

# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

\$5.95

Vol. 1, No. 2 • THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Fall 1995



## TWO FACES OF WORLD WAR II:

**THE UNSUNG  
STRUGGLE OF A  
JACKSON  
COUNTY BRIDE**

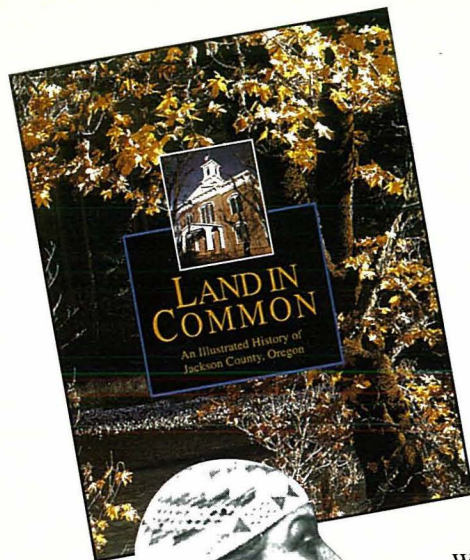
**A FULL-THROTTLE  
RIDE WITH  
FIGHTER ACE  
MARION CARL**

## PLUS...

**NEW LIFE FOR  
LOWER  
KLAMATH LAKE**  
BY DOUG FOSTER

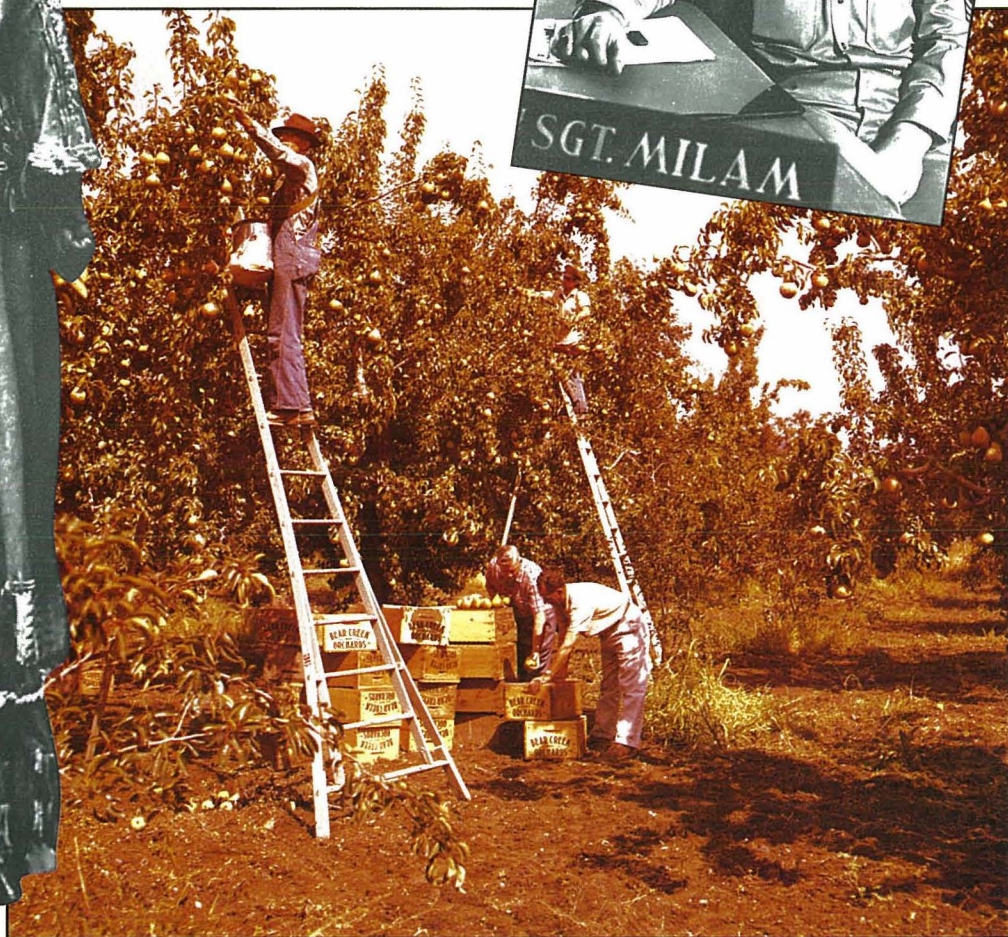


# LAND IN COMMON



**L**avishly illustrated with memorable photographs from a century of life in Jackson County, *LAND IN COMMON: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon* will delight young and old, newcomers and native Oregonians alike. From the American Indians who once inhabited the Rogue Valley to the orchard barons who found “gold” in the valley’s fertile earth to the World War II soldiers who turned the Agate Desert into a sprawling city, *LAND IN COMMON* will open your eyes to the women and men whose roots still run deep throughout this land.

To order your copy of *LAND IN COMMON*, contact the Southern Oregon Historical Society, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501-5926, tele. (503) 773-6536, FAX (503) 776-7994.





# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Vol. 1, No. 2 • THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Fall 1995

## FEATURES

- Marion E. Carl with Barrett Tillman. "Flying High with a Southern Oregon War Hero." An excerpt from the autobiography, *Pushing the Envelope*. 4
- Natalie Brown. "For the Record: Press Photography and Local History." *Mail Tribune* pictures document daily life in the Rogue Valley. 6
- Molly Kerr. "What's Past is Prologue: The Bard Celebrates Sixty Years in Ashland." A retrospective of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. 14
- Doug Foster. "Refuge Reclaimed: The Birth, Death, and Revival of the First National Waterfowl Refuge." After hanging in the balance, this historic preserve finds new life. 22
- "Remembering Ginger, 1911-1995". A photo essay bids a fond farewell to Southern Oregon's Ginger Rogers. 27
- Kay Atwood. "Claiming the Land." Rogue Valley settlers transformed the wilderness and brought certain change. 28
- Jeff LaLande. "When Southern Oregon was a 'Little Kansas': The Populist Movement of the 1890s." The People's party threatened politics as usual in Jackson County. 32



John Beeson was an unsung hero in his time for his selfless work on behalf of the Indians in southern Oregon. See page 10 to learn of his role as a pacifier.



COURTESY OF NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS

Above: Aviation hero Marion Carl, now retired in Roseburg, gave his all at Guadalcanal. [see page 4.]

Cover: Preserved for posterity, this photo inspired memories of loved ones on the homefront. [see page 40.]

## DEPARTMENTS

- 2 EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK  
Karla K. Powell.
- 3 GUEST EDITORIAL  
Jay Mullen.
- 9 THEN AND NOW  
Medford's Central Fire Hall.
- 10 OREGON PIONEER  
John Beeson.
- 19 SIGNPOSTS  
Oregon Caves.
- 20 EXHIBIT FEATURE  
Eagle Point Historical Society.
- 39 CALENDAR
- 40 OUR OWN VOICES  
Virginia Fredenburg Younger recalls hard times on the home front during World War II.
- 42 LANDMARKS  
The 1883 Jackson County Courthouse.
- 45 COLLECTIONS HIGHLIGHTS  
Antique portable desks.

### Southern Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees

Lana McGraw Boldt, Ashland, *President*  
Jon Deason, Medford, *First Vice President*  
Mary Barker, Grants Pass, *Second Vice President*  
Anne Billeter, Medford, *Secretary*  
Alice Mullaly, Central Point, *Treasurer*  
Vern Arnold, Medford  
Judith Barr, Medford  
Robert Bowers, Central Point  
Cheryl Breeden, Medford  
James Kuntz, Medford  
Elizabeth Manuel, Medford  
Nancy McGrew, Medford  
Ann Moore, Medford

Janie Stewart, Talent  
Samuel Whitford, Medford  
Lois Wilson, Eagle Point

### Administrative Staff

Samuel J. Wegner, *Executive Director*  
Brad Linder, *Historic Resources Director*  
Carol Bruce-Fritz, *Programs Director*  
Maureen Smith, *Finance Director*  
Patty O'Neil, *Public Relations & Marketing Coordinator*  
Susan Cox-Smith, *Membership Coordinator*

*Southern Oregon Heritage* is published quarterly by the Southern Oregon Historical Society as a membership benefit. Other benefits include monthly newsletter *Artifacts*, discounts at the

Society's History Stores, and invitations to programs and special events. Administrative, membership, and editorial offices are at the Southern Oregon History Center, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501-5926. Back issues of *Southern Oregon Heritage* and *Oregon Heritage* are available for \$5.95 each.

**Staff:** Samuel J. Wegner, *Executive Editor*; Karla K. Powell, *Managing Editor*; Tracy Calvert-Jantz, *Art Director and Production Manager*; and Michael Leonard, *Photographer and Production Assistant*.

**Thanks to:** Jacque Sundstrand, Carol Harbison-Samuels, and Bill Snowman.

*Southern Oregon Heritage* is produced using Quark XPress on Macintosh computers and is printed by Ram Offset Lithographers, White City.

**Copyright ©1995** by Southern Oregon Historical Society, ISSN #1082-2003. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be printed or electronically duplicated without the written permission of the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



SOUTHERN  
OREGON  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY





## World War II: Private Battles, Public Record

by Karla Powell

**A**s worldwide commemorations of the 50th anniversary of World War II draw to a close, so, too, do ours at the Southern Oregon Historical Society. Our popular World War II exhibit, "Give It Your Best!" ends in September; and in this issue of the

magazine we offer two widely different stories of wartime bravery. On page 4 is an excerpt from the autobiography of fighter ace Marion Carl, a retired Marine Corps Major General who lives in Roseburg. His insider's view takes readers into the heat of battle during the campaign at Guadalcanal. On the homefront, Virginia Fredenburg Younger of Medford recalls the quiet courage of those whose fate was to anxiously wait — and hope for the best (Our Own Voices, page 40).

Courage. I've tossed that word around a lot in my mind this past year, especially as it relates to the terrors of war. Like most people who were not touched directly by it, World War II was no more than a notion to me, filtered through the images of Hollywood and *Life* magazine, or gleaned from the vague references of my parents. During this past anniversary, I had the singular experience of revisiting D-Day through my father's eyes, via an unexpected encounter with the oral historian at the United States Naval Institute in Annapolis. Paul Stillwell's enthusiasm over the tattered snapshots my father had sent home (complete with editorial comment on the back) led to an entire chapter in his book of first-person accounts from the sea services. The resulting tribute to "Civilians in Uniforms" — based on an interview with the commanding officer of my father's landing ship tank — not

only heightened my appreciation for what the Normandy Invasion demanded of its participants; it also opened my eyes to the invaluable role of historical societies in recording our life experiences.

Although I assured Mr. Stillwell that my father would have been a superb interview subject, his editorial skills fall just short of clairvoyant communication with the dead. It was a profound sadness for me that my father could not bear witness as his World War II experience was woven into the official fabric of history. Yet a deeper sadness was that my father and I had not shared his experience on a personal level. When I related my regret to Mr. Stillwell, he assured me it was all too common; and that he often is embraced by those he interviews for the simple fact that he serves as a keeper of their stories. At our own historical society, we are graced with Marjorie Edens, who has served as the keeper of southern Oregonians' stories for almost twenty years. I, for one, will always wonder at the stories within each of us, and never will forget the price for not listening.

During the year I spent with the Naval Institute, the stories I heard time and again were the stories of men and women displaying the purest of courage while facing the surest of evils. Until then, war for me had always been an abstraction. Now, through these most intense of testaments, it took on a distressing reality. With the commemorative speeches and reenactments of World War II's 50th anniversary already fading into the past, we must stay mindful of the realism of *all* war.

We also would do well to recognize those historians who zealously record the minutiae, which allows us to appreciate the entirety of world events.

It is far too easy to succumb to romanticization when our war stories only recall the hero's glory and overlook the understated truths. There is no denying the noble side of war. Yet we must recognize that it springs from our impulse to battle those dark forces of history that we ourselves create.



*Karla Powell joined the Society last May. This issue marks her debut as the new managing editor of Southern Oregon Heritage.*

### Southern Oregon Heritage Editorial Guidelines

Feature articles average 2,500 to 3,000 (pre-edited) words. Standard articles range from 1,500 to 2,000 words. Other material, such as poetry, essays, reviews, and short fiction, range from 100 to 1,500 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on either 5-1/2- or 3-1/4-inch disks and should be accompanied by a hard-copy printout. Cite all sources and construct endnotes and outlines using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The author is responsible for verification of cited facts. A selection of professional, unscreened photographs and/or line art should accompany submissions—black-and-white or color. The Southern Oregon Historical Society reserves the right to use Society images in place of submitted material. All material should be labeled with author's name, mailing address, and telephone number. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped with sufficient postage.

Authors should provide a brief, two- or three-sentence autobiographical note at the end of manuscripts.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society secures rights to full and final editing of all manuscripts, layout design, and one-time North American serial rights. Authors will be notified of acceptance of manuscripts within thirty days after receiving materials. In most cases, payment is upon publication. *Southern Oregon Heritage* takes great care with all submitted material, but is not responsible for damage or loss. Only photocopies of irreplaceable original historical documents should be submitted. Facts, views, and opinions expressed in signed submissions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints or opinions of *Southern Oregon Heritage* or the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



# Backed by Popular Demand

by Jay Mullen

The heinous Oklahoma City bombing and the "militia movement" linked to it may be stark expressions of a recurrent theme in American history — distrust of government — but closer analysis suggests less obvious historical interpretations.

For rational people the recent Oklahoma tragedy invites responses like "wanton and senseless," not to mention "insane!" It would be an egregious error to dismiss the Oklahoma City bombing solely as the unfathomable act of a deranged personality. When looking at history, we ignore social context at our peril.

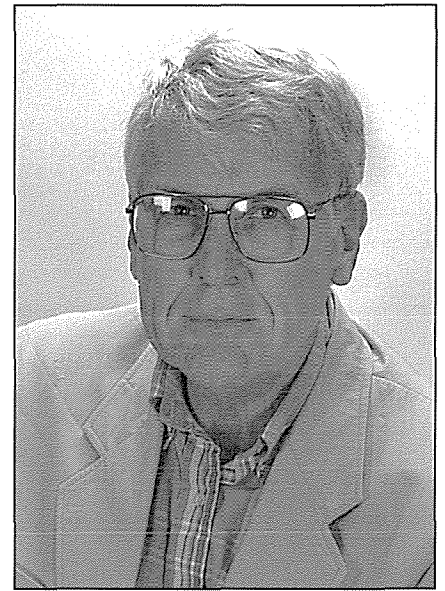
Thoreau remarked that "Men lead lives of quiet desperation." Perhaps nothing induces more quiet despair among modern people than anxiety about economic security. History repeatedly reveals stress-induced responses to economic uncertainty: England's Luddites frantically destroying machines they believed threatened their livelihood as laborers; Irish families wrenched into emigration by the spectre of famine. In America, Pontiac and Tecumseh, not to mention southern Oregon's Chief Sam, rallied Indian tribes who felt pressured by the encroachment of a new economy. Agrarian South Carolinians, facing diminished incomes from over-farmed cotton lands, defied protectionist tariffs, which they believed benefitted manufacturers at farmers' expense. Their Nullification Crisis, which mobilized resistance to Andrew Jackson and the federal government, subsided only when political compromise averted armed conflict. In this issue of *Southern Oregon Heritage*, Ashland historian Jeff LaLande writes of Jackson County's Populist politics in the 1890s, when local farmers attempted to gain control over their economic destiny.

Of course economic change does not always foster poignant or violent reactions. Consider Douglas County's Stumbo clan, who invoked raucous humor to upbraid the government that confounded their livelihood. Like Lilliputians they bound the Gulliver bureaucracy with its own red tape. Today's disaffected miners, ranchers, and irrigationists — along with other members of the "Counties Movement," "Sagebrush Rebellion," and private militias — would do well to study the legal clarity of the Stumbos' position when they confronted the government in 1956.

The state, when constructing Highway 99, had neglected to acquire an easement across 16 1/2 feet of Stumbo property near Azalea. When officials apparently ignored repeated entreaties to install a signal light to slow traffic where Stumbo logging operations crossed the road, the exasperated family barricaded the right-of-way (among the stalled traffic was an entire circus). The Stumbos then proceeded to distribute a broadside to their captive audience backed up for miles on end. It said:

In these days of State owned roads, State controlled schools, State owned and operated liquor stores, and a multitude of State laws, assessments and taxes, this is to advise you that you are about to pass over 16 1/2 feet of privately owned highway. We sincerely hope that you can sympathize with our position as the forgotten man — the taxpayer — and that you have not been too greatly inconvenienced..

Signed: THE STUMBO HEIRS




The protesting logging family then allowed traffic to resume and repaired to the Wolf Creek Tavern. Meanwhile, although the government acknowledged the validity of the Stumbos' claim, still more shenanigans were required to engage the gears of government. After threatening to charge

tolls, the Stumbos then subdivided the property into .000000638 acre parcels, which they offered for sale, "so that the Stumbo Strip on U.S. Highway 99 shall forever remain in the hands of the American people where it belongs," they declared.

The Stumbos emerged as folk heroes, while quitclaim deeds to "The Strip" were distributed across the country. All the while, the soundness of the Stumbo family's position had been established by attorney Corinne Stumbo. Recognizing a good story, Twentieth Century Fox filmed "The Stubborn Stumbos" for television. The film itself proved to be an interesting historical document since its producers chose to attribute Corinne Stumbo's role to a man!

Political correctness aside, could citizen disaffection be resolved with such good humor in our current political climate? Today's expression of discontent is decidedly disturbing. Armed citizenry stockpile weapons and undergo paramilitary training in anticipation of a showdown with their government, citing the precedent of Minute Men. While a Klamath County squatter asserts that the government has no constitutional authority to possess land, Lake and Coos County commissioners maneuver with advocates of local control of federal lands.

So as the dizzying changes of our modern economy continue to displace workers, government policies are excoriated as the reason for our ruination. The deficit! Health care costs! Junk bonds and leveraged buyouts! Increased grazing fees! Finite water resources! Free trade! Illegal immigration! Environmental regulation! Perhaps we all could benefit from late-night reruns of "The Stubborn Stumbos," to remind us that good humor plays a role in political protest! 

Jay Mullen is an associate professor of history at Southern Oregon State College in Ashland. His article, "The Party of Hicks and Hayseeds," published in the Fall 1992 issue of *Table Rock Sentinel*, discusses the Populist movement in southern Oregon.



# Flying High with a Southern Oregon War Hero

*F*ighter ace Marion E. Carl was born on an Oregon homestead in 1915. His parents had earlier emigrated from Iowa to initially settle near the Coquille River in southwest Oregon. In this excerpt, adapted from his recent memoir, *Pushing the Envelope* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Md.), the retired Marine Corps Major General, who now lives near Roseburg, takes readers full throttle into the pivotal Pacific campaign at Guadalcanal.

Carl's imposing list of "firsts" began with his World War II career—when he became the first Marine Corps ace, among the first Marines ever to fly a helicopter, and first Marine to land a jet aboard an aircraft carrier. Such achievements led to Carl also being the first living Marine admitted to the Naval Aviation Hall of Honor.

In peacetime Carl gained fame for "pushing the envelope" as a test pilot, adding the world's altitude and speed records to his wartime feats and becoming the first U.S. military aviator to wear a full pressure suit. These accomplishments led to yet another historic initiation for Carl — that of being the first Marine named to the Navy Carrier Aviation Test Pilots Hall of Honor. Following his stellar military career, he retired to southern Oregon — an area he deemed the best of all possible spots.

After Midway I figured I had been through the worst. At the time we didn't know where we might be sent, but it was obvious something was brewing. On 7 August the 1st Marine Division landed at Guadalcanal, in the first American offensive of the war in the Pacific, and secured the airfield the Japanese were building.

We knew little about conditions on "the Canal." When our squadron landed on the 20th, we discovered a narrow beachhead that lacked even rudimentary facilities. As deplorable as

living conditions were at Henderson Field — named in honor of Major Lofton R. Henderson, who had been killed in a dive-bomber at Midway — we could only guess what they were like for the infantry. Early in the morning of 21 August we were awakened by heavy gunfire from the perimeter, about a mile and a half away. I remember thinking, "I sure hope those guys on the line can hold them." But hold them they did.

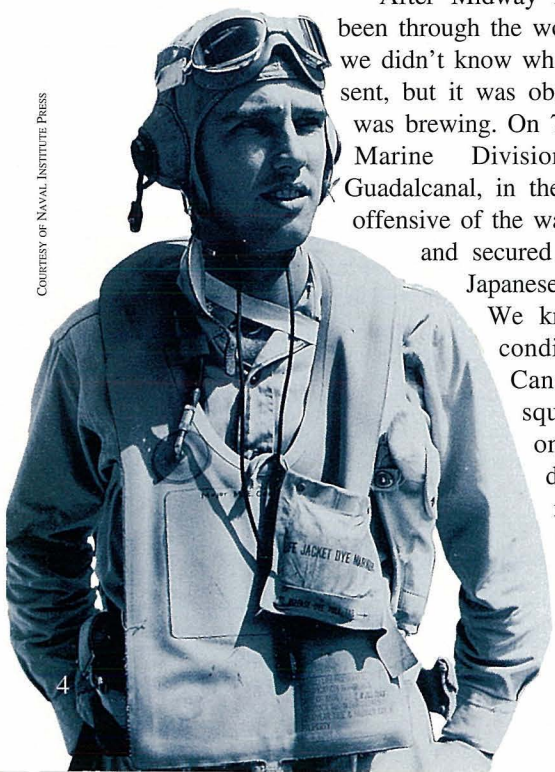
In the predawn hours of the twenty-fourth, a Japanese submarine lobbed some shells into our perimeter, and a bombing raid arrived that afternoon. It was the squadron's first big combat, and we scrambled fourteen Wildcats to intercept two separate enemy formations totaling about forty fighters and bombers. I was over the water, well north of the field, when I glanced down and saw a formation of Japanese bombers. It was almost like the Midway setup, but without escorting Zeros [Japanese fighter planes]. I rolled into an overhead pass and splashed one bomber. Then things fell apart. My division split up and I lost contact with the other three pilots, but we continued to hammer away at the bombers.

The fight was very confusing because it involved twenty-one planes from the Japanese carrier *Ryujo* plus some twenty twin-engine Bettys from Rabaul. It's almost impossible to sort out which enemy formation we hit first. I dropped a second bomber in another overhead run and shot a Zero off Lindley's tail. As the fight drifted toward Henderson, I claimed another bomber. These four kills made me an ace, the first in Marine Corps history, but that thought didn't occur to me at the time.

The pattern began to repeat itself: nocturnal shellings and bombings, followed by daytime air attacks. We maintained standing patrols but couldn't always intercept in time, which is what happened the twenty-fifth. An estimated twenty-one bombers, plus fighters, came over at 23,000 feet. But we lacked radar, and the coast watchers, later so splendidly effective, weren't in position yet. I logged three frustrating hours on that mission without firing a round.

Part of the problem was the Wildcat. Combat loaded, it took about forty-five minutes to reach 30,000 feet, so we had to maintain standing patrols. That in turn meant we couldn't meet most raids in force because we couldn't keep enough fighters airborne simultaneously. Things worked better on the twenty-sixth, however, when we tangled with about sixteen Bettys and a dozen Zeros, and I splashed a Zero from a high-side run.

I was feeling pretty good about the situation as I entered the pattern and lowered my wheels. Suddenly I was jumped by an



COURTESY OF NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS



audacious Zero pilot who apparently had trailed me back to the field. I dived for the nearest antiaircraft gun position, which opened fire and drove off the Zero. Meanwhile I was busily cranking up my landing gear, shoving on full throttle. There wasn't much hope of catching the Zero, since he was faster and had a head start besides. But as we approached the coast I saw his wing come down and, sure enough, he turned back into me. Just over the beach we bored at each other head-on, but I wanted to hold my fire until I was sure he was within range. Then he pulled almost straight up in that startling climb that only Zeros could perform. I had no choice but to try and match him; otherwise he would have a decisive altitude advantage. At nearly full deflection I got my lead and fired. The Zero blew up, raining pieces down on the beach. That was our seventh day on Guadalcanal. I had flown six missions totaling thirteen hours and claimed six victories in three combats.

On 9 September I was flying my thirteenth mission at Guadalcanal. Maybe a numerologist could have predicted what happened next. I was in my old number thirteen Wildcat, and had just made my thirteenth kill when, next thing I knew, I was sitting in a flying junk heap with a fire in the cockpit. Some crafty Zero pilot had hit me before I even knew he was there. I had no choice—I slid back the canopy, undid my safety harness, and went over the side at 22,000 feet. Fortunately, I made a safe landing in the water about thirty miles from base. My return from the dead caused quite a sensation, but I was darned if I was going to let superstition get the better of me. So I set about picking out a new Wildcat and immediately had a number thirteen painted on it.

On 30 September, Admiral Chester Nimitz arrived on an inspection trip. I had seen him only once before, at Midway, but got a chance to talk to him the next day. I really admired him. There weren't many four-stars who got within shooting distance of the enemy, and his concern for his people was genuine. When he decorated John Smith ("Smitty"), Bob Galer, and me with the Navy Cross, our aggregate score at that time was about forty-three enemy aircraft, so no doubt the medals were deserved.

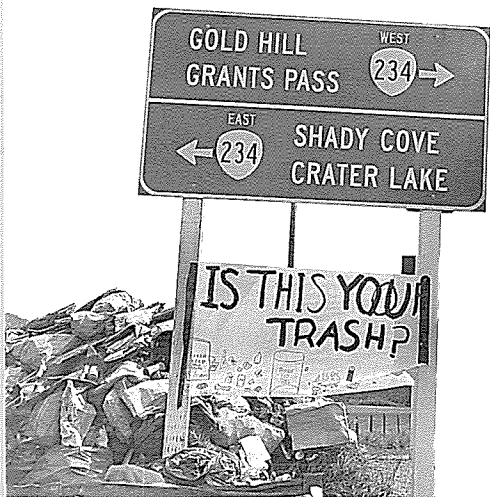
When VMF-223 left Guadalcanal on 12 October, the squadron was credited with 110 aerial victories since 20 August, but at a price of 57 percent casualties among our own pilots—six killed and six wounded—plus some losses from other squadrons on detached duty. Our war temporarily was over. I looked forward to going home. 🏠

*Adapted with permission from the Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, publishers of the 1994 autobiography Pushing the Envelope: The Career of Fighter Ace and Test Pilot Marion Carl, by Major General Marion E. Carl, USMC (Ret.), with Barrett Tillman.*

Left: Marine ace Marion Carl would soon make aviation history.

Right: Carl savors his backyard view of the Umpqua River.





This photo revealed area students' campaign to clean up the environment, April 1970.

# For the Record:

## Press Photography and Local History

by Natalie Brown

"Nothing is as stale as yesterday's newspaper." This truism may address the fleeting nature of the daily news, but overlooks the press' contributions to an area's historical record. Early newspaper photography offers unique perspectives and visual clues to a past era, as can be seen through a collection of photographs from the 1950s through the early 1970s donated by the Medford *Mail Tribune* to the Southern Oregon Historical Society. Like other daily and weekly newspapers, the *Mail Tribune* had collected thousands of photographs illustrating the lives and environment of southern Oregon citizens. Examined as part of a newspaper's daily offering, the pictures of awards and accidents, political campaigns and construction zones, function as tools to present news or to capture the attention of readers. Examined as a collection, however, the images become invaluable historical documents of the changing cultural landscape of southern Oregon.

