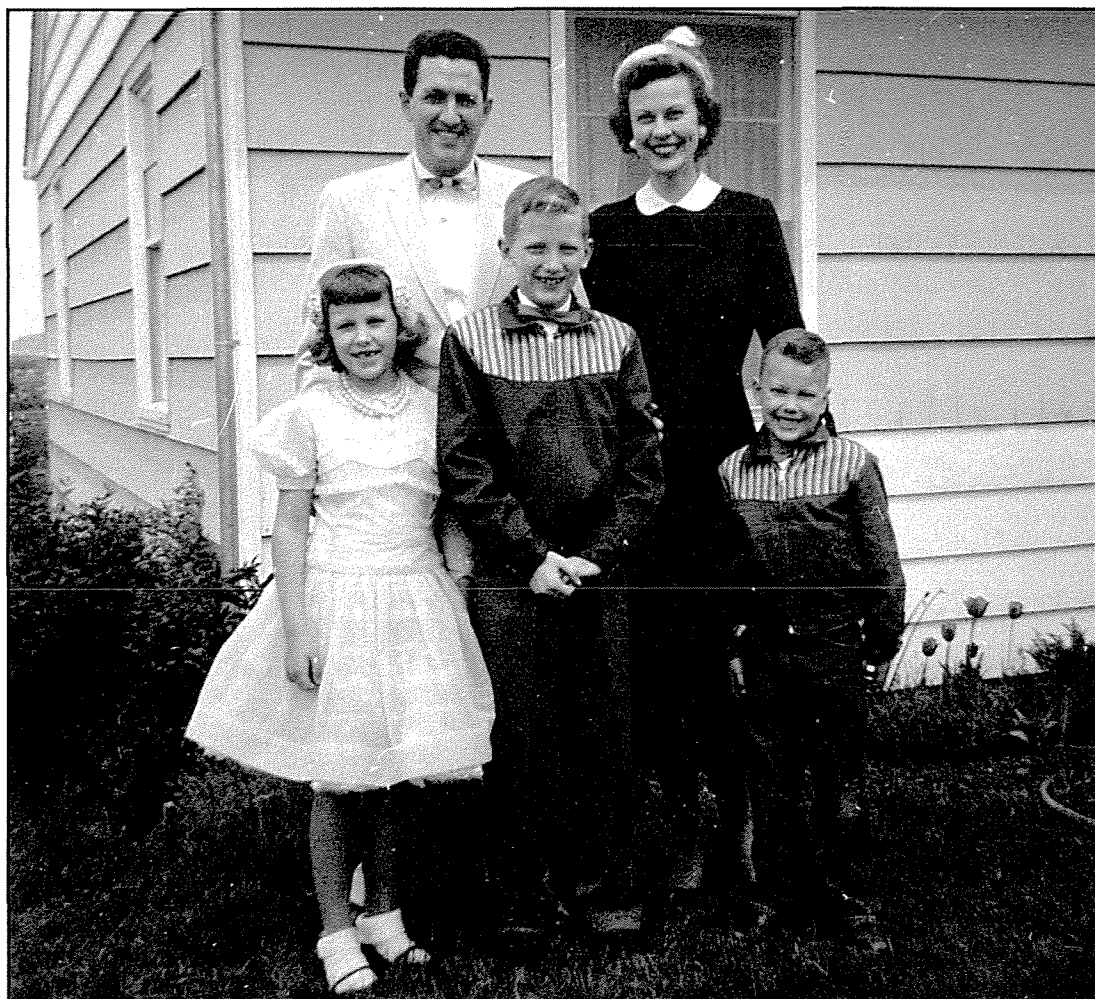


It was while at Oregon State University that Dick Fosbury perfected his unorthodox high-jumping style, now known as the "Fosbury Flop." Photos courtesy Oregon State University

# TO FAME

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**Dick Fosbury** grew up in Medford in a small house on Ridge Way (left). Fosbury, (Center), is shown here with father Doug, mother Helen, sister Gail, and brother Greg. Photo courtesy Dick Fosbury

Throughout his years at Medford High School (opposite bottom), Fosbury kept working on his own style, eventually breaking the school record. He went on to greater success at Oregon State University (opposite right). Photos courtesy retired Medford High School coach Dean Benson and the Medford Mail Tribune

neighborhood kids. I suppose it's all houses today, but back then it was wide open space and a lot of fun.

Medford, of course, has a very strong tradition in athletics in their school system, and I was first exposed to that in the fourth grade. There were a couple of kids in my class who were a little bit more mature and advanced, and they were invited to join the team, playing football or basketball or baseball or whatever.

And so I kind of watched it and was curious about it but didn't participate until the fifth grade. I was still fairly young—oh gee, eleven years old.

But in the fourth grade, walking home from school, it was maybe about a half a mile and they had just built Hedrick Junior High School, and so I walked through the schoolyard on the way home, and they had the track and field stuff out, had a high jump pit out and so a couple times as I was going home, I'd stop and I practiced high jumping.

And so that was my first exposure. Then the next year I started organized sports, and I played everything. I enjoyed football and basketball. I never did enjoy baseball, so track and field is what I started at.

I think because of my height—I was a tall kid—I migrated toward the high jump. You know, at an early age it's a little bit easier when you're a little bit taller. I was still eleven, twelve years old, fifth and sixth

grade. And I was good enough to be competitive, and so I kind of stuck with the high jump after the first couple years.

I did OK high jumping through junior high, and then I got into high school. I was the only kid around that was still using the scissors style, which is an antiquated style dating clear back to the '20s and '30s. You kind of run up at the bar and hurdle over it. You do a scissor kick sitting up over the bar.

And so when the season started and we started showing up for practice, my coach encouraged me very strongly to learn how to do the straddle, which was the dominating style, and the best style—just from a pure mechanical standpoint—to use at that time.

But I had a lot of problems with it. I had tried to learn it in junior high, and I just didn't have any confidence. I was not very coordinated—and not very coachable. But I followed the coach's instructions, and the very first year, my sophomore year, the first meet that we went to, I jumped with the straddle and I went out at the opening height. So I knew this was going to be a long year. And the year before, in junior high, I had done reasonably well, won a couple meets and was always competitive.

So anyway, my sophomore year I went all the way through the school year, and about the end of the season I had only gotten up to the same height that I

could scissor, which was 5'4", and that's not competitive in high school.

So the coach said in about the last meet, at Grants Pass, that if I wanted to I could go back and use the scissors style. He kind of opened the door for me—whatever I had the most confidence in. And I just felt better with the scissor. I could run in faster and I just felt that I had more spring for that.

So I went back to the scissor style, and during the meet as the bar got higher I began to change my style, trying to do the best that I could. My body was trying to keep up with what my mind was telling it. And so I began to change and instead of going over the bar sitting up I began to lay out, drop my shoulders down and try to lift my hips, lift my butt up. And by the end of the meet I was going flat over the bar instead of sitting up. And so I improved my best in that one meet by six inches, and I even placed third in the meet.

And a lot of people were noticing and paying attention to what I was doing, because every jump seemed to be a little bit different, and I made it through toward the end of the competition.

We had one more meet the next week. And I tried it again, and duplicated the technique and duplicated the performance, as far as the height, so I really felt that I



had something. I couldn't qualify to state as a sophomore, but, you know, I had my own thing going. I wasn't very good back then, I mean, I was good enough to make the team but nothing to rave about.

So, the next year, my teammate Steve Davis started right off early and broke the school record, I think in the first meet. And I spent the rest of the year playing catch-up, and by the end of the year I broke the school record.

And the style was still evolving. I had been using a curved approach, a curved run at the bar, ever since



**Fosbury with Oregon State University coach Berny Wagner (above). Wagner tried to convert Fosbury to a straddler, but the Medford grad continued to jump shoulders first (below).**

Photos courtesy Dick Fosbury and Oregon State University

grade school for some unknown reason—just felt natural to me. And that tended to make me turn and go over the bar at an angle instead of going over parallel to the bar my sophomore year.

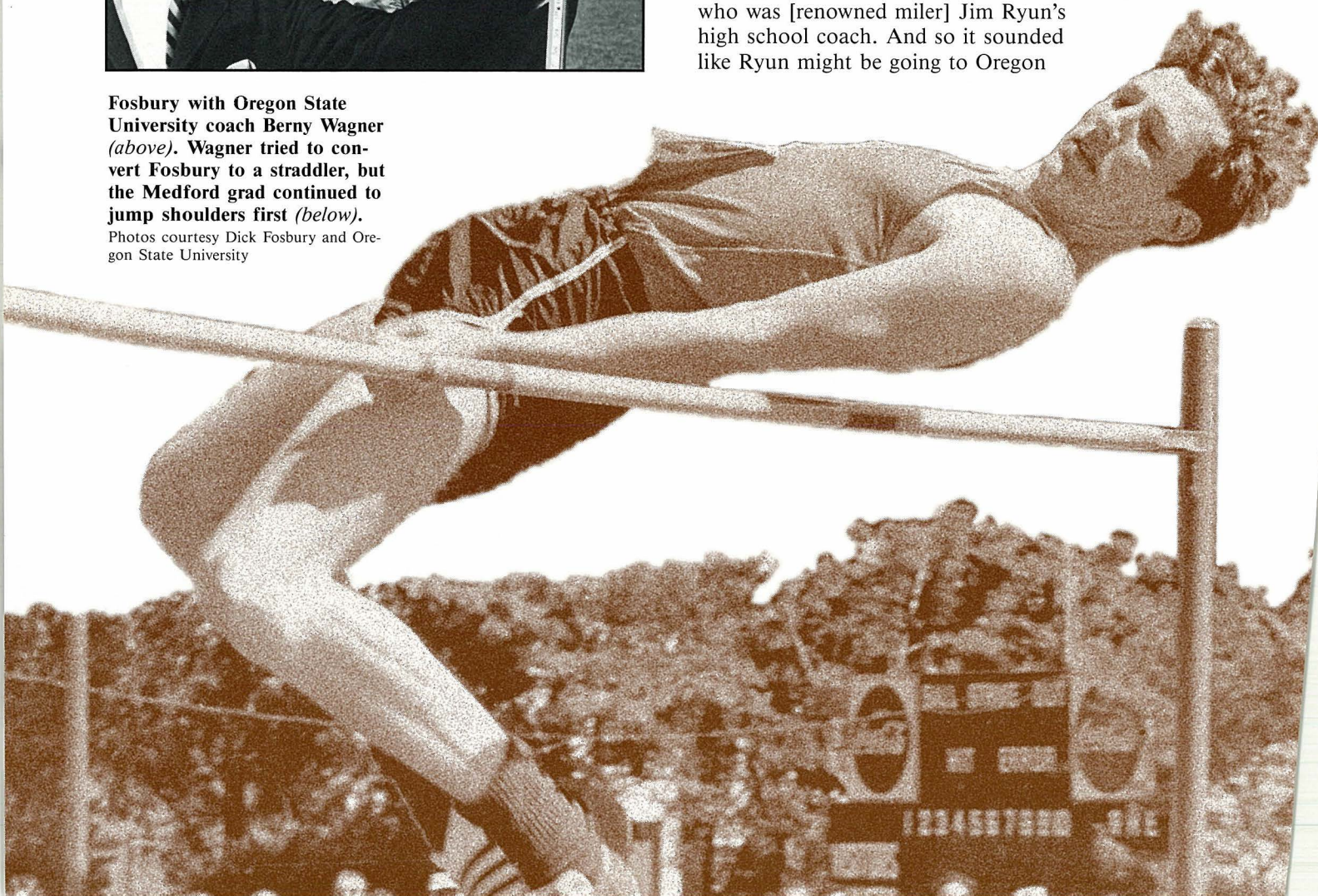
My junior year I began to go over at kind of a forty-five-degree angle. In other words, I was leading with my shoulder and following with my hips and my feet. And so I still had my own technique, and I was still fairly competitive.

My senior year, same thing happened: my teammate broke the school record and broke my record, first off, very first meet. And so I spent the rest of the season playing catch-up, and by the end of the year I broke his school record and placed second in the state meet and eventually qualified to go to a national high school track meet, and I even won that, which helped to reward me with a scholarship to Oregon State.

By the end of my senior year I'd received a letter and a telegram from Bill Bowerman, who was the University of Oregon coach, inviting me to come up to Oregon and visit. But I had already made my mind up that I was going to go to school in engineering, and so Oregon State was going to be my college as far as I was concerned because of academics.

That summer, as I was competing for that National Junior Champ track meet, which was down in Houston, Texas, I met our track coach at Oregon State . . . this was going to be his first year as well.

Oregon State had recruited Bob Timmons, who was [renowned miler] Jim Ryun's high school coach. And so it sounded like Ryun might be going to Oregon



State, but as the time drew near, he decided to stay in Kansas. The two of them stayed there, and so they hired Berny Wagner from California, and that was my first introduction to Berny, that summer.

I remember meeting him at that state meet, and he congratulated me on what I was doing and said I had a very interesting style, certainly very unique—unlike anything that anybody else had ever done. But he said that he had coached some really good high jumpers—which he had in junior college—up to around the seven-foot barrier. And he thought that he could coach me. I obviously had good spring in my legs and was a good candidate for a high jumper, and so he was hoping that he could coach me and convert me to a straddler.

When I got to college we worked out a plan where I would honestly make a good effort and try to learn how to do the straddle during the off-season, during the winter and through the spring. This first year he would still let me compete with the flop, but I'd have to train with the straddle.

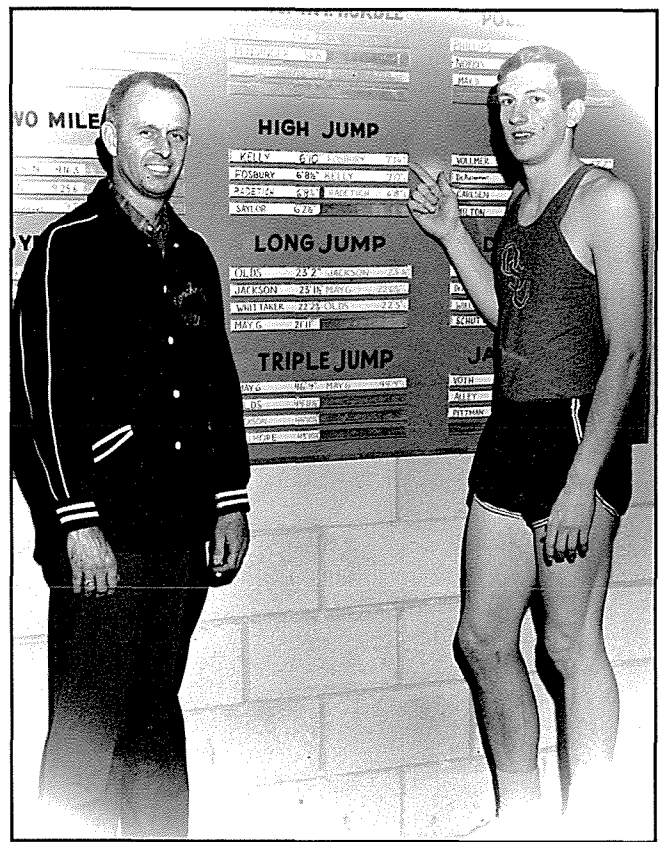
I was agreeable, and we gave it a shot. But I just couldn't get it. I mean, I just could *not* catch on, and I think the best that I ever did was straddling about 5'8" and I could still do the flop at 6'6". So I was not even close.

And so he continued to train me, and I got stronger. But my first year in college was a transition year. I didn't do as well as I had. I didn't beat my personal best that I'd set in high school.

