TABLE ROCK ENTRE

SEPTEMBER OCTOBER 1992

JUST A LOWN WITH A PENCIL

THE PARTY OF HICKS & AYSEEDS

CRATER LAKE'S AZURE LLURE

> The Magazine of the Southern Oregon Historical Society



Forty-six Years Ago.



Just across the tracks from Medford's downtown business district, more than 800 volunteer and regular firefighters battled an inferno which raged for three hours before it was brought under control. Early in the evening on June 26, 1946, a fire broke out in the coffee shop at the American Fruit Company packing plant and spread quickly through a storage area containing oil spray, oil paper and other combustible material. Fanned by a 20-mile-per-hour northeast wind, the flames quickly leaped to adjoining businesses. Before crews had any chance of controlling the blaze, it had spread through three blocks of the city's fruit packing district. Firefighters from Medford, Ashland, Camp White, the state fire patrol and Rogue River National Forest battled to confine the blaze to the industrial area, just blocks from the heart of Medford's commercial district. As a precaution officials evacuated residents of three adjacent blocks. A devastating explosion was narrowly averted when a Southern Pacific railroad engineer backed his switcher onto a blazing sidetrack and coupled with two carloads of dynamite caps and pulled them out of the danger zone.

As the sun set that evening, crews finally brought the blaze under control, but not before it had destroyed the American Fruit Company packing plant, Crystal Springs packing plant, Medford Milling Works, Porter Lumber Company's yard, and Monarch Seed and Feed Company warehouse. Total damage to businesses was estimated to exceed one million dollars.



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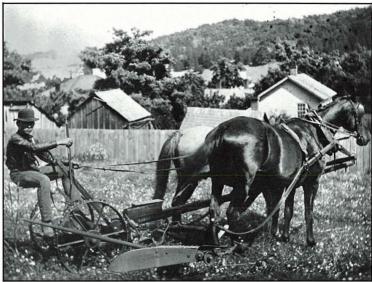
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The original Bozo the Clown and the voice behind Pluto and Goofy started out a clarinet player during his childhood in Jacksonville. Vance DeBar Colvig, called "Pinto" because of his freckles, used his sense of humor and love for entertaining to become one of the most versatile voices in Hollywood.

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The beauty of Crater Lake calls the artist in everyone—whether novice or master. You'll find Crater Lake on just about anything, from soup spoons to lamp shades, from sweatshirts to crosscut saws. Among its more notable portrayers is Peter Britt, Jacksonville's beloved pioneer photographer.

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It was a sobriquet they adopted with pride, these members of the new People's Party, also known as Populists. Their pro-labor, anti-big business movement spread across America, one of its greatest areas of support being southern Oregon.

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Just a Clown with a Pencil

by Dawna Curler

Illustrations by
Pinto Colvig from
the collection of the
Southern Oregon
Historical Society

wanted to be somebody," commented Vance Debar Colvig in a 1926 newspaper interview, "and have some distinction besides that of belonging to the fire department or the silver cornet band." Best known as Bozo the Clown, Colvig started life as a southern Oregon boy—born in Jacksonville 100 years ago. With the love and support of his family, a superb sense of humor, and a mishmash of diverse talent, Colvig indeed became somebody.

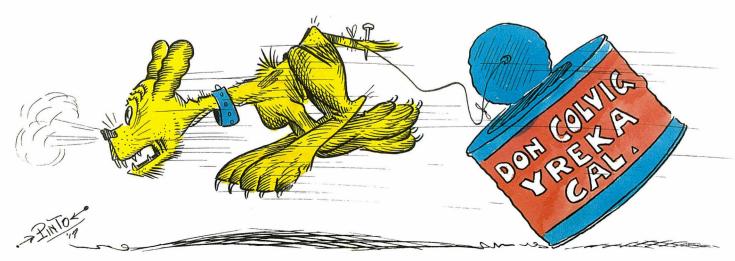
School chums called him "Pinto," after the spotted horse, because of the freckled mass strewn across his impish face. Like the freckles, the name stuck for his entire life. Pinto spent his childhood days wandering the dirt lanes and back alleys of Jacksonville, getting into mischief with his friends, playing E-flat clarinet in the town band, and trying every way he could to be noticed, including riding a calf around town.

During his career Pinto traveled as a circus clown, gained recognition as a cartoon- and film-animation artist, and

acted in silent films. After sound was introduced to the film industry, Pinto became one of the most versatile voices in Hollywood, providing barking noises for Mickey Mouse's dog Pluto and voices for other Walt Disney characters, including Goofy; the wise pig and the wolf from the "Three Little Pigs"; Grumpy and Sleepy of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs; and Grasshopper from the "Grasshopper and the Ant." Pinto also did voices for some Popeye cartoons and animated productions of Gulliver's Travels and "Raggedy Ann and Andy." He performed in many radio productions such as "Amos 'n Andy," and provided the sound effects for Jack Benny's Maxwell car and howls for the "Hound of the Baskervilles." For his final achievement, Pinto won the hearts of a nation making records and personal appearances as "Bozo, the Capitol Clown."

Although Pinto found a niche for himself in the wider world, he retained a fond spot in his heart for the people and places of southern Oregon. The foundation for life

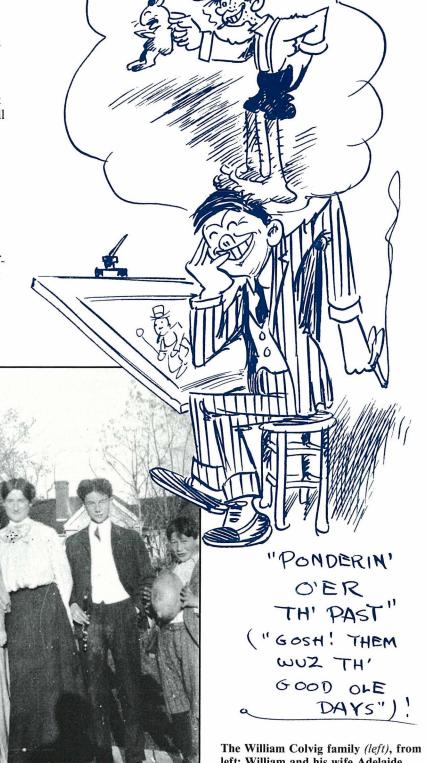
An artistic clown led a host of jolly characters in a coloring book Pinto designed (top left). Pinto's correspondence to friends and family was full of whimsical cartoons and sketches. such as a clown face and a runaway dog. Pinto drew cartoons for the San Francisco Bulletin in the 1920s (opposite). Some of his creations throughout the years have included circus elephants, a selfportrait, and a prop-nag named "Jargo." SOHS #79.6.39, MS. 9, #79.98.1, #2897, #80.35.5, MS. 9, MS.





that he gained growing up in Jacksonville (and Medford) was expressed frequently throughout his work. Pinto played off his image of a small-town country boy and often drew cartoon sketches based on his youthful memories. "Goofy, who is the epitome of all the 'hicks' in the world, is the easiest to portray," explained Pinto in a newspaper interview. "Guess that's because I'm a cornfed hick myself."2 On another occasion he said, "They have a lot of real writers and artists at the Disney studio, but when they want something cornfed they call on the old apple-knocker from Jackson County. The grasshopper was supposed to sound like a simple country boy, so they gave his part to me."3 Pinto also suggested that Grumpy was a "composite of all the old codgers in Jacksonville in the early days."4

Pinto's family was well thought of in Jacksonville. His parents, Addie Birdseye and "Judge" William Colvig, were both offspring of southern Oregon pioneers. Along with Pinto, their youngest, the Colvigs had quite a houseful with three daughters, Clara, Helen, and Mary, and another son, Don. Until the Colvigs moved to Medford



WANNA BUY

The William Colvig family (left), from left: William and his wife Adelaide Birdseye Colvig, and their children, Clara, Helen, Mary, Don and Vance, better known as Pinto. Pinto reminisces in a 1918 letter to his father (above). SOHS #1792, MS. 409

in 1906, the family shared the wood-frame, Gothic Revival house that still stands near the junction of Oregon and Applegate streets.