Although newspapers rely on images for content and to attract readers, historians and researchers regularly turn to photographs to uncover information. Photography often gathers information more rapidly—and more completely—than a written record. As anthropologists Malcolm and John Collier, Jr., noted: "The critical eye of the camera is an essential tool in gathering accurate visual information because we moderns are often poor observers."<sup>1</sup> A 1956 news photograph taken of a politician glad-handing passers-by on a busy street yields more information than the mere mug shot of the celebrity. Later scrutiny may reveal the identities of supporters and detractors, successful and failing businesses, clues to the

size and scope of the community, economic conditions, local interests, and more. The single image, initially taken for its day's news value, ultimately becomes a keeper of information for generations.

By its very technology, photography can claim to represent reality. This is not to say that the camera never lies. Photographs have been manipulated at least since the camera's earliest applications, when in 1840 Hippolyte Bayard staged his "Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man," a shocking image designed to redress the lack of attention to his photographic work.<sup>2</sup> Yet images presented as photojournalism—whether enlarged, reduced, cropped, or distorted—still presume that what is shown in the picture actually existed. For example, a recent exhibit at the Society showed the work of early twentieth-century photographer and sociologist Lewis Hine,

whose depictions of children working in squalid factories prompted the passage of child labor laws. When questioned about his use of photography in this effort, he replied, "If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera."<sup>3</sup> In another example, the press camera contributed to radical changes in the game of football. A press photo of battered players in a 1905 game between Pennsylvania State University and Swarthmore College came



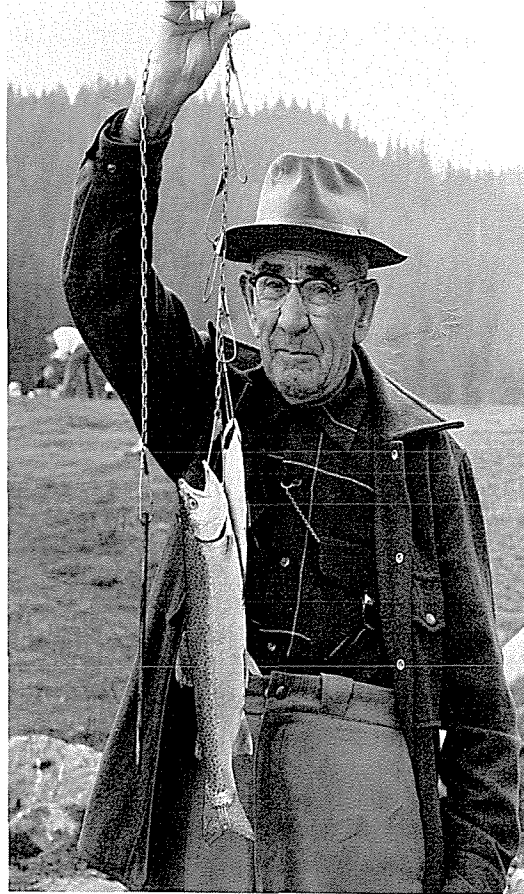
Oregon State University graduate students Sheila McKay, Marilyn Martin, and David Lindstrom examined a model of the Apollo XI lunar module, which was on display as part of a moon rock exhibit held in Medford in the early 1970s. Space exploration captured the public's interest in the 1960s and 1970s.



to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. The president was so angered at the image of Swarthmore's mangled player Bob Maxwell that he issued an immediate ultimatum—that if rough play continued, he would abolish the game by executive edict.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, the selection of an image to represent “reality” may in fact underscore a point of view. The famous 1972 photograph of a naked and screaming South Vietnamese child burnt by napalm brought home a previously unseen aspect of the Vietnam War and undoubtedly contributed to the protest movement against American involvement. Critics may say that newspapers could have published a less shocking image. Yet, in a society bombarded with visual stimuli, the ante for viewers’ attention keeps getting raised. Responsible newspapers must juggle visual impact with fair depiction. Those that violate press ethics are frequently called to task by irate readers.<sup>5</sup> Community newspapers stay in business by striving for accuracy in visual as well as written presentations.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the value of photojournalism lies not only in its technology, but also in its context. During the 1950s and 1960s, Americans were enamored of visual media; *Life* magazine counted 8.5 million subscribers<sup>7</sup> and television brought moving pictures to many households. Most community newspapers



This timeless portrait of an elderly gentleman and his day's catch was taken April 25, 1964.

were locally owned and operated. To be successful, they developed close community relationships, offering news and events relevant to readers. Their photographs reflected this viewpoint, lending credence to the anthropological dictum: “Every culture must be seen on its own terms.” Newspapers portrayed activities deemed important by their readers — from “hard” news of changing politics or land development to “soft” social features and school activities. Newspapers from small, rural communities commonly featured agricultural images; whereas publications from larger, economically diverse cities contained images of industry and cultural attractions. Historians who strive to understand events within the context of the time period find press photography collections to be indicators of how newspapers interpret “community,” as well as how a community defines itself.

The *Mail Tribune* collection from the 1950s through the early 1970s gives such glimpses into the lifestyles and values of Rogue Valley residents of that era. These images portray pride in community growth: new shopping centers, schools, and recreation sites; automobile and space technology; and science fairs. Also represented are citizen concerns and misfortunes: anti-pollution campaigns; service organization food drives; children’s safety classes; and devastating fires, frosts, and floods. Thousands of residents

This 1963 photograph of a policewoman is dated by the office teletype and other technology.

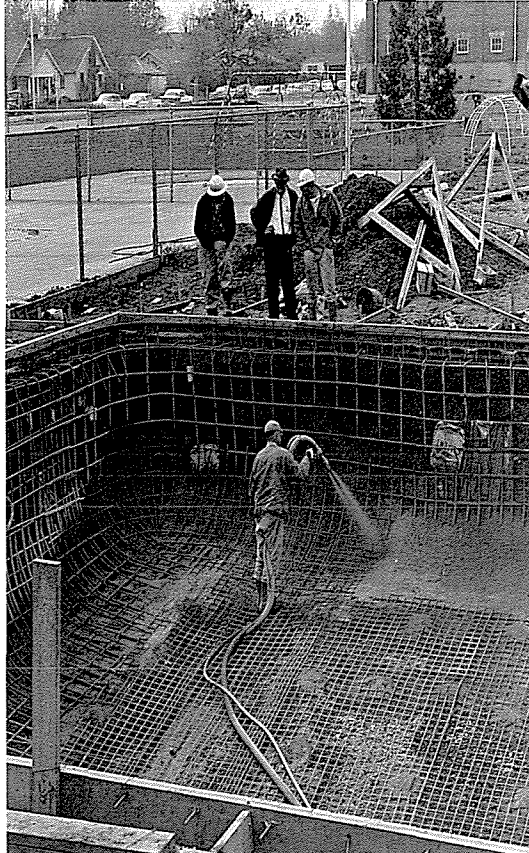


Members of the a local women’s club gathered for a tea in September 1964. Clothing, gestures, and home decor provide information about social gatherings in the 1960s.





are profiled with their accomplishments or handicaps: county fair champions, sports fishermen, accident victims, triumphant or dejected athletes and politicians, bank executives, artisans, and children. These daily news records offer today's viewers a precious mirror into the past. With fresh insights born from distance, we can reflect on the perspectives of a previous generation, as well as make comparisons with Rogue Valley life today. Some of the issues have changed—litter control campaigns now take a back seat to budget reductions and land-use battles; space technology competes with cyberspace for our attention. Yet, in these countless images we also see earlier versions of ourselves. As Ansel Adams commented in an introduction to *Jacob Riis: Photographer & Citizen* (1974): "These people live again in print as intensely as when their images were captured.... I am walking in their alleys, standing in their rooms and sheds and workshops, looking in and out of their windows." So, too, can we say of the Rogue Valley residents who, seen through these collected photographs, transcend the "news" to become keys to our collective past and lessons for our future. 🏠



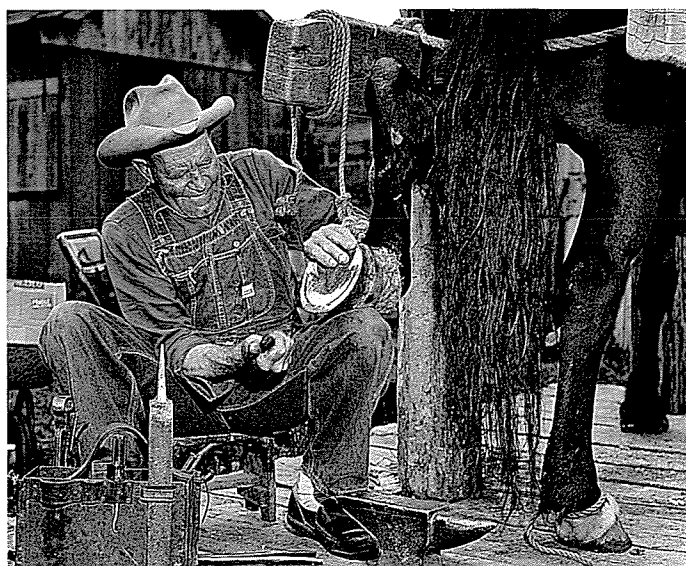
Construction progresses on the Jackson diving pool in Medford, May 1963.

The former art director and head of photography for the Society, Natalie Brown is currently residing near Santa Fe, New Mexico. She is the art director for *Stereophile* magazine, and freelances articles and photography relating to Western culture and history.

#### ENDNOTES

1. John Collier, Jr., and Malcolm Collier, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 5.
2. Fred Ritchin, *In Our Own image: The Coming Revolution in Photography* (New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1990), 13.
3. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 185.
4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet Books, 1964), 180.
5. During the mid-1980s, *National Geographic* heavily manipulated a cover image photograph, and the resulting controversy caused Thomas Kennedy, director of photography, to assert: "There was so much negative fallout that we'd be extremely reluctant to do that again."
6. Current computer technology permits subtle and blatant manipulation of photographs; many responsible newspapers clearly credit such images not as photographs but as "computer-altered images" or "computer illustrations." Media that present altered images as strict reality may find themselves taken to task by outraged readers, as in the case of a recent news magazine that published images of murder suspect O.J. Simpson altered to make him appear more sinister.
7. Gisele Freund, *Photography & Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, Pub., 1980), 143.

Unlike many professions, a farrier working in the 1960s revealed little difference in techniques and tools with such tradesmen today.



This photograph taken in April 1970 documents area students' campaign to fight air pollution.





# From Firehouse to Coffeehouse

After World War II much of what remained in downtown Medford did battle with the cement mixer and trowel, and lost. The brick and stone work so carefully crafted at the turn of the century gave way, as block after block was smoothed into a concrete corridor. One landmark that has survived many incarnations is the Central Fire Hall, Medford's first real city hall, which stands at the southeast corner of Sixth and Front streets.

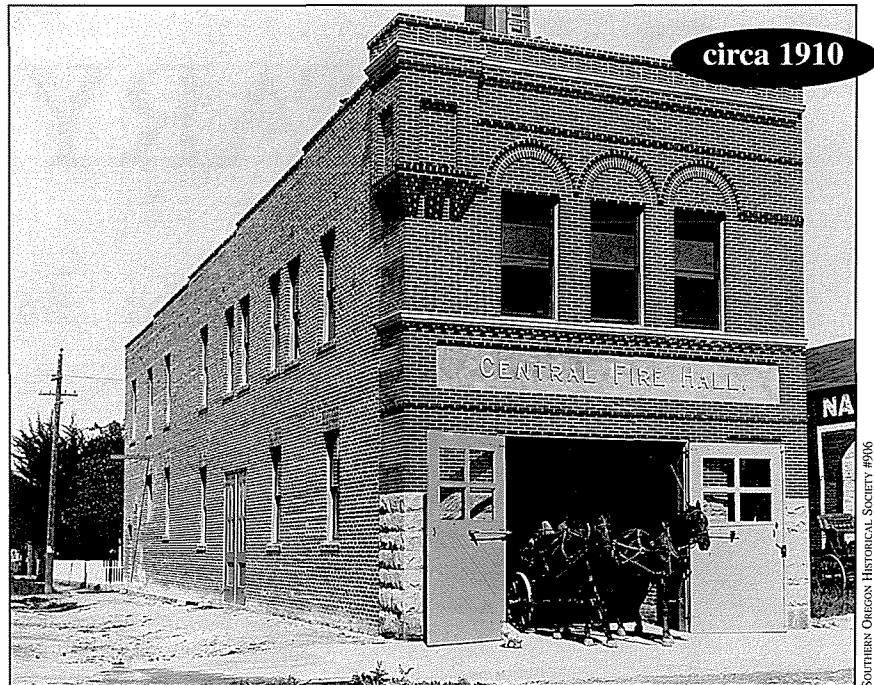
On July 29, 1907, the city hired a local architect named John A. McIntosh to draw plans "for a fire barn and office rooms for the city officials." Construction began the following October for the new city hall and firehouse. The building would also serve as housing for the new public library, with the city council chambers used as a reading room.

The building as it originally appeared was exactly one-half of its present size. A pair of tall swinging doors took up the better part of the building's Front Street entrance, with a doorway next to them that led to a stairway to the second floor. Inside the swinging doors was the fire-fighting apparatus. At an entrance off Sixth Street to the east was the city jail. The city council room cum library was upstairs in front, while the rest of upstairs served as housing for the firemen.

By 1910 Medford's population had increased to 8,900 — a more than four hundred percent increase over its 1900 level of 2,200. Less than two years after the first City Hall opened, council members began to consider building an addition on the adjoining vacant lot and adding a third story to both structures. This possibility was evaluated several times over the next six years, but ultimately was voted down by the citizenry.

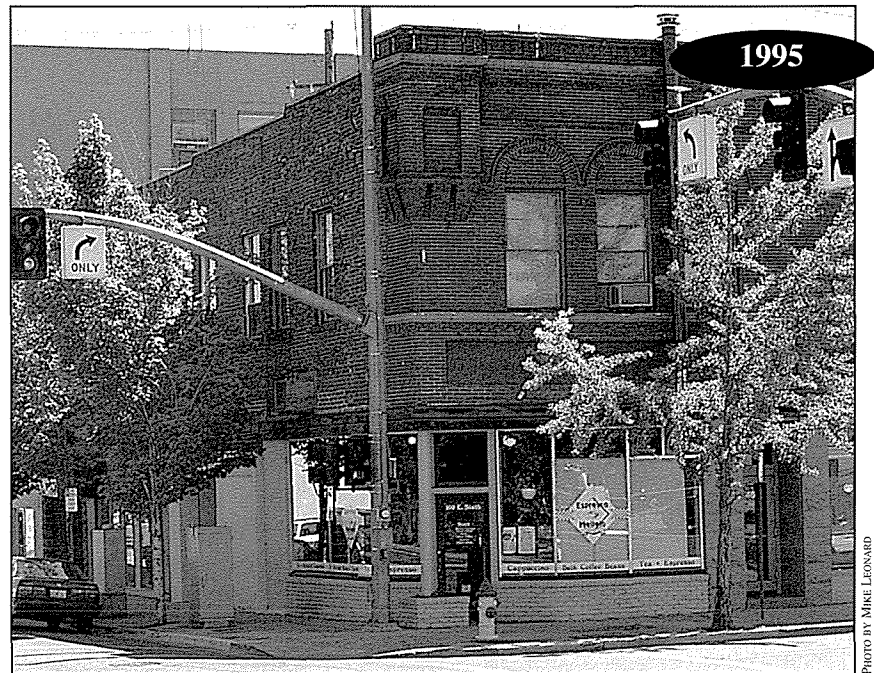
To meet the demands of new development (by 1911 ninety-eight buildings alone were under construction within eight blocks of Front and Main streets), the fire department also doubled in size, further increasing the need for a larger city hall. Despite such close quarters, work did not begin on the city hall addition until January 1921; and it was completed that spring. Yet with Medford still growing at an incredible rate, less than ten years later the city was looking to build an entirely new City Hall. The fire department moved out of the Central Fire Hall in 1929, when a new fire hall was constructed at the corner of Third and Front Streets. It has since been destroyed.

In late 1932 the old city hall was finally vacated, as Medford took on an even greater governmental role as the new county seat. The building itself is still recognizable, although first floor modernization has taken its toll. Yet if one looks upstairs, the beauty of its simple design is still obvious.



circa 1910

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #906



1995

PHOTO BY MIKE LEONARD

Top: Fire team horses, "Tom" and "Jerry," were bought in 1910 from W.H. Venable for \$675. Yet in less than a year, they were replaced with automobile trucks.

Bottom: Where's the fire? Today people relax in this landmark building over a cup of gourmet coffee.

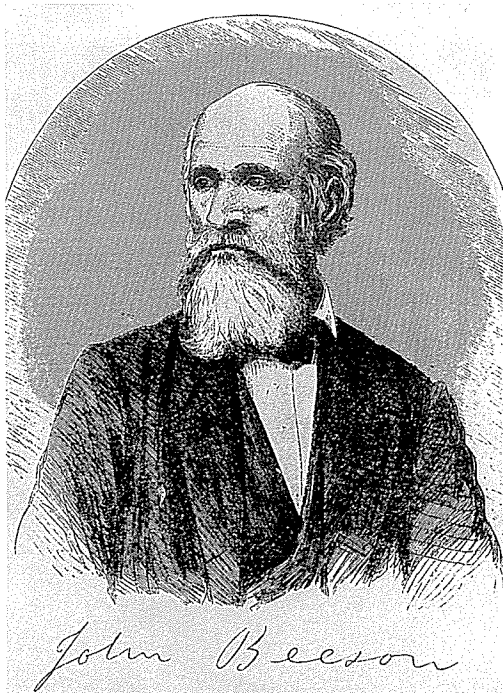
*Adapted from an article published in the June 1987 Table Rock Sentinel by Mark Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe, a former attorney and volunteer for the Society, is now a city planner and historic preservation officer in Deadwood, South Dakota.*



# A SOLITARY VOICE IN THE WILD

## *John Beeson's Plea For The Indians*

By Melinda James Haldeman



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1253

In 1856 some considered John Beeson a hero. Others wanted to hang him for treason. But none could deny that he was a formidable opponent to those who were bent on the elimination of the Rogue Indians.

Only three years earlier, Beeson knew little about the plight of this tribe. A baker and confectioner, he lived a peaceful family life on a farm in LaSalle County, Illinois. When colorful tales of settlers in the West reached John, his wife Ann, and their fifteen-year-old son Welborn, their thoughts turned to a new life. Ann longed for the green hills, oaks, and cedars they'd known in their homeland of Leicestershire, England.<sup>1</sup> The promise of natural beauty and fertile land in southern Oregon inspired the Beesons to give up the Illinois farm and most of their possessions to join a wagon train headed for Oregon in 1853.

In planning for their March 16 departure, they could not foresee what the arduous 2,000-mile journey would entail. Welborn wrote in his diary of illness, steep and muddy roads, of a murder within their own company, and the threat of Indians stampeding their cattle.<sup>2</sup>

But Welborn's father had other concerns about the Indians. He noted that great numbers had been killed during earlier pioneer emigrations and few were now seen enroute. Beeson described the "shy, fearful Indians ... grateful for a piece of bread

Left: John Beeson was ahead of his time as an advocate of Indians' rights.

Below: Members of the original Rogue, Coquille, Chetco, and Coos tribes in traditional dress at 1918 Siletz Fair.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1254





SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1166

Seen here in Euroamerican dress, an Indian woman and two girls symbolize their people's lost way of life.

... or even a friendly smile." Their inherent graciousness proved to him, "they richly deserve the sympathy and protection of our government."<sup>3</sup> To add to his concerns, some of his fellow travelers, bored with shooting buffalo and bear, took to bragging they would "shoot the first Indian they see."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Beeson was able to forget the journey's "toils and perils" when they descended into the Rogue Valley on August 30, 1853. "It was a picture varied with shadow and sunshine, lofty mountains and little hills, meadows, groves, and silvery streams, altogether more beautiful than a painter could portray or even imagine."<sup>5</sup>

Yet Welborn's eerie description of another sight presents an altogether different picture of their new home: "We passed several houses and farms, but they were all deserted, having fled to the fort for protection from the Indians ... All the citizens of this part of the valley are collected in it. It is not safe to go far away from it."<sup>6</sup>

The Beesons had arrived at a time of turmoil. "The yells of white men, the war cries of the Rogues, the howling of the Indian dogs, and the smell of powder filled the morning air."<sup>7</sup> With good reason, whites feared the wrath of the Rogue Indians, who were forced to fight the encroaching miners and settlers for their land and way of life. Land that essentially belonged to the Rogues was being handed over to settlers in 320-acre parcels as part of the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850.<sup>8</sup> John Beeson himself bought one of these claims, from a Mr. Walton for \$1,500. On this Wagner Creek property, south of the present city of Talent, stood a two-room log house amidst the oaks and cedars Ann had so missed.<sup>9</sup>

Yet with their new home displacing a former Indian settlement, the work of breaking prairie and splitting fence rails only reminded Beeson that he was "an interloper or usurper of homes which others ought to possess, or for which they ought to be paid. There were remaining the excavations, the poles, bark and coverings of their wigwams, and the fresh ashes of their fires." So when he heard of "hostilities and bloody strife, it was natural

to attribute the whole to the aggressive spirit of our people."<sup>10</sup>

After months of torturous battles, both sides were ready for a cease fire. On September 10, 1853, General Joseph Lane, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joel Palmer, and other representatives met with Chiefs "Joe," "Sam," and "Jim" at Table Rock,<sup>11</sup> while "surrounded by seven hundred fierce and hostile savages, arrayed in all their gorgeous war paint and feathers."<sup>12</sup> The Table Rock Treaty called for a \$60,000 payment to the Rogues for cession of their land and the establishment of a reservation in present-day Sam's Valley.<sup>13</sup> Barren and dry, this land provided the Indians with little in the way of sustenance. In typical fashion, Beeson had strong views about the situation:

"All might have been prosperous and happy; but, unfortunately, ... treaties were disregarded and peace became utterly impossible, as it always is, and must be, whenever the strong man removes the landmark of his weaker neighbor, and monopolies according to his own pleasure ... and supreme selfishness became the rule, and a worse than naked brute force the accepted law of the land."<sup>14</sup>

As renegade Indians continued to attack whites, peaceful reservation Indians were subjected to arbitrary retaliation. Once again, hostilities fanned the flames of war. In response, Territorial Governor Curry began a campaign to drive out and destroy all Indians throughout the region, enlisting the help of volunteer militia.<sup>15</sup>

Though outraged by this tactic, Beeson protested it with diplomacy. "I am far from wishing to reflect unkindly upon my fellow-citizens, or to asperse the motives of any. There was, undoubtedly, a cause for all which occurred." The fact that Beeson's beliefs were echoed by Generals Palmer and John Wool (commander of the Pacific Department of the U.S. Army) only strengthened his conviction.<sup>16</sup> In early 1855 Beeson began a campaign of letters to newspapers in California and Oregon. To his dismay, he discovered that postal agents had either suppressed or editors had refused every letter he sent.<sup>17</sup>

As the horror of the continuing Rogue River War loomed over the territory, Beeson had to face reality. The majority of newspapers, even *The Christian Advocate*, supported elimination of the Indians. "The war spirit," he lamented, "in one form or another, took full of the minds of the people; and all were absorbed with anticipations of the terrors, the perils, and the excitement of savage warfare."<sup>18</sup>

Welborn wrote of an "indignation meeting" held May 23, 1856, to discuss his father's letters and speeches. A committee was appointed to draft a resolution to stop circulation of his articles. Welborn wrote that day:

"I am afraid Father will have to leave this country. Public opinion is so strong against him some would about as leave kill him as an Indian just because he has spoken the truth out boldly against the rascality of this Indian War, or rather the butchery of the Indians."<sup>19</sup>



Indeed, when Beeson came upon a camp of vengeful members of the volunteer militia near his house, he decided he must leave, that his life was in danger. At 11:00 P.M., after Beeson sorrowfully "bade farewell" to Ann, Welborn accompanied him into the dark and rainy night, as they rode toward Fort Lane at the northern end of the valley. They parted company below the Table Rocks, at 7:30 the next morning.<sup>20</sup> Upon returning home that day, Welborn recorded, "Ah, how lonesome it seems without Dear, Dear Father. There is nobody but Mother and I at home. I have the whole management of the Farm resting on my shoulders."<sup>21</sup>

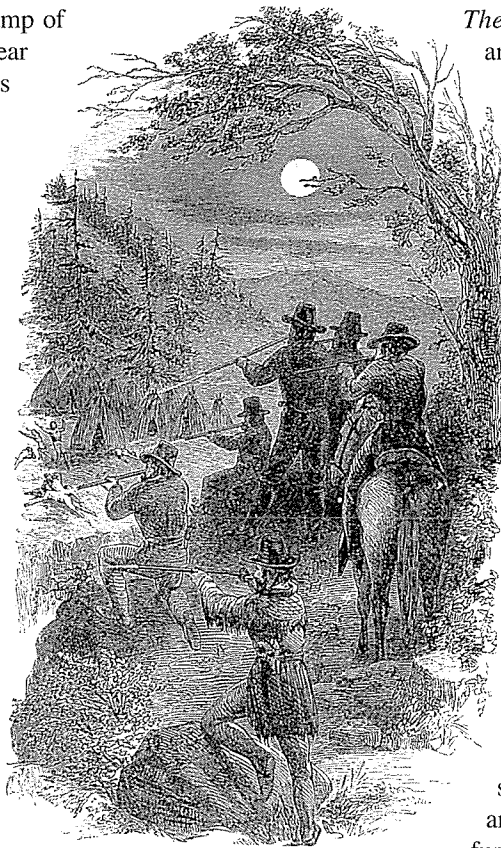
On the road to the Willamette Valley, Beeson decided he would spread "... those principles of love and brotherhood, which are stronger than cannons, and more powerful than armies for the subjugation of savage nations."<sup>22</sup> Yet even upstate Beeson faced rejection from most editors; however, a Mr. Adams of the Hillsboro *Argus* agreed to meet with Beeson. As a result, Adams agreed to correct his prior statement that the Indians had begun the war. Adams also published Beeson's "Address to the Citizens of the Rogue Valley," as well as several letters on the Indians' behalf.<sup>23</sup>

Back in the Rogue Valley, the bloodbath continued. The Indians finally surrendered in Fall of 1856. As the Rogues were herded to the Siletz Reservation, Captain Edward Ord wrote in his diary, "It almost makes me shed tears to listen to them wailing as they totter along."<sup>24</sup> Although Chief John had agreed to cease fighting, he would not leave his country. He told Colonel Robert C. Buchanan:

You are a great chief. So am I. This is my country. I was in it when these large trees were very small, not higher than my head. My heart is sick with fighting, but I want to live in my country. If the white people are willing, I will go back to Deer Creek and live among them as I used to do. They can visit my camp, and I will visit theirs; but I will not lay down my arms and go with you on the reserve. I will fight. Goodbye.<sup>25</sup>

Some well-meaning whites, such as General Palmer, believed the removal of Indians to reservations was the only way to ensure their safety. Yet other whites saw the reservation policy as a convenient way to be rid of an unwanted obstacle. For the Indians, however, it was virtual genocide.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, Beeson had journeyed to San Francisco. Again, he met with predictable opposition from newspaper editors. But one fortuitous meeting brought the Reverend Brady into his life. As the editor and proprietor of *The Pacific* and



A quaint depiction of a bloody struggle, from *Journal of Army Life*, 1874.  
SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #14597

*The Evening Post*, he welcomed Beeson's articles. Soon, thanks to tickets bought for him by sympathetic Californians, Beeson booked passage to New York on September 5, 1856.

Back East, where all minds were focused on the abolition of slavery, little attention or sympathy remained for the oppression of the distant Indians. Yet Beeson still found supporters to help advance his cause. In 1857 he published the well-received *Plea for the Indians with Facts and Features of the Late War in Oregon*. Not only did it describe "the barbarous atrocities" of the conflict, but also offered suggestions for resolving what sympathizers saw as an unsatisfactory solution to the Indian problem.

The Indians, Beeson said in his book, possessed "a sense of the grand and the beautiful that made them natural students of refinement and the arts."<sup>27</sup> In his view of them as intelligent and capable of higher learning, he advocated setting aside suitable lands for agriculture and "all the arts of civilization."<sup>28</sup> Beeson further described the Indians as "eminently spiritual, even though many whites had preached their extermination for being Pagans." In their defense he explained, "They read intelligently the writing of the Great Spirit in all exterior nature, as well as the human soul."<sup>29</sup>

Now a skilled public relations man, Beeson promoted the Indians' cause relentlessly. He also spoke at Cooper Union, where many social reform agencies were founded. Then he met an Indian princess named Larooqua, who was called "an aboriginal Jenny Lind" because of her exceptional soprano voice. Beeson included her as a guest performer on his lecture circuit, passing his hat for donations afterwards.<sup>30</sup>

One eventful day in February 1861, Abraham Lincoln happened upon Beeson and Larooqua while passing through Buffalo on his way to the inauguration. Moved by their display, the President invited them to the White House. During their subsequent visit Lincoln told them, "If we get through this [Civil] war, and I live, this Indian system shall be reformed."<sup>31</sup> Until his tragic end, he remained available to Beeson and Larooqua and even ended payment to the volunteer militia for their part in the Rogue River War.<sup>32</sup>

While in Washington Beeson joined forces with numerous other Indian rights groups and continued his own efforts with financial help from Welborn and Ann, as well as influential supporters in the East.<sup>33</sup> In 1860, however, he ran out of funds for his Indian rights journal, *The Calumet*, begun the year before. He also faced opposition to his appointment to the Indian Department by Oregon Senators Nesmith and Harding.<sup>34</sup> Yet even in the face of the Civil War, Beeson continued to fight on behalf of the Indians. In 1879 Beeson wrote Welborn that the



only consolation for his long absence was his work "for the good of Humanity, and that my success will do more directly for your welfare than If I worked for you alone."<sup>35</sup>

John Beeson finally returned to the Rogue Valley in 1887, twenty-one years after his wife Ann's death, to retire to his farm and be near Welborn and his own family. When he died in 1889, the Southern Oregon Pioneer Association wrote that he "labored for the elevation of the whole human family, and particularly for the American Indian."<sup>36</sup>

Though no reform measures have been attributed to Beeson, he was a harbinger for future generations. Says Lewis Beeson of his great-grandfather, "I think he lived 120 years ahead of his time. We are just coming around to his thinking."<sup>37</sup> Today, John Beeson would find many kindred spirits who, like him, lament the annihilation of the Rogue Indians and still hear their voices echo throughout the hills and valleys that were their home for thousands of years.



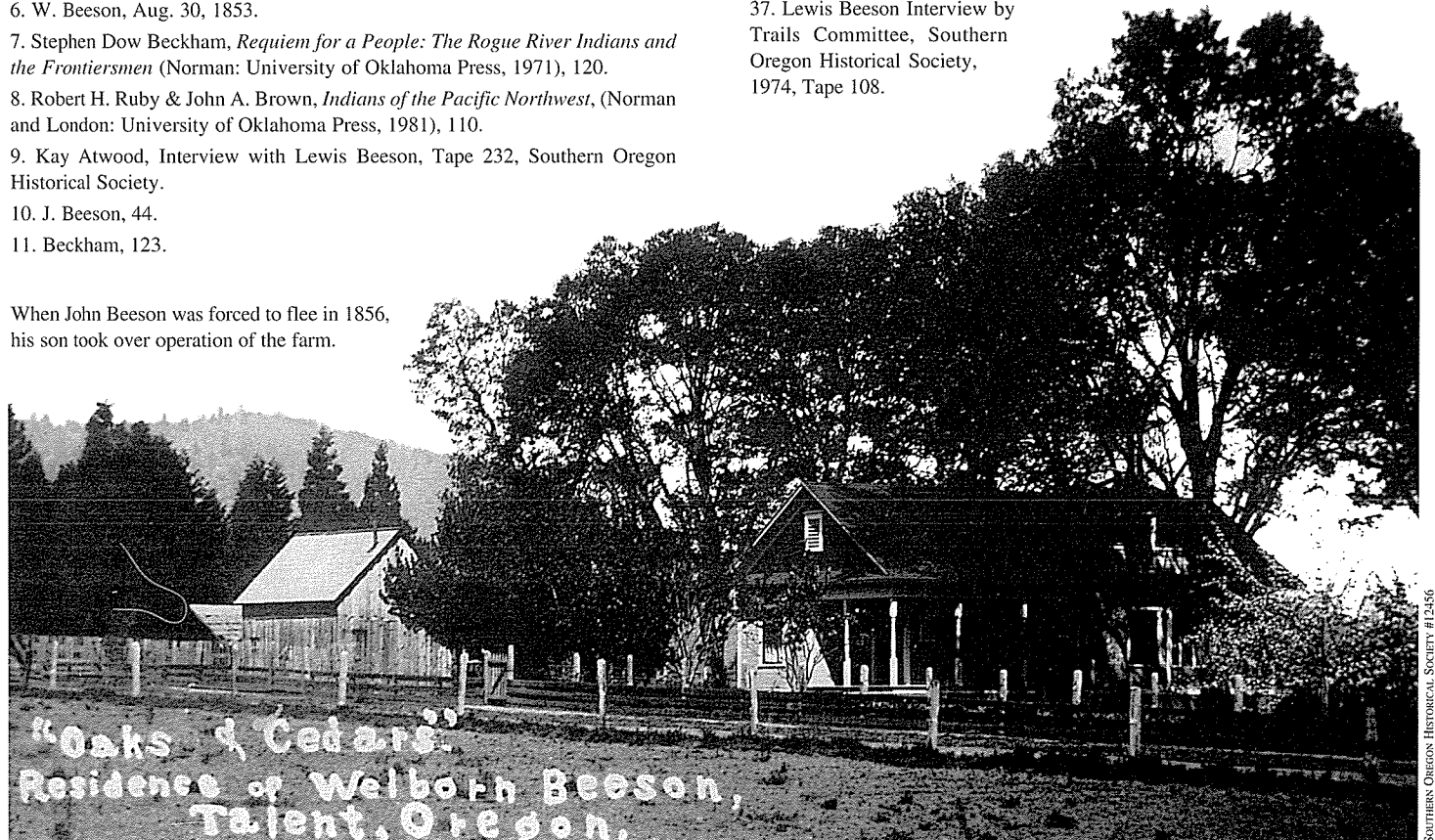
*Melinda James Haldeman is a free-lance writer who lives in Gold Hill.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Kay Atwood, Interview with Lewis Beeson, *Jackson County Conversations*, 1975, Southern Oregon Historical Society.
2. Welborn Beeson, 1853, "Diary of Welborn Beeson I, July 22, 1851-Dec. 31, 1856," photocopy on file at Southern Oregon Historical Society.
3. John Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians: With Facts and Features of the Late War in Oregon* (Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1982), 19. (Originally published: New York: John Beeson, 1875).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 26
6. W. Beeson, Aug. 30, 1853.
7. Stephen Dow Beckham, *Requiem for a People: The Rogue River Indians and the Frontiersmen* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 120.
8. Robert H. Ruby & John A. Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 110.
9. Kay Atwood, Interview with Lewis Beeson, Tape 232, Southern Oregon Historical Society.
10. J. Beeson, 44.
11. Beckham, 123.

When John Beeson was forced to flee in 1856, his son took over operation of the farm.

12. George E. Cole, *Early Oregon: 1850-1860* (Published in 1905 from a series of articles in the Sunday *Oregonian*, 1901), 58.
13. Beckham, 124.
14. J. Beeson, 27.
15. Ibid., 32-33.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. W. Beeson, May 23, 1856.
20. J. Beeson, 89.
21. W. Beeson, May 24, 1856.
22. J. Beeson, 90.
23. Ibid., 93.
24. Beckham, 188.
25. Ruby & Brown, 120.
26. Ibid., 111.
27. J. Beeson, 127.
28. Ibid., 25.
29. Ibid., 114.
30. Bert Weber, Introduction to *Plea for the Indians*, 15.
31. Ibid., 14.
32. Beeson interview, tape #232.
33. Weber, 15.
34. Weber, 26.
35. John Beeson, Letters to son, Welborn, Ernest Zottola, "An Investigation into the Philosophy and Subsequent Actions of John Beeson in Regards to the American Indians" Unpublished term paper, Pacific Northwest History, Southern Oregon College, 1962 (Archives, Southern Oregon Historical Society).
36. Southern Oregon Pioneer Association Records, "Resolutions on Deaths of Members," Vol. I, 142-143, Southern Oregon Historical Society.
37. Lewis Beeson Interview by Trails Committee, Southern Oregon Historical Society, 1974, Tape 108.





# WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE

## *The Bard Celebrates Sixty Years in Ashland*

by Molly Walker Kerr

Celebration fills the air in Ashland as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) reaches yet another milestone — sixty years! Since its inception in 1935, OSF has been touched by the inspired dreams of those visionaries who've guided it toward its current role as the largest non-profit theatre in the country, in terms of audience and number of performances.

How has the Festival flourished in this tiny southern Oregon town, when many similar ventures throughout the world have failed? What is its secret? First and foremost, look to its founder, the late Angus Bowmer, who laid the groundwork for success with his passion for theatre, his belief in people, his unfailing optimism, and his incredible ability to generate the excitement that makes the impossible happen.

It all began one rainy afternoon in 1935 when Bowmer — then a frustrated English teacher at Southern Oregon Normal School — spied the ruins of the old Chautauqua building. He and his friend Bob Stedman ducked into its excavated basement for cover. Bowmer began to conjure scenes from the glory days of the traveling Chautauqua circuit, which brought culture and entertainment to the area, from the late 19th century until the early 1920s. Bowmer pictured the trunks filled with costumes, mirrors reflecting faces smeared with greasepaint, excited chatter, booming voices, and clashing swords wielded by men in hussar uniforms.

Bowmer saw a chance to reignite that old Chautauqua spark in Ashland. The abandoned Chautauqua building resembled Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in England. He could present repertory Shakespeare in an Elizabethan setting and apply the bare staging technique he had learned in 1930 from his English mentor, B. Iden Payne. Bursting with excitement, Bowmer approached the skeptical City Council. They advanced him a small sum; and the old Chautauqua platform, with the help of the W.P.A., was transformed into an Elizabethan stage illuminated by homemade stovepipe and coffee-can lights. Recalls Bowmer in his autobiography, "No roof protected us from sun or rain in the backstage area, and there were no dressing rooms... Costumes hung on racks under the open sky, and modesty was a luxury we could not afford."<sup>1</sup>

The actors in Elizabethan costumes, mostly students and local residents, each learned several parts and presented a repertory of two plays— *Twelfth Night* and *Merchant of Venice* in conjunction with the town's Fourth of July celebration. To appease the celebration committee — worried they would lose money on Shakespeare — Bowmer agreed to let the city use the stage in the afternoons for boxing matches.

During the first two nights, July 2-3, audiences thrilled to the antics of

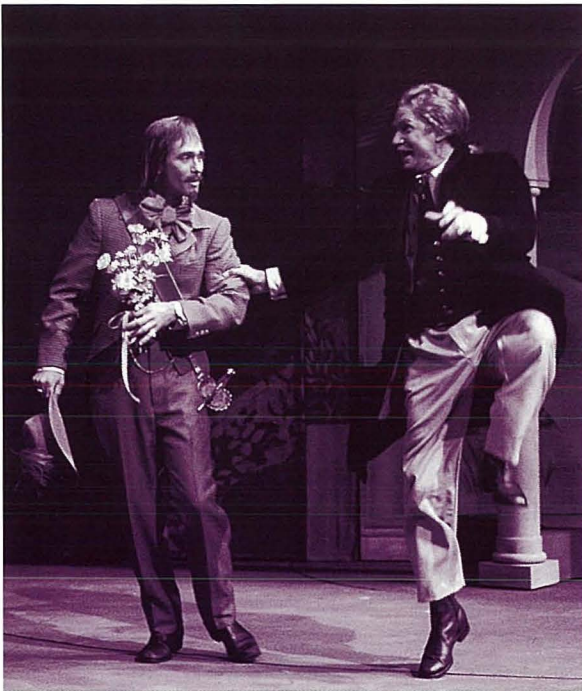


PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER, COURTESY OF OSF

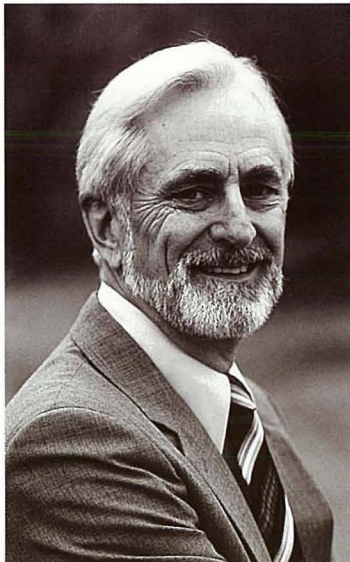


PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER BRISCOE, COURTESY OF OSF

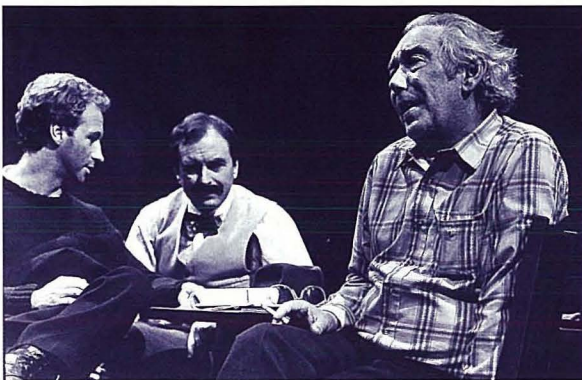


PHOTO BY HENRY KRANZLER, COURTESY OF OSF

Top: Mark Murphey as Sir Andrew (left) and Dennis Robertson as Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (1995).

Center: Former Executive Director Bill Patton.

Bottom: Jerry Turner directs *An Enemy of the People* (1986). Bill Geisslinger (left) and Richard Elmore rehearse their roles of Capt. Horster and Earl Washington.



Bowmer's Sir Toby Belch and Shylock, along with their hilarious cohorts. But on the evening of the Fourth — between the noisy boxing match enthusiasts and fidgeting crowds waiting for the fireworks — mayhem broke loose. The deafening fireworks went off early, rendering the last of *Twelfth Night* into virtual pantomime.<sup>2</sup> The unexpected Pandemonium only heightened the audience's appreciation for the performance; and shrewd "Shylock" acquired future Festival supporters from the misadventure. Also, to Bowmer's delight, that first Festival not only covered its own expenses (plus the losses from the obligatory boxing matches), it made a profit as well. By 1937 the Oregon Shakespearean Festival Association was incorporated.

In 1939 Bowmer and his troupe in Tudor costumes took off for the Golden Gate Exposition on San Francisco's Treasure Island. He had hired a publicity agent with \$500 from the City Council and \$500 from his own life insurance policy. The agent wangled an invitation and off went the thespians to perform *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Federal Theatre. But the best was yet to come, during an hour-long live broadcast of *Shrew* over NBC radio on Treasure Island. Shortly before air time, the specially prepared radio scripts with voice cues and sound effects were misplaced. A frantic search yielded one script; but seventeen were needed, and these were the days before copy machines.

Fortunately, there were sixteen typists in the group and sixteen typewriters were rounded up. According to Bowmer, "The one script was divided equally among the typists and immediately the place was reverberating with the rat-a-tat-tat of sixteen sets of typewriter keys, the uneven tingling of sixteen bells as sixteen carriages ended sixteen lines and were swished back with a bang to repeat the process....For the only time in my life [I was] truly paralyzed with panic."<sup>3</sup> During the live broadcast, fresh pages were ripped from typewriters and handed to the actors. Bowmer adds, "The thing that struck the reporters and columnists as being newsworthy was the fact that among a troupe of Shakespearean actors, there should be sixteen typists."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the ensemble Bowmer had created was not easily deterred in the face of adversity. This determination came into play again the following year, when a fire ruined most of the costumes and badly damaged the stage. The actors finished the season in modern dress, although the company never recovered the loss. Around the same time, World War II broke out in Europe. With the actors and, eventually, Angus Bowmer himself facing

The late Angus Bowmer saw his dream in lights and the Festival he founded continues to flourish.

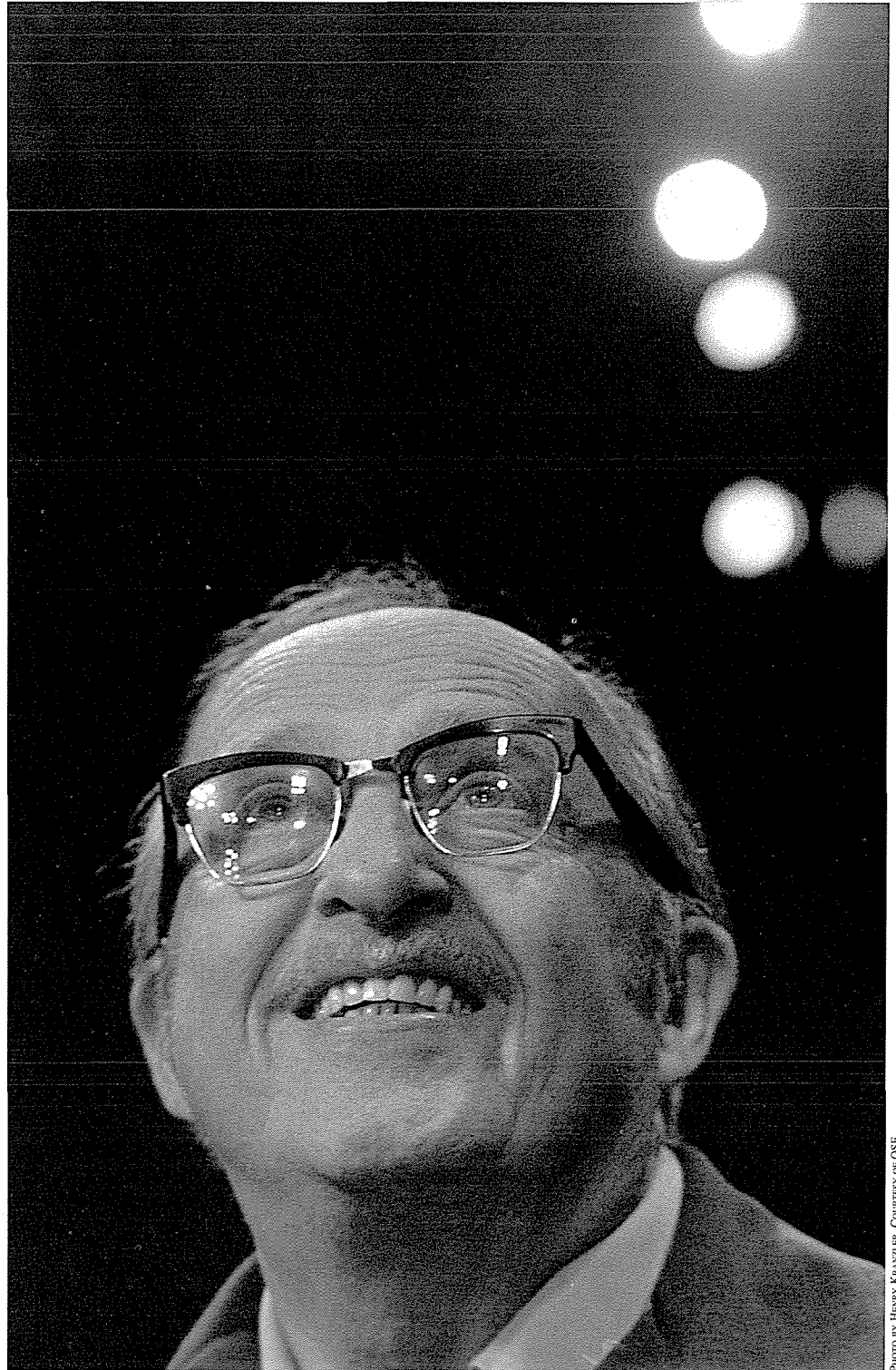


PHOTO BY HENRY KRANZLER, COURTESY OF OSF





COURTESY OF OSF

Bowmer as Sir Toby in first performance on Elizabethan stage.

the draft as America entered the conflict, the Festival sadly closed its doors.

In 1947 the Festival resumed with Angus Bowmer again at the helm. The postwar boom was felt even here — as Bowmer now received pay for his efforts, the damaged Elizabethan stage was replaced, and the repertoire was expanded to sixteen performances. Scenery and costume shops also were added to the back of the arena. Bowmer hired one of his mentors from Stanford University, Dr. Margery Bailey, as academic advisor for OSF. She began the popular Institute of Renaissance Studies, the forerunner to the education

department. The eloquent Dr. Bailey also acted in several plays.

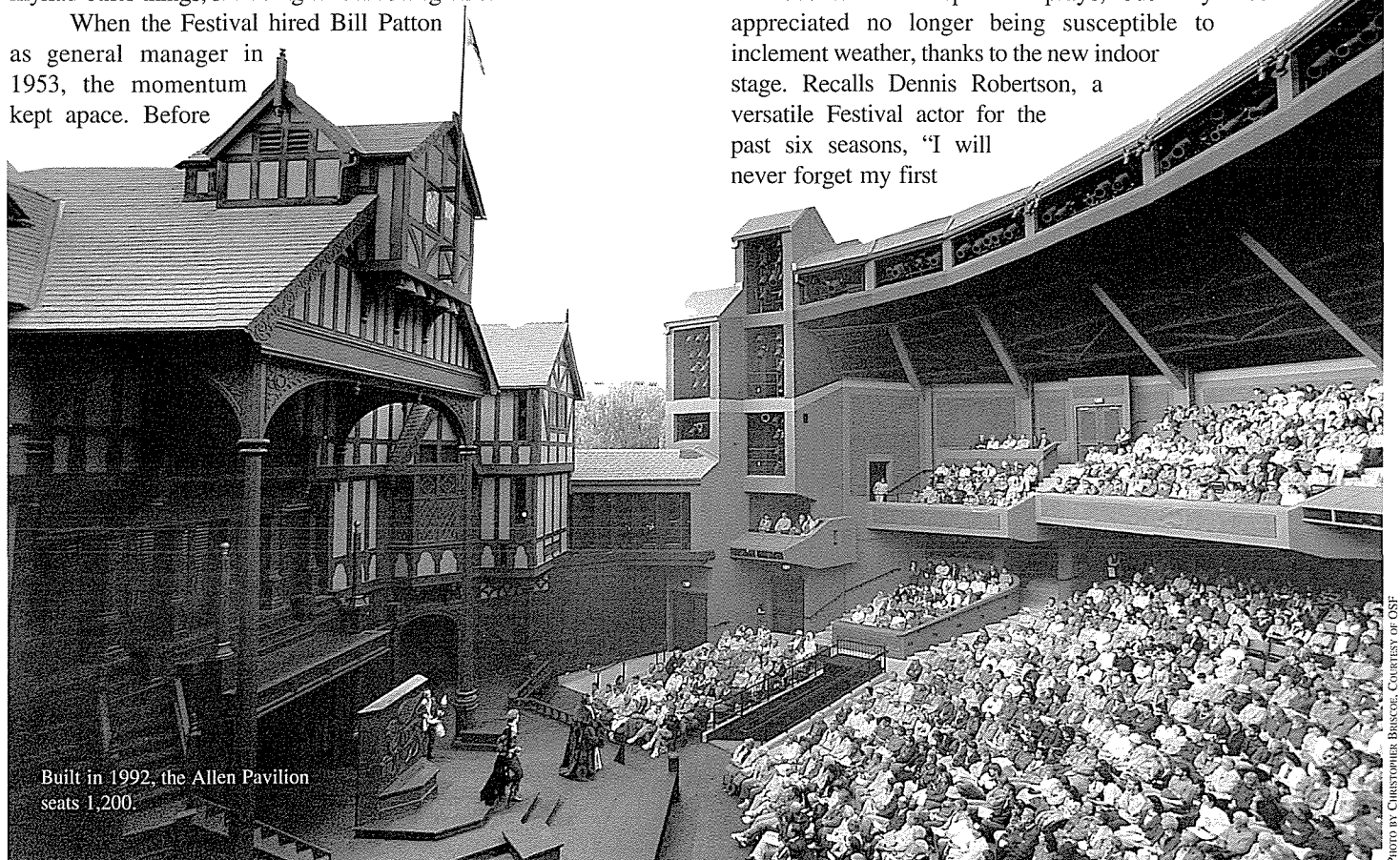
In 1951 the formation of the Vining Repertory Company expanded the season. They presented indoor plays during winter months at the ornate Lithia Theatre. The next year, realizing the need for organized volunteers, Dr. Bailey, Margaret Schuler and Robertson Collins formed the Tudor Guild. It continues to be a backbone of the Festival — providing funds, scholarships, and myriad other things, including tender loving care.

When the Festival hired Bill Patton as general manager in 1953, the momentum kept apace. Before

graduation from Stanford, Patton had spent summers as an actor and lighting technician. Bowmer recalls, “We made a very good team in spite of the fact that our personalities and temperaments are very different. We worked together very closely ... and we invariably presented a united front to the Board.”<sup>5</sup> Another new member joined the team that year—W. Bernard Windt, as music director. During his twenty years with the Festival, he composed or arranged all the music to accompany the Shakespeare canon.

The ever-popular Green Show soon followed, as part of the summertime pre-show festivities. Now as then, Renaissance dancers leap and twirl, to the sounds of pipe and tabor. Yet just as things were taking off, disaster struck again. The Lithia Theatre, which contained the Festival’s records and costumes, burned to the ground. Subsequently, the Ashland Fire Marshall declared the 1947 Elizabethan stage a fire hazard. The company patched it as best they could, but finally had to tear it down in 1958. Richard Hay, who had been hired in 1953 as principal scenic and theatre designer, was ready for the challenge. He drew up plans that followed Shakespeare’s own Fortune Theatre; and although it was a sad day when the old Elizabethan stage came down, it was incredible to see the new theatre emerge in its place. It was as if the Bard himself had come to Ashland.

