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S O U T H E R N O R E G O N H E R I T A G E

Vol. 1, No. 3 • THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Winter 1995

**HARRY
AND DAVID'S
LITTLE
MASCOT**
BY BILL ALLEY



**CROSSING JENNY
CREEK SLIDE IN A
COVERED WAGON**

BY DOUG FOSTER

**JACOB WAGNER
AN EXEMPLARY
LIFE**

BY KRISTINE THOMAS

The Children's Museum



There's more in store at the Children's Museum...

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Come celebrate the opening of the "I.M. Sellin" General Store, and the new turn-of-the-century laundry and bank.

The Children's Museum is free to all Jackson County residents.

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Closed Mondays.

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Medford, OR 97501-5926

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206 N. Fifth St.
in Jacksonville.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Vol. 1, No. 3 • THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY • Winter 1995

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Jacob Wagner revolutionized farming in 1852 when he dug the Wagner-Thornton Irrigation Ditch. Peter Britt photo. Circa 1875. [see page 40.]

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEG. #1068

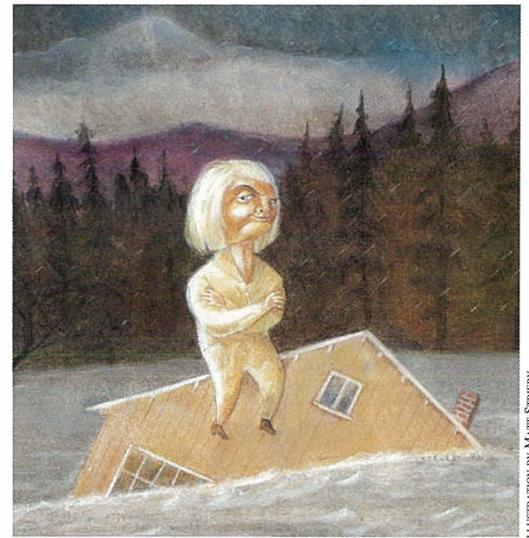


ILLUSTRATION BY MATT STRIEBY

Above: Flooding was once an accepted fact of life in the Rogue Valley. We will never again see such disasters as the flood of 1964. [see page 4.]

Cover: Harry and David mascot "Cubby Bear" delivers the 1948 Christmas Book of Gifts. [see page 22.]

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SOUTHERN
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Exciting Changes at the Children's Museum: New Exhibits, Funding for the Future, and Discovery Boxes

by Samuel J. Wegner

Not so many decades ago there were no children's museums. Previous to the 1970s, children were ushered down echoing halls, lined with row upon row of glass cases filled with hermetically sealed artifacts. Rooms were roped off in velvet chains, the arms of chairs were laced in silk -- no sitting allowed. Kids were told to keep quiet, keep off, keep their hands to themselves. A trip to a museum was about as appealing as a trip to the dentist. Experts began to understand that to reach children, one had to create an environment that was not hostile to their genuinely curious natures.

Since the inception of the Children's Museum in 1979, the Southern Oregon Historical Society has stretched to meet that need by creating an interactive space that interprets the domestic life, trade, commerce, and culture of the past century. What that means is, that in keeping with the social studies curriculum for grades K through eight, exhibit spaces are designed to allow visitors to experience for themselves the changes that have occurred in the world, particularly the United States, and in this region of Oregon. Take a step inside the 1930s kitchen and you'll get the idea. Put on a dunce cap and pick up a McGuffey's reader, while your child teaches you the ABC's, or stop by the "I.M. Sellin" General Store.

The general store, over a year in the making, and made possible by the support of the Gold Diggers' Guild, is a spectacular exhibit, one of which Jackson County residents can be extremely proud. Artifacts from the 1890s have been reproduced with great attention to historical detail. One can experience shopping in a time long before places like the Rogue Valley Mall, or the Minute Market were even a glimmer in a contractor's eye. Complete with brass cash register, and expansive oak counter, one can find bolts of fabric, horse tack, root beer barrel candy, harmonicas, hats, hams, and sacks of feed. There are Don Sung tablets to encourage greater yield from your hens, mange lotion to soothe your itch, and Skookum Root to promote hair growth. For those who want to hang around the general store and tell stories, there's a cracker barrel complete with a checker board. A trip to the museum's general store is an education in the goods and services, tastes, and necessities of small-town life one hundred years ago. Other new

exhibits include the turn-of-the-century laundry and bank, with a scale for weighing gold.

People may be aware of the museum itself, but may not know of the educational and outreach programs that the museum's education staff conducts. With the help of a grant from TCI Cable and The Learning Channel, the Society's education staff has put together six "Discovery Boxes" for use in the schools. The boxes were carefully researched and chosen for their relevance to the history of southern Oregon. The boxes include themes on southern Oregon Indians, mining and Gold Hill, spinning and weaving wool, archaeology, Camp White and White City, toys, and the Hispanic Holiday Día de los Muertos. Boxes contain old objects and reproductions of artifacts, books, and audio-visuals as well as a five-day program and the curriculum to go along with it. Without the tremendous help of the Gold Diggers' Guild and funding from TCI Cable and The Learning Channel, these truly unusual, informative, and inspiring educational tools could not have been created.

The Children's Museum puts together programs every year that present history through hands-on activities, storytelling, and now, via the new grant, through audio visual means. This year's programs include "Acorns and Arrowheads," "Old Fashioned Christmas," and "Victorian Valentines." Children will grind acorns, eat cookies made in a wood burning stove, and make notes for loved ones in the same way they did in Queen Victoria's time.

The validity of museums is being questioned more and more frequently. Come to the Children's Museum on a Saturday afternoon, or better yet, come on a school day when a classroom is visiting, and any doubts you may have had will be erased. You will see history, education, imagination and fun holding hands.

You might even find yourself in the general store, wrapped in an apron, feather duster in hand, tying up parcels in butcher paper, learning something, and liking it.

The Children's Museum is located at 206 N. 5th St., adjacent to our museum in Jacksonville. Hours, now through Memorial Day, are—Sunday and Tuesday, 12 to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mondays.



**You will see
history, education,
imagination
and fun
holding hands.**

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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 cutlines 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

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Engraved in Stone...Ashland Cemetery Receives Historic Designation

by Marcia W. Somers



Ashland Cemetery, located between East Main and Morton Streets in Ashland, is the final resting place of many of Jackson

County's founding families. Abel Helman, Lindsay Applegate, and Hiram Foster who deeded the land to the trustees of Ashland are interred here, as are many early prominent citizens. In June of 1995, the Ashland Cemetery was assigned to the National Register of Historic Places.

Ashland Cemetery began as a family burial ground on Isaac D. Smith's donation land claim. Burial dates go back as far as 1860. The land eventually wound up in the hands of the school district to be sold and used as an official cemetery. By 1876 the cemetery was described as "Half a mile east of town," and concern was raised due to the lack of care for the grounds. There was no irrigation, water had to be carried up from the creek in buckets, donated maples withered and died, berry vines choked the graves. A caretaker's tool shed, however, was built in 1894, and is still on the grounds today. An official caretaking program was eventually established in 1930.

Historically, in the period from 1851 to 1925 when Ashland was developed, community cemeteries reflected the affluence of the town. Monuments were more elaborate, with marble and granite headstones, Victorian embellishments, formal plantings and wrought iron or, in Ashland's case, native sandstone copings. Rural headstones usually were made of stone and wood, often set upon an unfenced, gently rolling hillside.

Much of the statuary in the Ashland Cemetery was carved by master carvers James Russell and his wife Ann. They opened the Ashland Marble Works in 1865, quarrying local stone until the railroad came to town in 1887, whereupon softer Vermont marble became available. Ann Russell had seen the settlement of the valley in the 1850s and the Rogue Indian Wars, was a founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Ashland and, after her husband's death, ran the marble works until 1915. Her reputation brought in orders from across the country. Ashland monuments for which the Russells are well known include, among others, those marking the Thomas Smith, J.C. Tolman, Oscar and Lucinda Ganiard and the Wagner children's graves.

Cemeteries are often an overlooked legacy, quietly revealing the values and traditions of society at the time. Ashland



Crosses, flags, bibles, and this Elk's plaque display the patriotism and faith of the citizens of Ashland during its formative years.

Cemetery's historical designation is due to being representative of cemeteries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is foremost, the place where Ashland's first generation of settlers are buried. It also reflects the later influx of those who came with the railroad in 1884 and developed the town and surrounding areas.

The cemetery has maintained its integrity, despite some vandalism and alteration due to maintenance. The Ashland Cemetery is a haven in the center of an urban business and residential district. The peaceful grounds are host to one of the last remaining stands of native oak within the city boundaries. There are no formally designated paths. Deep grass, squirrels and ancient oak boughs naturally beckon those interested in a tour past the monuments honoring Ashland's pioneering citizens.



Inset and above: Much of the artful marble work in the Ashland Cemetery was done by Ann and James Russell.

ENDNOTES

1. National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form, Katherine C. Atwood, 29 Apr. 1994.
2. "Petite But Fiery, Ann Haseltine Russell Smashed Ashland Saloons," the *Mail Tribune*, 30 Oct. 1967.
3. Nan Hannon, "Ann Hill Russell left legacy in Marble," (Vertical File, "Russell Family," Southern Oregon Historical Society).
4. "Ashland Woman Celebrates 50 year residence," *Mail Tribune*, 18 Apr. 1921.
5. "Pioneer Ashland Woman, A Trade Journal's Tribute to Mrs. Russell of this City," *Ashland Tidings*, (Vertical File, "Russel Family," Southern Oregon Historical Society).



Weathering the Weather

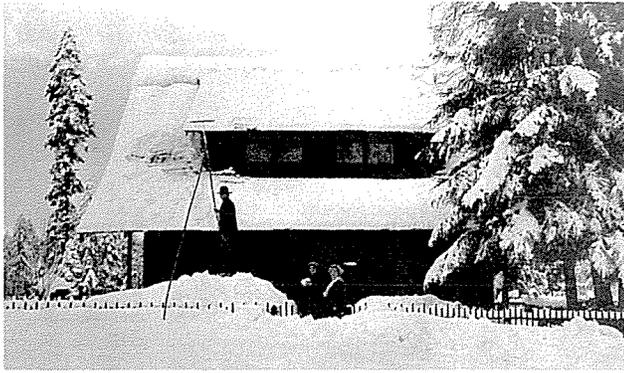
Today when the forecast calls for rain, we grab a raincoat and hope our shoes don't get wet. When the first rainy days of winter hit, we look forward to curling up by the fire with a book and a bowl of popcorn. Minor inconveniences such as a battery drained by the headlights, or a "chains required" sign on the mountain passes are the worst we generally endure. In the years before flood control, however, heavy snow followed by continuous warm rains put the countryside on the alert. Folks batted down the hatches and headed for high land.

For the orchardists, ranchers and farmers of the Rogue Valley, trying to predict and outguess the weather has been a serious necessity. A report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's weather bureau, dated 1936, states "One characteristic of the precipitation of this complex climatic region [the Rogue Valley], is its variability in amount, monthly and annually. There is a noticeable difference in precipitation from year to year." In 1905 there were eleven inches of rainfall, in 1907 there were almost twenty-nine. Those involved in agriculture were forced by necessity to adapt to the drastic fluctuations in winter weather.

The fickleness of winters past meant cold snaps, endless rain, light drizzles, heavy fogs, hail stones and even snow. Today it is unusual to see snow on the valley floor. The occasional flurries quickly dissolve. Fluke storms of the past have closed off mountain passes, stopped the trains, caved in barns, and stilled the traffic on the streets of Medford, Ashland and Jacksonville.

Peter Britt, Jacksonville's famed photographer and noted agriculturist, began upon his arrival in 1856, to keep a daily weather diary. Equipped with pocket sundial and handmade rain gauge, he kept the area and local papers informed on monthly and annual weather conditions. For almost twenty years he was the weather bureau in Jackson County. In 1870 Ulysses S. Grant founded the first official weather bureau. By 1875 the Army Signal Corps was setting up a weather service to broadcast storm warnings and meteorological information. Britt was recruited as a volunteer civilian observer. In 1891, his son Emil took over the daily notations. Between the two men almost one hundred years of documentation were compiled.¹ These journals and other noted diaries, writings, and articles are on file at the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT STREIBY



snow has fallen, though intervals of clear weather did not allow more than a foot to accumulate at any time, at about which depth the snow lies at present. The oldest inhabitant remembers but a few similar storms in Jackson County. Many are of the opinion that at no one time since 1860 has such an amount of snow fallen and remained on the ground for so long a period. The accompanying cold weather prevents rapid melting, a fortunate circumstance by the way, for, should a warm rain occur, a disastrous flood may be the consequence and the scenes of early times be reenacted...

Snow was 28 inches deep at Sterling Monday and 32 inches at the head of Jackson creek...Several barns and other structures fell under the weight of the snow the forepart of the week. *Democratic Times*

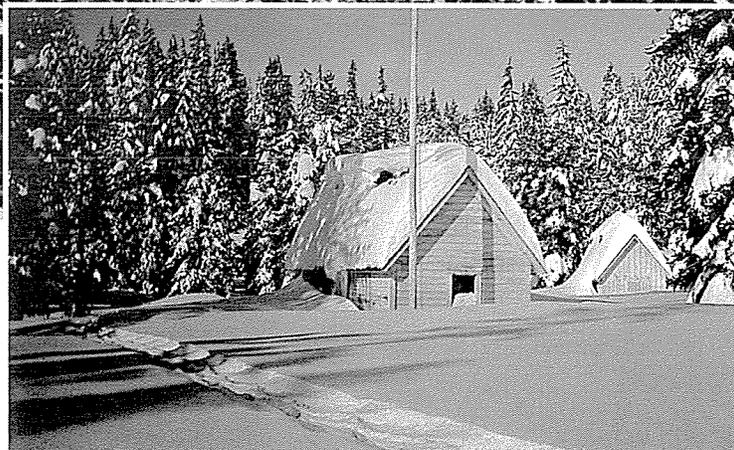
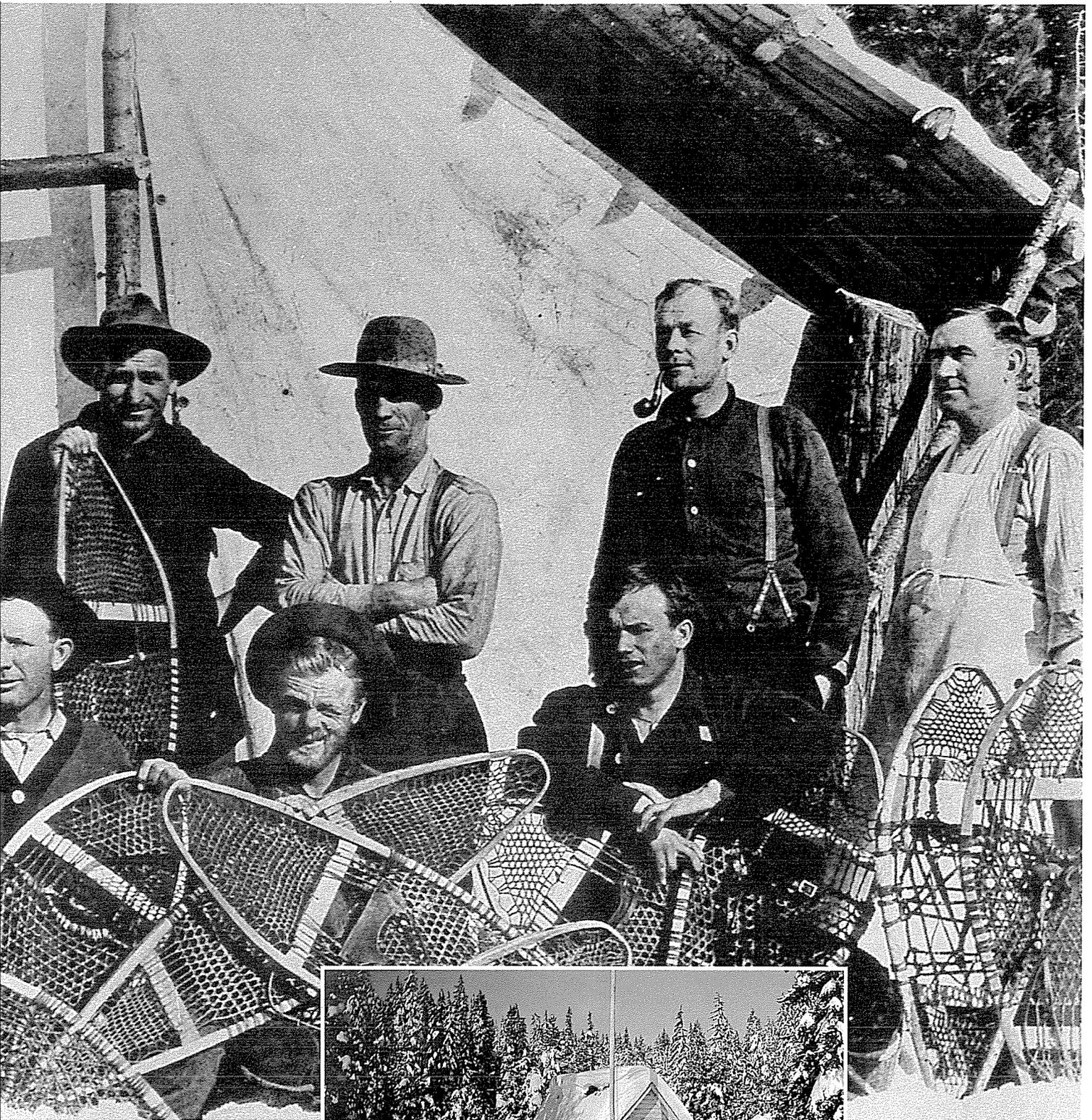
— Butte Falls, winter of 1900 and 1901.

“Parker had what he called a snow boat. It was just sort of a boat, all right enough, that you’d hook a team to the front of it, and it would slide right along in the snow; and we traveled in that, you know. It was quite a ride to go in that snow boat. But it was a good rig. You couldn’t get



Upper Left: Buell Hildreth removing snow after Butte Falls storm, circa 1912.

Center: U.S. Forest Rangers at a Snowshoe Camp on Parker Meadows Road above Butte Falls, 1911.



Lower right: Crater Lake National Forest Headquarters deep in snow, March 10, 1919.

Lower Left: Proposed in 1910, the grading of the Rim Road was not completed until 1920. September snows blanket these wagons, 1920.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE NUMBERS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NEGATIVE #14982, NEGATIVE #12076, NEGATIVE #14984, AND NEGATIVE #14985.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #8481

around with a wagon at all...He would come down and break the road out, you see. He'd go a little ways one day and go back home. And the next day he'd go a little farther, until he got the road broke down through." - Charlie I. Patton ³

— January 1911

Benjamin Heidel, U.S. highway engineer, Martin Erickson, supervisor of the Crater National Forest and Harry Hicks of Rogue River Valley University Club at Medford set out for Crater Lake. "It is currently stated that no more than ten white persons have ever gone to Crater lake in winter." Started walking at Eagle Point, because of deep slush on the roads...Third night spent at Prospect (found only two trappers in the whole town). Snow depth requires the use of the snow shoes...Slept the fifth night on 12 feet of snow east of Union Creek...Seventh night is spent at the Rim Hotel, sitting out a raging storm. Party discovers Barkowski's photography equipment, but no trace of the photographer. The 3 men sit out 3 days of gale force wind and falling snow.

Finally when the sun comes out, the team is able to take the first winter photographs of the lake. Complete trip takes about 18 days.⁴



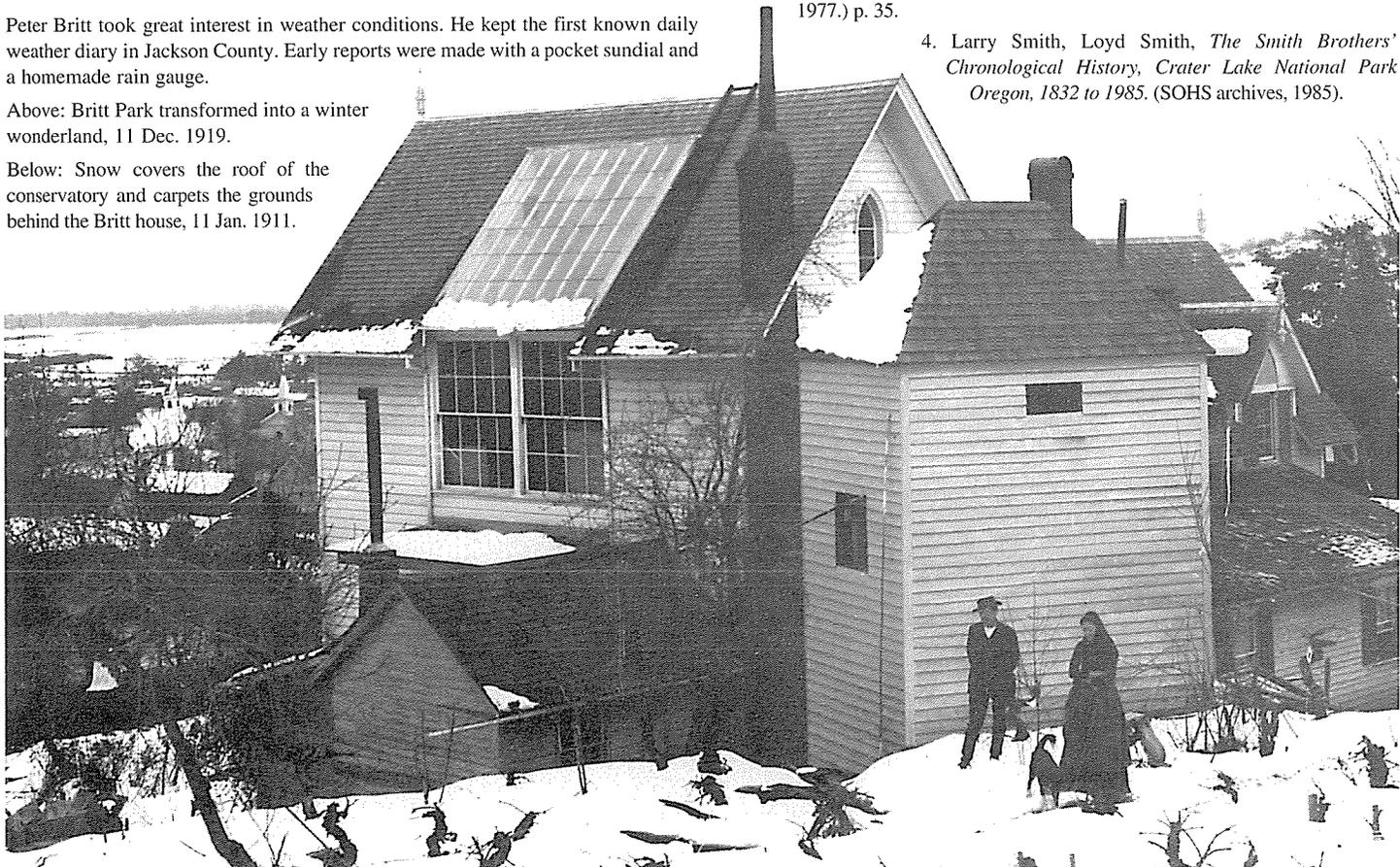
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1. F. Robert Bauman, *Early Day Highlights of the Weather in the Rogue Valley*, 1967. Alan Miller, *Peter Britt; pioneer photographer of the Siskiyou*. (MA thesis, Trinity College, 1972), pp. 80-82. Eva Hamilton, 100 Years of Weather Forecasting, *Medford Mail Tribune*, 22 Mar. 1970.
2. Mary Mathes Van Dyke, Tape 26, (SOHS interview, no date.) pp. 26-27.
3. Tape 56, (SOHS Oral History Interview with Charles I. Patton, 12 Jan. 1977.) p. 35.
4. Larry Smith, Loyd Smith, *The Smith Brothers' Chronological History, Crater Lake National Park Oregon, 1832 to 1985*. (SOHS archives, 1985).

Peter Britt took great interest in weather conditions. He kept the first known daily weather diary in Jackson County. Early reports were made with a pocket sundial and a homemade rain gauge.

Above: Britt Park transformed into a winter wonderland, 11 Dec. 1919.

Below: Snow covers the roof of the conservatory and carpets the grounds behind the Britt house, 11 Jan. 1911.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #3086

Toys! More than Mere Child's Play...

by Margaret Watson

The great thing about an old toy is that it reminds us of one we once owned or desired. That bear or train seems to strike a familiar childhood chord in us all.

Upon reflection, toys have important historical significance because they can reveal much about the period in which they were manufactured. Choices at playtime reflected popular trends and accepted mores. In many instances, toys may be directly related to objects used in adult life. Stoves, baby dolls, trains and wagons are toys that may indulge play, but they can also be seen as toys that helped instruct children during formative years to assume skills and even social roles. Toys were used to fortify traditional masculine and feminine roles: boys could pretend at bravery or hard work, and girls could exercise their skills as homemakers. These toys, from the collection of the Southern Oregon Historical Society, served not only as a source of entertainment, but familiarized the children with the world into which they were growing.

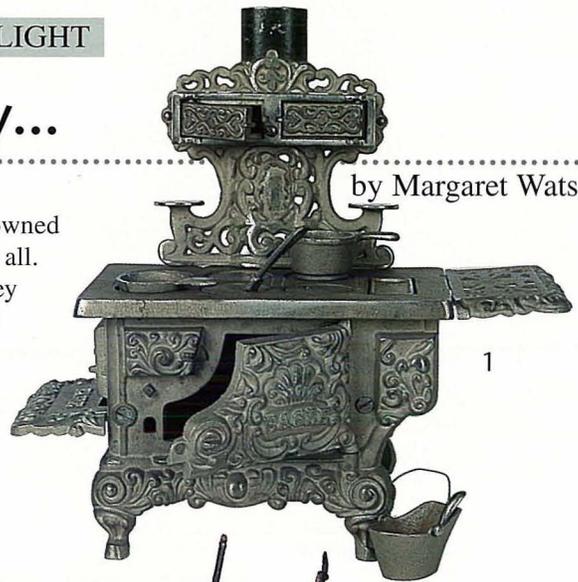
1. Cast iron toy stove, circa 1930. Toy stoves were popular before the turn of the Century. Children from Ashland carefully played with this stove and then stored it in the original "Ward's" box. The 1894 Montgomery Ward & Co. catalog describes toy stoves as "useful and instructive."

2. Lead soldiers, circa 1935. Friends and enemies march in sequence with these toy soldiers, rehearsing strategies and politics. Some soldiers have moveable arms and guns for more realistic play. The nurse kneels with bandage in hand.

3. Fisher-Price Medical Kit, circa 1960. A trip to the doctor's office could be traumatic. Medical toys served to make many of those scary instruments familiar. Many of the kits even included candy pills!

4. Lionel Train, circa 1925. Smoke, bells and flashing lights could put young conductors in charge of the tracks which could stretch as far as the horizon. This Lionel #10 came with an extraordinary number of realistic parts and accessories.

5. Magic lantern, circa 1895. This kerosene-operated lantern could cast on any wall informative pictures of strange things and foreign places. These illuminated images could bring the far-away Liberty Statue, or Washington's Mt. Vernon home to the attention of any child.



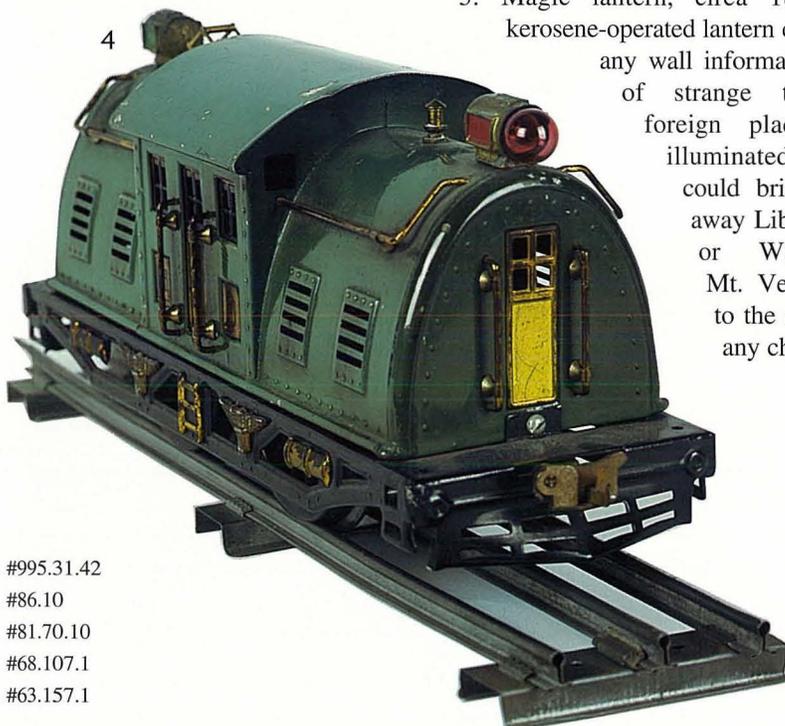
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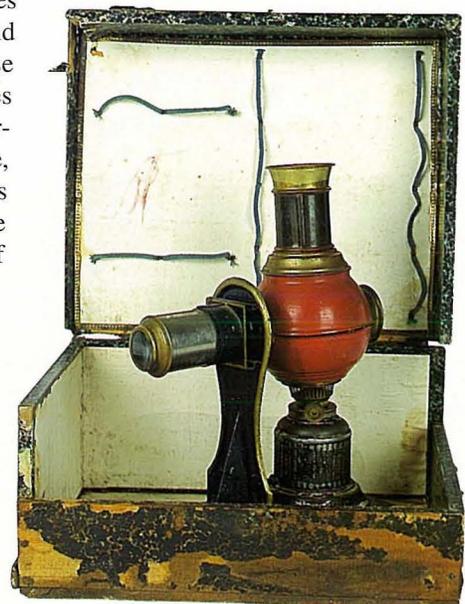
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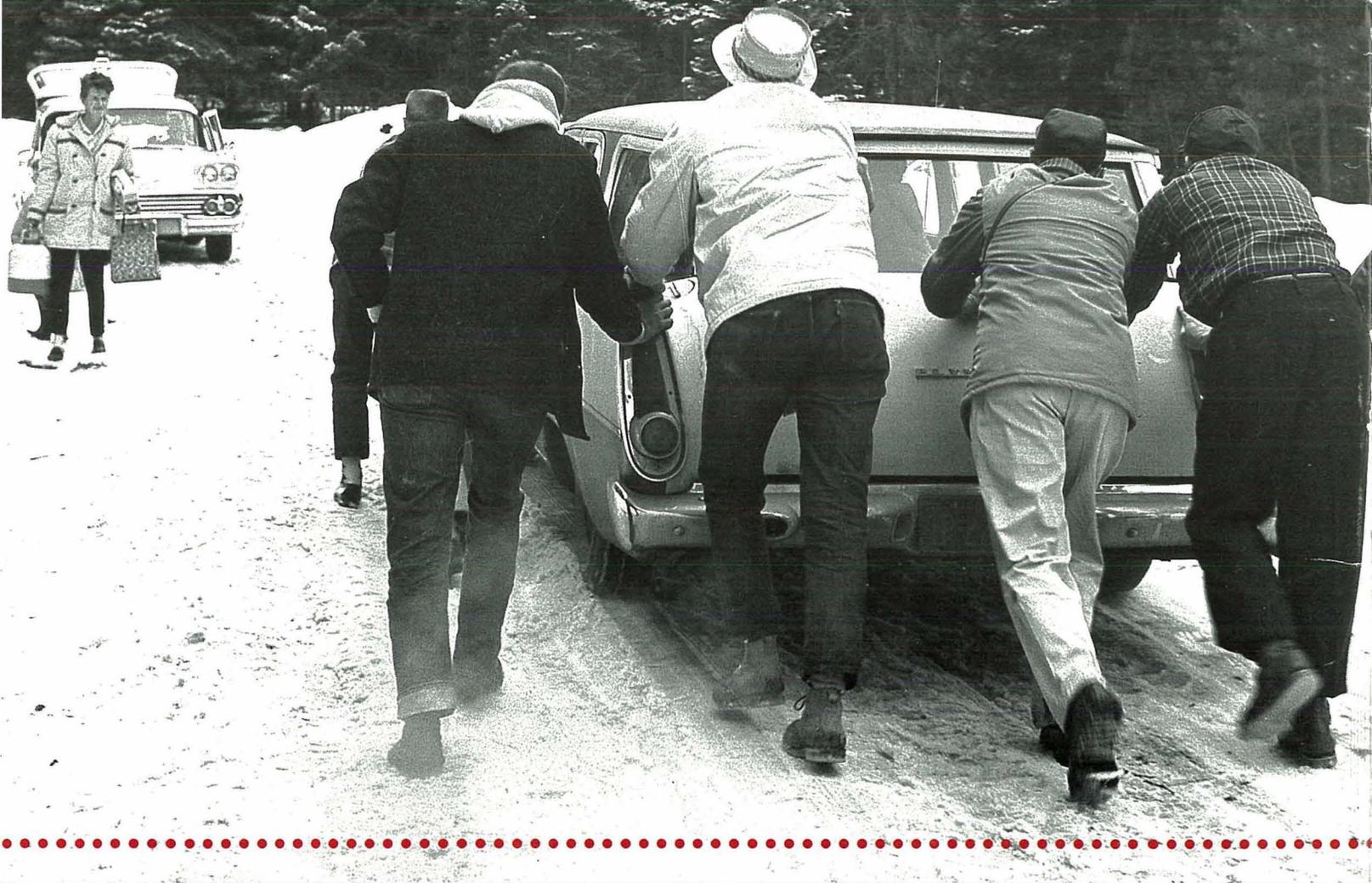
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Spanning the years...Structural changes of the Rock Point Bridge

by Dawna Curler

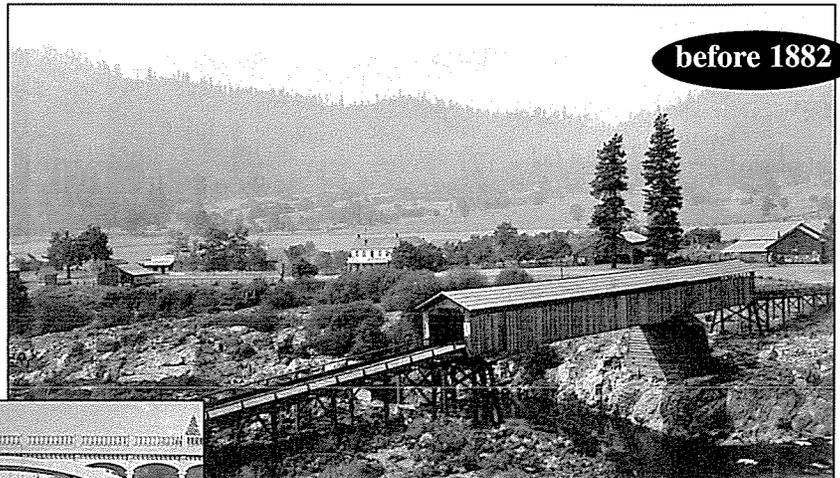
To local miners and ranchers, and the stranger passing through, crossing the Rogue River meant trundling over the Rock Point bridge, a rustic construction anchored to the rivers' basalt-lined banks. The original Rock Point bridge, probably built in the late 1850s, washed out in the flood at the close of 1861. Lytle White, however, had the bridge rebuilt by 1863. It is unclear when the covering for the bridge pictured here was constructed. It may have been in 1878, when the *Oregon Sentinel* reported, "Ben Haymond having purchased the old bridge crossing Rogue River at Rock Point is now having it placed in first class repair for travel." Covered or not, the bridge was quite passable in 1872 when fifteen-year-old Amanda Beals described her crossing, "...traveled two miles came to a small town called Rockpoint. There we crossed Rogue River on a toll bridge (toll 1 dollar)."

The bridge was on an early wagon route connecting northern Oregon settlements with those in California. In 1865, Lytle White opened a hotel near his bridge to serve Oregon Stage Company passengers. Sixty-one couples attended the dedication ball held that February for "lovers of dancing and music." Other businesses opened around the stage station. By the 1880s, the community of Rock Point included a telegraph office at the hotel, a livery stable, store, saloon, post office, blacksmith shop, and school.

Growth of the thriving little town was thwarted in 1883 when the Oregon and California Railroad Company established a train station a short distance up-river in Gold Hill. Although there were many contributing factors in choosing to build the station at Gold Hill, Lytle White may have sealed Rock Point's fate himself when he successfully contested the railroad's right-of-way through his property. Had he not caused a fuss, the train station might have been located near his front door, and his hotel dining room could have been filled with hungry train passengers.

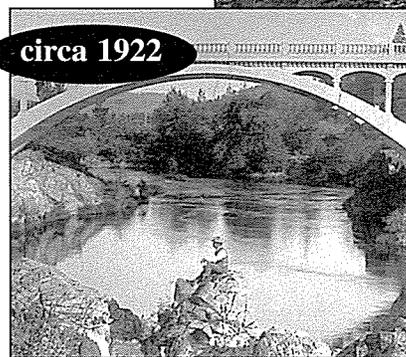
Losing its economic base to Gold Hill, Rock Point withered and died. Eventually all evidence of the town disappeared except for the 1859 John B. White residence, and Lytle White's hotel next door. The founders of the Del Rio Orchards bought the hotel in 1907 and converted it to quarters for the orchard foreman. Having undergone few alterations over the years, this significant structure is one of the few surviving nineteenth century stage stations in Oregon.

By the early twentieth century, the town of Rock Point was slipping toward oblivion; use, however, of the route across the Rock Point bridge increased. Americans were traveling by



before 1882

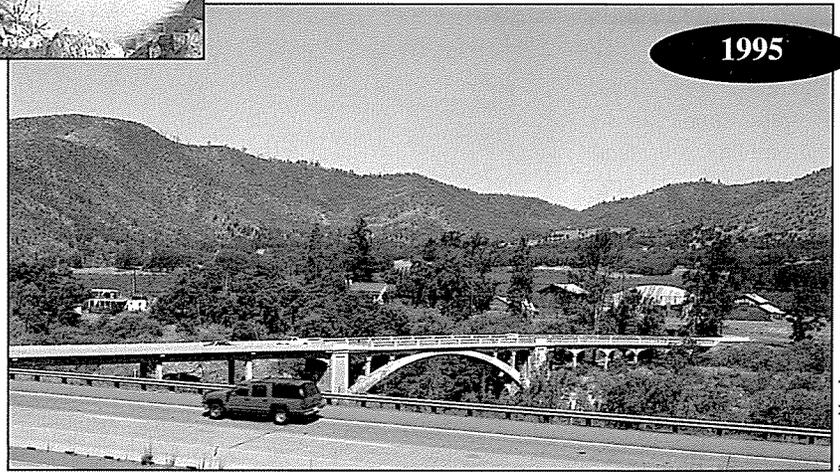
SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #4105



circa 1922

So. Oregon Historical Society #14073

Top: The original Rock Point Bridge was constructed in the 1850s, was rebuilt in 1863, and the covering was added later. Center: The bridge was rebuilt again in 1920 to accommodate the motor car, and as part of the ambitious project of constructing the Pacific Highway. Below: The Rock Point Bridge today, the view now obstructed by the Interstate.



1995

PHOTO BY MIKE LEONARD

motor car. By 1923, the rutted dirt road tying Ashland to Portland was a paved link in the new Pacific Highway that stretched between the Mexican and Canadian borders. As part of this ambitious project, a progressive "major arch," reinforced concrete bridge replaced the time-weary wooden one. It was designed by noted engineer Conde B. McCullough, and constructed in 1920 by Parker and Banfield of Portland. The bridge is 505 feet in length, and the main span is a single 113 foot "open spandrel." With the establishment of the Federal Highways program, the Pacific Highway, and the route over the Rock Point bridge, officially became part of Highway 99 in the early 1930s.

After the construction of Interstate 5 in the early 1960s, most travelers bypassed the Rock Point river crossing altogether. Now, old Highway 99 and its seventy-five year old cement span receive only local traffic and an occasional history buff, wandering the byways of southern Oregon's past.

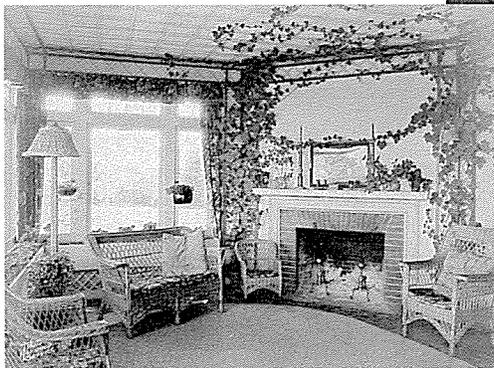


The Walter Bowne House

by Paul Richardson

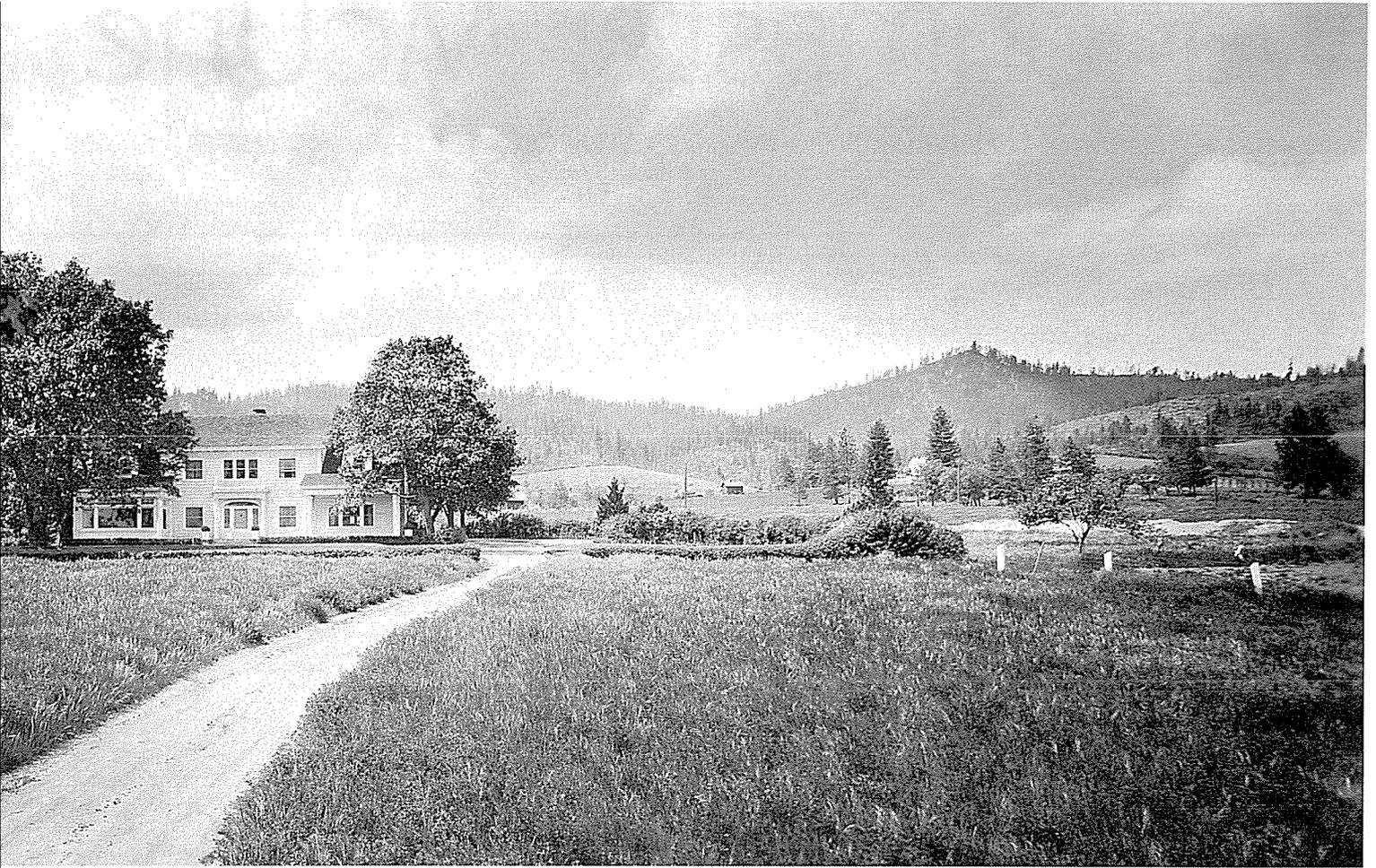
The Walter Bowne (pronounced like “town”) House near Central Point is one of Jackson County’s most interesting and imposing residences. Designed by local architect Frank C. Clark and built during 1913 and 1914, the Bowne House is an elegant symbol of the grand lifestyle enjoyed by many agricultural entrepreneurs in the years following the turn of the century. Among the home’s more interesting features when built, were its outbuildings: a playhouse and a doghouse designed by the architect to match the main structure.

Despite its Colonial dignity, the Bowne House did not enjoy an entirely unsludged reputation. When various owners of the residence died of cancer or suffered through divorce, some people in the community thought the house was cursed. Despite such rumors, the building still stands as a reminder of years gone by.



Clockwise from top left: Southern Oregon Historical Society Negative #2578, Negative #14977, Negative #2583, Negative #2577, and Negative #2584.





Clockwise from top left:

The Walter Bowne House still stands off Old Stage Road near Central Point. Circa 1920.

When Walter Bowne decided to rely on his own water for irrigation, he imposed upon his daughter Ruth to give up her playhouse to serve as a pump house in return for unrestricted rights to an island in the pond. She readily agreed, only to discover that her father refused to build her a bridge! Circa 1920.

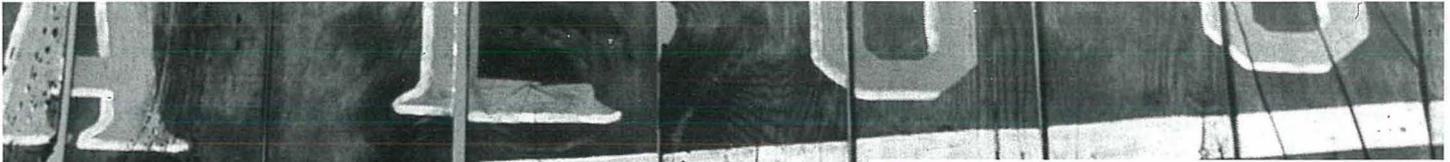
By the 1920s, the Tomlin family had moved in and brought with them the latest electrical marvel — the radio — to decorate their living room. Circa 1920.



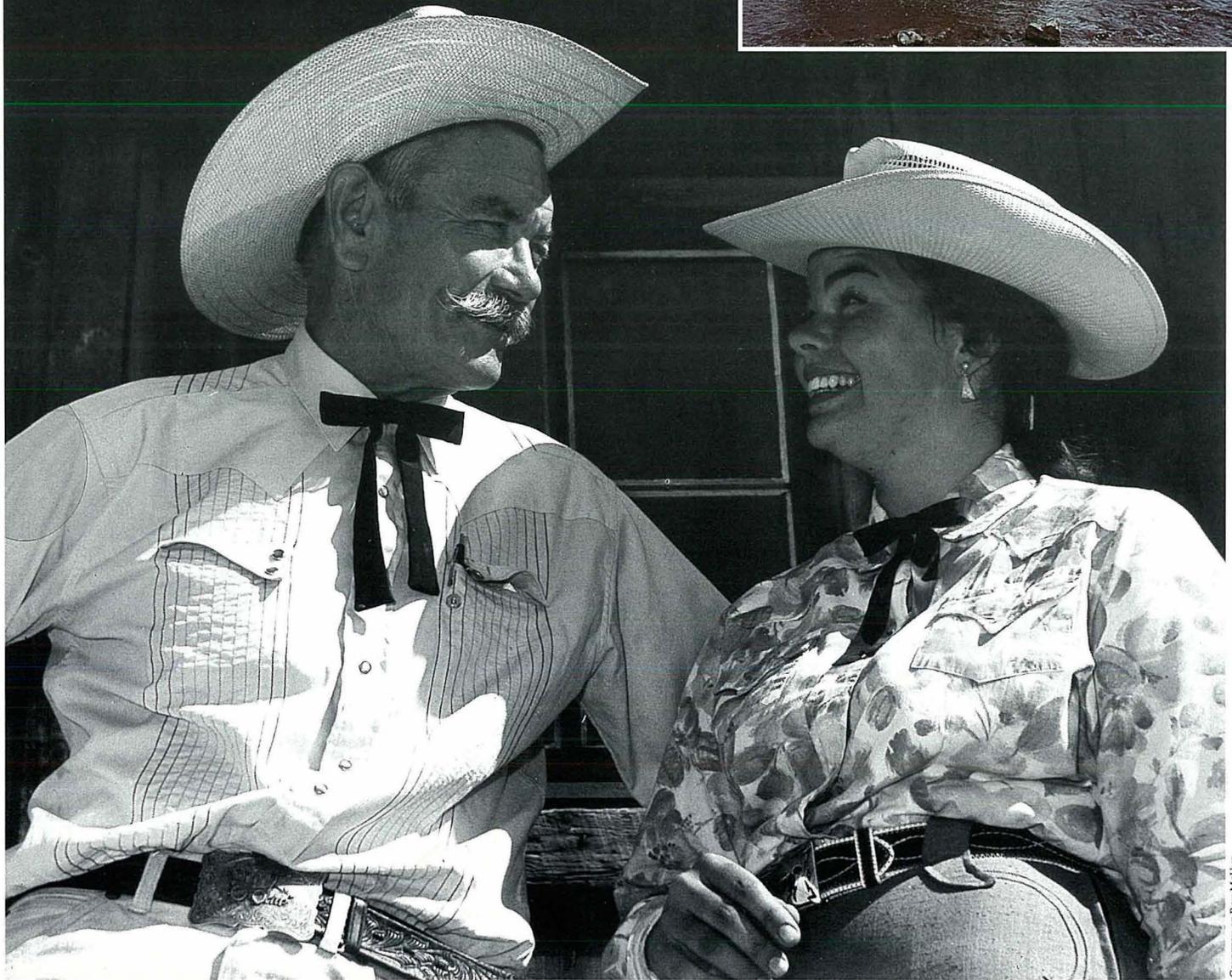
Constructed during 1913 and 1914, the Period Colonial house boasted a sun room for residents to enjoy their natural surroundings, including a beautiful view of Mt. McLoughlin. Circa 1920.

The sun room's interior continued the theme of harmony with nature through a proliferation of foliage. Circa 1918.

Wagonmaster McUne



COURTESY OF RON MCUNE



COURTESY OF RON MCUNE

The Second Blazing of the Applegate Trail

by Doug Foster

Wagonmaster George McUne stood at the crest of Jenny Creek Slide, at the junction of Soda and Grizzly Creeks in Jackson County. The ground dropped precipitously away from him. For two hundred feet the earth pitched down at a forty-five degree angle. The man wondered how he would get six covered wagons down the sheer grade.

The wagons, built high-centered to clear rocky trails, would tip over if they cut across the face of the slope. McUne had no choice: the wagons had to go straight down the slide. There were no trained wheel teams, no well-broken pair of draft animals that could walk ahead of a descending wagon to steer and brake; horses had to be unhitched and the wagons lowered by rope. McUne would need volunteers: one to ride in each wagon and one to walk ahead holding the wagon tongue straight. What if the rope broke?

The perils of Jenny Creek Slide, in the Cascade Mountains near Pinehurst, are described in the diaries of many wagon train pioneers. It was one of the most difficult descents on the Applegate Trail. George McUne, though, wasn't an early day pioneer: his wagon train crossed this treacherous slide in 1976. To celebrate the United States Bicentennial, forty-five men, women and children set out in six wagons to retrace one hundred miles of the Applegate Trail from Keno to Jacksonville. McUne's group called themselves the Bicentennial Applegate Wagon Train.

Their goals were to pay tribute to early pioneers and retrace the actual route of the original Applegate Trail. The old trail, nearly forgotten, had never been properly marked. What better way to mark the Applegate Trail, McUne thought, than to run wagons over it again. The Southern Oregon Historical Society agreed and helped sponsor the wagon trip.

The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the forging of the Applegate Trail will be celebrated in 1996. The year also marks the twentieth anniversary of McUne's re-enactment of that historic event. Jessie and Lindsay Applegate originally laid out the trail, not as a gateway to southern Oregon, but as a southern route to the Willamette Valley.

In 1846 Oregon was under a joint occupation treaty between Great Britain and the United States, and it was not clear who would be given title to the Oregon Country. Therefore, it was not desirable for Americans to be reliant on the Hudson's Bay

George McUne in the late 60s at Pioneer Village in Jacksonville, a living museum of the west that he owned and operated from 1961 until his death in 1979.

Inset: The Applegate Bicentennial Wagon Train crosses Spencer Creek. Wagonmaster McUne and one of the cavalry guard lead the way.

Company's British forts. The Applegates wanted to find a trail to the Willamette Valley that avoided both the British Hudson's Bay Company forts and the treacherous waters of the Columbia River Gorge, where each brother had lost a son three years before. They accomplished this heroic task by backtracking south through the Rogue Valley and east to intercept the Oregon Trail near Fort Hall, Idaho. The Applegate Trail, since it was a longer route to the Willamette Valley, was little used until gold was discovered near Jacksonville in the 1850s. It then became the pioneers' route of choice to southern Oregon.¹

George McUne planned and organized the 1976 Applegate wagon trip. He conceived the idea when he was a teamster on the Oregon Centennial wagon trip from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon in 1959. He and his family then spent four months on the old Oregon Trail in a covered wagon pulled by Missouri mules.

McUne thought it important for younger people to understand how people used to live, so they might better appreciate modern life and its conveniences. Cars, light switches and water faucets are taken for granted today. Growing up in rural Washington, McUne lived a pioneering life: his mother cooked in a logging camp, cut wood with a cross-cut saw and shot game for the table. George quit school in the eighth grade to help support the family.²

George McUne, was well qualified to be wagonmaster. For fifteen years he'd owned and operated Pioneer Village, a living museum of the old west, where he ran a blacksmith shop and maintained many horse-drawn wagons.

Planning and preparing for the two-week wagon trip took nearly two years. He built all six wagons, working on each wagon for two months. The wagon boxes were built from cedar, to keep them light. The running gears were rebuilt from parts of the more than fifty historic wagons at Pioneer Village in Jacksonville. He made the wagons twelve feet long (two feet shorter than the original covered wagons) because of the rough, mountainous country they had to cross.

For wagon wheels he repaired and rebuilt old oak wheels that had turned almost rock hard. Many of the aged wooden wheels were over one hundred years old and had shrunk so that the strap iron rim, called the "tire," had become loose. To repair them he cut a piece from the iron rim, put the rim in a wood fire, hammer welded it back into a circle, heated the rim again, then dropped it over the wooden wheel and plunged both into water to quickly cool; shrinking the rim to the wood before the old oak could burn.

The six hoops that hold up a wagon's canvas cover are called "bows." To duplicate the bows, George cut clear, knot-free mountain ash from Georgia Pacific land on the Little Applegate. To bend the thirteen-and-a-half foot long wooden staves, he put them into a curved metal pipe over a wood fire, filled the pipe with water and boiled the wood for two hours. He then tied off each softened, curved bow to a wagon wheel to dry. "If they built a Ford car like I built these wagons, it'd cost \$75,000," he said.³

Wagon brakes are inefficient, merely serving as a parking brake to keep a wagon from rolling. For greater security McUne manufactured "rough locks" at his smithy. When these shoe-like skids were fit under a rear wagon wheel and chained to the wagon box, a wagon's rear wheels couldn't turn. McUne was worried that they might need this extra braking power at Jenny Creek Slide.

To make the trip as realistic as possible, McUne insisted that every member of the wagon train wear a period costume from the 1840s. Four people applied for every available position on the trip and those selected to go enthusiastically complied with the wagon train dress code. Barbara Beard of Fern Valley sewed five complete outfits for herself: pantaloons, petticoats, dresses, aprons, shawls, capes and sunbonnets. Her son wore knickers and suspenders. Her husband wore tall boots and a wide-brim hat.

The wagon train “preacher,” Jay Dee Conrad, the former pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Medford, wore a

long, black, felt frock coat and carried a wind-up pocket watch. The six man cavalry contingent from Northern California dressed in blue and yellow uniforms, carried replicas of the 1866 Winchester Model 66 carbine, ate off of original 1874 mess-kits, and rode on Civil War-era rebuilt McClellan saddles — open centered saddles which were far more comfortable for horse than rider.

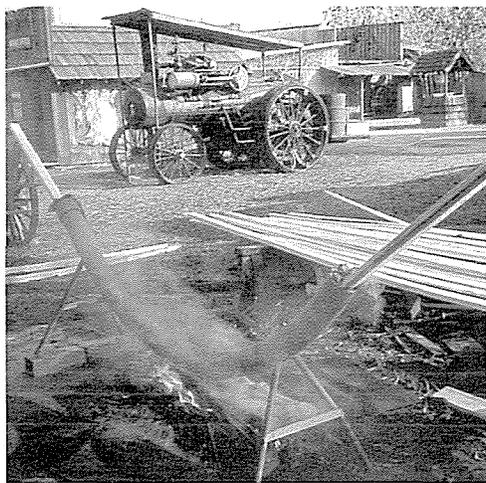
Much of the original Applegate Trail through the Cascades had been obliterated by logging and by new trees. Relying on research and surveys by local historians, McUne retraced the route as accurately as possible. While they sometimes followed old Weyerhaeuser logging roads, they turned off onto the original trail whenever possible. Riding in a wagon was a jolting experience, so wagon train members, like the original pioneers, often walked beside their wagons.

“We could have gone around a lot of these bad places and made it easy on ourselves,” George McUne said, “but this was not the purpose of this trip. We wanted to impress upon our people that the first wagons that come through didn’t have it easy, they had it rough. When the Applegates persuaded between eighty and a hundred wagons to follow this route back in 1846, there was only about half the wagons made it through.”⁴

Oxen were the preferred draft animal of the original pioneers. Oxen proved too difficult to procure for the 1976 re-enactment, so horses were used instead. Teams of horses worked well since the wagons were light and carried no furniture. Still, they had to double-team the animals in order to pull each wagon up the steep grade at Hayden Mountain. Passing through rattlesnake country, the group slept on cots provided by the National Guard. At Jenny Creek they killed thirty-five scorpions.

The Bicentennial Wagon Train faced Jenny Creek Slide on day six of the trip. This was their biggest challenge. The slide was only a few hundred yards long, but there was no way around it. “You shove a wagon over a forty-five percent grade,” McUne said, “wonder if the rope’s going to hold, or just what’s going to happen.”⁵ McUne came prepared with a six-hundred foot, 1 1/2 inch thick rope and “rough locks,” his specially-made wagon brakes.

McUne’s plan was to tie the big rope to the back of a wagon’s rear axle and then curl the rope around a stout, thirty-foot tall juniper on the top of the grade. A line of wagon train members on the hill could then play the rope out through their hands and lower each wagon down the slope. Double looping the rope around



“Bows” for the covered wagons were fitted in a curved metal pipe, and steamed for hours over a wood fire.

the tree gave them more leverage and more mechanical advantage over the heavy wagons. Each team of horses would have to be unhitched. Horses slid faster than a wagon and weren’t trained to brake. McUne would need volunteers to guide the lowered wagons.

Hank Appleton, one of the cavalry escorts from Northern California, volunteered to help guide each wagon down. Walking at the head, where horses would normally be harnessed, Hank’s job was to keep the long wagon tongue from jack-knifing. Ken Zimmerlee, wagon train cook and former head chef at Oak Knoll restaurant in Ashland, is the grandson of a pioneer woman

who crossed the plains in a covered wagon. Ken volunteered to ride in the front seat of each descending wagon, to direct the descent, apply the wagon brakes and help steer. These were dangerous jobs. If the rope broke both men risked serious injury.

The first wagon started down the slide at 9:00 a.m. Those on the hilltop played out the heavy rope. The wagon began skidding and rolling down the slope. Appleton, a big man, pushed, pulled, and strained and was able to steady the wagon tongue. They wouldn’t need the rough locks McUne had worked so hard on. The rope held.

About two-thirds of the way down, where the ground canted sideways, Evelyn Anderson, of Ashland, tied another rope to the side of the wagon. A line of wagon train members pulled on this second rope to keep the wagon from tipping on its side. Finally, the first wagon eased into Jenny Creek. McUne, on horseback, tied a rope to the wagon tongue and pulled the wagon up to where a team of horses could again be harnessed.

It took four hours to maneuver all six wagons less than half-a-mile down the Jenny Creek Slide. It was the shortest trip, and the most arduous of days. When the last wagon reached the creek, Ken Zimmerlee went up to George McUne and said, “By God, George, we did it.”⁶



Doug Foster is a free-lance writer and historian living in Ashland, Oregon. His article, ‘Send Chiloquin Up’ — Klamath Indians and the War Effort, appeared in the summer issue of Southern Oregon Heritage, 1995.

ENDNOTES

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2. Ronald L. McUne, “Talk for Museum Oral History Performers, 25 May 1981,” Tape 191, (Southern Oregon Historical Society), pp. 15-16.
3. “Preparations Underway for Trip,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 2 Aug. 1976.
4. George McUne, “Narration of the film: Applegate Bicentennial Wagon Train Trek of 1976,” (Southern Oregon Historical Society, 23 Feb. 1977), p. 3-7.
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Right: George McUne in 1959 in Independence, Missouri, standing by the wagon he and his family rode in for four months as part of the Oregon Centennial wagon trip across the old Oregon Trail.



COURTESY OF ROS McCUNE



The Schmidt Sisters' Legacy

Josephine County
Historical Society Museum

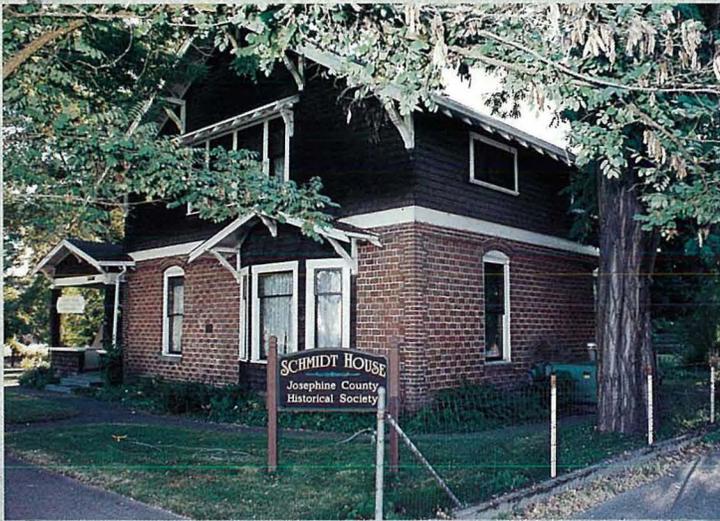
by Molly Walker Kerr

A German wall hanging in a Schmidt House bedroom states, "Where love and truth keep watch, all is well in the house." The house that Claus and Hannchen Schmidt built emanates a feeling of well-being and prosperity and now, thanks to their daughters Flora and Anna, the public can experience what life in the Schmidt House was like from the turn-of-the-century to today. The house was built in 1901 and remained in the Schmidt family until the sisters bequeathed their home to the Josephine County Historical Society in 1978. The house and grounds have been turned into a museum and research facility. The Schmidt sisters loved to entertain visitors; what better way to continue their tradition of hospitality than to literally open the doors to the public.

Claus and Hannchen Schmidt were both born in Denmark in the province of Schleswig-Holstein, which later, as a result of war, was ceded to Germany. They met, however, at a German speaking club in San Francisco. Not satisfied with their life in the city, Hannchen quit her cleaning job, and Claus left his grocery business to file on a homestead in Grants Pass in 1887. Claus and his brother-in-law, George Gebers, divided a 160 acre homestead evenly between them, dragging hundreds of stones from the property to build the boundary-line. They cleared, fenced, built and planted. "Farm income was meager, and each head of the family had to work for pay to help the family to live..." Claus and his mules carted lumber from the sawmills in the

Flora Schmidt delighted young visitors by hiding animal crackers in the sleeves of her dress, circa 1912-1918.

Inset: In 1978 the Schmidt sisters bequeathed their home to the Josephine County Historical Society.



area, to the finishing mills in Grants Pass. Flora remembers roads so "...makeshift, bumpy and rough..." that she, her mother, and brother Herman were jolted out of their wagon and badly bruised. The labor was staggering and the profits were paltry. It is no wonder that Claus followed the promise of gold to Alaska during the 1890s Gold Rush.

Miners exhausted from a day of prospecting, found that they did not have the inclination or energy to cook for themselves. It was agreed that someone should be paid to do it for them. That someone was Claus Schmidt. While the others were out searching for a dream, Claus was cooking up a nest egg.

Upon returning to Grants Pass, Schmidt found his family had moved to a rented house in town. "Mama was afraid to stay out on the farm alone in bad weather," Anna said. With the cash from Alaska, Schmidt rented a building, which is now the Rogue River Hardware—he purchased counters and enough to initially stock the shelves, and in 1899 opened a grocery store on Sixth Street.

One assumes, with Mr. Schmidt back from Alaska, the family moved back to the Homestead until they had the money and resources to build the house in town. The homestead was two-and-a-half miles from the store, and Claus walked to and from everyday except Sunday, when the store was closed.

As the business prospered and expanded Schmidt had a small, four-room, brick house built on the corner of 5th and "J" Streets. When the family, now numbering six, with the four children Anna, Herman, Flora, and Reinhold outgrew the tiny house, he added on a wood-shingled upper story.

Schmidt had found his calling as merchant and developer. The grocery boomed and Claus rented an adjacent



Anna Schmidt circa 1904. She was thirteen when she became the shop's bookkeeper.

building to accommodate expansion. At the same time he purchased a feed store, which he razed, in order to build his own impressive brick mercantile, Claus Schmidt Groceries. This is now the site of the U.S. National Bank. Tour guide Lyle Felkner, born and raised in Grants Pass, recalls the popular store. She says, "You could get everything you needed there. We would drop off our list and come back later to pick up groceries, bales of hay, and feed for our stock. I especially loved the open pickle barrels and huge rounds of cheese. My grandfather would buy a big wedge and we'd sit on a bench and down crackers and cheese for lunch. It was that kind of store." Schmidt was responsible for the purchase and development of several other business properties in town as well.

Anna was thirteen when she began at the store as a bookkeeper. Later, in the early 1900s, both she and her brother Herman bought shares and made a lifetime commitment to working in the family business. With Claus' death in 1927, the brother and sister team took over the daily workings of the store. When Herman died in 1949, Anna managed the business herself until 1955, when she sold it to allow for the expansion of the U.S. National Bank. Felkner says, "Anna, who lived to be two months shy of one hundred, resented the fact that she was needed at the store and did not get to finish high school. She remained angry about it until the day she died."

Both sons married. Reinhold, an irrigation engineer, married Gertrude Kerley and moved to California. He died in 1974. Herman married Linnie Kimsey from Grants Pass. Her wedding dress is displayed in the entry hall of the museum along with family pictures and a collection of Anna and Flora's handmade lace collars. Flora worked for the U.S. National Bank until



The Schmidt House in 1904, burgeoning with flowers and friends. From left to right are: Elizabeth Bigelow, Lilian Wieland, Hazel Cornelier, Edna Peck, and Hannchen Schmidt holding Reinhold. Flora and Anna sit on the steps.



Claus rented an adjacent building and expanded the grocery in 1904. Success is apparent by the holes worn in the wooden floor, making it necessary to reposition the counter on occasion. Pictured from left to right are Herman Schmidt, an unknown shopper, and Fritz Gebers.

1962, when she retired after forty years of service.

The dining room and parlor remain furnished much as they were when the gracious Schmidts entertained guests. Behind the scenes in the cozy kitchen, visitors can imagine the sisters preparing for these events, bustling in their aprons, lifting tea cakes and biscuits from the hot oven. Felkner demonstrates a strange wooden-handled implement hanging by the stove. "This is a pie lifter like my mother's." The antiquated implement appears too frail to lift anything. Heavy irons atop the wood stove, rustic washboards, boilers, and wooden tubs are all reminders of the time and effort required back then for even the simplest chores.

A pink bonnet hangs by the back door ready to don for a quick escape into the magnificent gardens to pick roses, or to rest on the bench beneath the shade trees. Some of the sisters' fondest memories are of the flowers on the homestead, and it appears that they attempted, in their planting of trees and flowers, to pattern their own gardens upon those memories. Anna said, "Across the front of the house grew honeysuckle vines and rose bush, a climber of somewhat an apple blossom color, and flowers in clusters." Along the path to the barnyard gate grew a row of old-fashioned fragrant yellow roses. The adored flower gardens are mirrored in the Schmidt House decor, as evidenced in the floral carpets upstairs, flower bedecked hats, and dainty floral dresses in the spacious walk-in closets.

In the guest room, high-top wedding shoes belonging to Lyle Felkner's aunt, Nellie Wetherbee, sit by the ornate bed: Hannchen's trunk, that transported her possessions from Germany, rests at the foot. A needlepoint wall-hanging depicts the short life of Martha Schmidt who died when she was eleven months old. Martha was the third born of the five children, all of whom were born on the homestead.

In the whimsical playroom antique dolls are nestled down in baby beds and doll buggies. Cardboard Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers stand in perfect rows in a cabinet made by Claus himself. An iron "Rapid Fire" gun sits ready to shoot marbles beside a tin horse-drawn ice wagon. The Victorian dollhouse in the center of the room is a favorite. A visitor to the museum remembers playing with these toys upon cherished visits to the Schmidt sisters' house long ago. She recalls Flora playfully hiding animal crackers in the sleeves of her dress to delight the children. The attic room is filled with relics from the old store. Felkner says visitors "...like it because they can see what kind of boards were used and how the plaster was put on."

Besides the Schmidt belongings, which constitute most of the museum collection, items from other donors are featured. For example, a huge frying pan hangs in the attic room. It belonged to Glen Wooldridge who challenged the powerful Rogue River by taking the first riverboat from Grants Pass to the Oregon coast, blasting his way through in

The Schmidt sisters and friends pause before the grocery during the Annual Rose Garden Parade. Circa 1904.

places. Clark Gable, Herbert Hoover, Zane Grey, and countless others accompanied him on subsequent trips. His book, "A River to Run" is available in the museum gift shop. Grants Pass Judge, Orvil Millard's gavels and pipes lie quietly behind glass and his imposing wooden rocker sits in the parlor.

The most impressive donated collection, however, takes up one of the downstairs bedrooms. The late Colonel LeRoy Heston, a Grants Pass resident and retired U.S. Air Force pilot and professor, spent most of his life in the Orient where he collected many of the treasures exhibited here. Having no descendants, he bequeathed his collections to the Josephine County Historical Society and donated funds towards maintaining the Schmidt House. A sign on a door states the words he lived by, "Man's flight through his life is sustained by the power of his knowledge." Tour guide Felkner claims, "Colonel Heston looked like a commanding officer. He was a charmer, he really was."

Neither of the Schmidt sisters married. They stayed on in the family home long after their parents had passed away, and their brothers had started households of their own. When Flora and Anna deeded the house as a life estate to the Josephine County Historical Society in 1978, a provision enabled them to reside there as long as they were able. In 1982 they moved to a retirement home. However, they remained attached to their childhood home in an unusual way. Felkner says, "The sisters didn't trust the chlorine in the city water, so they had someone pump water from the back porch pump and bring it to them twice a day." Flora died in 1981 and Anna in 1987. The faithful old pump still sits on the back porch.

The Schmidt House and the Research Library—sustained by dues, donations, and endowments left by the Schmidt sisters and Colonel Heston—are open from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. For more information call (503) 479-7827. The museum is located at 508 SW J Street. 

Molly Kerr is a free-lance writer living in Medford, Oregon.

ENDNOTES

All photographs courtesy of Josephine County Historical Society.

A History of Josephine County Oregon, (Grants Pass: Josephine County Historical Society, Inc., 1988.) pp. 222-224.



Harry and David

at Bear Creek Orchards, Medford, Oregon





Cubby of Bear Creek

and the Harry and David Story

By
William Alley

Throughout the decade of the 1950s, one of the first harbingers of the Christmas season was the arrival of Cubby Bear in the mail. Cubby, mascot of Harry and David's Bear Creek Orchards, appeared prominently on the envelopes and catalogs featuring the company's Royal Riviera pears, food and gift items, and their famous Fruit-of-the-Month Club. Cubby himself even served, on occasion, as one of the gift items.

It is only natural that a bear would be used to promote the Bear Creek Orchards. When Hunt Lewis owned the orchards in the early years of the century, his packing label featured a bear leaning on a rail fence. Harry and David maintained this tradition, using a grizzly bear head on some of their early labels. The less ferocious Cubby was later chosen to spearhead the sale of Harry and David's 'Cubby' brand of pears.

The Bear Creek Orchard was the second commercial orchard established in the Rogue Valley. Shortly after J.H. Stewart planted his orchard in 1885, Arthur Weeks (his son-in-law) and Weeks' brothers established the Bear Creek Orchard. At the turn of the century, Weeks sold the Bear Creek Orchard to Hunt Lewis.

The orchard was then a well-established and successful concern. In 1908, Lewis sold the orchard to the Whisler, Olwell, Clark and Myers real estate syndicate, who in turn placed the property back on the market. Entered as exhibits at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, pears from the Bear Creek Orchard won several first prizes. The property caught the interest of Samuel Rosenberg.

Samuel Rosenberg was a prominent Seattle businessman who had gotten his start by outfitting prospectors headed for the gold fields of Alaska and the Yukon. By 1910 he had also built and owned Seattle's luxurious Sorrento Hotel. In December of that year Rosenberg purchased the Bear Creek Orchard for three hundred thousand dollars. Popular accounts claim that Rosenberg traded the Sorrento Hotel for the orchard, but this story remains unsubstantiated.

Samuel Rosenberg's two sons, Harry and David, were studying agriculture at Cornell University at this time. Upon completion of their studies they moved to



Medford to manage their father's properties, taking up residence in the old Medford Hotel. Initially the two boys were more interested in raising prize-winning merino sheep, but after the death of their father in 1914, they began managing the orchard in earnest.

These early years were successful ones for the Rosenberg brothers. There was one variety of pear that grew well in the Rogue Valley that was not a big seller in the United States. Due to its large size, the Doyenne du Comice was difficult to pack in sufficient numbers per box. There was, however, a healthy demand for them as a dessert fruit in the European markets. The bulk of the Doyenne du Comice crop was marketed in the east through fruit brokers, and the large pear found a steady market among the finer homes and hotels of Europe. Little of the Rosenberg's produce was sold locally.

These were years of steady growth for the Bear Creek Orchard, and the physical plant was much expanded. Among these additions were a new packinghouse, built in 1921, and one of the Rogue Valley's first pre-cooling plants built in 1923. Pre-cooling was a major innovation for the pear industry. It was discovered that pre-cooling the fruit immediately after picking delayed ripening. This delay allowed for longer shipping times. Pre-cooling proved to be very important because, by 1923, the California canneries had a surplus of product and the price for Bartletts had dropped considerably. Pears could now be pre-cooled and shipped east to be sold there, or trans-shipped to

Europe, where a higher price could be attained. The Rosenberg's pre-cooling plant had a holding capacity equal to that of forty railroad cars of fruit.

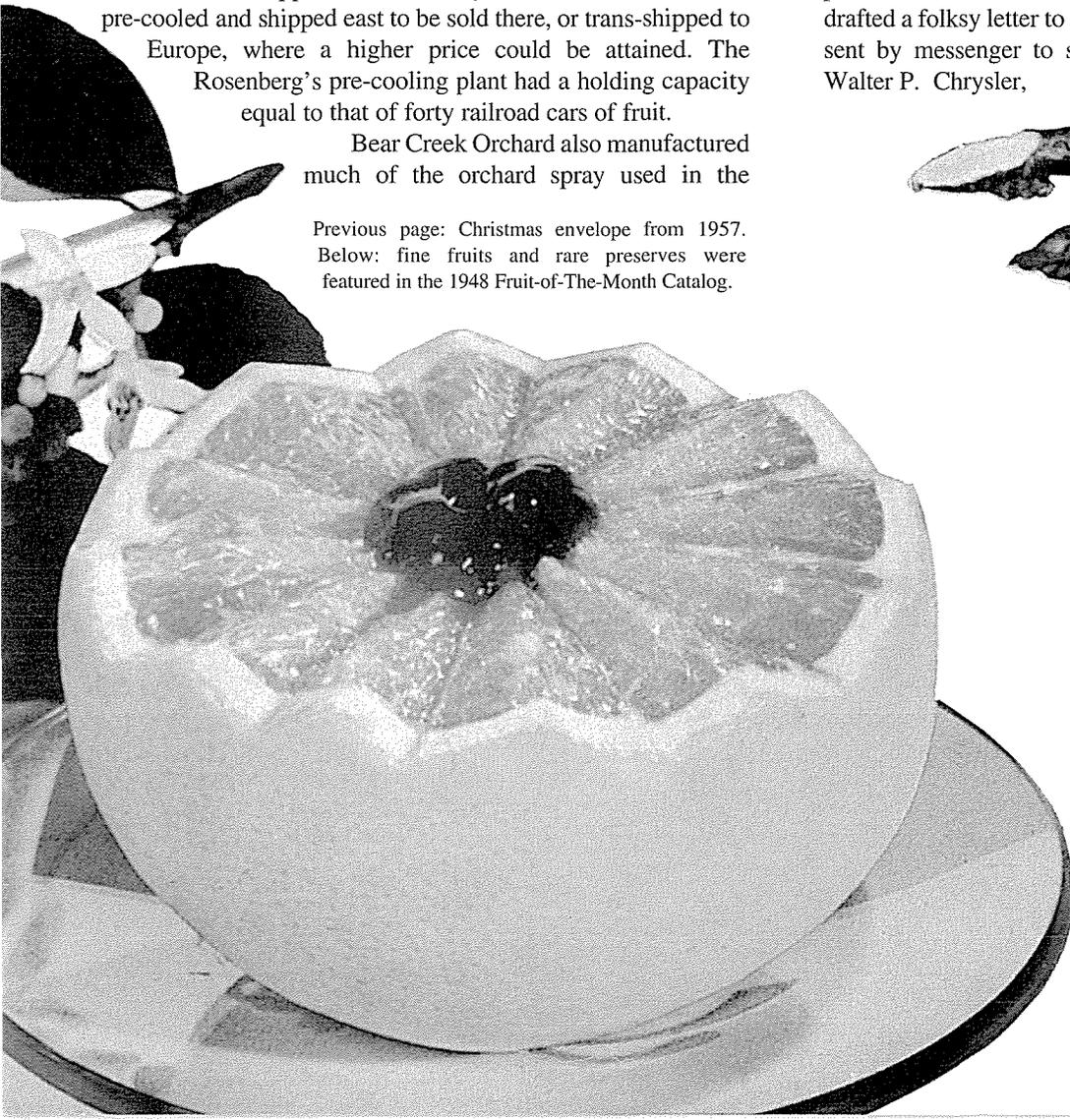
Bear Creek Orchard also manufactured much of the orchard spray used in the

Previous page: Christmas envelope from 1957.
Below: fine fruits and rare preserves were featured in the 1948 Fruit-of-The-Month Catalog.

valley. A shed where the spray was manufactured was located alongside the Southern Pacific tracks next to the pre-cooling plant, near the site of the current packinghouse.

The decade of the 1920s passed with steady growth for Bear Creek Orchard, but an event that was to dramatically change the way the Rosenberg's would market their product loomed just over the horizon. The Great Depression that gripped the world after the stock market crash of 1929, dried up much of the demand for Rogue Valley pears. Many orchards were cut down and returned to farmland. In the midst of the great despair that was washing over most of the pear industry, the Rosenberg brothers hit upon a novel marketing scheme in an attempt to boost their sagging sales. They decided to offer Christmas gift packages of their Comice pears, which they marketed under the trademarked name of Royal Riviera Pears. In 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, the two Rosenbergs staked everything on their new marketing strategy.

In 1934, Harry travelled to New York City with a supply of sample gift boxes to show the fruit brokers. Because of the depression, however, none of the brokers were interested in selling premium pears. As Harry sat in his room at the Waldorf-Astoria with his rapidly ripening boxes of fruit, he decided to engage an advertising agency to assist him in marketing his gift boxes. It was Harry's good fortune that the ad-man he called was G. Lynn Sumner. Sumner suggested that Harry send a box of pears to some of the city's wealthiest citizens. The two of them drafted a folksy letter to accompany the pears, and the boxes were sent by messenger to such men as Walter P. Chrysler,

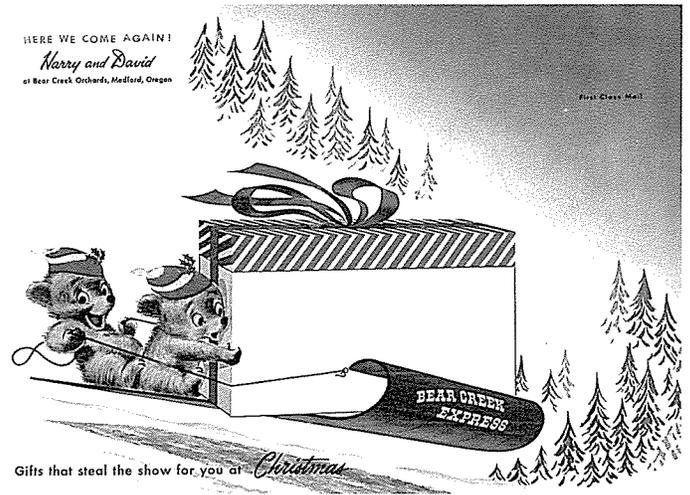


David Sarnoff, head of RCA (and later NBC) and Owen Young, chairman of General Electric. Within the hour Harry had a call from Walter Chrysler. He wanted Harry to come right over and take his order for more gift boxes. By the next day Harry had orders for 467 gift boxes.

Harry and David's new marketing strategy was an immediate success. Sales of their gift boxes of Royal Riviera pears soared. In 1936, David went to New York to discuss with Sumner the possibility of a nationwide advertising campaign. Sumner came up with a full page ad that ran in the November, 1936 issue of *Fortune Magazine*, "Imagine Harry and Me advertising our PEARS in *Fortune!*" read the ad. What followed, in the homespun, folksy manner that was to become Harry and David's trademark, was copy describing how the Royal Riviera pears, which sold for as much as seventy-five cents apiece in Europe, were now available by mail right here in the United States. For only \$1.89 for the ten pound "Medium Family" box, or \$2.95 for the "Large Family" box, Harry and David would ship in time for Christmas anywhere in the United States. The *Fortune* ad proved so successful that it not only boosted sales of the gift boxes, it also won the advertising industry's "award of the year." After only four years, sales of the Royal Riviera pear had soared to eighty-seven thousand boxes.

In 1937, the Rosenbergs introduced another marketing innovation. While the sales of their Christmas gift baskets remained strong, the remainder of the year was a slack period. Harry and David decided to inaugurate a Box a Month Plan. This plan enabled Harry and David to broaden their product line and keep their plant busy throughout the year. Under this plan, the customer would receive a box of different fruit each month. To offset any drop in the price of a fruit after a membership had been paid for, Harry and David would compensate with an increase in the amount of fruit shipped. This Box a Month Plan was soon renamed the Rare Fruit Club, and is now as famous as the Fruit-of-the-Month Club.

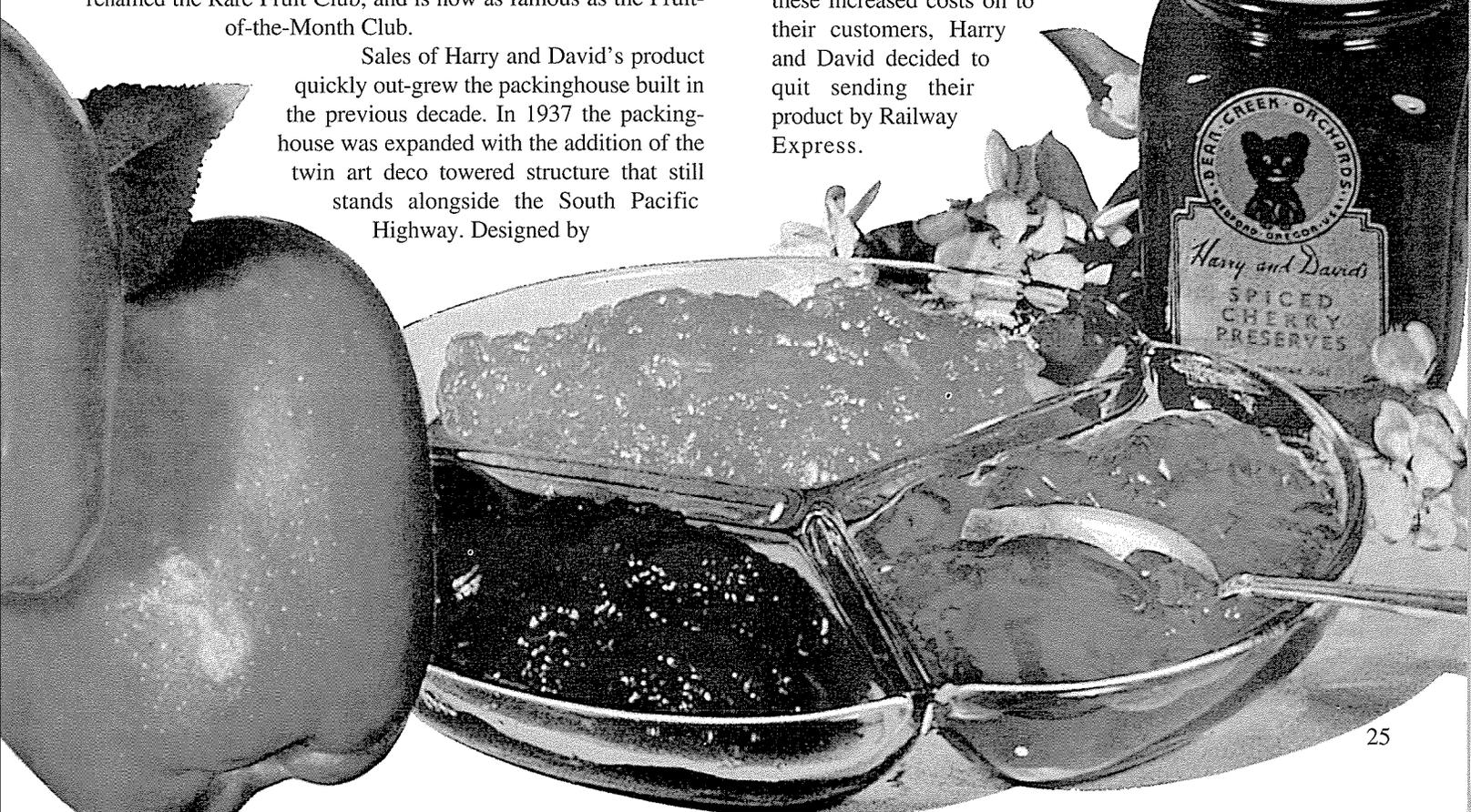
Sales of Harry and David's product quickly out-grew the packinghouse built in the previous decade. In 1937 the packinghouse was expanded with the addition of the twin art deco towered structure that still stands alongside the South Pacific Highway. Designed by



Envelopes like this, from Harry and David's 1956 *Christmas Book of Gifts*, featured Cubby Bear, bringing on the holidays with rambunctious, cub-like cheer.

Medford architects Frank Clark and Robert Keeney, the structure was inspired by one Harry and David saw at the Chicago World's Fair. Always considered one of the Rogue Valley's chief landmarks, this structure underwent, in 1985, what has been described as the "Biggest renovation project in its [Bear Creek Corporation] history."

In order to handle the growing volume of business, the Railway Express Company opened a temporary office at the Bear Creek Orchard during each fall sales season. This office, at its peak, was staffed by seventy Railway Express employees. Over the years, as sales grew, the express company began raising their rates. Rather than pass these increased costs on to their customers, Harry and David decided to quit sending their product by Railway Express.





Instead, orders were shipped by rail to key central cities where the boxes were then sent via the U. S. Postal Service. In 1938 Harry and David began manufacturing their own baskets in which to sell their growing array of Christmas gifts. The original basket was reputedly based on a design provided by Sybil Dodge, who frequently played bridge with David and his wife. Between 1938 and the outbreak of the Second World War, Harry and David acquired the reeds used in the basket making from China. Mrs. Edyth Goodman of Jacksonville was retained to train the basket weavers. After the war disrupted that supply, the Rosenberg's began using paper. Also in 1938, Harry and David decided to change their name. The rising tide of anti-semitism, especially in Europe, was perceived as detrimental to both their domestic and international sales. They took on the surname Holmes after Jack Holmes, who had earlier married their widowed mother.

Always looking for new ways to promote their product, Harry and David once teamed up with United Airlines. Individually wrapped pears were delivered to each United flight that passed through Medford to be handed out to the passengers. As David Holmes explained to a local reporter, "The plan fits in with the new signboard at the airport that advertises Medford as the pear city. Our idea will advertise Medford and its Comice pears and at the same time help extend the hospitality for which southern Oregon has been noted."¹

Almost from the beginning, demand for Harry and David's product out-paced the supply. In 1938 Bear Creek Orchards almost doubled their acreage with the purchase of the Hollywood and Ross Lane orchards. For those whose orders could not be filled, there was always a prompt refund sent with a typically folksy letter with lines such as, "We feel lower than a flat-footed gopher" at being unable to fill the order. Similar letters went out in response to complaints about late or damaged deliveries. In all cases, Harry and David strove to satisfy their customers completely. Complaints were handled with dispatch, and there was always a money back guarantee if a client was not completely satisfied.

Not ones to rest on their laurels, Harry and David again put their particular brand of genius to work and came up with a solution for the marketing problems faced by oversized Bosc pears. In 1938 they began experimenting with a recipe for baking the large pears and selling them in attractive jars. By 1940 their process had been perfected; and a rotary oven capable of handling three hundred jars an hour had been installed in a separate department headed by George Mann. "Our whole idea," according to David Holmes, "was to solve the problem of the big Bosc for the growers of the Rogue Valley, and I think it safe to say that we are now well on our way to a solution."

The second World War created new difficulties for the Holmes' to confront. As the 1943 picking season approached, farms and orchards across the country were faced with a chronic shortage of labor. Between the draft and the many inducements for employees to flock to defense plants, there was not enough labor to harvest the crops. In a letter to Oregon's senior senator, Charles McNary, David Holmes warned that without help, "... food production in 1943 will not come up to the 1942 figures, let alone show the increase asked by administration officials." Holmes' solution to this dilemma was to request that soldiers stationed near agricultural areas be allowed to augment their pay by

Top to Bottom: Festive Christmas Book envelopes featured Cubby Bear for more than a decade. Pictured here are the years: 1957, 1951, 1953, 1950.



working in the fields during their time off from military duties. For all of the Rogue Valley's orchardists, the manpower stationed at Camp White could easily alleviate the current labor shortage. In response to this request, the War Department agreed to let those servicemen who wanted to work on their days off do so, thereby averting the impending labor crisis.

By 1946, Harry and David Holmes had become so closely associated with the product of their Bear Creek Orchards, that they decided a name change was in order. Their mail order business was officially incorporated under the familiar name of Harry and David.

Tragedy struck Harry and David in 1950 with the untimely death of David Holmes in an automobile accident. David and office manager Nathaniel "Nat" Bender were driving to San Francisco on March 23, when their car hit a slick spot on the road near Woodland, California. David, who was driving the car, lost control and the car rolled over twice, throwing the two occupants from the vehicle. While Bender was not hurt, Holmes was severely injured. He died later that evening in the Woodland hospital. The business continued under brother Harry's direction until heart troubles forced his retirement. Harry died in 1959.

The company continued to expand under the direction of their sons, David H. Holmes, and later John R. H. Holmes. In 1966 it was decided to purchase the Newark, N. Y. rose firm of Jackson & Perkins. Harry and David's peak season was during the fall and Christmas time, and the purchase of Jackson & Perkins, whose peak season was during the spring, ensured that there would be little down time at the packing houses.

Harry and David was renamed the Bear Creek Corporation in 1974. The corporation has pursued many different interests. The product line was expanded to include specialty food items, many of which are made by Harry and David. An in-house bakery was established to provide the many different cakes and candies that were offered in the Christmas catalogs. In 1964 Harry and David acquired a bonded distilling facility in Talent to produce their Perrymeade line of vinegars. In addition to their outlet store, the company has also controlled a number of other mail order businesses, selling such diverse items as patio furniture, toys, and fine jewelry. Other endeavors over the years have included the manufacture of travel trailers, a data processing center, and an in-house advertising agency.

As Harry and David grew into one of the nation's largest mail order operations, their roots as orchardists were not forgotten. In the 1960s, their fifteen hundred acres of orchards included experimental work with dwarf pear trees. It was discovered that these trees would provide marketable fruit at an earlier age than the standard tree. Whereas a standard pear tree reaches maturity at twenty years, the dwarf varieties begin producing an equal amount of fruit after only four years. The smaller trees are also less labor intensive to harvest. A picker standing on a box can reach all of the fruit without the need of ladders. These



Top: Cubby and friend swoosh down the slope of the 1961 envelope for the Christmas Book of Gifts.

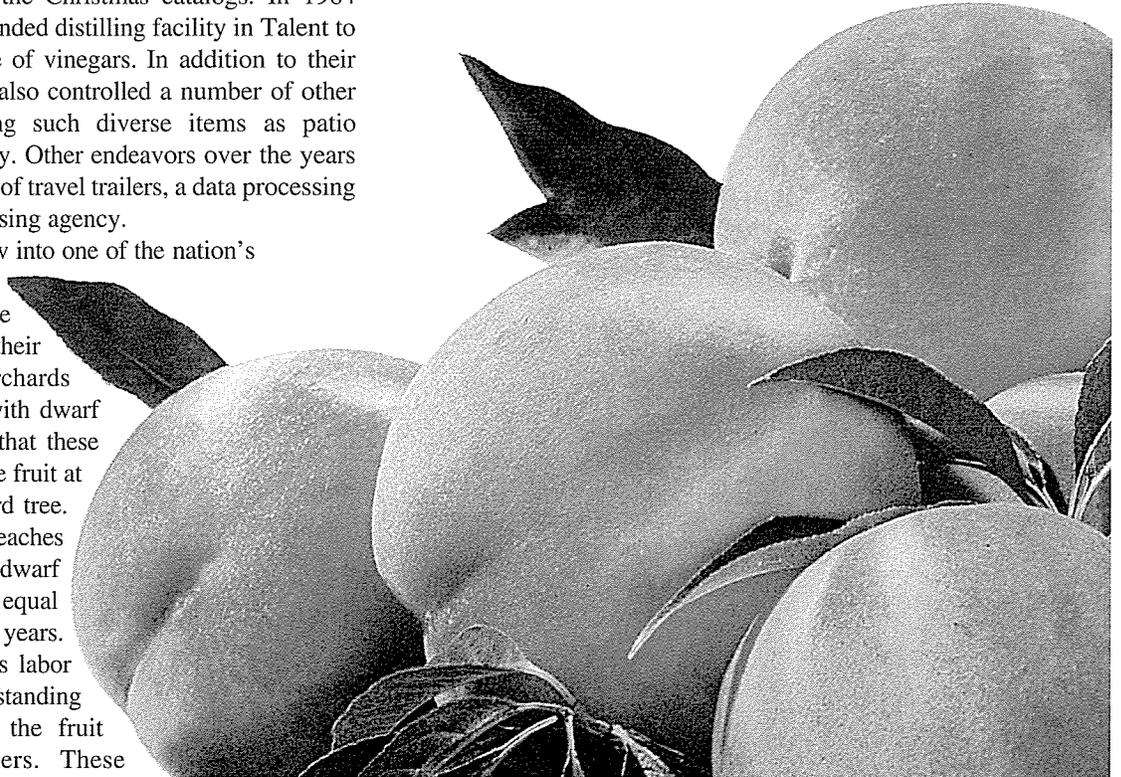
Below: "Oregold peaches," from the 1948 Fruit-of-The-Month Catalog were described as "... so juicy you need a bib to eat them."

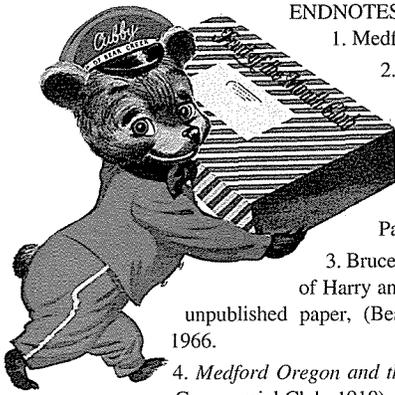
experimental orchards include the Hollywood and Rainbow orchards.

In 1984 the Holmes family sold the Bear Creek Corporation to the R. J. Reynolds Company of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Two years later, the company was again sold, this time to the Shaklee Corporation. In 1989 Shaklee was acquired by the Japanese firm of Yamanouchi Pharmaceutical. Regardless of who might own the company, however, the high standards for quality established by Harry and David over sixty years ago continue to be the benchmark of success for a company that strives to be "On Time Every Time."



William Alley is a certified Archivist living in Medford. He recently set up the archives for the Bear Creek Corporation.





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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All artwork courtesy of Bear Creek Corporation Archives.

In the 1960s, Cubby Bear began to lose his prominent place on Harry and David's mailings. He was gradually replaced by folksy drawings of Harry and David.

Passing The Buck to a Bear

To help shoulder the blame for some of the vicissitudes of the mail order business, such as late, damaged or misdirected orders, there evolved at Bear Creek Orchards a little mascot known as Cubby. Cubby first appeared as a small, dime-sized logo on the 1937 Rare Fruit Club circular. In 1940 this same design appeared on the annual Christmas book. Two years later, Cubby made an appearance on the macadamia nut label. In 1944, Cubby made his first appearance on the envelope of the Christmas Gift Book mailing, and for the next three years graced the top of the number one gift box.

In 1948 Cubby became a major part of Harry and David's promotions. Dressed in a full delivery boy's uniform, Cubby was now regularly seen delivering a Fruit-of-the-Month Club box to an anxiously waiting family. Cubby Bear's appeal was almost immediate. In 1949 he became part of the Harry and David product line. (The Holmes brothers had incorporated their Bear Creek Orchards under the name Harry and David in 1946.) That year the Christmas Gift Book contained Cubby's Candy Box. The box top was a fifteen-and-a-half inch long die cut picture of Cubby with a real bow tie attached. Inside was an assortment of candy, balloons, and toys, all for \$2.25, delivery included. In 1951 Harry and David also marketed a Cubby Bear plush toy with a molded plastic face.

By 1950, the envelopes containing Harry and David's Christmas Book of Gifts had evolved into elaborate full color Christmas scenes featuring Cubby Bear and his friends. For the remainder of the decade Cubby was featured prominently on the envelopes as well as throughout both the Christmas Book of Gifts and the Fruit-of-the-Month catalogs.

In the early years of the 1960s, Cubby began to lose his prominent place on Harry and David's mailings. David Holmes had been killed in an automobile accident in California in 1950, and Harry had died in 1959. Cubby was gradually replaced with drawings of Harry and David. For the remainder of the 1960s, Cubby

remained on several product labels, such as the 'Home Canned Fruit' and the 'Wild 'n Rare' preserves. He made his last appearance on a Fruit-of-the-Month Club promotion in 1972 and

is now enjoying his retirement.



Vintage Holidays and Old World Exhibits at the Southern Oregon Historical Society

4th ANNUAL AUTHORS PARTY

Hot cider and cookies will be served November 11, from 1:00 to 4:00 to honor local and national authors who have published materials relevant to the history of Southern Oregon. Get a peek at what the *Going Places* exhibit will be like. A Wells Fargo wagon and a Studebaker wagon will be on display. The *Applegate Trail Odyssey* video will be shown throughout the day, and a quilting demonstration will be presented by the Jacksonville Museum Quilters. For more information call 773-6536.

BEEKMAN STYLE CHRISTMAS

The halls of Beekman House will be decked in 1890s style again this Christmas. Stop in for a tour of the downstairs burgeoning with Victorian Christmas cheer. Swags of pine boughs, ribbons and gifts, a fresh cut tree all add to the festive ambiance. Take a break from the bustle of shopping, step back in time and let the heat from the woodstove warm you as sugar cookies are served. December 9, 10, 16 and 17. Beekman House Christmas is free to the public.

HOLIDAY CRAFTS AT THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Handmaking gifts and ornaments is a way to get the family into the true spirit of the season. Special programs at the Children's

Museum include: printing your own holiday card, 12/2; paper making, 12/9; stencilling, 12/16 and ornament making all month long, December 1 through 23. Spend an afternoon with us, we'll provide the glitter and glue. Adults encouraged to participate.

COMMUNITY COLLECTS

Good things come in small packages. An exhibit featuring a personal collection of miniature furniture and accessories is being shown in the History Center. Not only do these miniatures serve as examples of period styles and tastes but each piece is a work of art in itself. A class will be held in January on creating your own tiny reproductions, date to be announced. Exhibit runs November 6 through January 1996.

VISUAL GEOGRAPHY

The Jacksonville Museum is hosting an exhibit highlighting the art and science of mapmaking, otherwise known as cartography. This exhibit includes reproductions of some of the world's most exquisite and ancient maps: a chart drawn by Columbus, a map that went to the moon, an Italian city drawn by da Vinci, and an Arabic world map done in the 13th century. You will be stunned by the beauty, imagination, and precision of the people that mapped our world. *Visual Geography* will be shown November 18 - January 7. It is sponsored

by the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey and the National Geographic Society.

SNAP CRACKLE POP

The American Advertising Museum has put together a traveling exhibit of advertising that spans the decades from the 1920s through the 1960s. Drop by the mezzanine at the History Center for a nostalgic look back at the most glamorous, irreverent and entertaining moments in advertising history. December 15 - February 13.

FOLK ART IN STORE

The History Store is going all out for the holidays. Santa Claus is on parade in every shape and size. Santas originally carved in wood and replicated in resin have been handpainted in the Folk Art tradition by such artists as Leo Smith, Randy Tate, David Frykman, and Eddie Walker. Stockings will be hung by the chimney with care if they are filled with gifts from the History Store. Tin ornaments, hand-knit stockings, advent calendars, chocolates made in reproductions of antique molds, and jewelry are just some of the items that could bring a smile to any elf.

VOLUNTEER

Programs are in progress. If you would like to give your time please call Dawna Curler at the Southern Oregon Historical Society, 773-6536.



SOUTHERN
OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

MUSEUMS, SITES, AND EXHIBITS

• Southern Oregon History Center

106 N. Central Ave., Medford
Featuring *Advertising through the Ages*
The American Advertising Museum in Portland has put together a traveling exhibit featuring favorite icons from advertising from the 20s to the 60s. December 15 through February 13. Community Collects gallery: features miniatures - reproductions of furniture and accessories from the past. November 6 through January. 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 *Visual Geography* Nov. 18 - Jan. 7. This exhibit probes the essence of maps and mapmaking and features the art of cartography through the centuries. 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 the new general store, and turn-of-the-century laundry and bank. 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

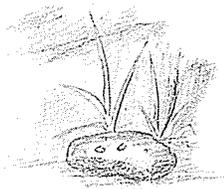
California and Laurelwood streets, Jacksonville.
Beekman House Christmas is free to the public and will be open December 9, 10, 16 and 17, from noon to 4:00 p.m.

• 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.

the Tales and Trails of Hathaway Jones

by Bob Heilman
and Marcia Somers



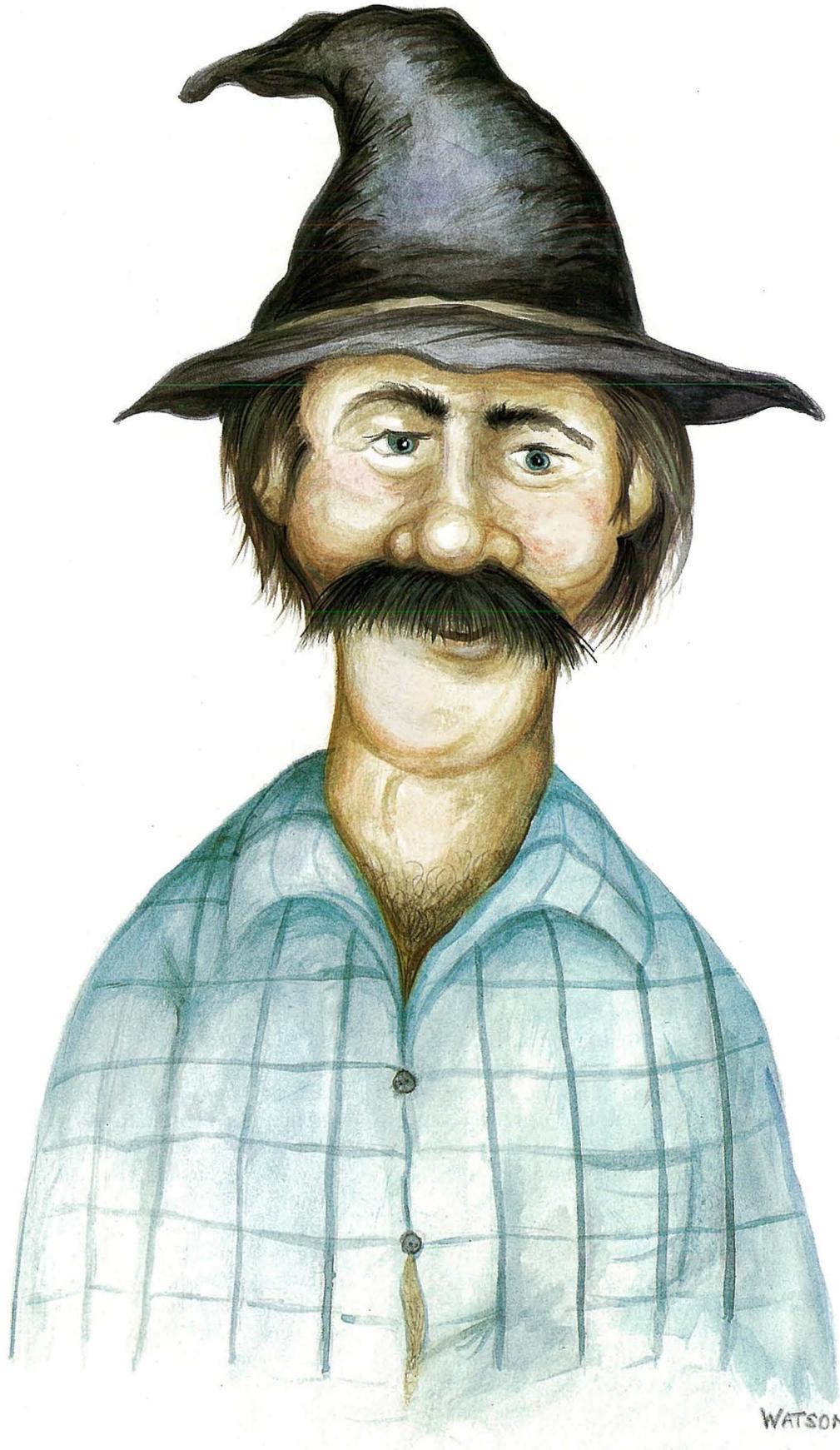
When Hathaway Jones came to Mule Creek in 1883, the land was a wilderness inhabited by few. He packed the mail by mule train from Dothan, a whistle stop at the west fork of Cow Creek, to Illahe, on the lower Rogue River from 1898 to 1937. His celebrated stories and anecdotes delivered with the news and parcels, delighted and lightened the burden of the miners, guides, packers and homesteaders who eked out a living in what is now known as the Siskiyou National Forest. Hathaway's fantastical musings have fortunately been told and retold ever since. His stories now make up one of the largest collections of tall tales from a single known teller in American Folklore. Fifty-eight of them were collected in 1974 and published as *Tall Tales from Rogue River, the Yarns of Hathaway Jones*, edited by Stephen Dow Beckham. Other writers, Arthur Dorn, an Illahe resident among them, also compiled Jones' yarns. Many of Hathaway's contemporaries wish they'd had the good sense, while still able, to "write 'em down."

Though folklorists classify his yarns as tall tales, Hathaway was simply considered a liar, a title he took a great deal of pride in. It is alleged that he once threatened *The Oregonian* with a libel suit when that paper named someone else as the state's biggest liar. As Dr. Beckham explains in his book, the kind of story that Hathaway told can be considered a "Munchausen Tale," in reference to Baron von Munchausen and his exaggerated exploits. This style is considered a sort of "reverse bragging...where the yarn-spinner laughed at harsh realities."¹

"He said he was working on the Railroad. And he said he killed a rattlesnake, he said it wasn't the biggest one he'd ever killed but it was one of the biggest. And he said he just hooked that thing over on one side of the steps on the caboose and its head reached the other side, just touched the ground on the other side. That wasn't the biggest one! (Laughter) It was one of the biggest."²

Hathaway's father, Sampson "Samps" Jones was a bartender in Roseburg, and seems to have been something of a ne'er do well. He married Elizabeth Luserbia Epperson in 1863, they divorced in 1883. Hathaway was twenty-three years old when he and "Samps" Jones left Roseburg and headed for the Siskiyou. Hathaway left behind seven other siblings and his grandfather "Ike" Jones. Ike and Samps are featured protagonists in many of Hathaway Jones' tales.

They first tried mining at Mule Creek; when that failed, they moved on to Battle Bar along the Rogue River, five miles from Marial. The dangers and hardships of everyday life were very real, and many of Hathaway's stories make light of physical threats such as, bear, cougar, deep snows, steep



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT WATSON

trails, and stubborn mules. Poverty, hunger, and the more poignant sufferings were brushed off with humor. Food was often scarce and this account of domestic life with Samps was woven into many of Jones' conversations. It is also a good example of the 'reverse-bragging' theory. This particular version was told to Claude Riddle on a 1903 pack trip, when Claude and his fellow mining friends became lost along the narrow trails above Mule Creek, and Hathaway was brought in to pack them out.

As we set about to prepare our dinner, I peeled some potatoes. Hathaway said: "you'd ought to seen the spuds we had over on Mule Creek. I planted some in new ground above the cabin, one day I says to pa, 'I'm goin' up and see if them taters are big enough to eat.' So I goes up and digs into a hill; about two bushels rolled out before I could stop up the hole."³

Two mountain men, fending for themselves, Samps a rumored alcoholic -- one can only imagine the state of their cabin. This is a little story, as Hathaway told it to Mr. Riddle, about keeping the home fires burning and doing a bit of house-keeping at the same time.

You'd ought to have some of the draft we had in the fireplace pa and me built in our cabin. We carried up a pile of big rocks and then mixed ashes and clay for mortar and put about a sack of salt in it. After we got the fireplace built we got a joint of big mine pipe for the chimney and I found a short piece of pipe that was littler at one end and put it on top like a nozzle. Pa says 'We'll let her dry out plenty 'fore we build any fire.'

After we got the punchin' floor down, we started squarin' the walls with an adz. The floor was all piled with chips, and pa says 'I'm going' to scoop some of this stuff into the fireplace and burn it so maybe we can find the floor."

"The chips and shavings begun to burn right now, and she commenced to get hot. Perty soon she begins to suck and roar, and she started draggin' the chips off the floor and into the blaze. Pa and me run outside, and she sucked that cabin as clean as if we'd swept it."⁴

Claude Riddle clearly remembers Hathaway's arrival at their campsite in 1903. There was a great commotion of bell ringing and shouting as Hathaway urged on his mules. Riddle was astonished by this man hollering at his mules as if they were human, and intrigued by the eccentric personality who soon rounded the corner.

He was small and short and walked with a forward stoop. His arms were long and his hands seemed to swing ahead below his knees. Later I saw him in profile walking up a hill, taking such long steps that his body bobbed up and down, giving the impression that he was walking on four legs. He wore a conical little black hat with a buckskin string woven in for a hatband. His heavy blue flannel shirt was open and black hair decorated his throat and breast. A narrow leather belt held his

pants about his slim hips and it looked like he might come apart in the middle any time. Hathaway's speech was most peculiar a cross between a hairlip [sic] and tongue-tie. His pronunciation of some words was intriguing, and he always seemed in dead earnest.⁵

The impact Hathaway Jones had on Riddle was so strong that in 1953, Riddle devoted a section of his book, *In The Happy Hills*, to the thirteen days he spent absorbing Hathaway's mannerisms and knack for embellishing the truth.

In a time before radio, big screen TV, and the Internet, communities relied on the town tale-teller for news, gossip and entertainment. In their own way, these storytellers held a role of great importance in society. People would come for miles to hear an educated and gifted orator, oftentimes sitting for hours in rapt attention. Hathaway would become so engrossed in the telling of a story, that he tapped his foot along with its rhythm, as if to music.⁶ Without formal schooling, Hathaway mesmerized those who were lucky enough to stumble along his path.

It would seem he had a tremendous love for life — those who crossed Hathaway Jones' path while travelling through his territory, tell of his helpfulness, humor, and magnanimous gift of gab. He was beloved by Charlie and Sadie Pettinger owners of the Big Bend Ranch, and for whom Hathaway was under contract to as mail carrier. He was gregarious, loved his mules and dogs, worked hard, drank moonshine and wasn't beyond playing the occasional practical joke.

Hathaway was married to Flora "Florie" Thomas. For several years they lived on Mule Creek raising two children and scratching out a living. In a friendly rivalry with Andy Huggins, a neighbor over on Blossom Bar, Hathaway agreed to a mischeivious wager:

"He [Hathaway] trusted Florie all the way down the line. And this guy [Huggins*] made him a little bet that he could sneak in and get in bed with her and she couldn't tell which one was which!...Move over Florie," he'd say, like Hathaway did, you know. And he took one shoe off and dropped it on the floor and the other shoe. Then when he got his pants off he said again, "Move over, Florie." Hathaway said, "That's far enough. That's far enough." The bet was off!"⁷

Perhaps it is no surprise that, with such goings on, Hathaway's marriage ended in divorce. Perhaps it is no surprise that Florie ran off with another man. Very few of Hathaway's tales feature women.

Harvey Smith ran the mail route with Hathaway for three months in 1937. Harvey, his wife Loda, and their daughter Marie Davis Smith were interviewed by the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1981. They recall the stories differently from how they appear in print. When asked how Hathaway would have told them, they indicate that his speech was peppered with "curse words." Hathaway, given his speech impediment and hare-lip, stood to be ostracized in a world of muleskinners, miners, ranchers, and backwoodsmen. One can't help but surmise that his survival, indeed his popularity, was

greatly due to his use of the vernacular in telling his rough-hewn whoppers. In *"The Great Snow,"* a yarn recorded in *Tall Tales*, Jones reveals sensitivity regarding his handicap. The story features Hathaway delivering the mail via a tunnel beneath mountainous snow drifts. Unsuspecting neighbors stand out by their mailboxes above, gossiping about him, making fun of his manner of speech.

Though many say he was never lewd, some admit his conversation was not "fit for parlor talk." Hathaway's stories as they were told, when Claude Riddle published his renditions in the fifties, would also not have been "fit to print." Arthur Dorn also apparently gentrified the tales.

Despite the boastful character of his tales, Hathaway is said to have been a modest, easy-going, hard-working man. While not packing the mail he often worked on the Pettinger ranch planting corn and melons, boarding there between legs on the mail route.

Charles and Sadie's Big Bend Ranch along the Rogue, was a gathering place for the community. Evenings, there was usually a "big gang" seated around the table enjoying Sadie's considerable cooking skills, Marie Smith recalls. Later, Sadie played piano, and if folks weren't too tired, there would be dancing. "Old Charlie Pettinger was a dancer. And he'd dance my sister and I to death..."⁸

Alice Wooldridge attempted to interview the Pettingers in 1967. Ms. Wooldridge found them reluctant to speak. They did not wish Hathaway to be seen as a caricature, or to be ridiculed; "He was a nice old man and all the funny remarks he made were about himself or something that happened to him...He never said anything about other people."

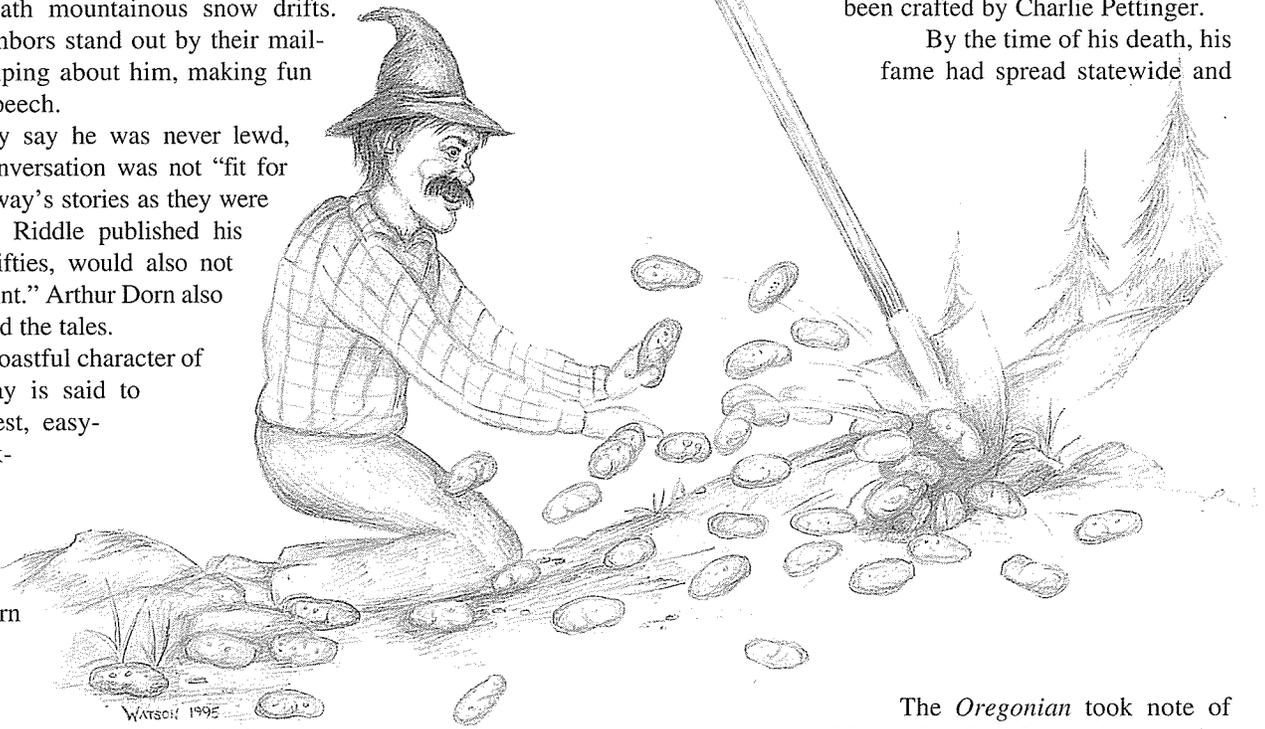
In September of 1937, Hathaway's mule appeared at Marial without him and a search party was organized. Following the trail back toward Dothan, they found his body at the foot of a cliff along the trail. It is not clear exactly what happened. Some say he was going to mend his saddle and didn't. Another version says he mended it, but didn't fasten it firmly; still others say he was thrown by his mule. He was sixty-seven years of age. He had been working his mules along the mountain passages and creek beds for thirty-nine years.

Ironically, one of his tall tales told of how he'd survived just such a fall when his mule, startled by a rattlesnake, jumped off a cliff. Hathaway had the presence of mind to pull back on the reins in mid-air and holler, "Whoa!", bringing his mount to a stop just before they were both dashed on the rocks below.

Hathaway Jones is buried on a hill over looking Foster

Creek, near Big Bend in a small grouping of military graves dating back to 1856. His stone is simply carved; Beckham believes the marker might even have been crafted by Charlie Pettinger.

By the time of his death, his fame had spread statewide and



The *Oregonian* took note of his passing "...After a bit, now that Hathaway Jones is gone, the recollections that folks have of him will dim, and the dimness will increase to legendry, and then the very legend of him will be disremembered as though he had never been..." What The *Oregonian* could not foresee was that Hathaway would live on through his stories. Fifty-eight years later, more than a century after his birth, a man who never wrote a single word is considered an historical and literary treasure. How happy the masterful yarn-spinner would be to know that adults and children, neighbors and friends still hear his stories with delight, and remember him well.



Robert Heilman has recently published *"Overstory: Zero, Real Life in the Timber Country of Oregon."*

ENDNOTES

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2. Marjorie Edens, Oral History Interview with Harvey and Loda Smith and Marie Davis Smith, Tape 190, (Southern Oregon Historical Society, 24 April 1981), p. 190-4.
3. Claude A. Riddle, *In The Happy Hills*, (Roseburg: M-M Printers, 1954) p. 39.
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6. Edens, p. 190-6.
7. *Ibid.* 190-7, 190-8. The identification of Andy Huggins is hypothetical.
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Special Thanks to Stephen Dow Beckham for his consultation in the writing of this article.

Bunkumville, Bunkum, Buncombe, or Buncom?

Deciphering a Crossroads Conundrum

by Kay Atwood

“buncombe, bunkum: from Buncombe, a co. of N. Carolina; colloq. Speech-making to gain applause — anything said or done for mere show; hence nonsense.

—Webster’s Dictionary

Three wooden buildings greet the traveler who passes through Jacksonville, and takes the turn at Sterling Creek Road, winding along to the stop sign at the intersection of Little Applegate Road. This is Buncom — begotten in stream bank bravado and reborn as a silent crossroads sentinel. The site is one of many small nineteenth century Jackson County communities that now exists only as a muted link to our past. At Asbestos, Draper, Leeds and Logtown only traces suggest the life that once illuminated them — a few gravestones, some old lilacs, crumbling foundations, some chimney bricks. The houses, post offices, schools, and stores are gone — dissected by new roads or buried under water or subdivisions.

Fifty years ago these buildings were moved to this intersection to keep them from destruction. Allowed to weather and settle comfortably on the corner, they remain a direct link to the past, simply by reminding us of it. By sparking our curiosity and imagination they recreate Buncom in our mind’s eye, where it can again thrive.

Buncom lies in a narrow canyon below the dark ridges of the Siskiyou Mountains, near the confluence of Sterling Creek and the Little Applegate River. Pine, oak, madrone and manzanita cover the hillsides. Conifers tower along the higher slopes. In the early 1850s this narrow valley was still used for seasonal fishing and food gathering by a small band of the Athapascan-speaking Dakubetede people who inhabited villages along the Little Applegate River. A permanent camp is believed to have been situated near the mouth of Sterling Creek.¹

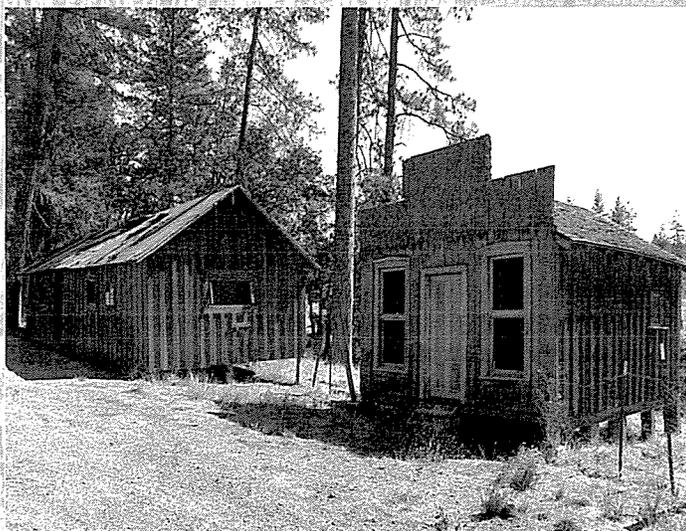


PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEONARD

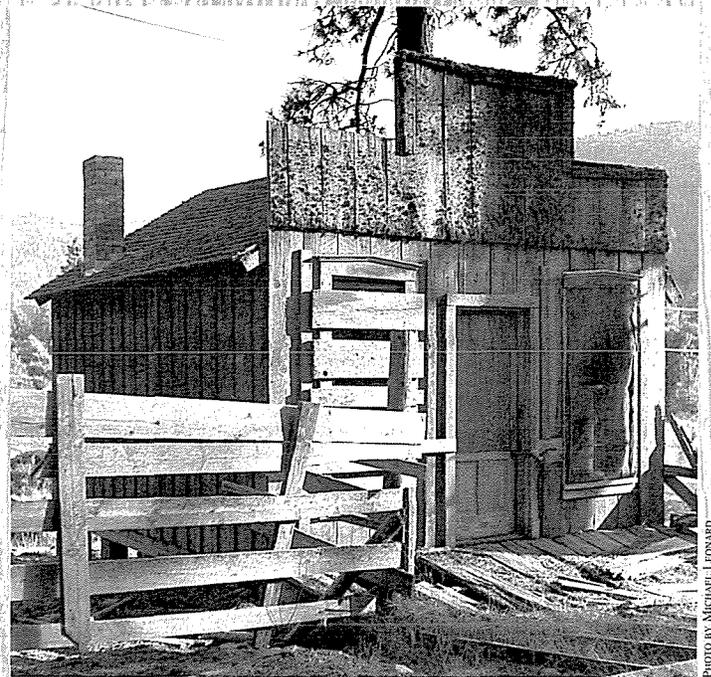


PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEONARD

The Buncom Post Office is one of the three remaining buildings left from the original mining town. It is located at the intersection of Sterling Creek and Little Applegate Roads.

Miners burst into the area in 1853, and came in greater numbers following the discovery of gold on Sterling Creek in 1854. A rough trail was hacked out from Jacksonville and canvas tents, hastily constructed cabins, and mining equipment soon bordered Sterling Creek and the Little Applegate River. The predominantly male population boomed as men staked their claims and dug mining ditches. Some of them must have boasted loudly for by February, 1855 (a few months after the Sterling Creek gold discovery), James Mason Hutchings explored the new diggings and wrote, “Down Sterling Creek to its mouth called Bunkumville five miles. On the way down on the hillsides, men are busy as in town, doing very well with the little water they now have.”²

Buncom bulged as Euro-American and Chinese miners gouged wealth from the streams. The workers were briefly interrupted in the early spring of 1861, when a devastating flood sent cabins, flumes, and sluice boxes crashing downstream. After the raging waters quieted, persistent miners rebuilt their ruined shelters, replaced lost equipment, and screened the alluvial gravels once again. By 1864, when John A. Wilson sold his “house, fixtures and field at Bunkum (confluence of Sterling Creek and Little Applegate),”³ to

The cookhouse was originally on the Federal Mine property in Buncom. It was moved by the Hukills to its present location.

SIGNPOSTS

Chinese miner Gin Lin, the high water was a distant memory. Gin Lin's purchase was unusual for the Oregon Constitution prohibited Chinese who were, "...not a resident of the State at the adoption of this Constitution..." from "...ever hold[ing] any real estate, or mining claim, or work[ing] any mining claim there in."⁴ Whether or not Gin Lin was present in Oregon prior to the adoption of the Oregon Constitution in 1859, his eventual large accumulation of land along the Little Applegate River, and at other locations in southern Oregon was remarkable.

During the 1860s several companies worked at Buncom. In 1867, with a growing number of men in the area, miners organized the Buncom Mining District. By the end of the decade, however, mining activity tapered off as the more easily exploited placers (deposits) were depleted. Miners-turned-farmers now cleared fields and built barns and houses. In 1870, Jackson County cooperated with local citizens to improve the road from Jacksonville, down Sterling Creek, to the mouth of the Little Applegate River. In 1871 early Jackson County resident and long-time miner Samuel Phillips received a patent to one-hundred and seventy-three acres of homestead land, which included the place called Buncom.

Farming and stock raising thrived along the Little Applegate River in the 1870s and 1880s. The Gilson, Kleinhammer, Phillips, and Saltmarsh families were among those who formed the agricultural community centered at Buncom. At the same time large-scale hydraulic mining began on Sterling Creek, as well as on the Little Applegate River. During the 1880s the Buncombe Mining Company operated near the place for which it was named. Population increased rapidly as these extensive mining ventures were activated, but stabilized again in the 1890s when hydraulic mining languished in the area.

On December 5, 1896, the Buncom Post Office was established in a two-story house just south of Little Applegate Road, facing the intersection. The new postmaster, Jacob Parks, estimated the number of patrons at about one-hundred and seventy-five, including those formerly served by the Sterlingville post office, which closed in 1883. At that time, Buncom was selected as the correct spelling of the new station's official name. Tuesdays and Fridays local residents stopped to collect mail which was delivered from Jacksonville.

In 1904 the first Little Applegate School, also called the Buncom School, was built nearby. In 1917, after the house containing the Buncom Post Office had burned to the ground, postmaster Allie Ingles built a small board and batten building where he sold groceries and distributed the mail. The little structure was only an officially designated post office during that first year, but it served informally as a place to pick up parcels and letters for years.

During the 1920s and 1930s, livestock, hay, potatoes, and other crops were transported for sale to Jacksonville and Medford. During the 1930s renewed hydraulic mining brought a flurry of activity near Buncom. Two of the largest placers were the Kleinhammer Mine on the Little Applegate River between Yale Creek and Sterling Creek, and the Federal Mine near the mouth of

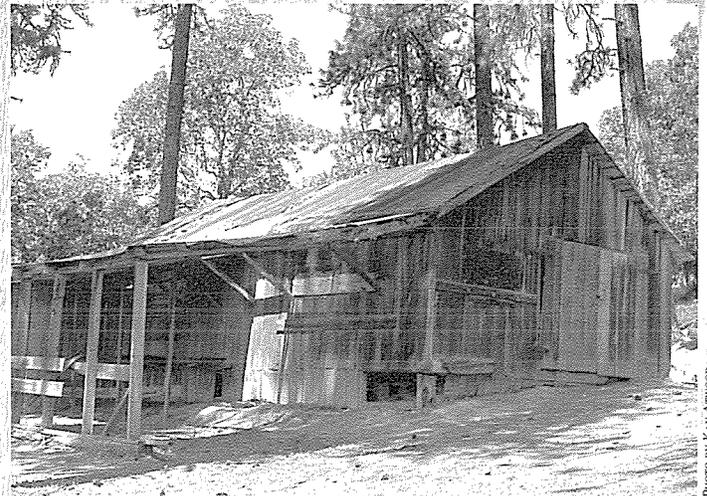


PHOTO BY KAY ATWOOD

Transferred here from the Federal Mine at the mouth of Sterling Creek; one can almost hear the sound of heavy miner's boots upon the floorboards of this Buncom bunkhouse.

Sterling Creek. With World War II, these mines also closed.

Following World War II new changes came to Buncom. In 1947 O.E. and Lillian Hukill purchased the farm containing the Buncom site and moved the post office building across Little Applegate Road to its present location. Soon the former bunkhouse and cookhouse at the Federal Mine were also transferred to the intersection. On May 4, 1950, Buncom area residents voted to consolidate their school with the Ruch district. The school building stood for several years before it was taken down in 1973. At Buncom the old Samuel Phillips barn gradually deteriorated and was removed from the site. Travelers no longer stopped at Buncom for mail or groceries. They wheeled right or left through the intersection on their way somewhere else.

The land which contains Buncom has been owned by many people: Wilson, Lin, Phillips, Bostwick, Gilson, West, and Hukill. The conservation effort begun by the Hukills is carried on by owners Reeve and Lyn Hennion who now protect what remains of the town's buildings. Buncom has had as many generations as it has had names—appearing in different forms: as Indian camp, crowded placer mining locale, devastated flood plain, and agricultural center with post office, store and school. It stands today as a reinvented place, created by an ensemble of three modest structures.



Kay Atwood is an historian living in Ashland.

ENDNOTES

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2. Francis D. Haines Jr., Vern S. Smith, *Gold on Sterling Creek*, (Medford, Oregon, 1964).
3. James Mason Hutchings, *Diaries*, (Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, 7 Feb. 1855).
4. Kay Atwood, *Minorities of Early Jackson County*, (Medford, Oregon: Jackson County Intermediate Education District, 1976), p. 8.
5. Charles Henry Carey (ed.), *The Oregon Constitution* (Salem: State Printing Department, 1926), p.427.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE #1907

Settling Elk Creek

A Rough and "Rowling" Country

by Joli Sandoz

Life on turn-of-the-century Elk Creek challenged even the resourceful. Cash was one crop that never grew abundantly for small farmers on the south side of the Rogue-Umpqua divide. Poor soil, floods in spring and drought in summer kept most Elk Creek farms at a level uncomfortably close to subsistence. The day-long wagon journey over barely passable roads to the nearest market only made things more difficult. "We used everything," Viola Pence Houston recalled ninety years later, describing her mother Elsie, making lamps by pouring deer tallow into a pan with a string in it. The Pencses smoked venison and sold what the family didn't need. They made deerskin gloves from the same animal by scraping hair from the hide, and soaking it in a tanning solution. Family members then sat in a circle and worked the skin between their fingers, forcing out dampness so the hide would dry soft and pliable. The finished product was sold to the well-to-do of Medford for fifty cents a pair. The longer ladies' gloves, called gauntlets, were more expensive at one dollar and fifty cents for two.¹

David Pence's parents William and Hester Pence migrated throughout Oregon before settling along the Elk Creek drainage in 1895. The isolated valley provided fertile land, clear waters and plentiful hunting.²

The drainage had a certain charm. Preacher and *Medford Mail* correspondent A.C. Howlett pronounced himself, "agreeably disappointed" with his October, 1896, horseback trip into the hill country northeast of Trail and southwest of Prospect. Howlett had expected, he wrote, "...a canyon good for nothing except for stock to run on in the summer. To my astonishment, I found a beautiful little valley."³

Howlett chronicled his discoveries in geographical order for his readers' benefit: a "fine farm and stock ranch" at the confluence of the Elk and the Rogue River; next to two new farms and a "neat little school house"; then, three miles above the

Top: Tressie Pence Vaughn, David and Elsie's second born, posing on Trail Creek in 1917.

Left: Elk Creek School, on Pence land, circa 1900.



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creek mouth, Mrs. J. Heckathorn's "fine orchard and an abundant supply of berries" buttressed by "considerable farming land." He noted subsequent "signs of improvement" farther up the creek. Howlett's article closed, however, with a warning, "...if any of your readers think of going to that part of the country to settle then they had better take a good bit of determination and muscle."⁴

Fortunately, David Pence possessed both. He married Mrs. Heckathorn's daughter Elsie in 1895. The young couple settled on homestead land five years later, making a home for Viola and her younger sister Tressie just downstream from Elsie's mother's homestead, the sizeable Heckathorn farm. To make a homestead legal, one had to testify to proof of residence on the land. When Pence 'proved up' in 1906, he and his witnesses described the Pence place as a two-story box house of six rooms, a barn, smoke house, wood shed, corral, irrigation ditch, half a mile of fence and fifty to sixty fruit trees just beginning to bear. David added that he owned forty-nine head of cattle, four horses and nine hogs, and land adjoining his homestead acres.⁵

In company with most settlers in the spread of hills east and north of the Rogue Valley, the Pences made their living directly from the land. In the early years there was an abundance of deer, fish, wood, water and grass for stock in cleared fields along the narrow creek bottoms. Part of the Pence family luck lay in timing. They settled on Elk Creek early enough to lay claim to its plenitude. And as that began to wane under the pressure of increasing numbers of settlers and hunters, outside investors discovered the valley.

"Cripple Creek of Oregon," screamed headlines in the June 11, 1897, issue of the *Medford Mail*. "A Mountain of Rich Quartz Reported to Have Been Discovered on Elk Creek - Excitement Running High - Liveliest Camp in Oregon - No Authentic Reports to Be Had." Authentic or not, the reporter wrote of "bits of gold as large as wheat kernels," and of Rogue Valley residents "leaving thither in great numbers."

Peter Applegate, member of a prominent Willamette Valley family who now lived in southern Oregon, found the strike some twenty miles up Elk Creek. Word soon spread, encouraging several hundred hopeful miners to make the trip. On June 18, 1897, the *Medford Mail* printed a tiny headline "Elk Creek Boomerang," with updates from miners saying that there simply was no color [gold], except in one ledge already opened.

The boom/bust judgements of the headline writer were simply too hasty. When the dust settled, several mining companies had filed headwaters claims

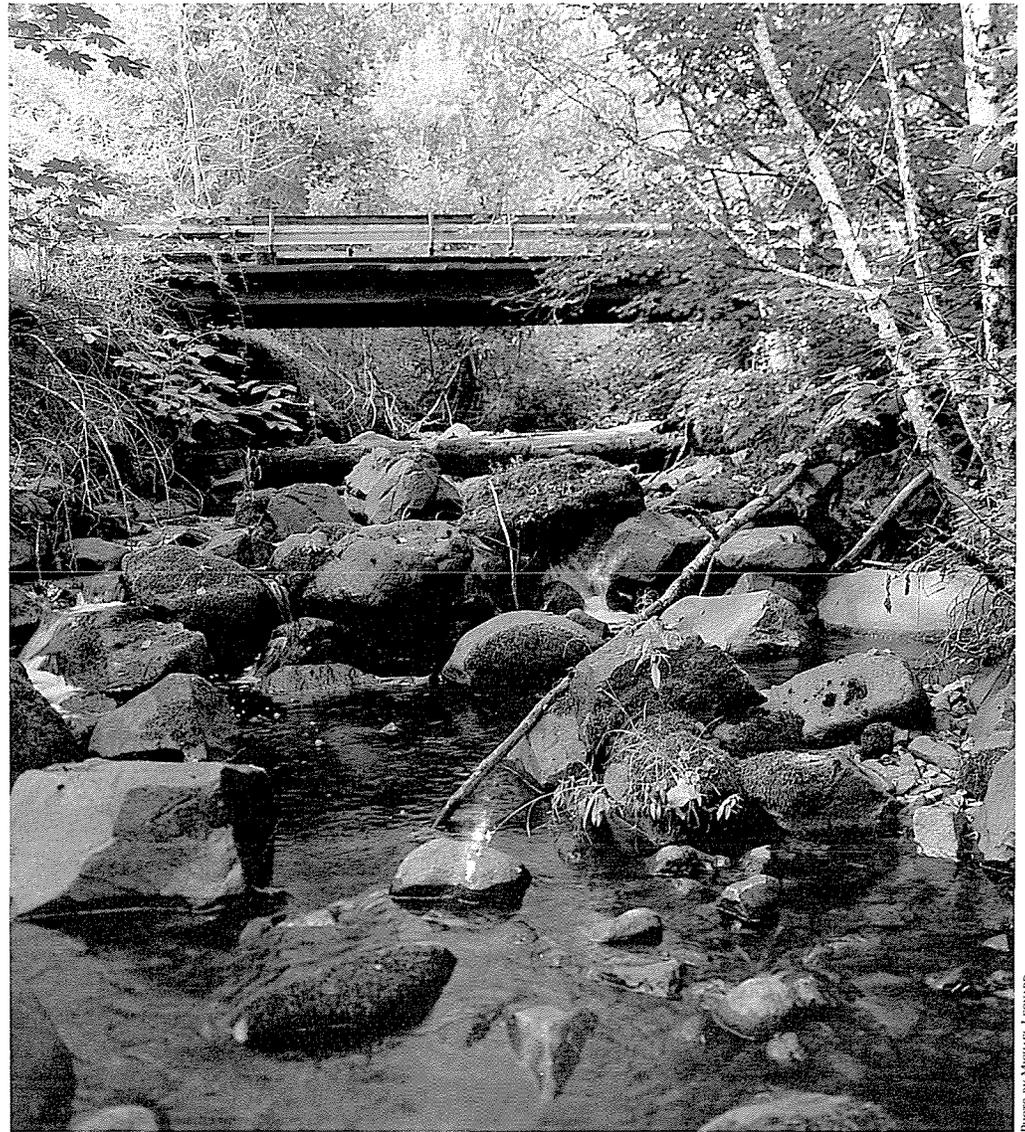
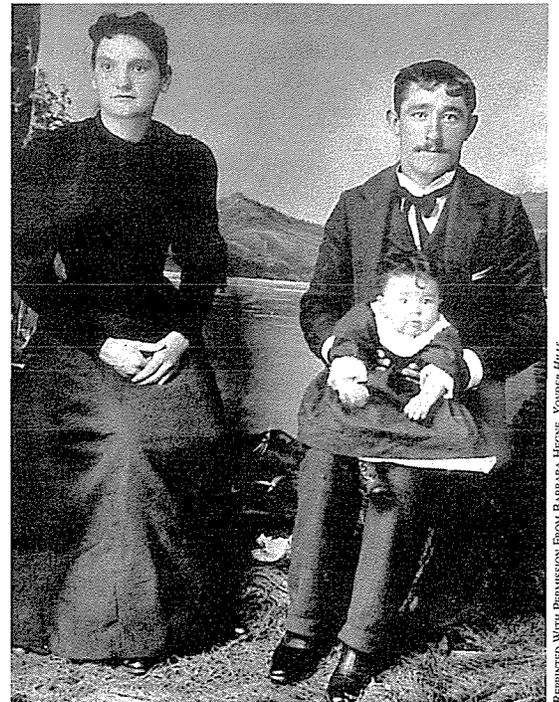


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Top: The rugged beauty of Elk Creek is still evident today.
 Right: David and Elsie Pence with daughter Viola at age one-and-a-half, circa 1898.

they deemed worth developing. Among them was the Sunset Mining Company, which claimed several mines known as the Buzzard group. The Brobst brothers, C.J. and J.L., who gave their address as Cripple Creek, Colorado, spoke for the mine, casually mentioning to a reporter that they were backed by “a cold million of gold...minted and in our possession.”⁶ Medford and Central Point residents, Peter Applegate among them, formed the Pearl Mining Company and prospected a claim adjacent to those worked by Sunset. Within a couple of months the Brobst operation had built housing, a blacksmith shop, and offices; cleared three miles of roads; and put two shifts of eight men each to digging tunnels.⁷ Records don’t reveal whether the Pence family benefitted from the strike. But another enterprise would soon bring employ to the Pences.

The same week the *Medford Mail* broke news of the Elk Creek strike, lower Rogue River salmon canning baron R.D. Hume directed an employee to find a fish hatchery site on the upper river. Hume’s agent traveled to the mouth of the Elk. By July, Hume was writing enthusiastically to U.S. Fish Commissioner J.J. Brice, noting that “the best spawning grounds on the [Rogue] river are in the vicinity and Salmon go up the [Elk] creek as well.”⁸

R. D. Hume, Oregon’s “Salmon King,” made his start in the canning business on the Columbia and Sacramento rivers before setting himself up as a self-labeled “pygmy monopolist” at the mouth of the Rogue in 1876. In time, Hume’s canning operation was successfully exporting salmon to England and Scotland. The salmon run eventually declined. Hume hit on the revolutionary idea of rebuilding his profits by raising fish in a hatchery and releasing them into the Rogue.⁹

By 1897 Hume had decided that his hatchery near the Rogue’s mouth was not adequate. Kept by ill-health from a more active role, Hume offered to build a second hatchery at the confluence of Elk Creek and the Rogue River, if the U.S.

Fish Commission would pay salaries and run the facility.

The upper Rogue hatchery operated seasonally at first. Several men, David Pence among them, worked at the site for a month or two each year. The men worked in the Rogue, seining forty pound fish and holding them in pens until the female’s eggs ripened.

Elsie Pence added to the family’s finances by keeping boarders, and by working in the big hatching house set on the river bank. Inside lay eight hatching troughs, each thirty-five feet long, a foot wide and ten inches deep, with a twelve foot filtering tank on one end.¹⁰ Here Elsie stood, bent over the wooden egg trays, removing dead white eggs with long steel tweezers. Viola remembers her mother wearing gumboots and heavy socks against the cold, working an eight hour day for two dollars pay.

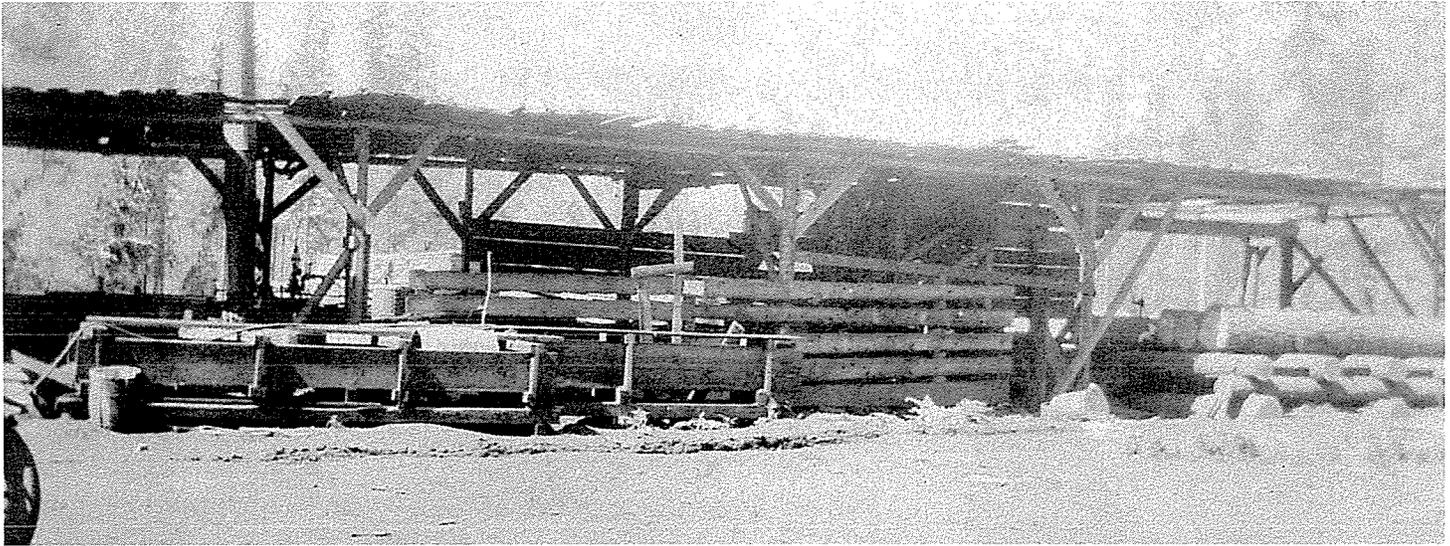
The birth of Zella, a third daughter, meant further financial responsibilities for the Pence family. In March, 1905, David filed a lease at the county courthouse, detailing his agreement with three sawmill operators to erect buildings and cut down trees on his property; specifically, “all straight sound timber measuring eighteen inches in diameter at the butt...”¹¹ Horse teams dragged the logs, some as thick as five feet, down to the valley floor.

Roads, little better than rutted trails, limited the mill owner’s customers to local residents. In fact, poor roads affected the scope and success of most early Elk Creek businesses. Farmers tended to raise cattle, a “crop” capable of walking to market. Newspaper accounts noted the problems of hauling heavy mining machinery and ore back and forth over the rutted Elk Creek “road.” Even the hatchery crew, who dealt primarily in fish and water, encountered difficulties in transporting their product from an isolated valley some twenty-five miles from a railroad.

Hume’s lower hatchery was located on the coast,



COURTESY OF VIOLA PENCE HOUSTON AND DORA HOUSTON BOOTHBY



COURTESY OF VIOLA PENCE HOUSTON AND DORIS HOUSTON BOOTHBY

approximately two hundred miles west, as the crow flies, from the upper hatchery. In 1904, to send the annual allotment of eggs to the lower hatchery, workers began by packing the delicate cargo (roughly one-and-a-half million eggs) with ice, probably in flannel-lined trays. Then wagons carried the egg boxes to the railroad in Medford, a dawn-to-dusk journey. Hume employees were instructed to, “have some one meet them [the eggs] at Oakland and taken [sic] direct to cold Storage when they get to S[an] F[rancisco]. Also fill the boxes with ice and again when taken out of Cold Storage.” Finally the eggs, freshly packed in ice, were hauled to the dock and loaded aboard a small steamer for the journey up the coast to the lower hatchery at the mouth of the Rogue River.¹² The first part of the long trip was no doubt the most arduous.

In 1906, sixteen valley residents, including David Pence, petitioned for a county road up Elk Creek. The county court appointed three men to survey and lay out the road. Two of those men had economic interests to protect: mining claim owner Peter Applegate and fish hatchery superintendent J. W. Berrian, F. Y. Allen was the third.

Previous road surveyors had called the south slope of the divide a “rough rowling [sic] country.”¹³ They did not, however, rule out road construction. Not surprisingly, with the newly appointed surveyors, the 1906 crew recommended that a road be built. It would be, after all, “the only means by which a hundred or more people can reach a trading point.”¹⁴

Once begun, slow change continued to alter the valley. The life in which Viola and Tressie Pence each received one pencil per school year (a pencil they “...were careful not to sharpen very often”) passed as the years revolved into the twentieth century. Today a partially completed government dam half-a-mile long rests across the old Pence homestead, close to where the house once stood. The twenty-first century approaches. Howlett’s “...beautiful little valley” endures.



Viola Pence Houston was a good friend of Joli Sandoz’ grandmother, E. Lydia Sandoz. The women were neighbors on Elk Creek.

Above: This early mill may have stood near the Pence homestead. David Pence leased his land to sawmill operators to buttress his own income from farming and road work, date unknown.

Bottom left: 1911 gathering at the Elk Creek School. David’s mother Hester Pence is in the white blouse, seated near the table. Viola and Tressie stand amongst the girls to the left.

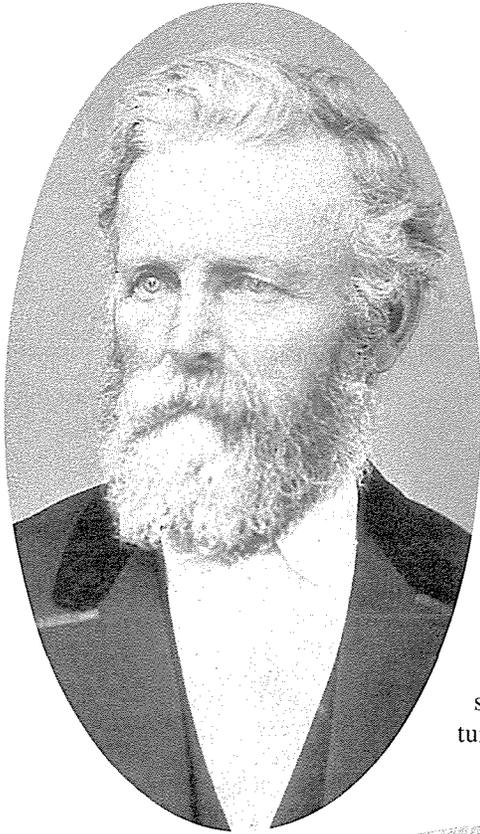
ENDNOTES

1. Interviews with Viola Pence Houston in 1987, 1991 and 1994 and with Doris Houston Boothby in 1987 and 1994 provided Pence family memories. Stories about the Pences also appear in Barbara Hegne’s books *Unforgettable Pioneers* (1987) and *Yonder Hills* (1989). I am also indebted to Marcel and Emile Sandoz, Emil Zimmerlee, Margaret Johnson McIntire, and Daisy Wagner Herriott, who shared with me their memories of growing up on Elk Creek in the years from 1910 to 1930.
2. The stream called Elk Creek today was termed “Button Creek” in early federal survey notes, and on the first water deeds. Today “Button Creek” is a tributary of the Elk.
3. Howlett, A.C. “A trip up Elk Creek”, *the Medford Mail*, 16 Aug. 1896.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Homestead Proof - Testimony of Witness, William R.(Rube) Johnson; Homestead Proof - Testimony of Witness, George Nelson; Homestead Proof - Testimony of Claimant, David W. Pence, (National Archives, RG O49 Land Management, Homestead Certificate 6055. 4 Sept., 1906).
6. “Mines and Mining,” *the Medford Mail*, 16 Jul. 1897. June, July and August issues of the *Medford Mail* and *The Democratic Times* contain numerous references to the Elk Creek strikes and developing mining operations. A significant amount of information ran in the *Medford Mail* on 8 Oct, 5 Nov., and 12 Nov. 1897.
7. *The Democratic Times*, 16 Aug. 1897.
8. R.D. Hume to J.J. Brice 12 Jul. 1897, R.D. Hume Papers, box 184, vol. 86, *Letterbooks*, (University of Oregon Library, Special Collections), 581.
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10. U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries, *Report of the Commissioner for the Year Ending June 30, 1898*. Part XXIV, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), p. CI.
11. *Jackson County Deed Record Book*, vol. 52. (23 Mar. 1905), pp. 72-75.
12. Arthur Dunan to Herbert Hume, 10 Nov. 1901, R.D. Hume Papers, box 184, vol. 89, *Letterbooks*, (University of Oregon: Library Special Collections), 581. Elk Creek egg transportation is also mentioned in *The Rogue: A River to Run*, by Florence Arman with Glen Wooldrige (Wildwood Press, 1982), pp. 35-36.
13. *Jackson County Commissioners Journal*, Vol. 7. Road Record V-2-108, 7 Jun. 1888. (Public Works copy) Viewer’s Report, 9 May 1888.
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Jacob Wagner

Jackson County Patriarch

by Kristine Thomas



The morning dew glistens on the leaves of the corn stalk. The sun has barely peaked around the edges of Mt. McLoughlin as a farm crew pulls, lifts and moves irrigation pipe twelve rows to the north. After the plants have received a good drenching, the crew repeats the process again and again until they find themselves back where they started.

This ritual of moving irrigation pipe takes place in corn, barley, wheat, mint, rye grass and berry fields throughout the state of Oregon. Speeding by at sixty-five miles per hour along Interstate 5, or driving on one of the many country roads or highways, passers-by notice the flickering water, dancing and sparkling in the sun. Imagine for a moment ditches, instead of pipes, running throughout the crop rows. In 1852 Jacob Wagner and a man named Thornton built one of the first irrigation ditches in Oregon. Using the water from a nearby creek, Wagner nourished over sixty-nine acres of crops. He was among the first to establish water rights in the state.

The Rogue River Valley was once described as a “primeval waste.”¹ Wagner worked for nearly fifty years to transform the area through his farming, business, spiritual and political endeavors. He was known as one of Jackson County’s most highly respected and esteemed citizens.

Born on September 26, 1820, in Dayton County, Ohio, to John and Esther Wagner, Jacob Wagner was the seventh of eleven children. After attending district school, Jacob Wagner worked with his father, learning how to care for the land so in turn, it could provide for him.

Wagner was drawn to the west just as his father and grandfather were. First it was to Indiana where he worked as a farm laborer then, several years later, he went on to Iowa where he was a builder and a carpenter.

Like many of the men of his generation, Jacob heard stories of the “Wild West” with its bountiful land and hills laden with gold.

With a team of oxen and a robust spirit, he began the strenuous six months journey across the plains, valleys and mountains from Iowa to Oregon. The year was 1850, Wagner was thirty-years of age. Looking for good land and a place to settle, Wagner went from the Dalles, along the Columbia River, to Astoria and then back to Oregon City where he worked as a carpenter.



Upper left: Jacob Wagner had a vast impact on the growth of Jackson County, circa 1875-1880.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE #1068

Left: The Wagner home between Ashland and Talent, circa 1865.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE #1078

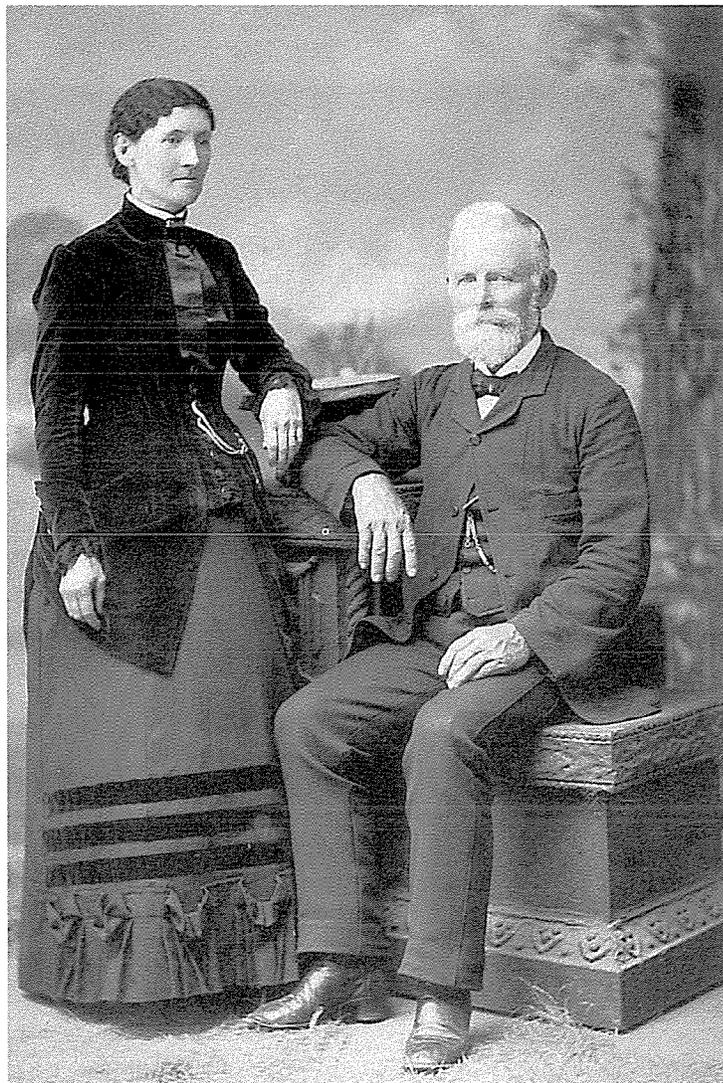
News of gold in the Siskiyou Mountains took him to California in 1851. By the fall of '52 he was back in Oregon to legally stake a donation land claim (eventually totalling 480 acres), situated on a creek about five miles north of Ashland, in what is now called Talent. It was in that first spring that he constructed, the Wagner-Thornton Irrigation Ditch. Farming in the valley was changed forever. The creek was later named Wagner Creek, in the pioneer's honor.

During the settling of the region, European-American and American Indian encounters became increasingly hostile. Wagner had become accustomed to carrying a gun while working his livestock or tending the fields. When the Rogue Indian Wars broke out in 1853, a fort was constructed around his home to protect his family and neighbors. A rough barracks was built and stocked with supplies. The fort became known as Fort Wagner. By 1855 fighting had become severe and Wagner enlisted in Company D, Second Oregon Volunteers. For reasons unknown, he was granted an honorable discharge in May of 1856.

Despite his successful farm, he had yet to start a family. He returned to Ohio where he met and courted Ellen Hendrix. They married on August 25, 1860. Rather than take the trip back across the plains, Wagner and his bride went to New York, where they caught a ship to Panama and then crossed the Isthmus by train. From there, they took a ship to San Francisco.

In a review of her life written when she was eighty-seven, Ellen Wagner described the trip to her new home in Oregon; she was nineteen years old at the time. "I had first class passage upper Salon, only ladies being on this floor. My husband one floor below and his nephew took steerage passage, not costing so much, my passage costing three hundred and twenty-five dollars."² The boat carried sixteen hundred passengers. "We had

Upper right: Jacob Wagner and Ellen Hendrix Wagner, circa 1883-1885.
Bottom: The Rogue Valley had its agricultural boom in the early 1900s due in part to the digging of irrigation ditches such as the one pictured here, circa 1912.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEGATIVE #14978



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEGATIVE #14153



a rough sea on the Atlantic, many were soon feeding fishes, many times the dining tables were upset, dishes broken and people rushing to their berths, not caring about anything to eat, though the fare was good,”³ the young bride wrote.

Traveling by train across the Isthmus of Panama, Ellen Wagner was thankful she did not have to ride pack horses, like those who traveled before her. She made note of the heat and rain, and of “...natives around everywhere selling their wares with very little clothing.”⁴

Except for a burial at sea, Ellen Wagner wrote that the fourth leg of their trip was rather uneventful until the night before reaching San Francisco. “The captain, they surmised, was intoxicated and ran against a snag tearing a hole in the vessel so they had to turn it on one side to mend it, throwing the passengers out of their berths and causing something of a panic,” she wrote. “Of course, I was frightened for I too was rolled out of my berth, but soon my husband came and told us the trouble.”⁵



After a few days waiting for lost baggage in San Francisco, the newlyweds began their journey north by stagecoach. Mrs. Wagner describes it as “...rather a hard trip, night and day changing horses every twelve miles...We would meet many freight wagons, mule teams mostly having bells so we could hear them some distance.”⁶ She recalls that the roads were so bumpy and their speed so great that their heads kept bouncing against the roof of the stage. They stopped in the Siskiyou at a hotel run by Ellen’s sister and husband, who had come to Oregon eight years earlier. After a few days rest they moved on. Mrs. Wagner diplomatically states, “My husband having a ranch where Talent now is, was anxious to see to the place and I wanted to see the end of my journey.”⁷

The Wagners pushed on towards the Rogue Valley, stopping where the Applegates lived and took toll, and headed into Ashland, where they changed horses and the mail, and went on to the homestead.

There we took possession and set up housekeeping for the people who had lived there were gone. My husband made all the furniture. It seemed a little queer to me as well as his nephew. Our windows were simply spaces sawed out from the logs and muslin put in ...⁸

She remembers that first night, picking ripe peaches in the orchard before exhaustion overtook them. “A band who played on bones came and serenaded us and we failed to hear them which we very much regretted.”⁹

In time, as Wagner’s family grew (they had seven children), his business interests spread further than the boundaries of his substantial acreage. The family took up residence in Ashland and Wagner’s enterprises flourished. He owned the Ashland Flouring Mills, one of the first flouring mills in the Rogue River Valley. He ran the Mills for twenty years and had an active share in the Ashland Woolen Mills and in several mining properties. According to Southern Oregon Pioneer Association records, Wagner was one of the best-known businessmen of southern Oregon. His notoriety came from buying wheat from most of the farmers in Jackson County, and then selling the flour to the merchants in the mining regions of California.¹⁰

In 1884, he sold the flouring mills and retired from active business. He purchased the Soda Springs Ranch, twelve miles southeast

Upper left: Jacob Wagner a man of his word, circa 1860.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE #14223.

Bottom: Wagner developed artesian wells on his property for commercial purposes. Talent well, circa 1908.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEGATIVE #14979.

of Ashland. The Ranch was a well-known resort hotel and stage stop. Incredibly, despite quasi-retirement, Wagner developed the mineral springs on the property for later marketing purposes. They eventually sold Soda Springs Ranch and moved back to Ashland for the remaining years of his life.

A staunch Union Republican in his political views, he served as a state senator from 1862 to 1866, where he attended three sessions of the legislature, one being the special session convened to ratify the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The fourteenth amendment declared voting rights for all "freedmen." This meant that African American slaves, freed by Lincoln, had equal rights under the law. Later, he served as a Jackson County commissioner from 1874 to 1875.

Jacob Wagner died on January 4, 1900. He was seventy-nine years of age. Upon his passing, *The Ashland Tidings* published his obituary: "There may have been better men than Jacob Wagner - we have never seen them." Southern Oregon Pioneer Association Records state,

"In physical strength and comeliness, in mental poise and balance, in nobility of heart and purity of character he was one of the rare men of the earth. None ever looked into his clear, honest blue eyes without knowing that here was a man to be trusted without bond other than his own true sense of honor and justice; no worthy appeal for help ever missed his active sympathy and his best response; none ever came in contact with his clean mind and sunny temperament without loving him. It may be safely said that of the many hundreds who had business relations with him during his long and active life not one ever knew a single act of small or dishonorable dealing on his part."

Mr. A. G. Rockfellow, a longtime acquaintance of Wagner wrote,

"...It would seem that the writer ought to have known much of the man and to be able to form a just conception of his character. And now looking back over all these years of intimacy, I find it wholly impossible for me to recall one word of low order, one sordid suggestion, one intemperate expression, one deed of selfishness, one arrogant look or even a frown. To be able to live thus is to have and exemplified most beautiful character. During these long years, Mr. Wagner's life was a constant exemplification of the Golden Rule."¹¹



Kristine Thomas' article, "A Sheperd's Tale" appeared in the Summer 1995 issue of Southern Oregon Heritage.



Wagner, in 1852, was one of the first in southern Oregon to dig an irrigation ditch such as the one pictured above, ca. 1912. The Wagner-Thornton Irrigation Ditch revolutionized farming in the valley.

ENDNOTES

1. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon, "Wagner, Jacob and Family,"* (Southern Oregon Historical Society), p. 616.
2. Transcript Ellen Wagner's Diary, vertical file, "Wagner, Jacob and Family," (Southern Oregon Historical Society).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon*, p. 616
10. "Resolutions on deaths of members," Southern Oregon Pioneer Association records. Vol. II, vertical file, "Wagner, Jacob and Family," (Southern Oregon Historical Society,) pp. 76-77.
11. Miller, Betty "His digging into history pins the location of old Fort Wagner." *Mail Tribune*, 20 Jun. 1976.



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- ▼ Southern Oregon Pioneers: Hillcrest Orchard
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- ▼ Ranching in the Rogue and Applegate Valleys,
by J.B. Roberts and Natalie Brown
- ▼ The Anniversary of the Applegate Trail

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