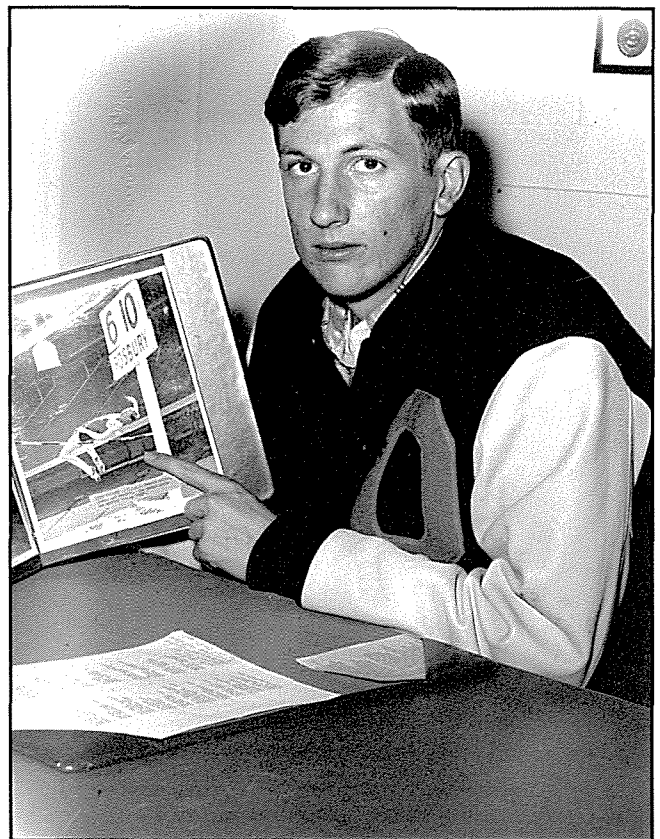
But I continued to train, and by the time we got to my sophomore year we went on a spring trip and went down to California, and the first meet I broke the school record. And he said, "OK. That's it. I'll start filming you and studying the style that you've got, but it's all yours." So he kind of capitulated to let me continue to develop my own style and my own technique. And of course he put me on a good training program and good strength program—otherwise I never would have jumped the heights that I did.

It was a new thing to me, and I had the same preconceptions that most people do, that I didn't want to lift weights, because I didn't want to be this big massive guy that's all swollen up. What I was after was really strength and power. At the time we had an assistant coach who was helping to teach me plyometrics, which is a sort of bounding exercise. What I was doing was bounding up the coliseum steps. I'd bound up on one leg and jog down and bound up on the other leg. So you repeat that same action, and it is a kind of a response exercise to improve your jumping response. That assistant coach was John Chaplain, who, of course, today is a very successful head coach at Washington State.

By the end of my sophomore year I did place fourth in the National College Athletic Association and received All-American honors in track, but there was a big difference between the heights that I was jumping



At Oregon State University, Fosbury broke the school record at 7'1¼" with the help of coach Wagner (above). His achievements were a source of pride at the school, where he's listed as an NCAA record holder with a "unique style" (below). Photos courtesy Oregon State University



UPI photo



## MEXICO CITY 1968

The Nineteenth Olympiad was remarkable for several reasons: It was the first to be held in a Latin American country and the first to be held at a high-altitude site, 7,573 feet above sea level—an elevation at which many felt it might be impossible for athletes to perform. It was also the first to be touched by political protest when two black American sprinters, Thomas Smith and John Carlos, raised their clenched fists in a Black Power salute on the awards stand to protest racism in the United States.

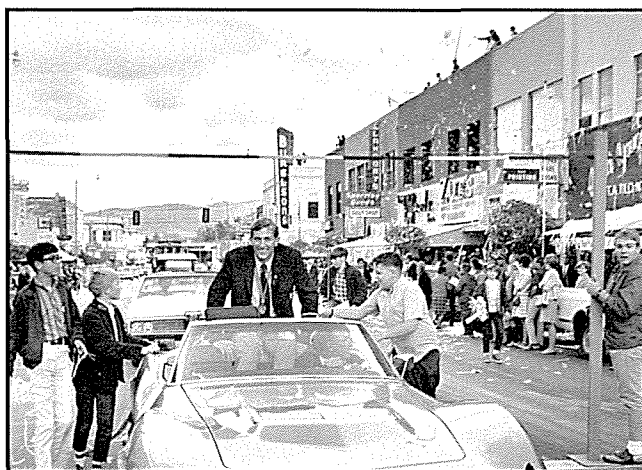
The 387 members of the United States delegation won forty-five gold medals, the most spectacular of which were Robert "Bob" Beamon's long jump of  $29'2\frac{1}{2}"$ , breaking the Olympic record by nearly two feet, and Al Oether's unprecedented fourth gold-medal win in the discus. Other gold-winning performances included Bob Seagren (pole vault), Bill Toomey (decathlon), Winona Tyus' second gold (1964 and 1968) in the women's 100 meter sprint, and a first-place finish by a young heavyweight boxer named George Foreman.

United States miler Jim Ryun's surprise upset in the 1,500 meters that year by Kenya's Kipchoge Keino is still one of the great stories of the Olympic Games. Keino opened up a forty-meter lead on Ryun halfway through the race and Ryun, who was noted for his strong final lap efforts, finished twenty meters behind for a silver medal.

Dick Fosbury was clearly the crowd favorite, though, with his unorthodox style. Contemporary accounts describe the spectators rocking back and forth with him as he prepared for his run at the bar. His final jump came as Mamo Wolde of Ethiopia circled the stadium to win the marathon, but Wolde ran unnoticed by the crowd, whose eyes were on the American high jumper.

and the heights that the best Americans were jumping at the time and the Olympics—that's a whole different level. It's something that I had no dream of, and it was not a goal. It was just beyond what I had ever expected to do.

But in placing fourth at the NCAAs I had begun to gather some attention. And so my junior year I began to get invitations in the indoor season, in the winter season, which was normally just for training. A friend of my coach invited me, as well as a couple of other athletes, down to the San Francisco indoor games.



And I competed down there and did fairly well; I think I probably jumped  $6'10"$ , which was equal to the best of all my sophomore year. I think I placed third in the meet, but the biggest thing that happened was that the crowd went nuts because of the style, and so it became obvious that there was something there that the crowd really enjoyed. They liked to watch different things, and so I think that it was seen that there was some entertainment value there. And so immediately after that very first meet I got invitations to more and more meets.

And by the end of that season, in '68, I think I jumped in about eight indoor meets. And I was able to compete against the Soviet jumpers, who were on tour, first time I'd ever seen them or certainly that they had ever seen me. By the end of the season I had won the NCAA Indoors, and my strength training was really proving to be successful, because I was consistently improving my best. I got up to well, the year before I'd jumped  $6'10\frac{3}{4}"$  in the indoor season. Just six months later I was up to  $7'1\frac{1}{4}"$ . So, I'd improved by a couple inches and was winning some meets.

Seven-foot was a great barrier. And in fact, coincidentally, the first time I jumped seven feet, at the Oakland indoor games, *Track & Field News*, which is kind of the bible of track and field sports, featured me on their cover, because they had changed their format to a new look. And with their new look, they had me on there as the new look for high jumpers, and I gained some more publicity there.

I had won the NCAAs, which qualified me for the Olympic trials. We had two Olympic trials that year. First time, I believe, that had ever been done. And the reason they did that was because there was the high altitude [in Mexico City]. There was quite a bit of discussion and concern by physicians that some of the athletes would be at risk in the endurance events because of the high altitude and lack of oxygen that most athletes are accustomed to.

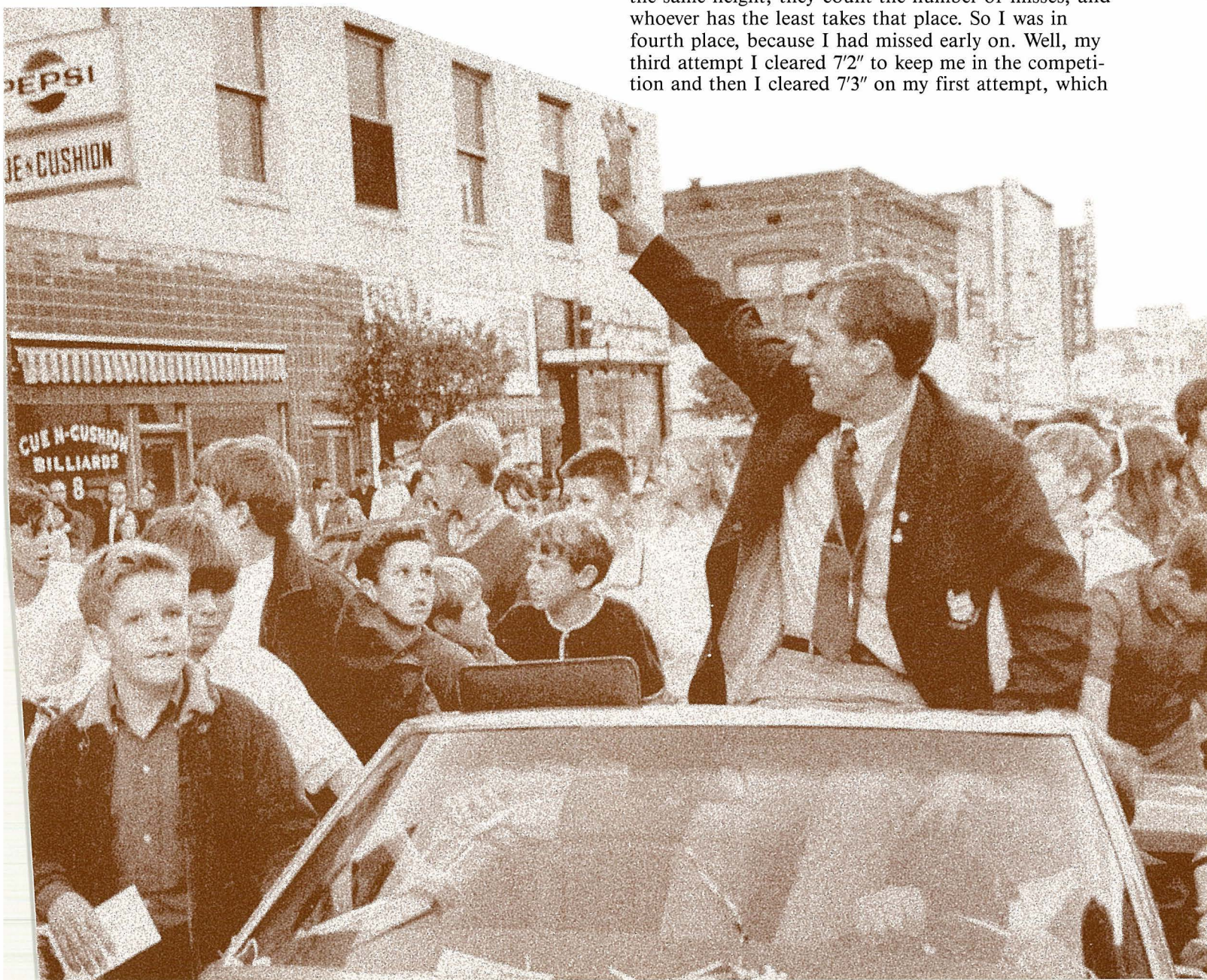
And so they had an early Olympic trial in Los Angeles, and I won those—didn't jump a great height, I jumped 7'1". But they had declared that the winners of the L.A. trials would make the team, and then they'd pick the other two members from the high altitude trials at South Lake Tahoe.

**After Fosbury won the 1968 Olympic gold medal, the entire town of Medford celebrated with a parade (below and opposite). Photos courtesy Medford Mail Tribune**

They had a training camp up there, so I spent the summer up in South Lake Tahoe, training with the other athletes. And at the end of the summer (the Olympic Games that year were in October, which was later than usual because it was in the subtropics in Mexico) I was assured of a berth, or at least I understood that, so I packed up my bags the week of the trials and went back to Oregon, took all my stuff back and went back to Tahoe and found out that the athletes had boycotted to force the United States Olympic Committee to wipe the slate clean and pick all three finishers at the South Lake Tahoe trials to make the team.

I got there in the middle of the week and only had a couple days really to prepare for the meet, because I was just kind of training through it and wasn't really focusing on that meet.

Well, as it turned out, we had great competition. Four of us cleared 7'2", which was near a PR [personal record] by all of us. Raised the bar to 7'3". One of the rules that they have in the high jump is if you tie at the same height, they count the number of misses, and whoever has the least takes that place. So I was in fourth place, because I had missed early on. Well, my third attempt I cleared 7'2" to keep me in the competition and then I cleared 7'3" on my first attempt, which



Fosbury was elected to the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1981. Included in the exhibit is a mismatched pair of Fosbury's shoes, which he often wore because "I'm just a little bit strange," he says. Actually, one is a running shoe, the other a jumping shoe. Photo courtesy Dick Fosbury



psyched one of the other competitors out, and three of us jumped personal records, 7'3", that day just to make the Olympic team. So it was hot and heavy competition and really a good indication for Mexico City.

So, anyway, I made the Olympic team and was fortunate enough to go with the team down to Mexico City and then jump the best that I ever had up to that time and ever did since in competition, jumped 7'4¼" down in Mexico [for which he won the gold medal].

One of the biggest events that happened in the Olympic village was when [Tommy] Smith and [John] Carlos did their protest. I mean, things were in an uproar. The press was mobbing the United States building, and those guys got kicked out of the village, and I'll tell you, all of the press in the United States and around the world picked up on it.

There were a lot of changes that were happening. Demonstrations continued for the next several Olympics and, unfortunately, have taken away from the event itself. I personally think it was a tragedy when the countries were boycotting. I mean, from my point of view, the athletes train for years to make a team or to get on a team again, and to have politics enter into the games loses the ideal of the Olympic Games and the purpose of the Olympic Games. So you know, those types of things were very disappointing.

So, the following week we headed back, after the closing ceremonies, packed our bags and headed back to the U.S. I think that I had flown with the team to L.A. and then had a commercial flight to San Francisco and then one of the fellows from Medford flew his private plane down and picked me up in San Francisco and brought me back up for a parade.

I was absolutely flabbergasted. It was the most incredible thing that I had ever seen. Growing up in that town and to see . . . what they did to downtown and putting on a parade and all the people that showed up—it just knocked me out. I mean, I couldn't believe it.

There were also a number of television shows. I think the first one that I did was *The Tonight Show*, and that was an incredible event for me. They happened to invite me down for a night that was amazing to me to be out there on the stage.

I helped Johnny Carson high jump. They set up a high jump pit. Bill Cosby was there. Of course, he did track and field when he attended Temple University, so he's an old track man. So Cosby got out there and jumped. And the other people on the show, they had Raquel Welch and Carol Burnett and Rod Serling. And I was in shock. I was really having a good time. It was a lot of fun.

And then later I did *The Mike Douglas Show*, which was back in Philadelphia, and even did a tour on *The Dating Game* as one of the three bachelors—I didn't get selected.

As I've lived the last twenty-four years and time goes on and . . . I mean, people told me a lot of things. People said, you know, "You're going down in history." That's an awful bold statement to make. Because to me it was a natural course of events. I had a great year and one thing led to another. But boy, as you look back on things, it really was something that happens once in a lifetime and probably once in several lifetimes.

I think that there are other kids out there that have the potential to do the same thing—it's just whether or not they ever get to realize it. I can appreciate the situation that existed at the time. I was really blessed.

My primary involvement with the sport nowadays is doing clinics. I've been coaching back at a track camp in Maine. Last year was the first year and we had, oh, a hundred and something kids at Bates College doing all events in track and field. And I just work with the high jump.

And I enjoy that. I enjoy working with kids and trying to pass some of the experience and some of the knowledge that I have on to them. I think partly because I never had the opportunity to ever see anybody like me, who had gone to the Olympics. And it's important to me—that's where our future is, is what the kids do.

And look at what we go through in life to try to get to where we want to go. You always say, "Gee, if I only knew then what I know now." And so I just don't see any reason to hold that back—why not pass it on?

Hey, of all the kids that I coach, I don't know if any of them will ever make an Olympic team, but I can see the excitement in their faces, and they seem to really try hard. And I think that's what it's all about, is just trying to get the best that you can out of your human potential. And so if you can affect a few people, boy, it makes a difference, and I just think that it's really important.

*After the Olympics, Dick Fosbury continued high jumping, winning the Pac Eight championships for the third time and the NCAAs for the second. But athletics proved his downfall in academics; he flunked out of engineering his junior year and pursued philosophy and religion instead. Back in Medford, a group of businessmen established a scholarship fund for Fosbury and he returned to school, agreeing to retire from the high jump in exchange for readmission to Oregon State University. He earned his engineering degree in 1971.*

*Fosbury eventually developed his own civil engineering firm in Ketchum, Idaho, where he now lives with his wife Karen and their nine-year-old son, Erich. In 1981 he was elected to the National Track and Field Hall of Fame.*



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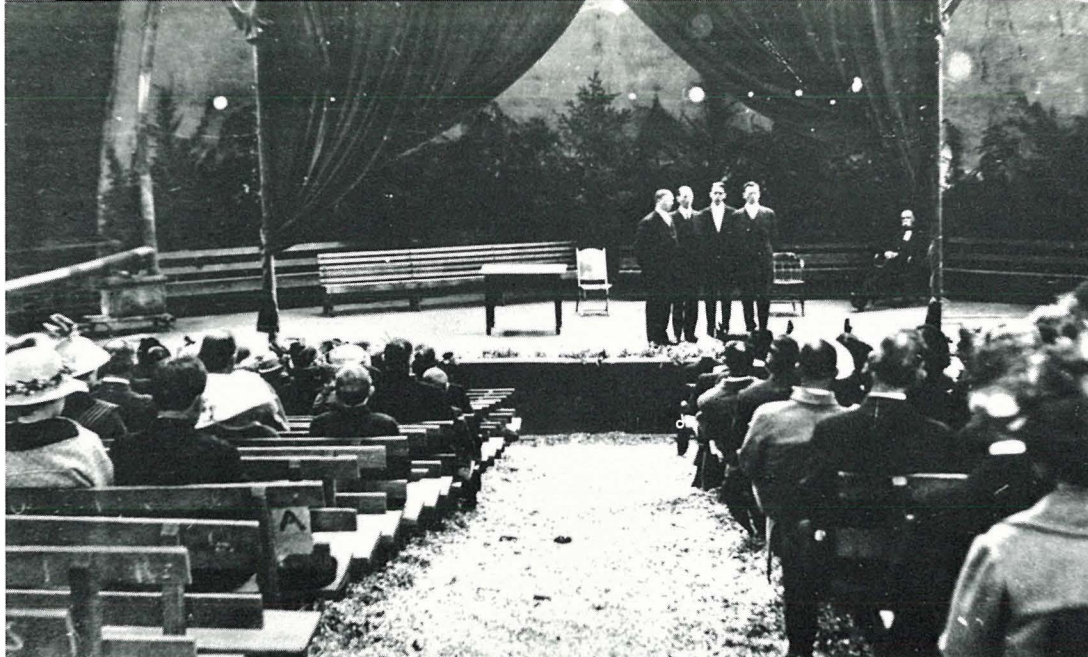
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*Robert Heilman is a freelance writer and interviewer living in Myrtle Creek.*

**Fosbury in Mexico City, where he jumped a gold-winning 7'4 1/4".**

Photo courtesy Dick Fosbury





# CHAUTAUQUA

## The Cultural Spark That Ignited Ashland

by Molly Walker Kerr

**T**he Chautauqua movement, with its grand orators, preachers, musicians, jugglers, and dancers, spread across post-Civil War America like a blazing fire. Rural communities, sparked with new ideas and opportunities, became bristling hubs that attracted culture-starved people from miles around.

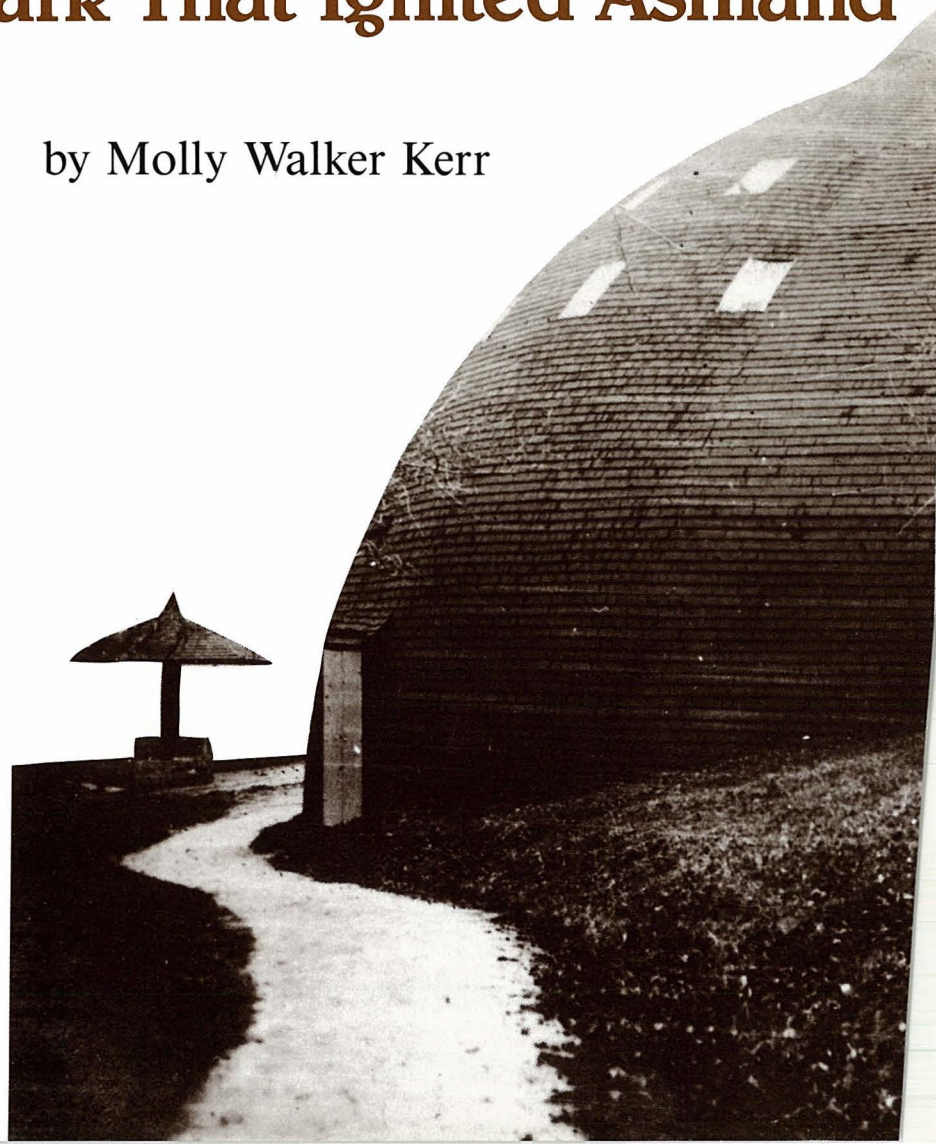
The war had left devastation, disillusionment, and open wounds in its wake. Economic depression and political corruption threatened to take over. The country needed a focus.

The Chautauqua movement brought order and healing. It provided educational programs for all ages, camaraderie for those stranded on lonely farms, and a place to come together to share new ideas.

In the 1890s, Chautauqua reached the West and settled in the heart of downtown Ashland—in an area now known as Lithia Park. With it came culture and a new way of life for southern Oregonians.

It all began as one man's dream.

In 1874, Rev. John Heyl Vincent, a Methodist minister in Capetown, New Jersey, became concerned about the country's youth after the horrors of the war. Poli-



cians roared, and religious denominations argued about creeds and the proper methods of baptism. Theologies clashed. But the battling churches had one common ground—their Sunday schools, where they studied the same lessons.

Vincent's dream was to rescue the youth by training better Sunday schoolteachers in an intensive short-term summer course. He hoped to pattern it after the training of public schoolteachers. Instead of the usual emotional camp meetings, he wanted to teach religious principles, biblical history, and geography. He believed education was a lifelong process and should be a joyous activity as well.<sup>1</sup>

Vincent, the church's first general agent of the Sunday School Union, shared his

dream with Lewis Miller, a wealthy Sunday school superintendent from Ohio. Miller, a genius at organization and management, became equally impassioned by Vincent's dream, and together they put it into effect.

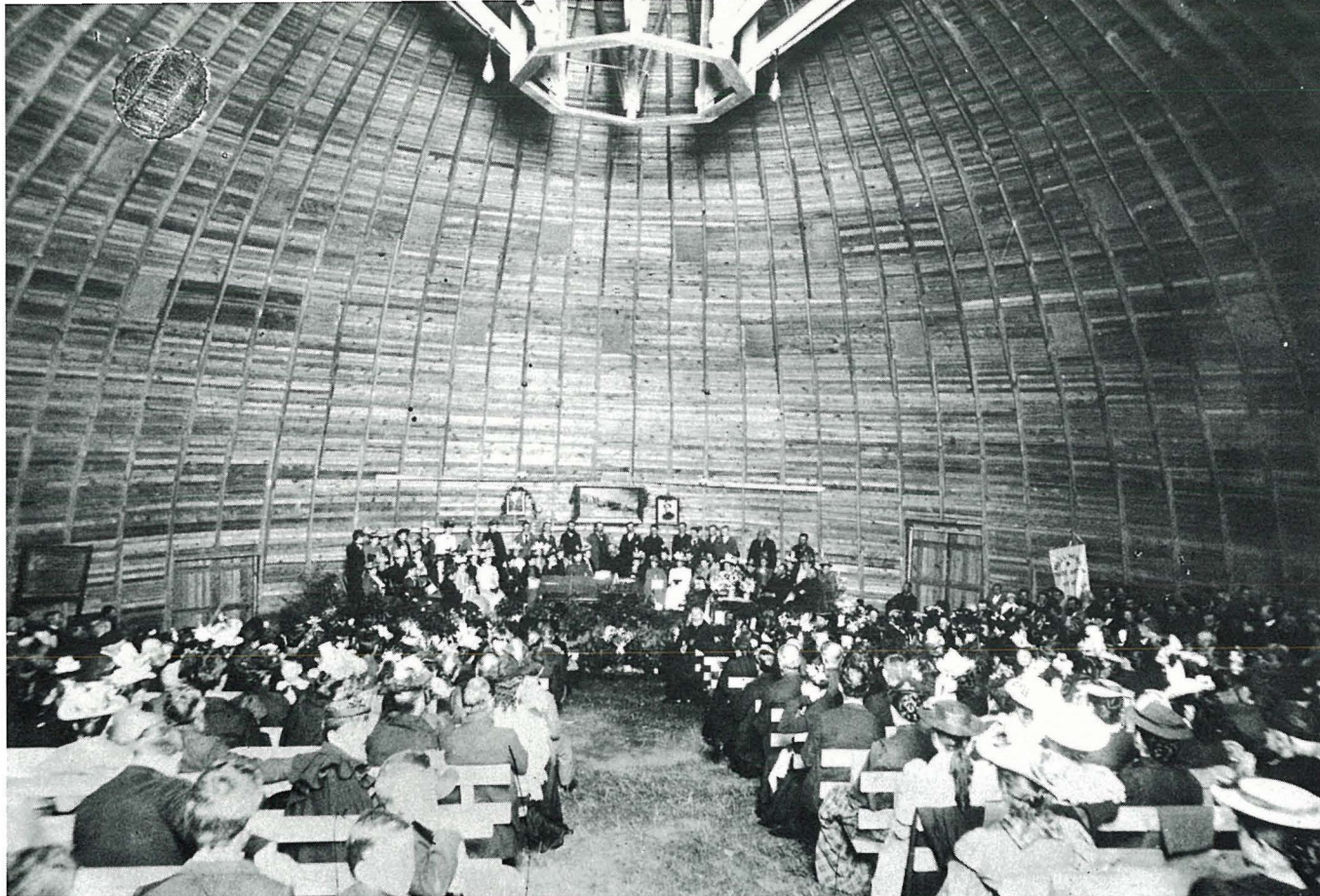
The two men secured a perfect site at Fair Point on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in upper New York state.

At the first Chautauqua Assembly in 1874, the days were filled with lectures, classes, and recreational activities. Sunday schoolteachers shared their views and fears. During the evenings they attended concerts that ended in dazzling displays of illuminations and fireworks.<sup>2</sup>

This stirring combination of learning and recreation proved a tremendous success and launched one of the most widespread

**Chautauqua in Ashland, which started in 1893, became so popular the building was expanded twice, the first time in 1905 (below). Music was an important part of Chautauqua and included performers such as this quartet (opposite).SOHS #2097, #5680**





**The Women's Christian Temperance Union held meetings at the Chautauqua building at the turn of the century.**  
SOHS #2099

educational movements in America.

Although Chautauqua began as a Methodist endeavor, Vincent soon sensed people's needs and invited other denominations to take part. The idea caught on. Other areas wanted to start their own Chautauquas. The two men agreed to share the Chautauqua dream and the Chautauqua name as long as the principles were strictly followed. With their blessings it spread across the nation, garnering carefully monitored secular programs until it became a unique blend of religion, education, and recreation.

Each July, like homing pigeons, thousands loaded their wagons, hitched the horses, and headed for the nearest Chautauqua. Many camped on the grounds during the spectacular two-week sessions. Hotels and boarding houses overflowed with visitors, and local townspeople, after months of anticipation and preparation, hurried to the grounds to greet old friends, meet new ones, and catch up on the latest gossip.

All across the nation the magical word "Chautauqua" stirred the senses and conjured up meaningful and uproarious memories. Its popularity grew, and in its span across the country, the spirit of Chautauqua arrived in southern Oregon in 1892—to ignite yet another man's dreams.

**R**ev. Judah S. Smith, a Methodist minister, had witnessed budding Chautauquas in Kansas before moving to Oregon. His dream to begin a Chautauqua in southern Oregon became a reality when he shared his idea with the right blend of civic leaders at a Methodist camp meeting near Central Point. They championed the idea, and his dream exploded into action.

Incorporation papers for the new Southern Oregon Chautauqua Association were drawn up, signed, and filed with the county clerk on October 15, 1892.<sup>3</sup> Excitement grew as plans were made and the news spread throughout the community. The Chautauqua was coming to southern Oregon! It would open on July 5, 1893, at the Methodist Camp Grounds near Central Point.

But as time for the meeting drew near, those involved realized the present location would be inadequate to accommodate the crowds. Mr. G. F. Billings of Ashland tried to convince Smith that Ashland would be a preferable location because the town had electric lights, city water, and better hotel accommodations. Also, the train stopped there on its way from San Francisco to Portland and back. But Smith held fast to the Central Point location until the arrival of Dr. C. C. Stratton, president of the

Methodist-affiliated Portland University. He came to the area to look at proposed sites for a normal school. Smith escorted him. When Stratton saw Roper's Grove, the wooded area near Ashland Creek, he felt it was too small for the school location but perfect for the Chautauqua because of its shade trees, clear running water, and sloping hillside to provide the needed pitch for a tabernacle with a stage. He persuaded Smith to reconsider.

Smith wanted to wait until the following year to make the change-over, but Ashland townspeople, ecstatic over the possibilities, wanted the Chautauqua from the outset.

At a meeting hurriedly called on June 14, 1893, the Southern Oregon Chautauqua Association voted unanimously to change the location from Central Point to Ashland.

They authorized a building committee composed of Smith, Billings, F. H. Carter,

E. D. Briggs, and J. R. Casey (replaced by J. L. Downing) to purchase the seven-and-a-half-acre Roper Grove tract for \$1,500, to issue bonds for \$2,500 for ten years at eight percent, and to build a tabernacle large enough to hold a thousand people and to have it ready by July 5, 1893.<sup>4</sup> Could it be done?

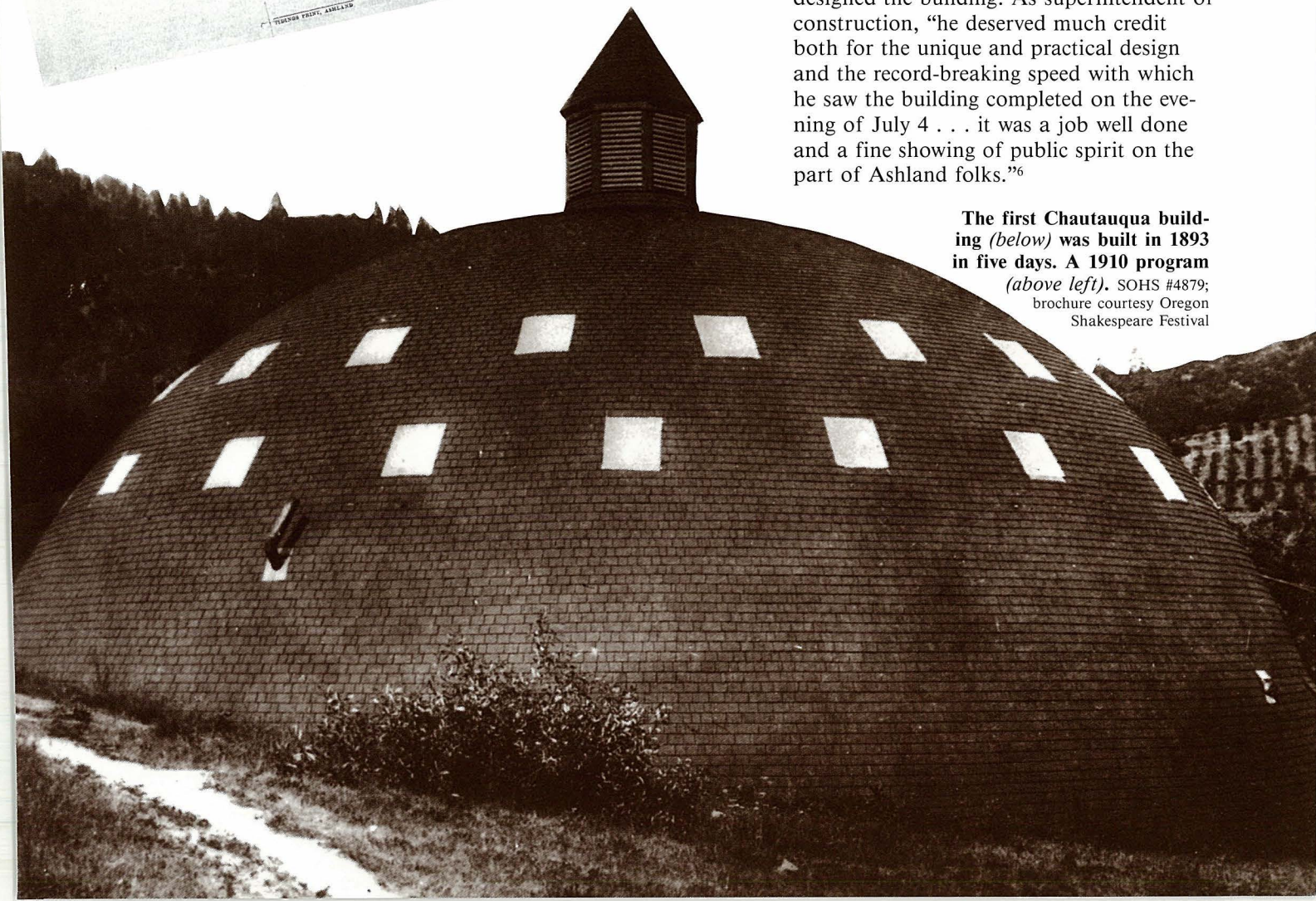
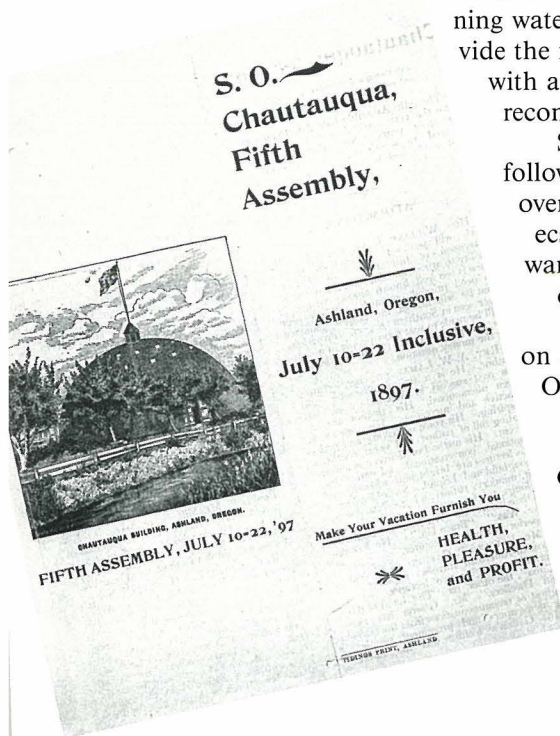
The daring committee members accepted the challenge. They scurried to put the plans in motion. With the grand opening of the first Chautauqua Assembly only twenty-one days away, there was no time to squander.

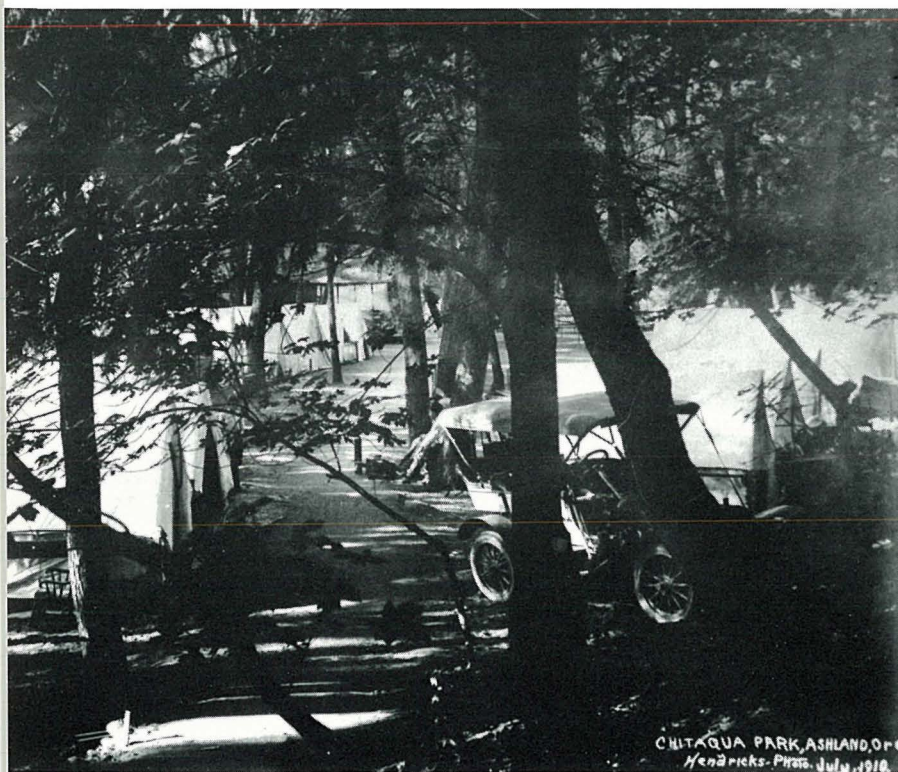
They purchased the land, secured the bonds, then ran into a problem. Because of the economic "panic of 1893," the banks were not lending money, and the committee needed ready cash to begin the project. By the time a local Chautauqua supporter procured the money from a man back East, there were only a few days left.

Many feared it couldn't be done, but "business men donned their overalls and turned to carpentering for the Chautauqua cause. And lo and behold, in five days the completed beehive."<sup>5</sup>

W. C. Schmidt, an Ashland contractor, designed the building. As superintendent of construction, "he deserved much credit both for the unique and practical design and the record-breaking speed with which he saw the building completed on the evening of July 4 . . . it was a job well done and a fine showing of public spirit on the part of Ashland folks."<sup>6</sup>

**The first Chautauqua building (below) was built in 1893 in five days. A 1910 program (above left).** SOHS #4879; brochure courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival





CHAUTAUQUA PARK, ASHLAND, ORE.  
Henricks-Photo, July, 1910.

**Chautauqua performers and visitors  
camped in Lithia Park in the early  
1900s (above). A crowd gathers to  
welcome William Jennings Bryan  
and his wife (center) in 1917  
(below). SOHS #2207, #6748**



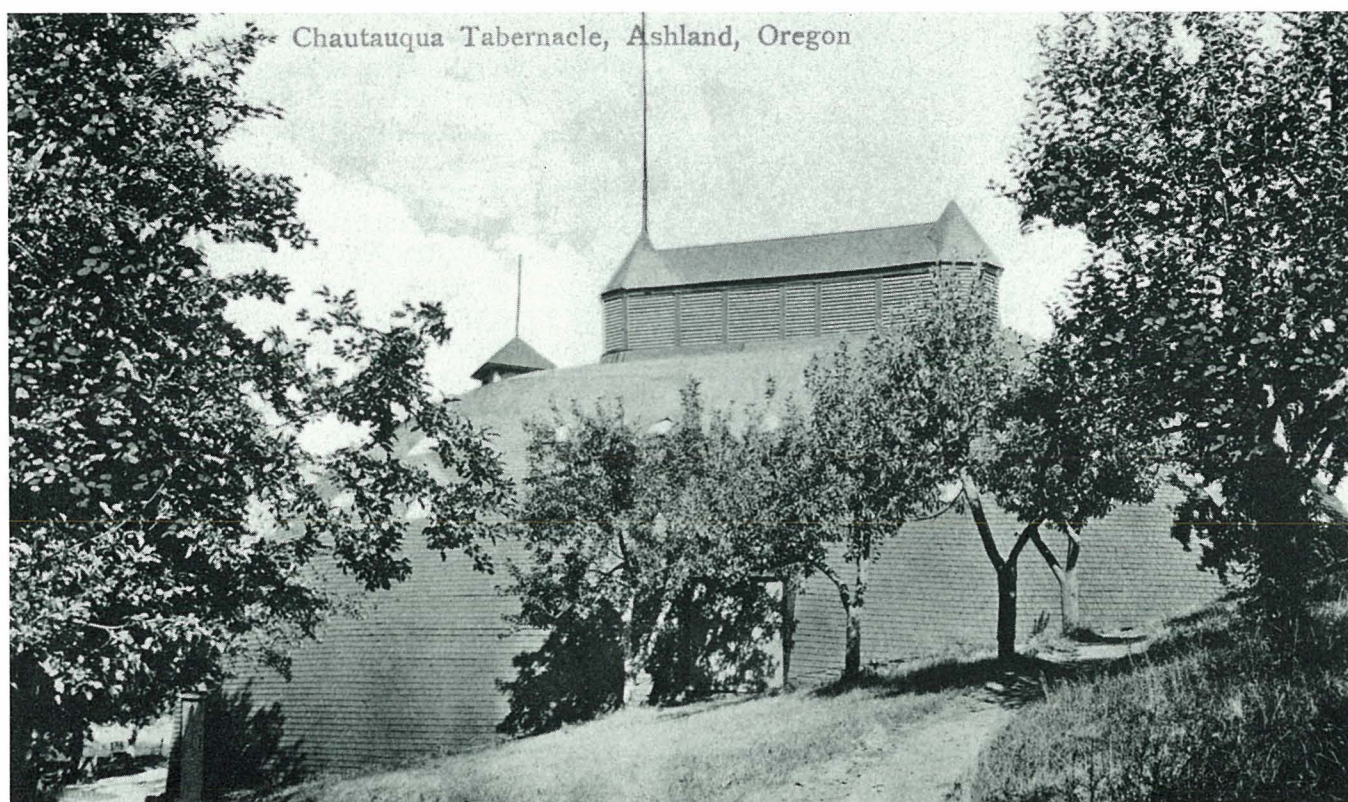
Ashland had met the challenge. The building, complete with electric lights, stood ready on the night before Chautauqua's grand opening.

The new tabernacle, shaped like a beehive of frame construction, had no interior posts or pillars to support the dome roof. The mammoth building stood forty feet high, eighty feet in diameter, and it was wrapped in shingles from base to cupola. Because of the hurried construction, grass still grew on the dirt floors. The canvas over the windows could be rolled up for ventilation on hot July days.

Some people were wary of the roof, having heard there were no posts holding it up. They waited until after the opening to make sure it was sound. But excitement was contagious, and soon the meetings were crowded with ladies in long skirts, white blouses, and elegant plumed hats. (They were later asked politely to remove their distracting hats, which they did — reluctantly.) Men sweltered in suits and stiff collars. Children fidgeted in dress-up clothes during long lectures and dreamed of escaping outdoors where life was happening down by the creek.

Mornings were devoted to classes on elocution, cooking, Bible study, singing, crafts, nature study, painting, and physical training. During afternoons and evenings, local talent performed as preludes to famous and not-so-famous poets, professors, politicians, explorers, bell ringers, Swiss yodelers, dancers, cartoonists, magicians, jugglers, or whistlers.

Prices were kept low so everyone could attend. At first, one dollar purchased a sea-



son ticket. Later the price went up to \$1.50, then \$2.50. Single performances were twenty-five cents, and some specials were fifty cents. There were no reserved seats, and Sundays were free—with an offering. Some area residents purchased life memberships for twenty-five dollars.

The Chautauqua season lasted ten days in July and was packed with the best speakers, lecturers, teachers, musicians, and performers of the day, including William Jennings Bryan, America's star orator; Madame Schumann-Heink, a favorite world-famous opera singer; Billy Sunday, major league baseball star-turned-evangelist who was loved for his slang and flamboyant manners; and the great John Philip Sousa with his Marine band playing his rousing marches. These people, much in demand, were seasoned travelers on the Chautauqua trail.

To locals, the lives of the Chautauqua stars seemed glamorous. They adored and envied them and waited outside their dressing rooms for autographs. But in reality, their lives were hectic and often lonely. Rushed from town to town, they had to find hotels, eat, dress, and leave their grumpy moods behind before they stepped onto the stage. Sometimes they went without food before performances and dressed

in makeshift costumes because of lost luggage. Trains were dusty and usually late. Their lives were filled with strangers, harrowing uncertainties, and greasy food. They performed with one eye on the audience and the other on the clock so they wouldn't miss the only train taking them to their next performance. They slept when they could, oftentimes in train stations.<sup>7</sup>

**W**hen William Jennings Bryan came to Ashland, he drew such a crowd he had to speak outside under the shade trees by the tumbling creek. He spoke on bimetallism. Known as "the silver-tongued orator," he could enthrall crowds for hours, seldom showing the exhaustion he must have felt from his rigid schedule on the Chautauqua circuit. Some say Bryan spoke to more people than anyone in history. He carried bunches of radishes and a saltcellar in his pockets. And he fought the July heat by fanning himself with palm leaves and speaking with his hand on a block of ice. When his balding head glistened in the hot sun, he ran his cool hand over it and continued on—never missing a word.

Madame Schumann-Heink's arrival at the train station was an event. When the children lined her path with flower petals,

**This version of the Chautauqua Tabernacle was built in 1905 and could hold 2,000 people. But hundreds still were turned away as the popularity of Chautauqua grew.**

SOHS #2214



**A view of Ashland at the turn of the century. The first Chautauqua building can be seen at left of center. Photo courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival**

she became so moved she invited them all to a free concert. The association lost money that season, because it had to honor her promise and distribute free tickets to all the schools.

The Southern Oregon Chautauqua Association thrived under the guidance of its first president, Smith, until he was transferred in 1894. Billings of Ashland was then elected president. He guided the Chautauqua through twenty-two successful years. He worked with three other Chautauqua leaders representing centers on the Pacific coast (Pacific Grove and Long Beach in California, and Oregon City, Oregon) to bring talent from the East. The four men met in San Francisco each December to plan the following season. Dealing with booking agencies, they strove for variety, balance, and quality.

In Kay Atwood's book *Jackson County Conversations*, some of Ashland's old-timers shared their Chautauqua experiences.

Robert Wagner recalled a prank that probably took hours and great skill to carry out. He described the night a preacher chastised some organization, and the members didn't like it at all. "I was there that night and we skunked him out . . . somebody put a skunk under the platform. They just had to disband that meeting," Wagner said.

Almeda Helman Coder, whose grandfather made sure she had a ticket each season, recalled the fun she had singing in the children's choir.

Henry Enders told about people arriving in wagons and pitching tents. "There was a livery stable right across where that ice cream parlor is in the park, and they'd take their horses over there and leave their wagons and tent in that whole area."<sup>8</sup> He also recalled when he was fifteen years old, "I can remember going down there to meet all the new kids. It was really something."<sup>9</sup>

Other old-timers remember when the wagons started rolling into the campgrounds, the air became electrified with excitement. While the men unloaded the gear and secured the horses, the women scurried about to create cozy homes inside the tents, spreading homemade quilts on cots and finding a place for everything.

Old friends chatted happily, exchanging news, recipes and opinions, and eagerly awaiting the next day's events.

Between classes and lectures, they did chores—tidied the grounds, cooked, fed the horses, fetched water—or they gathered in the center to mull over the day's events, argue politics, and discuss philosophies.

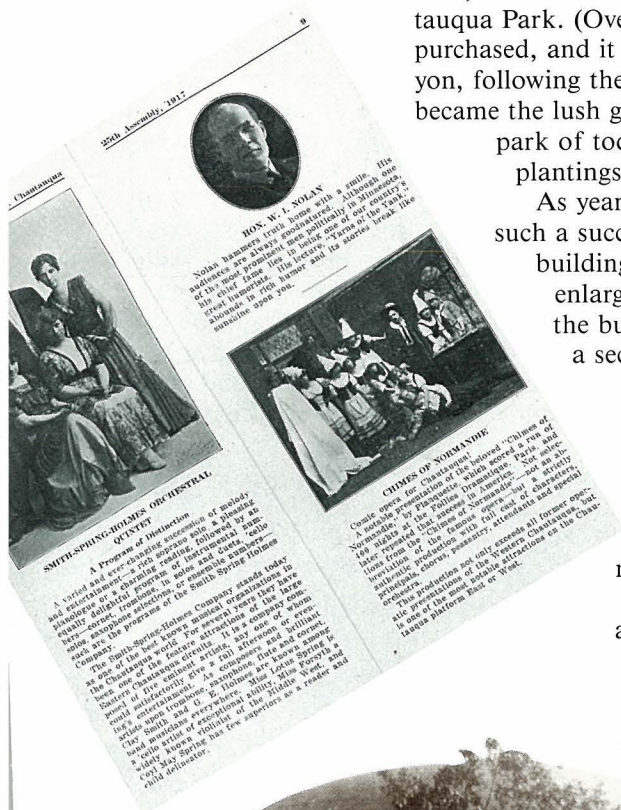
Campers wakened each morning to sounds of rushing creek water tumbling over rocks and the rich smells of frying bacon, boiled coffee, and damp earth, grass, and trees. Squirrels chased each other. Children playing in the creek shrieked with delight as they hopped from rock to rock in search of frogs and other wonders.

After the day's events, warm evenings provided stars to study, material for ghost stories, and familiar family sounds as they settled down for the night with hushed whispers and soft snoring. Bright moonlight splashed across the paths, beckoning young people to stroll away from watchful eyes.

When Chautauqua season ended, there were sad farewells, tears, and promises as they loaded their gear and headed home with minds full of unforgettable memories, new-found knowledge, and a longing to return to this cultural place called Ashland.

**W**ith the coming of Chautauqua, Ashland was dubbed the cultural and educational center for all time and soon became known for its splendid park as well. The Ladies Chautauqua Park Club, formed in 1902 to improve and beautify the park grounds,<sup>10</sup> was responsible for persuading the city to remove the deserted flour mill and its unsightly pig pens near the park

Double domes marked the third Chautauqua Tabernacle, built in 1917 (bottom). The 25th Assembly featured a quintet, a humorist and a comic opera (below). SOHS #2216A; brochure courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival



entrance off the plaza. They wanted the area to look presentable now that visitors were attending Chautauqua. The women were often seen pruning and weeding in their long flowing dresses with mutton sleeves rolled to their elbows. They soon raised enough money to hire a gardener. A playground was added to entertain the children, and the area became known as Chautauqua Park. (Over the years more land was purchased, and it slowly spread up the canyon, following the winding creek, until it became the lush green 100-acre wooded park of today.) Some of the women's plantings still survive.

As years passed, Chautauqua was such a success it needed a bigger building. In 1905 the association enlarged the tabernacle. It cut the building in half and inserted a section which elongated the building and doubled the seating capacity.

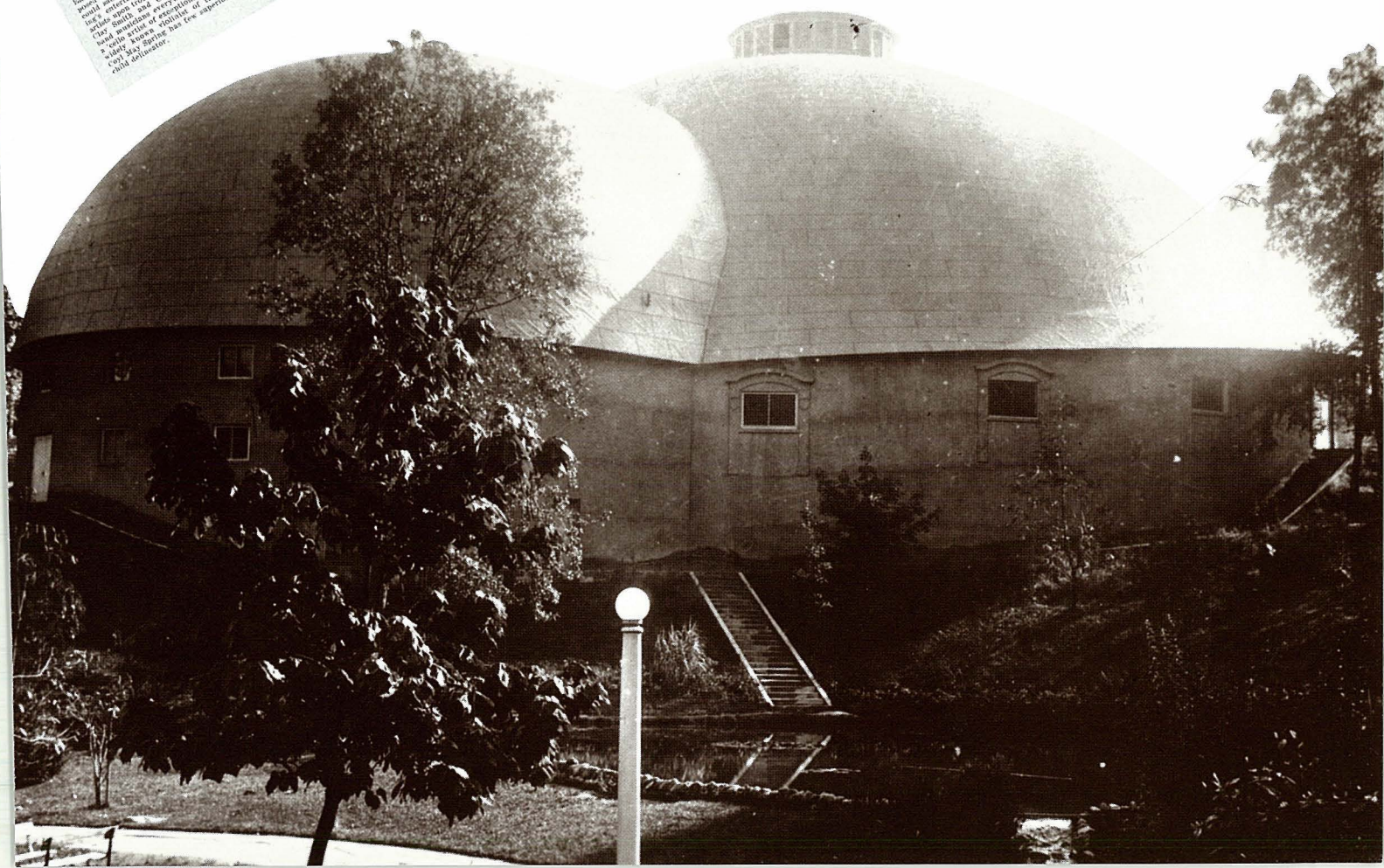
Although the new structure was adequate for awhile, it soon became apparent that it was still not large enough. Hundreds were being turned away from popular events.

Once again the townspeople put their heads together and came up with a plan. They decided to tear down the old tabernacle and build a new one.

In March of 1917, \$15,000 worth of bonds were issued to purchase six and three-fourths acres of land to enlarge the park and to begin work on the new building. "A few braces were cut and with a crash which brought a crowd of spectators the building collapsed," reported the *Ashland Daily Tidings*. The timbers were used to make forms for the concrete walls, but none of the other materials could be salvaged. People were invited to take pieces home.<sup>11</sup>

Work on the new building began immediately. The plan, similar to the old one except for an added dome over the stage, provided for a more massive and attractive appearance. It would seat 5,000. The stage would hold several hundred performers, and there would be dressing rooms and three comfort stations below.

On June 12, the town sponsored a Chautauqua Bee. They called for every able-bodied man and boy to bring hammers and saws and to forget about business for the day. In fact, all city stores were closed at one o'clock. No one was paid, but the



ladies served free dinner at noon to the workers.

President M. C. Reed of the Chautauqua Association said, "The acoustic properties of the new building are good anywhere you choose to sit. And the view of the stage is just as good one place as another, unless, of course, you have poor eyesight."<sup>12</sup>

Later, an irritating echo plagued the huge room, and measures were taken to try to correct it.

The magnificent new tabernacle, ready on time, turned out as everyone hoped. Problems emerged, however. Not only was the association now in debt, having also borrowed \$6,000, but Ellison-White, a high-powered agency with greedy circuit managers, took it out of the hands of local people. And with the arrival of radio and motion pictures, people lost interest in attending Chautauqua. It was too easy to go to the nearest theater or turn on the radio for instant entertainment. Most peo-

ple owned a car, and with the highway opening in 1915 over the Siskiyou, they left the valley and traveled to faraway places.

Chautauqua crowds dwindled, and the association began losing money. In the mid-1920s, the Ashland Chautauqua gave up. The entire movement across the nation diminished about the same time, and one by one Chautauquas slipped away like ghostly figures in the night.

The Ashland Chautauqua building sat dormant and unused. Its new white roof was referred to as a "white elephant," and it sat alone, weather-beaten and vandalized. The roof began to sag, causing alarm among townspeople, and in the early 1930s it was decided the dome should be removed. On the wall, once vibrating with sounds of joyful singing, resounding orations, fire and brimstone, and raucous laughter, remained—silent like a grave. Grass and weeds grew in and around it. It was ignored until one rainy day in 1934. A

**The Chautauqua was torn down in the 1930s, but the wall was retained. Boxing matches took the place of music and oratory.**

Photo courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival





Angus Bowmer built a small stage on the site in the mid-1930s and began producing Shakespearean plays. It was the forerunner of today's Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Photo courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival

young man named Angus Bowmer, an English teacher at Southern Oregon Normal School, and his friend, Bob Steadman, ducked into its deserted dressing rooms for cover. Angus began imagining scenes from the Chautauqua days—trunks filled with glittering costumes and band uniforms, mirrors on the walls, excited chatter, and sounds of instruments tuning. Again, the hovering spirit of the old Chautauqua ignited another man's dream.

Bowmer's dream was to present a Shakespeare play with an Elizabethan setting. To him, the deserted Chautauqua resembled the Globe Theater in England. He knew Ashland was conservative, and "conservatives tend to hang on to the past," he recalled his book, *As I Remember, Adam*. He felt conservatism would be to his advantage in reviving the festival idea, especially if it were staged within the same walls that housed the old Chautauqua.<sup>13</sup> Although something was lost forever when the Chautauqua died, the magic still remains within the old ivy-covered Chautauqua walls. They vibrate once again with booming voices and riotous performances while sporting bright banners and encircling Oregon Shakespeare Festival's outdoor Elizabethan Theater—Angus Bowmer's dream.

There have been attempts to revive the Chautauqua. The original assembly still thrives where it all began long ago on the shores of Lake Chautauqua. Maybe its time will come again and another person's dream will come alive.

After all, as Shakespeare said, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on."



## ENDNOTES

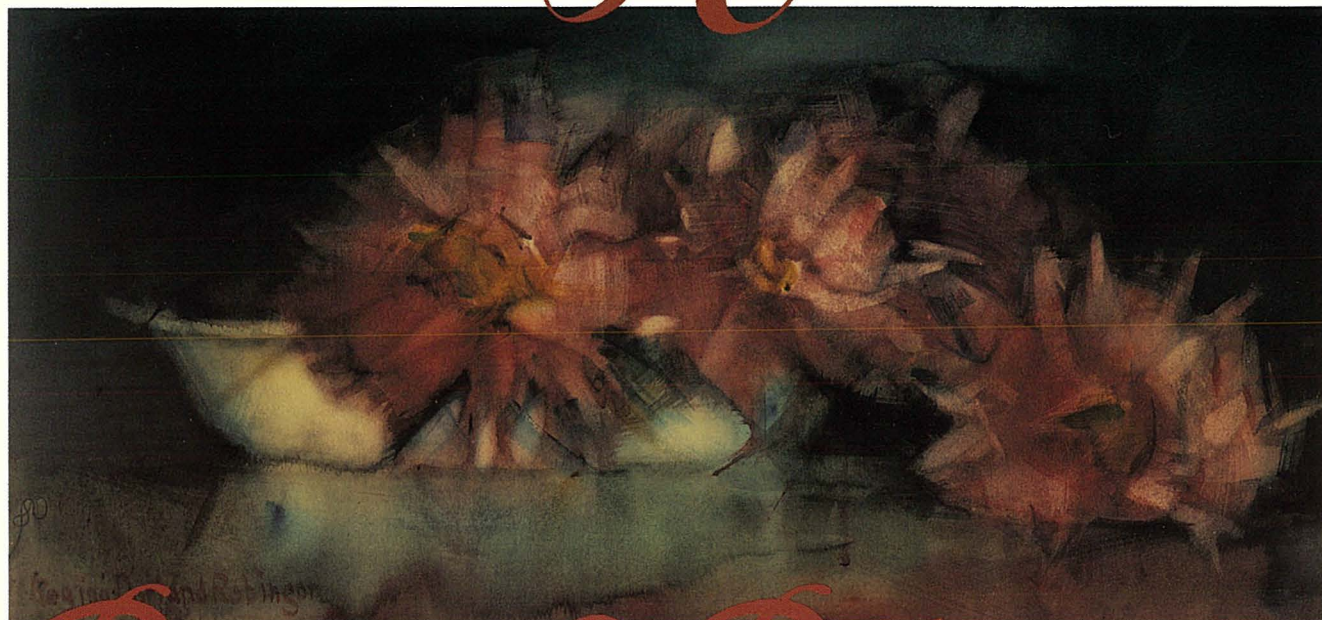
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4. Homer Billings, "The Story of Chautauqua," *Ashland Daily Tidings*, July 11, 1960.
5. Eugenia Atkins, "History of Oregon Chautauqua," scrapbook, June 2, 1914, ms. 18, Southern Oregon Historical Society.
6. Billings, "Story of Chautauqua."
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8. Kay Atwood, *Jackson County Conversations* (Medford, Ore.: Jackson County Intermediate Education District, 1975), 37, 81, 174.
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10. Eugenia Atkins, "The Chautauqua Park," scrapbook, ms. 18, Southern Oregon Historical Society.
11. *Ashland Daily Tidings*, March 26, 1917.
12. *Ashland Daily Tidings*, July 12, 1917.
13. Angus Bowmer, *As I Remember, Adam* (Ashland, Ore.: Oregon Shakespearean Festival Association, 1975), 11.

Freelance writer Molly Walker Kerr spent her girlhood in Lithia Park, studied Shakespeare under Angus Bowmer, and has published numerous articles on Lithia Park. She currently resides in Medford.



The Chautauqua wall still stands today, now flying the banners of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival outside its Elizabethan Theater. Photo by Molly Walker Kerr

A



# Brief Bloom

## The Tragically Short Career of Jacksonville Artist Regina Dorland Robinson

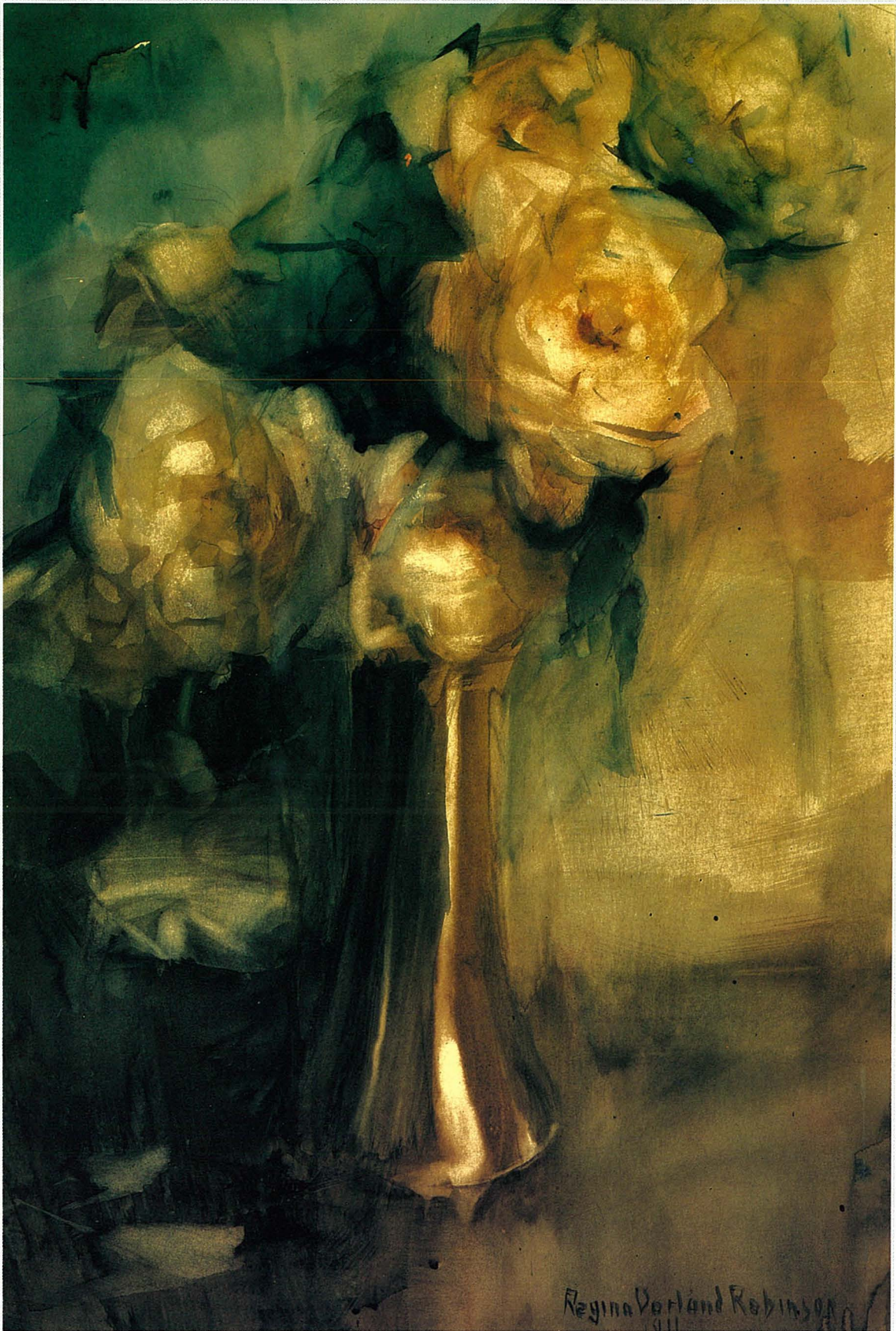
by Sue Waldron

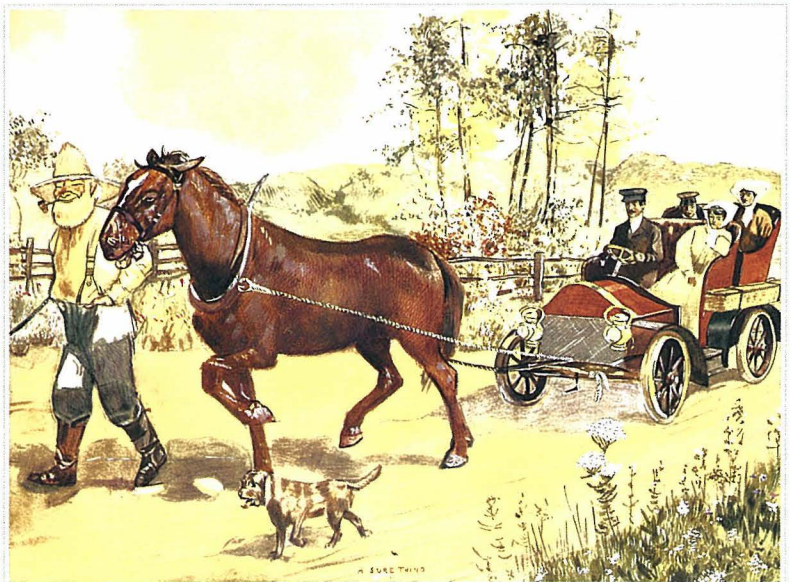
***Dahlias*, ca. 1913 (above). Done late in Dorland Robinson's career, this watercolor is an example of her impressionistic, individualistic style. *Untitled roses*, ca 1911 (opposite). The brass vase of roses demonstrates Dorland's accomplishment in representing metals with watercolor.**

*Dahlias* courtesy Gertrude Opp Nutting, SOHS #78.20.34

**R**egina Dorland Robinson was born in Jacksonville November 5, 1891.<sup>1</sup> A beautiful, dark-haired, dark-eyed child, Dorland was the focus of her parents' lives. For twenty-five years she was protected and indulged. Her father gave her her first art lessons when she was five years old. With further instruction, her astonishing artistic talent blossomed. Then on April 7, 1917, this gifted young artist took her own life.<sup>2</sup> Why?

Dorland was the third child of Dr. James W. and Sarah Matilda (Tillie) Miller Robinson. Her older brother, Willie Cecil, and sister, Mary Leah, died six





Untitled sepia pencil drawing (top), dated 1904. Dorland completed this drawing when she was thirteen. Untitled self-portrait (left), ca. 1907. By this time Dorland had taken classes in Berkeley, and here she demonstrates skill in combining watercolor and opaque paint. *Sure Thing* (above), ca. 1907. Dorland created an oil painting from a black and white print of the same name. SOHS #60.27.5; #78.20.31; #59.128

days apart during a diphtheria epidemic in October 1890.<sup>3</sup> Dorland grew up a pampered only child.

At the age of five, Dorland showed an interest in drawing and painting. Dr. Robinson, whose hobby was oil painting, helped his daughter put paint on canvas. Dorland graduated to lessons with the sisters at St. Mary's Academy in Jacksonville. In addition to classes in painting the sisters introduced Dorland to the piano.

Each school day morning Dr. Robinson walked Dorland from their home on North Oregon Street approximately twelve blocks to St. Mary's School on East California Street. Every afternoon he was waiting at the gate to walk her home. Fear of the disease that took her brother and sister in 1890 isolated Dorland from children her own age. She spent many hours alone, reading, practicing her piano, and sketching.

Dorland's friends were carefully selected, and since she didn't participate in group activities, she was sometimes allowed to ask her friends to go sketching with her.

Years of training with the sisters at St. Mary's gave Dorland the basics for sketching and drawing. She used her training to illustrate class papers put on display at the end of the school year.<sup>4</sup> During her years at St. Mary's

Dorland began her work in portraiture, producing charcoal and sepia pencil drawings of school friends.

**I**t was probably during the summer of 1904—when Dorland was twelve years old—that she took lessons from Jacksonville's pioneer artist-turned-photographer Peter Britt. Working in Britt's studio or near his pond, she tried oil painting. The bright, impressionistic paintings from this time gave promise of the talent that flowered a few years later.

The Robinson family took the train north to Portland in July 1905 to see the Lewis and Clark Exposition.<sup>5</sup> Dorland was able to see, perhaps for the first time, rooms filled with the artwork of some of America's newest and brightest artists. Inspired by

what she saw, Dorland did a portrait of Portland Mayor George E. Williams. It was displayed in Portland City Hall.<sup>6</sup>

Encouraged by his daughter's public recognition, Dr. Robinson sought more advanced instruction for Dorland. Most of the art schools in San Francisco had been damaged or destroyed in the April 1906 earthquake. But there were art teachers in Berkeley. On Dorland's fifteenth birthday, the Robinsons boarded a train headed for Berkeley, where Dorland would spend the winter receiving instruction in the use of watercolor and opaque paint.<sup>7</sup> Early works in this period are labored; she merely used the paint to color a landscape drawing. It may have been during

this time that Dorland made paintings of two popular whimsical prints: *Oh, Why Don't*

*Father Come* and

*A Sure Thing*. By the

spring of 1907, Dorland's skills had improved and she produced a charming self-portrait. Skill-

fully drawn in pencil, then filled in with watercolors and opaque paints, the painting captures its artist dressed in white surrounded by flowers.

Back in Jacksonville in the summer of 1907, Dorland completed several portraits of children.

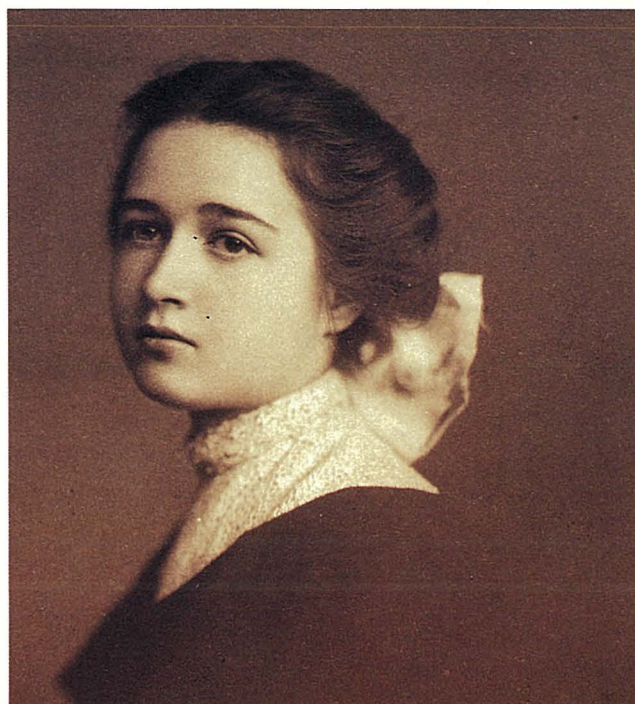
She also made a number of nature sketches and entered them at the

Rogue River Fair in Grants Pass. Her drawings won first prize.<sup>8</sup>

It is probable that

it was this summer that Dorland heard about the new exhibit of Northwest artists at the Portland Art Museum. Her friends Mildred and Nydah Neil could have provided details of the wonders of the exhibit when they returned in August from a visit to Portland.<sup>9</sup>

Anyway, in October the Robinson family arrived in Portland and took rooms at the Imperial Hotel. In Portland, Dorland began her next course of art lessons, studying anatomy and perspective, and learning ways to execute with charcoal the varying shades of light and dark that give a drawn shape form. She also learned techniques for depicting fabrics and portraying different textures. Working extensively in charcoal, Dorland's command of the medium grew quickly. Good instruction honed her skills and may have helped Dorland identify portraiture as her preferred form of expression.



**Dorland Robinson, ca. 1908.** SOHS #488

In the summer of 1908, the Robinsons returned to Jacksonville, and sixteen-year-old Dorland settled into the quiet lifestyle of a small country town. She resumed her local sketching jaunts, rejoined the congregation at the Presbyterian Church, and took up piano lessons again. At a benefit to raise funds for the town library in December 1908, Dorland played a piano solo from Charles Francois Gounod's popular grand opera Faust. Dorland continued with her charcoal drawings, practicing her new skills on friends, posing them more naturally than had been the practice in the classroom.

Having successfully met the challenges of working in charcoal, Dorland set it aside and turned to oils to put color back into her art. Recording everyday scenes from around the house, Dorland experimented with different techniques: impasto, impressionism, and glazing. Although her talent and previous training are obvious in these paintings, they lack the confidence and self-assurance that distinguish her charcoal portraits. Possibly Dorland's frustration at being unable to reproduce what she had seen in the artwork of others, or the lack of advanced art instruction in Jacksonville, led the Robinsons to board a train again, this time bound for the East Coast.

After checking out the instructors and the class schedules at the Academy of Fine Arts in New York, it was decided that Dorland would attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. The still-operating academy is located on the corner of Broad and Cherry streets. "The façade of the academy building is a mixture of historical styles . . . There are Venetian Gothic colors and materials, Gothic arches and tracery, a French mansard roof, arabesque crenelations, a Greek frieze, Renaissance stone rustication, Byzantine tiles, medieval corbels, American Indian rug patterns, and stylized flower and leaf forms. The splendid colors on the façade—red, blue, green, yellow, black, beige, gray, and gold"<sup>10</sup> are a feast for the eyes. The lower floor of the building contains a library, a large lecture room and

seven studios for art students. The second-floor galleries are reached by a wide staircase decorated with bronze railings and floral patterned newel-post lanterns.

For the next eight months Dr. Robinson volunteered his services at Philadelphia medical clinics and took medical classes while Dorland learned to paint with oils and watercolors.

As with the months spent in classes in Portland, this was a time of great productivity for Dorland. The many oil paintings from this period have the dark

background suggestive of the influence of William Merritt Chase, who was teaching at the Academy in 1911. Most of the paintings are still lifes. Three of them, obviously early classwork, contain the same brass and copper containers in different arrangements. As Dorland's skill increased, she added lighter, more feminine touches to the arrangements she made for her paintings.

Comfortable with oil painting, Dorland turned to watercolors. There is no evidence in these later works of her earlier fumbling.

All the examples in the Southern Oregon Historical Society's collection are superb—free, impressionistic and well-executed. As her ability grew, Dorland's early subdued paintings

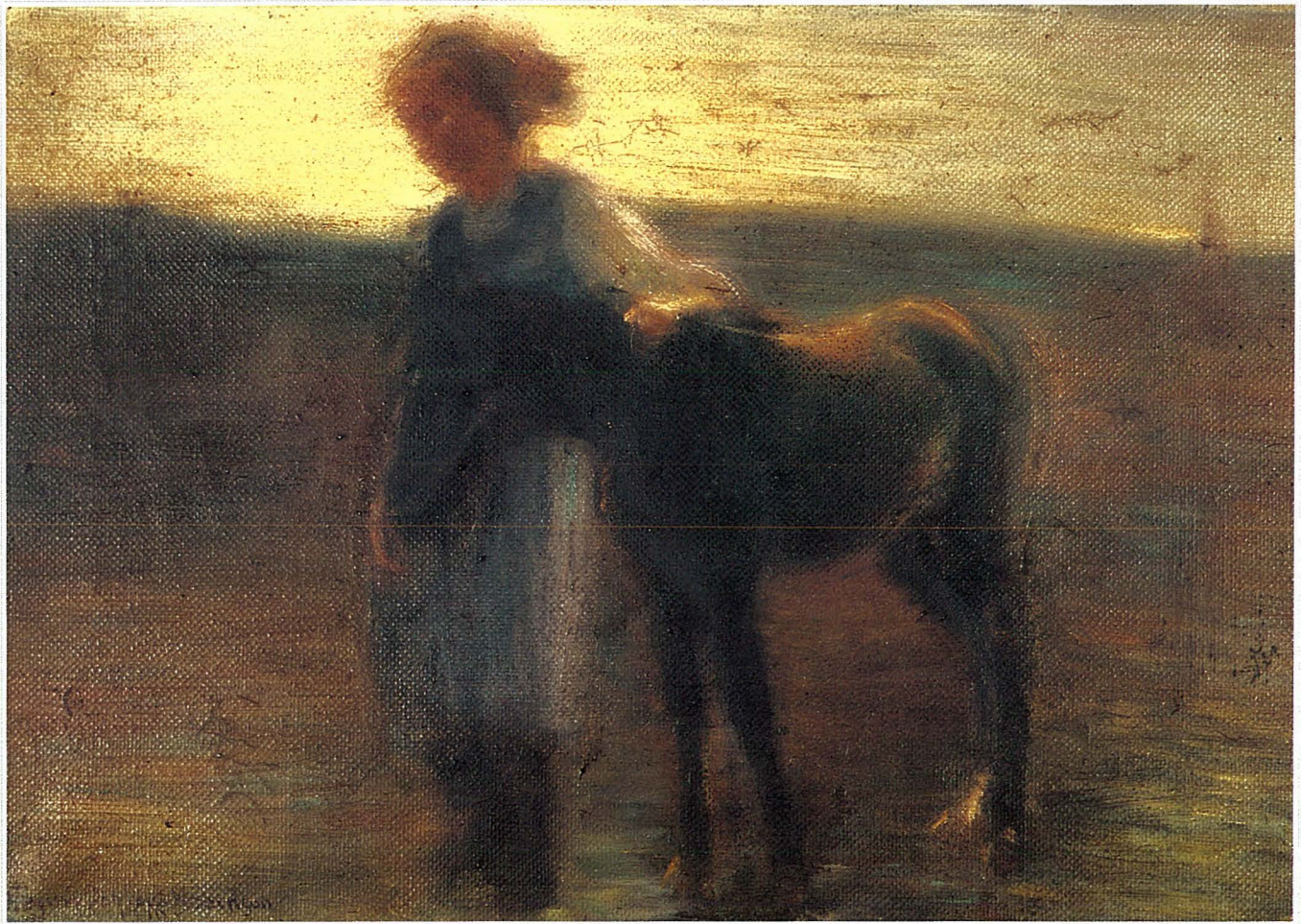
of spring flowers brightened to the brilliant colors of a bowl filled with nasturtiums.

The Robinsons returned to Jacksonville in the summer of 1911. After a period of recuperation, Dorland used her training to produce several light, impressionistic oil paintings.

Apparently Dorland had a strong desire to continue her lessons in watercolors. In 1912, Dr. Robinson installed Dorland, Tillie, and six cats in a small house in Oakland, where Dorland began lessons in painting watercolor landscapes.<sup>11</sup> Outdoor painting from nature presented new challenges for Dorland, but once again she learned quickly. She was soon confidently using the full range of the color wheel to produce paintings of the ocean at Monterey and scenes



The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Photo by Natalie Brown



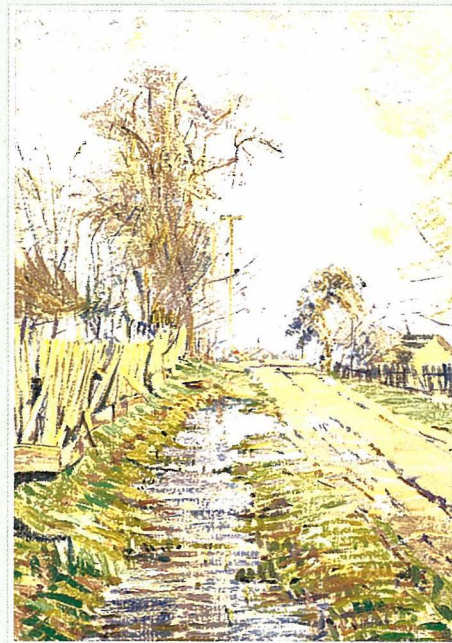
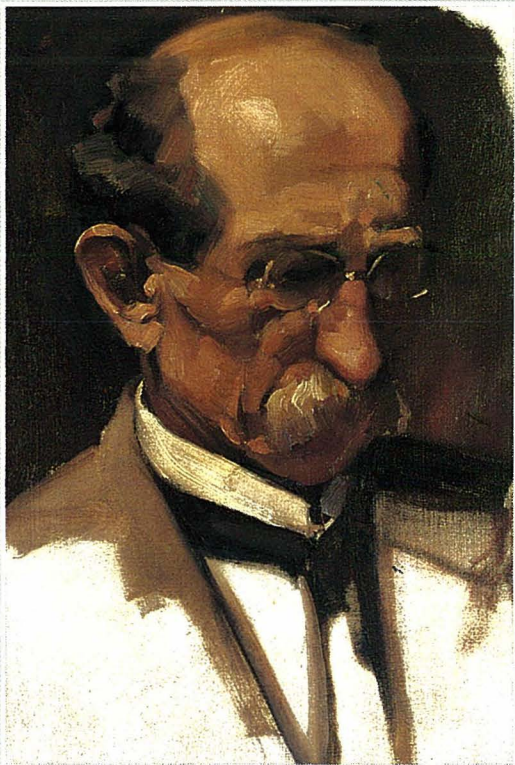
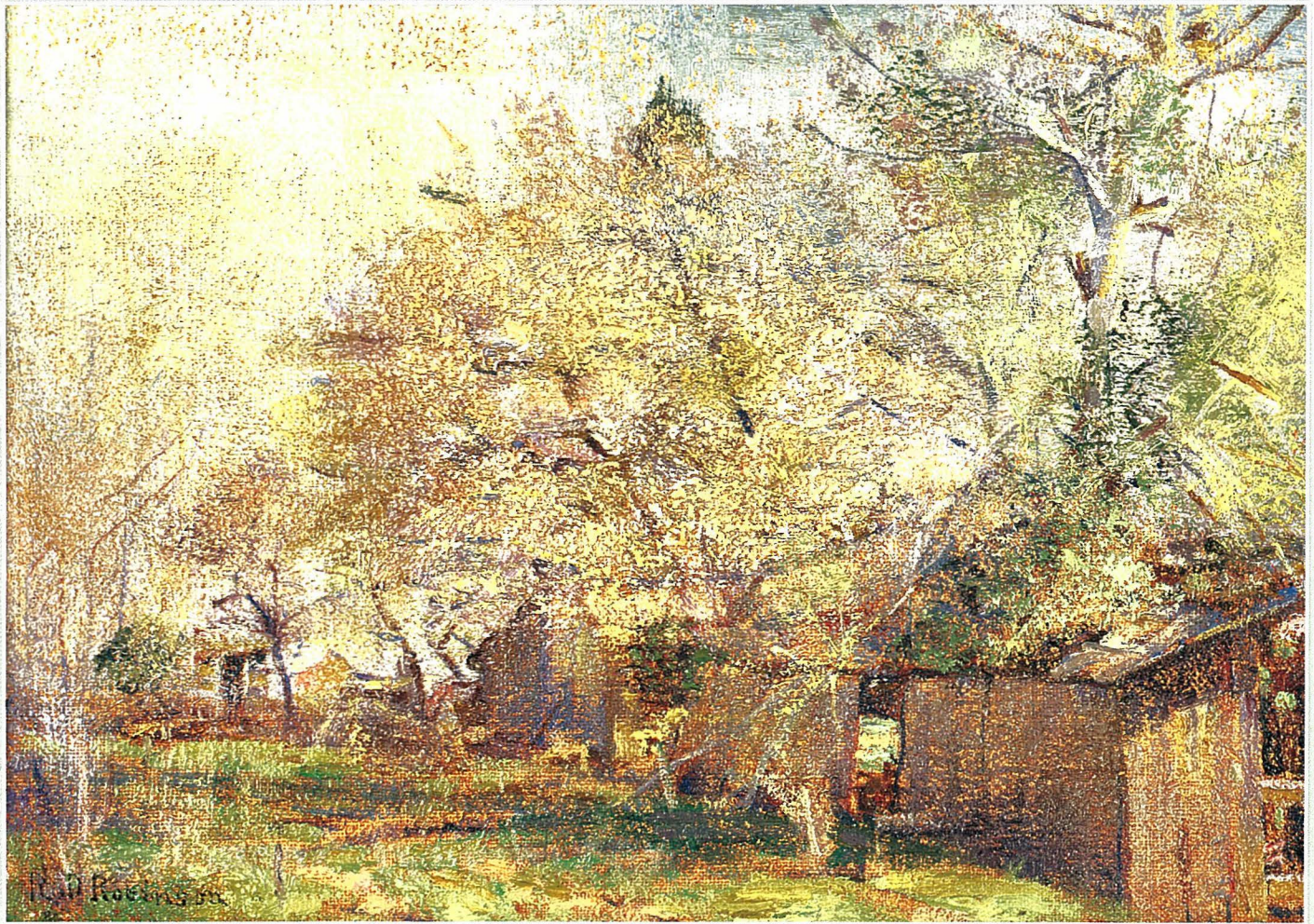
**Untitled girl with colt (top).** This oil painting shows Dorland's experimenting with color and style, reflecting, perhaps, her impressions from the Lewis and Clark Exposition. **Untitled cowboy (left)** is a charcoal drawing Dorland did while taking lessons in Portland in 1908. **Untitled brass pot with china teapot (above)** shows Dorland struggling with highlights during her studies in Philadelphia in 1911. Top painting courtesy Gertrude Opp Nutting; SOHS #78.20.28; #64.55





**Untitled thistles** (opposite), watercolor, 1913. Dorland's brush strokes are masterful in this piece, probably done in Jacksonville. **Untitled peaches** (above), pastel on paper, ca 1916. Here Dorland has brightened her palette and is experimenting with color. **Untitled nasturtiums** (left), watercolor, 1911. Dorland employs a modern touch using the transparency of her watercolors. SOHS #62.136; 78.20.25; #78.20.10





Untitled buildings (top), ca. 1914. Untitled portrait of Dorland's father (far left), late 1916. Untitled road (left), 1916. Self portrait sketch (opposite), ca. 1917. SOHS #78.20.4; #55.76; #78.20.5

around San Francisco Bay.

Dr. Robinson's recurring heart ailment flared up in 1913, and Dorland and Tillie returned to Jacksonville to nurse him.<sup>12</sup> Once her father's health was restored, Dorland began painting again. She worked in both watercolors and oils, even experimenting with pointillism, a technique pioneered by the French painter Georges Seurat, involving the use of tiny dots of color to create an image.

In 1915 the Robinsons visited Dorland's uncle, Harry Miller, in Burlingame and enjoyed the fine art displayed at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. Now Dorland began to be recognized as an accomplished artist by a wider audience. She joined the Sketch Club, a San Francisco organization of women artists. In January 1916 the ladies of the Greater Medford Club organized an exhibit of thirty-five of Dorland's works at the Holland Hotel. It was a well-attended, elegant affair with tea, ferns and music. Dorland sold two paintings and received several commissions for portraits.<sup>13</sup>

The artwork displayed in the Palace of Fine Arts at the Panama-Pacific Exposition created a widespread public interest in art. The San Francisco Art Association, working with the members of the San Francisco Society of Artists, prepared a post-exposition exhibit of art at the Palace of Fine Arts which ran from January 1 to May 1, 1916. Dorland and her friend Mrs. G. E. Johnson spent three weeks in April touring the many galleries. On her return to Medford, Dorland said:

I would scarcely know where to begin to describe the thousands and thousands of masterpieces by the greatest artists of the world . . . To study those indescribable pictures, for hours at a time, is not a task that fatigues; it is an intellectual feast. I was fascinated with the outdoor work of Spencer and Metcalf and with the still life of William M. Chase. Those are our greatest artists in those lines, I believe, in America. I filled three or four notebooks with observations noted while studying their work. I never crowded so much real pleasure into three weeks of time before in my life. I could have continued the enjoyment for months.<sup>14</sup>



Dorland met many new people in San Francisco's art circles and made plans to exhibit her work in San Francisco and Portland in the fall of 1916. During her spare time in San Francisco, Dorland studied with Alice B. Chittenden, who was famous for her pastel portraits. Dorland combined her fine knowledge of charcoal portraiture with her love of color and produced new and wonderful works of art.

In October Dorland traveled to Portland, probably to work on the details of the planned exhibit. There, on October 25, she married Charles Henry Pearson.

Not much is known of Pearson. On the marriage license he is listed as being of legal age, born in New York, residing in San Francisco and working as a commercial traveler. There are suggestions that Pearson and

Dorland met at the art exhibition in San Francisco in May, or maybe just on the train ride to Portland. However, her family and friends were greatly surprised by the marriage.

Rallying quickly, Dorland's parents had marriage announcements printed and put together a reception for the new-lweds. On October 30, Dorland and Charles caught a train bound for New York.

Dorland celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday on November 5 in New York meeting her new in-laws. By the fifteenth she was back in Jacksonville visiting her parents and completing several commissioned portraits. Sometime later she traveled to the San Francisco Bay area. On December 8, Dr. Robinson received word of Dorland's nervous breakdown and caught the train for San Francisco.

He returned to Jacksonville on January 9, 1917. Rumors abounded at the time, and still do today, about the cause of Dorland's illness. Suggestions were made of a divorce, an unwanted pregnancy, or a bigamous marriage.

Following her recovery, Dorland and Tillie apparently took rooms at 31 Grand Boulevard in San Mateo, California. Dorland returned to her artwork. The March 8, 1917, *San Mateo County News* reported Dorland had a self-portrait on display at the Crawford Art Shop in Burlingame. Also on display were Dorland's portraits of her friend Mrs. Johnson, a noted doctor and a local singer. About this time

Dorland made a wonderful oil portrait of her father.

Mrs. Johnson received a letter from Dorland on April 5, inviting her to visit. Then on Saturday morning, April 7, Dorland shot herself. A coroner's inquest found "... that the deceased met death from a gunshot wound in the head committed by her own hand while temporarily deranged, suicidal." It was also reported that Tillie discovered her daughter's body on a bed, her hand clutching a revolver.<sup>16</sup> Tillie provided the information for Dorland's death certificate. The certificate states Dorland was single, perhaps lending support to the rumor of a divorce.<sup>17</sup>

Funeral services for Dorland were held at the Jacksonville Presbyterian Church April 11, 1917. Dorland was buried with her brother and sister in the Jacksonville Cemetery.

In 1921 Dr. Robinson sold his City Drug Store and gave up his medical practice to devote all his time to caring for his grief-stricken wife. In 1922, the Robinsons donated twenty-five of Dorland's paintings to the University of Oregon in Eugene for display in the new Women's Building being constructed. The Robinsons attended the dedication of the new building in June 1923. The paintings eventually were transferred to the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Tillie Robinson died June 13, 1931. Soon after, Dr. Robinson left the big house on North Oregon Street in Jacksonville and moved to the Jackson Hotel on the corner of Eighth and Central Avenue in Medford. On June 23, 1938, after a year and a half in a nursing home, Dr. Robinson died of his heart disease.

Today, few are left who knew Dorland. Those of us who have discovered her artwork regret the tragic loss of a great talent. And always, the great question surrounding her death arises: Why?



#### ENDNOTES

1. Lewis, Ray. "Tillie." *Table Rock Sentinel* (February 1985): 5.
2. *Medford Mail Tribune*, April 7, 1917.
3. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, October 24, 1890.
4. Manuscript 312, SOHS Collection, files from St. Mary's School.
5. *Medford Mail*, July 21, 1905.
6. *Portland Oregonian*, August 27, 1916.
7. *Medford Mail*, November 9, 1906.
8. *Jacksonville Post*, September 21, 1907.
9. *Medford Mail Tribune*, August 9, 1907.
10. *Medford Mail Tribune*, December 27, 1908.
11. *Antiques Magazine*, March 1982, 682.
12. Manuscript 426, SOHS collection, letters from Dorland Robinson.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Medford Mail Tribune*, January 3, 1916.
15. *Medford Mail Tribune*, May 11, 1916.
16. *San Mateo Times*, April 14, 1917.
17. State of California Certificate of Death, No. 17-015348, dated April 9, 1917, SOHS collection.

*Researcher Sue Waldron lives in Medford and is a frequent contributor to the Table Rock Sentinel.*

*An exhibit of more than sixty paintings by Dorland Robinson at the Southern Oregon Historical Society's History Center will continue through November.*



## FROM THE COLLECTION

by Steve M. Wyatt

Memories fade and distort with the passage of time, but the scrapbook compiled by the Robinson family leaves nothing to chance. Newspaper articles, telegrams, greeting cards, and invitations meticulously pasted to its yellowing pages document both important and trivial events in the lives of the Robinsons and other Jacksonville residents in the 1880s. The clippings begin with the start of the family, the marriage of Dr. James Robinson and Miss Tillie Miller in 1882. One of the latest clippings announces the birth of the Robinsons' daughter Regina Dorland in 1891.

Paging through nine years worth of memories reveals a glimpse of the personality of the compiler of this paper treasure. Pasted next to clippings that record Robinson family milestones such as the birth and death of their first two children are clippings of homespun humor, such as "Facetious Idle Talk," self-help, advice, and trivia: "The average weight of an Englishman is 150 lbs; of a Frenchman 136; and a Belgian 140 lbs." Taking an entire page is a write-up of a fire that threatened Jacksonville and destroyed several businesses on California Street. Also cut from newspapers and pasted to the album's pages are seemingly mundane events that would not be deemed newsworthy in today's world — "Mrs. J. W. Robinson and her little son, of Jacksonville, were visiting Ashland on Wednesday." Why the Robinsons did not continue adding to the scrapbook after the birth of Regina Dorland is not known.

Owing to limited exhibit space, the majority of the objects in the Society's collection are not often seen by visitors. "From the Collection" is our attempt to provide an informative glimpse of the scope of the Southern Oregon Historical Society's collection.

# Then & Now

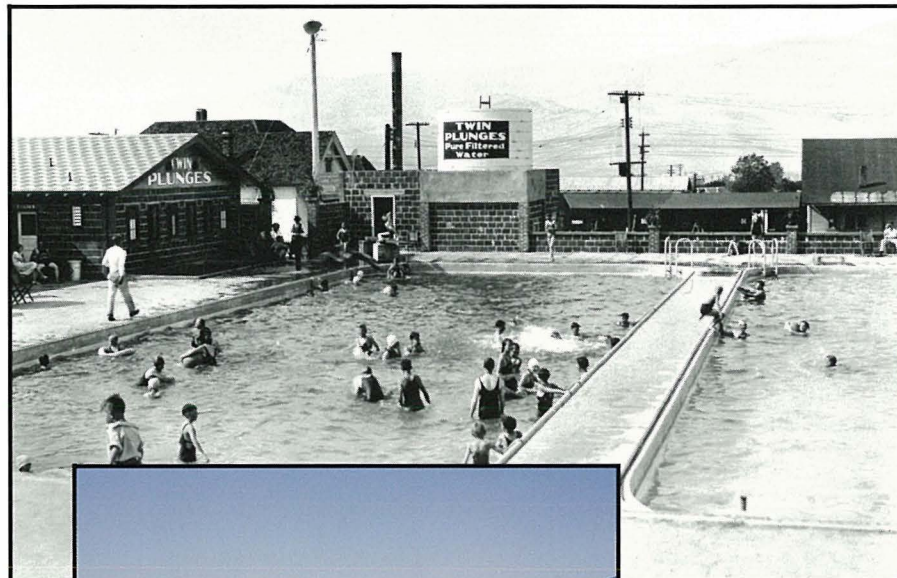
by Catherine Noah

## TWIN PLUNGES

When drillers in 1905 discovered natural springs at the Southern Pacific Railroad station in Ashland, they unleashed more than mineral water—they provided the impetus for a social institution that would endure for seventy years.

Known to longtime Ashland residents by their modern name, the Twin Plunges, these springs between First and Pioneer streets and A and B streets began drawing swimmers in 1909 when the Ashland Mineral Springs Natatorium was completed. The \$40,000 project included a 100-foot-by-200-foot building with 12-inch-thick foundations; two 100-foot-long swimming pools, one for men and one for women; fifty-eight dressing rooms; spring boards, slides, high dives and trapeze rings; a balcony capable of seating 500 people; and a 64-foot-by-100-foot solid maple dance floor which doubled as a skating rink. The opening, on October 30, 1909, was a gala event, to be sure. Adorned with palms, bright bunting and portraits of President William H. Taft and Vice-President James S. Sherman, the natatorium played host to music, refreshments, dancing, and swimming and diving feats by the world-renowned Professor Oberdorf of Seattle.

The successful opening precipitated several years of skating, dancing, and swimming at the natatorium. Since “nice girls” didn’t do those things in public, spectating became another favorite pastime. Various bands, whose members included longtime Ashland



Ashland residents for many decades cooled off at the Twin Plunges, two swimming pools at First and A streets. Only a field and an adjacent bank remain today. SOHS #5073, photo by Matt Striebey

residents Everette McGee and Henry Enders, regularly entertained the guests.

The natatorium’s heyday years soon ended, however, with the proliferation of home bathtubs and motorized travel coupled with management woes and competition by Helman Baths and Jackson Hot Springs. The corporation dissolved on January 21, 1919, leaving the site empty save for occasional activities such as housing plants and livestock during the winter fair. The building was torn down in the late twenties.

William Briggs, a young lawyer with a dream and financial backing, purchased the property—which still had the two swimming holes, a wading pool, and a holding tank—for \$500 in 1931 and spent \$38,000 on renovation. After a series of mishaps ranging from burst pipes to a white enamel surface that turned brown upon contact with the sulphur water, the pools opened the evening of June 26, 1931, in a downpour. Things brightened up, though, the following week—the Elks Convention sponsored a bathing beauty contest

with swimming and diving competitions, and in August a fall style show saw models parading up the center ramp of the pools before 1,500 spectators. Briggs also held races, lessons, and dances throughout the summer, attracting even area soldiers who hitchhiked from Camp White.

Throughout its long history—which included changing owners three times, installation of a bubble roof which collapsed, and a heating system which changed from oil to wood and back to oil—the Twin Plunges provided a gathering place for area residents to socialize and exercise. Some churches even used the pools to baptize the faithful. Schools throughout Josephine and Jackson counties made the Plunges their headquarters for spring picnics.

Today nothing remains but memories. The last owners, Edith and Alfred Willstatter, sold because of economic troubles in 1978 to Heritage Bank, which built its offices on the site and filled in the pools. The site now houses Valley of the Rogue Bank and an empty field.

# Life

in the

# Past Lane

by Brad Linder

## THE DERBY SCHOOL

The Derby School recently was placed on the Jackson County Register of Historic Landmarks—one of two properties on the list so far. The school buildings are on a beautiful hillside just off the Butte Falls Highway and were last used as educational facilities nearly forty years ago. Community dances were held there until the 1970s, when an alcohol-related accident put an end to the festivities.

Roger and Phyllis Perso, of the San Francisco Bay Area, were visiting friends in the Rogue Valley when they first saw the Derby School and were so inspired they purchased the buildings for \$50,000 in 1991. They had worked on nine homes over the years and were excited about the challenges this property presented. Most of the initial work consisted of replacing the water well, putting on a new roof, installing energy-efficient windows, and repairing some of the vandalism that had occurred over the years. Roger Perso said they have spent another \$50,000 in improvements and are far from being finished. They plan to keep the exterior much the same and retain the feel of a country schoolhouse inside.

I had a chance to walk through the school as the interior walls were being framed and new electrical wiring installed. One of my favorite features is the strong outline on the wall left by a classic "Regulator" clock—an image burned into the paint by years of sunshine and children's stares. A



**The Derby School** (above) was last used as an educational facility forty years ago and played host to community dances up until the 1970s. Roger Perso (left) purchased the building and is remodeling it for a home. Photos by Natalie Brown

cupola will be exposed from the interior as a skylight, and a rain porch will be retained as the main entrance to the home.

One of the more unusual features on the property is a separate gymnasium adjacent to the school. This fine little building doubled as a community dance hall as well as a basketball court, evidenced by a stage in one corner and countless

ball imprints scattered over the walls and ceilings. Perso is storing his building supplies in the space and plans to convert the gym into a woodworking shop.

Perso described his father as a skilled craftsman/handyman, and with all the work he has done on the Derby School and the plans he holds for the future, he obviously is carrying on the tradition.



# County Byways

by Sue Waldron

## PAYNE-FERN VALLEY ROADS

The Payne Cliffs were carved by time and weather from the foothills of the Greensprings Mountains. The distinctive sandstone outcroppings have long served as a landmark in the Rogue Valley. We don't know what the local Native Americans called the cliffs, but in the late 1860s they were given the name of the Missouri family that lived at their base. The cliffs, the creek that flows from their side, and the road that ends at their base were all named for Champion T. Payne.

Payne was born December 15, 1831, in Chariton County, Missouri. He was twenty years old when he married seventeen-year-old Elizabeth McCollum on April 14, 1852. The next day the couple joined a wagon train headed west.<sup>1</sup> A little more than four months later they chose property in Linn County, Oregon, and settled down. Eight of their eleven children were born in Linn County. But the restless spirit that brought the Paynes to the West returned, and in 1866 Payne moved his family to Walla Walla, Washington. The move proved unsatisfactory, so in June 1868 the couple uprooted the family once again and came to the Rogue Valley.

Deciding to settle on land near the center of the valley in the lightly populated foothills east of Bear Creek, Payne completed negotiations with Jackson Hocksmith on May 27, 1869.<sup>2</sup> For \$2,000 he became the owner of three hundred twenty acres about a mile and a half due east of the town of Phoenix (then known as Gasburg). Over the next ten years Payne added more than nine hundred additional acres to his holdings. The sandstone cliffs that now bear

his name marked the eastern boundary of Payne's property.

On October 31, 1890, Payne Road was established to connect the family to the towns of Talent and Ashland.<sup>3</sup> Beginning at the east end of the Talent bridge over Bear Creek, Payne road ran almost due north for two and a half miles to the family homestead. The road was officially named in 1949 and designated as a county road in 1966.

About a mile and a half up Payne Road from Talent, a branch road linked the Payne family with Phoenix. For almost twenty years it was also known as Payne Road. Then in July 1909, the name was changed to Fern Valley Road, recognizing the addition of the Ferns family to the population living on the east side of Bear Creek.

William T. Ferns, his wife, Amelia, and their seven children came by train from Iowa to the Rogue Valley in November 1897. On September 26, 1898, Ferns made a down payment on more than nine hundred acres in a lovely valley east of Phoenix.<sup>4</sup> But his health deterio-

rated, and just before he died on March 4, 1899, he sold the property to Amelia for "one dollar and love and affection."<sup>5</sup> For the next ten years Amelia worked hard. With the help of her children she was able to make the ranch produce and keep her family together. Then as each of her sons married, Amelia deeded him a share of the ranch.

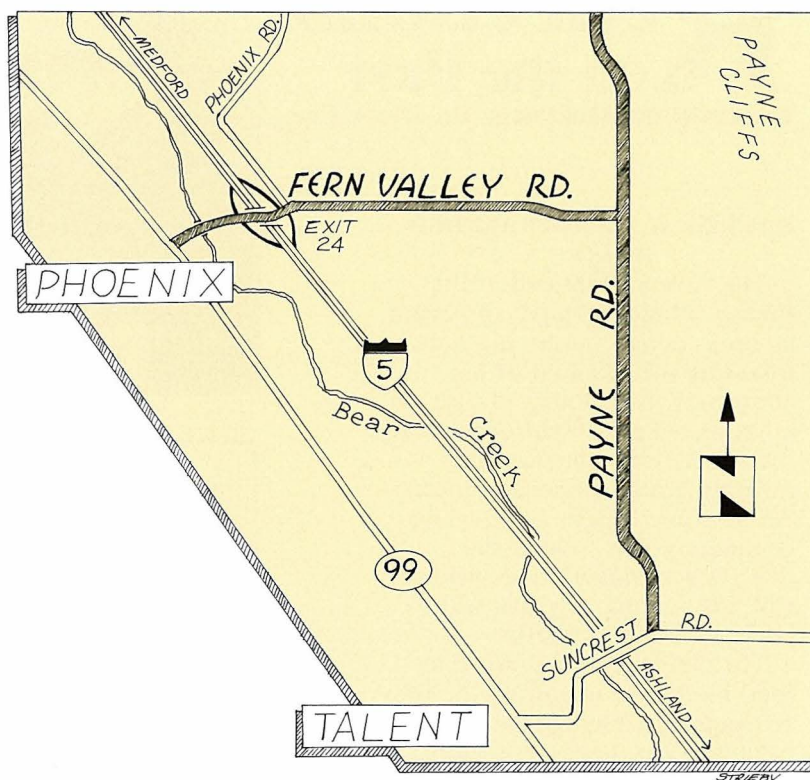
The names of Payne and Fern Valley roads remind us of two sturdy, hard-working families who settled here. The agricultural heritage they helped establish is still a vital part of the Rogue Valley's economic base.



## ENDNOTES

1. Elizabeth Payne obituary, *Ashland Tidings*, April 3, 1929.
2. *Jackson County Deed Records*, vol. 12, 214.
3. *Jackson County Road Records*, vol. 2, 203.
4. *Deed Records*, vol. 36, 2.
5. *Deed Records*, vol. 36, 177.

*Columnist and historic researcher Sue Waldron finds stories and memories along the highways and byways of Jackson County.*



# Reflections on the Past

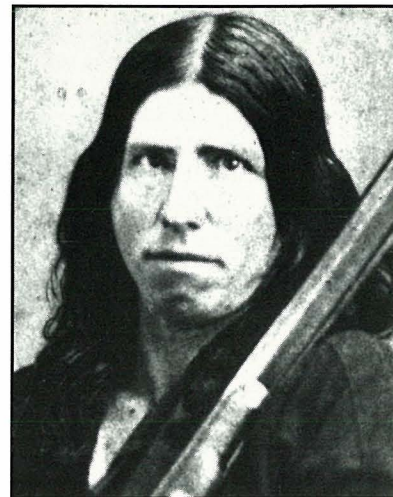
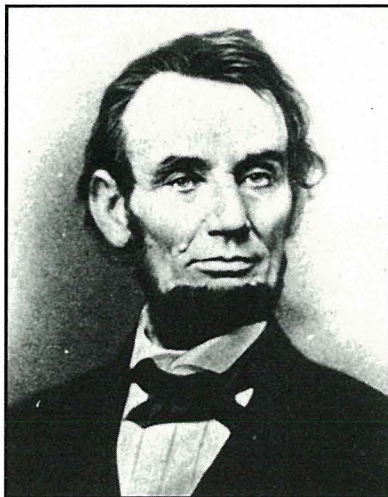
by Dr. Joseph Cox

## RACISM: A LONG-TRAVELED ROAD

The violence captured in the Rodney King videotape, and again as news footage during the riots following the acquittal of his abusers, is just another marker on a long-established road of inequality. An African-American is savagely beaten by police officers. An all-white jury in an all-white community fails to hold the officers accountable. The incident will not be forgotten, nor will it change the road it marks.

The nation started down that road in 1619 by importing the first Africans into Virginia and establishing Negro slavery. For more than 200 years, African-Americans were slaves. President Lincoln's proclamation of 1863, subsequently reaffirmed by amendments to the U.S. Constitution, abolished the legal form of slavery, but America retained the unwritten realities socially, economically, and politically. Gunnar Myrdal, who in the 1940s penned one of the most significant reports in race relations ever written in the United States, labeled this chapter in our history "The American Dilemma." A 1968 report on civil disorders confirmed that we continued moving toward two different societies, one black and one white, separate but by no means equal.

Once in each generation, the terrible realization of what America has done to its African-Americans wells up. And whether motivated by altruism or fear, the country moves to uncover the social and economic conditions which breed and perpetuate the problem. Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, said there is one people "being born into this world wearing saddles while another class of people, based on race, are born booted and spurred, prepared to ride them."



Even though Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in 1863, equal rights have evaded Native Americans, blacks, Chinese and other minorities throughout recent history. SOHS #13926, #732, #7146

Thirty years ago, Martin Luther King admonished us that "a riot is the language of the unheard." None of us who watched Los Angeles burn and who, three decades ago, watched Watts, Washington, Baltimore and Detroit in flames, could avoid this terrible feeling of foreboding, this "alarm bell in the night," or as one writer put it, this "wake-up call for America."

As a nation, we are more segregated now than we were thirty years ago. There are more African-American men in prison than in college. The illiteracy, crime, drugs, infant mortality and high school dropout rate among African-Americans testify to that inequality.

No one—no man, nature or government—can make life absolutely fair. But society could at least attempt to provide an Anglo,

Indian, Hispanic, or Black child as level a life-playing surface as possible.

The last time the national conscience was moved to attack racism was in the 1960s when that most incongruous of leaders on this subject, Lyndon Johnson, affirmed he shared Dr. King's dream of a better future for children of all colors. He said, "The only genuine long-range solution to what has happened lies in an attack upon the conditions that create such despair."

A nation built on the promise and dream of social upward mobility cannot endure if it continues to deny that liberty to one group of its fellow citizens because of race.

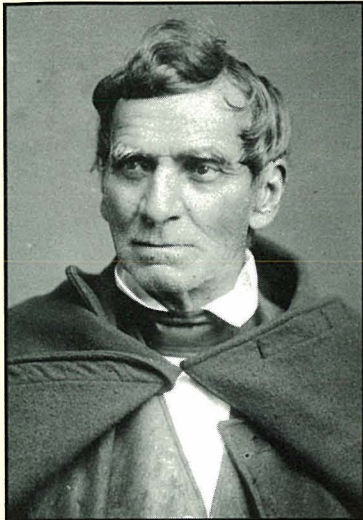


*Dr. Joseph W. Cox is a historian and president of Southern Oregon State College.*

## ODDS AND ENDS OF HISTORY

# That's fairly interesting...

Compiled by Samuel J. Wegner



Lindsay Applegate. SOHS #1233

June 6, 1846: The Applegate Expedition leaves La Creole in the Willamette Valley in an effort to establish an alternate route to Oregon. Historically known as the "Southern Route," it would later be called the Applegate Trail.<sup>1</sup>

"I am decidedly in favour of purchasing Cuba and making it one of the States of [the] Union."<sup>2</sup>  
—President James K. Polk, 1846

In 1577 Sir Francis Drake guides the first English ship into the Pacific Ocean. Sailing northward up the Pacific coastline to a point somewhere between the 38th and 48th parallels (the Oregon-California border is the 42nd parallel), he finds a region characterized by rain that is "an unnatural congealed and frozen substance" with the "most vile, thicke and stinking fogges."<sup>3</sup>

At the 1787 Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin proposes the U.S. president receive no salary. He gives his reasons as follows:

"There are two passions which have a powerful influence on the affairs of men. These are ambition and avarice, the love of power and the love of money. Separately, each of these has great force in prompting men to action, but when united in view of the same object, they have in many minds the most violent effects. . . ."

The Convention ignores his proposal and sets an annual salary of \$25,000 per year.<sup>4</sup>

"The area of Jackson County is approximately 3,000 square miles. . . . Rendered in acres this is equal to no less a number than 1,866,240—an area not far short of the size of Connecticut, and nearly twice that of Rhode Island."<sup>5</sup>

The first of 238 Vietnam War Congressional Medals of Honor is awarded on December 5, 1964, to Capt. Roger H. C. Donlon. The last is awarded nearly twenty years later on May 28, 1984, to the Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War. Oregon has two recipients, both posthumous: Sgt. Maximo Yabes of Oak Ridge (Lane County) in February 1968 and Sgt. John N. Nolcomb of Richland (Baker County) in December 1968.<sup>6</sup>

Galls Creek in Jackson County near Gold Hill is named for Jacob Gall, who settled along its banks on September 7, 1852.<sup>7</sup>



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The Rogue Valley. SOHS #1341



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