

\$4.95

TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

JANUARY
FEBRUARY 1993

KKK THE
LAN
IN OREGON

PIONEER CHINESE

HOPE AND
HEARTACHE

GOLDEN LAND
GUM SAN

AMERICAN
CRAFTS

The
Magazine
of the
Southern
Oregon
Historical
Society



Fifty-four Years Ago



Two No. 2 Family boxes of Bear Creek Corporation's Royal Riviera pears arrived in the Philippines at a record cost of \$1.77 per pear. Photo courtesy Bear Creek Corporation Archives

by William Alley

Ever since Bear Creek Corporation founders Harry and David Rosenberg mailed their first catalog in 1934, their gift boxes have traveled to the four corners of the globe. The boxes gained so much popularity, in fact, they established Bear Creek as the leading shipper of fine food and fruit packages.

In promoting their gift boxes in the fall of 1938, the Rosenberg brothers described how their Royal Riviera pears were served in the finest hotels in Europe for more than fifty cents a piece. "Our Royal Riviera Pears went to other distinguished tables too — to the kings and queens and first families of Europe," touted their 1938 catalog. "We got a great kick out of wrapping big, luscious,

blushing Royal Riviera Pears in tissue and knowing they were going to be served on golden plates and eaten with golden spoons!"

That December the Rosenbergs (who during World War II changed their Jewish last name to Holmes) received an order that many believed established a new record for the price of pears. The order was for two No. 2 Family boxes of Royal Riviera pears, each containing twenty-four pieces of fruit. Their destination: Manila, Philippines Islands, via Pan Am Clipper. With the Clipper's shipping charges added to the purchase price of the gift boxes, the total cost came to a whopping \$85 — making each pear worth a record \$1.77 each.

William Alley is an archivist and historian living in Medford.



Board of Trustees

James Kuntz, Medford, *President*
 Marjorie Nichols, Ashland, *First Vice President*
 Jean Smith, Central Point, *Second Vice President*
 Cindy Faubion, Gold Hill, *Secretary*
 Vern Arnold, Medford, *Treasurer*
 Judith Barr, Medford
 Anne Billeter, Medford
 Gary Breeden, Medford
 Jon Deason, Medford
 Edmund Dews, Ashland
 Mary Foster, Medford
 Gerald Latham, Medford
 Janie Stewart, Talent
 Dr. Gary H. Wheeler, Medford
 Samuel Whitford, Medford

Administrative Staff

Samuel J. Wegner, *Executive Director*
 Brad Linder, *Historic Resources Director*
 Joy B. Dunn, *Programs Director*
 Maureen Smith, *Finance Director*
 Janice S. Dole, *Development Director*
 Susan Cox-Smith, *Membership Coordinator*
 Stacey Williams, *Public Relations Coordinator*

TABLE ROCK SENTINEL

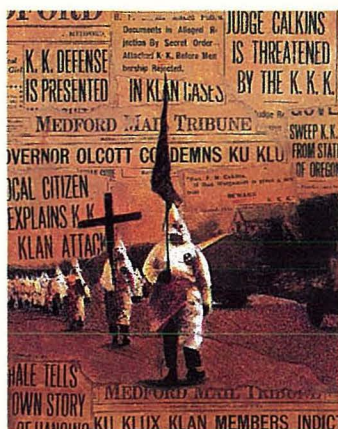
Natalie Brown, *Head of Communications Services*
 Catherine Noah, *Editor*
 Matt Strieby, *Photographer*

The **Table Rock Sentinel** is published bimonthly by the Southern Oregon Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Other benefits include *ArtiFACTS*, a monthly newsletter; discounts at the Society's History Store; and invitations to programs and special events throughout the year. Administrative and membership offices are at the Southern Oregon History Center, 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501-5926. Current copies of the *Sentinel* are available for \$4.95 each; back issues are \$5.95 each.

POSTMASTER: Please send Change of Address (form 3579) to Southern Oregon Historical Society, 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501-5926.

Copyright ©1993 by Southern Oregon Historical Society. ISSN #0732-0523. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be printed without written permission from the Society.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Address all editorial communications to **Table Rock Sentinel, 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501-5926**. We are happy to consider queries and contributions. All material must be identified with the sender's name and address, and will be returned with sufficient postage. Care is taken with contributions, but we are not responsible for damage or loss. The Society disclaims any responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in signed contributions.



2



12



20

FEATURES

2 Politics and the Klan: Jackson County's Struggle with Fear and Bigotry *by Jeff LaLande*

In the 1920s, Jackson County was embroiled in a political conflict whose players included the Ku Klux Klan, two newspapermen and a handful of political officials.

11 Land of Hope and Heartache *by Catherine Noah*

To the Chinese in the mid-1800s, the American West was *Gum San*, Land of the Golden Mountain. What they discovered once they arrived, however, was prejudice and widespread violence.

12 Remembering Gum San *A photo essay by Barry Peril*

Northwest photographer Barry Peril captures the *Gum San* of today as part of a traveling exhibit by the High Desert Museum chronicling the Chinese experience in the American West.

20 American Crafts

Congress has dedicated 1993 to the American craft as a tribute to the country's diverse historic and ethnic hand-worked traditions.

DEPARTMENTS

Fifty-four Years Ago (inside front cover)

24 From the Collection

24 Reflections on the Past

Front cover: Ancestral figure and altar in Gee How Oak Tin temple in Portland. Photo by Barry Peril

Back cover: Chinese in nineteenth-century Jacksonville light joss sticks in a traditional celebration of the new year. Southern Oregon Historical Society #1505

ST. JOHN

MEDFORD,

by
pital
Girl

Five
at the
M's.

Weather
light and Sunday fair,
yesterday 79-4
today 45

Seventeenth Year
Medford Oregon

K. K. DEFENSE
IS PRESENTED

B. F. ... makes Pub.M
Documents in Alleged Re-
jection By Secret Order-
Attacked K. K. Before Mem-
bership Rejected.

IN KLAN CASES

JUDGE CALKINS
IS THREATENED
BY THE K. K.

MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE

MEDFORD, OREGON, SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1922

GOVERNOR OLCOTT CONDEMNS KU KLU

LOCAL CITIZEN
EXPLAINS K K
KLAN ATTACK

INDIAN GUIDE

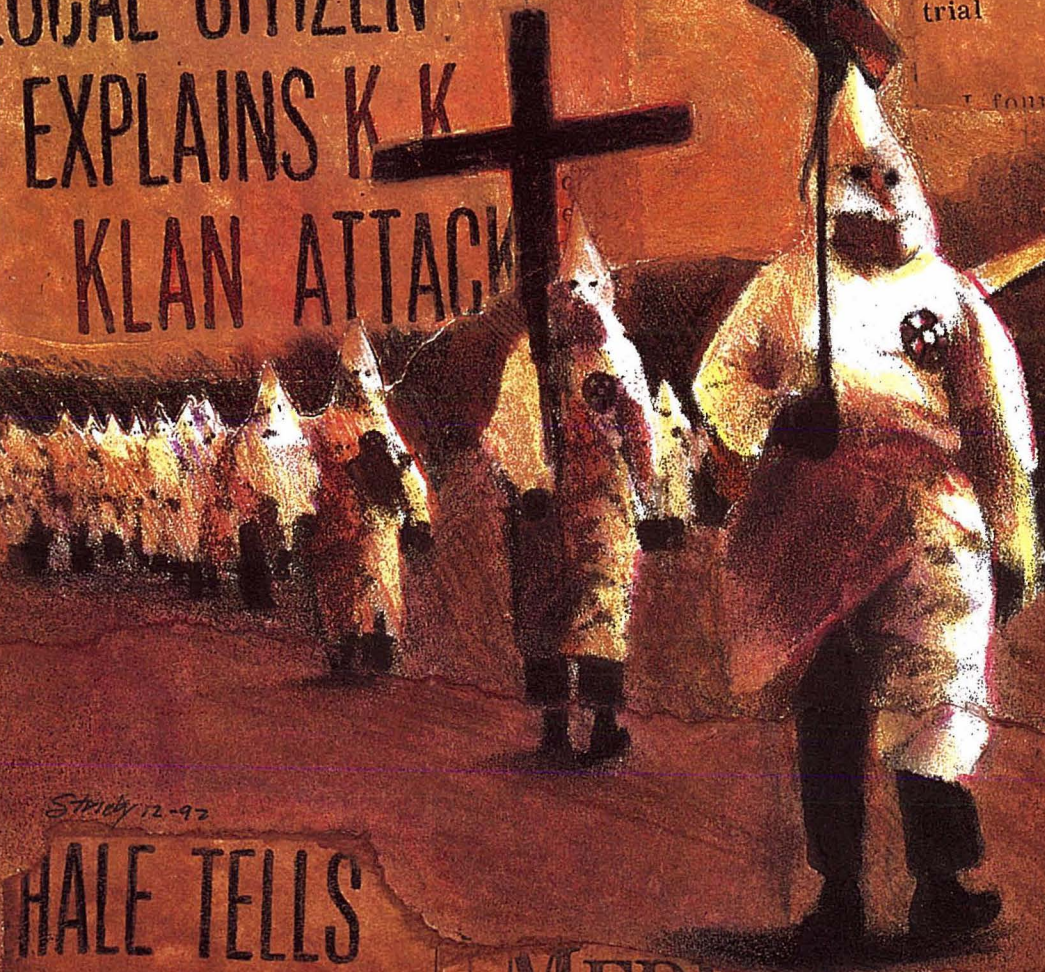
Bobby ... lot

"Hon. F. M. Calkins,
If Dud Wolgamott is given a new
trial

BEWARE

K. K. K.

I found this notice under my...



HALE TELLS
OWN STORY
OF HANGING

MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE

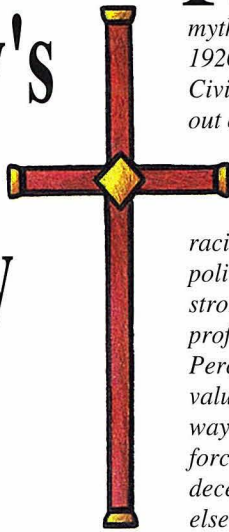
MEDFORD, OREGON, THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1922

KU KLUX KLAN MEMBERS IND

POLITICS and the KLAN

Jackson County's struggle with fear and bigotry

by Jeff LaLande



Many Sentinel readers are aware that, during the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan was a force to be reckoned with in southern Oregon. The reasons for the Klan's popularity here, however, have become shrouded in myth and misunderstanding. People often confuse the Klan of the 1920s with either its predecessor, the original Klan of the post-Civil War South, or its successor, the present-day Klan that grew out of hostility toward the Southern civil rights movement. Both emphasized white supremacy and openly used violence as a weapon of terror.

In contrast, the Klan of the 1920s — although it, too, was racist and soon became tinged with violence — had a broader political agenda and a much wider geographic base. It was strongest in the West and Mid-West; it attracted merchants and professionals in towns and cities alike. Under the banner of "100 Percent Americanism" and the pretense of "upholding moral values," it became the self-proclaimed protector of a traditional way of life against the dark designs of "foreign" or "immoral" forces. It typically appealed to people who considered themselves decent, hard-working, "real" Americans. In Oregon, as elsewhere, the Klan of the 1920s focused on what was then considered a threatening minority, Roman Catholics. In the face of a national controversy, the Oregon Klan helped enact a state initiative that abolished parochial schools.

Although its membership included many sincere if misguided people, the Klan's leaders and political allies tended to be opportunists, men who skillfully and cynically used fear and bigotry in order to gain political power. Jackson County was just one of many places where this political struggle was played out during the 1920s.

By the summer of 1921, Robert W. Ruhl, as owner and editor of the daily *Medford Mail Tribune*, was an influential voice in Jackson County affairs. Having arrived in southern Oregon ten years before, at the height of the Rogue River valley's orchard boom, he had witnessed a period of tremendous economic growth prior to the world war. Now he looked confidently toward a return of boom times in a July 27 editorial: "As the 'biggest little city' on the Pacific Coast . . . Medford [has] . . . no idle millionaires, no civic rivalries, no problems, no militarism, nothing but trout fishing, fruit picking, and [it is] a general Twentieth Century Paradise. . . . Welcome gentlemen. The city of Destiny awaits you!"

The forty-year-old Harvard graduate was proud of his adopted hometown. A progressive Republican who stressed his paper's independent, nonpartisan stand on most issues, Ruhl could not resist taking an editorial jab at Portland, "the Rose City, a transplanted Back Bay, the mecca of bond clippers and moss covered conservatives." Two weeks prior, he had commented on the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan there. Medford, in happy contrast, was a place where "those finer human feelings, which aspire to peace on earth, good will to man, flourish."¹

Apparently unaware that in fact Medford was the first Oregon outpost of the Invisible Empire of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Ruhl was mistaken in his self-assurance, though he quickly became the spearhead of opposition to the group. Within a few months, the KKK dominated politics in his community. The Klan's political program, and the vigilante actions attributed to it, soon attracted an unwanted form of publicity: the national magazine *Outlook*, for example, discussed "southern Oregon outrages" in a feature story called "The Ku-Kluxing of Oregon." State and local elections in 1922 set off, in Ruhl's words, "the bitterest political campaign in the history of

Jackson County."²

In southern Oregon, and throughout much of the nation, the Klan won support by appeals to ethnic and religious nativism, to traditional moral values, even to economic discontent. Questions remain, however. What local factors contributed to the Klan's becoming such a dominating force during Jackson County's vituperative 1922 elections? For example, how did inflamed newspaper rhetoric function in this particular setting? How did the county's political environment fuel the Klan's rise? If truly "all politics is local politics," might certain endemic political conditions explain the course of the Klan's development in Jackson County?

