

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today

MAKING ONE FAMILY'S LEGACY ACCESSIBLE

The Beekman House

A TRIP THROUGH THE TIMELESS GREAT BASIN

Frenchglen the Hard Way

THE PINNACLE OF AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE

Table Rock Challenger

MAY 1999
Vol. 1, No. 5



Making the Beekman House more visitor-friendly

by Amelia Chamberlain

If you've driven by the corner of Laurelwood and California streets in Jacksonville lately, you've probably noticed something new at the Beekman House. Accessible parking and walkways are being built to make the site available to more people. The interior of the "woodshed" has been remodeled to provide an orientation space for visitors to Beekman House, and the bathrooms are being updated. Eventually, we'll connect to the trail system recently developed behind the Beekman House by the city of Jacksonville and the Woodlands Association.

The remodeling project began with a Facility and Program Accessibility Evaluation done in November 1995 for all Society sites. Several situations were identified and have been corrected at the History Center. A chair lift was installed last year at the U.S. Hotel. (Above A.D. A. Compliances made possible through the W. E. Thomas bequest.) Other situations at the museums in Jacksonville are being evaluated and addressed as resources permit.

Early last year, the Society made plans to address the following situations at Beekman House:

- create an accessible parking space;
- correct the slope of the brick walkways to make them less steep;

- provide access to the summer kitchen;
- adjust thresholds in doorways to allow easier passage by wheelchairs;
- create a video to provide an alternate form of access to the second floor of the house;
- provide a place to view the video; and
- remodel bathrooms to current ADA standards.

All of this is being done with minimal impact to the historic integrity of the site.

During its days as a home for Jacksonville banker C. C. Beekman and his family, the lot consisted of three acres inside a fence and another ten beyond. A two-story barn stood much farther back on the southwest corner of the lot. The structure appeared on Sanborn Insurance maps for the first time in 1898. The barn remained on the lot for many years – well into the twentieth century.

The site of the building currently being remodeled has had other modifications. From the 1880s through at least 1907, there appears to have been a somewhat primitive wooden structure surrounded first on two sides, and then on three, by lean-to awnings or additions of some kind. In 1913, Mr. Beekman paid \$21.55 for the building of a woodshed at the house.

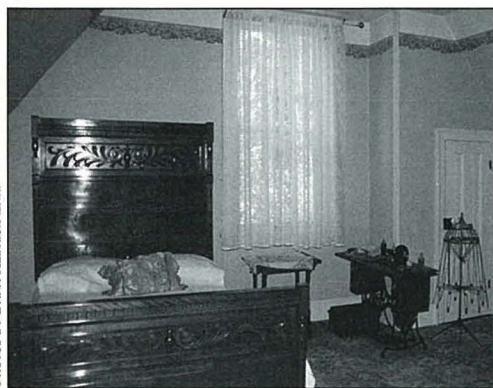


The Beekman House appears today much as it did in this 1926 photo. The challenge is to maintain the home's historic character while making it more accessible to disabled visitors.

The yard has also undergone a number of changes over the years. The Society laid a brick sidewalk in 1966, using bricks fired at a late 1800s Kanaka Flats brickyard just west of Jacksonville to give the look of an early brick walkway. (In 1967, the Society began offering guided tours of the Beekman House, and in 1984, the first living history tours began.) In 1974 a new fence was placed around the property, and in 1978, the back yard was terraced and bricked in around the well to correct a drainage problem.

You're invited to see the new visitor facilities and to visit with the Beekman House living history family daily from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. beginning opening day of the summer season, Saturday, May 29, through Labor Day. Volunteers are currently being recruited to serve as greeters and act the parts of the Beekman family, friends, and relatives. Call 541-773-6536 for more information about this program. ☺

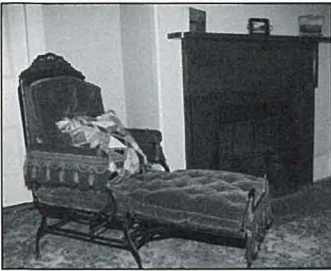
Amelia Chamberlain is programs director for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



Visitors unable to reach the second floor of the Beekman House can still take a peek at these nineteenth century bedrooms on a videotape shown in a wheelchair accessible outbuilding on the Beekman grounds.



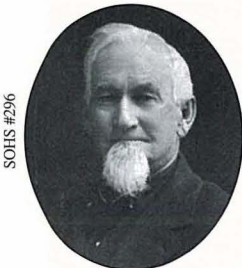
SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*



Our Own Voices:
The Beekman House is getting
easier to navigate



From the Collections:
The Beekman House



SOHS #296

The
Pioneers:
Mysterious
William
Bybee

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 outlines using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The author is responsible for verification of cited facts. A selection of professional, unscreened photographs and/or line art should accompany 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.

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OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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ON THE COVER

Society living history volunteers David Rishell and Jean Ayers portray Cornelius and Julia Beekman, giving visitors a warm welcome at the Beekman House and adding a personal dimension to this historic home. See articles on pages 2 and 5.



PHOTO BY MARK ARMSTRONG

Feature: Frenchglen
the Hard Way



SOHS #202

Sunday Driving:
Table Rock Challenger



PHOTO BY DONN L. TODT

Rooted in
History:
Manzanita

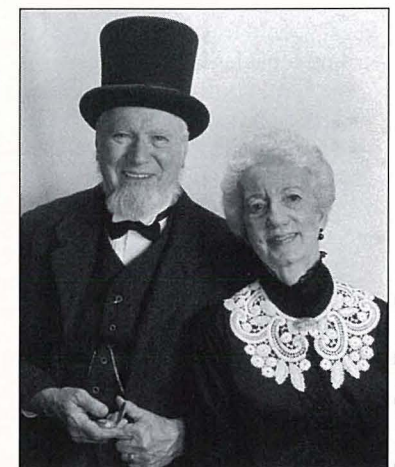


PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Table Rock Challenger

by William Alley



PHOTO BY MAGGIE JAMES

At left, Medford photographer Burhl Harwood recorded Hugo Lange's progress as he climbed Table Rock in his 1929 Essex Challenger. The route to the top of Lower Table Rock is now a popular hiking trail (see map below).

The usual tranquility of Table Rock was disrupted early in the morning of June 25, 1929, by the unfamiliar sound of an internal combustion engine.

The cause of this raucous intrusion on the butte's usual serenity was a 1929 model Essex Challenger stock sedan climbing the steep trail in an effort to become the first automobile to reach the summit of the local landmark. The Roaring Twenties was a decade rife with stunts. Flagpole sitting was a common occurrence, and "Human Flies" would travel from town to town scaling local buildings. In the large cities of the East, it was not uncommon to witness a daredevil perform stunts on the open girders of a skyscraper under construction. During this period the nation's advertising industry was also experiencing a new ascendancy, assisted by the phenomenal growth of two popular media: movies and radio. American advertisers wasted little time in developing the publicity stunt into a major facet of their product.

The driving force behind the publicity stunt on Table Rock was Hugo F. Lange, vice president of Armstrong Motors. In order to showcase the qualities of the Essex automobile, one of the more popular and reliable machines of its day and holder of several speed and endurance records, Lange came up with the idea of driving one of the unmodified, stock cars in his inventory to the summit of Table Rock.

At 7:30 in the morning of June 25, Lange, at the wheel of the Essex, left Medford for Table Rock. Upon reaching the base of Table Rock, final preparations were made for the ascent up the steep and difficult track, little more than a rutted trail in some spots. Among those along to witness "the greatest test on motor stamina ever accomplished in southern Oregon," were Ernest White, shop foreman for Armstrong Motors, present in case the car required any mechanical work, and Herb Alford, local representative of the Associated Oil Company and a noted local jazz musician. Also along were Hugo Lange's son, Luke, Jack Wirth, William Brockman, and Elaine Crawford. To record the event an unnamed reporter from the local paper was also along, as well as Medford photographer Burhl Harwood. Rounding out the group was Horace Bromley, advertising manager for the California Oregon Power Company (COPCO). Bromley was perhaps better known as "the COPCO Cameraman," and was there with his seemingly ever-present 16mm movie camera to record the event for the COPCO Current Events Newsreel.¹

Lange began his ascent at 8:15 in the morning, with the coterie of witnesses following along on foot. The Essex plowed its way through the thick brush and over countless large rocks on the rough trail up the hill, estimated in places at a grade of up to 38 percent. Lange reached the summit of Table Rock after an

actual elapsed running time of a mere thirty-five minutes. At no time, it was reported, had the water temperature in the radiator exceeded 108 degrees.

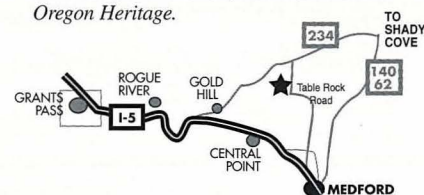
Once on top, Lange drove his car to the rim, crossing 100 yards of rock-strewn ground "while the COPCO movie camera ground out foot after foot of hair raising action pictures." At the rim the Essex was parked and Lange and the others posed for the photographers. Sadly, the motion picture footage taken by Bromley has been lost.

It is not known if Lange's advertising stunt had any immediate impact on his dealership's sales. Lange would repeat his automotive feat in September 1930, this time behind the wheel of a bantam American Austin, a much smaller automobile. 🚗

William Alley is the archivist/historian for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

1. Medford Mail Tribune, 25 June 1929. For additional information on Horace Bromley and the COPCO Current Events Newsreels, see the author's article in Vol. 4, No. 1 of *Southern Oregon Heritage*.



Directions: Take I-5 exit 32/33. Drive north on Table Rock Road to Wheeler Road. Turn left and follow the signs to the Lower trail head.



The Beekman family, shown clockwise left to right, Cornelius, Ben, Julia, and Carrie.

The Beekman family home and its original contents were rescued from the auction block nearly 40 years ago by the Siskiyou Pioneer Sites Foundation.

Summer visitors to this ca. 1870 Gothic Revival style home see how a prosperous banker once lived in Jacksonville. When the Beekmans moved into the home, Cornelius C. Beekman was already established in his downtown bank where he bought, sold and shipped gold, served as the Wells Fargo express agent, sold school supplies, and dealt in real estate. He was married to Julia Hoffman and had three children: Ben, Carrie and Lydia.

Education was important to the Beekman family. Shelves are filled with books on literature, history, religion, languages, music, nature, poetry and



INTERIOR PHOTOS BY MAGGIE JAMES

C.C. Beekman probably spent long hours in this plush adjustable chair reading and smoking his pipes. This innovative piece of furniture was advertised in the 1890s as the "best chair in the world. It combines in one a Parlor, Library, Smoking and Reclining Chair, a Lounge or a full size bed."



The Beekmans' circa-1870 Gothic Revival-style home has a front porch (left) at the entrance on Laurelwood Avenue and a side porch facing California Street.

medicine. Ben was instructed in Latin and high mathematics. He earned two degrees from the University of Oregon and a law degree from Yale. He became an attorney in Portland and visited his family often in Jacksonville.

Carrie attended Mills Seminary in California where she studied history, French, music and literature, but an eye problem forced her to leave before graduation. When not traveling, Carrie played the organ at the Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, taught Sunday school, gave piano lessons, and was active in the local Reading Circle along with her mother. The Beekman home was filled with music. The first floor contains an organ, piano, a "Victrola" phonograph, and many classical records.

Life for the Beekman family was not without tragedy. Shortly after moving into the new home, five-year-old Lydia died from measles. Her portrait still hangs in the master bedroom as a constant reminder that life in early Jacksonville was not easy, even for a prosperous banker. ■

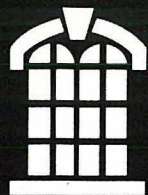


Perfume bottles, silver-plated brushes and a painted glass jewelry box adorn Carrie's dresser.



Assorted spices, boxes and canned goods line the pantry shelves.

Mary Ames Sheret is curator of collections and exhibits for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



News & Notes

of the Southern Oregon Historical Society

May 1999

HISTORY IS ALIVE



Beginning on May 29 the **Beekman Living History** program opens its doors where costumed

characters play the parts of Cornelius and Julia Beekman and their family in the year 1911. Located on the corner of California and Laurelwood streets in Jacksonville, the house and visitor center will be open daily 1:00-5:00 p.m.

The **History Store in Jacksonville** will re-open on May 29 at the corner of California and 3rd streets. Thanks to overwhelming support, the **History Store in the Mall** is to remain open, contrary to our previous announcement..

Program Schedule

CONVERSATIONS WITH...

*Saturday, May 1, Free
Ashland Branch
1:00 p.m.*

Terry Skibby, is well known for his extraordinary commitment to preserving Ashland's photographic history. Terry will be on hand to share his collection of prints in a very informative and entertaining way.

MAY DAY AT THE MALL

*Saturday, May 1, Free
Rogue Valley Mall, Medford
11:00 to 2:00 p.m.*

Families are invited to come and discover the fun of weaving colorful ribbons while dancing around a maypole. Family members can also make their own paper crowns, scepters and May Day baskets to celebrate spring's arrival.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

May 26, 5:30 pm

CINCO DE MAYO

*Wednesday, May 5
Children's Museum, Jacksonville
3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
\$3 members/\$4 non-members*

Join the fiesta! Ages 3-6 are invited to create traditional Mexican decorations and swing at our colorful piñata. Preregister by April 30 by calling 773-6536 or email us at educate@sohs.org.



GOOD CLEAN FUN

*Saturday, May 8
Ashland Branch
2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
\$3 members/\$4 non-members*

To the delight of many children, baths were once reserved as a once-a-week event. During this workshop youth ages 3 to 6 will explore the art of making soap of different colors, shapes and sizes. Preregister by May 5 by calling 488-4938.

ASHLAND BRANCH OPEN HOUSE

*Saturday, May 15
208 Oak Street, Ashland
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.*

Join us for a short program and check out our new facilities. For information call Jay Leighton at 488-4938.

WASN'T THAT A TIME

*Saturday, May 22
Ashland Branch
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.*

Drop in for a light-hearted overview of Rogue Valley history featuring historical quotes and portraits of some of the area's most noteworthy characters.

Coming in June

TWO-WAY SEEING: PIONEERS AND NATIVE OREGONIANS

*Saturday, June 5, Free
History Center, Medford
2:00 p.m.*

Mark your calendars for Shannon Applegate and Esther Stutzman's outstanding presentation exploring the relationships between, and experiences of, Native Americans in Oregon and Oregon Trail pioneers. (Made possible by funding from the Oregon Council for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.)

PHOTO PRESERVATION TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

*Saturday, June 12
History Center, Medford
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
\$10 members/\$15 non-members*

Perfect for the genealogist but also geared toward anyone interested in learning how to effectively store, handle and display family photographs. Preregistration and prepayment are required. Call 773-6536 for more information.

Historic Preservation Week

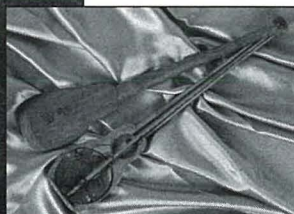
Take some time this month to discover the Valley's rich pioneer heritage. Three cemetery tour brochures have just been completed in time for National Historic Preservation Week, May 9 through 15. Available at Society sites in Ashland, Medford, and Jacksonville.

ANNUAL MEETING June 25

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 ■ Website www.sohs.org

VOL. 1, NO. 4



*April's Mystery Object
Balance Scale*

MYSTERY OBJECT OF THE MONTH

This "MA" and "PA" have a special purpose at the dining table. They measure 2-1/2" by 2-1/4". A winner will be drawn from all correct answers received by May 31 and will be awarded \$5 in "Applegate Scrip," good toward any Society purchase. Send your answer on a 3 by 5 card with your name, address and phone number to: *News and Notes* Mystery Object, SOHS, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, Oregon 97501.

April's Mystery Object was a Balance Scale. It was used by the Chinese to weigh gold, teas and possibly herbal medicines. Congratulations to February's Mystery Object winner, Carolyn Watson, Medford, Oregon.

Enjoy the Mystery Object feature? Then be sure to watch "Kid's Q&A" on KTVL-TV10. Each month Jackson County youth will try to stump viewers with different Mystery Objects.

Exhibition Schedule

AT THE HISTORY CENTER

During the months of May, June and July, the Community Collects corner, presented by the Southern Oregon Antique and Collectibles Club, will feature "Celebration of Life" rituals and rites of passage. Items on display will include a hope chest and bridal baskets.

Come and take a peek at military style during the month of May at the History Center. United States Navy and Marine Corps uniforms from the past and the present will be on display. This exhibit is presented by the Camp White Historical Association.

IN JACKSONVILLE

Visit the Third Street Artisan Studios in Jacksonville and learn more about overshot weaving in the exhibit featuring traditional and contemporary weaving. Demonstrations on Fridays and Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. through May 22.

The Beekman Living History program begins its 16th season with a new visitors' orientation center and exhibit. The exhibit features artifacts unique to the Beekman family and the early community of Jacksonville. A video will highlight the house and the Beekman family. Hours are 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. daily, beginning May 29 through Labor Day.

Volunteers Needed

Summer is coming and so are the Tourists! Volunteers are needed to greet and share local history with visitors in the *Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker* exhibit upstairs at the Jacksonville Museum. Training is provided. Volunteers are asked to give a minimum of 3 hours one day per week for the summer season. For more information, contact Dawna Curler at 773-6536.

Get Your History Here!

Produced by the Society and Southern Oregon Public Television, the video "An Air Minded City" is available at the History Center, the History Store in the Mall, and beginning May 29, the History Store in Jacksonville. Member price is \$19.95; nonmember price is \$24.95. Film footage and photographs from the Society's collection bring to life development of aviation in the Rogue Valley.

Reproduction maps: 1910 Jackson County, \$5.95; 1910 City of Ashland, \$7.95; and 1904 Mining of Southern Oregon, \$9.95. Now available at the History Center, the History Store in the Mall, and beginning May 29, at the History Store in Jacksonville.

NEW VISITOR INFORMATION SIGNS IN JACKSONVILLE

A series of colorful signs highlighting historic sites in Jacksonville has been made possible through a grant of Oregon State Lottery Funds. The signs are located at the Jacksonville museums on 5th Street, at the Jackson Creek junction behind the Visitors' Center on Oregon Street, Doc Griffin Park on 4th Street, the U.S. Hotel on the corner of California and 3rd streets and the Beekman House on the corner of California and Laurelwood streets.

*Museum summer hours,
daily 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.,
beginning May 29*

HISTORY CENTER

106 N. Central Avenue, Medford
Mon - Fri, 9:00am to 5:00pm
Sat, 1:00 to 5:00pm

RESEARCH LIBRARY

106 N. Central Avenue, Medford
Tues - Sat, 1:00 to 5:00pm

THE HISTORY STORE, MEDFORD

Rogue Valley Mall,
Lower Level
Daily, Mall hours

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM

5th and C streets, Jacksonville
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, 12:00 to 5:00pm

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

5th and C streets, Jacksonville
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, 12:00 to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIOS

3rd and California streets, Jacksonville
Fridays and Saturdays, 11:30am to 4:00pm

U.S. HOTEL

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

ASHLAND BRANCH

208 Oak Street, Ashland
Wed - Sat, 12:00 to 4:00pm

HANLEY FARM

Open by appointment. Call 773-2675.



PHOTO BY TOM WICKLUND



PHOTO BY BILL POWELL

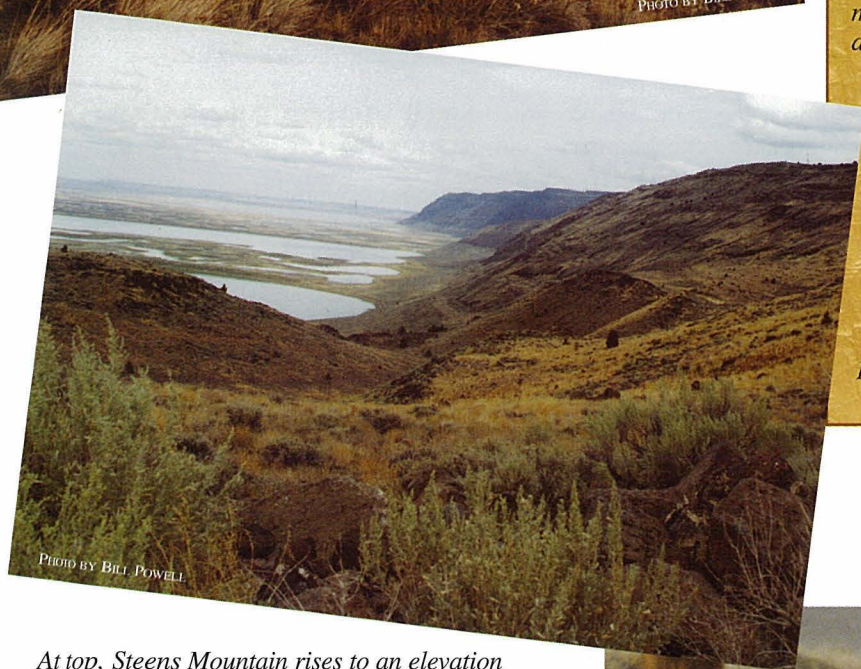


PHOTO BY BILL POWELL

This way to Frenchglen

For many readers, a favorite way to enjoy our region's history is to pile into the family car and visit a historic town such as Jacksonville, a museum in Eagle Point or a mining trail in the Applegate.

But now that it's May and the weather is warmer, some of us feel the urge to travel toward a wide-open horizon and see some country. It's a time of year when the roads to far-off Frenchglen beg to whisper their secrets of adventure.

For people who appreciate history, the stark landscapes of the Great Basin invite interpretation. Take good maps and a copy of *Oregon Geographic Names* and find out how that big alkali lake off to the south got its name. Stop for lunch on the pass and ask yourself how you would cross this escarpment with horses and wagons, and maybe you'll make out a long-ago track still sketched in the sagebrush at just that spot.

Often times in the high desert, the history isn't so subtle. In fact, the dilapidated remains of long-gone communities are part of the charm. And when you've gone for hours without seeing a trace of humanity, then round a bend and come upon a lush hay bottom and a cozy ranch house, there's almost a sense of relief that somebody here is making a go of it.

And so this month's *Heritage Today* presents a story about a trip thirty years ago into the wide-open lonesome of southeastern Oregon, where both the people and the place make history a continuing adventure.

It's a trip you can still make today.

Southeastern Oregon is still ranch country, and visitors must be prepared to brake for cowboys and cattle herds.

At top, Steens Mountain rises to an elevation of 9,773 feet to the east of the Catlow Valley plateau. Second from the top, breathtaking Kiger Gorge, cut by a glacier, falls away to the north from the summit of Steens Mountain. Above, the view of the Warner Valley wetlands from the road up the face of Hart Mountain is one of Oregon's most memorable vistas.

PHOTO BY TOM WICKLUND



FRENCHGLEN

THE HARD WAY

by Pat Paeper

In the late 1960s, at the foot of Hart Mountain Antelope Refuge, on the far shore of a dry lake bed named Guano, a precisely squared white post stood as proper and out of place as a Victorian dowager at a rodeo. It held a pointed state highway sign. There was no road, but the black lettering on the sign labeled the two parallel ruts that headed out through the sagebrush as going to "Frenchglen 75 miles" thataway. Clearly this situation qualified as a candidate for another round of our favorite game, "Staying Off the Blacktop."

A few months later, the spare time opened up, and the weather promised sunshine. We packed our four-wheel drive with everything we thought necessary to survive in the lonesome high desert of southeastern Oregon and drove away from suburban Portland.

We pulled onto Charlie Crump's ranch near Adel in Warner Valley in late afternoon. Crump's family was so much a part of the land that state highway maps show a lake that carries their name – given after 1885, when Charlie's parents, Thomas and Johanna Crump, became the first family to homestead along the lake.¹

We had planned to camp in his yard, but Charlie, a quiet, hospitable man, wouldn't hear of it. He invited us into his house, the house where he had been born

and lived all his life. This house is about five miles south of the original homestead. Charlie's parents had wanted to raise their growing family closer to the Adel school, and water from Deep Creek, where they relocated, was much clearer than the mineral-laden water around the lake. They homesteaded on the new property in 1900, and Charlie Crump was born that same year. Most of the Charlies' eleven children eventually moved on, but after their father's death, nineteen-year-old Charlie bought the ranch from his mother, and with the help of his brother, Leland, made ranching his way of life.²

"Leland is away," Charlie told us. "There's no one but me staying at the house right now, and I could use the company."

No trip to the ranch was complete without a visit to Crump's geyser. In 1959, the Nevada Thermal Power Company, looking for suitable sites to tap into the geothermal activity that lies beneath Warner Valley, contracted with Charlie to drill an exploratory well. They went down 1,684 feet and hit hot water, but it wasn't hot enough to meet their specifications. So, on June 29, 1959, the company released its interest in the well, packed up and moved on, leaving Charlie with a new hole in his ranch. Two days later, on July 1 sometime between noon and 1:15 p.m., the well erupted with considerable

violence, spewing out drilling mud and debris. Charlie went to see what all the commotion was about and found water still boiling at the top of the well. When it exploded again, Charlie put the time at 1:55 p.m. This time, without stopping, the geyser blasted 400 to 600 gallons of water to heights of

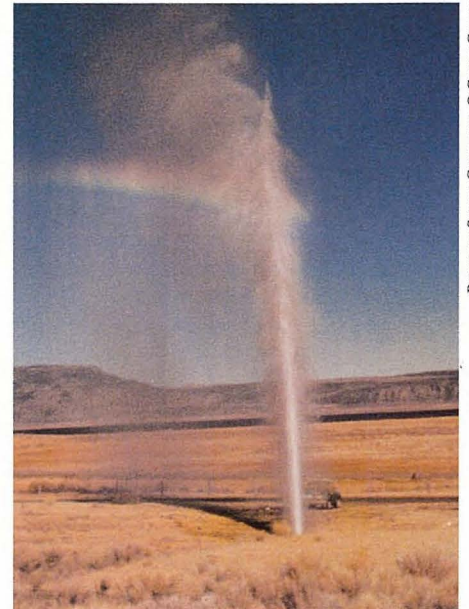


PHOTO BY SYLVIA CLELAND © GERRY GETTY

Crump Geyser, the result of exploratory drilling just north of Adel, now only sporadically erupts.

150 to 200 feet for most of the following year.³ Charlie had a lot of visitors during that display.

Unfortunately, crime interfered. Early in 1960, vandals piled large boulders and debris in and around the well casing. In spite of the obstruction, the geyser continued to erupt nonstop until June, when it slowed to a 30-second eruption every two minutes. The intervals between eruptions gradually increased until July 20, when they stopped.⁴

At the time of our visit, only the rumblings of boiling water could be heard down in the bowels of the well. However, Charlie found the geyser could usually be triggered by lowering a rock-filled coffee can down the shaft and waiting until steam pressure built to just the right point. Then,



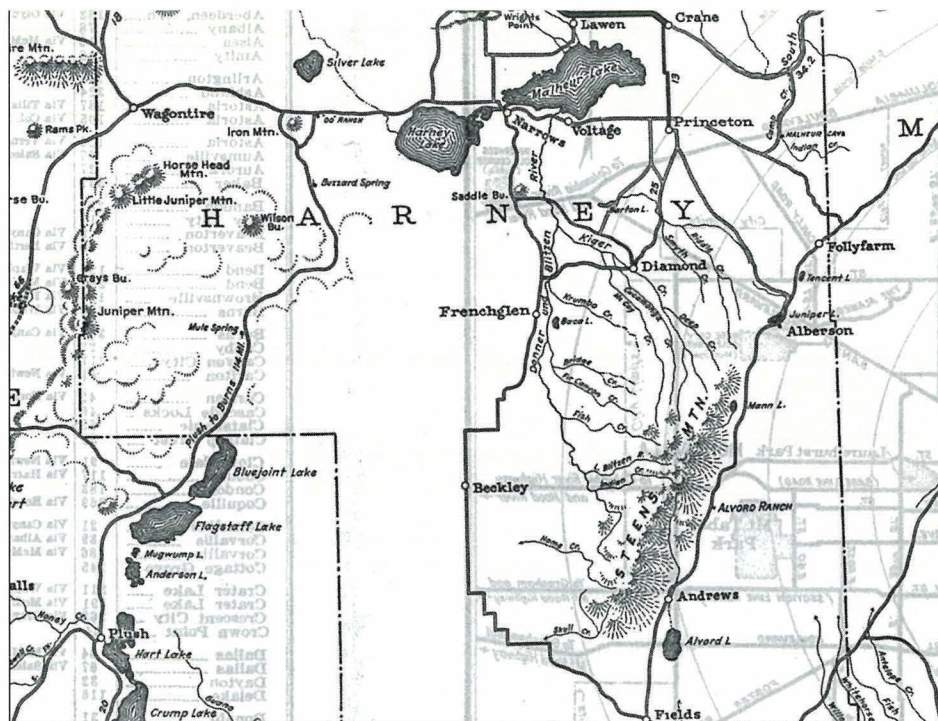
the trick was to grab the rope and run, pulling the can quickly out of the hole. If the coffee can operator had waited the proper amount of time since the geyser's last eruption, the can would shoot into the air, and a dazzling column of steam and water would erupt high into the desert sky. Through long experience, Charlie was an expert.

We told him about the sign at Guano Lake, and he gave directions and landmarks with the ease of someone long familiar with the territory. But ... "Since you won't be starting out until the morning, how about joining me and a few neighbors on a porcupine hunt?"

Charlie had been a sheep man most of his life, but in the 1950s he decided to run Angus cattle. Recently, several head of his stock had put their curious noses too close to a porcupine. If the injured cattle weren't found quickly and the quills removed, infection could be fatal. Charlie wanted to cut down on the porcupine population, and our van with its box-like rack on top would provide a higher lookout for the hunt than the bed of a rancher's pickup. Night was the best time; the ranchers could immobilize porcupines with their spot lights, making for an easy shot.

It was black dark when we headed out. My husband drove, and Charlie took my place as navigator. We had removed the back seats when we loaded for our trip, so I sat in back on the van floor along with the rest of the hunters.

Charlie thought he knew where to find porcupines, and getting to them involved driving along an irrigation dike. When we reached the dike, all but two of the ranchers climbed into the top rack with their guns and flashlights. The two men left in the back of the van poked their guns out side windows. Apparently, as the only woman on this expedition, I wasn't



The struggles of ranchers and homesteaders in the basin and range country of southeastern Oregon played out over some of the most spectacular landscapes in the West. 1930 Map.

expected to do anything, which was good. I had no intention of helping them, though I hadn't wanted to be left behind. However, the dike was a narrow, earthen berm in need of maintenance after some recent flooding, and as we crept along, I began to question my determination to be a part of this macho undertaking.

I knew I should have stayed at the ranch house when Charlie told my husband, "Go real slow now, and stop the minute I tell you to. There's a little washout up here, and we'll have to be careful."

His "Stop!" was quiet and abrupt as he leaned his head out the window and looked up. "OK. Everybody move to the high side." He pulled his head in and turned to look down at the three of us on the floor. "You too. All get over against that side." Then Charlie moved himself closer to my husband. "All right, just ease her gently around that washout there. You

should be fine. Just ease it along. That's good. A little more. Good. You can all spread out now. See anything up there?" He had his head out the window again.

The hunters raised their guns to several false alarms that night, but never fired a shot. This time, the porcupines of Warner Valley were safe.

As we left Charlie's the next day, surrounded by dramatic country, we climbed ever higher, the air so crisp and pure it seemed we had to be close to the top of the world. The land appeared empty and untamed; it fell away behind us in waves of seemingly barren hills and isolated buttes. As our four-wheel drive ground and jolted on up the incline, we too felt isolated, the only living creatures in existence.

Then we rounded a curve, and a pewter-gray stallion stood on the rocks above us. Tense. Alert. His stocky power posed against the sky. The silken blacks, browns, and russets of his mares were scattered up the hillside behind him; they didn't look up. Content in the stallion's protection, they continued browsing on clumps of dry grass.

We had that moment, that memory-etching instant. Then the stallion made his decision and snorted a command. With hooves pounding and manes and tails streaming in the sunshine, the wild band flowed into a hidden canyon.

Beyond the horses, the track began to descend, then leveled out onto a plateau. According to our map, we were in Catlow Valley. Only in relation to the buttes and mountains in the distance could this place be called a valley. The plateau rose nearly



PHOTO BY MARK ARMSTRONG

Looking north from Long Hollow, Catlow Rim defines the eastern edge of Catlow Valley, once an ice-age lake. The ancient, wave-cut shoreline is still visible along the rim at right.

5,000 feet in elevation, and the wild land ran flat for miles, dry and cracked between the widely separated, stunted clumps of vegetation. A pluvial lake during the last ice age, the valley was now only a thin layer of volcanic soils covered sediments compacted into hardpan.⁵ Except for the indistinct track we followed, it existed for us as a land so innocent of man's intrusion it could have been an island on Mars. The wind took advantage of the limitless space, and we ate lunch in the van to avoid the dust.

It was impossible to recognize this as the place David Shirk described as a cattleman's paradise. In 1873, when he drove a large herd of cattle onto what was then an unnamed plateau, he found tall grass waving on the foothills and the floor covered with white sage, good forage for cattle. Shirk, foreman for a rancher named John Catlow, named this new grazing land after his employer.⁶

As the ranchers moved in, the area was used primarily as range land for both cattle and sheep. The lush grazing was already showing signs of depletion when,



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

In this 1970s photo, rancher Charlie Crump of Adel tends the rock-filled coffee can he so skillfully employed to coax an eruption from Crump Geyser.

Chester Nye stops with his pack string for supplies at the Frenchglen general store in the 1940s.



COURTESY OF BURNS DISTRICT, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

following the 1909 Homestead Act, settlers began swarming onto the land. By 1914 the population had grown to 500 – some accounts say 700 – and for a few years Catlow Valley hummed with activity. However, when a warmer, drier weather cycle began, it soon proved that the rich land could not produce without readily available water. By 1920, the census takers found only 178 people. Now, only a few ranches remain.⁷

When we moved on, the dust got worse. The vague track dissolved into a fine powder that billowed chalk-white behind us, and the wind worked to drive alkali dust into our van. By late afternoon, we were out of the alkali and we were wondering about a place to camp out of the wind.

On the horizon, like a mirage, we saw buildings, the skeletons of poplars – and corrals. Hooray! A ranch. There was life on the planet, but it was much farther away than it appeared. The desert night-chill was coming down fast by the time we arrived and found the place as empty as the land around it.

Strange looking for a ranch, the buildings were lined up in what, at one time, had been fairly straight rows along each side of the road. The fences were in good repair, but most of the building walls leaned crookedly in on sunken roofs. Only a couple of the buildings were clean and well-maintained. One contained a wood-burning cook stove and an old wooden table with mismatched chairs. Our home for the night, it held the wind and dust at bay, and the stove warmed us while it cooked our dinner.

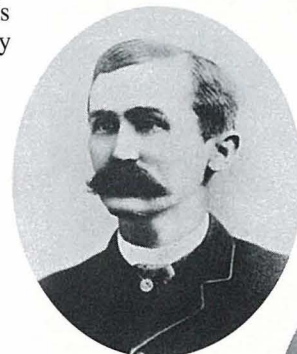
The wind calmed by morning, and we went out to explore while our breakfast heated on the wood stove. The white car with its pluming tail of dust coming in from the direction we had yet to explore surprised us. When it stopped by our van, we saw the logo on the car's door. A game warden had come to visit.

In answer to my question, the warden told us we were in the ghost town of Blitzen. "Ranch hands come up and use the corrals and a couple of the buildings during roundup time," he said. "It's OK if

you stay here, as long as you leave things the way you found them and make certain your fire is out."

Later, I found little information about the origin of the town, or why, even though it is in the Catlow Valley, it was named after the nearby Blitzen Valley. Apparently, like so many small towns in that country, it began sometime after the 1909 Homestead Act and just grew in answer to the settlers' needs. I found Blitzen first anchored in history when the post office was established April 10, 1916. There had been a post office down in the Blitzen Valley from 1888 until 1892.⁸ Perhaps, when the new post office was established up on the plateau, approximately thirty-five miles south, it carried the name with it. In its glory days, Blitzen boasted two stores, a hotel, a saloon, a school and several residences in addition to the post office. By the 1920s, nearly all the settlers in Catlow Valley had been starved out, and Blitzen remained as the only settlement. It lingered on until the last store shut its doors in November 1942.⁹ The post office closed on January 31, 1943.¹⁰

The Blitzen Valley is named after the Donner und Blitzen River, which flows



Until his killing in 1897, Peter French, left, supervised ranching operations on 200,000 acres in the Blitzen Valley and surrounding area.



Dr. Hugh Glenn, a California investor, provided the financial backing for Peter French's cattle empire.

PHOTOS FROM "CATTLE COUNTRY OF PETER FRENCH," BY GILES FRENCH. COURTESY OF BINFORDS & MORT, PUBLISHERS, 1964.



PHOTO BY MARK ARMSTRONG

Looking down on Frenchglen from the rim above town shows that it remains a very small community.

Dating to 1916, the Frenchglen Hotel is now owned by the people of Oregon and remains a favorite destination for travelers to Steens Mountain and the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. It has changed little since this photo was taken in the 1960s.



PHOTO FROM "CATTLE COUNTRY OF PETER FRENCH," BY GILES FRENCH, COURTESY OF BINFORDS & MORT, PUBLISHERS, 1964.

along its floor. During the Snake War of 1864, Colonel George B. Currey led his troops across the stream during a furious thunderstorm and named the river the Donner und Blitzen, using the German words for thunder and lightning. Today the river is frequently referred to only as the Blitzen.¹¹

Frenchglen was named after Peter French and Dr. Hugh Glenn, the California investor he worked for. French arrived in the Blitzen Valley in 1872, and, until slain by a settler on December 1, 1897, he operated one of the largest and most successful ranches in the valley. Ultimately, his operation came to be known as the French-Glenn Livestock Company.¹²

I doubt there are any historical accounts of Harney County that do not give space to Peter French, Dr. Hugh Glenn, the French-Glenn Company and the huge P Ranch in the Blitzen Valley. However, like the town of Blitzen, there seems to be no record of when the first buildings came to Frenchglen, which is located only a few short miles from the P Ranch. On December 1, 1926, the post office was

moved about fifteen miles from Somerange to its present location in Frenchglen. Apparently it remained registered as the Somerange Post Office until October 1, 1930, when the name was officially changed to Frenchglen. The Frenchglen post office was closed in 1941, then opened again March 20, 1947.¹³

Frenchglen owes its longevity to the attraction of nearby Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, which includes many of the French-Glenn holdings that were purchased by the federal government in 1935. As the refuge gained fame and the spectacular vistas of nearby Steens Mountain became known, visitors discovered Frenchglen and the Frenchglen Hotel.

The hotel was built in 1916 to accommodate teamsters and stagecoach passengers traveling between Burns and Winnemucca and was extensively renovated in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.¹⁴ Tucked in its grove of poplars, with its screened porch and its promise of hot coffee, it still seemed ready to welcome the next string of freight wagons from Winnemucca when we arrived. I jokingly told the proprietor that, after the alkali flats, I looked forward to the public bath that every town in the Old West offered.

He grinned in delight. "We have one!" he said. "It's not in town, but about a quarter-mile south. You'll see it, just right off the road. A rancher owns it, but he leaves it open to everyone, no charge."

What a treat. The water came directly from a warm spring housed in a weathered, bone-gray building, and constantly flowed through the four-foot-deep pool. We soaked and swam a few

strokes, then scrubbed down and let the layers of dust stream away.

Clean once again, we headed through the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, north toward home. ☺

Pat Paeper is a freelance writer and amateur anthropologist living near Corbett, Oregon.

Postscript:

During our visit, Charlie Crump spoke fondly about a woman he was "seeing over near Willow Creek." We thought that Charlie, the perennial bachelor, was doing pretty well for a man in his late sixties. And he was; at the age of seventy, Charlie got married. The couple had nineteen years together before his death in 1989.

In 1991, Charlie's niece and her husband purchased the ranch from Charlie's widow and now operate it with the help of Leland Crump's son, John. In 1995, the Crump Ranch received the designation of Centennial Ranch, one which has been owned and operated by the same family for at least 100 years.

In 1973, the Frenchglen Hotel was deeded to the state of Oregon. Designated a State Heritage Site, it became a part of the Oregon State Parks system.¹⁵ The bathrooms are still down the hall, and dinners are still served family style.

Although battered and diminished by time and vandalism, a few buildings still show the location of the once-bustling town of Blitzen.



PHOTOS BY BILL POWELL

Peter French built his famous round barn near Diamond, north of Frenchglen, to give his men a covered place to work horses during the long, cold winters on the P Ranch.



GETTING TO FRENCHGLEN

If you're thinking how much fun it would be to make the trip to Frenchglen, think harder about how you plan to get there, and allow most of a day's driving each way.

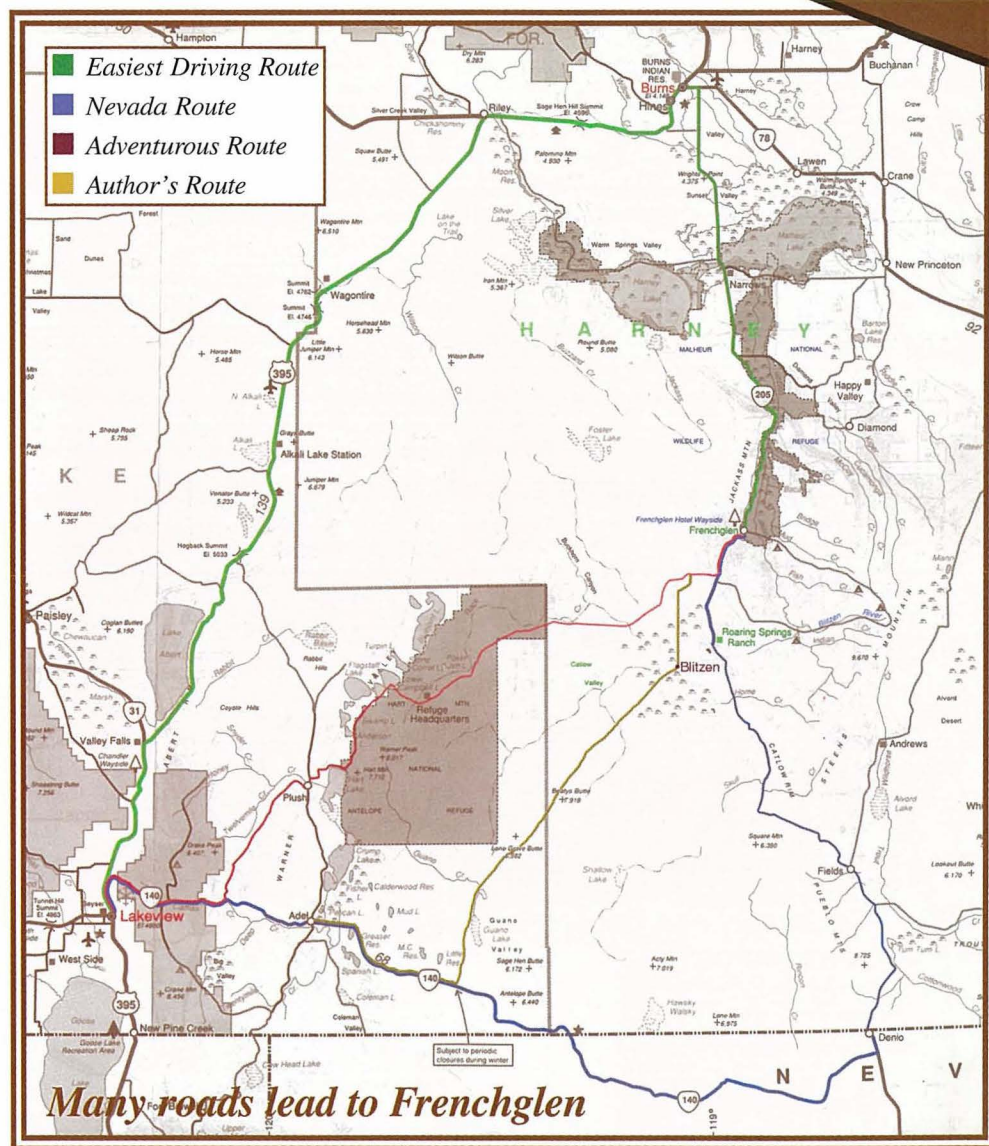
Lakeview is 171 miles from Medford via Highway 140. Beyond Lakeview the travel choices multiply. For those uncomfortable with remote routes and rough roads, reach Frenchglen via U.S. 395 and U.S. 20 to Burns – about 140 miles – and another sixty-three miles south on Oregon 205 to Frenchglen itself. ■

Or follow Highway 140 east from Lakeview through Adel to Denio, Nevada – about 100 miles – then take Oregon 205 north seventy-eight miles to Frenchglen. Bureau of Land Management recreation planner Trish Lindaman says she often sees wild horses on this route, particularly near the Nevada line. ■

For a more adventurous trip, turn north at Adel and drive past Crump and Hart lakes to Plush, about eighteen miles. Follow the signs to Hart Mountain Refuge. The pavement ends after fifteen miles, and it is another fifty-two miles of gravel to Oregon 205, then another 10 miles to Frenchglen. Snows can keep this route closed into May, says Steve Clay of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ■

And then there's the route Pat Paepers and her husband took by four-wheel drive many years ago. BLM road 6106 leads north from Highway 140 about twenty-one miles east of Adel and skirts Guano Lake, then joins a network of back roads and two-tracks, many of them unmarked. ■

Although these back roads start drying out in May, the BLM's Lindaman warns that it is still easy to get lost or stuck in the back country, where cell phones don't always work.



Before taking the back way into Frenchglen, obtain up-to-date information and maps at the BLM's Lakeview Resource Area office at (541) 941-2177 or the Burns District BLM office at (541) 573-4400. For road conditions at Hart Mountain, call the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service at (541) 947-3315.

Reservations are required at the Frenchglen Hotel, and should be made well in advance. The hotel season is from March 15 to November 15. Call (541) 493-2825 for information.

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Manzanita: the “little apple”

by Donn L. Todt and Nan Hannon

Manzanita. The syllables roll off the tongue, recalling the influence of Spanish colonists on the character of the Far West. In California, Spanish names preceded English names for plants and landscapes: madroña, piñon, toyon, chamiso, yerba santa, yerba buena, chaparral. Plants characteristic of the California Floristic Province extend into Southern Oregon, but north of the Umpqua River drainage, the character of the landscape changes and few plants bear Spanish names. Manzanita is one that does.

Manzanita means “little apple” in Spanish and refers both to the shape and color of the fruit and its apple-like flavor. Clusters of reddish-orange fruit ripen in early autumn, offering a warm contrast to the clean curves and cool green color of the foliage. Chipmunks, ground squirrels, birds and bears relish the fruit. In the fall in manzanita country, bear scat is often composed of a good percentage of partially digested manzanita fruit, indicating how much bears rely on manzanita. The Latin genus name for manzanita, *Arctostaphylos*, actually means “bear grapes.”

Native American peoples of southwest Oregon gathered the fruit in the autumn to store through the winter. Women made a refreshing cider from the pulp, and also used the tart fruit to flavor bland foods. Shasta Indians added dried and pulverized manzanita as a flour to acorn meal and Takelman people added it to cooked sugar pine seeds. Manzanita flour was also used to sweeten the tart fruit of elderberries, three-leaf sumac and wild plums.¹ Euroamerican settlers used the flavorful fruit to make jelly.

It surprises some people to learn that manzanitas are members of the heath family, which includes such moisture-loving species as rhododendrons and huckleberries. When manzanitas flower in early spring, the family relation is apparent. The small pink and white flowers closely resemble heather blooms. Since manzanitas are among the first of the native plants to bloom, hummingbirds and honeybees seek them eagerly.

As summer comes, manzanita’s adaptations to drought become more obvious. Manzanita leaves have a thick surface layer that helps prevent moisture loss. The plant holds its leaves canted away from direct sunshine, lessening the heat load on the leaf. Manzanitas also have roots able to penetrate small cracks in rock and draw out moisture unavailable to many other species.

Like many chaparral plants, manzanita is fire-adapted. Wildfire assists manzanita in its competition with conifers. Unchecked by fires, conifers will overtop and shade out shrubs. Fire opens the landscape, allowing manzanita seeds to germinate and spread. Numerous species of manzanita also resprout from the base after fire consumes the aboveground portion of the plant. Rapid growth from an already-established root system



The manzanita’s cheerful flowers and colorful orange bark obscure the fact that this hardy plant encourages wildfire as a part of its survival strategy.

Because of their volatility, manzanitas may be a fire hazard when growing in dense stands close to homes at the rural-urban boundary. In these situations,

thinning reduces fire danger. Pruning the small, dry branches from the interior of the manzanita reduces its flammability and accentuates its intrinsically beautiful structure. ■

Ethnobotanist Donn L. Todt serves as horticulturist for the city of Ashland. Anthropologist Nan Hannon is education coordinator for the Mail Tribune.

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PHOTOS BY DONN L. TODT



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WILLIAM BYBEE

A man of prominence and mystery

by Jamee Rae

William Bybee was a pioneer, an adventure seeker, a landowner

and a shrewd businessman who liked nothing more than to turn a profit. But this man who figured so prominently in Jackson County's history was once indicted for the murder of a distant cousin.

At the peak of Bybee's influence in the Rogue Valley, his family was one of the county's largest landowners. The empire included about 7,000 acres in Jacksonville, Rogue River and along Antelope and Evans creeks.¹

While historians hail Bybee as Jackson County's first land baron, they also remember him for raising livestock and as owner of a fording and ferry service in the late 1850s that crossed the Rogue River at the current location of Bybee Bridge at TouVelle State Park.

From 1878 to 1882, Bybee served two terms as Jackson County sheriff. During his heyday, Bybee also operated a resort at Evans Creek and a placer mine in Josephine County, grew mission grapes in Jacksonville and built one of the longest mining ditches in Southern Oregon. He reportedly owned most of the hogs in the Rogue River Valley for a forty-year period, moving up to 600 animals at a time through the Siskiyou Mountains to mining camps in California and Nevada.²

Traveling through rough terrain was nothing new to Bybee. In 1851, at the age of twenty-one, he joined a wagon train,

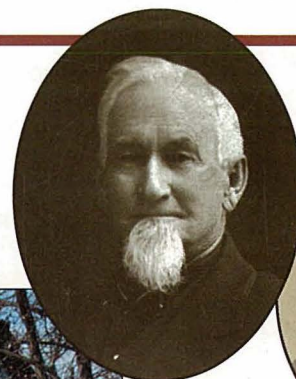


The Bybee House on Old Stage Road, built in 1868 on the land of a former thoroughbred race track, has been named to the National Register of Historic Places.

left his home state of Kentucky and headed west. The pioneer stopped briefly in California, then traveled north to Portland before settling in Southern Oregon in 1854.

That same year Bybee met and married Elizabeth Ann Walker, the daughter of Captain Jesse Walker. In 1855, Captain Walker died and left about 2,000 acres of undeveloped land in Jacksonville to the couple. This real estate was the foundation of Bybee's fortune.

Elizabeth bore eleven children. Six died before or during their teens. None of the surviving three sons – James William (Billy), Francis (Frank) or Robert – married or had children. Daughters Effa and Minnie married and raised families.



SOHS #4483



SOHS #296

William Bybee married Elizabeth Walker in 1854, and a year later inherited 2,000 acres from his father-in-law.

But two William Bybee mysteries remain: Did he shoot and kill his cousin, Thomas T. Bybee, in cold blood in 1886? Records show that at the time of the murder, Bybee was awaiting trial for shooting that same cousin in the leg. The Josephine County grand jury declined to indict on the murder charge, but the cloud

of suspicion against Bybee remained. And why did Bybee sell off all his assets, leaving only his Jacksonville home at the time of his death? While there are no records indicating bad investments, some believe Bybee was forced to sell his holdings because he had overextended his assets.

Elizabeth died at the age of sixty-one, after forty-five years of marriage. William was seventy-eight when he died at his Jacksonville home in 1908. ■

Jamee Rae is a local freelance writer, editor and proofreader. She does business as "Writing For All Reasons."

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