The new Elizabethan theatre drew even larger crowds, and soon OSF faced another problem—mounting expenses and no way to enlarge audience attendance. To generate more income, in 1970 the Festival opened the incredible 600-seat indoor Angus Bowmer Theatre and expanded the season from February through October. Not only did the actors welcome a new repertoire, which included non-Shakespearean plays, but they also appreciated no longer being susceptible to inclement weather, thanks to the new indoor stage. Recalls Dennis Robertson, a versatile Festival actor for the past six seasons, “I will never forget my first



Built in 1992, the Allen Pavilion seats 1,200.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER BRISCOE, COURTESY OF OSF



season in Ashland when I had to go on stage in the rain. I played Nim in *Henry V* and was wearing chain mail. When Pistol threw me onto the wet stage, I landed face down in a sea of water and surfboarded across it on my stomach. To my horror, I kept sliding until I was nose to nose with the audience!"<sup>6</sup>

What the audience *does not* see is the play unto itself that's in continuous motion throughout the maze of rooms that lie beneath both the Angus Bowmer and the Elizabethan stages. Although from above ground these two theatres appear separate, they are in fact connected by underground tunnels. This is the hub of the Festival. At its center, the Green Room provides a place for actors to gather between scenes. One may even witness a 1920s flapper chatting with Richard III, while they await their separate cues. It can be disconcerting, however, for actors to listen for their cues with two plays piped in simultaneously. "It's amazing more cues aren't missed," says Robertson. "Once I was in the wig room for last-minute adjustments. The volume had been turned down in there. My understudy rushed in and asked, 'Aren't you on stage?' In a panic I sped through the catacombs, up through the vomitorium (entry ways that lead to the stage from beneath the seating area), and popped onto the stage just a fraction late. The only thing worse than being late is being early! That has happened to me, also. You just hope all 600 people didn't see you."<sup>7</sup> Yet if the unexpected happens backstage, typically it goes unnoticed by the audience because of its expert handling. No detail is overlooked. The continual set changes are choreographed by crews in sneakers and baseball caps, who glide past each other in a ritualistic dance.

One event that did not go unnoticed was the 1971 retirement of the dynamic Angus Bowmer. While with OSF he had produced all thirty seven of Shakespeare's plays and had himself performed thirty two roles in forty three stagings. Could the Festival survive without him? Dr. Jerry Turner — drama professor at the University of California, Riverside, and Festival veteran of eleven seasons — was hired to take over as artistic director. Bowmer stayed on as development consultant. The Festival continued to prosper.

In 1977 the Festival added a third theatre, the Black Swan. Again, Richard Hay applied his genius and created a movable stage with fluid seating arrangements. This most recent stage offers an environment where artists can stretch, take chances, and experiment within the theatre's dramatic "black-box" space.<sup>8</sup> Backstage at the Black Swan, the costume storage room creates yet another world. Double racks of costumes almost reach the ceiling—labeled and categorized—awaiting their cues. Boots and shoes line the walls on shelves and can almost be heard marching, shuffling, dancing, and skipping. A mannequin's hand turns gracefully upward in a basket of delicate gloves. This fanciful room contains costumes numbering in the thousands.

Still, not all costumes are kept in storage. Some await delighted visitors in the Festival Exhibit Center. With a bit of gauzy chiffon, a plumed hat, or a golden crown, tourists can be transformed into Ophelias, Romeos, or King Richards. The Exhibit Center also displays costumes from the previous year, as well as a pictorial history of the Festival and informational videos. Across the hall from the Exhibit Center, in an old bank vault, the precious OSF archives are stored — protected at last from fire.

On May 26, 1979, OSF faced its most difficult moment. Angus Bowmer, beloved founder and friend, died of a stroke. At his memorial service, the grief-stricken community silently streamed by bagpipers who stood as sentinels outside the theatre that was named for him. His gentle but firm guiding hand continues to be felt. Proof of Bowmer's legacy came in 1983, when the Festival he founded received the Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Award for outstanding achievement in regional theatre, as well as the National Governors' Association Award for distinguished service in the arts, the first ever awarded to a performing arts organization.<sup>9</sup>

Angus would have been proud.

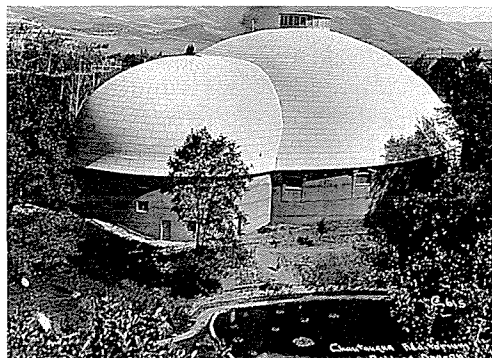
In 1984 OSF negotiated a contract with Actors' Equity Association, which enabled the directors to cast more experienced actors. The following year the Festival celebrated its Golden Anniversary — a real achievement. 1986 brought yet another award. This time it went to the deserving OSF volunteers, who number around one thousand. They received the President's Volunteer Action Award, presented at the White House.

In 1988 — with great daring and after years of planning — the Festival expanded to Portland. The debut production at Portland's new Center for the Performing Arts was George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House*, with Turner directing.

In 1990 OSF published Turner's translation of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*; and the following year Turner announced his retirement after twenty years with the Festival. A man with a penchant for big ideas, Turner had gone beyond the traditional fare to encompass the works of such modern masters as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett, Henrik Ibsen, August

Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, and George Bernard Shaw.<sup>10</sup> The Festival would miss his brilliant leadership, dispensed all the while wearing his hallmark plaid shirts. In the year of his retirement, Jerry Turner received the Oregon Arts Commission/Governor's Award for the Arts. (The Festival's executive director, Bill Patton, received the same award in 1993.)

Then once again, OSF took a new turn. Henry Woronicz, actor and director with the Festival since 1984, was appointed artistic director in 1991. Like his predecessors, Woronicz brought to OSF some interesting changes. Such change occurred on a grand scale in 1992, when the new \$7.6 million Allen Pavilion of the



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #4720



COURTESY OF OSF

Top: The original Chautauqua auditorium, ca. 1920.  
Bottom: The first Festival stage created from the remaining wall of Chautauqua foundation, ca. 1930.





Elizabethan Theatre opened to an amazed public. Resembling structures more commonly found in a large metropolitan area, the two-story pavilion encircles the seating area and offers state-of-the-art acoustics. Against the computerized lighting used to spotlight the actors on this worldly stage, the moon and the stars play supporting roles.

The Festival has continued to flourish under Woronicz, who resigned as artistic director, effective October 31, 1995. During his tenure the Portland operation became an independent theatre company — Portland Center Stage — as of July 1, 1994, when it became apparent that attempts to integrate Festival operations at opposite ends of the state were draining the artistic energies of the individual operations.<sup>11</sup> Yet, Woronicz remained interested in taking the Festival beyond the Rogue Valley. Last year, for example, three people from OSF performed in France, in a one-hour performance that saw the actors transform themselves from peasants to royalty.

What are some of the challenges ahead? Says assistant artistic director Fontaine Sayer, "Each play is a challenge. We have to constantly challenge each other and expand the artists we

Top: Destined to lead: Henry Woronicz plays Henry VIII in 1984.  
Bottom: New Festival actor Stacy Keach in *Comedy of Errors* (1962).  
Right: Ashland's troupe made a hit at 1939 World's Fair.



bring in. The ebb and flow of artists is stimulating for us here. Play selection is important and ... finding new and valid ways to reinterpret the classical material that is the backbone of the repertory. Even if the costumes are different, the words are always the same."<sup>12</sup> Looking back on the past sixty years, the Festival's secret seems to rely on a combination of factors: the imprint of Angus Bowmer and his insight into William Shakespeare's plays; Bowmer's uncanny sense of when to let others take over; and an unusually high level of continuity — only three artistic directors and one general manager in its history

Many of the actors also have remained season after season — James Edmondson, Shirley Patton, Phil Davidson, Margaret Rubin, to name but a few. Some who left the Ashland stage and were launched into greatness include Stacy Keach, William Hurt, Powers Booth, Dick Cavet, and George Peppard.

This season, however, not only will OSF see the departure of Henry Woronicz as artistic director; but executive director Bill Patton retires as well. More changes. Yet Patton will continue as consultant; and the thread to OSF founder Angus Bowmer remains unsevered. The Bard put it best when he said, "What's past is prologue." After all, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival named for his works is still surrounded by the ivy-covered walls of that magical old Chautauqua, where Angus Bowmer ducked for cover and dreamed his dreams.



*Molly Walker Kerr is a free-lance writer who lives in Medford. She acted in J.B. Priestly's play, Dangerous Corner, directed by Angus Bowmer, and also studied Shakespeare under him. Writing this article was a "Labour of Love."*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Angus Bowmer, *As I Remember, Adam: An Autobiography of a Festival*, (Ashland, Oregon: Oregon Shakespearean Festival Association, 1975), 79-80.
2. Ibid, 82-83.
3. Ibid, 139.
4. Ibid, 140
5. Ibid, 216
6. Interview with OSF actor, Dennis Robertson, 26 May 1995.
- 7 Ibid.
8. Oregon Shakespeare Festival 1977 program, 28.
9. Oregon Shakespeare Festival—"Celebrating 60 Years."
10. Tom Braman, "A Shakespearean Exit," Southern Oregon Currents (Courier Publishing Company), Feb. 22, 1991, 8-11.
11. Ibid, 8.
12. Interview with OSF Assistant artistic director, Fontaine Sayer, 26 May 1995.





# A "Gee"-O-Logical Wonder

by William Lundquist

During the summer of 1972, when I worked as a tour guide at the Oregon Caves, we operated more along the lines of "spiel-ologists" than true speleologists. Indeed, this "tall tale" tradition dates all the way back to Dick Rowley, the first guide after President Taft declared the caves a National Monument in 1909. Some sixty years later, we still believed no tour was complete without some silly joke and that our purpose was to entertain rather than educate.

The names of the chambers themselves were more whimsical than geological: Neptune's Grotto, the Wedding Chapel, the Ghost Room. Add to that the guides' carny approach to the tours, and it's easy to see why, at the time, visitors to the Oregon Caves may have felt they were in a fun house rather than in one of our nation's national monuments. Even the lighting contributed to the festive atmosphere. Red tones turned rimstone dams into "The Devil's Washboard" and "Dante's Inferno," while blue lights changed rimstone across the path into "The Atlantic Ocean." In the most beautiful room in the caves — Paradise Lost — we could switch on the red light ("ooh"), the blue light ("ahh"), or both ("ohh").

Special lighting notwithstanding, the fact remained that the natural condition of the cave was total darkness. By August, with each guide averaging seven or eight tours a day, six days a week, our biggest problem was sun-deprivation. Sixty hours of darkness a week can affect the mind, and the most serious cases had to be taken out of the cave for a day or two of chopping firewood in the sunshine.

Our primitive version of light therapy must have charged some brain cells because, as the summer progressed, we also grew tired of our own jokes and all the foolish names for formations. We began to take pride in our caves and now recognized them as evolving entities. Shaped by the constant flow of water through marble — water which, in turn, becomes carbonic acid that sculpts new passageways — this precious resource called out for our serious attention. We relied less on the scripted presentation and concentrated more on explaining flowstone draperies, clastic dikes, and ring deposition. We pointed out damaged formations and repeatedly warned tourists against touching the cave.

Yet our finest hour as tour guides called for us to convey

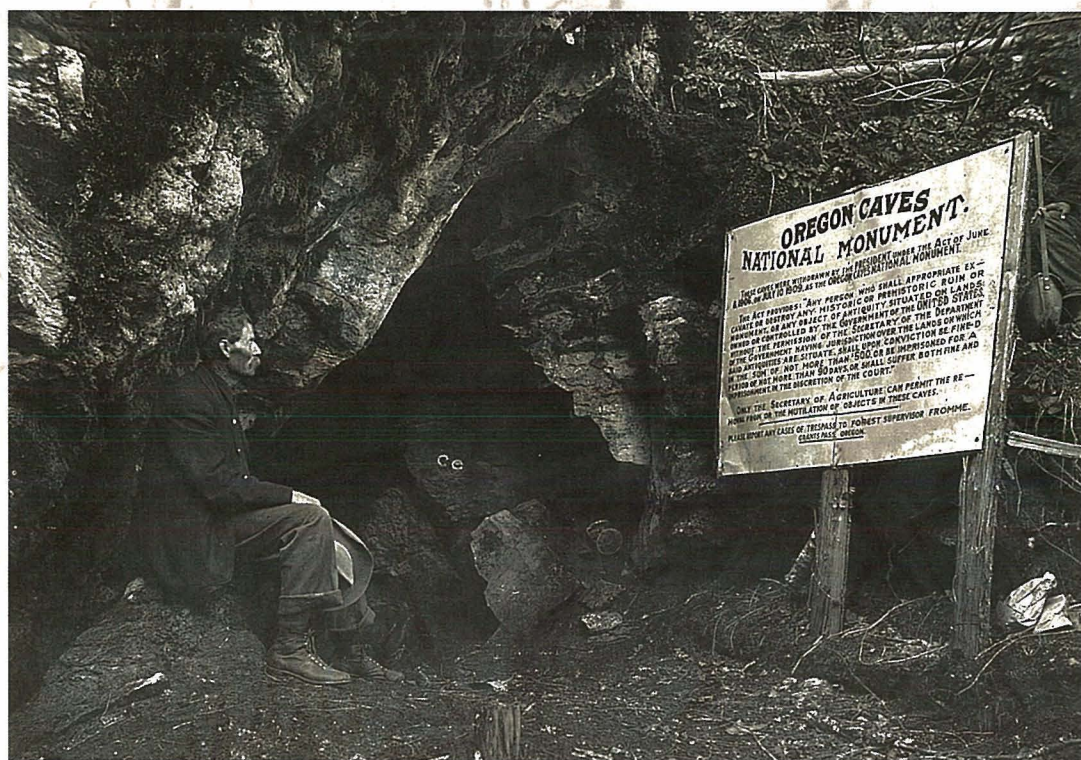
our newfound appreciation of this unique geology without the formations to serve as backdrop. An elderly woman exploring the country by Greyhound bus had come hundreds of miles to the see the famed Oregon Caves, only to realize her heart would be too taxed by the five hundred steps one must climb for the tour. Although she seemed content enough to sit on a bench and enjoy the Siskiyou Mountains, that wasn't good enough for us. She had come all that way for a cave tour, and we were bound and determined to give her one.

So we performed the entire tour right there in front of her, describing the chambers as we went along. Many of the staff got in the act, contorting their bodies into ridiculous facsimiles of actual formations. It took every bit of method acting we knew from high school drama to pull it off. "Think like a stalagmite, be the stalagmite." Stanislavski would not have been impressed, but that wonderful lady was.



*Former Oregon Caves tour guide William Lundquist is now an innkeeper in Butte, Montana. Oregon Caves National Monument is 20 miles southeast of Cave Junction, on Ore. 46. A tour of the Oregon Caves has been a tradition for more than one hundred years. Today, tours are conducted by the Oregon Caves Company, a private concession. Tour hours vary depending on the season, so readers are advised to call ahead (503-592-3400). The park also offers fine dining and accommodations at The Chateau, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

Elijah S. Davidson, discoverer of the Oregon Caves, contemplates the official signage commemorating the site's 1909 designation by President Taft as a National Monument, circa 1913.





# The Eagle Point Historical Society Museum Where Memories Have a Home

by Karla K. Powell

“**A**ll Trails End Here,” proclaims the white banner above the main room of the Eagle Point Historical Society’s Museum; and indeed, this former Long Mountain schoolhouse, circa 1925, now offers a final resting place for all manner of collectibles. With its bright white walls and expansive windows, the Eagle Point Museum has an airy, open feel to it that illuminates the past and invites visitors to explore its microcosm of history as experienced by the local people. “It doesn’t even smell [musty] like a museum,” says curator Barbara Hegne.

As curator, Hegne devotes herself to the restoration, documentation, and just plain cleaning of all artifacts that are donated. “Those old timers had to be ingenious,” she says of our pioneer forebears. “They forged the tools, and we’ve just improved on them.” As she shows me a combination padlock, circa 1877, a “3-D” stereopticon for viewing the Egyptian pyramids, and hair crimpers that predate the curling iron, I’m reminded that truly there is nothing new under the sun. Hegne’s obvious regard for the prized possessions in her care has resulted in some ingenuity of her own.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LEONARD

The interior of the Eagle Point Museum contains the second largest holdings of historic artifacts in Jackson County.

For example, cognizant of the fact that people like to muse over pictures as they would a family photo album, she has mounted historic photos within an acid-free environment and catalogued them in a contemporary, flip-through, poster-display case that was donated to the museum by the Fred Meyer company. It works. Rather than rifling through images pell-mell, the viewer can take in at a glance a period in time or a moment in a life. Another marriage of the old and new comes with a gadget from Wal-Mart that makes the perfect vehicle for viewing old postcards. Hegne also has installed special lighting and

reflective glass to protect the artifacts from harmful ultraviolet rays. Her sensibility towards display even comes through in subtle ways, such as lowering cases that are of particular interest to children, to accommodate their “shortened” perspective on life.

Barbara Hegne dotes over each of the donated objects and presents them to visitors in a flowing, graceful manner of display. Hegne points out that the Eagle Point Museum houses the second largest holding of historical artifacts in Jackson County. Still, she wishes people would donate more because “It honors their family.” Donations thus far range from antique gun collections to heirloom quilts; mining paraphernalia to the daily journals of James J. Fryer (“The Father of Eagle Point”), which Hegne has painstakingly

photocopied for posterity; rare examples of pioneer Hannah pottery to exotic reminders of the role of the Chinese in local history; logging "misery saws" to Ginger Rogers' milk jars. On and on it goes, with Hegne loathe to turn away anything that speaks of the past and those who lived it. "I have to find out how the story ends," says Hegne, who has written several local histories and likes to focus on the "forgotten" people of Eagle Point.

Eagle Point began in 1853 as an eight-hundred-acre land claim owned by Abram Robinson, George Ludlow, and Freeman Smith, who grew produce and livestock for the Jacksonville market. James J. Fryer bought out their claim after the Rogue River Wars. Named in 1877 by John Mathews for a rocky cliff where eagles nested overlooking the town, Eagle Point stayed much the same over the next sixty years. For excitement, there was the local dance hall, notorious for fights and bootleg whiskey; but Eagle Point remained primarily a place known for growing good produce, good livestock, and good kids.

When construction of Camp White began in 1942, some of Eagle Point's men helped build the camp and local business boomed there, as elsewhere in the valley. Men in camouflage practiced war games in the streets; but with the war's end, Eagle Point returned to growing better produce, better livestock, and better kids.

Today, despite modern life's insistent intrusions, life in Eagle Point retains its unhurried pace. Peter and Cora Crandall have run Butte Creek Mill, one of the valley's first flour mills, since 1972. Built in 1872, it is the only operating water-powered grist mill in Oregon today. Butte Creek Mill produces stone ground flours, grains, and other specialty items that are sold worldwide. Next door Crandall also operates the Oregon General Store Museum — his private collection of advertising paraphernalia from the late 1800s.

When Hegne and I return to the Eagle Point Museum after our visit with her neighbors down the road, I'm struck anew by the dedication of local people committed to preserving the history of their area. On our way to lunch, Hegne and I stroll past Bridge # 202 — better known as the Antelope Creek Covered Bridge — which now spans Little Butte Creek. Eagle Point became known as "The Community That Moves" in the fall of 1986, when together the townspeople moved and preserved this historic bridge. True to form, the people of Eagle Point wanted this bridge, in part, to provide safe passage for their schoolchildren.

While enjoying homemade soup at Danielle's restaurant, Hegne and I talk about what it is to have a sense of place. "I can still go by the boarding house my parents ran," Hegne tells me. Without a doubt her connection to this area matters to Barbara Hegne, as do the roots of others who call Eagle Point home.



*Interested readers can learn more about Eagle Point and its role in southern Oregon history in the book *Land in Common: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon*, published by the Southern Oregon Historical Society (1993). Eagle Point is approximately 12 miles northeast of Medford, off Hwy. 62. For directions and hours of operation of the Eagle Point Historical Society Museum, call 503-826-4166.*



Helen Wolgamott, president of the Board of Trustees of the Eagle Point Historical Society points to a photo of her ancestors in the collection.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LEONARD





# Refuge Reclaimed:

## *The Birth, Death, and Revival of the First National Waterfowl Refuge*

by Doug Foster

**L**ower Klamath Lake, on the Oregon-California border, is listed on the National Register as both the first national waterfowl refuge and the first large area of public land in the United States set aside for wildlife. President Theodore Roosevelt designated this 80,000-acre lake as a wildlife preserve in 1908. Within ten years the federal government cut off the flow of water to the lake — as part of a reclamation project — and Lower Klamath dried up. The wildlife preserve lay barren for more than twenty years.

At the turn of the century, Lower Klamath Lake held water-thronging masses of shorebirds and waterfowl;<sup>1</sup> the lake region of southern Oregon was then “the most profitable field in the west” for plume hunters.<sup>2</sup> These market hunters slaughtered grebes, terns, and gulls by the thousands and shipped their skins in bales to New York milliners to decorate Victorian ladies’ wear. One summer thirty thousand grebe skins — used to make capes and coats — were shipped from Lower Klamath.<sup>3</sup> Scores of plume hunters descended during nesting season when the birds, formed into dense colonies, were easy prey. They ruthlessly killed the mature birds, leaving the eggs to rot and the young to starve — annihilating colony after colony.<sup>4</sup> This commercial slaughter posed the greatest single threat to Lower Klamath birdlife.

Naturalists were incensed. When Oregon passed a law protecting non-game birds in 1903, the National Association of Audubon Societies paid salaries for two deputy game wardens to protect plumed birds on Lower Klamath. In 1905 the Audubon Society sent its western field representative, William Finley, to investigate conditions there.<sup>5</sup>

Finley and his field companion, Herman Bohlman, found the lake surrounded by a “jungle” of tules, an “impenetrable mass from 10 to 15 feet high.” On the lake, great colonies of nesting birds clustered on an “endless area of floating tule islands.”<sup>6</sup> These islands were composed of the decaying, brown stalks of generations of tules, through which sprouted each year’s new green growth.<sup>7</sup> Walking on these floating platforms of vegetation, Finley wrote, was “like walking on the crust of the snow, for you never knew just when it would break thru.”<sup>8</sup>

The floating islands held eight or ten big pelican rookeries, with four to six hundred pelicans, and fifteen smaller rookeries with from fifty to two hundred birds: a total of from four to nine thousand white pelicans, one of the biggest breeding colonies anywhere.<sup>9</sup> Lower Klamath and nearby lakes, Finley reported, were “perhaps the greatest feeding and breeding ground for water fowl on the Pacific coast” and Lower Klamath was “perhaps the most



extensive breeding ground in the West for all kinds of inland water birds.”<sup>10</sup> Lower Klamath supported colonies of gulls, terns, and grebes, but no herons — for plume hunters had decimated the heron rookeries.<sup>11</sup>

Finley and Bohlman learned that each winter twenty to thirty camps of professional hunters slaughtered vast numbers of ducks and geese to supply the San Francisco restaurant trade. This market hunting of “game birds” for meat — unlike plume hunting — was then still legal. Finley reported that “when the ducks are flying, each hunter will bag from one hundred to one hundred fifty birds a day.” These hunters kept two wagons going the entire season, to haul away dead birds for shipment south.<sup>12</sup> Hunters were paid \$3.00 to \$5.00 per dozen for mallard ducks. One hundred and twenty tons of wild ducks were killed during the winter of 1903 and shipped to San Francisco.<sup>13</sup>

Finley published stories in national magazines about Lower Klamath’s rich birdlife and the destruction wrought by market hunters. His stories were illustrated with superb, close-up photographs of wildlife. Finley and Bohlman were pioneer wildlife photographers; using bulky bellows cameras and hiding in canvas blinds, they captured wildlife images that stirred the public’s imagination. Finley’s work inspired President Theodore Roosevelt to sign an Executive Order in 1908 that set aside 81,619 acres of Lower Klamath “as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.”<sup>14</sup> This Executive Order prohibited all hunting; but it included in the preserve only lands “unsuitable for agricultural purposes” and it specifically made these lands subject to use by the United States Reclamation Service.<sup>15</sup>

Lower Klamath has another historic distinction: it was the first federal wildlife refuge superimposed on an existing federal reclamation project.<sup>16</sup> In 1902 the President had signed the Reclamation Act; and the following year the Reclamation Service began work on the Klamath Reclamation Project, which included Lower Klamath Lake.<sup>17</sup> In 1905 — the year that Finley first surveyed Lower Klamath wildlife — the Oregon and California state legislatures passed laws that authorized the draining of the lake.<sup>18</sup> The President believed that good land stewardship encompassed both reclamation of wetlands for agriculture and preservation of wetlands for wildlife. The conflict inherent in the President’s philosophy unfolded in southern Oregon more than seventy-five years ago.

The early history of Lower Klamath was forged by the clash of two federal agencies working at cross purposes: the Reclamation Service (now the Bureau of Reclamation) and the Bureau of Biological Survey (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The Biological Survey was at a disadvantage both because its official mission was studying wildlife, not protecting wildlife, and because it was so underfunded that it could not pay and equip the first refuge warden at Lower Klamath.<sup>19</sup> (In 1909 three groups collaborated to pay the warden’s monthly salary: \$1 from the federal government, \$25 from the National Audubon Society, and \$50 from the State of Oregon.<sup>20</sup> The Audubon Society furnished and paid for the warden’s patrol boat.)<sup>21</sup>

The Reclamation Service initially planned to reclaim Lower Klamath Lake by cutting off its sole source of water.<sup>22</sup> The lake was a settlement basin for overflow water from the Klamath River: in wet seasons water flowed from the river through the Klamath Straits and filled the lake; in dry seasons the water reversed its flow from lake to river. The Reclamation Service, by controlling the headgates at the Klamath Straits railroad crossing, controlled the flow of water to Lower Klamath.<sup>23</sup>

Since Lower Klamath was a settlement basin, government scientists were concerned that alkali salts had been deposited in its lake bed in such quantities as to impair soil fertility. They diked and drained a small tract of marsh, started an experimental farm, and discovered that the crops they planted would not grow to maturity. In 1911 these botanists concluded that the lake bed could not be farmed until the alkali was removed and that application of current farming practices would not economically remove the alkali.<sup>24</sup> While the rest of the Klamath Reclamation Project moved ahead, plans for draining Lower Klamath Lake were indefinitely postponed.<sup>25</sup>

This news — while a reprieve for the refuge — was not popular with local developers. Individuals had filed Swamp Land Act claims on nearly 20,000 acres of marshlands within the refuge. These marshlands, once drained and reclaimed, would become private property.<sup>26</sup> The landowners were irate that the federal government had shelved plans for reclaiming Lower

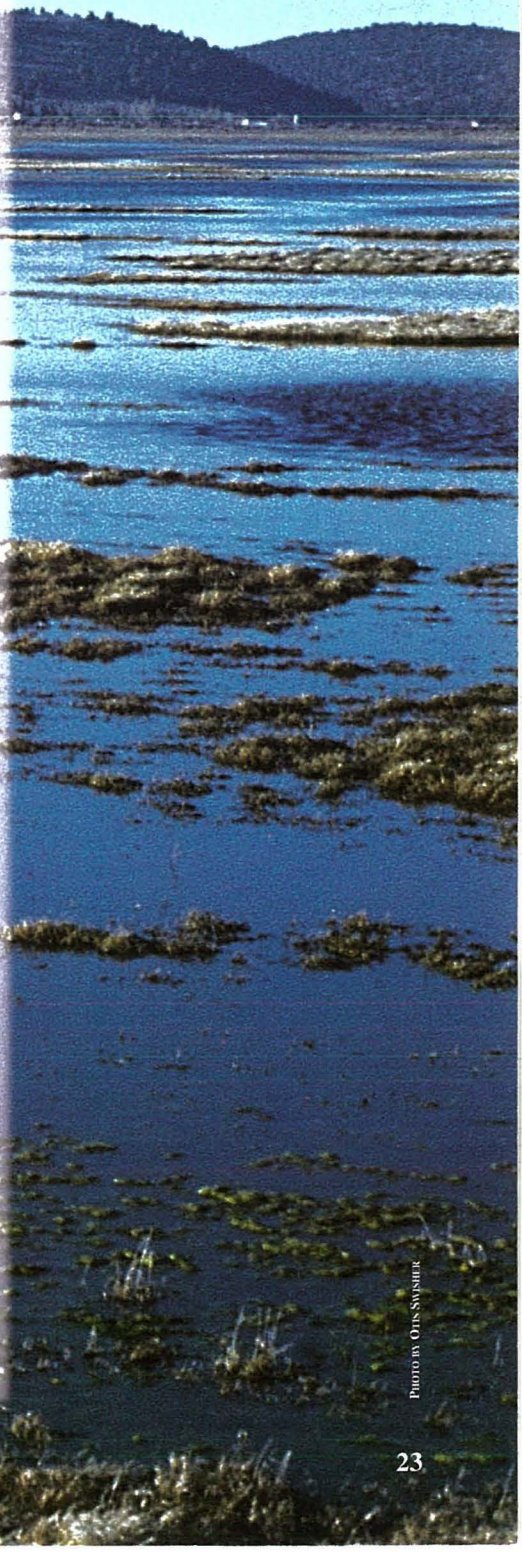


PHOTO BY OTIS SWANER





Former lake bed of Lower Klamath Lake in 1946, after draining and attempted farming.