Settled by farmers and miners in the early 1850s, Jackson County was the most populous and wealthy section of southern Oregon. Gold mining, grain farming, and small-scale logging dominated the economy until the mid-1880s, when the railroad arrived. The linkage to national markets provided by the Southern Pacific Railroad attracted both substantial investment and a wave of immigrants, particularly to the new railroad town of Medford. Another influx came shortly after 1900, when irrigation projects enabled intensive agriculture, primarily fruit orchards, to replace the old wheat and livestock operations of the early settlers. The Rogue Valley's winter pear, successfully marketed as a luxury food item, sold well on the East Coast and in Europe. "Orchard barons" (many of them young Ivy League graduates from East Coast families), professionals, and merchants helped to form a new, cosmopolitan elite living in and around Medford. Many newcomers, however, were of far more modest means: small businessmen and wage earners in Medford and nearby towns, owners of small orchards, part-time farmers who settled on inexpensive property in the valley's rural areas. Between 1900 and 1910, Jackson County's population increased by almost 90 percent to more than 25,000 people. However, the orchard boom of 1905-12 led to overplanting and overspeculation, and it ended with a 20-percent loss in population between 1910 and 1920.

By the early 1920s, Jackson County seemed blessed with a sense of the inevitable return of prosperity. The war was over. The international market for winter pears seemed to be regaining strength. Newcomers, some of them attracted by jobs in Medford's new large-capacity sawmill, were again pouring into the Rogue River valley. Between the end of the war and the onset of the Great Depression, the county experienced a 64-percent surge in population, most of it concentrated in and around Medford, which grew during this period to more than 11,000 people.

Despite the optimism of local boosters, however, serious economic and social problems existed. The postwar economic slump, particularly the nationwide agricultural depression, slowed the hoped-for recovery. Jacksonville's main bank



failed in 1921, which led to a controversial grand-jury probe and much blame all around. Prohibition, enacted by Oregonians in 1914, had resulted in open war between law enforcement agents and moonshiners in the thinly settled fringes of the Rogue Valley by 1920-21; newspapers reported a rising number of raids, drunken brawls, and shootings in the context of a breakdown of law and order in the county.³

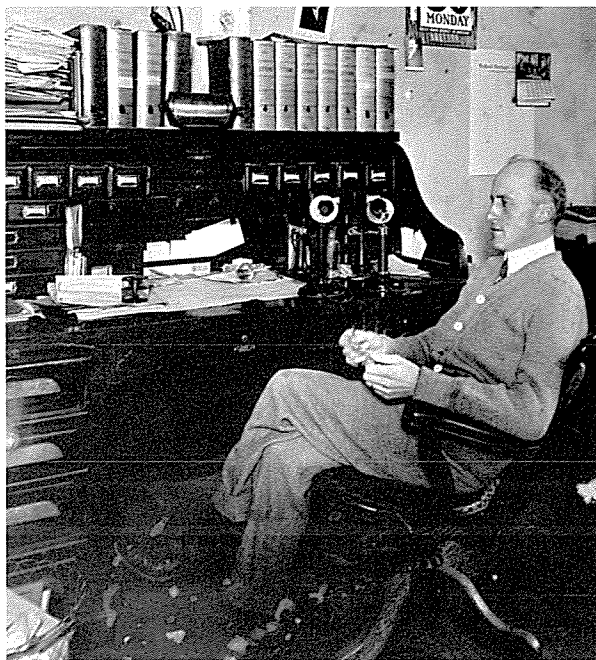
In Medford, a steady influx of ambitious attorneys and other professionals contributed to an increasingly factional political climate. In 1917 the city had almost defaulted on its bonds and narrowly avoided bankruptcy; a blue-ribbon citizens' committee steered the city to fiscal solvency but left ill will in its wake. Budgetary controversies, as reported in the press, burgeoned in the city and county during 1921-22. They ranged from prospective street-paving costs to the salaries of county employees. One political and economic issue became paramount, however: water.

The Rogue River valley is the most arid section of Oregon west of the Cascade Range. Medford's continued prosperity depended on securing an abundant supply of domestic water. By 1921 the existing water source at Fish Lake, high in the Cascades, was taxed to the limit. Unflattering comments in the Portland press about Medford's water quality (which was adversely affected by the slow decay of fallen trees in the reservoir) unsettled the community's self-image. In addition, the city shared water rights to Fish Lake with the Rogue River Valley Canal Company and the Medford Irrigation District, both of which competed for water in order to serve thirsty orchards outside town. Severe drought and water rationing during the summer of 1921 drove angry orchardists and city residents to hold mass meetings to protest water policy. Yet proposals for development of a new water source, Big Butte Springs, created additional divisiveness. Major capital investment was required, and water rights were in legal dispute. South of town, the newly established Talent Irrigation District, though not competing with Medford area water users, also grappled with water-rights problems of equal concern. During the long hot summer of 1921, Jackson County encountered the first serious limits to its growth.⁴

Sometime that year, the Ku Klux Klan appeared quietly in Jackson County and began relatively covert activity. Actual membership is unknown. One scholar estimates that the Medford area had 600 klansmen. A mid-1922 charter-granting ceremony in Roseburg drew approximately 2,000 masked klansmen "from throughout southern Oregon." The historian Kenneth T. Jackson found the Klan of midwestern and western cities composed mainly of lower middle-class men; few members possessed "wealth, education, or professional position." Although many of its members may have fit this social profile, the Jackson County Klan included a number of wealthier urban residents, among them the Medford orchardist Raymond Reter (who soon quit the organization and denounced it publicly) and a "score of reputable business and professional

men" who attended the first meeting.⁵

The attitudes of the Jackson County klansmen may have differed widely, but apparently common to all were religious nativism, moralistic concern, and economic resentment. Nativism had its most overt expression in the pages of the Medford *Clarion*, a weekly newspaper founded in 1920 by William E. Phipps, who also was its editor. A forty-three-year-old lawyer with political ambitions, Phipps had arrived in Jackson County during the early 1890s as a boy; his family was involved in the Populist insurgency of that decade. He was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the Oregon legislature in 1920. The former North Carolinian denied being a member of the Klan. Nevertheless, he filled his paper with pugnacious, pro-Klan commentaries and featured anti-Semitic articles from Henry Ford's Dearborn *Independent*, anti-Catholic columns by the Reverend Robert Shuler of Los Angeles, and pieces from the Klan-published *Searchlight* and *Western American*. While



Robert Ruhl, owner-editor of the Medford Mail Tribune, led the resistance to Klan intimidation in Jackson County.
Southern Oregon
Historical Society
11734

Robert Ruhl and the *Medford Mail Tribune* rallied anti-Klan forces, Phipps made the *Clarion* into Jackson County's Klan mouthpiece. In one editorial, Phipps asked if his readers realized that the "Roman hierarchy" was trying to "stamp its blight . . . on this great country?" In 1922 the stage was set for a rigorous newspaper war between the Harvard-educated newcomer and the Southern-born longtime resident.⁶

Unlike nativists in other areas of Oregon, Jackson County klansmen seem not to have been very concerned about alien land ownership. Although a few Japanese, most of them cooks, janitors, and domestic servants, lived in the Rogue Valley during the early 1920s, southern Oregon never had an influx of Japanese farmers. To Phipps and the Klan the threat was Roman Catholicism. Catholics formed about 8 percent of Oregon's total population in 1920 and slightly less than that in the county. A small convent, which had provided educational and medical services since the 1860s, was the most visible presence of Catholicism in the area. Having ministered to the sick during

Jacksonville's 1868 smallpox epidemic, the Sisters of the Holy Name remained heroines in local folklore.⁷

Jackson County's nativists gave strong support to Oregon's compulsory school initiative during the 1922 political campaign. This measure would have required all parents to send their children to public schools, and it provided for stiff fines and jail sentences for those who refused to comply.

Although introduced by a branch of the Scottish Rite Masons and promoted as an anti-elitist, "Americanizing" measure, the school bill was aimed at eliminating Catholic schools, and it became an important test of the Oregon Klan's political power. The school bill garnered adverse national attention for Oregon; the measure also came in for steady local criticism by Ruhl and the *Tribune*. Passage of the initiative would have closed the only Catholic school in southern Oregon, St. Mary's in Medford, which traced its origin back to Jacksonville's gold-rush days, and would have indirectly threatened Medford's Sacred Heart Hospital.⁸

Religious bigotry — fanned by Phipps's newspaper rhetoric — played an important role in the aggressive membership drive the Klan initiated in 1922. In May the Medford klavern invited Mayor Charles E. Gates to attend a ceremonial gathering. The affable "Pop" Gates, owner of southern Oregon's largest Ford sales agency and an announced "possible candidate" for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, expressed disapproval of masks but accepted honorary membership in the Klan, and he provided a glowing account of the ceremony in an open letter. On the evening of May 23, the Reverend Reuben H. Sawyer, Klan lecturer from Portland, spoke to a large and approving Ashland audience. A sizable contingent of hooded klansmen marched in Ashland's Fourth of July parade. The political campaigns that year also took on the cast of religious nativism. The school-bill issue seriously divided the population, and the resulting polarization may have reinforced local Klan solidarity and attracted new members.⁹

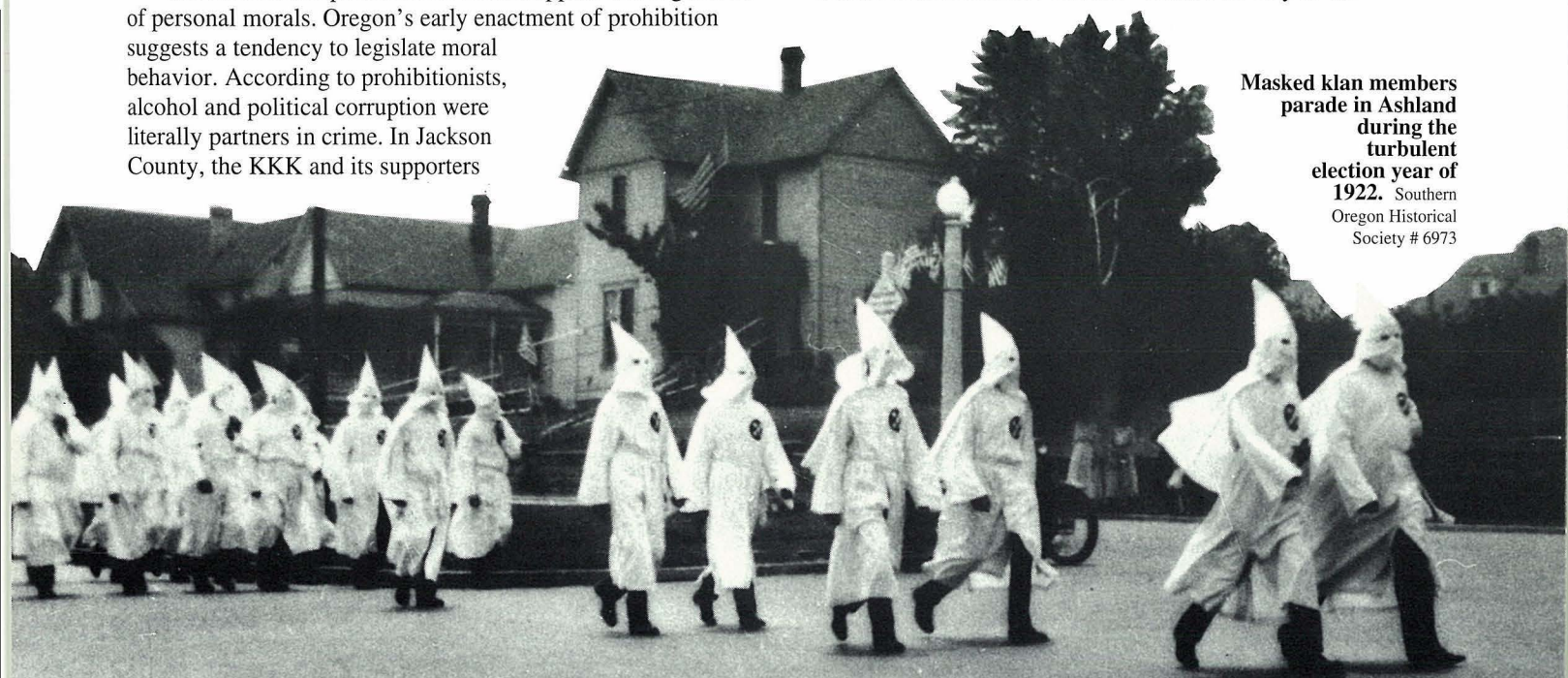
The second component of the Klan's appeal was regulation of personal morals. Oregon's early enactment of prohibition suggests a tendency to legislate moral behavior. According to prohibitionists, alcohol and political corruption were literally partners in crime. In Jackson County, the KKK and its supporters

forced moral issues into the political contents of 1922.

Three incidents of night-riding — abduction and near lynching of individuals by masked vigilantes — had occurred in March 1922. The night riders kidnapped their first victim, Medford piano salesman J. F. Hale (who may have been selected primarily because of a debt owed to him by a klansman), and drove him to an isolated spot along the Rogue River. Threatening him with hanging, they demanded that he sever his romantic relationships with two young Medford women, forgive the debt, and leave the county immediately. The vigilantes' second victim was a black man, Arthur Burr. Released from jail after serving a short sentence for prohibition violations, the one-time bootblack was abducted at dusk and driven south to the place where the Pacific Highway crossed the crest of the Siskiyou mountains, near the California border. After being hoisted off the ground three times by a rope around his neck and admonished about his past bootlegging, Burr fled south to the taunt, "Can you run, nigger?" as the group fired "a few revolver shots about his feet." The final incident involved a young Jacksonville man (according to one account, "part-Mexican"), Henry (Sam) Johnson, accused of being a chicken thief and idler. Taken to the orchard land south of Medford, he was hanged in the same nonfatal but terrifying manner as Burr and released with the warning to tread "the straight and narrow path in the future."¹⁰

Compared to other Klan actions outside the Deep South, the "southern Oregon outrages" were quite tame. Despite the incidents' undeniably violent nature, no one died or suffered permanent physical injury. Such was not their purpose. The incidents were meant by their perpetrators to be seen as acts of moral regulation taken to benefit the community. The Klan wished to be considered the guardian of public morality. It countered the negative image of vigilantism with highly publicized donations to a young Medford mother whose husband had deserted the family and to Main Street Methodist Church.¹¹ Linked directly to the

**Masked klan members
parade in Ashland
during the
turbulent
election year of
1922.** Southern
Oregon Historical
Society # 6973



night-riding was the recall of the Jackson County sheriff, Charles Terrill, in the summer of 1922. Once again the issue was morality. The recall effort originally grew out of Terrill's alleged lax enforcement of prohibition laws. Terrill, a longtime resident of the foothills east of Eagle Point, did not pursue local bootleggers with the vigor expected by community moralists. Joined by ministerial associations, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union circulated a recall petition. Local klansmen, whose oath included a temperance vow, took up the cause eagerly. They had further reason: Terrill had cooperated with the federal and state investigation of the night-riding incidents. The sheriff had responded to Governor Ben Olcott's inquiry with a strong denunciation of the Klan and a warning about the area's climate of violence and fear.¹²

Phipps, criticizing the sheriff for his "open and notorious collusion with moonshiners," fueled public outrage with the accusations that Terrill was nepotistic, deficient in moral courage, and drawing a salary that smacked of graft. Letters to the *Clarion* from apparent Klan supporters complained of Terrill's incompetence and his alleged friendship with a notorious local bootlegger. The July recall election, like the night-riding, provided Phipps with an opportunity to reinforce the Klan's self-image as the upholder of community morality.¹³

In addition to nativism and moralism, a third element in the Klan's appeal — one amplified by Phipps between 1921 and 1923 — was a kind of inchoate populism that voiced both social and economic resentments. A writer for the national magazine *Outlook* had painted the Oregon Klan movement in the hues of agrarian revolt. Phipps in fact editorialized occasionally in a populist vein about the unfair practices of a list of villains that included fruit associations, commission men, creameries, and consignment houses. But more important, he called attention to poor economic conditions and disparities in wealth in the Rogue River valley. He laid the blame for the situation at the feet of the county's "corrupt Gang" — members of the local political establishment purportedly enriching themselves at taxpayers' expense.¹⁴

Although the KKK cloaked itself in nativist, moralist, and populist rhetoric in Jackson County as elsewhere, the *Clarion's* portrayal of the Klan calls into question its editor's motives. Phipps's desire to boost his paper's earnings no doubt affected press coverage. Economics, not the Klan, seems to have been at the heart of his denunciation of the *Tribune* as a corrupt sheet. Ruhl's paper held a monopoly on city government's printing contracts and shared with the *Ashland Weekly Tidings* the benefits of being the "official" county newspaper. When, after the election, county commissioners awarded the *Clarion* a contract to print official legal notices, Phipps dropped his campaign against the *Tribune*.¹⁵

The newspaper war between William Phipps and Robert Ruhl highlights the social and political fragmentation present in Jackson County in 1922. The most widely publicized split in county politics that year occurred in May, when six members resigned from the Medford post of the American Legion, citing its failure to condemn the local Ku Klux Klan. Among the men was E. E. Kelly, a prominent attorney, Democrat, and head of the Elks Lodge. A veteran of the Spanish-American War and World War I, Colonel Kelly regarded the Klan as "the gravest



Attorney William Phipps made his Medford *Clarion* the Klan's mouthpiece in southern Oregon.
Southern Oregon
Historical Society
9317

menace to internal peace . . . since the Civil War." The resignations occasioned a visit from Lane Goodall, the state commander of the American Legion. After his inquiry, Goodall addressed the legion's state convention in The Dalles, decrying the injection of religious prejudices into legion affairs. When the convention voted for Goodall's successor, George Coddington, a Medford attorney considered a sure winner, was defeated; his alleged sympathy with the pro-Klan forces was apparently the reason. According to the *Medford Sun*, the legion's Klan fight "parted friends . . . some of whom had fought side by side overseas."¹⁶

Almost simultaneously, Earl H. Fehl, a member of the Medford Odd Fellows, reported that "the KKK has found a nucleus in our fraternity and even in our lodge hall." A building contractor, publisher of the weekly *Pacific Record Herald*, and perennial office seeker, Fehl demanded that his order take a stand against the Klan. His call found support from a faction of men vying for power in city and county politics. Both Phipps (who dubbed Fehl the "Fail candidate") and Ruhl (who made caustic references to "Fehlism" in his editorials) seem to have considered him an unpleasant crank, and his followers apparently were the least important of several Jackson County political factions of the time. But two other groups became major forces in the 1922 elections, one anti- and the other pro-Klan.¹⁷

Having formed a strong base in Medford during the orchard boom, an assortment of Republicans and Democrats, prominent lawyers, and merchants constituted what Phipps labeled the Gang. Two important members were E. E. Kelly and Evan A. Reames, chief attorney for the California-Oregon Power Company. Robert Ruhl often reflected the goals and opinions of this establishment faction in his editorials. The second group, headed by ambitious, young, mostly Republican lawyers, tapped the discontent of orchardists in the valley and small businessmen in Medford and other towns. Political candidates who represented this faction, such as Charles M. Thomas and Ralph Cowgill, received Phipps's open support; the establishment called them the "Klan ticket." Thomas, an Iowan

who had come to Jackson County in 1913, was the current president of the county bar association, of which Phipps, Reames, and Kelly were all members, and he also was the attorney for the night-rider defendants; he was running for the judgeship that would hear the case after the election.¹⁸

With the local Republican party fielding "Klan candidates," and a Klan-backed Democrat, Walter Pierce, running for governor, Kelly, Reames, and other members of the establishment formed the Independent American Voters League in August. Among the IAVL's diverse members were the retired Republican (but formerly Democratic) judge, William Colvig, of Jacksonville; the Medford Democratic attorney Porter J. Neff; and even Earl Fehl. Its declaration of principles stressed its nonpartisan, emergency character. The league ran a slate of candidates for local office that included Alice Hanley, daughter of prominent pioneer settlers, for state representative and Kelly for circuit court judge, a position he had held before the war. The IAVL's main strength seems to have been in Medford, its opponents' strength in the small towns and orchard areas.¹⁹

The league held meetings throughout the county during late October, concentrating much of its effort in hinterland communities such as Eagle Point and Butte Falls and focusing on the Klan. The contest between Kelly and Thomas for circuit court judge was vituperative. Letters to the *Clarion* castigated the venerable Colvig as a cowardly turncoat. Phipps dismissed the league as "an aggregation of antiquated . . . political has-beens" and renamed it the Bootleggers' Protective Association. Kelly trumpeted his war record and cast doubt on Thomas's.²⁰

In addition to factionalism, certain economic issues bore upon the Klan's influence in the 1922 elections. Water was chief among them. Like much of the semiarid West then and now, the Rogue River valley contained different groups competing for limited supplies of available water. Which groups would prevail, which would gain and maintain control over Jackson County's water, was likely a sub rosa issue in the Klan's political activities.

The *Tribune* for October 25 carried a front-page story about the disruption of the IAVL's public meeting in Talent; the account indicated that the "display of hoodlumism" broke out over water, not the school bill or alcohol. The league's representative, Evan Reames, attorney for the power company and for the Rogue River Valley Canal Company, spoke to the audience regarding legal difficulties over competing water rights that would soon affect the Talent Irrigation District. The district's legal counsel was Charles Thomas, whom the league had accused of committing fiscal improprieties while representing another irrigation district; Thomas, spoiling for a fight, rose from the back of the crowded meeting hall. He was supported by numerous people including Ralph Cowgill, the Klan's candidate for state representative and head engineer for the Medford Irrigation District, a new institution composed mainly of small orchardists and farmers located north and east of Medford. Heckling and shouting escalated in volume until someone turned out the lights and the meeting abruptly ended.²¹

The county Republican chairman Bert Anderson defended the behavior of Thomas and Cowgill, whom the IAVL accused

of bringing rowdy KKK members to the Talent meeting. In a statement to the *Tribune*, Anderson criticized the IAVL for "casting doubt and suspicion upon the validity of water rights." Anderson was legal counsel for the owner of "one of the largest and most valuable orchard properties" in the Talent Irrigation District. Phipps, too, had a personal stake in the local water situation; he had represented disgruntled Medford property owners during the 1921 drought, and he made "water graft" in the city a major crusade in his 1922 editorial columns.²²

Thus the 1922 campaign exhibited an intersection of interests among men who were publicly considered Klan candidates or Klan spokesmen and who were also representatives of water users in the small-town-and-orchard zone surrounding Medford. The Klan-water connection was not lost on voters. As they knew, the offices of circuit court judge, sheriff, and state representative were important both in terms of influence and in practical matters, such as selection of grand juries, appointment of local deputies, and adjudication of water rights. Small-town residents and orchardists proved to be Klan adherents on these and other political issues in 1922.

Elections that year included the May primary, the sheriff's recall in July, and the November general election. The results reveal a distinct geographic pattern of pro-Klan and anti-Klan voting. The gubernatorial primary involved a clear choice for Republican voters, either the anti-Klan incumbent, Ben Olcott, or the Klan-supported state senator Charles Hall, an early proponent of the school bill. Olcott barely edged to victory with a statewide margin of fewer than 600 votes. Jackson County Republicans gave Hall a very slim lead. He received his strongest majorities in Ashland and Central Point as well as in the nearby rural precincts; Medford gave him a much smaller margin of victory. If taken as a referendum on the Klan, the primary indicates that the strongest Klan support was in the county's small-town-and-orchard zone.²³

Sheriff Terrill retained his position by a margin of just over 300 votes out of nearly 5,700 cast in the recall election. Lowe, the Klan-backed contender for the job, received an overwhelming majority in Ashland: 677 votes to Terrill's 256. Lowe also captured Central Point, Rogue River, Gold Hill, and several other communities of the small-town-and-orchard zone. Terrill's main support came from the urban precincts of Medford, Jacksonville (where he long had been a familiar figure at the county courthouse and where a sizable community of Seventh-Day Adventists formed an anti-Klan voting bloc), and the county's hinterland. Of the nineteen hinterland precincts, fifteen returned majorities for him, many by margins exceeding 70 percent (the sheriff's home district around Eagle Point gave him 83 percent of the vote)²⁴

No doubt voters weighed issues other than the Klan controversy in the recall election. For example, Ashland was a traditionally dry town where the WCTU's anti-Terrill campaign may have been more influential than the Klan's. Conversely, bootlegging was considered a legitimate occupation by many hinterland residents, whose votes would have gone to Terrill. However, Lowe's anti-Catholic rhetoric likely tipped the balance for many voters in one direction or the other. The recall results, like those of the primary, indicate that Klan support was strongest in the railroad towns and areas outside Medford.

The November election included several races touched by the Klan controversy: the governorship, the local contests, and the school initiative. The Democrat Walter Pierce, backed by the Klan and running on a platform of tax reduction, the school bill, and "throw the bums out," defeated Olcott by a 57-percent statewide majority. Jackson County gave Pierce a similar lead: the usually staunch Republican stronghold of Ashland returned a 65-percent margin for the Klan's candidate, and Medford only 53 percent. Out of Jackson County's fifty-five voting precincts, only eight gave Olcott majorities; these included Jacksonville and five precincts in the hinterland. Although some Klan-influenced Republicans crossed party lines to vote against Olcott, Pierce's antitax campaign probably garnered him much of his support in Jackson County.²⁵

The local races ended in a stinging defeat for the IAVL. Charles Thomas defeated Kelly for the judgeship with over 70 percent of the vote; his largest percentages were in Ashland, Central Point, Gold Hill, and Rogue River, but he did well throughout the county. Kelly carried a handful of hinterland precincts, where his past support of Terrill may have been the decisive factor. Alice Hanley, the IAVL candidate for state representative, lost badly to Ralph Cowgill, who won the four-way election with solid majorities throughout the small-town-and-orchard precincts. The Klan issue almost certainly played a part in the league's defeat in these areas, but water politics was an important issue as well.²⁶

The compulsory school bill won by a statewide margin of 52 percent. Jackson County, on the other hand, defeated it by a similar margin. Given the county's notoriety as a Klan hotbed, the results may have surprised many people, especially since this initiative was the outstanding Klan issue in the election. Ashland, Talent, Central Point, Gold Hill, and Rogue River favored the bill by margins of 55-67 percent. Medford, Jacksonville, and virtually all of the hinterland precincts (where longtime residents still credited local nuns with battling the 1868 smallpox epidemic) defeated it decisively. These returns emphasize the county's political cleavage. Hinterland voters aligned themselves with the Medford voters, motivated by sentiments against prohibition enforcement and by a "live and let live" attitude that may have translated into religious toleration in the matter of the school bill.²⁷

Clearly, the Klan found its support in the small towns and orchard areas of Jackson County. Residents there were likely newcomers who, having arrived during the orchard boom, were now discontented with the county's postboom economy, frustrated by its putative crime wave, and anxious about its water supply. Economic vulnerability during the early 1920s may have disposed them to the nativist and anti-Medford rhetoric of the KKK.

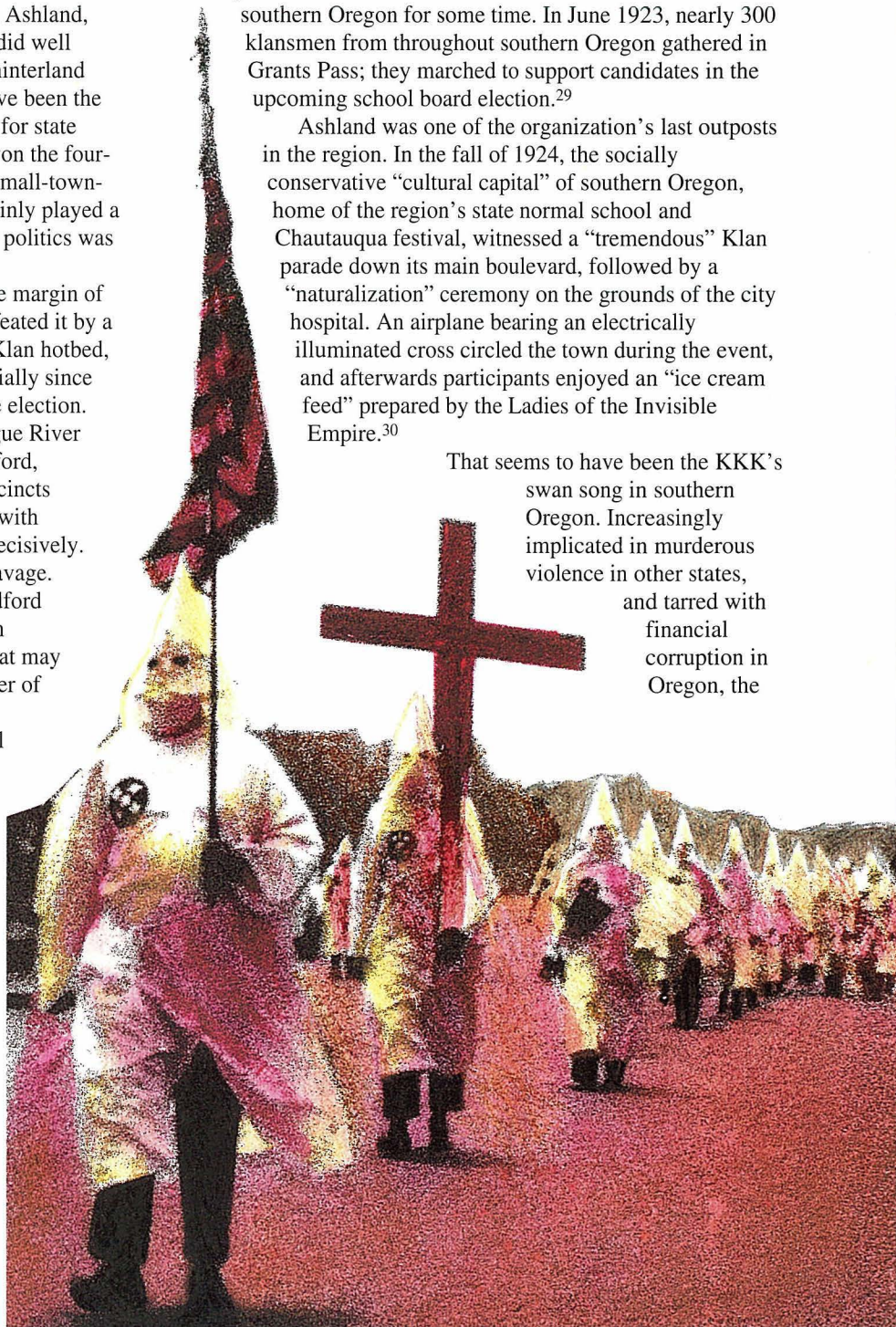
Following the 1922 general election, the night-rider cases kept the community's attention focused on the Klan for several more months. The first trial took place at the Jacksonville courthouse in early March

1923. Judge Charles M. Thomas, newly elected with the aid of the Klan, presided. The three well-known defendants (a former Medford chief of police, a chiropractor-Methodist minister, and a prominent young orchardist) had been charged with riot. Newspaper reporters, including a representative of the Hearst press, added to the sensationalistic atmosphere by publicizing rumors that some witnesses had come to the trial armed with handguns. The defense attorneys, who spent much effort discrediting the morals of the night riders' victims, proved to be persuasive. After nearly two weeks of testimony, the jury deliberated for just forty minutes before finding the defendants innocent.²⁸

Phipps gloated the trial was the result of "opulent Jews and the hierarchy of Rome . . . attacking an American order." Although the Klan faded from the pages of the Medford press thereafter, it remained influential elsewhere in southern Oregon for some time. In June 1923, nearly 300 klansmen from throughout southern Oregon gathered in Grants Pass; they marched to support candidates in the upcoming school board election.²⁹

Ashland was one of the organization's last outposts in the region. In the fall of 1924, the socially conservative "cultural capital" of southern Oregon, home of the region's state normal school and Chautauqua festival, witnessed a "tremendous" Klan parade down its main boulevard, followed by a "naturalization" ceremony on the grounds of the city hospital. An airplane bearing an electrically illuminated cross circled the town during the event, and afterwards participants enjoyed an "ice cream feed" prepared by the Ladies of the Invisible Empire.³⁰

That seems to have been the KKK's swan song in southern Oregon. Increasingly implicated in murderous violence in other states, and tarred with financial corruption in Oregon, the



Invisible Empire rapidly lost ground. Reflecting on the Klan-associated events of the early 1920s, state treasurer Thomas B. Kay wrote in 1927 that Oregonians had since experienced "a change of heart in connection with these matters."³¹

Phipps steadily moderated the nativist tone of his editorials in 1923. After attempting to increase the newspaper's circulation with a highly publicized giveaway contest, he sold the *Clarion* in 1924. Phipps ran unsuccessfully for county commissioner and other offices during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Robert Ruhl remained editor of the *Tribune* until his retirement in the mid-1950s. Because he had worked tirelessly against the Klan when other editors had equivocated, anti-Klan newspapermen in other communities asked him for advice, and Olcott, the former governor, along with Medford's Roman Catholic priest and other citizens, thanked him for his crusade. In 1934 Ruhl's paper, having continued its anti-extremist tradition, received the Pulitzer Prize for its effort to calm the county during another period of social and political unrest.³²

Jackson County's moralists were in full retreat when E. E. Kelly's son wrote of the American Legion's state convention — held in Medford in 1928 — as an openly "intoxicated" affair that portrayed "the hypocrisy of Volsteadism . . . in this little city." And in the mid-1920s, an issue that had bred contention in the urban and small-town-and-orchard zones was resolved: the Talent and Medford irrigation districts settled their water supply problems by purchasing water rights and constructing additional water storage facilities. Medford also undertook the expensive development of Big Butte Springs, the city's main water supply source to this day.³³

The Ku Klux Klan in Jackson County was as much used as it was a user in 1922. Although members and supporters certainly believed in its tenets, the Klan evidently flourished there chiefly because it allied itself with — and was skillfully used by — opportunistic political leaders. Its

own leaders, beneath the hooded robe of bigotry, may merely have been ambitious, disgruntled Babbitts who marched through the streets of a would-be Zenith.



Jeff LaLande is an archaeologist-historian and teaches at Southern Oregon State College. This article first appeared in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, volume eighty-three, 1992.

ENDNOTES

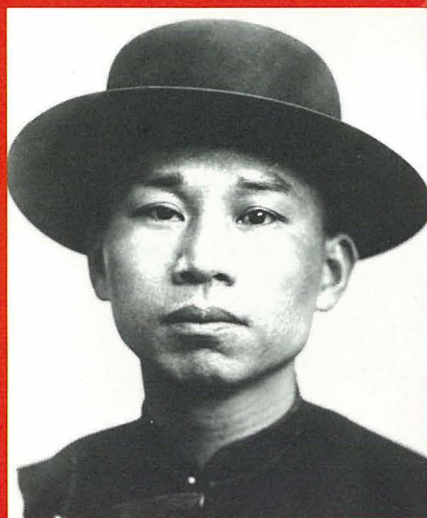
- ¹ *Medford Mail Tribune*, July 27, 14, 1921. Biographical material on Ruhl comes from *Tribune*, August 22, 1967, and George S. Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers* (Portland, 1939), 252.
- ² *Tribune*, Nov. 6, 1922; Waldo Roberts, "The Ku-Kluxing of Oregon," *Outlook*, March 14, 1923, 490.
- ³ *Medford Sun*, February 25, 1922; the "bootlegger war" is discussed in the *Tribune* between mid-August 1921 and March 1922.
- ⁴ See *Tribune* and *Medford Clarion*, mid-July through mid-September 1921.
- ⁵ "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Southern Oregon," *Table Rock Sentinel*, September 1983, 16, October 1983, 14; *Sun*, July 16, 1922; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967), 240-41. Information on Klan members, sympathizers, and night riders comes from the *Tribune* and the *Clarion*, March 1922-March 1923, and from Rothwell, 120.
- ⁶ *Clarion*, July 16, August 11, 1922.
- ⁷ Rothwell, 120.
- ⁸ David B. Tyack, "The Perils of Pluralism: The Background of the Pierce Case," *AHR*, vol. 74 (1968), 74-98.
- ⁹ *Tribune*, May 2, 1922; *Ashland Weekly Tidings*, May 17, 24, 1922; Lawrence J. Saalfeld, *Forces of Prejudice in Oregon, 1920-1925* (Portland, 1984), 5.
- ¹⁰ *Tribune*, March 18, 1922; *Sun*, April 2, 1922; *Tidings*, April 12, 1922. Additional details are contained in these papers' reportage of the trials, February 25-March 11, 1923.
- ¹¹ "Knights of the KKK," 13-14; *Tribune*, March 20, 1922.
- ¹² C.E. Terrill to Ben Olcott, May 14, 1922, vol. 5, Ben Olcott Papers, Special Collections, University of Oregon Library, Eugene; "Knights of the KKK," 18-19.
- ¹³ *Clarion*, June 23, July 21, 1922.
- ¹⁴ Roberts, 491; *Clarion*, August 17, Sept. 22, 1922.
- ¹⁵ *Clarion*, Aug. 11, September 22, Oct. 20, 1922, Jan. 12, 19, 1923.
- ¹⁶ Kelly quoted in George S. Turnbull, *An Oregon Crusader* (Portland, 1955), 74; *Tribune*, May 3, 1922; *Sun*, May 7, July 30, 1922.
- ¹⁷ *Sun*, May 28, 1922.
- ¹⁸ *Tribune*, October 26, 24, 1922.
- ¹⁹ *Clarion*, August 18, 1922.
- ²⁰ *Tribune*, October 20, 27, 1922; *Clarion*, September 1, 1922.
- ²¹ *Tribune*, October 23, 25, 1922.
- ²² *Tribune*, October 27, 1922, August 24, 1921; *Clarion*, October 20, August 18, 1922.
- ²³ *Tribune*, May 23, 1922.
- ²⁴ *Sun*, July 30, 1922; *Tidings*, August 2, 1922; Saalfeld, 5.
- ²⁵ *Tribune*, November 8, 1922.
- ²⁶ *Tribune*, November 8, 1922.
- ²⁷ *Tribune*, November 13, 1922.
- ²⁸ *Clarion*, March 2, 9, 1923; *Tidings*, February 28, March 7, 1923; *Sun*, February 25, March 4, 11, 1923.
- ²⁹ *Clarion*, March 23, June 22, 1923.
- ³⁰ *Tidings*, September 10, 1924.
- ³¹ Thomas B. Kay to Fred B. Mack, May 6, 1927, vol. 8, Olcott Papers. The U.S. Supreme Court found the compulsory school law unconstitutional in 1925.
- ³² Turnbull, *History of Oregon Newspapers*, 253-54.
- ³³ Edward C. Kelly to Mary Greiner, Aug. 3, 1928, Edward E. Kelly Family Papers, MSS 1434, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

金山

LAND OF HOPE

\$

HEARTACHE



SOHS #1154

by Catherine Noah

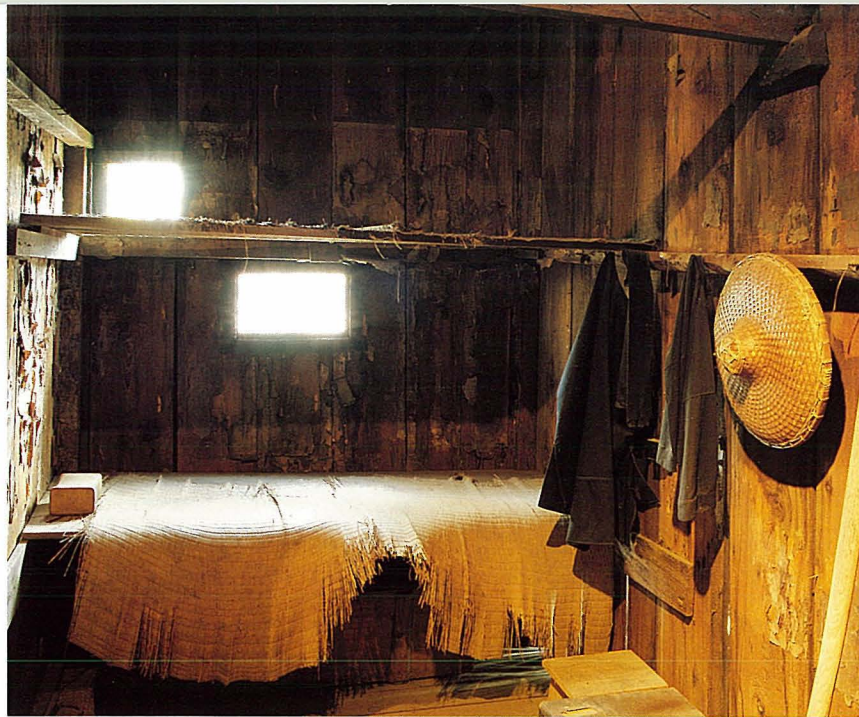
To the Chinese in the mid-1800s, the American West beckoned as *Gum San*, Land of the Golden Mountain. Gold awaited the laborer who had enough money and courage to make the arduous trip overseas. Thousands of Chinese hoped to build their fortune and return home to enjoy a life full of honor and free of poverty.

Their expectations shattered, however, once they reached the new land. Whites, unaccustomed to Chinese ways, considered them heathens and enacted discriminatory laws that kept many from earning enough money to go back to China. Chinese men were run off their mining claims and their houses and businesses set afire. Women were discouraged from immigrating to America, even to join husbands; those who did come often were forced into prostitution or sold as slaves to white owners.¹ By the 1880s, violence against the Chinese became so intense that in bigger cities, martial law was declared and government troops called in to quell the riots.

During the few decades in which they were tolerated for their cheap labor, and because of those who stayed despite the violence, the Chinese contributed substantially to the development of the West. Their experience in managing water in rice fields taught Americans new technologies for mining gold. Their willingness to work in adverse conditions for low pay gave Western companies a much-needed, reliable,

continued on page 16

Sexton's quarter in joss house, Weaverville, California. Alter (opposite) in Gee How Oak temple, Portland, Oregon.



Remembering Gum San

Photographs by
Barry Peril

Few of the participants in the region's exploration and settlement faced the dramatic cultural change or endured the hardship and oppression experienced by the Chinese immigrants," reads the foreword of a catalog accompanying the exhibition, *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain*. Developed by the High Desert Museum in Bend, the traveling exhibit chronicles the experiences of the Chinese in nineteenth-century western America and how they contributed to its economic development.

Through historic photographs, period artifacts, and contemporary color pictures of existing Chinese structures, *Gum San* demonstrates how the Chinese were essential participants in the development and settlement of the West. They worked on the nation's first transcontinental railroad; they labored in goldfields from California to Montana; they hired on as chuck-wagon cooks on desert ranches and as cannery workers on the coast; and they performed a variety of domestic jobs within towns and cities. Because of their race they faced prejudice, discriminatory laws and taxation, and violence that ranged from random theft to widespread rioting that left scores of Chinese

dead or wounded.

The photographs on these four pages were taken by Northwest photographer Barry Peril, who was commissioned by the High Desert Museum to capture contemporary images of surviving Chinese sites throughout the West. Peril studied art at the University of Pennsylvania then earned a law degree at Harvard. He is an art lecturer at universities and museums nationwide, and his photography is published and exhibited internationally. Peril's exhibits have included one-man shows at the Museum of Folk Art in New York City and at the High Desert Museum.

Robert G. Boyd, curator of western heritage at the High Desert Museum, says *Gum San* "celebrates those hardy Chinese immigrants and the contribution that they and their descendants have made to modern America."

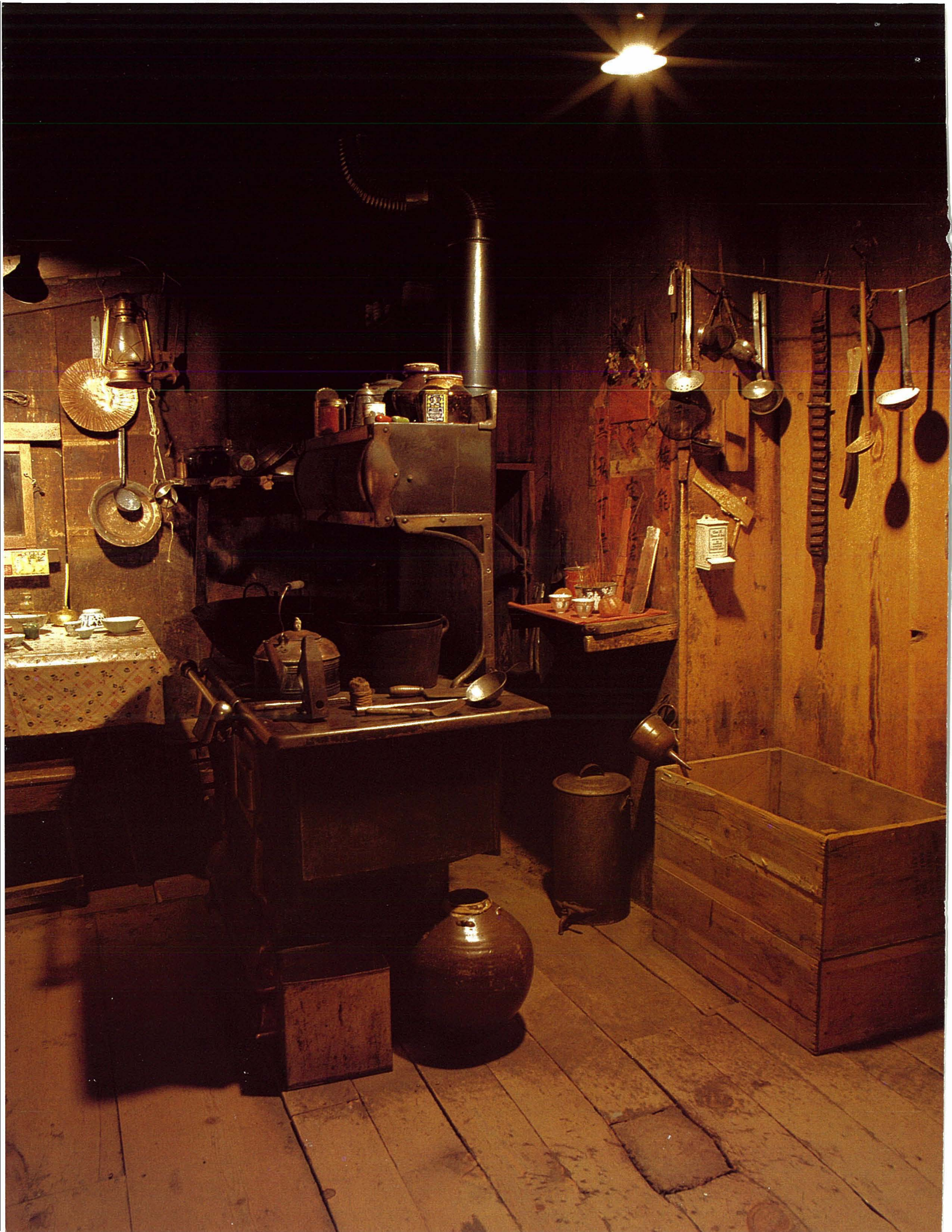


— C.N. The exhibit may be viewed through February at the Southern Oregon Historical Society's History Center, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford. Admission is free; hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.



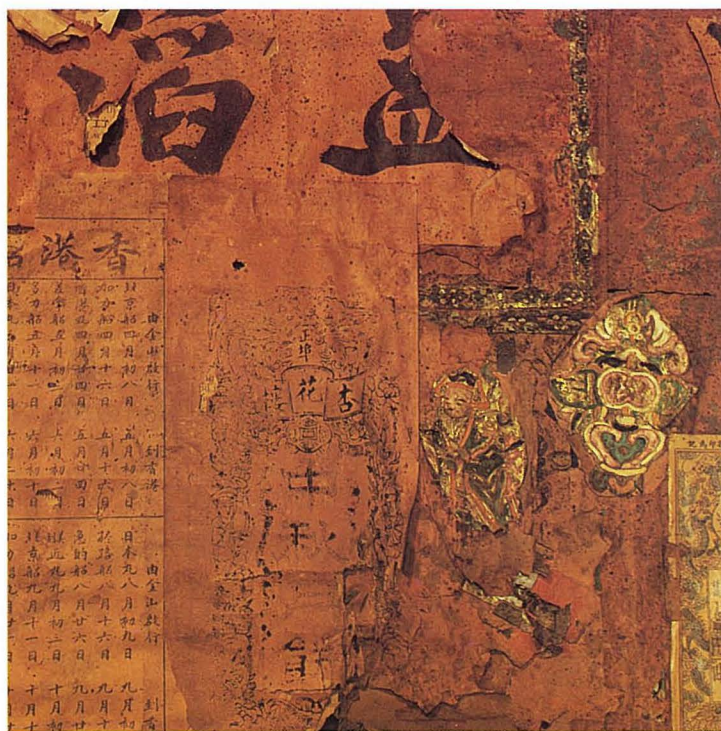
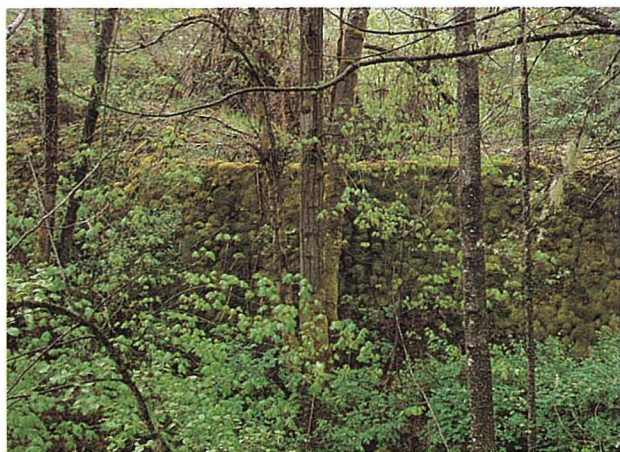
綏靖伯

綏靖伯
巧祖師





Kam Wah Chung kitchen (left), John Day, Oregon. Council chambers (above), Oroville, California. The council chambers was the meeting place of the leaders of the Chinese community in the upper Sacramento Valley. Wall detail (right) in Chew Kee Store, Fiddletown, in the heart of the California gold country. In the lower left corner of the photograph is a steamship schedule for the return voyage to China. Stone wall built by the Chinese (below) near the Gin Lin Trail in the Applegate Valley, Oregon.



源來

continued from page 11

and cheap work force. While the West boomed and jobs remained plentiful, the Chinese were welcomed; but when the gold ran out and competition for jobs grew tougher, the Chinese were rejected, beaten, run out of town, even massacred.

The Chinese experience in the American West is chronicled in a traveling exhibit, *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain*, showing through February in the Southern Oregon History Center in Medford (see related story, page 12). As the exhibit notes, the gold rush of 1848 drew the Chinese originally to San Francisco and other

logging camps near Washington's Puget Sound, and planting vineyards and fruit orchards in Oregon. In the cities they started laundry services, ran mercantile stores, and worked as household servants. They labored in the cigarmaking, shoemaking, and garment trades as well. By 1880, more than 100,000 Chinese were recorded living in the United States.³

At the outset, Westerners welcomed the Chinese because of their cheap and dependable labor. Chinese often were recruited and managed through a "China boss" who took care of their daily needs and kept them well-disciplined. (Gin Lin of Jacksonville and Wah Chung of Ashland are two well-known China bosses in southern Oregon.) Non-Chinese laborers had to be hired and managed individually. And Chinese wages were one-quarter to one-half cheaper than those of other laborers.⁴

Gold miners in Jackson and Josephine counties, however, took an immediate disliking toward the Chinese. In the mid-1850s, shortly after the first Chinese arrived in southern Oregon, both counties levied a fifty-dollar monthly fee on Chinese traders. Chinese miners were taxed two dollars per month in 1857, an amount that was doubled in 1858.⁵ White miners in Sailors' Diggings, an area in west Josephine County, adopted a resolution that said: "... no Chinaman shall take up any claim nor shall they hold any claim or claims by purchase or otherwise."⁶ Mining camps in the Applegate Valley eventually adopted similar resolutions.

In the early 1860s, Oregon passed a poll-tax that declared "each and every negro, chinaman, kanaka (Hawaiian), and mulatto residing within the limits of this state, shall pay an annual poll-tax of five dollars for the use of the county in which such negro, chinaman, kanaka, or mulatto may reside."⁷ The Chinese were not allowed to testify in court against white miners until 1862.

"From the time of their arrival, the Chinese miners' dress, lifestyle, and hard work in the mines angered and frightened the Caucasian miner," local historian Kay Atwood sums up in her handbook, *Minorities of Early Jackson County*.⁸

Ignorance over Chinese customs may have spawned the miners' fears. The Chinese, who considered themselves



Wah Chung family, Ashland. Southern Oregon Historical Society #1147

ports on the Pacific Coast; by 1860 almost 35,000 Chinese had come to make their fortune.² Soon the laborers expanded throughout the West, carving tunnels through the High Sierra, clearing tule swamps in Central California, canning salmon along the coast, working in

sojourners, were reluctant to integrate, preferring instead to retain their traditional ways. They wore shaven heads with a long, braided queue down the back. (The queue was their "passport" back to their own country, where it reportedly was required as a symbol of Chinese submission to Manchu rule.⁹) They ate comparatively little, relying on such staples as rice and tea. They bought few manufactured goods. They often sent money home to their families. If they died in America, friends or relatives would send their bones back to China to be buried with their ancestors.

Some Jackson County residents resented the Chinese's simple ways and felt they did not invest enough of their earnings back into the local economy. Jacksonville's Republican newspaper, *The Oregon Sentinel*, in its September 1, 1866, issue, advocated heavily taxing the Chinese to drive them out of the county:

... It seems an unwise policy to allow a race of brutish heathens who have nothing in common with us, to exhaust our mineral lands without paying a heavy tax for their occupation. These people bring nothing with them to our shores, they add nothing to the permanent wealth of this country and so strong is their attachment to their own country they will not let their filthy carcasses lie in our soil. Could this people be taxed as to exclude them entirely, it would be a blessing.¹⁰

White miners would not allow the Chinese to hold claims on producing mines. Once the mines played out, however, the whites were more than happy to sell their claims to the Chinese. The Chinese, by working over the waste dirt from previous operations, were able to extract enough gold to make a living. There are newspaper accounts of whites jumping the Chinese's claims once they proved fruitful again, however.

Another reason behind anti-Chinese sentiment locally may have been the vices they brought with them: namely opium, gambling, and prostitution. *The Democratic Times* of Jacksonville reported a scuffle between a Chinese man and his courtesan in 1871; a Chinese who took an overdose of opium in 1872; and a "first-class Chinese hotel, gaming-house and opium den, combined" in 1878.¹¹ While whites had some of the same vices, the Chinese's provoked this commentary in

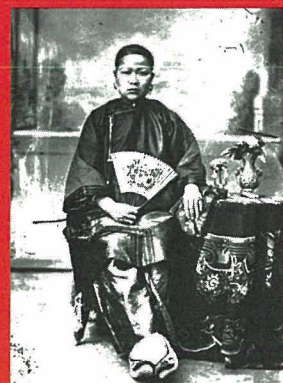
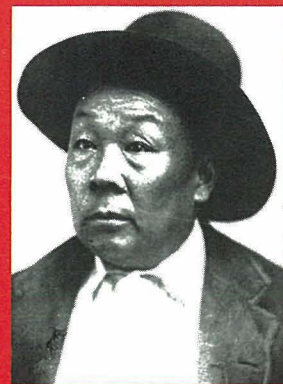
the *Times* in November 1878:

Jacksonville has its China row, and it possesses all the disgusting features of the Mongolian quarters in Portland or San Francisco; save the mission schools, where good white people strive to instruct the Joss worshippers in the principles of Christianity, while heathens are quartered in the station houses. During all hours of the night the Chinese of this place hold their orgies, drinking villainous, forty-rod brandy, gambling and indulging in all manner of vice peculiar to their race. A fine field for a superannuated missionary of moderate ability is offered here for the exercise of his talent.¹²

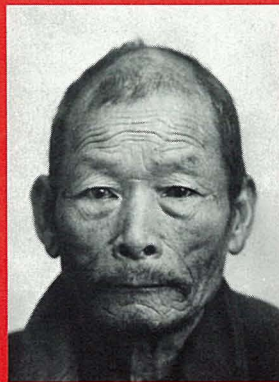
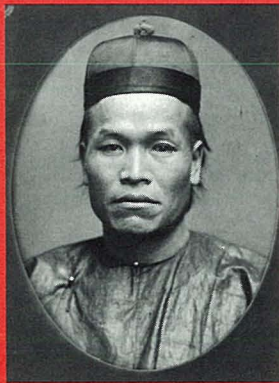
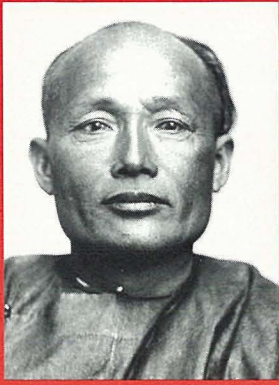
The whites' ignorance of Chinese culture and hypocritical disdain over their vices may have caused tensions between the two races early on, but the economic decline of the 1870s and 1880s spurred the widespread violence that drove many Chinese from the West and left hundreds dead or wounded. Anti-Chinese organizations had been formed in major cities as early as the 1850s; scarcity of jobs only fueled support for their demands to end Chinese immigration and keep those laborers out of the American job market. Many politicians used anti-Chinese sentiment to gain support for their campaigns.

Ironically, one of the Chinese's greatest contributions to the building of the American West — completion of the western half of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 — contributed to the anti-Chinese feeling.¹³ Central Pacific, in hopes of winning its race with the Union Pacific coming from the east, hired as many as twelve thousand Chinese to lay the track over the brutal Sierra. They had proven their ability to endure harsh weather conditions and overcome the problems of laying a grade in the sheer rocks of the mountains. Many lost their lives in landslides and other accidents. Not only did Central Pacific win the race because of the Chinese, but on April 28, 1869, one of its Chinese crews laid ten miles of track in twelve hours, beating the old Union Pacific record by two miles.¹⁴

The success of the Chinese railroad workers left whites throughout the West apprehensive; and once the railroad was completed, whites found themselves competing with thousands of those same Chinese for jobs. Concurrently, the labor movement was in full swing; management often used Chinese laborers as strike



Unidentified Chinese.
Southern Oregon
Historical Society #1156,
1145, 1153



Unidentified Chinese.
Southern Oregon
Historical Society #2459,
10561, 1154A

breakers, precipitating more conflicts — including a violent labor riot in Rock Springs, Wyoming, in which twenty-eight Chinese were killed and the rest driven from the mines.¹⁵ Legislation against the Chinese increased nationwide. In 1882, the Exclusion Act suspended Chinese immigration for twenty years; the act routinely was extended every ten years. The Scott Act of 1888 prohibited any Chinese laborers temporarily out of the United States from returning. The 1892 Geary Act deprived the Chinese of the protection of habeas corpus.

In California, state laws were passed requiring anyone convicted of a crime to have his hair cut to one inch (aimed, of course, against the Chinese queue) and refusing the Chinese permission to send their dead back to China. San Francisco made the carrying of baskets, suspended on poles, on the sidewalks an offense. Door-to-door vegetable vendors had to pay a ten-dollar fee if they peddled their wares on foot.¹⁶

Jackson County cities also passed ordinances aimed at driving out the Chinese. In the 1880s, Chinese laundries were required to pay twenty dollars a year in Jacksonville, forty dollars annually in Ashland.¹⁷

Along with the discriminatory legislation came increased violence against the Chinese throughout the West. Tacoma expelled the Chinese in November 1885; Seattle erupted into riots shortly thereafter, with mobs beating and killing the Chinese, setting fire to their houses and dynamiting their laundries. Martial law was declared and government troops were sent in to restore peace. The following February, a mob attacked the Chinese quarters of a woolen mill in Oregon City, beat and robbed its inhabitants, and forced them aboard a steamer bound for Portland.¹⁸ Also that year, mobs burned twenty-five Chinese laundries in San Francisco and set fire to the large Chinatown in Canyon City, Oregon.

Even in small Jackson County, the Chinese were not spared violence. In 1877 two Chinese were murdered in separate incidences on Jackass Creek, a mining area outside Ruch, where anti-Chinese sentiment was especially strong. The *Oregon Sentinel*, in reporting the burning of a Chinese cabin at Jackass and the

wounding of two of its occupants by gunfire, said "Feeling is strong against the Chinese among the miners of the creek, and a large number of them are perhaps implicated in this affair. Two companies of Chinese we understand have since, through fear of the whites, moved off the creek."¹⁹ That same year a Chinese woman was attacked by a group of boys, who threw a rock at her that struck her above the eye. In 1878 two attempts were made to burn down Jacksonville's Chinatown; had they been successful, the whole city might have been destroyed. In 1879, the *Oregon Sentinel* reported anti-Chinese actions in Ashland: "Last week, two of our enterprising Chinese having heard of the pure soft water of Ashland went to that town to start a wash house. They didn't start it, however, but started back to Jacksonville just ahead of a yelling crowd of men and boys who heard they had come to break ground for a Joss Temple in that pious city. Pursued by the angry crowd, the heathen missionaries struck into a rapid trot dropping bars of soap and other paraphenalia of their calling as they went. . . ."²⁰

Violence perpetrated by the anti-Chinese mobs in the 1880s, combined with a shrinking labor market and discriminatory legislation, took its toll. Chinese immigration dropped sharply from its peak of 1882, when 39,579 Chinese entered the United States, to a low point from 1884 to 1888, when less than fifty entered each year.²¹ Chinatowns throughout the West began to fade. Few Chinese remained in Jackson County by 1890, and those who did usually operated laundries or cooked for hotels or wealthy families. Any remnants of Jacksonville's Chinatown had been destroyed by 1900.²²

Two who survived the decades of prejudice and violence in Jackson County were Gin Lin and Wah Chung, both of whom were well-respected and regarded favorably in their communities. Gin Lin acquired a fortune through hydraulic mining in the Applegate Valley and Josephine County. Wah Chung worked as a Southern Pacific Railroad boss in Ashland and later operated a store and restaurant on North Main Street.

The twentieth century saw new

opportunities for Chinese in America as they began to integrate through service industries and individual enterprises. "The values that the Chinese immigrants brought with them to the new world facilitated passage of their descendants into mainstream American society," wrote Jeffrey Barlow and Christine Richardson in the text for the *Gum San* exhibit. "As a group, Chinese-Americans quickly raised their social status. They were better educated than the average, went into the professions in greater numbers, were wealthier, and their families more stable. . . . No one who understands the history of the Chinese in Gum San and their contribution to the development of the American West can doubt their ability to continue to succeed, and to continue to be a vital and important part of American life."²³



ENDNOTES

¹ Judy Yung, *Chinese Women of America: A Pictorial History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 8, 18. Yung says an estimated 85 percent of Chinese women in San Francisco were prostitutes in 1860. "Captives of an organized trade, most of these women were kidnapped, lured, or purchased by procurers in China, brought to America by importers, and sold to brothel owners who paid Chinese highbinders, policemen, and immigration officials to protect the business" (18).

² Jeffrey Barlow and Christine Richardson, *Gum San: Land of the Golden Mountain* (Bend: High Desert Museum, 1991), 4.

³ Jeffrey M. LaLande, "Sojourners in the Oregon Siskiyou: Adaptation and Acculturation of the Chinese Miners in the Applegate Valley, ca. 1855-1900" (master's thesis, Oregon State University, 1981), 12.

⁴ Barlow and Richardson, 20.

⁵ Kay Atwood, "The Chinese in Southern Oregon," *Minorities of Early Jackson County, Oregon* (Medford: Intermediate Education District, 1976), 6.

⁶ Willard and Elsie Street, *Sailors' Diggings* (Wilderville: Wilderville Press, 1973), 36.

⁷ Atwood, 7.

⁸ Atwood, 6.

⁹ Jeffrey M. LaLande, "'Celestials' in the Oregon Siskiyou," adapted from master's thesis, "Sojourners in the Oregon Siskiyou: Adaptation and Acculturation of the Chinese Miners in the Applegate Valley, ca. 1855-1900" (Oregon State University, 1981), 41.

¹⁰ *The Oregon Sentinel*, September 1, 1866, 2.

¹¹ *The Democratic Times*, June 17, 1871, February 3, 1872, August 30, 1878.

¹² *The Democratic Times*, November 1, 1878.

¹³ Robert Edward Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, 1850 to 1910* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), 12-13.

¹⁴ Barlow and Richardson, 18.

¹⁵ Barlow and Richardson, 21.

¹⁶ Wynne, 27-28.

¹⁷ Atwood, 9-10.

¹⁸ Stewart H. Holbrook, "Northwest Hysterias: The Chinese Riots," the *Sunday Oregonian*, February 28, 1937.

¹⁹ *The Oregon Sentinel*, February 7, 1877.

²⁰ *The Oregon Sentinel*, May 7, 1879.

²¹ Wynne, 284.

²² *Table Rock Sentinel*, December 1987, 10, 6.

²³ Barlow and Richardson, 26.

Catherine Noah is editor of the Table Rock Sentinel.



Gin Lin. Southern Oregon Historical Society #1142

AMERICAN CRAFTS

Photos by
Natalie Brown
and Matt Strieby



America was born and raised by its own hand. For its first two centuries, America relied on handicraft for its survival. Workers skilled in wood, clay, metal, leather, rushes, and wool created the means by which Americans ate, slept, kept warm, and provided for their families. When early Americans needed

something, they made it. When it was broken, they fixed it. Their handicrafts often were their legacies, as many tools, furniture pieces and linens far outlasted their makers.

The first American settlers learned many of their survival skills from the Indians. Their handicrafts were practical, simple in design, and as strong as the hands that made them. Their materials came from the land. They raised sheep for wool, grew flax for linen, gathered bark, straw, or vines for baskets.

In later years, as industry arose, people continued to practice handicraft for both practical reasons and pleasure. They painted glass and china or printed their own fabrics when manufactured goods became too difficult to obtain. They brightened pillows and tablecloths with needlework. They recorded family histories in colorful quilts.

As industrial advances made manufactured goods widely available, handicraft became more a hobby than a necessity. In the mid-1900s, it enjoyed new popularity as more people participated in the do-it-yourself movement, finding satisfaction in working with their own hands. Stores, publications, and exhibitions devoted to handicrafts kept the movement growing.

Today's craft movement is a mixture of hobbyists, do-it-yourselfers, and artists. Some focus on the practical applications of their craft; others concern themselves primarily with aesthetics. Some, such as Phoenix potter Jim Robinson, consider their craft a melding of past and present, of artistic endeavor and technical skill. "A communion with the earth and its materials resolved into form is the task of the artist-craftsman," Robinson says. "Each object and each day is a mystery. And the difference between *art* and *craft*? If well made, it's *craft*; it's *art* if it knocks you off your feet."

Congress, in recognition of handicrafters and their historical contributions to American society, has declared 1993 the Year of the American Craft. Local, regional, and national organizations are planning events throughout the year to increase the public's awareness of the craft movement. The following pages, dedicated to southern Oregon handicrafters and their endeavors, demonstrate the quality and diversity of local crafts.

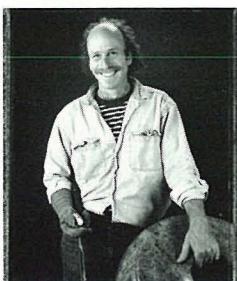


Spinner and weaver Junia Graff is the first weaver in southern Oregon to be certified by the American Craft Council for excellence in weaving. Above are samples from her portfolio.

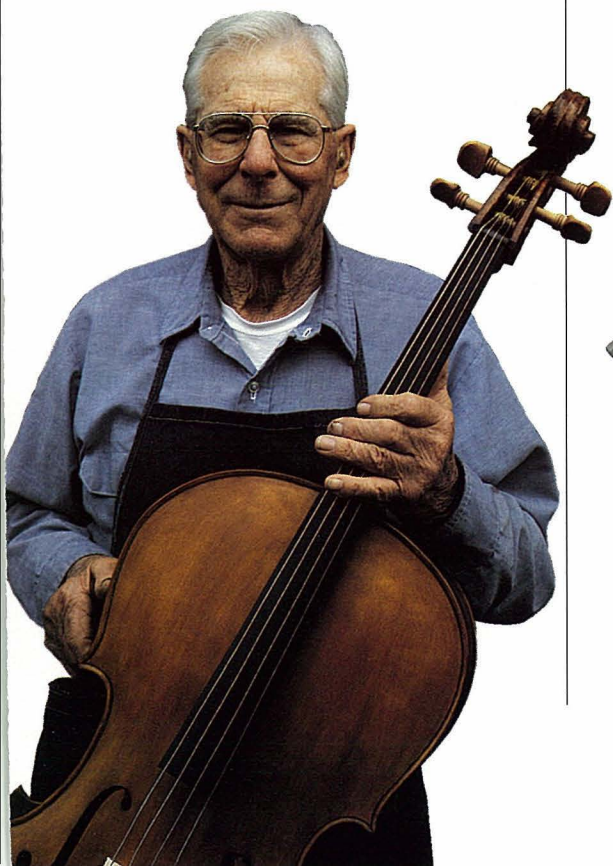
WOOD



■ Ashland woodworker Christian Burchard says at heart he's a "little boy playing in his sandbox. I substitute wood and lathe for sand and shovel. ... I want to evoke memories and fantasies, open space for the imagination."



■ Victor Gardner of Lake Creek is a self-taught surveyor, engineer and stringed instrument maker. Musicians throughout the country wait one to two years for a custom Gardner instrument.

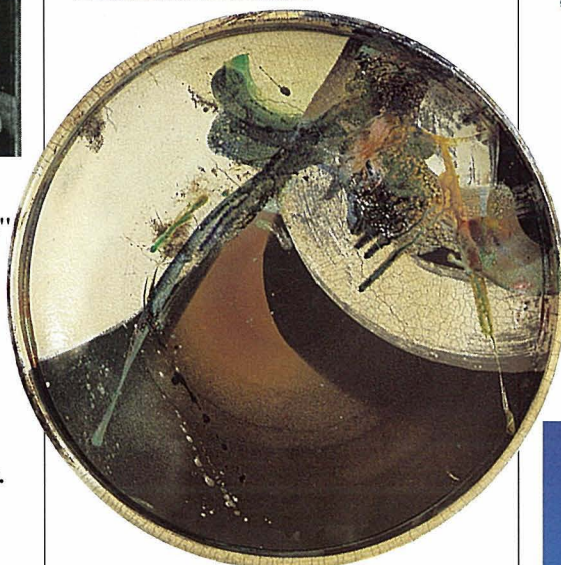


CERAMICS

■ Jim Romberg (left, his work shown at center) and Jim Robinson (right, his work shown at bottom) share friendship as well as a love for creating contemporary art from an ancient tradition. Romberg says claymaking is a "universal record of profound human meaning; a joyous celebration of response to



need, contemplation and play." For Robinson, it is a personal experience, open to others' interpretations, and "the riskiest venture of all."

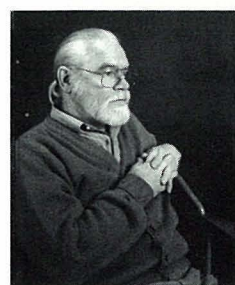


GLASS

■ Stained glass artist Andrew Tillinghast says his inspiration comes from "the ability to use a medium, which is often cold and unyielding, to create a sense of warmth and pleasure."



METAL



■ Lyle Matoush is a retired art professor at Southern Oregon State College but continues to teach others his skills in jewelry, printmaking, and ceramics.

WEAVING • LACE • TEXTILES • RUG-MAKING • DESIGN



■ John Purcell is a retired librarian from SOSOC and a weaver whose wife, Nadine, inspired him to try lace making — proving his versatility in fiber work.



■ Kay Campbell works in surface design. Her recent pieces include architectural elements "representative of perceived realities."



■ Ruth Farwell has been a crafts person all of her life, though weaving has been a love-hate affair with which she's experienced renewed romance.



■ Sari Elliott is a Cherokee Indian who trained in London. She was a Hollywood costume designer, has lived in southern Oregon for more than thirty years, and has been a weaver all her life.

Shown above and below are examples of her work.



BEADWORK



■ Rex E. Jessee says he was attracted to bead work "by the imagination and limitless possibilities of design and color."



LEATHER



■ Joyce Holt, hide tanner and performer of Native American dances, says tanning hides strikes a balance that connects the creation with the creator.



BASKETRY

■ Barbara Carse says she had taken a fifty-year hiatus from basket weaving until a 1990 workshop when "the memory was rekindled and the fun began all over." Also a spinner and weaver, Carse says "crafts that enable me to relate to pioneer ancestors give me a feeling of comfort. . . . what I create must be attractive, practical and functional."



■ Weaver Nadine Purcell became interested in baskets as another use of fibers to construct forms. She also is an accomplished knitter.



Year of the Craft

by Annin Barrett

The entire country will be honoring craftspeople and their endeavors this year thanks to Congress, which proclaimed 1993 as the Year of the American Craft. In Oregon, Governor Barbara Roberts issued a proclamation recognizing the crafts movement: "Through crafts we celebrate the diversity in our American heritage and pay tribute to the contributions of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There is a valuable history of crafts in Oregon that should be respected and supported. Oregon craftspeople deserve recognition for their achievements." From Native American basketry to Hmong needlework to Japanese ceramics to Italian stonecarving and West African tie-dyeing, Oregon abounds with cross-cultural contributions in crafts.

A common link among craftspeople of all ethnic traditions is respect for the process of making an aesthetic object. An idea is given time to gradually evolve as the craftspeople work. The long hours spent threading a loom, for example, or sanding a wooden vessel contribute to the quality and meaning of the finished object. In our fast-paced world the value of time spent creating by hand is dramatically increasing. While craft traditions are being updated by such innovations as computer-aided design, there is still a uniqueness to the handmade object.

More than 125 events, including exhibits, workshops, demonstrations, lectures, and festivals, are planned statewide to celebrate the Year of the American Craft. A free guide to these activities is available through arts and crafts organizations and at visitor information centers.

To celebrate the crafts movement locally, the Southern Oregon Historical Society will hold workshops and lectures throughout the year, featuring a different tradition each month. For more information on these events, call the Programs Division at (503) 773-6536.



Annin Barrett is the state coordinator for the Year of the American Craft 1993.

Reflections on the Past

by Joseph Cox

FILLING IN THE BLANKS

Now that we have survived the quadrennial election frenzy, we can turn our attention to the new administration's efforts to establish its own style and structure. Many Americans assume the trappings of the presidency — party affiliation, term of office, the cabinet — are ordained by the Constitution. But nothing could have been further from the Founding Fathers' minds.

Directly or indirectly, presidents, Congress, and the people throughout the years have contributed to interpreting, adapting, and filling in the constitutional blanks.

For example, no one among the founders in 1787 contemplated political

parties as we know them, certainly not the two-party system, which makes it impossible for a third party to win unless it can replace one of the existing two. This has happened only a half-dozen or so times, such as when the modern Republican party supplanted the Whigs in the 1850s. H. Ross Perot understood this, even if his followers may not have.

By the same token, as President-elect Bill Clinton proceeds to choose his cabinet, it will be a far cry from George Washington's first administration. The Constitution makes no mention of the cabinet, but merely provides for a vice president, secretaries of state, treasury, and war, and, as an afterthought, an attorney general in case legal advice might be needed.

Washington was the first occupant of a mistrusted office under a somewhat dubious constitution. Given the stormy history of this country, his main goal as first president was to ensure there would be a second president. He also understood clearly that the fledgling

nation must establish its sovereign credibility in the world to prevent its being gobbled up by one of Europe's ever-hungry empires.

Washington, largely by force of character and will, held the states together for eight years. He refused a third term, thus establishing yet another tradition which continued until Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration in 1940.

We seem to have evolved a governmental structure whose inherent strength and flexibility have been sufficient to survive profound changes over the past 200 years: the Civil War, industrialization, the westward movement, urbanization, immigration, etc.

We are about to witness its most impressive drama: peaceful transition from one political coalition, movement, party to another.



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

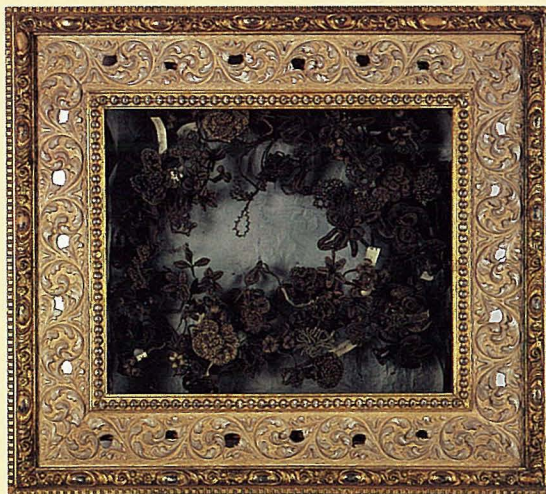
From the Collection

by Steve M. Wyatt

LOCKS OF LEGACY

Hair: a 1960s musical, the stuff that keeps barbers and beauticians employed, a gold mine for hundreds of cosmetic and shampoo companies. But oddly enough, hair has been used as a raw material by craftspeople. The gilt-framed wreath pictured here is an example of how locks of hair can be handcrafted into decorative designs. Native Americans, cowboys of the Southwest, and Victorian women all worked hair to make an incredible variety of ornamental and functional items. Native Americans wove almost every type of animal hair to make arm bands, anklets, rosettes, and parts of clothing. Southwestern cowboys during the slow winter months used horsehair to weave hat bands and ropes; even saddle blankets were plaited from hair.

Hair wreaths, such as the one featured here, usually were made by Victorian women and are, perhaps, the most intricate form of hair work. Victorian craftspeople also used hair in genealogical albums and as embroidery thread. Some of the strangest products of Victorian hair work were



the portraits and mourning jewelry crafted using the hair of the deceased.

When Minnie Newton of Ashland brought this wreath of human hair to the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1952, she explained it was made in Ohio more than a hundred years ago. This piece is a genealogist's find: the names of twenty-eight Aldred family members appear on labels that were carefully attached to their locks of hair as they were added to the wreath. The result is a unique and lasting family record.

A careful look at this seventeen-inch-diameter wreath reveals the strands of hair do not hang loose. Locks of hair were worked into fine metal wire to make petals, which form delicate hair flowers.



Steve M. Wyatt is collections manager for the Southern Oregon Historical Society. 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 Society's collection.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society
and Southern Oregon State College team up to bring you the

Oregon Trail by Bus

Visit Baker City and the new National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center by bus this spring with fellow southern Oregon history buffs. Two tours are being offered, each emphasizing the early migration to the West. Both itineraries provide plenty of time to explore the new Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill, where wagon ruts still may be seen. While traveling through Oregon's "Big Country," our highly trained staff will help you better understand how the Great Migration led to the development of the West.

April 26-May 2, 1993

Southern Oregon history author Marjorie O'Harra and her husband, Bob, will host this six-day program. The first day will feature Bend's High Desert Museum, one of the most respected natural and cultural history museums in the West. The next day promises a spectacular trip through the John Day Fossil Beds, the town of John Day (once the site of a Chinese laborer settlement), and Prairie City, ending with dinner in Baker City. Participants will spend the following morning at the Interpretive Center with the afternoon set aside for individual exploration. After two nights in Baker, the group will follow the Oregon Trail through the Powder River watershed and into LaGrande, where deep wagon ruts still traverse the Blue Mountains. Traveling on into the Umatilla Valley and through Pendleton, the group will overnight in the town of Hood River. Day five will find the group driving through the spectacular Columbia River Gorge, arriving in Portland for a two-night stay to enjoy Fort Vancouver, the John McLoughlin house and, weather permitting, the Japanese Gardens in Washington Park. On the final day, the group will drive through the Yoncalla Valley past the historic home of Charles Applegate and stop for tea at the famous Wolf Creek Tavern.

Included in the tour: All break-

fasts, a box lunch, an afternoon tea, two socials, two dinners, accommodations, transportation by first-class, air-conditioned bus, and admission to all museums and historical sites on the itinerary.

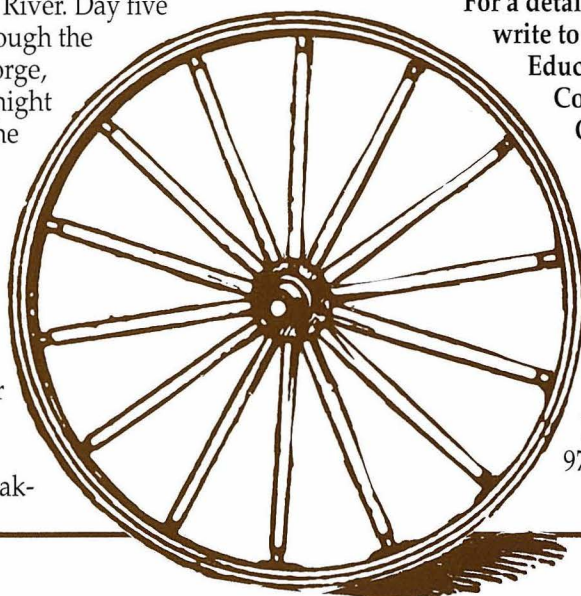
May 3-7, 1993

Departing from Ashland, participants will head east over the Cascade Mountains for a picnic lunch at Collier Memorial State Park. Continuing on through Christmas Valley, the group will overnight in Burns. Day two finds the group exploring John Day with its fascinating Chinese history and the western town of Prairie City. The following morning will be spent at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center; that afternoon, participants may try the center's hiking trails, take a self-guided walking tour of historic homes downtown, or visit the Baker City Regional Museum. On day four, the group will stop for lunch at the John Day Fossil Beds and travel on to Bend, where a gala farewell dinner is planned. On the final day, the group will visit the High Desert Museum before returning to Ashland. The tour will be led by native Oregonian and expert naturalist Vern Crawford.

Included in the tour: four breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, and two socials, accommodations, transportation by first-class, air-conditioned bus, and admission to all museums and historical sites on the itinerary.

For a detailed itinerary and program costs,
write to or call: Division of Continuing
Education, Southern Oregon State
College, Siskiyou Center, Ashland,
OR 97520, tel. (503) 552-6331.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society is dedicated to preserving, interpreting and promoting the rich history of Jackson County and southern Oregon. For information on membership, contact the Society at 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501, or call (503) 773-6536.



The Southern Oregon Historical Society
and Southern Oregon State College team up to bring you the

Oregon Trail by Bus

Visit Baker City and the new National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center by bus this spring with fellow southern Oregon history buffs. Two tours are being offered, each emphasizing the early migration to the West. Both itineraries provide plenty of time to explore the new Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill, where wagon ruts still may be seen. While traveling through Oregon's "Big Country," our highly trained staff will help you better understand how the Great Migration led to the development of the West.

April 26-May 2, 1993

Southern Oregon history author Marjorie O'Harra and her husband, Bob, will host this six-day program. The first day will feature Bend's High Desert Museum, one of the most respected natural and cultural history museums in the West. The next day promises a spectacular trip through the John Day Fossil Beds, the town of John Day (once the site of a Chinese laborer settlement), and Prairie City, ending with dinner in Baker City. Participants will spend the following morning at the Interpretive Center with the afternoon set aside for individual exploration. After two nights in Baker, the group will follow the Oregon Trail through the Powder River watershed and into LaGrande, where deep wagon ruts still traverse the Blue Mountains. Traveling on into the Umatilla Valley and through Pendleton, the group will overnight in the town of Hood River. Day five will find the group driving through the spectacular Columbia River Gorge, arriving in Portland for a two-night stay to enjoy Fort Vancouver, the John McLoughlin house and, weather permitting, the Japanese Gardens in Washington Park. On the final day, the group will drive through the Yoncalla Valley past the historic home of Charles Applegate and stop for tea at the famous Wolf Creek Tavern.

Included in the tour: All break-

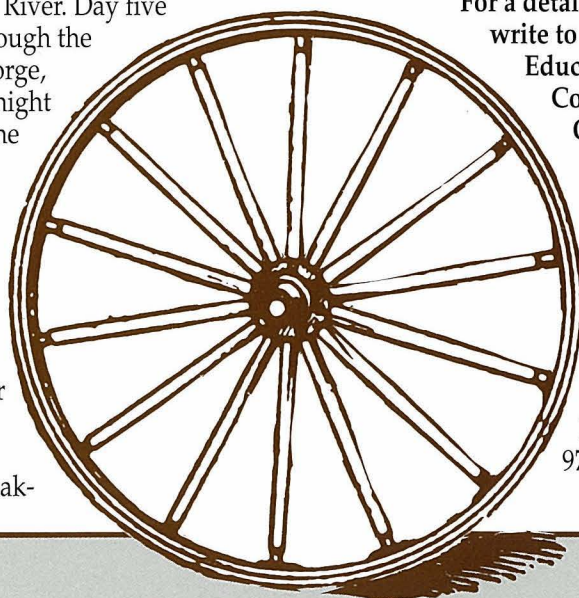
fasts, a box lunch, an afternoon tea, two socials, two dinners, accommodations, transportation by first-class, air-conditioned bus, and admission to all museums and historical sites on the itinerary.

May 3-7, 1993

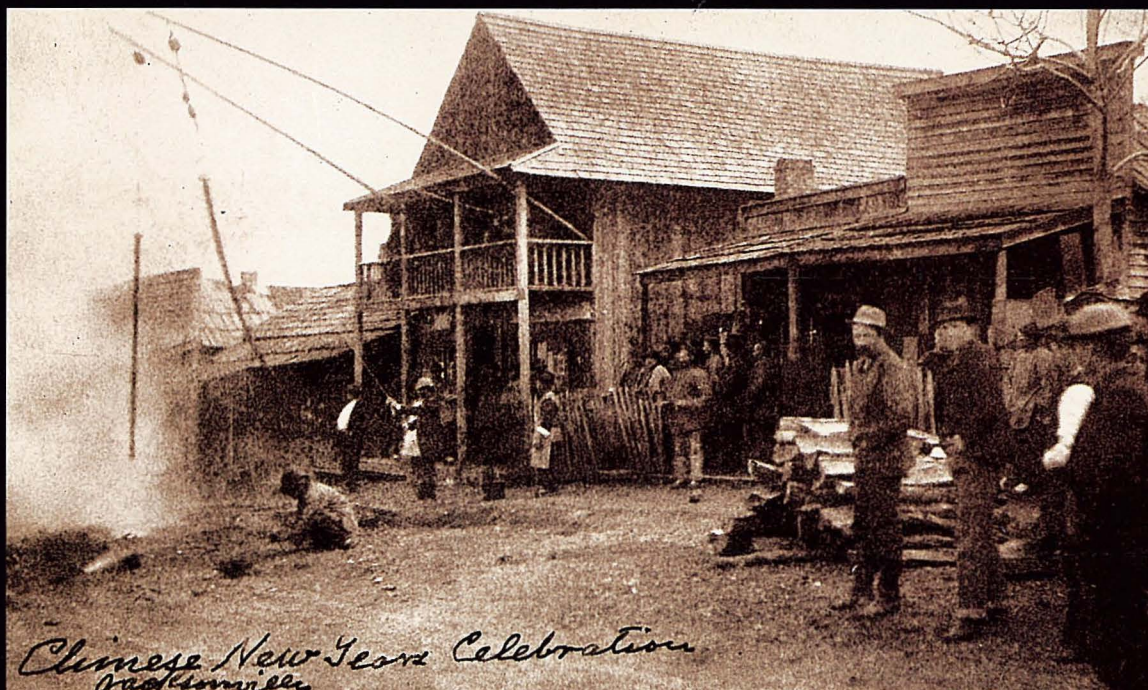
Departing from Ashland, participants will head east over the Cascade Mountains for a picnic lunch at Collier Memorial State Park. Continuing on through Christmas Valley, the group will overnight in Burns. Day two finds the group exploring John Day with its fascinating Chinese history and the western town of Prairie City. The following morning will be spent at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center; that afternoon, participants may try the center's hiking trails, take a self-guided walking tour of historic homes downtown, or visit the Baker City Regional Museum. On day four, the group will stop for lunch at the John Day Fossil Beds and travel on to Bend, where a gala farewell dinner is planned. On the final day, the group will visit the High Desert Museum before returning to Ashland. The tour will be led by native Oregonian and expert naturalist Vern Crawford.

Included in the tour: four breakfasts, two lunches, two dinners, and two socials, accommodations, transportation by first-class, air-conditioned bus, and admission to all museums and historical sites on the itinerary.

For a detailed itinerary and program costs, write to or call: Division of Continuing Education, Southern Oregon State College, Siskiyou Center, Ashland, OR 97520, tel. (503) 552-6331.



The Southern Oregon Historical Society is dedicated to preserving, interpreting and promoting the rich history of Jackson County and southern Oregon. For information on membership, contact the Society at 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501, or call (503) 773-6536.



106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501-5925

Non-profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Permit No. 164
Medford, OR

The
Magazine
of the
Southern
Oregon
Historical
Society