"I have often believed," wrote Pinto, "that on the day the Colvigs moved into that Home, Our Lord went ahead, and said: 'Welcome! And Bless Ye Who Enter Here.' Because thereinafter, a heap o' livin' went on in that grand old home. Kids! Kids! Kids! Music, Measles, Song, Chicken Pox, Laughter, Belly-aches, Friends, Poison Oak, Food, Relatives . . . and Country-Cousins-by-the-Dozens! Horses, Mice, Cows, Cockroaches, Mortgages . . . Fights 'n Fun!—But all mixed with just enough of that Ol' Time Religion to Make Life Worth Livin'!"5

nly hindsight can show how Pinto already was charting his future course as he did what came naturally in his pre-teen years. For instance, when minstrel and vaudeville shows came to town, Pinto temporarily joined the troupes when allowed. "About 1900," remembered Pinto, "the Verna Felton Players came to town, from up in Portland.

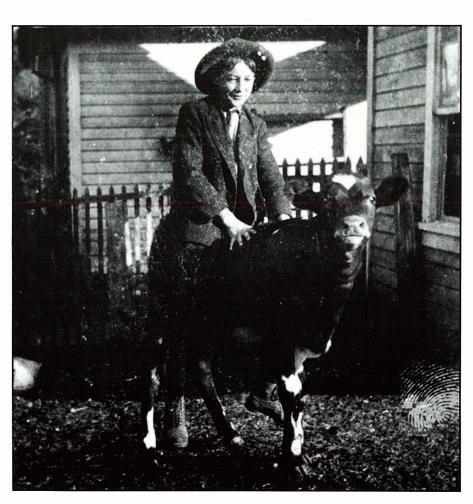
Little Verna Felton was the Shirley Temple of her day. She was something, with her striped stockings and her little hat with a flower on it. I was a loony, skinny-legged kid with uncombed hair. But I applied for a speaking part in the show, 'The Power of Wealth,' which was running for a week at the United States Hotel. . . . After a lot of persuasion, they gave me three and a half words. I was to walk on stage carrying a cat, go over to a prop well, and say, 'Psst! Let's duck it!' But I was so entranced working with Verna that I just stood there on stage, grinned at the audience, and held onto the cat. She pulled and the cat started yowling, but I didn't let go until she took off her shoe and hit me on the head."6

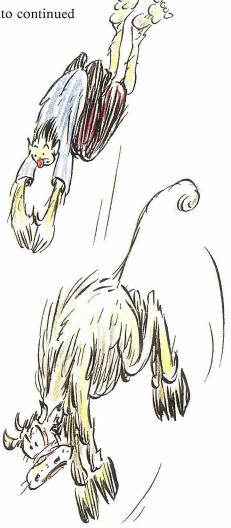
One of Pinto's early cartoons taught him an important lesson. Once his teacher reprimanded him for drawing an uncomplimentary caricature of town banker, C.C. Beekman. "Since then, explained Pinto, "I have avoided being offensive, for memories of that teacher's practical application of a vigorous lesson about respecting dignity remain very fresh."

While living in Medford, Pinto continued

Pinto would do anything to get attention. He even rode a calf about town (below left), which he later depicted in a cartoon in a letter to his sister (below).

SOHS #1791, MS. 409







to harbor dreams of fame and fortune and of how a cartooning career might get them: "I thought it would be mighty nice to find myself on the twenty-fifth floor of the New York Times building wearing an artist's purple smock, my studio laden with Persian rugs, with Venus and Dante in statue, and incense burners in every corner, while I turned out a 'Homer Davenport' daily and received a weekly check that made the telephone number blush. Never having been in a big newspaper office, that was my idea of its class. Imagine my chagrin when I did invade the artist's stuffy corner when they had to hang the inkwell from the ceiling for want of room."8

Pinto was sidetracked briefly by a rail-road job in the freight department at the Medford train depot, but an unappreciated cartoon ended that job and launched him again on a search for adventure. "One of my daily duties," recalled Pinto, "was to check up every car on the sidetracks and enter it in a big book. One evening, with time to waste, I made the entry by drawing a picture of the car, putting a hobo on top of it with a brakeman kicking him off. A week or so later the efficiency expert sweetly informed me that I was working for

a railroad, not a comic supplement in a newspaper. I objected to the way he ran down my art and I quit."9

Pinto then went to Corvallis, where he spent three winters studying art at Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University). While playing with the college band, Pinto presented a "chalk talk" act during intermissions. He left school when he received an offer to add his act to the Pantages Vaudeville Show. Armed with

Pinto (fourth from the right, second row) played in the Medford Band in 1908 (above). He often used horn players in illustrations (above left). Pinto studied at the Oregon Agricultural College for two years (below). SOHS #3150, #3154, #13897





After clowning around the country for some months, Pinto came back to Portland, where he fell in love and married Margaret Slaven in 1916. Pinto and Mar-

garet moved to San Francisco and began

raising their family. Four of their five boys were born there between 1918 and 1922.

With a family to support, Pinto returned to the newspaper business; this time he wrote and drew cartoons for the San Francisco Bulletin. Nicknamed the "Bulletin







Boob," Pinto also developed a single-panel cartoon series titled "Life on the Radio Wave" that ran in the *Chronicle* and whose popularity achieved national syndication. The cartoon poked fun at the way the newly introduced radio was influencing people's lives.

Besides his newspaper work and family responsibilities, Pinto found time to start his own film animation company, becoming a pioneer in an industry that was truly in its infancy. ¹¹ A few animation experiments were created between 1906 and 1913. For the most part, these were additions to vaudeville acts.

The first commercial cartoon to begin a series that played in movie houses, "Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa," was released in 1913. The next year, "Gertie the Dinosaur" captured the hearts of the American public and inspired dozens of would-be animators. Although there had been some work done in San Francisco as early as 1911, most of the experimenters and the three major studios were in New York.¹²

The field was wide open when Pinto made a local name for himself in 1916 with his California Theater bear. The "Li'l Movie Bear" was a cute, furry creature that marched across the screen at the California Theater before the feature began. His antics changed from week to week, and the popularity of this pint-sized critter brought Pinto considerable notoriety.¹³

During his film animation career, Pinto made a number of innovative productions, including a series of cartoons that played at the Rialto Theatre in Medford. In this series, the hand-drawn characters sported heads of real people that had been filmed in live action. ¹⁴ Also to Pinto's credit was the creation in 1919 of one of the first color animated films using a method called the Prizma Process. Following his move to southern California, Pinto teamed up briefly in 1928 with Walter Lantz to create an early talking cartoon very soon after Disney released "Steamboat Willie," the first animated film to use sound. ¹⁵

he golden age of silent films was at its peak in 1922, when Pinto moved his family to Hollywood. Pinto's silent film career ranged from writing titles and gags to acting in both comedies and dramas. "They call me the man with a million faces," Pinto explained in a 1926 newspaper interview, "and often call up and say 'come out to location and bring face No. 255." Pinto worked for several different studios, including Universal, Fox, and Mack Sennett. At one point he was part owner of a small film company and brought a crew to the Rogue Valley to film scenes for several different productions.16

By the end of the 1920s, Pinto was in his thirties and still longed for more adventure.



