

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*



THEY FOUND A SLICE OF PARADISE

Pioneers of the Coleston Valley

ECHOES OF AN EARLIER WINEMAKING TRADITION

Valley View Vineyard

A VISION OF MERCY

George Milligan

NOVEMBER 1999

Vol. 1, No. 11

The Magazine of the Southern Oregon Historical Society



Big Butte Historical Society

“WHERE HISTORY HAPPENS EVERY DAY”

by Joyce Hailicka

Say the word “history.” What does it conjure up? At the Big Butte Historical Society, we have one simple goal: to make history fun, interesting, and exciting.

that didn’t stop some from seeing the new museum as a “diamond in the rough.”

Society members also recognize that children are an important part of the historical picture in Butte Falls. Like youth itself, the joys and pains of childhood are fleeting, and children soon become the adults in the community. We continually

strive to come up with creative ways to engage young people with history.

Whether planting a garden, hiking a trail, or writing a poem, children learn how these society-sponsored activities tie in with our history. Older children mentor younger ones. For instance, high school students Maggie James from Prospect and Sarah Lawrence from Butte Falls taught the basics of black-and-white photography and movie-making to a group of youngsters, who learned that photography is an excellent tool for documenting history. Many of the photos in the historic E. W. Smith House in Butte Falls date back to the early 1900s. The children’s photos will show us what life looked like through the eyes of a child in 1999.

An old-timer once said: “We make up stories, so that we can get by. A long time ago, there were big stories. The tales were as tall as the trees. It seemed the bigger

they were, the more people listened and believed them. Most of the old folks have died, moved away, or are long forgotten.

So it’s the young folks, the folks younger than you and me, that we need to listen to. They have their own stories. Little ones. Big ones. It doesn’t matter how big or little they are, we

still need to listen to them. And that’s how history is made, one story at a time—written or passed on from one generation to the next.”

As we ended, he paused: “Maybe it pays to be a child, after all. At least then, you’ve got somebody to listen to you.” ☞

Free-lance writer and poet Joyce Hailicka is a member of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees and is chairwoman of the Big Butte Historical Society.



PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

The nine-year-old historical society is still in its formative years. Gradually, even the Butte Falls community is changing the way it sees history. History isn’t just about what happened in the past. History is about what happens every day. People who live and work here are the ones who help make our history.

In the last ten years, a new chapter has been written in the history of Butte Falls. It began with the arrival of a depot-styled building on October 11, 1990. The building closely resembled the original depot building owned by Medco. But this one was to become the new home of the Butte Falls Library/Museum.

Next, members of the historical society envisioned a train museum next to the depot. An 1890s caboose, owned by Barbara and Joe Layton of Eagle Point, was moved to Butte Falls. Its wheels had been sold for scrap and the paint was peeling, but

This old caboose, now used for special exhibits by the Big Butte Historical Society, once saw use on Medco’s logging trains.

At a recent workshop, children learned first-hand that photography is useful in documenting their community’s history.



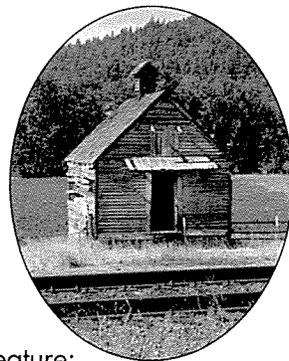
PHOTO BY MAGGIE JAMES

PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

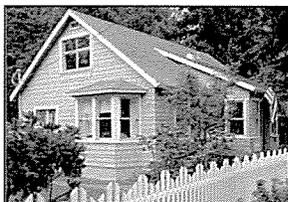


This corner of the Butte Falls Museum holds artifacts of significance to the community’s history and development.

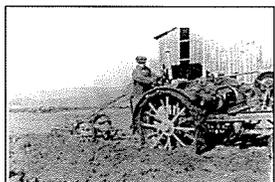
SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE Today



Feature:
Pioneers of the Colestin Valley



Our Own Voices:
Big Butte Historical Society



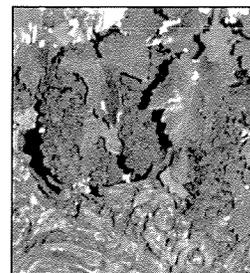
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From the Archives:
What Is an Archives Anyway? Part 2



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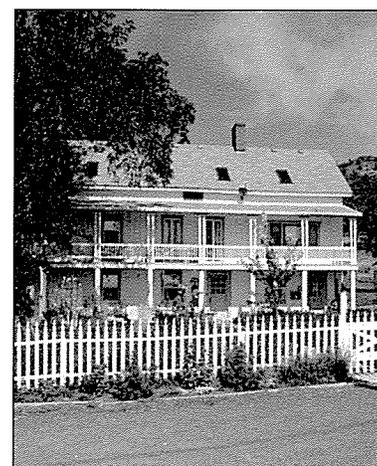
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COVER PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

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ON THE COVER

Cole's Station, parts of which date to the 1850s, served as a stage stop for nearly thirty years before the railroad crossed the Siskiyou in 1887. Today, the station still serves visitors as an organic farm and bed and breakfast.

Southern Oregon Historical Society

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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SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RCV 26/10/99

Valley View Vineyard

FROM SOUTHERN OREGON TO SLOVENIA

by Patricia Parish Kuhn

PHOTOS BY DICK HANCOCK/EXP

Poets pen tomes about it. Literature spills over with references to it. Societies celebrate vineyard harvests and grape crushings with festivals around the globe: vino, vin, wine, nectar of the gods.

Today, Southern Oregon boasts and toasts its own historic vineyard in the bucolic Applegate Valley, its wine internationally acclaimed. In 1971 near Ruch, Ann and Frank Wisnovsky planted what is now one of Southern Oregon's oldest operating vineyards "as a cottage industry of sorts," recalls family friend Terri Gieg, manager of the winery's Anna Maria Tasting Room in Jacksonville. "They were a couple with four children trying to establish a cottage industry without the initial cost of high-tech. It was a family undertaking. Frank raised the old barn that was on the property, put blocks under it, and it became the winery. Very pastoral and rustic."

A civil engineer, Frank Wisnovsky came west with his family as superintendent for construction of Oregon's Astoria Bridge across the Columbia River as well as for the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in San Francisco. But the couple's dream was to have a farm, which led them to purchase a seventy-six-acre ranch from Mr. and Mrs. Edgar M. Bush on Upper Applegate Road.

The vineyard's winery debuted in 1976 with the release of Valley View's 1976 cabernet sauvignon. The much-expanded list of wines offered today by Valley View also includes chardonnay, merlot, fume blanc, pinot gris, and syrah.

The Wisnovskys selected the name for their vineyard from another, much earlier vineyard in Jacksonville that was planted in 1854 by pioneer photographer Peter Britt, one of Jacksonville's most famous residents. A Jacksonville newspaper reported in 1866:

"Mr. Britt has successfully demonstrated the problem that a first quality of wine can be manufactured here and if we may be allowed to prophesy, this will be no unimportant branch of agricultural industry in our valley ere long."¹

Britt's Jacksonville vineyard prospered, and he found additional markets for his grapes outside the valley. Early accounts point out that Britt was able to sell all the wine he produced, which may have led to the government's acceptance of its economic benefit to the region. In its annual report for 1890, the Oregon State Board of Agriculture noted that "Jackson County is specially adapted to the raising of grapes."² The *Medford Mail Tribune* of June 3, 1983, reported that Britt's winery "was what appears to be Oregon's first commercial winery" and became one of the largest on the West Coast.



Draft horses haul a wagon at Peter Britt's original Valley View Vineyard in this late 1800s photo.

Early vineyards also flourished in Ashland, Central Point, and in various locations in Josephine County.³ However, Britt's vineyard ceased production with his death in 1905 and fell into ruin. Prohibition would follow a few years later.

One hundred forty-five years after its namesake was planted, the second Valley View Vineyard produces award-winning wines today. "One of our wines won a double gold a few years ago in

The fruits of the Wisnovsky family's labor stretch over this quiet Applegate hillside at Valley View Vineyard. The winery is in the barn.

competition in Slovenia, Yugoslavia," says Mark Wisnovsky. His mother, Ann, has operated the vineyard and winery since Frank Wisnovsky's accidental death in 1980. Left with four children to raise along with running the fledgling vineyard, she was committed to keeping the dream alive for her children. In 1992, her sons honored their mother's determination by choosing her name, Anna Maria, for the winery's premium label.

"It was Dad's dream, but Mom kept the dream alive," Mark Wisnovsky says.

The vineyard's location at the 1,500-foot elevation in what locals call "Sunshine Village"—free from the fog that plagues other areas of the Rogue Valley—allows the grapes to ripen to their greatest potential. That feature, along with the courage and commitment of Ann Wisnovsky and the assistance of her family, would seem to assure the winery's success into the new millennium.

To visit Valley View Vineyard, take Highway 238 through Jacksonville to Ruch, then turn left at Upper Applegate Road and proceed for one mile. The vineyard, at 1000 Upper Applegate Road, is on the right. Winery hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except for major holidays. Call the vineyard at 899-8468 for information and directions. ☘

Patricia Parish Kuhn is a Medford free-lance writer.

ENDNOTES:

1. *The Oregon Sentinel*, 29 Sept. 1886, 3:1.
2. *The Resources of Southern Oregon*, The Southern Oregon State Board of Agriculture (Salem: Legislative Assembly of Oregon, 1890), p. 51.
3. *Table Rock Sentinel*, May 1988, p. 14.

What Is an Archives Anyway?

(Part 2)

by Jacque Sundstrand

This "From the Archives" section has raised interest in and curiosity about what an archives actually is and what goes on behind the scenes. Part 1 discussed what an archives is, what the Society collects, and what steps we go through to make the collections available to our users. In this section we will answer more often-asked questions.

How do you get your stuff? The Society purchases books or other publications it needs on local and regional history. We collect archival materials (photographs, correspondence, diaries, etc.) through donations from generous individuals, organizations, and businesses throughout the seven Southern Oregon counties (Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake) and the two Northern California counties (Del Norte and Siskiyou) we serve. Since we are headquartered in Jackson County, however, our collections often reflect our proximity to local donors, so materials come predominantly from this county.

What happens if I bring some things in? Can I just drop them off at the desk? No. Please expect to spend a short amount of time with our staff filling out a "Temporary Receipt" form. The form outlines what the items are and their history and relationship to you, the donor, helping us to place them into a local context as we prepare and catalog them. It's just as important for us to know that it belonged to your great grandmother and to have information about her, as it is to know you bought it at a garage sale and that's all you know.

Do you ever decide not to take something? Yes. We generally don't take items that duplicate materials we already hold, or items held at the city, county, or state levels of government. We can't accept items in an advanced state of deterioration. We also don't collect the history of organizations that are already maintaining their own archives. Potential donors are advised about contacting other archives or libraries when their materials would be better placed somewhere else due to their stronger ties to another region.

I have some things you would be interested in, but I really want to keep them. Lots of folks are just like you. We have a "Loan For Duplication" program you might consider using, especially for photographs. You loan us the items to copy for an agreed-upon time and turn over any rights you may have in them to us. In this way, we make the information or the photograph widely available to all of our users in the library, in our exhibits, and in our publications.

As we reach the new millennium, we have growing concerns about the kind of documents that may be donated in the future and what questions we may be able to answer about them. In this century of changes, letters have turned into phone calls, and increasingly, computer e-mails. What questions about today will we be able to answer tomorrow? Is our past fast disappearing? ■

Jacque Sundstrand is archives/library coordinator for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Each donor is asked to fill out this Temporary Receipt form. Once approved by our Board of Trustees, cataloged items are placed in acid-free folders, labeled in pencil, and stored in acid-free boxes.

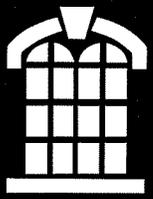


An insect feast! We found this glassine window envelope had been completely eaten by insects and were unable to salvage it for use in our archives.



Members of the Neil family loaned us photographs of their Ashland farm and family. From these photos, we made archival copy photographs for our files, which are available to the public.

SOHS #16334



News & Notes

of the Southern Oregon Historical Society

November 1999

1999 ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORS FUND BEGINS

Members and friends of the Society will be asked to give to the Annual Contributors Fund which has a goal this year of \$25,000. A few dollars can go a long way in supporting Society programs and services, and larger contributions can be dedicated to one major project. Contributions provide the Society with operating support to help care for 12 structures (70,000 square feet owned by Jackson County), approximately 81,000 artifacts, and 3,900 linear feet of archival materials—including some 750,000 historic images—and provide for the numerous special school programs, exhibits, and events the Society is proud to offer its family of members and friends.

For more than fifty-three years the Southern Oregon Historical Society and its devoted supporters have met the challenge of caring for, preserving, and sharing Jackson County and Southern Oregon's history. Every year the



challenge to do so becomes greater due to diminishing funds and budget constraints. Membership dues and the funds received from Jackson County do not fully cover the costs incurred in presenting educational programs and special exhibits, nor do they fully cover the costs of expanding and preserving the collections that document our region's vital history.

You will receive a letter informing you of how you can play a crucial role in the success of the Annual Contributors Fund. Please take a moment to consider how much your contribution will assist in making a difference in your community while ensuring the Society's continued success. The Society needs your help to continue efforts to preserve the region's past and educate today's youth about the value of their heritage.

changes. She began as an instructor of secretarial science at Southern Oregon College of Education and later taught in the business department at Ashland High School. The changing roles of women, education, business technology, and Ashland will be her topics of conversation. Come share your high school typing class stories!

EVERYDAY CHORES

Saturday, November 6, free
Family Day, Children's Museum
1:00-4:00 p.m.

"On Monday, see the bubbles fly; on Tuesday watch the wash get dry."

Household chores once adhered to a set schedule, a different chore for each day of the week. Roll up your sleeves for a variety of hands-on activities and crafts celebrating weekly chores.

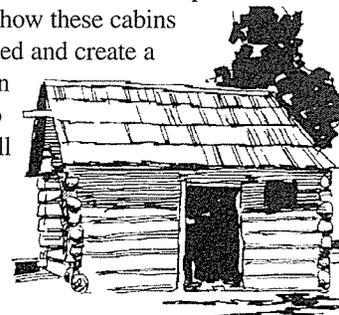


HOME SWEET HOME: LOG CABIN WORKSHOP

Wednesday, November 17
Children's Museum; ages 3-6
3:30-4:30 p.m.

\$3.00 members/\$4.00 non-members

Early Oregon settlers depended on the log cabin to keep them warm through the cold winters. At this workshop you will learn how these cabins were constructed and create a miniature cabin of your own to take home. Call 773-6536 to preregister by November 15.



Program Schedule

NOVEMBER CRAFT OF THE MONTH

"12 is the Game"
(Native American stick game)
Children's Museum
Families; 25 cents

Create a traditional Pomo game to take home and play.

CONVERSATIONS WITH...

Saturday, November 6, free
Ashland Branch, 1:00 p.m.

With over forty years of involvement in Ashland schools, Flora MacCraken has been a part of many



Coming in the
December issue

Special member
discount coupon

for use in the History Store
at the Rogue Valley Mall.

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

Exhibition Schedule

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

3rd & California, Jacksonville
Through November

Exhibit of tapestries woven by members of Southern Oregon guilds (Rogue Valley Handweavers, Saturday Handweavers and Far Out Fibers) on display. Studio open for viewing; weaving, spinning and pottery-making demonstrations; and sales, on Saturday from 11:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. through November, Saturday and Sunday in December. For more information, call the Society at 773-6536.

JACKSON COUNTY HISTORY MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

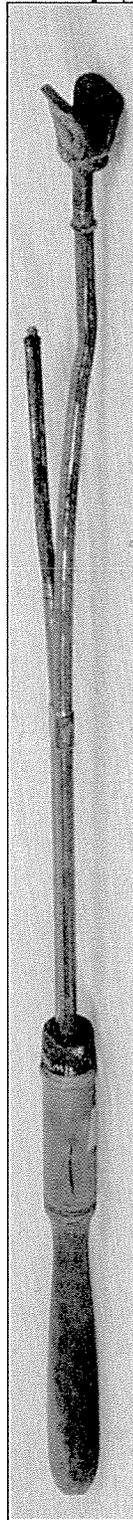
Camp White Historical Association has a topographical map of Camp White and the White City area for sale that was done by 650th Engineers in 1943. The 18"x22" map is tan with brown and black lettering and a border so it can be framed. The \$5.00 cost covers postage. Send requests and payment to Camp White Historical Association, P. O. Box 2373, White City, OR 97503.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Explore home and occupational settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through *Hands on History*. View the miniature train diorama depicting the Rogue River Valley in 1911.

REMINDER TO MEMBERS

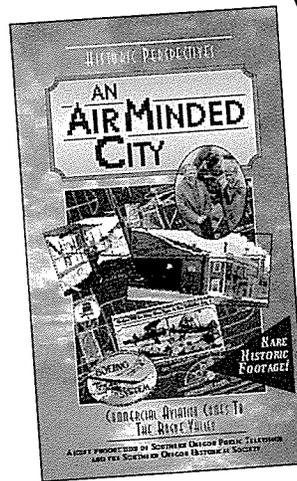
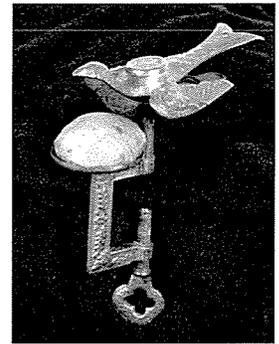
KCMX Radio (880 on the AM dial) continues with "Moments in Time" every Friday at 8:30 a.m. These verbal historical vignettes, narrated by Society Archivist/Historian Bill Alley, are sponsored by Bear Creek Corporation.



MYSTERY OBJECT OF THE MONTH

October's Mystery Object
Sewing Bird

October's mystery object was a sewing bird. By pressing down on the tail, the beak becomes a clamp to hold a piece of cloth. The seamstress could then hold the cloth tight in one hand and sew with the other. Congratulations to August's Mystery Object Winner, Charles Swingle of Medford, who identified the corn shucking peg.



VIDEO WINS AWARD!

The Southern Oregon Historical Society and Southern Oregon Public Television are the proud recipients of an American Association for State and Local History Certificate of Commendation for the video production, "An Air Minded City." The AASLH Annual Awards Program is the nation's most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of local, state, and regional history. "An Air Minded City" contains rare film footage, historic photographs, and manuscript materials that bring to life the development of aviation in the Rogue Valley.

The video is available at the History Store in the Rogue Valley Mall and at the History Center in Medford at a cost of \$19.95 for members, \$24.95 for non-members, and will make a terrific Christmas gift for your aviation and history enthusiasts.

Southern Oregon Historical Society sites Phone: (541) 773-6536 unless listed otherwise

HISTORY CENTER

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

RESEARCH LIBRARY

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

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

5th and C, Jacksonville
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sunday, noon to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

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

U.S. HOTEL

3rd and California, Jacksonville
Upstairs room available for rent.

HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road (between Central Point & Jacksonville) Open by appointment.
(541) 773-2675.

HISTORY STORE

Rogue Valley Mall, Medford
Daily, Mall hours
(541) 774-9129

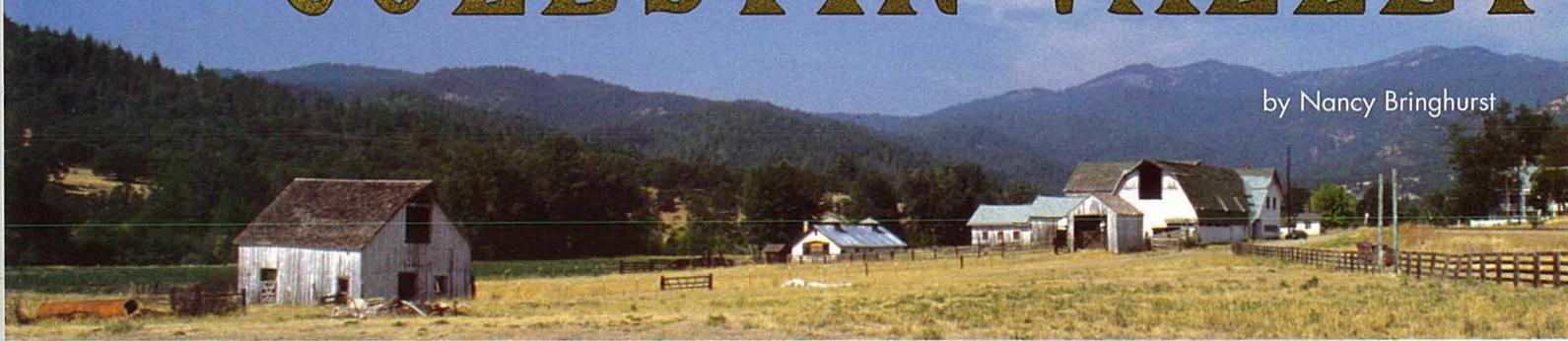
ASHLAND BRANCH

208 Oak, Ashland
Wed - