

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today

CARVING A LIFE OF TRADITION—VICTOR GARDENER

An "American Stradivari"

EXPLORE THE SECRETS OF A TOWN LOST IN TIME

Discovering Golden

MEMORIES OF THE ROGUE RIVER VALLEY RAILWAY COMPANY

All Aboard!

JANUARY 1999

Vol. 1, No. 1



Talking Tradition

Compiled by Jacqueline Leighton

Land in Common: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon, was published by the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1993. In association with that publication a series of traveling exhibits was initiated called "Faces in Places." Each set of panels contains text from interviews with five individuals and a brief history of their community. Twelve major Jackson County communities are represented. All twelve panels are currently on exhibit at the History Center in Medford and will later be displayed in libraries, schools and community centers throughout the area. This month excerpts from these interviews are featured exploring personal observations of local community traditions.



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Ida Tilley

Ida Tilley was born in Gold Hill in 1932. Her family has rung the Hanby school bell for four generations. "You pull the bell rope and it raises you off the floor. . ."



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Kathryn Stancliffe

In 1960 **Kathryn Stancliffe** proudly established an annual tradition of recognizing an "Outstanding Girl Athlete" of Phoenix High School. "The boys were always getting awards and I wanted the girls to be recognized," she said.



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Kelly Gehr

Kelly Gehr, past president of the Jacksonville Parent-Teacher Organization, sees Jacksonville's traditions, "the eccentrics . . . the fruit and nuts. There's a real honoring of pioneer settlers, the pioneer spirit, and risk-taking. There's a sense of community here that I wanted to be a part of . . ."



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Marla Cates

As a founding member of the Talent Historical Society, **Marla Cates** finds tradition and continuity in the "sense of community, [the] people you live with and take care of. . . . It's a melting pot but with a healthy diversity of social and financial representation."



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Danielle Ponder

For **Danielle Ponder**, who lived in Bulgaria prior to moving to Eagle Point, celebrating the Fourth of July is an important tradition, "it's the biggest day. It makes me feel free, no fear . . ."



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Jane Carpenter

Medford has a strong tradition of giving. **Jane Carpenter** calls it the "spirit of volunteerism" and Sue Naumes describes it as "a supportive community with a great success for non-profits."



PHOTO BY MATT STREIBY

Joyce Hailicka

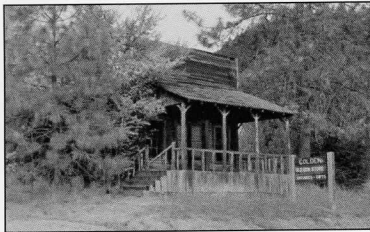
In Butte Falls "we are changing back into what we were," says **Joyce Hailicka**. The theme for 1998's Cycle Oregon, "It's a Wonderful Life," brought 1940s 'gas' lamps back to town square." ☞

Jacqueline Leighton, the Society's Ashland Programs Associate, recently received the "Co-Volunteer of the Year" award for her work doing photo and oral history research for "The Spirit of Ashland."

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*



Our Own Voices:
Talking Tradition



Sunday Driving: Golden,
Oregon



Profiles in Preservation:
The Medford Depot

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY

Editorial Guidelines

Feature articles average 3,000 to 4,000 (pre-edited) words. Other materials range from 500 to 1,000 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on 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 submission—black-and-white or color. The Southern Oregon Historical Society reserves the right to use Society images in place of submitted material. All material should be labeled with author's name, mailing address, and telephone number. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped with sufficient postage. Authors should provide a brief autobiographical note at the end of manuscripts.

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

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ON THE COVER

Victor Gardener carved his first violin after retiring. Four hundred instruments later, he is considered a master of his craft.



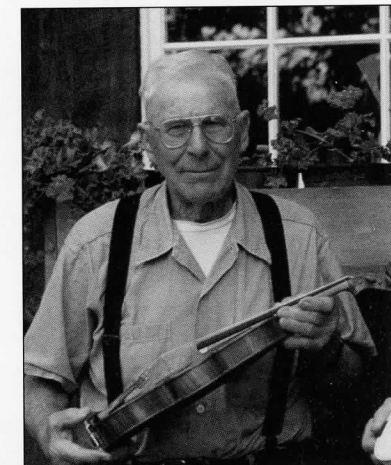
Carving a Life of Tradition



From the Archives:
The Rogue River Valley Railway



The Pioneers: Rapp Road



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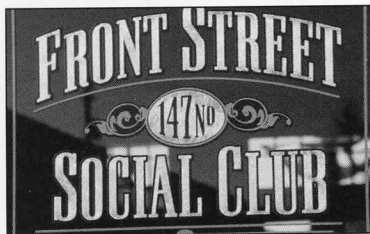
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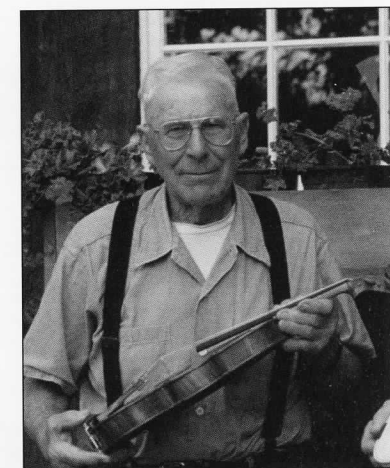
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SOHS #MS498

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SOUTHERN
OREGON
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SOCIETY

Hidden Treasures

THE MINING TOWN OF GOLDEN, OREGON

By Shawna Adams-Jacobs

Just three-and-a-half miles from the historical Wolf Creek Tavern lies a lesser known treasure nestled in the beautiful valley of Coyote Creek—the historic mining community of Golden and the Coyote Creek mining fields. Golden was the largest mining center along the stage route between Jacksonville and Roseburg. Travelers can still journey up Coyote Creek to explore the mining site and community of Golden.

Miners began arriving along Coyote Creek in the late 1850s. By 1860 a road had been constructed to transport lumber for flumes, sluice boxes and goods for miners. Nearly thirty cabins, a saloon, and a store occupied the upper reaches of Coyote Creek. During the early 1870s, after the first wave of miners gave up or moved on, the valley walls began echoing with the dialects of Chinese mining crews. Eventually, a new wave of caucasian miners descended on the valley: William Ruble Sr. began purchasing claims and property along Coyote Creek during this time period.

Ruble's purchases included Harrison Kelly's property. Kelly was a lawyer in Jacksonville when he could tear himself away from Coyote Creek. Unbeknownst to Mr. Ruble, Kelly had shareholders backing his property purchases. When the shareholders discovered Kelly had sold the property and not distributed the funds, mayhem, vigilantism, gunfire and a lawsuit soon followed in legendary frontier fashion.

In the ensuing six-year legal battle between Kelly and Ruble, the lower courts ruled in favor of Kelly and the Oregon Supreme Court ruled in favor of Ruble. Judge Hanna of Jacksonville was not prepared to let the Supreme Court interfere, and ordered Ruble to leave the claim. The decision, however, was short-lived. The Oregon Supreme Court stepped in once again, ordered some arrests, and returned the disputed property to Ruble in March of 1884.

William Ruble's sons, William Newton and Schuyler Ruble, patented the Ruble Rock Elevator, a hydraulic mining device, in 1890. Their rock elevator was featured at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, and was marketed throughout the West for years. Profits from the invention enabled the Rubles to move their families from the Willamette Valley to Coyote Creek. They officially founded the town of Golden, originally referred to as Goldville.

A church (built on land donated by William Ruble Sr. in 1892), two stores, a post office, and school were constructed, but never a saloon. Eventually over one hundred residents called Golden home, but by the time Golden was officially established, founding families were already leaving, seeking better educations for their children and pursuing other ventures. By the 1920s mining had nearly ceased in the valley. There was a brief resurgence during the Depression, but mining petered out entirely with the emergence of environmental concerns in the 1960s.

Many of Golden's most noteworthy structures still stand. Buildings, open and free to the public, include the church, the W. Ruble family home (1894), Columbus Bennett's store and post office (1904), and a feed and supply building. Below Golden, on the valley floor, is the Coyote Creek mining site. Hydraulic mining throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries dramatically eroded and widened the valley floor. Trees that once lined the creek are gone, as is much of the evidence of Coyote Creek's first miners. Visitors, however, can enjoy sweeping views and a path that weaves around Coyote Creek, several ponds, and tree-topped mining tailings.

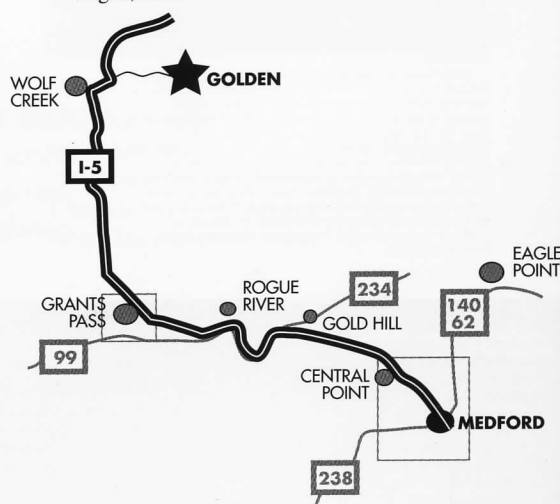
Golden Coyote Wetlands, Inc., a volunteer based nonprofit, has spearheaded the effort to preserve Golden and reclaim the mining site. The nonprofit is working toward the purchase and preservation of Golden as a public

educational resource. For a site tour, membership, volunteer, or wedding information call Shawna at (541) 686-4132. ■

Shawna Adams-Jacobs worked with Society historian Margaret Watson on developing a strategic plan for Hanley Farm. She is currently working on a double Masters in Urban Planning and Historic Preservation at the University of Oregon.

ENDNOTES

1. Larry L. McLane, *First There Was Twogood: A Pictorial History of Northern Josephine County*, 1995
2. Conversations with Larry McLane, August September 1998
3. *Ruble Deed Records*, 1883, 1884
4. *Josephine County Cultural and Historical Survey*, prepared by Kay Atwood, 1983
5. Ruble, Bernice E. "Golden, Oregon, and the Little White Church" 17 June 1950
6. *Oregon Sentinel*, 5 January 1884
7. (Douglas/Roseburg) *Independent*, 31 March 1883
8. (Douglas/Roseburg) *Independent*, 16 August 1879, 3 October 1883
9. (Jacksonville) *Democratic Times*, 2 June 1879
10. Walling, A.G. *History of Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos counties*, Portland, Oregon, 1884



ALL ABOARD THE ROGUE RIVER VALLEY RAILWAY

by Matt Strieby

The Rogue River Valley Railway, a five-mile track between Jacksonville and Medford, was built in 1891 to link Jacksonville to the Oregon and California Railroad whose trains began pulling into the Medford Depot in 1887. Curious passengers flocked to the newly constructed Jacksonville Depot for the two round-trips to Medford each day.

A problem arose immediately. The Railway's first locomotive, a Union Pacific ten-ton engine, proved too small to handle the gradual but steady incline into Jacksonville. A heavier twenty-ton locomotive, soon nicknamed "The Jacksonville Cannonball," was put into service in 1895.

After the excitement wore off, business began to decline. The train became thought of as romantic and quaint, used primarily by couples heading to the Jacksonville Courthouse for marriage licenses. In February 1900, the railway was sold to Medford resident William S. Barnum. With his green swallow-tailed coat and dilapidated conductor's cap, Barnum turned the railway into a family business, employing his wife as business manager and his sons as handymen and conductors.

The Medford City Council bought and dismantled the railroad in 1926. The loss of the railroad was a bad omen for Jacksonville, which lost its designation as county seat to Medford the following year. Today, the Jacksonville Depot serves as a reminder of an era when the railroad symbolized grand adventure, impressive technology, and economic opportunity. 🏠

Matt Strieby is the Society's Exhibit Design Manager

Visit the Jacksonville Depot where the Southern Oregon Historical Society has recently mounted a small photo exhibit commemorating the Rogue River Valley Railway.

ROGUE RIVER VALLEY RY. CO.

Time Table

TRAIN TIME TABLE: Leaves JACKSONVILLE - - - - - 9:45 a. m. and 3:30 p. m.
Leaves MEDFORD - - - - - 11:35 a. m. and 5:15 p. m.



25 MINUTES TO MAKE TRIP EACH WAY

Just Lately — Additional Quick Service!

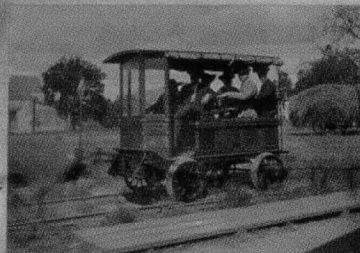
EFFECTIVE JULY 1st, 1905

ROGUE RIVER VALLEY RY. CO.'s special Time Schedule of Auto Car which is now in service, making morning and evening round trips between Medford and Jacksonville, will leave stations as follows, making quick runs:

AUTO CAR TIME TABLE: Leaves JACKSONVILLE - - - - - 7:00 a. m. and 7:00 p. m.
Leaves MEDFORD - - - - - 8:00 a. m. and 9:00 p. m.

15 MINUTES TO MAKE TRIP EACH WAY

When SPECIAL TRIPS are WANTED, AUTO-CAR can be CHARTERED for the MINIMUM CHARGE of \$1.50 ONE WAY, or \$2.00 ROUND TRIP, LIMITED to FOUR PEOPLE. ADDITIONAL in number 25c apiece Extra Each Way.



When SPECIAL TRIPS are WANTED, AUTO-CAR can be CHARTERED for the MINIMUM CHARGE of \$1.50 ONE WAY, or \$2.00 ROUND TRIP, LIMITED to FOUR PEOPLE. ADDITIONAL in number 25c apiece Extra Each Way.

Fare, 25 cents

In case Special Trips are wanted, the Auto Car can be chartered for a minimum charge of \$1.50 and limited to four people, additional in number will be extra. Auto Car can also be had at any time during the night by 'Phone. For further information please 'phone or consult Jacksonville office.

REGULAR TRAINS WILL RUN AS USUAL, CONNECTING WITH SOUTHERN PACIFIC TRAINS Nos. 15 and 16.

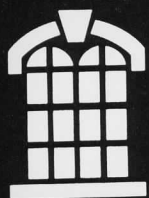
W. S. BARNUM, President

Southern Oregonian Print

W. H. BARNUM, Acting Manager

This 1905 advertising poster preserved in the Southern Oregon Historical Society's collections was produced by the Rogue River Valley Railway Company. The railway offered regularly scheduled train service, timed to make connections with the Southern Pacific trains at the Medford Depot.

As the poster shows, the Barnum line also ran an Auto Car, which provided a quick fifteen minute ride between Medford and Jacksonville. The Auto Car was also available for charter, and with a simple telephone call was available any time during the night.



News & Notes of the Southern Oregon Historical Society

JANUARY 1999

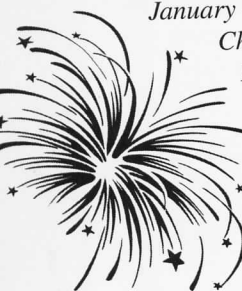
WELCOME!

News & Notes is the new Southern Oregon Historical Society news and events calendar. Each month *News & Notes* will keep you informed of upcoming workshops, programs, and lectures for adults, youth, and families. We hope you enjoy our new format and we welcome your comments and suggestions. Please write us at *News & Notes*, c/o Southern Oregon Historical Society, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501 or send an email to info@sohs.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Program Schedule

CHINESE FIRECRACKERS

January - All Month
Children's Museum
Free



Explore Southern Oregon's Chinese heritage by making a (pretend) firecracker to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

WONDERFUL WEAVING I

Saturday, January 9
Rogue Valley Manor
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Free

Interested in learning more about weaving? Local weavers will meet to explore velvet weaving as presented by Barbara Setsu Pickett of Eugene. The Rogue Valley Manor is located at 1200 Mira Mar in Medford.

See the Rogue Valley Handweavers in action every Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to

4:30 p.m. at the Southern Oregon Historical Society's Third Street Artisan Studios in the U.S. Hotel. Weavers demonstrate various weaving techniques in an interactive environment.

WONDERFUL WEAVING II

Tuesday, January 12
U.S. Hotel
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Free

Meet with the Rogue Valley Handweavers Guild and learn weaving in the traditional Italian manner.

HOMEGROWN MUSIC

Saturday, January 16
Rogue Valley Mall
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Free

Families are invited for a hoe-down of a good time! Learn about the Bremen Town Musicians and make your own kazoo, shaker or banjo. Play along with live musicians. This event is cosponsored by the Society and the Rogue Valley Mall.



JUST MY JOURNAL: BOOKMAKING WORKSHOP

Wednesday, January 20
Children's Museum
3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
\$3 members/\$4 nonmembers

As pioneers travelled westward over the Oregon and Applegate trails many kept journals. During this workshop youth ages 3 to 6 will create their own memory books in which to

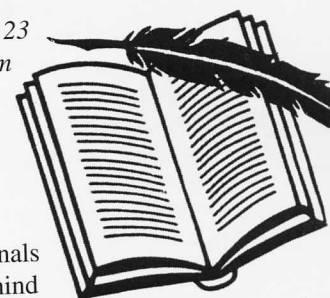
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS

January 6, 5:30 pm
January 27, 5:30 pm

record their experiences and dreams. Youth should bring a special picture to the workshop to place inside their book. Preregister before January 15. Call 773-6536 or email educate@sohs.org.

JOURNAL JOURNEY: JOURNAL WRITING AND BOOKMAKING WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 23
Children's Museum
10:00 a.m. to
12:00 p.m.
\$3 members/\$4
nonmembers



The journals left behind by pioneers help us piece together our history. Youth ages 7 and up will become a part of history by making and keeping journals of their own. Youth should bring photographs and treasured mementos to use in creating a book in which they can record their life stories during this last year of the century. Preregister before January 20. Call 773-6536 or email educate@sohs.org.

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

Students, there's still time to enter the Southern District competition! Winners go on to compete at the state level in April. Call Dawna Curler at 773-6536 for details.

For more information about the Southern Oregon Historical Society, contact us at:
106 North Central Avenue · Medford, Oregon 97501 ■ Phone 541 · 773 · 6536 ■ Fax 541 · 776 · 7994 ■ email info@sohs.org

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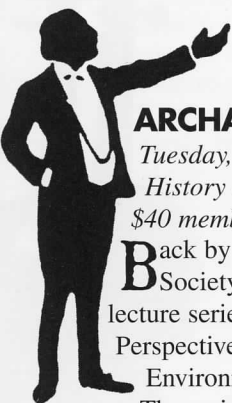
*December's Mystery Object
Hair Receiver*



MYSTERY OBJECT OF THE MONTH

January's Mystery Object: This item was necessary for winter carriage rides. It has a wood frame with punched tin door and sides. An earthenware cup fits inside and holds . . . The item was brought to Oregon from Massachusetts. It measures 5.5" H x 9.25" W x 7.75" D. What is the item and what did it hold? A winner will be drawn from all correct answers received by January 31 and will be awarded \$5 in "Applegate Trail Scrip" good toward any Society purchase. Send your answer on a 3" x 5" card with your name, address, and phone number to: *News & Notes* Mystery Object, SOHS, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501, or by email to info@sohs.org.

November's Mystery Object was a pill roller used in 19th century pharmacies. Many people guessed a pill counter, but the object actually rolled a drug mixture then uniformly cut the mixture into tablets. December's Mystery Object was a white china hair receiver. The donor used it during her school days to hold locks of hair. The winner will be announced in the March edition of *News & Notes*.



ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURES

Tuesday, February 9

History Center

\$40 members/\$50 nonmembers

Back by popular demand, the Society will host an archaeology lecture series entitled "Pacific Perspectives: Culture, History, and Environment of the Oregon Coast."

The series will run on Tuesday evenings. Professional archaeologists, ethnohistorians, and Native American scholars will consider the diversity of

cultures through time and the events that shaped the region's history. Topics will include the antiquity of human use of the coastal zone, human responses to earthquakes over the last 10,000 years, cultural adaptations to the rich maritime environment, history of White settlement, and Native American oral traditions.

Register early! This is a very popular series and space is limited. For complete information call Programs Director Amelia Chamberlain at 773-6536 or email her at program@sohs.org.

Exhibition Schedule

The side window of the History Center now features an exhibit created by the Camp White Historical Association.

Featured Exhibit

On display are uniforms and photographs presenting a brief overview of the military in Oregon beginning in the early 1800s. Uniforms featured in the exhibit span the late 1800s and early 1900s. A new display of uniforms from Camp White's collection will be featured monthly through June 1999.

This exhibit is part of the Southern Oregon Historical Society's new program to showcase the collections and work of Jackson County's historical organizations.

STOP IN FOR AN HOUR, LEARN FOR A LIFETIME

HISTORY CENTER

106 N. Central Avenue, Medford
Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.;
Saturday, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

RESEARCH LIBRARY

106 N. Central Avenue, Medford
Tuesday - Saturday, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

THE HISTORY STORE, MEDFORD

Rogue Valley Mall, Lower Level
Daily, Mall hours

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM

5th and C streets, Jacksonville
Wednesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

5th and C streets, Jacksonville
Wednesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIOS & JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE

3rd and California streets, Jacksonville
Thursday - Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

U.S. HOTEL

3rd and California streets, Jacksonville
Upstairs room available for rent. Call 773-6536 for information.

ASHLAND BRANCH

208 Oak Street, Ashland
Wednesday - Saturday, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.



CARVING A L

VICTOR GARDENER

By Nancy J. Bringhurst

He's sitting by the window, "just holding the chair down," he says. Most of us would say it's about time; the man will be ninety next July. He says he'd still be working from five in the morning until eight at night if his eyes hadn't given out on him, and if his hands still obeyed his head. But then Victor Gardener wouldn't call what he did work; it was his passion and his dream from the time he was six. It was what he did after he retired from over thirty years of ranching, logging, surveying, building roads and dams, jobs that weren't exactly prerequisite skills for becoming a world class violin maker. And that's what Victor Gardener is, although it is his Italian name, Vittore E. Giarinieri that is inscribed on his instruments.

Gardener carved a total of 405 instruments. What is even more amazing is that he carved them from trees he cut himself.



PHOTO BY DANA HEIDRICK

THE OF TRADITION

, "AN AMERICAN STRADIVARI"

Victor has made some of the finest violins, violas and cellos being played throughout the United States and Europe, many in noted symphonies. And according to Michael Klein, one of Gardener's many apprentices and a well-known Rogue Valley instrument maker himself, "I cannot think of anyone who has made as many instruments from trees he cut himself." For the record (and it probably is a record), Gardener has made 405 instruments. Imagine putting that kind of inspiration and talent on hold until you're sixty-five.

"My father always was goal-oriented," remarks Gardener's oldest daughter, Lucy. "He had drive. They say even as a child he knew what he wanted and was determined to get it. As a young boy, once every two or three years he would go with his parents to Medford. They made the trip on a buckboard from their home at Lake Creek; on the way they passed land in the Yankee Creek area, two miles up from Butte Falls. He set his eyes and heart on that land and made up his mind to own that some day. He did, too. And I can still see him reading by a kerosene lantern night after night while he taught himself surveying."

"I was twelve when I fell in love with that land," Gardener says. "Harriet and I were married in 1936; we had a place in Medford for two years, but in 1938 I bought that land and we lived there for over eleven years."

He was only six when a fiddle fell into his hands. Neither of his older brothers could play, but young Gardener wanted to more than anything. "I decided early on I wanted to play like Jascha Heifetz, and I wanted to play music by Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, but I learned too many bad habits teaching myself to play that fiddle. Fiddlers play the same fifteen or twenty notes over and over. It just didn't relate to classical music. I gave up lessons and decided if I wouldn't be another Heifetz, I'd be another Stradivari or Giarinieri," said Gardener.



PHOTOS BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Victor Gardener (left) passed on his knowledge and his tools to Michael Klein. Many came to Butte Falls to study under Gardener.

Maybe Gardener inherited his perseverance and determination from his mother. Maria D'francesco was born in 1880 in Bozen, Austria, now a part of Italy. Her parents abandoned her in a woodshed. Fortunately, she survived, grew up, and found work in Cavalese in the home of a friend of Raphael Gardener.

Raphael had left Cavalese when he was seventeen, found his way to Vienna, Rumania, and other parts of Europe before returning home to Cavalese for a year. He then went on to America, where he worked as a stonemason and farmer and eventually built himself a house. Fifteen years of living alone was enough. A letter from his friend in Cavalese praised the virtues of Maria, and for ninety dollars he had himself a bride. He

was forty-five; she was eighteen. It was a marriage made in the mail, not in heaven, for they were never compatible. But Maria bore Raphael six children, and she made do with what she had, even making the children's clothes from feed sacks. She was the efficient, frugal partner in the marriage, always looking ahead and taking charge of their home and finances, while her husband seldom looked past their next meal. Neither parent knew the meaning of idleness.

Their children learned about hard work at a young age. Young Victor left early in the morning and walked two-and-a-half miles to school to start the fire for the day, and then stayed late to sweep the floors. For that he earned five dollars a month. After school he'd herd goats, bringing

them back home each evening to protect them from the coyotes. He was twelve the year he put his first money in the bank. He earned eighty-five dollars herding as many as five hundred turkeys that summer, staying with them from early in the morning until nightfall. There were times he drove the turkeys two miles and back to feed on grasshoppers. In the fall, he helped his mother shell corn to ship to San Francisco.

Gardener learned about fighting and standing on his own early in life. As the youngest of three boys, he was forced to wear his brothers' hand-me-down shoes. The problem was they were handed down with no soles. His father took care of that by making new soles out of maple wood. Since this was Lake Creek and not Amsterdam, the children teased and taunted Gardener as he clip-clopped across the school's wooden floors. On top of that, he spoke only Italian when he entered school.

As many young boys did at the time, he quit school after the eighth grade and continued to work on the family ranch until he was twenty-one. "There were

"You have to remember this is sculpture, don't deny your tools," Victor would remind his apprentice Klein, when he felt the instruments looked too smooth.

too many chiefs and not enough Indians," he says, "so I left home with thirty dollars and what belongings I could carry." They were hard Depression years. Gardener hayed for \$1.50 a day plus food, managed to save eighty dollars, and worked the next two winters for board. His next job was operating a bulldozer on the road being built from Union Creek to Diamond Lake, now Route 230. Thus, he was lured away from music-making into the work force. "But I always had violins on my mind," Gardener says.

During his teens he ordered tools from both Sears and Montgomery Ward to make his own violin. With those parts came a suggestion from a thoughtful Sears employee that he contact Thomas Young, a violin maker in Seattle. "Young helped me more than just telling me what books and tools to buy and where to buy them reasonably," Gardener said. He was hooked. He completed his first violin when he was eighteen. "I showed that violin to Young. He took one look at it and said, 'Make some more.' It was terrible and he knew it, but he didn't discourage me." It took several more years before Gardener made his first saleable violin. "But it was Hans Weisshaar who helped me more than anyone did," Gardener says.

Weisshaar was a well-known violin maker and dealer in Los Angeles, and no doubt the best restorer and authority on violins in America at the time. About 1975 while visiting a friend, he was shown a viola made by Gardener. This was soon after his retirement, still early in Gardener's career. Weisshaar was so impressed by the viola that he got in touch with the Gardeners, visited their home, and invited them to Los Angeles. There, in Weisshaar's shop, Gardener was allowed to examine closely two Stradivarius violins. Weisshaar offered Gardener valuable criticisms and suggestions throughout the years, and even sold Gardener's instruments in his own shop until Gardener received too many orders from elsewhere. Their friendship continued until Weisshaar's death. "I've found in life, if you work and are not lazy, you'll always find someone willing to help you," Gardener says.

Gardener is unique in yet another aspect of his craft. Most violin makers have apprenticed or attended a special school. Few have taught themselves from start to finish, and of those who have, it is even fewer who have attained the renown that Gardener has. Back in 1967 Bernard Windt, music director for the Shakespeare Festival, told Marjorie O'Harra in an



PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP



PHOTO BY DANA HENNINGER

After Klein saws and cuts the wood on this bandsaw, he seasons it up to twenty years before carving.

article for the *Medford Mail Tribune*, "Victor's craftsmanship is beautiful. I have seldom seen instruments so beautifully put together, and in them I find the same quality tone I find in an instrument of mine that was made in 1793." Gardener was still at the beginning of his new career.

For those of you who are now dreaming of carving your own violin, viola or cello and are thinking of emulating Victor Gardener, there are a few things you will need before you even begin. Things like money, time, patience, and a big dumpster. The money is to take care of your needs during the years it will take to learn the art. The patience is to curb your temper when you've spent 250 hours on a cello and it sounds like your neighbor's son practicing the tuba, and only your local trash collector will ever see it. Gardener made twenty violins before he felt he had a decent one. So what did he do with the first nineteen, you might ask, "I sawed some, burned some and gave some away, and I wish I had some of those back so I could throw those away, too."

If you're determined to make instruments Gardener fashion, the first

thing you need to know is what kind of wood to look for and how to identify good "tone wood." The back, sides, and neck of all three instruments are made from maple, and the face is made from spruce, so don't go looking for the perfect felt leaf willow to saw up and whittle. For the tuning pegs Gardener used mountain mahogany. He even made his own purfling, the thin strip that runs around the outside on the back of the instrument—the one that looks like it's there just for design. It's actually three very thin strips of wood laminated and inlaid to form a barrier, preventing the linear wood from splitting. For this Gardener used ebony and maple.

"Looking for the perfect tree means we often turn down two or three hundred before we find the right one," says Michael Klein, who learned the art of selection from Gardener. Seekers of instrument wood agree that the right tree



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Finding tone wood is an art. Not only could Gardener recognize perfect mountain mahogany and curly maple, he also felled, sawed and planed the specimens himself.

is free of insects, twists and broken limbs, all of which could mean rotting. The spacing of the grain is important and, above all, the wood must have resonance; it must have good tone. According to Klein, Gardener observed the trees throughout the day, since the sun casts shadows on the bark differently depending on the time.

Once you've found your tree, then what? Let's hope you've considered accessibility—in other words, how are you going to get it out of there? Most



times it is taken out by a winch, an ATV, or even on someone's back. It took Gardener and Klein one week to cut up and take home a big leaf curly maple they found in a sheep pasture in Yoncalla, Oregon. That particular tree was a rare find. It was forty-eight inches in diameter, solid and curly all the way through—large enough to make almost a hundred cello backs. They sawed and cut the maple across the grain into wedge shapes, then dipped the ends of the wedges in wax to prevent cracking from drying out too fast. Next the wood was put in storage for at least two years outside away from the sun and rain. It was then taken inside to complete the seasoning for ten more years. There are ways to speed up the seasoning process if need be. There are



PHOTOS BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Janice Klein assists her husband, Michael, by combing horse hair and crafting bows.

also instrument makers who prefer to season their wood for twenty years before carving.

Most violin makers don't really trek around the woods for days and weeks at a time to find wood for their instruments. Most buy their tone wood from people like John Tepper in Shady Cove, and even Tepper says, "No matter how many years I've been in the business of finding music wood, I still feel that a lot of it is a mystery. I learn something new from each tree I cut."

Gardener spent years studying the masters' techniques. He visited schools and museums in Italy, Germany, Austria and England. He studied the texture of wood for tone and for visual beauty. He experimented to create the finishes with the greatest luster. He chiseled and carved to make tools that performed flawlessly, and that fit his hand perfectly. Cutting and sculpting a chunk of wood into the sixty-eight to seventy pieces it takes to make a violin demands precision both in the hands and the tools of the artist. Creating the scroll, the curly end of the instrument above the neck and tuning pegs, is the most demanding of all.

Klein remembers the carving lessons he learned from Gardener during his two-year apprenticeship. "I was intent on erasing any tool marks, but Victor wanted them to show. His was a studied carelessness. He would look at my work, and in his deep, rich Italian accent would say, 'Smoothie, smoothie, smoothie. You make it like the Germans. You have to remember this is sculpture. Don't deny your tools.' He knows I'm German."

"But I didn't just learn instrument making from Victor," Klein adds. "He talked a lot about honesty and being a good citizen. Being a good citizen was important to him. It was the highest compliment he could pay someone. But he didn't just talk about it; he lived it. If we found just the tree we wanted, but even a foot of it was on another property, he wouldn't take it. Victor and Harriet are always willing to give of their time, their energy and their possessions."

Klein is not the only one who praises the generosity of the Gardeners. Carla Shapreau, an attorney and violin maker in Alameda, California, spent a summer in the Gardener's home, where she had come as a novice to study violin making. "People like Victor and Harriet [his wife] are rare. You have to know them to believe that people like that exist in this world. They have inspired and contributed to the lives of so many people, never asking for anything in return."

Notice the pronoun "they," and remember the saying: "Behind every good man there's a good woman." In 1995, as a tribute to Gardener and the completion of his four hundredth instrument, musicians and friends gathered at the Pioneer Club in Lake Creek. Klein told those who had gathered to celebrate this giving couple, "There's a saying, 'An army runs on its stomach.' Over the years there's been an army of violin makers, apprentices and wood cutters that have marched through Harriet's living room and bivouacked

around her dining room table eating the most delicious and nutritious meals prepared by Harriet out of her own garden."

You have only to stroll through her gardens to appreciate Harriet's artistic genius and the green thumb any master gardener would envy. Speak with her briefly and you'll recognize her love of nature and good literature. Lucy says, "My mother has innate curiosity. She has a need to learn. My mother was always there for all of us. She's the glue that held us all together." Klein adds, "Harriet is the silent partner, the one behind the scenes who keeps it all going."

The Gardeners never charged for instruction, wood, or even room and board. In fact, Victor has given a number of instruments away. "Violin making has to come from the heart," he says, "and when I met a young person whose heart was there but the money was missing, I remembered what it was like for me during the Depression. I wanted to help promising musicians."

And help he did. During the eighties, Gardener sold his violins for three hundred dollars. The wood alone was worth that much. Each violin took at least one hundred hours of work. He sold cellos for seven hundred dollars, though they took triple the time to build. Why did he sell at that price while others were charging three times that or more? Same answer: he wanted to help others and he had all he needed. When Denise Stanley, writing for the *Medford Mail Tribune*, asked him why he'd just given a violin away to a young girl, he answered, "She played so well."

Gardener also cares about the community. Few people know that he saved the money from his sales and donated it to Lake Creek for equipment for the first fire department.

In the early nineties, Gardener donated a quartet (two violins, a viola, and a cello) all made from quilted maple, to a museum in Cavalese, Italy, the home of his ancestors, with the stipulation that the instruments be played twice a year in a free concert for the townspeople. He thought the quartet might be valued at twelve thousand dollars. The appraisers estimated the value to be fifty-six thousand dollars. The people of Cavalese don't care. To them, Victor Gardener is "The American Stradivari."

Gardener made his last instrument in 1995. By then he'd raised his prices to his all time high: five hundred dollars for a

violin, seven hundred dollars for a viola, and fifteen hundred dollars for a cello. At the same time others were charging five thousand to ten thousand dollars for their instruments. Some of them weren't so happy about Gardener's low prices, but then he's never been one to care much what others think.



Christened Vittore Ettore Giarinieri, Victor Gardener is a life-long Jackson County resident. He was born in the Lake Creek area in 1909, the son of Italian immigrants. He learned English while attending Lake Creek School #19. Gardener said, "for my career when I first left home, I had three things I wanted to be . . . violinist . . . the next was surgeon . . . the next thing was for civil engineer, but in the Depression [the engineers] were out of work. I got some books and I learned what I could [about surveying]. I'm not a surveyor that would do all types of work . . . I can do what I needed to do, water and stuff like that, do section line"—(*Oral history #345*, pp. 21-22).

In fact, glancing at any map of the Lake Creek area today, one sees several spots of blue depicting reservoirs and canals, most all the handiwork of Victor Gardener, either surveying, building, or both. Gardener estimates he surveyed and worked on ten to twelve area reservoirs. In addition, he did two canals that helped fill the reservoirs, one of which is eight-and-one-half miles long. The Lake Creek landscape bears the Gardener family name on a butte, a reservoir, and a road (though sometimes misspelled as Gardner).

Gardener never advertised, yet he received over thirty instrument requests a year. The only contract he required was a written letter of desire, and he took no orders over two years in advance. The most he ever made in any one year was twenty-four instruments.

After making 380 instruments, Gardener decided it was time to quit. Klein had other ideas. He wrote a letter asking Gardener to make him a violin, and he wanted it to be number four hundred. Gardener refused, but Klein wouldn't give up. Eventually Gardener agreed. He made five more after Klein's violin and then asked Klein to take over for him. It was a high compliment, for it meant not only did he believe Klein was an excellent violin maker, but it meant he was a good citizen as well. He then

packed up his tools and passed them on to Klein.

Gardener's eyes and hands may be letting him down some, but his memory seems as sharp as ever. Klein remembers asking him several years ago where he might find some mountain mahogany.

"Oh, I remember seeing some," Gardener told him. "Let me see, it was about twelve miles north of Weed. You go east to Hwy. 97 and follow that. You'll see a sign and a road there that loops to the right. You could see a train trestle and if you went under it and looked up to the left, it was right up in there. They've probably put in a highway there by now though."

"Did you get any wood?" Klein asked him.

"No, I was on a motorcycle then," he answered.

Klein knew it had been years since Gardener had his 600cc BMW, so he asked him when he'd seen this mountain mahogany. "Gardener scratched his head and said, 'Well, I haven't been there for a while. I guess it was about twenty-five years ago.'"

Klein and his wife decided to take a long weekend and check it out just for the fun of it. "Heck, I thought there'd probably be a condominium there by now. Can you believe his directions were exact? I found the trees just where he said they'd be and I even brought him back a branch to show him."

The Gardeners moved to Medford in 1996, when their hilltop home on ten acres of land, part of the original homestead Raphael and Maria raised their family on, had become too much to take care of. There are no Gardener instruments in their Medford house. "My children and grandchildren each have one, but I don't have any left," he says. "My hearing is going, too, so I don't even listen to music anymore." But when Gardener isn't "holding down" his chair and reading books on history, travel or politics, he's off helping friends and neighbors however they might need him. ■

Nancy J. Bringham writes children's books, music, and feature articles from her Ashland mountaintop. Her article on Tom Tepper appeared in Vol. 2, No. 4 of Southern Oregon Heritage.

The Medford Depot, A DREAM RESTORED

by K. Gabrielle

Architecture can be the dominant character-defining feature of any town or city. Preserving noteworthy structures helps maintain a sense of place and can add visual and monetary value to streets, neighborhoods and districts.

Rodger Whipple saw a challenge in the 1910 Medford Southern Pacific Passenger Depot, located at 147 North Front Street. A dominant landmark in Medford's commercial core, the Depot is the only surviving building related directly to the passenger era of the Southern Pacific Railroad.¹

Passenger service began at this depot in 1910 and ended in 1958. Between 1958 and December 1996, when Whipple purchased the building from Railtex, the Depot was used for storage and offices. Although obscured by some modifications, most of the Depot's original architectural elements were sound, and the character of the building intact.

The restoration project commenced in June 1997. Whipple felt challenged to help find the Depot's new identity in the community. The challenge of historical reconstruction, according to Whipple, is to make his work and the past blend so seamlessly that the public is unaware that the structure has been restored.

Whipple's restoration conforms to the given period in all its detail. His ability to master the details comes from a knowledge of architecture and from experience restoring buildings, including use of proper materials and techniques. Architecture, says Whipple, "is an incredibly important thread in the fabric of our society."



PHOTOS BY DANA HERRICK-EARP

Rodger Whipple paid meticulous attention to detail in restoring the Medford Depot and launching his Southern Oregon and Pacific Brewing Company.

The Medford Depot's restoration needed to reflect the 1910s, yet accommodate the structure's conversion to the Southern Oregon & Pacific Brewing Company restaurant and brewery. Keeping the history intact was the key. Whipple believes the more the history of a product or structure can be documented, the greater its value. Everything people create, including houses and architecture, comes from ideas passed from one era to the next. "We all need to know who we are and where we come from. We move so quickly in the race for

prosperity and affluence. We Americans leave behind our roots, our history . . . we have devalued our history," says Whipple, "still we remain entranced by it."

For Whipple, each project is a learning experience. The Medford Depot can be characterized as belonging to the Craftsman era, notable for many distinctive architectural features. These features, such as double hung windows consisting of twelve panes over one large pane, needed to be carefully preserved or reproduced.

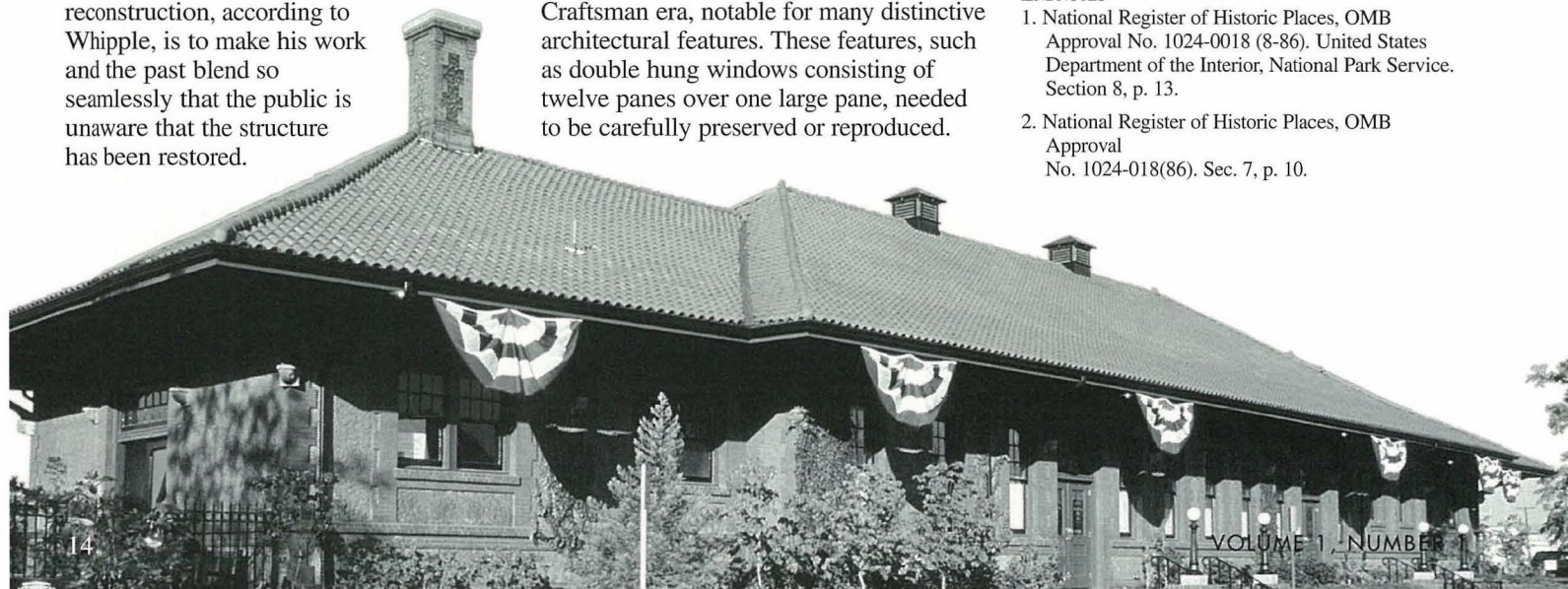
Whipple observed details such as cost-effective paneling constructed of half-inch flat grain fir plywood, and steel-troweled, concrete floors, formed in squares with colored borders. He then incorporated these details in the restoration. Today, the floor in the brewery is made up of small, white, hexagonal tiles true to the era. A curved, dark-stained fir ticket counter welcomes visitors into the bar.

Big game trophies, bighorn sheep, elk, deer and pronghorn antelope stare down from high on the brewery walls. Framed landscapes with scenes of Crater Lake, the Cascade mountains, and a campfire keeping the chill away draw the visitor into an Oregon before interstate highways dominated transportation. Framed bond certificates from the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Rail Road Company and the New York Central and Hudson River Rail Road decorate the walls along with postcards of old Medford. Outside, an inviting patio is shielded from the railroad tracks by wisteria trailing through an iron fence. As quoted in the 1910 *Medford Mail Tribune*, "Everything from the electric fixtures to the baseboards harmonize, the whole forming a splendid effect and one delightful to the eye."² Whipple has seen to it that every component from exterior to interior if not vintage Medford Depot, is vintage 1910. ■

K. Gabrielle is an entrepreneur and freelance writer living in Ashland.

ENDNOTES

1. National Register of Historic Places, OMB Approval No. 1024-0018 (8-86). United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Section 8, p. 13.
2. National Register of Historic Places, OMB Approval No. 1024-018(86). Sec. 7, p. 10.





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Roadside History—The Rapps of Rapp Road

by Mary Louise Lyman

Many of us go whizzing down Highway 99, passing Rapp Road in Talent without thinking twice about it, yet the Rapps were important pioneers who contributed to the development and character of Talent.

Joseph Rapp was born in 1818 in Reading, Pennsylvania, of Dutch descent. He became a successful miner in California after coming west in 1849. He came to Jackson County in 1872, and acquired three hundred acres on Wagner Creek, south and east of what is now Talent.

These acres were originally part of the James Thornton Donation Land Claim. He grew alfalfa, had a large orchard and raised livestock on the fertile bottom land of his farm. Several of his early barns are still in use on the property.

Joseph Rapp was a member of the Masons, politically allied with the Republican Party, and a member of the Lutheran Church. On January 13, 1879, in Ashland, he married Martha E. Reames. She was the daughter of Woodford and Masulda Reames who settled on a donation land claim near Phoenix in 1853. Her father came west as an employee of the Hudson Bay Company.



Martha Rapp and son



Joseph Rapp acquired 300 acres on Wagner Creek in 1872. Several of his barns still stand on the road that bears his name.

Joseph and Martha Rapp had two sons, one of whom (Edward) died in infancy. Their son Fred was born in the family home on July 19, 1880, where he lived out his entire life. Fred attended the Wagner school, and in 1896 continued his education at the Ashland Normal School, a teacher's college. His father's death in 1897 left him—a seventeen year old—to manage the farm. It was said of him, "Mr. Rapp is one of the most energetic and resourceful of the young farmers to whom old residents look for the carrying on of their pioneer efforts, and his personal characteristics are such as to win him friends in the present and popularity and influence in time to come."¹

In July 1903 Fred married Artie E. Oatman, but they were divorced in 1910. He married Linnie E. French in 1916. Her family moved to this area when

she was nine, and she was a Phoenix High School graduate. This marriage produced three sons: Joseph M., Chester L., and Raymond E. Rapp. Joseph Rapp moved to Ashland, but Chet and Ray Rapp still live on the road which bears their family name. 🏠

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ENDNOTES

1. Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon, 1904. No. 894



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