"Oh, how I yearned to do gags with sound," lamented Pinto, "to do musical gags."¹⁷ When sound revolutionized the film industry, Pinto got his wish. In 1930 he signed an eight-year contract with Disney Studios. After the contract expired and until Pinto's death in 1967, he continued to do the voice of Goofy.¹⁸

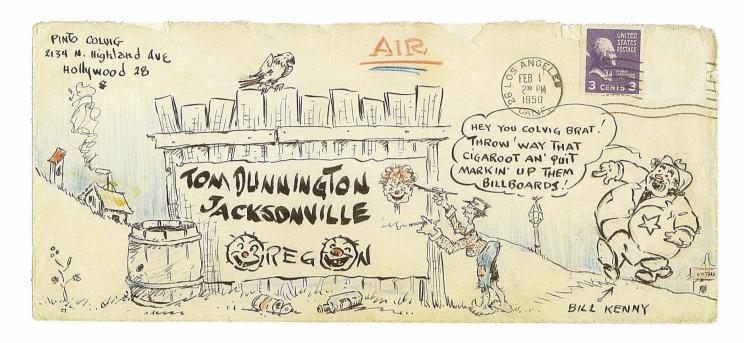
Including his radio work, the films he did with Disney and the few years he spent in Florida at Fleischer Studios in the early 1940s, Pinto already had made significant contributions in entertainment with his voice and sound-effects talents. In 1946 his career expanded when he joined Capitol Records to make recordings for children. As "Bozo, the Capitol Clown," Pinto inspired youngsters with storybook record sets, known as record readers. Through songs and narratives, Bozo encouraged his young listeners to follow the printed words as they heard them. Pinto's new character became a



Pinto with colleague at the San Francisco Bulletin (above). In the 1940s he provided the voice for Jack Benny's Maxwell car (left). Opposite page: During the golden age of silent films, Pinto was called "the man with a million faces" (far left); one of his first talking cartoons was "Bolivar the Talking Ostrich" (top); a band member recalls Pinto's earlier years (right). SOHS #79.6.112, #2341-A, #13874, #13886, #13879

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Pinto delighted in sending illustrated letters to folks back in Jacksonville (above) and family members elsewhere (right). His drawings often carried Pinto's trademark outhouse, or some mention of a "doniker." One of Pinto's self-portraits (below). SOHS #MS. 9, #80.35.9, #13897

household word, and he traveled all over the country promoting the Bozo series as Capitol Records' Goodwill Ambassador.¹⁹

When Pinto moved into the world of sound, he retired his pen and pencil professionally, but he continued throughout his life to entertain friends and family with his anecdotal sketches. Pinto must have delighted in entertaining postal workers with his lavishly decorated envelopes, and correspondents in the Rogue Valley looked forward to receiving his cleverly illustrated letters.

Whether it was through silly antics, facial expressions, voices, or musical spoofs, Pinto made people laugh. He was always a clown at heart, even as an illustrator. "A cartoonist is just a clown with a pencil," Pinto once wrote.²⁰ His humorous spirit, first nurtured in southern Oregon, left a brilliant, lighthearted legacy.

ENDNOTES

2. "Former Jacksonville Resident Thrives on Animal

1. "Adventurous Career is Lot of 'Pinto' Colvig,"

Jackson County News, Medford, Sept. 10, 1926.

Imitations," Medford Mail Tribune, Dec. 13, 1946.

gon," Sunday Oregonian, date unknown.

3. "'Big Bad Wolf' on Visit Here, Native of Ore-



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- 10. Miscellaneous newspaper clippings pasted on sheet of paper, Ms. 9, SOHS.
- 11. "Movie Gagman," Ms. 9.
- 12. Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, rev. ed. (New York: New American Library, 1987), 1–28.
- 13. "Pinto Tells How He Uses Ink," unidentified news clipping, Ms. 9, SOHS.
- 14. "Pinto Colvig's Cartoon Plays at Rialto Monday," unidentified news clipping, Ms. 9, SOHS.
- 15. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 27; and advertisement for "Bolivar the Talking Ostrich," Colvig-Lantz "Cinematoon" Process, copyright 1928, Ms. 9, SOHS.
- 16. "Colvig's Movie Outfit Departs for Prospect," unidentified news clipping, Ms. 9, SOHS.
- 17. "My Mother Covered Me with a Crazy Quilt": The Biography of Pinto Colvig The Capitol Clown, ca. 1951, Ms. 9, SOHS.

4. Pinto, A Brief History of Vance DeBar Colvig 18. Pinto, A Brief History, 9. (1892-1967) (Jacksonville: Southern Oregon 19. "Crazy Quilt," 4. Historical Society, 1980), 9. 20. "Crazy Quilt," 2. 5. Vance DeBar Colvig to Goldly family, August 10, 1959. 6. Pinto, A Brief History, 4. Dawna Curler is curator of interpretation at 7. "Oregon Youth Has Real Serious Job the Southern Oregon Historical Society. She as Movie Gagman," unidentified news developed the new Pinto exhibit, "Clowning clipping, Ms. 9, SOHS. Around," which opened in September at the 8. Ibid. 9. Ibid. Children's Museum in Jacksonville.

Forty-six Years Ago.



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Azure Allure

old prospectors who first gazed upon its azure waters in 1853 weren't very poetic, but their name for the giant basin they stumbled upon in the Cascade Mountains was an apt description: Deep Blue Lake.

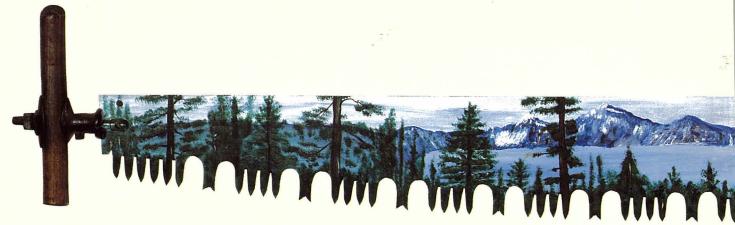
Crater Lake, as it is now known, has defied description ever since.

Artists both fine and folksy have tried to capture its likeness on canvas, film, leather, glass, metal, wood, paper, even velvet. Pictures of Crater Lake and its Wizard Island have appeared on every household item imaginable, from place mats to soup spoons, from lamp shades to crosscut saws. It has graced the covers of books and calendars. It has stretched across baseball caps, sweatshirts and backpacks. It even made the —continued on page 14

by Catherine Noah

The beauty of Crater Lake calls the artist in everyone.

Oil painting by Peter Britt, ca. 1875. SOHS #B177



The creation of Crater Lake, paintings by Hibbard Cleveland, 1932 (below). SOHS #56.94.1-56.94.4





Nadine Thomas of Keyes, California, painted this scene on a crosscut saw that hangs at the Yellow Submarine Sandwich Shop in Medford.

Saw courtesy of Vera Campfield









Oil painting by Peter Britt, 1875 (above). Mixed media by Medford artist Elizabeth Edmondson, ca. 1910 (right). SOHS #B286, #992 51



-continued from page 11

cover of millions of envelopes nationwide as a six-cent stamp in the National Park Series in 1934.

The United States' deepest lake (1,932 feet) has attracted such notables as watercolorist Gunner Widforss and photographers Ansel Adams and Edward Curtis, among countless other artists. Peter Britt, Jacksonville's beloved pioneer photographer, in 1874 hauled 200 pounds' worth of equipment over wagon roads and rough trails in a five-day journey to the rim just to capture the lake on fragile glass-plate negatives. His photographs became famous and played an important role in the successful campaign that made Crater Lake a national park in 1902.

What is it about Crater Lake that inspires the artist in all of us, whether novice or master?

The lake's indescribable color. Depending on the weather, the lake ranges from sky blue to a turquoise as brilliant as the Caribbean. Western painter James Everett Stuart, after an expedition with Peter Britt, painted a picture of Crater Lake that aroused skepticism among his colleagues over his ability to use color. "Most of the critics say the water is too blue," he wrote to Britt in 1883, "but if they were to study Crater Lake as I have done, they would think different."

Though some are more successful in portraying Crater Lake than others, there's really only one way to get a clear picture of just how blue it is: see it for yourself.

Catherine Noah is editor of the Table Rock Sentinel.

The Party of Hicks and Hayseeds

escribing the presidential campaign of 1892 as "the most tremendous political upheaval that the world has known," People's Party candidate James B. Weaver issued "A Call to Action." In book form Weaver catalogued America's ills in what now nostalgically is termed the Gay '90s. Campaigning as an implacable opponent of corporate monopolies and as the spokesperson for workers and farmers, Weaver struck a responsive chord in the electorate of southern Oregon, where he received one of the most enthusiastic responses in all America to his call.¹

Appeals to farmers would, of course, have been popular in southern Oregon at that time, for agriculture was the region's most productive enterprise. Transportation difficulties confined the timber industry largely to riverbanks, and most of the local mines had played out. Though the railroad had

With strong agricultural interests, southern Oregonians enthusiastically supported the new People's Party in the landmark election of 1892.

reduced the area's isolation somewhat, life in southern Oregon in 1892 unmistakably was rural. Medford had just taken an urbanizing step by acquiring a new firefighting hose-and-pump rig; and, to encourage merchandising, the Grand Central Hotel advertised "special rates for the commercial traveler," renting its most expensive nightly accommodations for two dollars. "Drummers" (traveling salespeople) who crossed Front Street from the train depot to the hotel might

Jacksonville farm workers, ca. 1900. SOHS #25



have called on S. Rosenthal, "The Great Clothier," or G. L. Davis, a local grocer who offered buyers fifteen pounds of Costa Rican coffee for a dollar.

Both locals and travelers could enjoy performances of "Everybody's Friend" at the Jacksonville Opera House or a concert by the Medford Silver Cornet Band. To raise money for their new equipment, Medford's firefighters sponsored the Fisk University Jubilee Singers at the Medford Opera House. Those seeking rowdier entertainment turned to Gold Hill, which offered a three-fight card with two gamecocks contesting the first preliminary bout, two pit dogs the second, and Woldred Reed and Tom Lawrence the third in a thirty-minute, bare-knuckle main event. In addition to their interest in cockfighting and boxing, local farmers followed the circumstances that were evoking protests from their counterparts across the nation, for the 1890s may be remembered as the colorful era of handlebar mustaches, barbershop quartets, sleeve garters, straw hats, and bicycles built for two, but it also was a time of farmer and worker discontent.

Industrial labor's dissatisfaction stemmed from low wages paid for hours of toil in sweatshop conditions while farmers complained about falling prices and dependence upon railroads for transportation of crops to market. Trusts, monopolies, pools, and cartels were opposed because they kept both freight costs and consumer prices high. But controlling trusts and railroads was difficult when politicians who were empowered to enact regulatory laws usually owed their positions to campaign contributions from corporations and railroads. When it came to supporting political candidates, farmers and workers simply could not match the financial resources of big business. But they could let the public know that politicians simply represented moneyed interests. Once the majority of working people realized that, they reasoned, the strength of their

numbers at the polls would turn such rascals out of office. What was needed, they believed, were suitable alternatives to the Democratic and Republican candidates and an electorate educated in the realities of the political situation.

In 1892 a new party, The People's Party, was organized to provide candidates who were not in the pockets of big business and to provide a platform that would remedy the ills of American life and politics.² Its fundamental tenet was the free and unlimited coinage of silver, for with silver and silver certificates circulating as legal tender, the money supply would be inflated while the amounts owed on farm mortgages would remain constant. The People's Party platform also advocated: a national currency issued by the fed-

What was needed were suitable alternatives to the Democratic and Republican candidates and an electorate educated in the realities of the political situation.

eral government instead of banking corporations with their own bank notes; government ownership of railroads and communications; a graduated income tax; the establishment of a postal savings system; the direct election of United States senators; the adoption of the secret ballot; initiative and referendum processes; and a shorter working day.

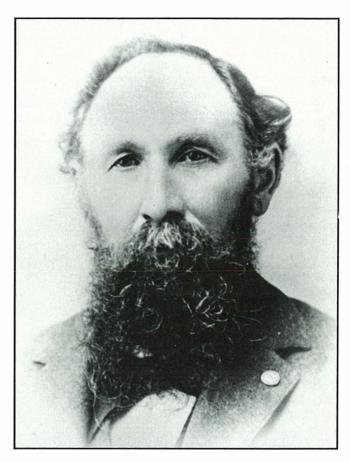
Members of this party called themselves Populists;

A young mower in Jackson County at the turn of the century. SOHS #3783

a sobriquet they adopted with pride. The nicknames of some of their more zealous spokespersons reinforced their agrarian image: Pitchfork Ben Tillman, Sockless Jerry Simpson, and Davis "Bloody Bridles" Waite. So did the pithy quote of their foremost female advocate, Mary Lease, who declared farmers "should raise less corn and more hell." Southern Oregon's Populist spokespersons may not have enjoyed national reputations, but their opinions were no less fervent. Ira Wakefield and W. H. Breese of Talent, S. H. Holt of Phoenix, and J. W. Marksbury of Gold Hill were the most active local advocates, with Wakefield being the most energetic. Ranging throughout the area, Wakefield assailed monopolies wherever he could find an audience, from the Woodville Schoolhouse near Evans Creek to the Opera House in Klamath Falls. "In our country the power to oppress has increased with the centralization of industry and wealth," this veteran of the Union Army asserted. "This injustice is shown in the greed of the corporations in reducing the comforts of employees and the enactment of laws burdensome to the masses."

he Southern Oregon Mail, one of twenty Populist newspapers in the state, also provided a local platform for Populist rhetoric beneath its "The Official Farmer's Newspaper" banner. Its bias in 1892 was evident in comments concerning the February meetings of the central committees of the two major parties. "Nothing startling took place," it reported about the Republicans; and even before the Democrats could meet, it went to press with the conclusion they would leave "a number of goodly points lying around loose." The Democrats of "The Jacksonville Ring" controlled local politics, the paper declared, and it trumpeted examples of railroad mistreatment, such as the case of the Grants Pass Pine Door and Lumber Company. The railroad charged \$41 for freight forwarded 300 miles to Portland, then another \$28.50 for the 40 miles from Portland to McMinnville. The newspaper was not only indignant about the price/distance ratio between these points, but it also denounced an \$8 overweight charge as unfair. There was no suggestion that heavier traffic on the mainline might have reduced the Grants Pass-Portland rate, or that it was simpler to weigh the freight after it was loaded. The editors appear to have believed that once there was prepayment on unweighed freight, adjustments for weight was unfair.

The paper likewise editorialized against monopolies and trusts and endeavored to explain that corporate combinations victimized merchants just as much as they did farmers. Nevertheless it still ran advertisements for W. I. Vawter's Southern Oregon Bank on the same front pages that advocated banking reform. As election day approached, a picture of James B. Weaver, popularly known as "The General" because of his military background, appeared in each issue, while the editor, Felix G. Kertson, endorsed Weaver's candidacy with the assurance that he was "a man who always advocated the cause of the oppressed and the



S. M. Nealon, Table Rock postmaster, was nominated by Jackson County Populists for the state legislature. SOHS #3649

right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."³ Cribbing "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" from the Declaration of Independence was typical of Populists, who frequently couched their appeals in patriotic or evangelistic language. They also were not immune from the politician's tendency toward exaggeration. Referring to Democratic presidential candidate Grover Cleveland's support for the gold standard, letter writer J. F. Wisner, a resident of Kubli in the Applegate Valley, asserted in the *Mail:* "We have had thirty years of Republican rule and poor old Democracy is flocking to her lustful arms. It has driven us to starvation. Give us a change."

To effect that change, Jackson County's Populists met in convention on March 10, 1892, in Central Point. They endorsed Holt of Phoenix as their preferred candidate for Congress; and they nominated S. M. Nealon, a Connecticut-born Union Army veteran, farmer, and Table Rock postmaster, and Breese, a German immigrant, to be candidates for the state legislature. Breese, a former Greenback Party member whose parents lost their farm and savings in the Panic of 1873, declared that a vote for a Democrat or Republican was "throwing your vote away." That opinion was so common among Populists that the county convention resolved unanimously to erase the names of any Republicans or Democrats from the

ballot just as soon as they entered the polling booth. Also at the convention was adopted a resolution advocating state control of the liquor business. A collection of \$19.50 was taken to apply to the expenses of the county delegation to the state nominating convention in Oregon City. At the state convention, Holt stepped aside as the party's congressional candidate in favor of M. V. Rork, though he was elected second vice president of the state party and was nominated to be a candidate for presidential elector. Under the slogan "An Injury to One is the Concern of All," the state party platform echoed the national one and additionally registered opposition to a Nicaraguan Canal unless it was owned and operated by the government at cost. They also advocated that Oregon's textbooks be published by the state.

opulism throughout the state received a boost when Governor Sylvester Pennoyer, a Democrat, converted to the People's Party, comparing Oregon's farmers to the Minute Men of the American Revolution.⁴ To publicize the governor's conversion locally, the Jackson County Populists sponsored a picnic on the Nealon farm near Table Rock, with piano and glee club entertainment heralding the reading of a letter from the governor explaining his switch.

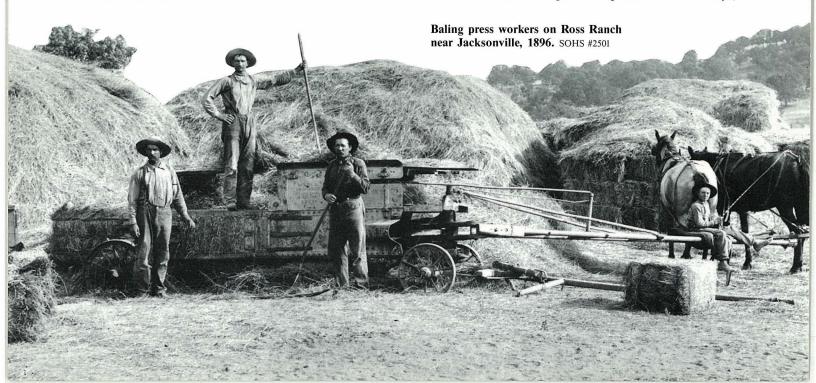
Such rallies increased in frequency as the election approached, the most colorful one being in Medford, where forty-three young women from throughout the county paraded through town on horseback, each carrying an American flag to symbolize the forty-three states of the union. But the most dramatic occasion was when The General himself arrived. Even raw, blustery weather could not diminish the enthusiasm of the throng that gathered in a Grants Pass park on the morning of May 18 to hear their champion speak. Some even arrived the day before and camped by their wagons so they would not miss any of his ten o'clock address.

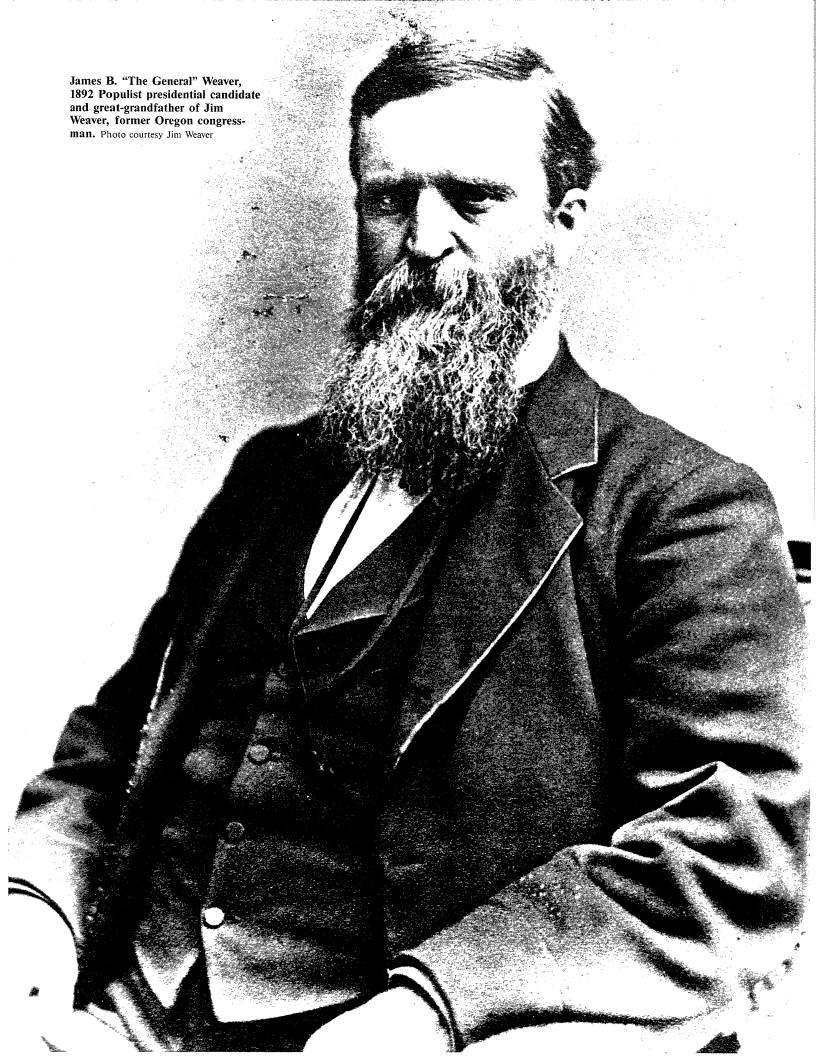
Before The General's speech, a choir sang labor songs, and an announcement that a local Republican would offer a rebuttal stirred the crowd. In his speech, Weaver assailed the two major parties which, he said, were controlled by their "unconscionable master—Wall Street." At the conclusion of this talk, people swarmed to shake his hand. T. Syson Curdy, a local Populist, described the address: "Such pathos, such rhetoric, such unanswerable logic has never held a crowd so spellbound since the days of Patrick Henry." The scheduled Republican refutation failed to

A local Populist described The General's address: "Such pathos, such rhetoric, such unanswerable logic has never held a crowd so spellbound since the days of Patrick Henry."

materialize because the respondent did not want to inconvenience the crowd by asking listeners to remain in the cool weather any longer.

There was no contradiction in 1892 when Americans invoked appeals to patriotic images of Minute Men, the Declaration of Independence, and Patrick Henry while attacking Wall Street and advocating government ownership of railroads and telegraphs. Once the Bolsheviks established a socialist state in Russia, Populist programs were associated with a hostile foreign ideology; but in 1892 such talk was homegrown American. Investing patriotic songs with new lyrics was another Populist tactic to generate enthusiasm. They rewrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" as "The Battle Hymn of Labor," and Governor Pennoyer's conversion to Populism was announced after the glee club performed "Goodbye,





My Lover, Goodbye" as "Goodbye, Old Parties, Goodbye." When The General reappeared to campaign in southern Oregon three months later, he and Mary Lease stepped down from their whistle-stopping train in Ashland to the stirring strains of a rousing Union Army song, "Marching Through Georgia," revised and played by a local band as "Weaver and Field." (James Field of Virginia was the Populist vice presidential candidate.)

With his shock of hair, his full set of whiskers, and his basso profundo voice, The General projected a patriarchal image that reassured rural Americans, and he reassured them further with the well-known biblical and patriotic allusions that he wove into his addresses, delivered with the familiar cadences of an evangelist. In his Grants Pass speech discussing "The question which is shaking this republic from center to sea," he asked rhetorically, "What was the underlying philosophy which culminated in the nomination of Abraham Lincoln in 1860?"

He answered his own question. "The great battle for the freedom of labor." In 1892 most southern Oregonians would have agreed with that. He continued, declaring that the Civil War persisted in a new form, for

It did not conclude with the freedom of the black man, but continues with the moneyed power which began where slave power lost, and with which the great battle of labor has yet to be fought.

Having finessed Lincoln from the Republican Party and identified him with the People's Party, the Populist candidate then associated labor's opponents

PROFILE OF THE 1892 ELECTION IN SOUTHERN OREGON

County	Populists			Democrats		Republicans	
	Votes	070	*	Votes	070	Votes	070
Jackson	1,474	49.83	51.56	474	16.02	959	32.42
Douglas	1,290	40.26	41.92	532	16.60	1,329	41.48
Coos	1,077	53.45	55.24	299	14.84	603	29.93
Josephine	701	46.61	47.81	283	18.82	502	33.38
Lake	406	53.85	53.98	110	14.59	237	31.43
Klamath	392	52.62	53.56	76	10.20	270	36.24
Curry	120	30.15	31.41	90	22.61	183	45.98
*Indicates the percentage of the combined Populists-Prohibitionist vote.							

It is noteworthy that like the farming communities of southern Oregon, counties along the Columbia in northeastern Oregon, the other farming region farthest removed from the state's urban center, Multnomah County, also returned decisive Populist votes.

						- op amor	
Umatilla	1,886	49.49	51.46	398	10.44	1,452	38.1
Union	1,729	51.49	52.49	586	17.45	1,012	30.14
Wallowa	549	59.74	61.04	81	8.81	277	30.14

Though the Republicans carried pluralities in three of the state's most populous counties, Populists won sizeable blocks of votes, outpolling the Democrats in all, and winning pluralities in Linn and Clackamas.

6,507	38.03	38.03	2,040	11.92	8,041	47.00
2,653	38.88	43.19	898	13.16	2,979	43.65
2,348	48.33	52.20	633	13.03	1,689	34.77
1,866	39.72	41.81	832	17.71	1,902	40.49
2,049	44.02	46.90	657	14.11	1,815	38.99
	2,653 2,348 1,866	2,653 38.88 2,348 48.33 1,866 39.72	2,653 38.88 43.19 2,348 48.33 52.20 1,866 39.72 41.81	2,653 38.88 43.19 898 2,348 48.33 52.20 633 1,866 39.72 41.81 832	2,653 38.88 43.19 898 13.16 2,348 48.33 52.20 633 13.03 1,866 39.72 41.81 832 17.71	6,507 38.03 38.03 2,040 11.92 8,041 2,653 38.88 43.19 898 13.16 2,979 2,348 48.33 52.20 633 13.03 1,689 1,866 39.72 41.81 832 17.71 1,902 2,049 44.02 46.90 657 14.11 1,815

with slaveholders, asserting that "Labor produces all the wealth of the earth."

He cited the recent death of Cornelius Vanderbilt to demonstrate his own philosophy. After assuring his listeners that he bore Vanderbilt no personal animosity, he said, "I want all men to be rich if they get rich honestly. He should eat his bread in the sweat of his own face. I do not like any man who insists that it is his right to eat his bread in the sweat from some other man's face." The image was Lincoln's, drawn from the biblical book of Genesis, though in 1861

"I want all men to be rich if they get rich honestly. I do not like any man who insists that it is his right to eat his bread in the sweat from some other man's face."

The Emancipator delivered it with more oratorical grace than The General did in 1892.

Weaver asked the audience to imagine workers saving a dollar a day, an impressive accomplishment at that time. Then, he said, suppose also that Adam, the first worker, had saved the amount from the first day until the present. Since the world was 6,000 years old (it was widely believed in 1892), Adam would have managed to save \$2,100,000. Compare that with Vanderbilt, he said, who amassed \$220,000,000 in thirty years. Not content with that contrast, Weaver registered a religious aside saying that scientists were trying to "pry off the Rock of Ages" with research that concluded that human life may have existed on earth for 60,000 years. Even if that were so and one saved a dollar a day, Vanderbilt nevertheless still, Weaver maintained, "could have bought him out and had a million dollars to buy a legislature." Economic justice and the battle of labor would be won, he concluded, when the gold standard and corporate monopoly were replaced. In conclusion he offered a parable that was familiar to nineteenth-century farmers:

Suppose my friend here has an old buggy with axles sprung and spokes loose and the boards in the bottom of the bed broken and the torn flaps flying in the breeze. Suppose he could change drivers, would that help the buggy?

And that's what you've been doing, my friends. You have said the buggy is all right, but she won't track. It's not a change of drivers wanted, but a new vehicle.

The General detrained in Medford only long enough to shake hands at the depot with well-wishers, for no speech was scheduled there. Nevertheless, by the time he had crossed the state his voice was faltering, but his stand-in, Mary Lease, was an exceptional orator herself. In Portland, one observer said, she "had women crying and men yelling enough to split their throats." To raise money she invited Portlanders

to use her as a target for coins, and one, of undisclosed value, she caught, not by design, down the front of her dress.

hile Oregon Populists may not have been impressive fund raisers, they garnered votes impressively. Weaver received more than a million popular votes across the United States, with 35,818 coming from Oregon.⁵ He defeated the national winner, Grover Cleveland, throughout the state by more than 20,000, and incumbent Benjamin Harrison edged him statewide by the razor-thin margin of only 149. Ten percent of the 2,313 votes cast for the single-issue candidate for the Prohibitionist Party, whose temperance stand many Populists shared, would have been sufficient to have confirmed the repudiation of the traditional political parties by a formal People's Party majority, awarding all of the state's electoral votes to Weaver.

The election of 1892 was a vivid demonstration of voter dissatisfaction, and proportionally nowhere were voters more dissatisfied than in southern Oregon. A major party candidate outpolled Weaver only in Douglas and Curry counties, though only with pluralities, not majorities. Weaver beat Cleveland in both those counties, and, with the Prohibitionist vote, would have beaten Harrison in Douglas. Weaver won majorities in Coos, Klamath, and Lake counties and was only five votes short of a majority in Jackson, which he won by a decisive plurality. A mere ten percent of the Prohibitionist vote would have assured Weaver a majority in Jackson. He won a plurality in Josephine. Southern Oregon definitely registered its

disapprobation. Unless the traditional parties responded to the voters' message, the Democrats would have been gored fatally statewide and the Republicans rendered a minority.

America's major parties historically swallow the appealing philosophies advanced by third parties. In 1896 the Democrats formally embraced the Populists' ideals and supplanted James B. Weaver with William Jennings Bryan as the foremost proponent of the bimetallic replacement of the gold standard. "You shall not press down on labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold," Bryan intoned at the 1896 Democratic nominating convention, evoking cadences and images that were as familiar and reassuring to rural Americans as Weaver's. Then, within a decade, Theodore Roosevelt vigorously thrust the Populist ideology into the Republican Party mainstream. By World War I the graduated income tax, the Federal Reserve system, the secret ballot, the direct election of senators, and the eight-hour day for workers were no longer the rants of hicks and havseeds, but political realities. Where southern Oregon led, America followed.

Oregon, meanwhile, served as the model for progressive reform at the state level, leading the way to the direct democracy processes of initiative and referendum, recall elections, nomination of party political candidates by primary elections, the secret ballot and the state presentation of political campaign information through the voter's pamphlet. And, as Jackson County's Populists had advocated in 1892, the state assumed control over liquor sales. "The Oregon System" became synonymous with reform. Once



Populism's programs generally became acceptable to the voting public, they were relabeled "progressivism" and their initial successes obscured. In 1965 University of Oregon professor Earl Pomeroy wrote, "Throughout the Pacific slope, Populism became distinctively strong in the more densely populated areas." Such an assertion discounts the record, for voting statistics from 1892 confirm that in Oregon, Populism was distinctly strong in rural areas first. If voters throughout the United States followed where Oregon led, Oregon followed where its southern and northeastern counties led.

On the local level, the Medford Mail Tribune, the descendant of the Populist Southern Oregon Mail, won a Pulitzer Prize by crusading in the Populist tradition for honest and responsible local government. Perhaps Populism's final visible legacy in southern Oregon was the election of Weaver's great-grandson, Jim Weaver, to the U.S. Congress. And though the voters of southern Oregon generally would not view themselves as being on the cutting edge of political change, a century ago they were the front ranks of a state and national movement.

ENDNOTES

1. James Baird Weaver, A Call to Action: An Interpretation of the Great Uprising, Its Source and Causes (Des Moines, 1892). The extracts from the speeches cited in this article are drawn from this source.

2. References to local Populists and their activities are drawn from the various 1892 issues of *The Southern Oregon Mail*.

3. John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers; Alliance and People's Party* (Lincoln, 1931). This was the standard scholarly monograph on Populism for more than a generation. For a survey of subsequent scholarship consult Gene Clanton, *Populism: The Humane Preference in America* (Boston, 1991). Norman Pollack examines Populist ideology in *The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought* (Cambridge, 1962). Numerous studies of Populism in various states

have been published, but despite their vitality and success in Oregon, no study of Oregon's is among these new monographs. Available is a dated and superficial master's thesis by Marion Harrington, *The Populist Movement in Oregon*, University of Oregon, 1935.

4. Duman Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography, XIV*, 445; Robert Sobel and John Raimo, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the Governors of the United States, 1789–1978, III* (Westport, 1978), 1267–68. Pennoyer proved himself to be something of a maverick long before he bolted the Democratic party. When advised that his intemperate anti-Chinese remarks might embarrass President Grover Cleveland and Sino-American concord he

And though the voters of southern Oregon generally would not view themselves as being on the cutting edge of political change, a century ago they were the front ranks of a state and national movement.

responded that the president should confine his activities to Washington, D.C., and not intrude into the affairs of Oregon. When the president proclaimed Thanksgiving to be a national holiday, the governor declared it to be an Oregon holiday on a different day.

5. Burton W. Onstine, *Oregon Votes: 1858–1972; Election Returns by County for U.S. President, U.S. Senator, Governor, and U.S. Representative* (Portland, 1973).

6. Wayne Andrews, ed., Concise Dictionary of American History (New York, 1962), 700.

7. Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada (New York, 1965), 176

Jay Mullen is an American history professor at Southern Oregon State College in Ashland.





SOHS #59.73

FROM THE COLLECTION

by Steve M. Wyatt

PILLOW TALK

Politics makes strange bedfellows—especially on this pillow cover, which features campaign ribbons from the presidential race of 1896. Among the feather-stitched silk and velvet pieces in its crazy-quilt pattern are campaign ribbons for the Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan and the Republican ticket of William McKinley/Garret Hobart. This was perhaps one of the most exciting presidential races in history. It was a face-off between the common man represented by Bryan and big business, which backed McKinley. The central issue of debate was money.

The slogan "16 to 1" used by Bryan appears along with his picture on the skillfully quilted ribbon. Bryan, noted for his rousing speeches, unrelentingly campaigned in twenty-seven states, speaking more than 600 times to advocate limited coinage of silver and gold at a ratio of sixteen to one. McKinley, who refused to leave his invalid wife for long campaign tours, stood on his front porch and gave brief, well-rehearsed talks advocating unlimited coinage of silver. On election day the McKinley/Hobart ticket won by more than 600,000 votes.

This unique reminder of the 1896 election was quilted by Pernita Jane Hedren. Laura Olsen donated this fine piece of quilting to the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1959.

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.

Reflections on the Past

by Dr. Joseph Cox

GRAVEYARD OF POLITICAL AMBITION

In the excitement of a presidential campaign wherein the candidates might square off over real issues rather than sound bites, I began ruminating about the second office in the land.

Clearly, the Founders had no anticipation that political parties as we know them, or primaries, or political action committees, etc. would exist—let alone become as institutionalized as they are. The formal political framework that has evolved was the furthest thing from their minds.

The vice presidency was, purely and simply, created to ensure a stand-in or a surrogate, and, given the eighteenth century's medical scourges, a smooth succession if needed. The office had its origins in the British colonial experience—a 169-year gestation period wherein most of our political, social, and economic institutions took root.

When it came time to create a new government out of the ashes of the revolution in 1776, the level of hostility to central government was so high that in the Articles of Confederation no chief executive was provided for, lest it become too powerful.

The counteraction to this radical surge leftward was our present governmental framework—the Constitution of 1787. An executive obviously was needed, and when establishing the presidency, a lieutenant position also was created, generating an institution usually considered to be the end of the line—frequently a place to safely stow a rival, i.e., Teddy Roosevelt with McKinley, Johnson with Kennedy.

Many of those who have held the post presiding in oblivion over the Senate range from also-rans to downright hacks. Thank heavens, though, with a few notable exceptions—Andrew Johnson in 1865 and Chester A. Arthur in 1881—we have had good men in place when tragedy struck down a president. There have been several cases in which the vice president arguably proved to be a more effective president than the man he succeeded—Calvin Coolidge, for example.

Citizens of the twentieth century have grown more anxious about the vice presidency—with good reason. Since 1900, five vice presidents have succeeded:

- Theodore Roosevelt (McKinley was assassinated);
- Calvin Coolidge (Harding died of an embolism);
- Harry Truman (Franklin D. Roosevelt died from a cerebral hemorrhage);
- Lyndon B. Johnson (Kennedy was assassinated);
- Gerald Ford (Nixon resigned).



Joseph Cox is president of Southern Oregon State College.

Life in the Past Lane by Brad Linder

HANLEY FARMSTEAD HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

The Hanley Farmstead, or the Willows, as it is sometimes called, is a thirty-seven-acre farm property owned by the Southern Oregon Historical Society since 1981, when Mary Hanley died and donated the land, structures and historical collections. There are ten buildings on the property, including a house, two barns, a water tower, and various outbuildings—all needing varying amounts of maintenance, restoration or development. Much work has been done in stabilizing and maintaining the structures in





Architectural drawings were prepared for a historic structures report on the Hanley farmstead, shown above in 1985. Photo by Natalie Brown



the past, but to do a thorough job a special plan must be completed—a historic structures report.

The historic structures report will document and analyze all of the buildings' initial construction and subsequent alterations through historical, physical, oral, and pictorial evidence. One of the barns on the property was moved about 300 yards southwest of its original

location; this study will document such alterations. The current state of the buildings' architectural materials and structural stability will be investigated. Layers of paint and wallpaper will be sampled, and floors and stairs will be scrutinized for possible failure under visitor loads.

After the basic documentation has been completed, recommenda-

tions will be made on appropriate historic preservation treatment and priorities for work projects, and cost estimates will be given. A feasibility study completed last year outlined several ways the Hanley farm could complement the Society's programs—all of them exciting options for this valuable historic resouce in southern Oregon.

24

ODDS AND ENDS OF HISTORY

That's fairly interesting...

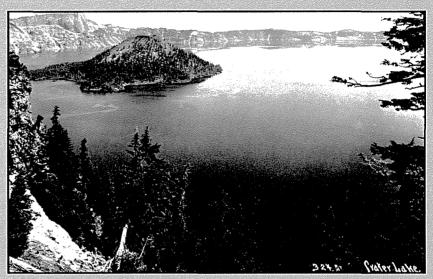
Compiled by Samuel J. Wegner

July 1854: A new political party is formed in Michigan with the announcement that: "In view of the necessity of battling for the first principles of republican government and against the schemes of aristocracy, the most revolting and oppressive with which the earth was ever cursed, or men debased, we will cooperate and be known as Republicans."



Jacksonville Jubilee. SOHS #13025

Reprinted from The Jacksonville Miner of August 19, 1932: "Where else in this world can one find such a town so ideally suited for a Gold Rush Jubilee? California, with all her glamor and publicity, cannot present a city as well located as Jacksonville. Under our very business houses lies a network of drifts and tunnels that would shame the sewers of Paris, and every back yard boasts a gold mine. Where else do gardens fall from sight, saloons rise in mute monument to a more colorful day, and so many of the real oldtimers, whose yesterday was a chapter from immortal history, still reside? Yes, sir! a Gold Rush Jubilee is a 'natural' in Jacksonville."2



Crater Lake. SOHS #12942

"The water level of Crater Lake has dropped 10 feet, 4 inches from the bench mark set in the rock in 1908 by the United States geological survey. . . . It is believed that this variation is due to evaporation, from a succession of dry seasons."

"WASHINGTON, Oct. 25—(AP)—President Hoover said today the fundamental business structure of the country is on a very sound basis." 4—October 25, 1929, four days before Black Friday and the start of the Great Depression.

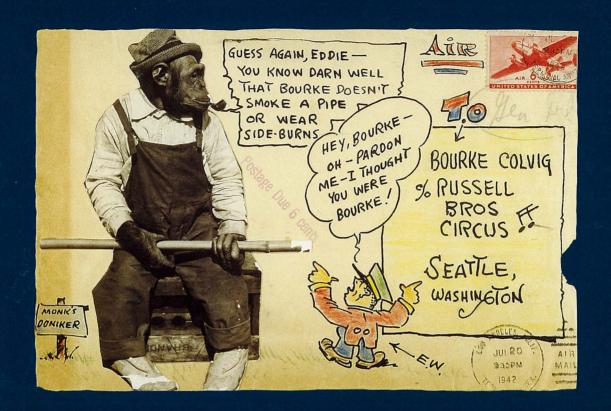
The first mail plane landed in Medford on August 15, 1926, at Newell Barber Field. Until 1927 "Medford was the only regular air mail post in the state of Oregon." 5

"... nothing has spread socialistic feeling more than the use of the automobile ... a picture of the arrogance of wealth."

General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker of Civil War fame was stationed in Oregon after the Mexican-American War and was responsible for construction of a military road from Scottsburg to Camp Stewart in Jackson County.⁷

ENDNOTES

- 1. McPherson, James M., Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 126
- 2. Your Invitation to Historical Jacksonville and the Rogue River Valley, Jacksonville Gold Rush Jubilee, August 2 and 3, 1952.
- 3. Medford Mail Tribune, September 1, 1929, 5.
- 4. Medford Mail Tribune, October 25, 1929, 1.
- 5. Tucker, William Pierce, *The History of Jackson County Oregon*, master of arts thesis (Seattle: University of Washington, 1931), 84.
- 6. Flexner, Stuart Berg, I Hear America Talking: An Illustrated History of American Words and Phrases (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 75.
- 7. Corning, Howard McKinley, editor. Dictionary of Oregon History: Compiled for the Research Files of the Former Oregon Writers' Project with Much Added Material (Portland, Oregon: Binford & Mord Publishing, 1989), 118.





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