Klamath. Most of this land was controlled by one man called the "Marsh King," a "speculator" who had bought some marshlands for as little as \$1 an acre.<sup>27</sup>

The Marsh King, who was President of the Klamath Water Users Association, spent four months in Washington, D. C., lobbying to have Lower Klamath Lake released from the federal reclamation project so that the marshlands could be "privately" reclaimed.<sup>28</sup> While he lobbied in Washington, the private landowners proposed diking the private lands and pumping off the water — a plan that wouldn't drain the lake or destroy the refuge.<sup>29</sup> When Lower Klamath was released from the federal project, however, they insisted that the government close the Klamath Straits since this would drain the private marshlands at no cost to the landowners.<sup>30</sup>

The private landowners' plan for Lower Klamath, according to the supervising engineer of the Reclamation Service, was inconsistent with the Reclamation Act. While federal law required that lands be held in small tracts of a few hundred acres and that owners live on and cultivate their land, some Lower Klamath landowners controlled thousands of acres and their reclamation plan had no restriction on "land speculation, inflation of values or other forms of malpractice that have been the bane of western development." This engineer warned that marshland owners were "in full career toward unloading their speculative holdings on the unwary at the earliest possible date."<sup>31</sup> In 1913

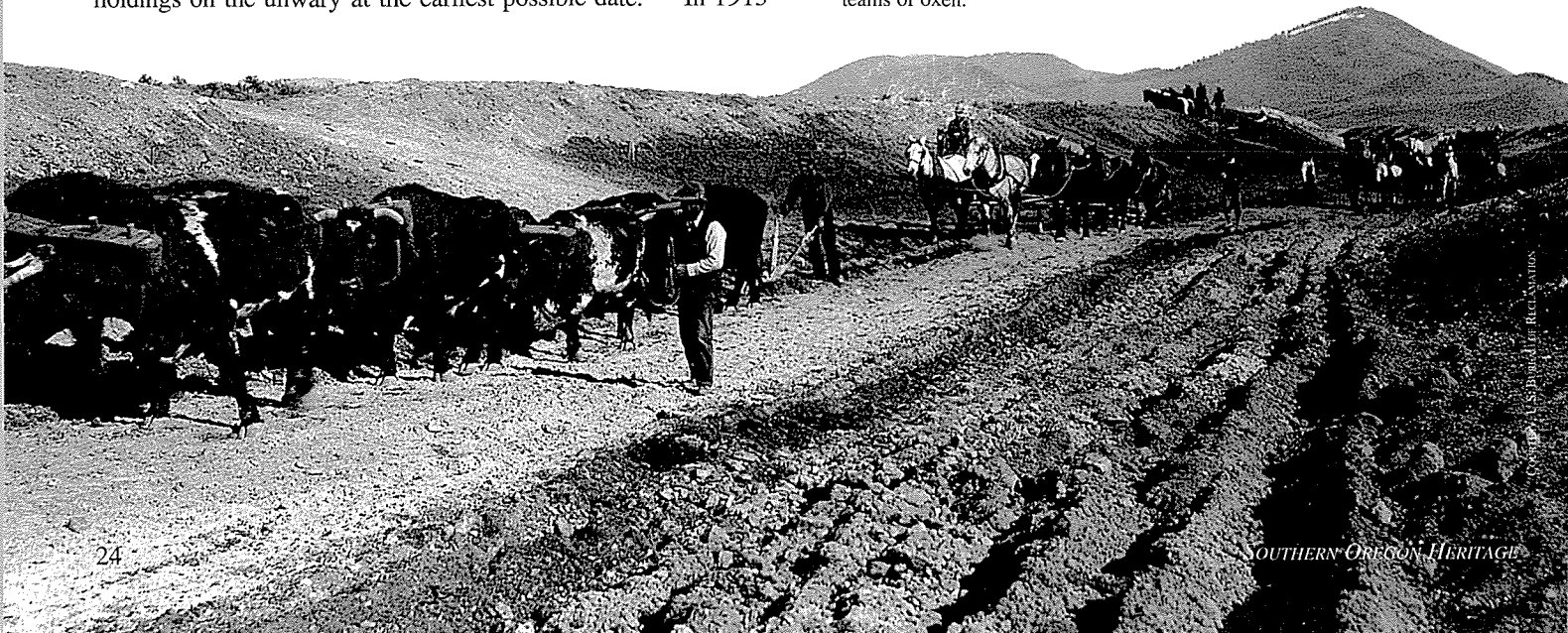
the director of the Reclamation Service warned the secretary of the interior that if the flow of water to Lower Klamath Lake was cut off before the landowners installed an irrigation system, there was a "great danger" that fires would start in the peat soil and sweep through the marsh so that the lake bed would become "simply an alkali flat."<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, local Reclamation Service employees helped the private landowners organize as a drainage district and then began negotiations to stop the flow of water to the lake. Four years later, the United States and the drainage district signed a contract to close the headgates and shut off water to Lower Klamath Lake.<sup>33</sup> Given the concerns of government botanists, the warnings of Reclamation Service officials, and the threat to the refuge, why did the United States enter this contract? One answer may be found in the terms of the contract; for it required that the drainage district pay the United States \$104,895.15 as "reimbursement" for its share of government costs incurred to investigate the feasibility of reclaiming Lower Klamath Lake.<sup>34</sup>

The headgates in the Klamath Straits railroad embankment were permanently closed in 1917. By the summer of 1918, all the marshlands were dry and great mud flats extended out a mile into the lake.<sup>35</sup> By 1922 all that remained of Lower Klamath Lake was a 365-acre alkaline pond at the south end of the lake bed. Thousands of ducks died of alkali poisoning; and the great colonies of nesting gulls, cormorants, and pelicans disappeared.<sup>36</sup>

One private landowner, who at one time controlled nine thousand acres of marshland on Lower Klamath, wrote that as of 1920 the drainage of the lake increased the value of his land from \$11 to \$45 per acre.<sup>37</sup> But fires soon broke out in the lake bed's dried-out peat soils; and clouds of choking dust and ash began to fill the air and obscure the sun. Most efforts to farm these reclaimed lands in the 1920s were "total failures."<sup>38</sup> By the early 1920s, according to the chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, "what was formerly a great wildlife refuge became a desert."<sup>39</sup> In 1925 William Finley wrote that Lower Klamath had become "a great desert waste of dry peat and alkali. Over large stretches fire has burned the peat to a depth of from 1 to 3 feet, leaving a layer of white loose ashes into which one sinks above his knees."<sup>40</sup> T. Gilbert Pearson, president of the Audubon Society, visited Lower

Excavating the main canal on the Klamath Reclamation Project in 1906, using teams of oxen.






The first diversion of water into irrigation ditches at the Klamath Reclamation Project, August 28, 1906.

Klamath then and reported that “we saw only weeds — miles and miles of thickly growing weeds — and the only living creature we found was a scrawny venomous snake that crossed the road and paused by the wheel track to shake his rattles at the two perspiring men in the car. Farther on we came to open flats over which whirlwinds chased each other like ghosts of the wildlife that had departed.”<sup>41</sup> When he served as game warden and biologist for the State, Finley was Oregon’s most outspoken champion for Lower Klamath’s birdlife.<sup>42</sup> In the 1920s he spearheaded a national campaign to restore the refuge, arguing that, since the lake bed was useless for agriculture, it should be reflooded for wildlife. The commissioner of Reclamation acknowledged in 1926 that his agency had received voluminous letters from “lovers of wildlife,” both organizations and individuals, requesting that the lake be reflooded.<sup>43</sup> But the pleas of conservationists went unheeded, and the refuge lay dry and barren through the 1930s.

Ironically, it was neither “lovers of wildlife” nor a federal wildlife agency that revived Lower Klamath. The agency that had destroyed the refuge began to reclaim it for wildlife when J. R. Iakish, senior engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation, conceived a plan to reflood the lake. Lower Klamath Lake and nearby Tule Lake each posed a nuisance; one was too dry, and the other too wet. While peat fires and dust storms raged on Lower Klamath’s dry lake bed, the sump at Tule Lake — filled to overflowing with irrigation run off from the federal reclamation project — threatened to flood valuable agricultural land. Iakish proposed that a 6,000-foot tunnel be constructed through the ridge separating the two lakes so that water from Tule Lake sump could be pumped onto the dry bed of Lower Klamath — to solve both problems and to meet the needs of agriculture and wildlife.<sup>44</sup>

The plan worked. Lower Klamath once again is a productive refuge. There is a final irony, though, for the lake bed — through use of deep irrigation drains to leech out the alkali salts — has become productive farmland. Local farmers

sharecrop some refuge fields, leaving part of their barley crop on the ground as a high protein food for migrating waterfowl. The refuge and nearby farms even look alike; both are crisscrossed by dikes that slice the land into neat rectangles. The refuge is managed as intensively as the farmlands that surround it. Refuge personnel maintain a plumbing system of dikes, canals, and pumping plants, which allows them flexibility to create habitat for wildlife.<sup>45</sup> While there are still serious problems — the refuge lacks any legal water rights and must rely on agricultural run off laden with chemicals — farming and wildlife now coexist on Lower Klamath.

Once again, Lower Klamath hosts teeming flocks of migrating waterfowl and masses of nesting terns, herons, ducks, geese, pelicans, and grebes. Last spring over twenty-five thousand ducklings and goslings hatched on the refuge. Last fall over one-half million migrating waterfowl congregated at the refuge to feed. Truly, Lower Klamath has been reclaimed. 

*Doug Foster is a free-lance writer, historian, and past president of the Rogue Valley Audubon Society. His article, “‘Send Chilquin Up’ — Klamath Indians and the War Effort,” appeared in the summer issue of Southern Oregon Heritage.*

A contemporary view of Lower Klamath Lake shows vast agricultural fields.



PHOTO BY DOUG FOSTER



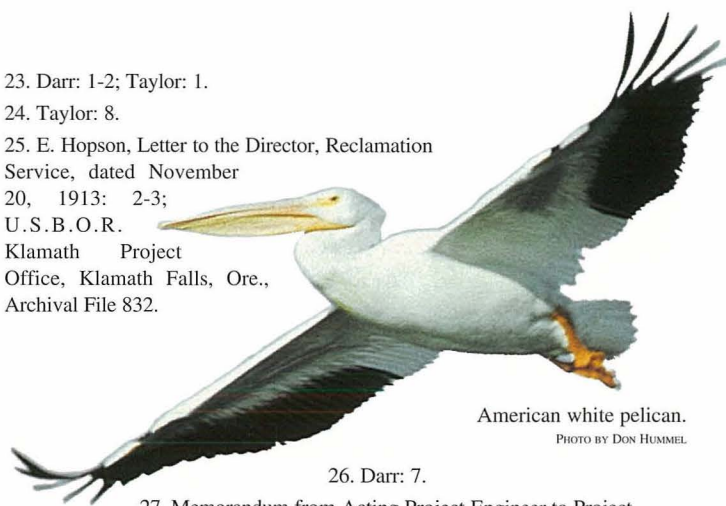
## ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Leaflet 238, "Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges" (May 1943): 5.
2. William L. Finley, "The Grebes of Southern Oregon," *The Condor*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (July-August 1907): 97.
3. William L. Finley, "Uncle Sam, Guardian of the Game," *The Outlook*, Vol. 107 (June 27, 1914): 482.
4. William L. Finley, "Western Grebe," *The Oregon Sportsman*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 1918): 40.
5. Portland Audubon Society, *Audubon Warbler* (April 1959): 4.
6. Finley, "The Grebes of Southern Oregon": 98.
7. *Ibid.*
8. William L. Finley, "Among the Pelicans," *The Condor*, Vol. 9 (1907): 37.
9. *Ibid.*
10. William L. Finley, "Report of the Oregon Audubon Society for 1905," *Bird Lore*, Vol. 7 (1905): 338-339.
11. William L. Finley, "The Trail of the Plume Hunter," *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1910): 374-375.
12. Finley "Report of the Oregon Audubon Society for 1905": 340.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ira Gabrielson, *Wildlife Refuges*, (MacMillan, 1943): 11.
15. Executive Order No. 924, August 8, 1908.
16. Gabrielson: 182.
17. Allen L. Darr, "Lower Klamath Lake Reclamation," (1923): 3; U.S. Bureau Of Reclamation Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore, Archival File No. 123.2.
18. General Laws of Oregon, January 20, 1905: 63; California Stats. 1905: 4
19. Jenks Cameron, *The Bureau of Biological Survey, its History, Activities and Organization*, (Johns Hopkins Press, 1929).
20. "Report of the President of the Oregon Audubon Society for 1909": 1; Portland Audubon Society Collection, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Ore.
21. William L. Finley, "With the Field-Agents Cruising the Klamath," *Bird Lore*, Vol. 17 (Nov. 1915): 1.
22. Taylor, "Memorandum re: Lower Klamath Lake, Klamath Irrigation Project, Oregon-California," (February 20, 1926): 5; U.S.B.O.R. Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore., Archival File 565; Darr: 3.

23. Darr: 1-2; Taylor: 1.

24. Taylor: 8.

25. E. Hopson, Letter to the Director, Reclamation Service, dated November 20, 1913: 2-3; U.S.B.O.R. Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore., Archival File 832.



American white pelican.

PHOTO BY DON HUMMEL

26. Darr: 7.

27. Memorandum from Acting Project Engineer to Project Engineer, Klamath Reclamation Project, dated September 19, 1912: 1-2; U.S.B.O.R. Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore., Archival File 123.2.

28. "Klamath Falls Wins Long Fight," *The Oregonian*, April 30, 1911: 7.

29. Hopson : 13-15.

30. Darr: 7; Hopson: 10.

31. Hopson: 9-10.

32. F. H. Newell, letter to the secretary of the interior, dated May 29, 1913: 2; RG 48 (secretary of the interior) Series 8-3, Box 1605, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

33. Taylor: 12-13.

34. Agreement between the United States and the Klamath Drainage District dated November 1917.

35. J. J. Furber, "Warden's Report for August 1918," (September 9, 1918): 1; RG 22 (U.S.F.&W.S.), Series E-162, Box 81, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

36. Darr: 3.

37. L. Jacobs, "Affidavit, In the Matter of the Lower Klamath Lake Investigation," December 28 (1920): 1; U.S.B.O.R. Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore., Archival File No. 832.

38. U.S.F. & W.S., Wildlife Leaflet 238: 6.

39. E. W. Nelson, letter to Elwood Mead, Commissioner of Reclamation, dated June 11, 1924: 2; RG 115 (Bureau of Reclamation), Series E-7, Box 575, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

40. William L. Finley and Irene Finley, "The Destruction of Lower Klamath," *Oregon Sportsman*, Vol. 2, No. 1: 3-6.

41. Frank Graham, Jr., *The Audubon Ark: a History of the National Audubon Society*. (Alfred Knopf, 1990): 108.

42. E. Hewitt, "Oregon's State Game Warden and Biologist," *Sunset*, Vol. 39 (August 1917): 44.

43. Elwood Mead, letter to Hon. J. D. Fredricks, U.S. House of Representatives, dated February 25, 1926: 4-5; U.S.B.O.R. Klamath Project Office, Klamath Falls, Ore., Archival File No. 565.

44. J. R. Iakish, "Report on Tule Lake Reclamation, Klamath Project, Oregon, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Project Investigations Report No. 5, (1938).

45. Peter Steinhart, "Meeting Ground for the Masses," *National Wildlife*, Vol. 21 (Dec. 1982 -Jan. 1983): 24, 28.

Lush with renewed life, Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge now accommodates the needs of both man and nature.

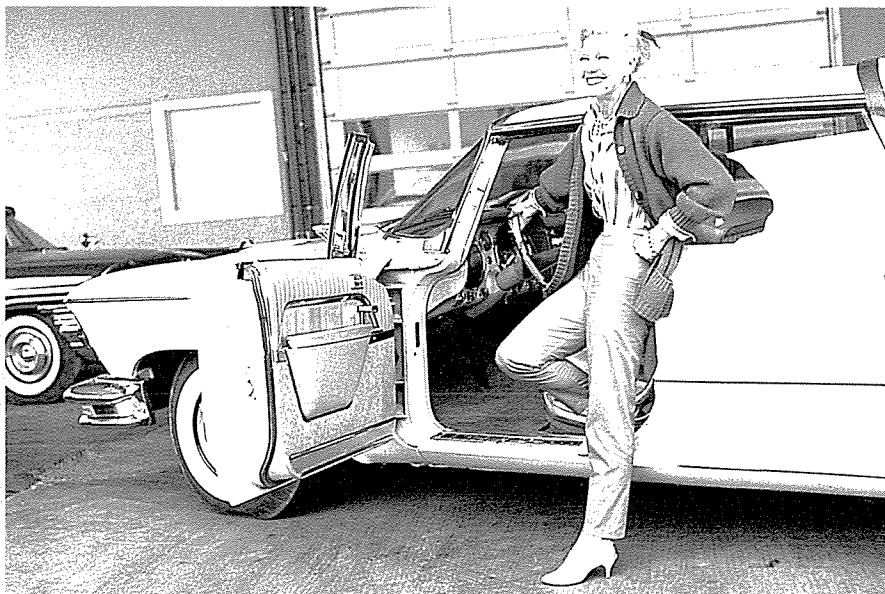


PHOTO BY ORIS SWANER





COURTESY OF GINGER ROGERS' ESTATE



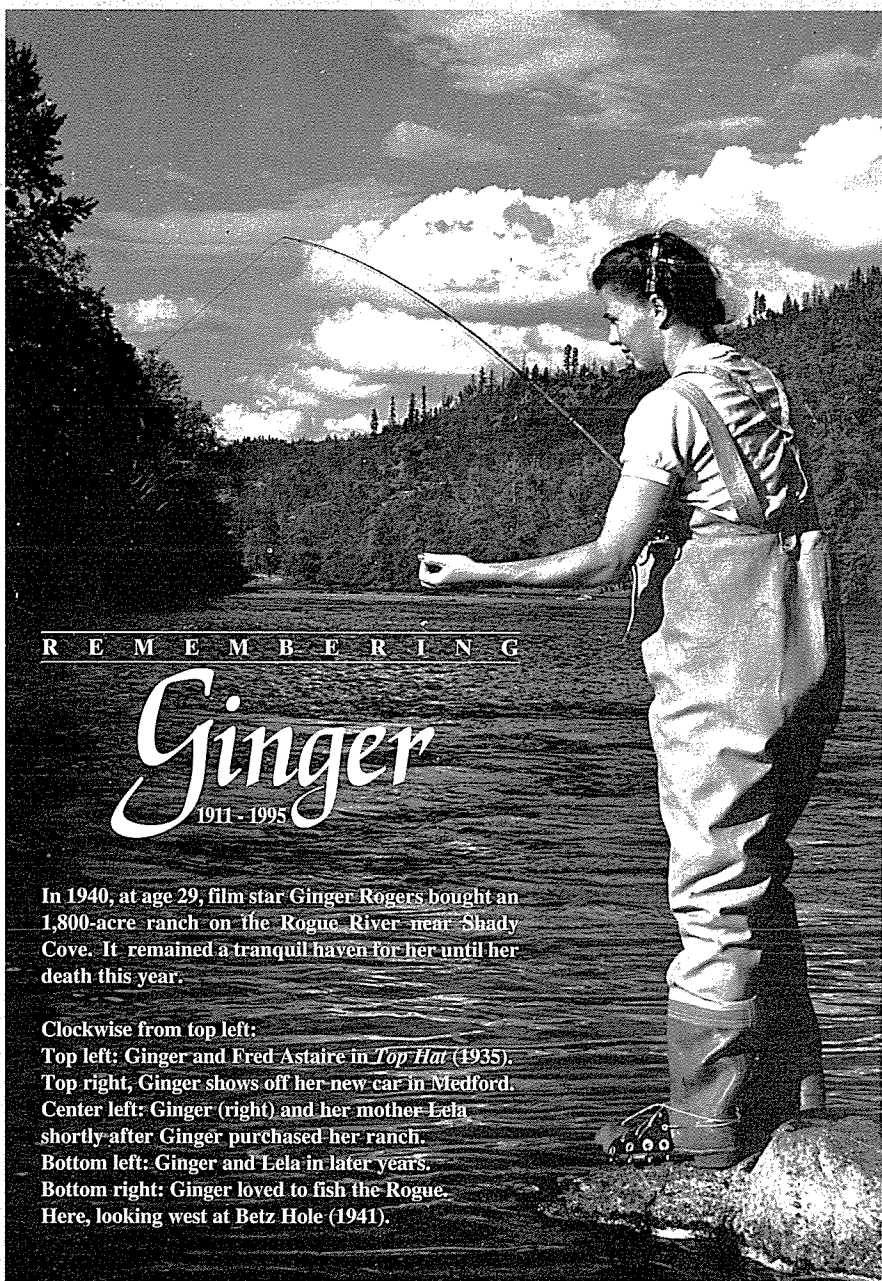
SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1489



COURTESY OF GINGER ROGERS' ESTATE



COURTESY OF GINGER ROGERS' ESTATE



COURTESY OF GINGER ROGERS' ESTATE

R E M E M B E R I N G

# Ginger

1911 - 1995

In 1940, at age 29, film star Ginger Rogers bought an 1,800-acre ranch on the Rogue River near Shady Cove. It remained a tranquil haven for her until her death this year.

Clockwise from top left:

Top left: Ginger and Fred Astaire in *Top Hat* (1935).

Top right: Ginger shows off her new car in Medford.

Center left: Ginger (right) and her mother Lela shortly after Ginger purchased her ranch.

Bottom left: Ginger and Lela in later years.

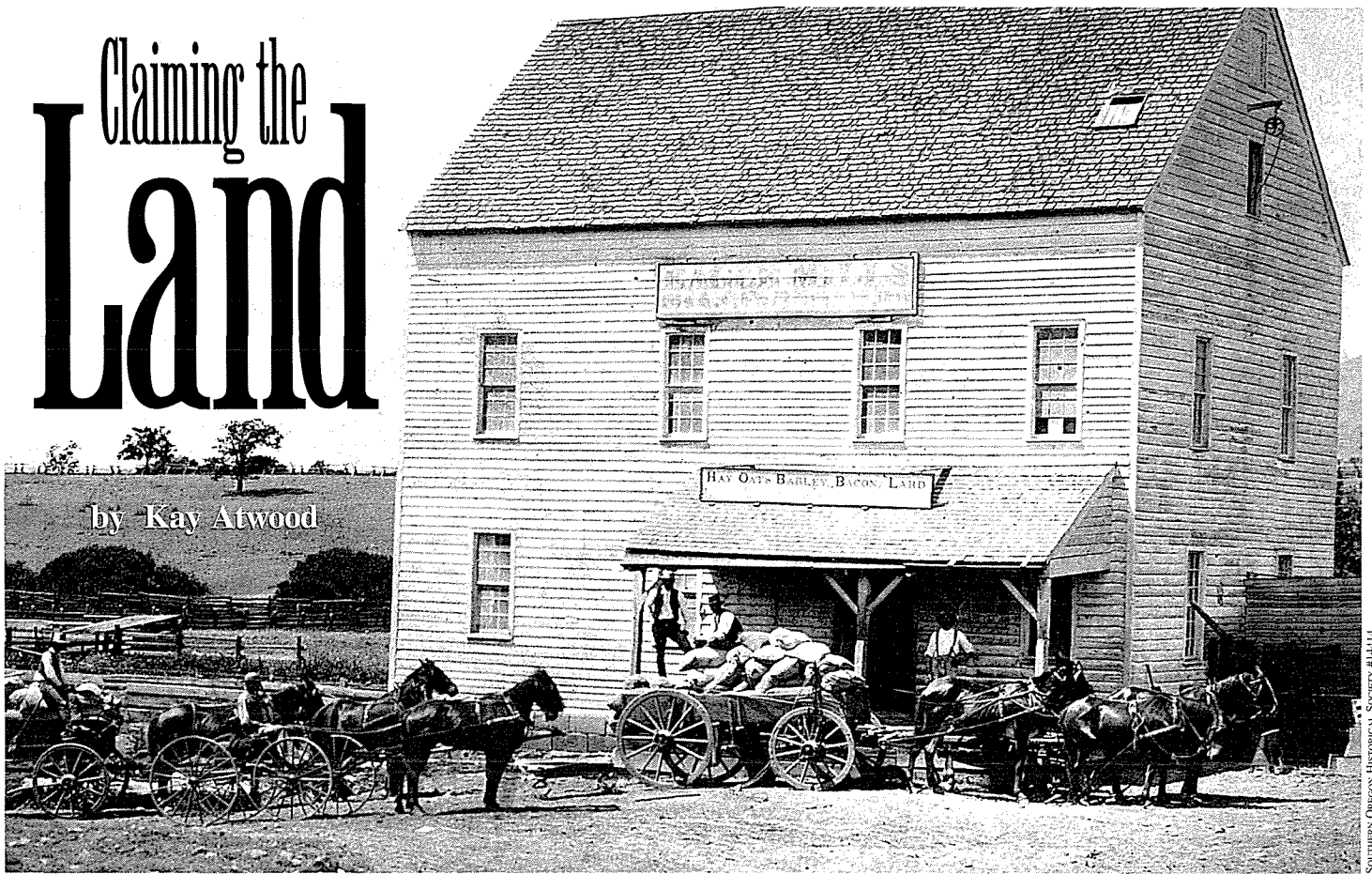
Bottom right: Ginger loved to fish the Rogue.

Here, looking west at Betz Hole (1941).



# Claiming the Land

by Kay Atwood

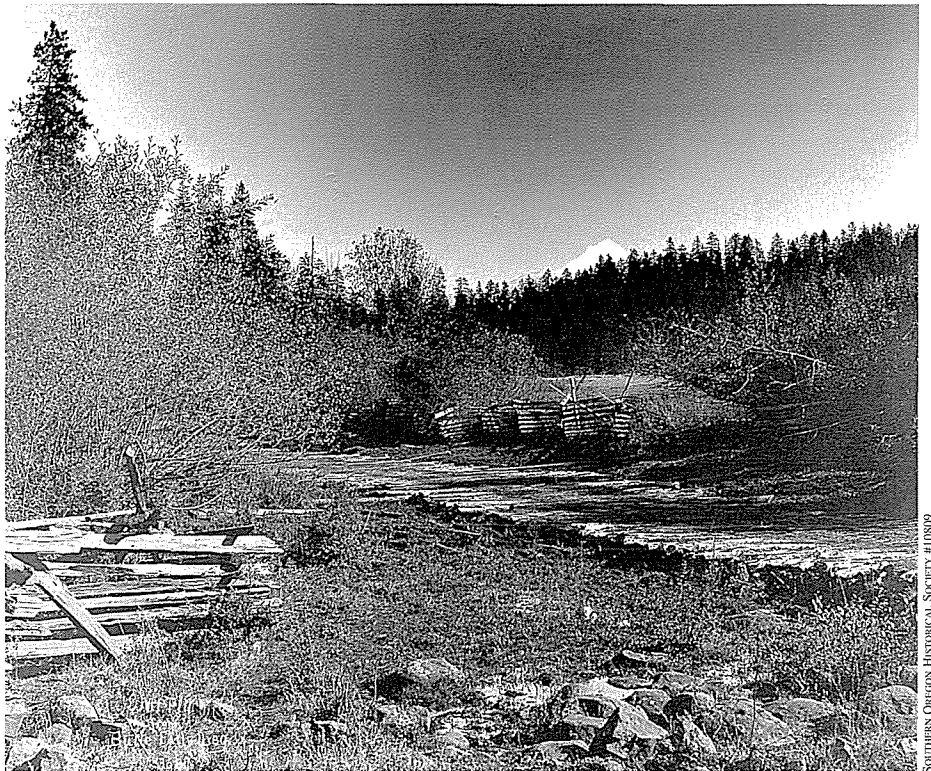


SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #14114

## The Current

Having once put his hand into the ground,  
seeding there what he hopes will outlast him,  
a man has made a marriage with his place,  
and if he leaves it his flesh will ache to go back.  
His hand has given up its birdlife in the air.  
It has reached into the dark like a root  
and begun to wake, quick and mortal, in timelessness,  
a flickering sap coursing upward into his head  
so that he sees the old tribespeople bend  
in the sun, digging with sticks, the forest opening  
to receive their hills of corn, squash and beans,  
their lodges and graves, and closing again.  
He is made their descendant, what they left  
in the earth rising in him like a seasonal juice.  
And he sees the bearers of his own blood arriving,  
the forest burrowing into the earth as they come,  
their hands gathering the stones up into walls,  
and relaxing, the stones crawling back into the ground  
to lie still under the black wheels of machines.  
The current flowing to him through the earth  
flows past him, and he sees one descended from him,  
a young man who has reached into the ground,  
his hand held in the dark as by a hand.

— Wendell Berry,  
*Farming: A Handbook*



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #10809

Top: The Eagle Mills was located north of Ashland and served Jackson County's wheat farmers beginning in 1854.

Bottom: Split-log roads and split-rail fences transformed the pristine landscape of southern Oregon.



The current linking Rogue Valley settlers to the Indians they found here was obscured by the speed with which the newcomers claimed the land as their own. In 1851 a valley characterized only by terrain, seasons, and hunter-gatherers was forcibly adapted. Within a year the mountains, streams, and vegetation became a political entity with the creation of Jackson County, Oregon Territory, on January 12, 1852. Only the most reflective newcomer observed that one way of life was ending while another was taking hold. The Indians' mark was invisible to most settlers; if the firestones or footprints were noticed they held little interest. John Beeson, an 1853 emigrant, was different. As he walked over his Wagner Creek farm one day, he paused to consider:

There were still remaining the excavations...the fresh ashes of their fires. I was constantly reminded of being an interloper or usurper of homes which others ought to possess.<sup>1</sup>

Like much of the nation's rural landscape, the Rogue Valley assumed its character from the farmers, road builders, miners, and merchants who came to stay. White settlement was accelerated by the exchange of intense hostilities between settlers and Indians from 1853 to 1856. Within five years of the arrival of the first settlers, most visible traces of Indians were gone. Streambank villages became farmsteads; camas fields yielded to pastures enclosed with split-rail fences; and trails widened into roads. Within months, *Di'tani* became Table Rock, *Titankah* became Rock Point, *Si-ku-ptat* became Stuart Creek. *Dilomi*, *Lat-gau*, *Hayawakh*, *Lats'upkh* — the Indian names — were now Jacksonville, Willow Springs, and Wagner Creek<sup>2</sup>

The settlers brought not only new ways, but also a fierce desire to replace the familiar things. Without hesitation, they transformed the wilderness into the civilization they remembered. While Indians had adapted to nature, new settlers strained to mold the landscape to meet their own purposes. Natural terrain and physical boundaries no longer defined human vision of the Rogue Valley. Farmers squared-up the land,

By 1854 Fort Lane and an Indian reservation were near the Table Rocks, once called *Di'tani* by the Indians. SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #14386

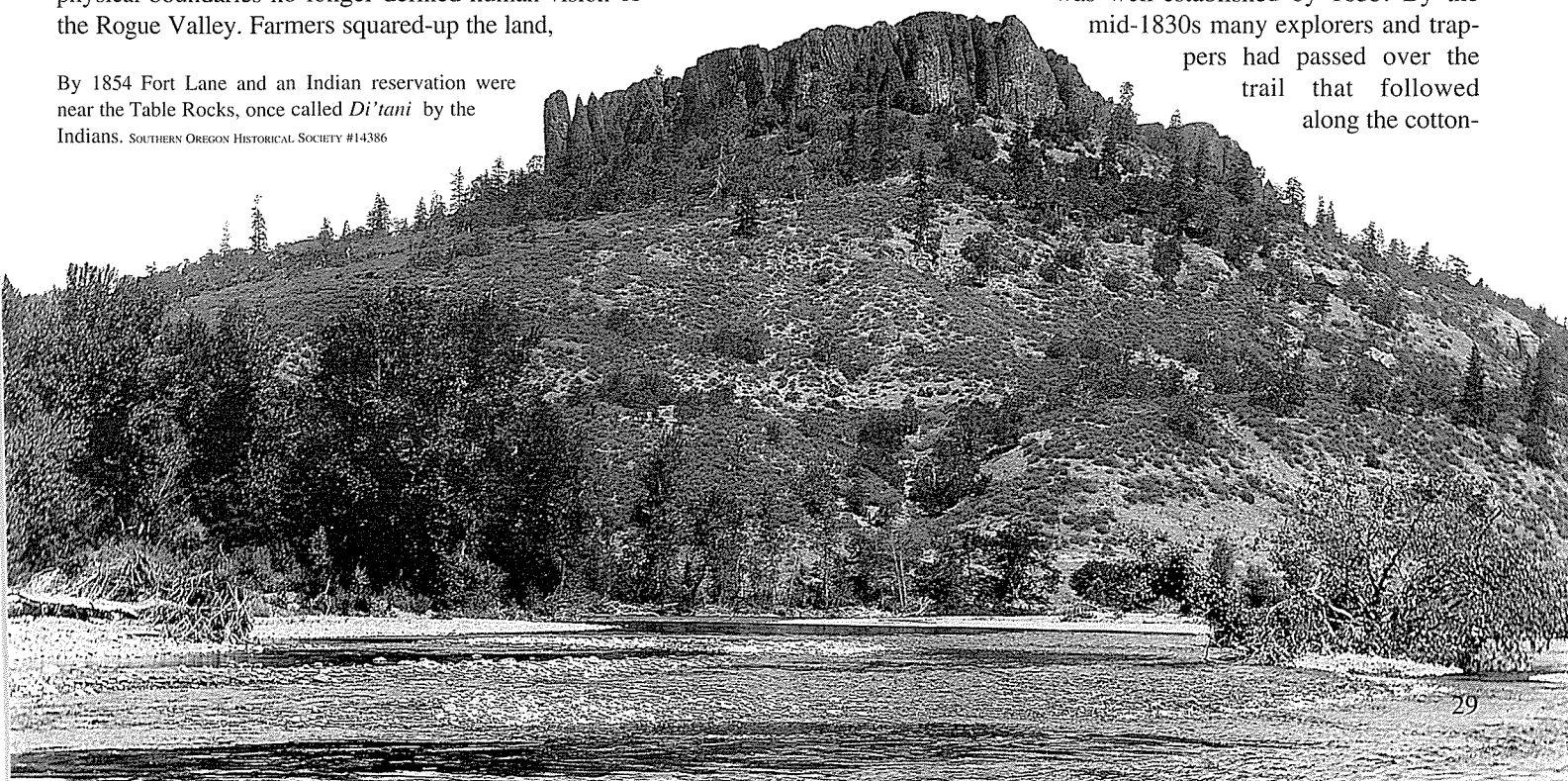
measured lines on the ground, and laid out fields and fences to mark their property.

The mountainous geography of the region determined settlement patterns for both whites and Indians. The Klamath Mountains, or Siskiyou, as they are commonly known, created a natural boundary in the southern part of the valley, and the Cascade Range formed the eastern boundary. Bottomlands extended along the Rogue and Applegate rivers and in the Bear, Little Butte, and Evans creeks' drainages. Originating in the forested mountains to the north, the Rogue River cut across Jackson County in a general southwesterly direction. Bear Creek coursed through a valley about two and one-fourth miles wide and twelve miles long before joining the Rogue. Forested slopes and open valleys offered settlers a rich variety of vegetation. They found maples, white and black oaks, fir, cedar, pine, alder, madrone, and ash. Closer to the ground grew Oregon grape, manzanita, wild roses and grapes, elderberry, hawthorn, snowberry, poison oak, and vine maple.<sup>3</sup>

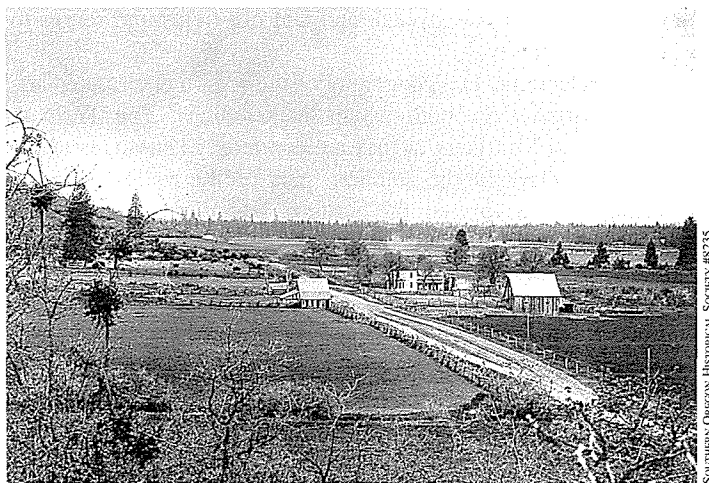
The people who came in 1851 were not the first whites to see the Rogue Valley, just the first to stay. During the preceding twenty-five years, fur trappers, a military expedition, and various entrepreneurs had seen the hills — green and then golden — had traveled through the blossoming springtime, had endured the hot dry summers. In the mild February of 1827, explorer Peter Skene Ogden wrote this description of the upper Bear Creek area:

Following a small stream for three miles I encamped... All here looks like summer...the oaks here being nearly double the size of any I have seen this season... this is certainly a fine Country and probably no Climate in any Country equal to it, the Indians inform us the winter is now over and I am almost inclined to believe them from the singing of Birds of all kinds, grass green and at its full growth...<sup>4</sup>

The Oregon-California land route was well-established by 1833. By the mid-1830s many explorers and trappers had passed over the trail that followed along the cotton-







Fences line the roadway past the Woodford Reames donation land claim, southwest of Phoenix.

wood and willow-lined Bear Creek. Ewing Young came through with cattle herds in 1834 and 1837. George Emmons led a military expedition through in 1841, followed by fur trader James Clyman's expedition in 1845.<sup>5</sup>

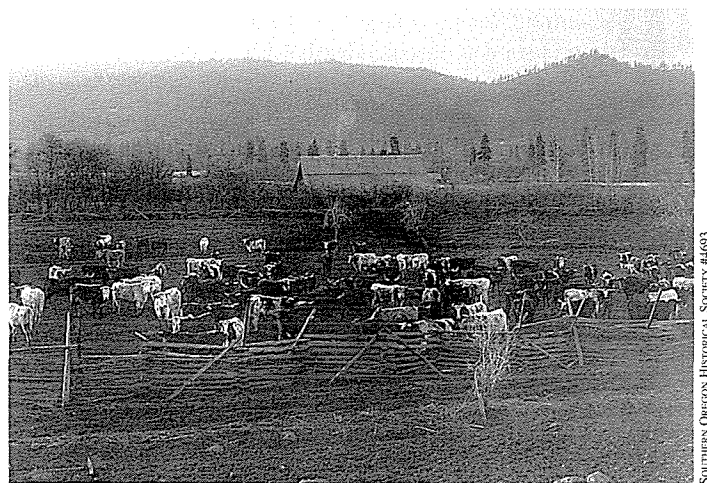
By 1846 prospective settlers passed through the Rogue Valley in what would become a regular seasonal pattern. That June the Applegate Trail was established when Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, Levi Scott, and others forged a wagon route through the Cascade Mountains, from the Rogue Valley toward Klamath Lake. In August 1846 about one hundred wagons left the Oregon-California Trail to cross the newly established Applegate Cutoff. The following year more settlers attempted the new route, but were attacked by Indians in the Rogue Valley.<sup>6</sup>

In September 1850, the U.S. Congress passed the Donation Land Claim Act, which encouraged potential settlers to move west in search of free, farmable land. The act allowed a married couple 640 acres of land and a single man 320 acres, providing the settler was in Oregon Territory on December 1, 1850. Claims amounting to one half that much were available after December 1.<sup>7</sup>

When the weather softened in the Rogue Valley in spring 1851, the newcomers arrived, at first only a few at a time. They came south from the Willamette Valley, north from California, and west through the Cascade Mountains along the Green Springs route — named for verdant springs that refreshed parched travelers and stock.

As settlers raised log sheds and brush lean-tos, the new sound of axes cracking into wood echoed throughout the valley. Split-rail fences soon confined stock and marked property boundaries. Roads were stretched between one farm and another, and bridges were laid across the streams. Fences, roads, and structures became the visible symbols of claiming the land. For the first time, the Rogue Valley was divided and adapted for private ownership.

These newcomers had ample choices for good land. They found open grasslands near streams and accessible wooded hills. They selected terraces with good soil and minimal flooding on which to construct their first shelters and barns. Within weeks, log cabins and barns began to replace the original rough shelters. Oats, wheat, and barley went into the fields. Lilacs and roses appeared in dooryards, and vegetable gardens were planted nearby.



Beginning with this 1857 farmstead, between Jacksonville and Central Point, Michael and Martha Hanley built a regional agricultural empire.

While farmers toiled in the fields, prospectors worked the creeks. In the early weeks of 1852, gold placer deposits in Jackson Creek and its tributary, Rich Gulch, were publicized widely. Adjacent to the gold mines, the small community of Jacksonville was established. Tents, log buildings, and frame structures were raised hurriedly along its streets.

In the summer and fall of 1853, large numbers of emigrants streamed down the Green Springs into the Bear Creek Valley, hurrying to settle in before winter struck. Scores of men, women, children, cattle, sheep, horses, and mules widened the trail as they came to claim the grass-covered meadows.<sup>8</sup> Young Welborn Beeson, who would settle with his parents on Wagner Creek, described the view:

August 30, Tuesday.

Started early, two miles to summit of hill. Caught sight of the mountain house with a beautiful green garden around. Descended two miles to Mr. Hill's house... The rest of the company separated some going one way and some another...The valley is about three miles wide here . . .<sup>9</sup>

Finding good farmland was critical and could be complicated. Nathaniel Myer and his son, Benjamin Franklin, were skilled surveyors and assisted neighbors in establishing claim boundaries in advance of the official government survey. The greatest number of claims was surveyed officially in 1854 when Butler Ives and George Hyde, two of fourteen U.S. government deputy field surveyors, came to Jackson County. Settlers who previously had measured land "to those hills" or "past that line of trees" now lived with imaginary lines on the ground. James Cardwell, an early Ashland-area resident, noted the process:

People began to take up land for ranches all over the country, and have them surveyed. While the surveying was in progress, the Indians seemed to be at a great loss to know how it was that the white men would take compass and chain and go around and cry stick stuck and set up a few stakes and call the land their own.<sup>10</sup>



Although summer and fall of 1853 were marked by frequent violent clashes between Indians and the miners and settlers who usurped the land and streams, farmers continued the endless rhythm of breaking prairie, splitting and hauling rails for fences, planting gardens and crops, tending stock, and digging irrigation ditches.

In September 1855 violence again erupted when Indians attacked teamsters in the Siskiyou. In October a volunteer militia swept out of Jacksonville to exterminate Indians on Butte Creek and massacred several old men, women, and children. Fighting continued through the winter at several locations, but by early spring of 1856, the Indians, subdued and broken, began their sad trek from Table Rock to reservations.<sup>11</sup>

With the removal of the Indians, the Rogue River Valley was altered permanently. Rural communities developed into supply centers — evolving at crossroads, by streams, or near mills. Wagner had a small population in the mid-1850s, as did Phoenix. Ashland Mills residents grouped around a sawmill, flour mill, and store. Other settlements flourished at Willow Springs, and at the Dardanelles and Rock Point on the Rogue River.

In the new towns and throughout the rural environs, frame houses gradually replaced log structures. The new dwellings — enclosed by picket fences and often sheltered by maples and willows — comprised the main buildings of farm complexes, which included barns, water towers, cellars, granaries, and wood sheds.<sup>12</sup> These farm landscapes now characterized the land that so recently had been undeveloped.

A stage route from Sacramento to Portland was completed in 1860, and by the following year Jackson County had post offices at Ashland Mills, Applegate, Rock Point, Jacksonville, and Phoenix. By 1865 the first wave of white settlement had ended in the Rogue Valley. The best land was claimed; and the ownership patterns — defined by donation-land-claim-lines — were established and bordered.

One spring day in 1854, Welborn Beeson and two companions left their mark on a mountain:

We started strait [sic] up the mountain determined to ascend to the very summit of the Wagoner Peak. After climbing up very steep mountains through very thick and heavy timber and underbrush, we got to the summit from which we would have a splendid view but for a cloud that came up far beneath us but between us and the valey [sic]...We cut our names into the rock with the pick on the tip top rock of all.<sup>13</sup>

Their enthusiastic carving reflects the backbreaking labor; the confident sense of Manifest Destiny, and the perseverance the early settlers needed to claim the land.

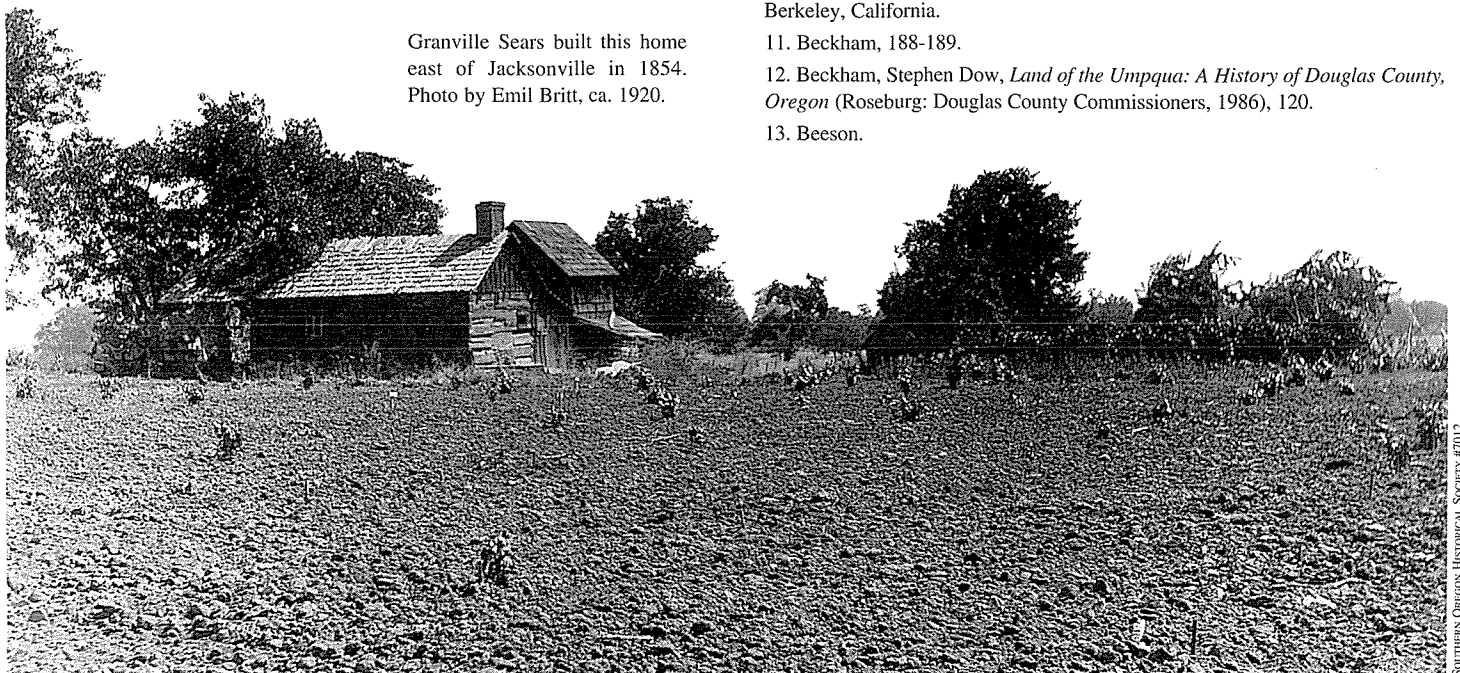


*Interested readers can find the above article in its entirety in the book Land in Common: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon, published by the Southern Oregon Historical Society (1993). Kay Atwood is an historian who lives in Ashland.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. John Beeson, *A Plea for the Indians: With Facts and Features of the Late War in Oregon* (New York: John Beeson, 1857), 41.
2. Dennis Gray, "The Takelma and Their Athapaskan Kin: An Ethnographic Synthesis of Southwestern Oregon" (Corvallis: Oregon State University thesis), 73-78.
3. Gray, 16.
4. Jeff LaLande, *First Over the Siskiyou: Peter Skene Ogden's 1826-1827 Journey Through the Oregon-California Borderlands* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1987), 54, 59.
5. Stephen Dow Beckham, *Requiem for a People: The Rogue Indians and the Frontiersmen* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 31-36.
6. Beckham, 40.
7. James M. Berquist, "The Oregon Donation Act and the National Land Policy," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 58 (1957), 28-29.
8. A.G. Walling, *History of Southern Oregon Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties* (Portland: A.G. Walling, 1884), 339-340.
9. Welborn Beeson, "Diary of Welborn Beeson I, 1851-1856," typescript on file at the Jackson County Library, Talent, Oregon.
10. James A. Cardwell, "Emigrant Company," MS P-A 15, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.
11. Beckham, 188-189.
12. Beckham, Stephen Dow, *Land of the Umpqua: A History of Douglas County, Oregon* (Roseburg: Douglas County Commissioners, 1986), 120.
13. Beeson.

Granville Sears built this home east of Jacksonville in 1854. Photo by Emil Britt, ca. 1920.

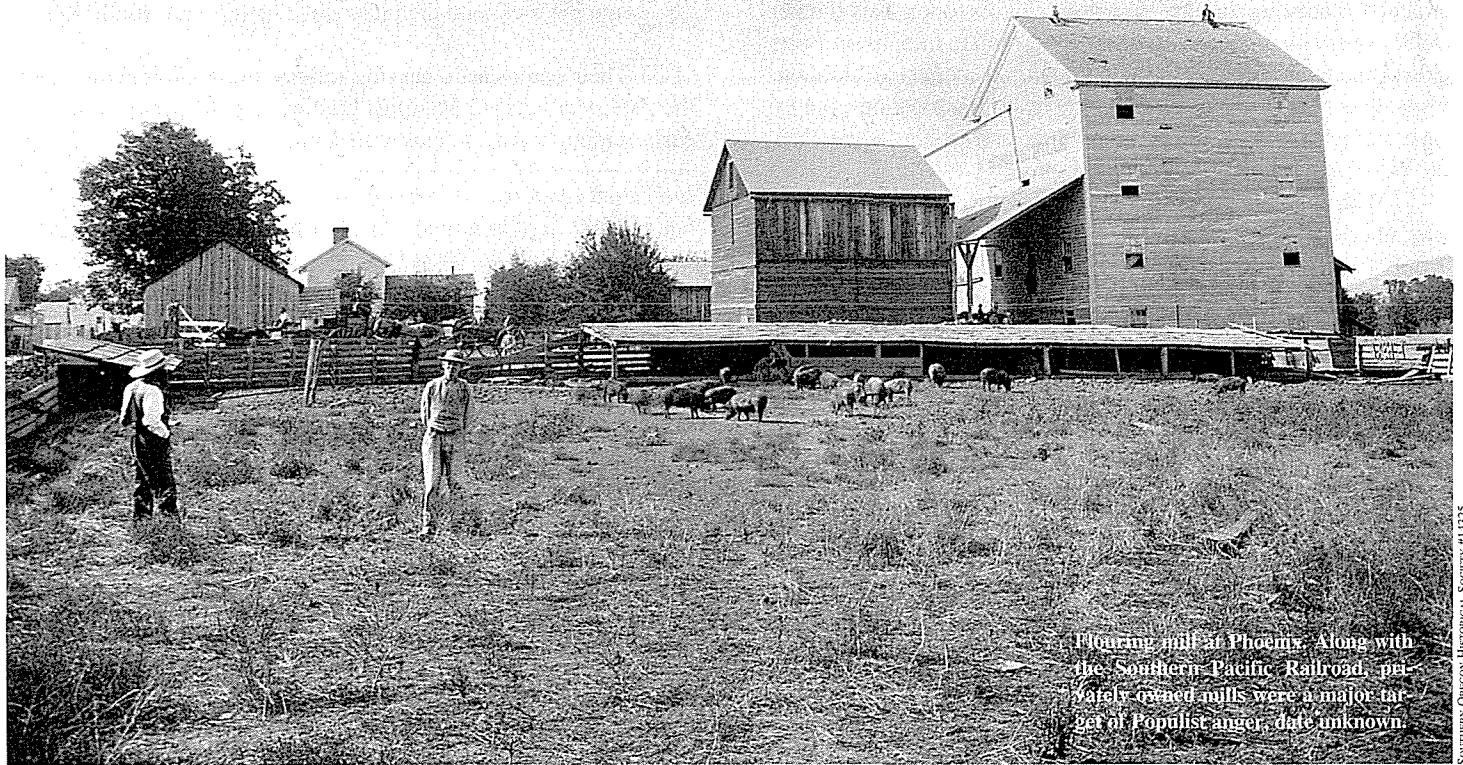




WHEN SOUTHERN OREGON WAS A "LITTLE KANSAS"

# The Populist Movement of the 1890s

by Jeff LaLande



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #14325

*The well-worn saying that "The more things change, the more they stay the same" applies particularly well to political history. Exactly one hundred years ago, Jackson County and other sections of southern Oregon were in the throes of a fierce political battle between the established political order and the new People's party. Accusations of "corruption in the courthouse" and calls for "revolution" through the ballot box spurred local people to join the Populist movement then sweeping into the West from east of the Rocky Mountains. The 1890s episode helped create an enduring legacy of rural-based "protest voting" in our region — a political tradition that remains potent today.*

**T**he Southern Pacific Railroad, the only direct link between the main population centers of California and the Pacific Northwest, brought former Civil War General James B. Weaver to the Rogue River Valley on May 10, 1892. Weaver stepped off the train at Medford and proceeded to the county fairgrounds where a large crowd awaited him. "Wagon load after wagon load" of southern Oregon farmpeople had come to hear the Populist speaker, soon to become the People's party candidate in that year's presidential race. According to a Populist newspaper, the *Southern Oregon*

*Mail*, the "grand and gentlemanly" Weaver riveted the attention of his frequently applauding listeners.<sup>1</sup> "The General," a hero and national political reformer, found his Rogue Valley audience bursting with enthusiasm for the Populist crusade.

Less than two weeks later, the "Kansas Cyclone" arrived in the valley. The dynamic Populist orator Mary Elizabeth Lease spoke at Ashland, Medford, Jacksonville, and Gold Hill. The *Mail* claimed that "never before had there been such an uprising" in the county as the crowds that turned out to hear Lease. Famous



for allegedly advising Kansas farmers to “raise less corn and more hell,” Lease delighted her eager Jackson County listeners by debunking the Republicans’ claim that overproduction caused farm ills with the quip, “the only over production that Kansas ever had, was an over production of fools.”<sup>2</sup>

Southern Oregon — with Jackson County its wealthiest and most populous section — became a hotbed of political discontent during the 1890s, when two-party conflict had put Jackson County government into a stalemate that seemed to mirror the national political situation. The region’s farmers participated enthusiastically in the nationwide Populist Revolt. This local movement — as yet little studied — is worthy of closer analysis: for the Jackson County third-party movement provides a case-study of the attempt to transplant the better-known Farmers’ Alliance/Populist model of the Great Plains to the Far West.

By 1892 the agrarian-based movement, which became known as the People’s party, had experienced a meteoric rise in southern Oregon’s Rogue River Valley and its smaller tributary valleys, which formed an extensive agricultural hinterland that traded with the merchants of Jacksonville and Ashland. The influx of several thousand newcomers (many of them wheat farmers) following completion of the railroad in 1887 — and the rapid growth of the new town of Medford — had introduced an unsettling element in the county’s political balance. Rural hamlets and small towns such as Talent, Phoenix, Central Point, Eagle Point, Woodville [now Rogue River], and Gold Hill became focal points of early Populist organizing.

What were the grievances that drew rural southern Oregonians into the ranks of the new People’s party? Three local factors spurred the third party’s rise among restive farmers: financial distress due to poor harvests and low prices; resentment of “monopolies,” as represented by local flouring mills and in particular the powerful Southern Pacific Railroad; and frustration with both high taxes and the perceived corruption of county government.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed tremendous acceleration in the transformation of America from an agricultural to an industrial nation. A time of prosperity for some segments of society, the period also brought severe distress to others — particularly the farmers of the South and the Great Plains — who were caught in a web of debt and low prices for their harvests. A major economic battle of the times pitted those in favor of the gold standard for currency against those who favored “free silver” coinage. The relative surplus of dollars caused by “free silver” would fuel inflation, helping debt-ridden farmers pay off their mortgages. The issue dominated American politics throughout the late 1880s and early 1890s, eventually coming to a head in the 1896 presidential campaign, the so-called “Battle of the Standards” between Republican William McKinley and Democrat/Populist William Jennings Bryan.

Neither of the nation’s two parties seemed capable of, or seriously interested in, addressing the farmers’ situation. Forming self-help organizations during the late 1870s and early 1880s, farmers forged fragile links with restive industrial workers and urban reformers that, by 1891, took shape as a third political party. The movement spread to the western



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #6794

Charles Nickell, owner/editor of the Jacksonville Democratic Times, saw his party’s once solid control of Jackson County politics ended by Populist insurgency, ca. 1900.

states, finding fertile ground in the silver mining and farming areas of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>3</sup>

One historian of Populism has stressed the key importance of an autonomous “democratic movement culture” in explaining the early political strength of the People’s party in the Great Plains from Texas to the Dakotas. This “movement culture” included the cooperative economic endeavors and social solidarity of the new Farmers’ Alliance clubs. It imparted a sense of independence and self-respect to downtrodden farmers. Consciously based on the Plains model, Jackson County’s transition from numerous local Farmers’ Alliance clubs to region-wide Populist movement occurred rapidly during the winter of 1891-1892. As one county member admitted, “the [Farmers’] Alliance seems to be the school for the People’s party.”<sup>4</sup>

In December 1891 the county’s new People’s party unfurled its banner of reform. Proclaiming that “for thirty years the legislation of our country has been in favor of monopolies,” its inaugural declaration condemned old parties as “hopelessly under the ... control of organized capital” and called on “all who believe in a reform of the evils” to join the “struggle of the people against plutocracy.”<sup>5</sup>

Jackson County’s political gridlock of the 1880s and early 1890s resulted from the bitter feuding between the county’s two largest towns. The long-term rivalry between Jacksonville and Ashland, expressed regularly by insults and sarcasm in the towns’ newspapers, was both commercial and political. Under

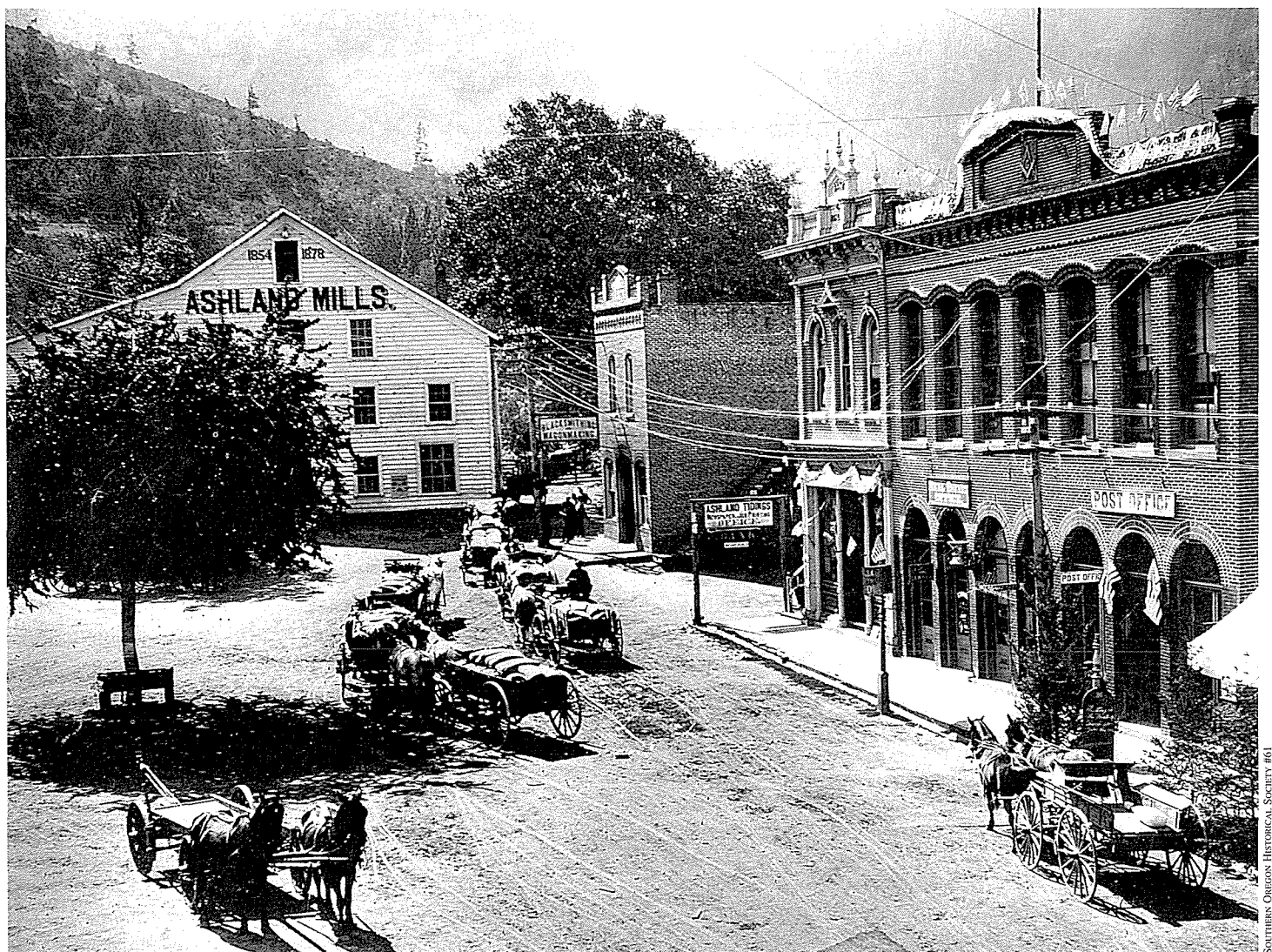
the dominance of Jacksonville, Jackson County had a strong Democratic tradition dating from earliest settlement. In 1860, it returned half of its presidential vote to the pro-slavery ticket of John Breckenridge and his running mate, southern Oregon "native son" Joseph Lane. Except for 1862, when it joined the rest of Oregon in voting for Republican-Union gubernatorial and congressional candidates, the county consistently gave solid majorities to Democratic national, state, and local officeseekers from the Civil War through the Gilded Age (circa 1865-1890). In contrast, many other Oregon counties transformed from Democratic to Republican majorities during this period.

Charles Nickell, owner and editor of Jacksonville's *Democratic Times*, dominated the local "Democracy," as his party was known. Representing the interests of Jacksonville's old-line elite, and supported by the many border-state Democratic farmers who had first settled the valley in the 1850-1860s, the party controlled the courthouse for nearly a generation. By the late 1880s, however, Ashland's remarkable growth translated

Farmers with wheat ready for milling wait near the office of the Ashland Tidings, Jackson County's confident Republican voice, ca. 1884.

into a direct political challenge to Jacksonville. Prosperous Ashland grew into a firmly Republican town during the 1880s and early 1890s. William Leeds, owner and editor of the *Ashland Tidings*, promoted his fellow Republicans at every opportunity, and Ashland residents dominated the local party's ranks. Editor Nickell, hoping to bestir Democratic loyalists to the polls in 1890, quoted the Republicans of an adjacent county as gloating: "the old Democratic stronghold of Jackson County, just across the line, will ... [become one more county] redeemed from the grip of Bourbonism since the advent of the railroad."<sup>6</sup>

As the tide of Populist reform began to gather force in 1892, the newly organized party polled surprisingly large minorities in the June state and local elections, its first race. A sample of fourteen of Jackson County's Populist leaders or candidates in 1892 indicates that most were farmers and only one was a native Oregonian. Of the immigrants, all but one had arrived in the region after 1880. Most had been raised in New England or the Midwest. These leaders ranged from full-time farmers like Stephen Nealon, of Sam's Valley, and William Bradshaw, of Eagle Point, to committed reformers like Talent's William Breese and Phoenix resident Samuel Holt. An ex-Republican



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #61





REAPING IN SOUTHERN OREGON

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #14322

originating from east Tennessee, Holt was the party's acknowledged mover-and-shaker, who effectively made the Populist case to southern Oregon voters. Reverend Ira A. Wakefield, Holt's Phoenix neighbor and the region's tireless, ubiquitous Populist organizer, called upon the party's Jackson County legions to "gird up [their] loins" for the 1892 presidential race. "Fight, we will — yield, we cannot — conquer, we must...to save our country from the power of 'enthroned capital.'" <sup>7</sup> Wakefield's confidence proved correct that November when Jackson County gave Populist presidential candidate James Weaver fifty percent of the vote, with his Republican and Democratic opponents splitting the remainder. Adjacent southern Oregon counties gave Weaver similar margins of victory.

The local movement's original 1892 demands — railroad regulation, mortgage relief, and government economy — obviously held strong appeal for hard-pressed farmers who weighed their previous allegiance to the older parties. For the most part, local fiscal resentments dominated. In a typical example, one *Mail* letter-writer, signing himself "A kicker from Woodville [present Rogue River]," complained that, despite exorbitant taxes, the "Jacksonville Ring's road department" failed to maintain rural roads. Citing "sumps" and "stumps" that caused physical injury to farmers on their way to market, he warned established politicians that "it is a long lane that has no turn and justice will yet prevail." <sup>8</sup> Yet another Populist, an Applegate Valley resident, stated, "We have had thirty years of [misrule] ... It has driven us to starvation. Give us a chance." <sup>9</sup>

With Farmers' Alliance members as its core adherents, southern Oregon's People's party mounted a sustained challenge to the region's "corrupt" political order from 1892 through 1894. The Populists of southern Oregon, although geographically isolated from areas of large-scale Alliance/People's party

Farmers like these made southern Oregon into a Farmers' Alliance and People's party stronghold, ca. 1905.

activity, nonetheless participated in important aspects of the movement's culture. Public language that stressed solidarity, particularly the use of "Brother" and "Brethren" in addressing their fellows, was common among local Alliance members. The tone of numerous editorial letters displays a sense of religious fervor and confidence in the power of unity to effect change. Large Alliance picnics in the valley periodically helped cement political association among distant rural residents. One such picnic, hosted in May 1892 by Brother Nealon's Table Rock Alliance on the north bank of the Rogue River, brought large numbers of self-proclaimed "Old Hay Seeds" to listen to Populist candidates. <sup>10</sup> The following year, a similar "grand picnic," followed by dancing, took place at Beeson's Grove near Talent.

In addition to frequent chapter meetings and mass rallies held in a pastoral setting, Jackson County Populists attempted to forge solidarity and self-reliance through cooperative economic ventures. In November 1891 Talent's "Progress" Alliance, "tired of being robbed by the monopoly mill association," made plans to create an Alliance flouring mill and general store. <sup>11</sup> A second cooperative mill was proposed in early 1892 for Sam's Valley. Despite promotional efforts, neither of these projects materialized. Nor did a third mill originally planned for Central Point. Foreshadowing the kind of division that would doom Populism's efforts in southern Oregon and elsewhere, this proposal became the victim of a dispute between loyalists of Central Point and those of nearby Medford. Although failures, these ventures demonstrated local farmers' intentions to apply the lessons learned by their Great Plains brethren.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #3649

Former Republican Stephen Nealon, Jackson County farmer and one of seven Populists elected to the Oregon House of Representatives, ca. 1895.

After two years of grass-roots organization and agitation among local farmers, control of Jackson County politics appeared to be within the Populists' grasp. The chairman of the party's county executive committee, James Marksbury of Gold Hill, exhorted fellow delegates to the county convention with a vision of sweeping change: "We are on the eve of a revolution in Jackson County and in Oregon."<sup>12</sup> Echoing the strong emphasis on local issues, another Populist leader urged "every man who wants the political affairs ... , particularly of our county, bettered" to join in the "noble work of reform." He predicted that after the forthcoming 1894 election the "past [thefts] of taxpayer's money and other corruption at the [county seat of] Jacksonville will be exposed to view."<sup>13</sup>

Another concern weighing on local voters' minds in 1894 was the deepening national depression — the ongoing effects of the "Panic of 1893." Farm mortgage foreclosures in the Rogue River Valley gained increased press coverage, and by 1894 talk of an impending nationwide railway strike further heightened farmers' fears. During the spring, the Southern Pacific carried growing numbers of unemployed men, riding the rails to points north and south. The 1894 "tramp nuisance" brought an unusually large influx of jobless men to the valley.

In April about forty such men, under the leadership of "Captain" Charles E. Kain arrived in Ashland. They clambered down from a Southern Pacific freight on their way to Portland. An "orderly set" that called itself "Company A, Second

Regiment," the group soon left Ashland to join the swelling "Industrial Army" of unemployed men — Jacob S. Coxey's "petition in boots," that was making its way towards the nation's capital.<sup>14</sup> The 1894 campaign thus got underway amidst an atmosphere of local and national crisis.

The 1894 campaign pitted the county's entrenched Democratic and Republican organizations against one another — as well as the insurgent newcomers — in a bitter three-way struggle. It was a hard-fought battle from which the People's party emerged victorious. The county's incoming state senator, two of its three state representatives, and every newly elected county official (except school superintendent) was a Populist who took office with promises of clean government and tax relief.

Although much of rural Oregon displayed Populist sympathies during the 1892 and 1896 elections, the older agricultural counties of the Willamette Valley never really wavered from the two-party path. Only the more recently developed sections on the state's far northeastern and southwestern peripheries "went Populist." The wheat-raising and mining counties of the northeast joined southern Oregon, with Jackson County leading the way. Precinct returns for the 1892 and 1896 elections show consistent Populist dominance in virtually all of the county's hinterland. Rural voters, whether their communities had formerly tended to vote Democratic or Republican, formed the new Populist majority. Jacksonville and Ashland remained bastions of the Democracy and stalwart Republicanism, respectively.

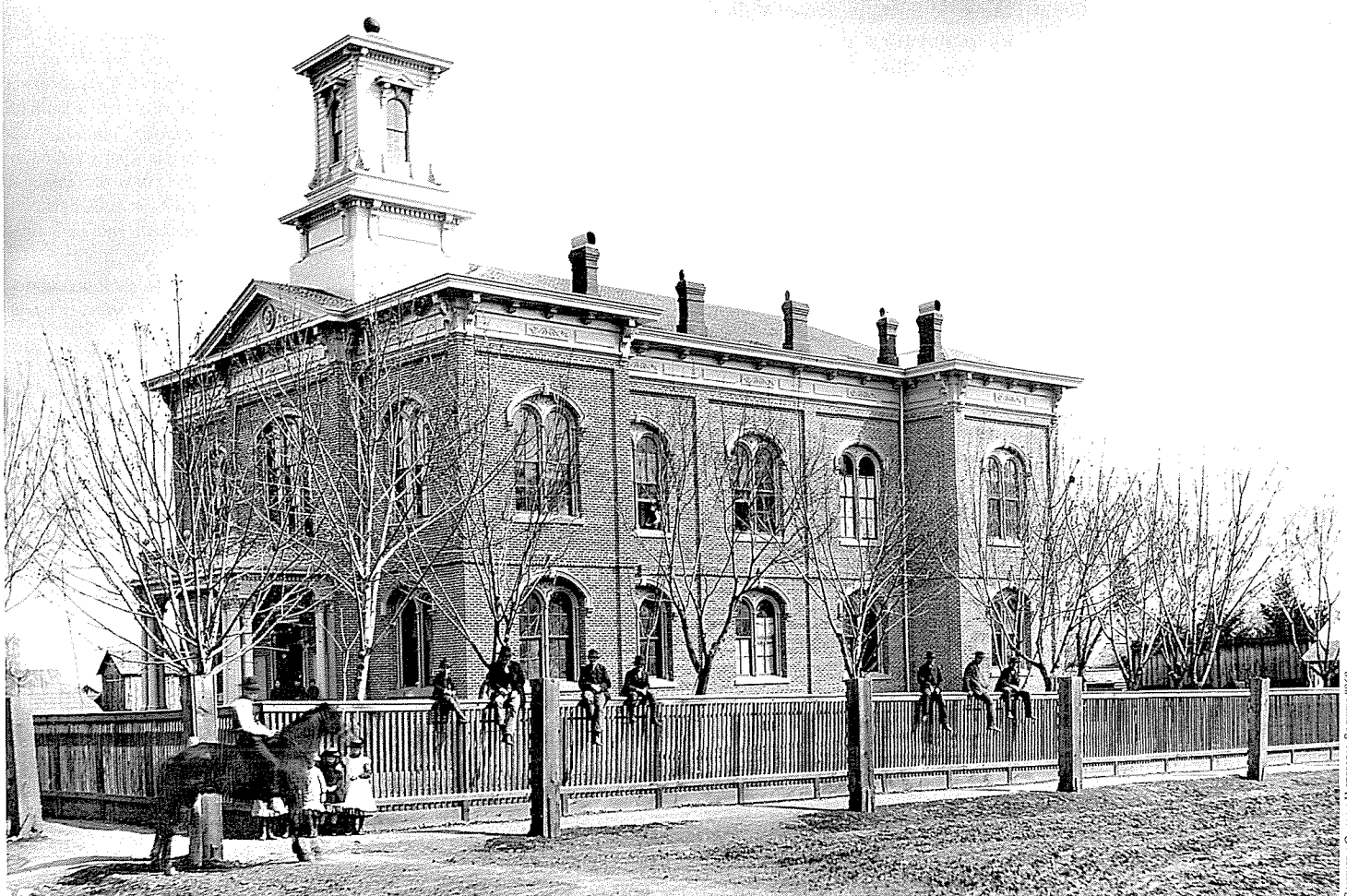
"Outsiders" in 1892, southern Oregon's People's party had mounted a successful insurgency through the ballot box. Despite their inspiring campaign rhetoric, however, the local Populists' actual achievements in office — whether at the capitol in Salem or at the county courthouse — proved to be quite limited, even contradictory. Guided by ambivalent goals of political reform and fiscal retrenchment, and soon beset by feuds, they failed to bring forth the promised "revolution in Jackson County."

Ongoing charges of Populist nepotism and personal favoritism in tax assessments rang out in both the *Times* and the *Tidings*. Regarding the detested Southern Pacific Railroad, the promise to tame the great "Octopus" through county taxes was tarnished when the Populist county clerk joined the Democratic county judge in rescinding the assessment. "Let us weed all traitors from our party," responded one outraged Phoenix Populist, but the incident simply led to increasing division within the party.<sup>15</sup>

As the 1896 election approached, Populist politicians suffered further divisions. Eager for a chance at office, some Populists supported a move for party-enforced "term limits," a proposal at which incumbent Populist officeholders balked. Instead of the promised "love feast," the party's April nominating convention in Medford was, chortled the *Tidings*, "rent by internal feuds" and "distracted by the insane scramble for office."<sup>16</sup>

Another problem that beset Jackson County during the mid-1890s was the emergence of a new kind of Populist candidate. Begun by dedicated reformers like Holt, the party's leadership changed in composition as the ranks of Populist office-seekers swelled with politicians who had previously "enjoyed little influence in the major parties."<sup>17</sup> Opportunists, long stymied by factions





SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY 7468

within the old parties, now came to the fore of the People's party in southern Oregon. Among them was John Jeffrey. One of Jackson County's more charismatic politicians, Jeffrey was the successful Populist candidate for state representative in 1894. He went on to win the race for district attorney in 1896. Perhaps inspired by the example of Kansas Populist "Sockless Jerry" Simpson, Charles Nickell coined the sobriquet "Little Johnny" for the diminutive attorney. Nickell made fun of the former Democrat as a "sprig of a boy" and a rabble-rouser who continually "bamboozled the people ... with that little speech of his."<sup>18</sup> William Leeds portrayed Jeffrey as a cynical demagogue who played to the rubes, and reported at length on one rural speech wherein Jeffrey lambasted a host of conspiracies, from the Jacksonville Ring to Wall Street and Jewish bankers.<sup>19</sup>

During the epic 1896 presidential election, southern Oregon Populists gave vent not only to anti-Semitic rhetoric in their campaign speeches, but they apparently expressed anti-Catholic sentiments as well.<sup>20</sup> Scapegoating and nativism thus emerged as important political strategies (and they would continue to characterize a number of southern Oregon elections during the next century).

**O**n July 10, 1897, failed Democrat/Populist presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan stopped at Ashland during his Pacific Coast tour. Hundreds of farm families arrived in town to greet the defeated hero. Speaking to a large audience of

Jackson County courthouse, ca. 1884, before ejection of the old "Jacksonville Ring" and entry of the People's party victors of 1894.

the faithful, Bryan commented cheerfully on their "firm Western handshakes."<sup>21</sup> The popular response to Bryan's brief visit might have caused local Republicans some concern for their political future, but by 1898 it was plain that insurgent rule had come to an end. Long-simmering resentments erupted at the Populist nominating convention, with disastrous consequences. The result was a fatal split of the Jackson County People's party. With the agricultural depression now a receding memory and the war with Spain commanding the headlines, local Populists watched their hard-won gains slip from their grasp. Republican candidates won office after office and consolidated their hold on local political power. By 1900 southern Oregon had been transformed from a "Little Kansas" of Populist agrarian radicalism into a conservative Republican-dominated region.

Some historians have inferred that southern Oregon's Populist support resulted primarily from the area's mining economy.<sup>22</sup> There is no evidence to support this assertion. On the contrary, southern Oregon's Populism was first and foremost part of the agrarian crusade. Although "free silver" undeniably had strong appeal among local People's party supporters, the region's modest mining industry was based on gold, not silver. The local party's leaders and supporters came largely from the ranks of farmers, many of whom were recent arrivals from the

Populist heartland of the Great Plains. The Rogue River Valley of the 1890s — in terms of its population, economy, and political issues — can indeed be termed a “little Kansas.”<sup>23</sup>

During the 1890s the Populists of Jackson County, who were bitterly opposed by the local elite and isolated from the People’s party main geographic wellsprings in the Plains states, undertook a sincere effort to organize a grass-roots social, economic, and political movement. Voter frustration with local politics brought to southern Oregon Populism many of its original supporters. The “Ring”-led, stalemated government in the courthouse heightened rural voter’s sense of powerlessness. Jackson County’s rival political elites, based in the competing towns of Jacksonville and Ashland, failed to capture the allegiance of newcomers during the 1880s. The weak or absent party bonds of many of these recent immigrants created a volatile situation, which reached a flashpoint during the hard times of the early 1890s. A third-party challenge provided disgruntled farmers with the only means to have their protests heard. Despite its ultimate failure, the Populist episode in Jackson County helped loosen the logjam of older politics, leading to a new order in local government.

Perhaps more important, at least for those of us living in the region today, southern Oregon’s “Populist Revolt” gives historical perspective — and resonance — to more recent political battles. Battles over divisive local issues such as natural resource management, land-use planning, or even government restrictions on automobile and woodstove emissions have been waged with anti-establishment rhetoric that echoes the slogans and sentiments of the region’s Populists a century ago.

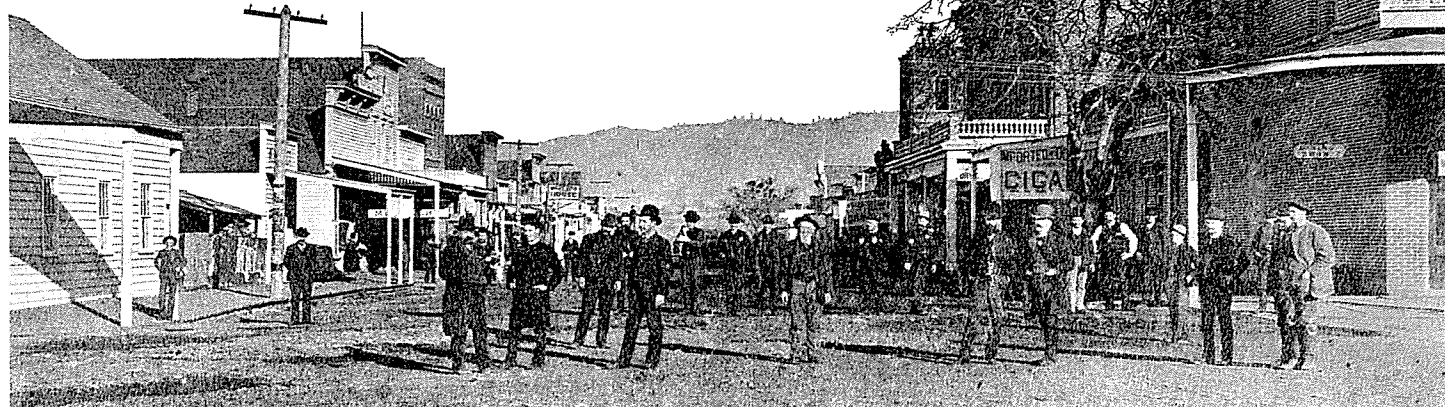


*Permission to publish this adapted excerpt comes from the Pacific Coast branch of the American Historical Association. Interested readers can find the original in-depth article in the May 1994 issue of Pacific Historical Review. Jeff LaLande is an historian who lives in Ashland.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Southern Oregon Mail*, May 13, 1892
2. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1892; *Medford Mail*, Jan. 10, 1896.
3. Two standard works on western populism are: Karel D. Bicha, *Western*

Medford, ca. 1885. The new railroad town held the balance of political power in Jackson County by this time; and many of its voters supported Populist candidates.



*Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism* (Lawrence, Kan., 1976) and Robert W. Larson, *Populism in the Mountain West* (Albuquerque, 1986). See also David Burke Griffiths, “Populism in the Far West, 1890-1900” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1967). Dealing with Idaho, a silver state, but demonstrating the “farmer-labor” strengths of the People’s party there is William Joseph Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies: A History of Idaho Populism* (New York, 1988). The only comprehensive treatments of the People’s party in Oregon are Griffith’s chapter two and Marion Harrington’s “The Populist Movement in Oregon, 1890-1896” (M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, 1935); both, however, concentrate on the Populist leadership in the Portland area and give little attention to southern Oregon.

4. Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York, 1976), abridged as *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York, 1978).
5. *Democratic Times*, Dec. 18, 1891.
6. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1890. “Bourbon” was the Republicans’ pejorative term for the Democratic Party.
7. *Southern Oregon Mail*, June 17, 1892.
8. *Ibid.*, Aug. 26, 1892.
9. *Medford Mail*, Jan. 14, 1892; *Southern Oregon Mail*, April 29, 1892.
10. *Southern Oregon Mail*, May 20, 1892.
11. *Ashland Tidings*, Nov. 27, 1891; *Democratic Times*, Dec. 11, 1891.
12. *Valley Record*, March 8, 1894.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ashland Tidings*, April 16 and 19, 1892. “Company A,” having recruited additional members from Jackson County and points north, arrived in Portland to much press coverage; there the men joined other eastbound “Coxeyites” in hijacking a Union Pacific train from Troutdale to Arlington, Oregon.
15. *Democratic Times*, Oct. 24, 1895. Following the lead of Californians angered by railroad monopoly, Jackson County Populists commonly used the epithet “Octopus” for the Southern Pacific.
16. *Ashland Tidings*, April 13 and 20, 1896.
17. Marion Harrington, “Populist Movement in Oregon,” 54.
18. *Democratic Times*, May 7, 1896.
19. *Ashland Tidings*, May 14, 1894.
20. *Democratic Times*, May 11, 1896.
21. *Valley Record*, July 8 and 15, 1897.
22. Harrington, “Populist Movement in Oregon,” 99; Griffiths, “Populism in the Far West,” 136.
23. Earl Pomeroy, *The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada* (New York, 1965), 176.



# History Happenings Around Southern Oregon

## IN THE REGION

### JACKSONVILLE CELEBRATES THE ARTS

Dedicated to the memory of Jacksonville's early Renaissance man, Peter Britt, the annual juried show of high-quality fine arts and crafts is scheduled for August 25, 26, and 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the grounds of the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History. More than fifty artists from Oregon, Washington, California, and Arizona will be featured, along with live musical entertainment and children's activities. Call John Doderio at (503) 899-8772 for more information.

### DOLLS ON PARADE

The Rogue Valley Doll Club will host its annual show of old and new dolls at the Lake Creek Historical Society on August 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Contact Maxine Eastman at (503) 826-9589 for more information.

### HARVEST FAIR

The Harvest Fair is scheduled at the Jackson County Exposition Park October 7 to 8. Exhibits of crafts and foods, a farmers' market with harvest produce,

live music, and lots of other fun activities will be part of the fair. For more information, call the Fairgrounds office at (503) 776-7237.

### OREGON ARCHAEOLOGY WEEK

Lectures, field trips, and field days are scheduled throughout southern Oregon to celebrate Oregon Archaeology Week September 23 through October 1. Call Ted Goebel at (503) 552-6345 for a schedule of events.

## SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

### GIVE IT YOUR BEST!

At the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History, the Society presents *Give It Your Best!*, an exhibit of World War II posters and memorabilia, through September 15. The exhibit explores the impact of propaganda campaigns and how wartime images and artifacts continue to shape contemporary impressions of the war.

### WARTIME MEMORIES PROGRAMS

In conjunction with the *Give It Your Best!* exhibit, the Society will host two final presentations in the "Wartime Memories" program series. On August 12, the *Front Line Experiences* program features Myrtle Creek resident Richard Chaney, who will discuss his military career as an infantryman with a tank destroyer battalion. On September 9, Lloyd Bloomstine and Peggie Eccles will talk about their experiences as pilots during the war.

### CHILDREN'S MUSEUM FALL CELEBRATION

Families are invited to this free event on October 14 at the Children's Museum in Jacksonville. The Society will be showing off the renovation of some exhibit galleries in the Children's Museum, inaugurating our new Discover Boxes of educational materials and reproduction artifacts, and showcasing our new Video Learning Center at this gala public party. The renovations at the Children's Museum were underwritten in part by a generous contribution by the Gold Diggers Guild. The development of the Video Learning Center and Discovery Boxes was funded by a grant from The Learning Channel through TCI Cablevision of Oregon. For more information, call Amelia Chamberlain at (503) 773-6536.

### PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE OLD WEST EXHIBIT

At the Southern Oregon History Center in downtown Medford, the Society will host *Photography and the Old West* September 1 through November 30. Organized by the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, the exhibit documents westward expansion as it was viewed by nineteen different photographers, among them John Hillers, William Henry Jackson, and Adam Clark Vroman.



SOUTHERN  
OREGON  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## MUSEUMS, SITES, AND EXHIBITS

### • Southern Oregon History Center

106 N. Central Ave., Medford

Featuring *Behind Closed Doors: Treasures, Trinkets, and Tidbits from the Collection; History: It's Closer Than You Think* through September 18; Community Collects gallery: display on glider pilots during World War II from the collection of Lloyd Bloomstine through September 30; Elizabeth Edmondson watercolors of native flowers and plants through September 4; *American Family* photographic exhibit from PARADE magazine August 9 through 21; and *Photography and the Old West* exhibit from the Amon Carter Museum September 1 through November 30. Gallery and office hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. The gallery is also open on Saturday from noon to 5:00 P.M.

### • Research Library

106 N. Central Ave., Medford

Open Tuesday through Saturday, 1:00 to 5:00 P.M.

### • The History Store

The History Center, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford

Open Monday through Friday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; Saturday, noon to 5:00 P.M.

### • The History Store

Behind the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History, 206 N. 5th St., Jacksonville

Open Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 5:00 P.M.

### • Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History

206 N. 5th St., Jacksonville

Featuring *Give It Your Best!* posters and much, much more about World War II, on display through September 15; *Politics of Culture: Collecting the American Indian Experience: Jacksonville: Boom Town to Home Town*; and *HANNAH: Pioneer Potters on the Rogue*. Open daily, from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. through September 4. Winter hours: Sunday and Tuesday, noon to 5:00 P.M.; Wednesday through Saturday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; closed Monday.

### • Children's Museum

206 N. 5th St., Jacksonville

Children's Museum, 206 N. Fifth St., Jacksonville. Hands-on history and exhibits on life as it used to be, including *Clowning Around: the Life Story of Pinto Colvig*. Open daily, from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. through September 4. Winter hours: open Sunday and Tuesday, noon to 5:00 P.M.; Wednesday through Saturday, 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; closed Monday.

### • C.C. Beekman House

California and Laurelwood streets, Jacksonville.

Open May 27 through September 4, daily, from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M. Costumed interpreters tell about life in 1911 Jacksonville.

### • C.C. Beekman Bank

California and 3rd streets, Jacksonville.

Interior of this turn-of-the-century bank and Wells Fargo office can be seen from viewing porches anytime.

Corrections: We would like to correct the following factual error inadvertently introduced in the Summer 1995 issue of *Southern Oregon Heritage* magazine.

In the article "Grange Co-op: The Farmers' Feed and Seed," the gentleman on the left in the photograph on page nineteen is Carl Hover, not Carl Hauer.



Lovingly preserved: This sweetheart photo carried Rufus Younger through the war.

# "IT WASN'T OVER UNTIL *The* LAST ONE CAME HOME"

Interview with Virginia Fredenburg Younger

*On page 4 of this issue, an aviation hero from southern Oregon recounts his involvement in the pivotal Pacific campaign at Guadalcanal. Yet the experiences of those on the home front are often overlooked*

*M:* How did World War II affect you living in Medford?

*U:* Well, of course we could see what was happening in Europe before it hit us here [at Pearl Harbor]. While I was working at Crater Lake, I was writing to a girl in Poland. We had exchanged enough letters that told me more about what was happening over there than I would have known otherwise. My last letter to her was returned with little notations in the margins. I couldn't read the German. But there was a ranger naturalist [at Crater Lake] who spoke German, so I asked him what it said. I've since learned that he didn't tell me the truth. He was trying to protect me. He just said, "It says, 'Whereabouts unknown.'"

*M:* And in fact it had said what?

*U:* That she was in custody. That really brought it home. We talked about it, in our age group, because there were so many young fellows. They weren't anxious to go, but there was a definite commitment. When war was actually declared, a lot of them left immediately. As soon as my husband [Rufus] was reclassified to 1-A, he went out and enlisted in the Navy, Seabees [U.S. Navy

construction battalions, established in December 1941; alternately, CB, for construction battalion.] He probably could have stalled, but that wasn't the way he was. I remember the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the whole family had been out getting a Christmas tree. Rufus and I came back a little ahead of the rest, turned the radio on, and that was the first we knew. It was almost evening by then. The next day just seemed absolutely unreal. I mean people were still doing whatever they had been doing, but it seemed like a different world: I mean, somehow it was never going to be the same world again.



Just this morning I was reading in the *National Geographic* an article about how they used the Geographic maps in the war room back in Washington, D.C. We also had a Geographic map up on the wall, and we would use it to keep track of where the different men from town were. And that was a tricky thing, because they couldn't tell us where they were. But there were ways of finding out.

*M:* Like what?



**U:** Like when my mother sent a big bundle of the [Medford Mail] *Tribunes* to my brother, James, and he wrote back and said, "You know there was a picture in the *Tribune* of such-and-such-a-date, and I've always wanted a picture like that." So we scrambled to get the papers and look through them and came to this picture of a Samoan policeman in his cloth skirt and we knew that was it, that James was in Samoa.

One girl here in town, her husband was in the Marines, and he had written a letter telling her, "You know, I saw so-and-so, and whatever happened to him?" And the man's name happened to be the same as an island out there. So we got to be pretty smart. We would get out our maps and we would look.

**M:** So this was a way of being involved.

**U:** You knew, you knew exactly where they were.

**M:** Was this a way of keeping up your own morale?

**U:** I suppose it did. Sometimes it didn't. It was nice to know that the Army was making progress. But . . . during the war you never knew . . . you lived for the mail. You'd be so overjoyed to get a letter, but it was written anywhere from two weeks to a month before. So you never knew what's happening now. That was why we only listened to the news reports, we didn't listen to the commentators. My aunt, who had a son in the Air Force, listened to the commentators, and she was in a constant state of panic. And we tried not to think . . . not to dwell on it. Every time we would get really uptight, mother and I dug dandelions. There was a never-ending supply of dandelions to dig because it was a huge lawn out in front of this house on Jacksonville Highway. We got down on our hands and knees and dug, this mindless job, something to wear you out.



**I** noticed the comments in the paper this morning about V-E Day. And I noticed MarAbel



A wistful moment recalls hard times on the homefront.

## Every time we would get really uptight, mother and I dug dandelions.

Frohnmayr says, "I don't remember any parade." I don't remember any parade either. And we probably wouldn't have gone if there had been one. It was a thing of relief to a certain extent. But our main thought was, "Well, now maybe they can concentrate on the war in the Pacific." As far as it being over, it wasn't over until the last one came home. People tried to keep an up beat. But after all, we were realistic. When you have that many over there . . . they can't possibly all come home.

Most of our acquaintances, the men, were gone. There were a few {in our group} who were frozen in their jobs, and I'll say this for them: They never told those of us who had people over there how to win the war, which really went against the grain. But there was one man, and he'll remain nameless because he's still around here . . . if he had kept quiet I wouldn't have had this urge to do him bodily harm. But he was

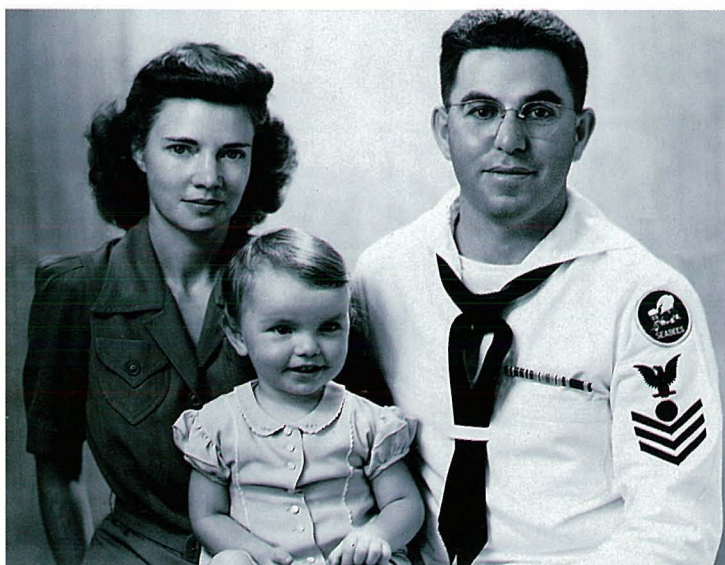
forever telling me how the war should be won. And my thought was, "If you know so much about it, go over there and finish it, please." There weren't very many like that, but that really made me boil.



**W**hen Japan first bombed Pearl Harbor, a lot of people just immediately panicked, the Japanese were going to be behind every bush. Somehow that never bothered us that much, I guess. We came from pioneer stock, and my husband being a Younger, we knew: "They aren't going to take this if I have anything to say about it." I mean, we were here. We had guns in the house. And I think that most people here would have fought to the last ditch. That's just the way people in Oregon are. I mean, we didn't get here the easy way. (Laughter) It's an experience I don't want to go through again, ever. Not ever.



*Adapted from the verbatim oral history transcript #569. This interview was conducted at the Medford home of Virginia M. Fredenburg Younger, on May 8, 1995, by Southern Oregon Historical Society oral historian Marjorie Edens.*



Reunited at last: Rufus Younger meets daughter Ann for the first time, 1945.

# THE 1883 JACKSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

*C o r n e r s t o n e   o f   P r o g r e s s*

*The following is adapted from the February 1995 Jacksonville Courthouse Complex Historic Structures Report, prepared by historic preservation consultant George Kramer of Ashland. This in-depth review of the development and construction of the courthouse and its annexed structures was commissioned by the Southern Oregon Historical Society as an aid to assessing both the significance and long-term usage of these buildings. Long recognized for its importance, the courthouse, along with the Jacksonville Historic District, were designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1966. Interested readers can find the entire report in the Society's research library.*

In the early years of Jackson County, when the fledgling community of Jacksonville was named the county seat, governmental and judicial duties were somewhat sporadic ventures. The Honorable Matthew P. Deady, judge of the Circuit Court, traveled the state and while in Jacksonville held forth in a structure located next to a saloon,

"... and it was a most unpretentious temple of justice. The bench was a dry goods box, covered with a blue blanket, and it is quite probable that the uncomfortable seat occupied by the judge was so irksome, that it had something to do with his rapid dispensation of justice."<sup>1</sup>

The Jackson County Courthouse, ca. 1884.



County and Circuit Court functions continued in various quarters, including the Methodist Church, until 1858-59. That year, following the construction of a hall in Jacksonville by the Warren Masonic Lodge between 5th and 6th Streets, the Jackson County commissioners entered into a lease agreement with the lodge for use of the first floor offices. In 1867, following the Masons' move to new quarters, the Commissioners took over the entire building. The old Masonic Lodge, a two-story, wood-frame structure, remained Jackson County's courthouse for almost twenty years. Its shortcomings as a public building, however, were obvious.

Pressure for a more appropriate courthouse grew, but no action was taken until 1882. As the imminent arrival of the railroad posed a threat to Jacksonville's future as the county seat, the courthouse question faced mounting opposition. Despite the controversy — or perhaps because of it — the County Court ruled on August 10, 1882, that a new courthouse be built in Jacksonville.

Having "considered the propriety" of a new courthouse and determined to proceed in its construction without delay, the County Court hired Ashland architect G.E. Payne. It appears that Payne was recruited specifically for the project. He was nothing if not expeditious in preparing his initial plan: only twenty days after his appointment, Payne presented plans and specifications to the commissioners for acceptance. Mr. Payne not only sufficiently impressed the commissioners, he won over the local press as well.

Even William Leeds, the vitriolic editor of the *Ashland Tidings*, applauded Payne's work, although the expense of the project still rankled. It appears that the county, perhaps to reduce costs, initially intended to serve as its own contractor. By late October, however, the difficulties this presented resulted in the advertisement for a general contractor. On November 11 this was awarded to L.S.P. Marsh, who had arrived in Oregon in the early 1870s from California. Other of Marsh's building contracts included Ashland's Presbyterian Church in 1878, the Atkinson House in Ashland in 1880 (which he also designed), and the Sister's School (Sacred Heart) in Jacksonville in 1883. Less than one week after he was awarded the contract for the Jacksonville Courthouse, Marsh also obtained the contract for the construction of the Bank of Ashland.

Architect and contractor secured, construction of the new courthouse could begin. By that time — late November 1882 — the old Masonic Lodge had been removed from the site and at least some of the excavation work had begun. The *Democratic Times* optimistically reported that the foundation would be ready for the



bricklayers by the following spring. The onset of winter slowed the pace, however, and before brickwork and building walls came the laying of the cornerstone. This ceremony, touted as "... one of the most important events in the history of Jackson County, which everyone should attend,"<sup>2</sup> was held on Saturday, June 23, 1883. County Judge Silas Day made the opening comments. His description of the building that would rise from the foundation constitutes the closest thing to specifications of the courthouse to be found. Yet, after proceeding with this rather elaborate description, he concluded: "It would weary your patience should I go into details of the plans and specifications."<sup>3</sup> That said, the various dignitaries then deposited items within the cornerstone, and Judge Day himself spread the mortar and supervised the lowering of the stone in place, where it was consecrated with "corn, wine, and oil."<sup>4</sup>

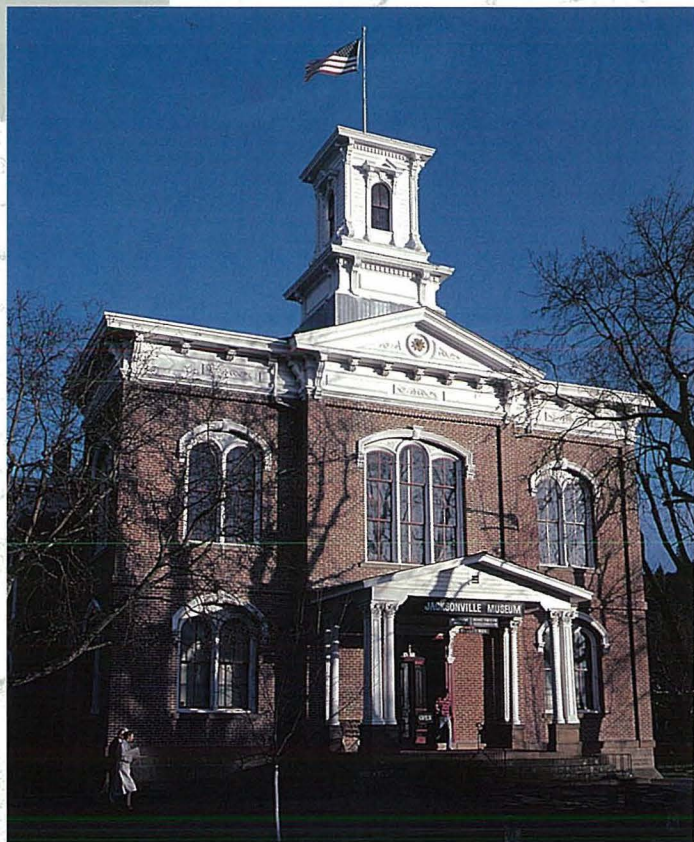
Construction of the new courthouse continued through the summer. By early December the building was substantially completed, and Jacksonville residents organized a Christmas ball in contractor Marsh's honor — the first public event to be recorded in the new courthouse. The first session of the Circuit Court was held in the facility in early February 1884, with Judge L.R. Webster officiating. Jacksonville could now boast a judicial decorum worthy of its stature, as the *Oregon Sentinel* deemed its courthouse "one of the finest halls of justice in the State of Oregon" — a far cry from Judge Deady's "unpretentious temple of justice."

Despite the permanence of this stately new construction, the threat to Jacksonville's status as county seat accelerated. The first campaign, in 1920, to move the county seat to Medford was defeated by a mere ninety votes. By 1926, however, the ballot measure passed by a plurality of over fifteen hundred votes. The issue went all the way to the Oregon Supreme Court, delaying the move of county government until 1927. On July 1 of that year, as Jacksonville relinquished its role as the seat of government, the forty-three-year, official use of the courthouse formally ended. However, the structure continued to play an important role as a community center, serving such tenants as the Boy Scouts and the Jacksonville Grange.

Even before the end of World War II, a long-recognized need for preservation of the region's history gained momentum. This culminated in 1946 in the organization of what would become known as the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The Society's first objective was to set aside the courthouse as a museum. Yet with no stable funding for the museum, renovation was stalled until passage of a tax levy — the Jackson County Historical Fund — in 1948. Meanwhile, the promise of a museum had compelled the courthouse's long-standing tenants to vacate the building, leaving it susceptible to vandalism.

By the time the first income from the historical fund came in October 1949, the pioneer courthouse was much reduced by the invasion of errant youth, not to mention colonies of pigeons and bats, which had deposited several hundred pounds of guano and feathers in the tower. Workmen turned their attention to dispossessing these unwelcome tenants and removing their debris, replacing windows and repairing the roof, so interior repair could begin.

The renovated courthouse opened its doors as the



The contemporary Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History.

Jacksonville museum in July 1950, attracting 107 visitors on its first day of operation. At its formal dedication — held August 5 during the annual fundraiser, the Gold Rush Jubilee — local attorney Gus Newbury, who had attended the courthouse's 1884 cornerstone ceremony, had this to say:

"When we consider all of the stirring and interesting things that took place in this courthouse, it seems entirely appropriate that [it] should be employed for the preservation of those relics of times gone by for present and future generations to contemplate"<sup>5</sup>

Today, as the Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History, the old courthouse continues to display and preserve the "relics of times gone by" that relate the history of southern Oregon.



*The Museum, which is located at 206 N. Fifth Street, in Jacksonville, is open daily from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Memorial Day through Labor Day. During the remainder of the year, it is open Sun. and Tues., 12:00 to 5:00 P.M.; Wed. through Sat., 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; closed Mon.*

## ENDNOTES

1. George Kramer, M.S., *Jacksonville Courthouse Complex Historic Structures Report* (Medford: Southern Oregon Historical Society, Feb., 1995), 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 13.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 14.
5. *Ibid.*, 30-31.



# There's always room for one more.



## With Plenty to Read for Long Road Trips

### Join the Southern Oregon Historical Society today.

Membership in Southern Oregon Historical Society provides you with advanced notice of premiere events and receptions, a one-year subscription to *Southern Oregon Heritage* magazine and the *Artifacts* monthly newsletter, discounts at the History Stores (Medford and Jacksonville), and the knowledge that you are helping make Oregon history come alive.

Yes! Please send me more information on joining the Southern Oregon Historical Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



Please fill out this form and mail to: Membership,  
Southern Oregon Historical Society, 106 N. Central  
Ave. Medford, OR 97501-5926, or call 503-773-6536.

### Future issues:

- ▼ William Alley tells the Harry and David story.
- ▼ Doug Foster takes us on a reenactment of the opening of the Applegate Trail.
- ▼ Robert Heilman relates the improbable adventures of Hathaway Jones.
- ▼ Joli Sandoz explores turn-of-the-century life along the Umpqua-Rogue Divide.
- ▼ Kristine Thomas examines irrigation farming as pioneered by Ashland farmer Jacob Wagner.



# Word Processing In Times Past

As the airplane climbs to 36,000 feet, some passengers reach for a book or stretch out for a nap. Others go directly to work, busily typing away on their laptop computers, hardly noticing that the airplane has left the ground.

The laptop desk is not a recent invention. Travelers have long depended on them for maintaining personal and business correspondence. While attending the Continental Congress in 1775, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence on a laptop desk made by his friend Benjamin Randolph.

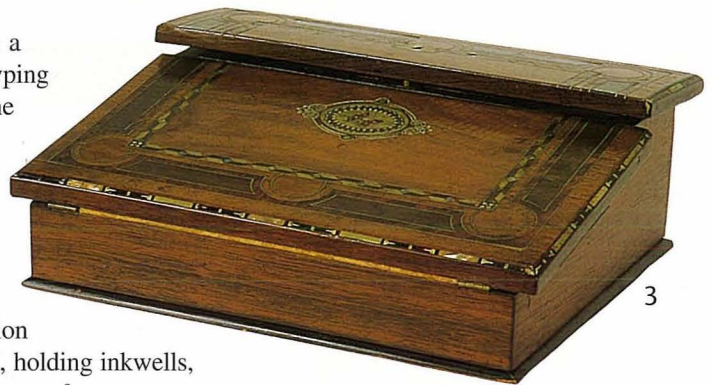
As artifacts from the Southern Oregon Historical Society's collection show, early portable desks were a combination briefcase and writing pad, holding inkwells, pens, blotters, stationery, letters, addresses, stamps, and sealing wax. Writing surfaces were elegantly covered with velvet, embossed leather, or fine fabric.

Many portable desks are richly decorated wood boxes. A walnut desk (number 1) has brass straps and medallion attached with brass pins. Maroon velvet and a celluloid envelope with a feather pen cover desk number 2.

Portable desks are the perfect vehicle for showcasing the woodworker's fine skills. Desk number 3 is made from pine but covered with walnut veneer and decorated with mother-of-pearl, rosewood, walnut burl, and brass string inlay. Desk number 4 is made from mahogany with holly and satinwood inlay.

Desk number 5 is one of the collection's finest examples and is on view at the Beekman House in Jacksonville. It is made from elm burl and rosewood, with an inlay of mother-of-pearl and exotic woods.

Although efficient and lightweight, today's plastic laptop computer cannot compare to the beauty and elegance of yesterday's portable desks.



3



5



4



4



2



1





## Wake Up and Read!

Join the Southern Oregon  
Historical Society today and  
enjoy *Southern Oregon  
Heritage* magazine.



SOUTHERN  
OREGON  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

106 N. Central Ave.  
Medford, OR 97501-5926

Non-profit Org.  
US POSTAGE

**PAID**

Permit No. 164  
Medford, OR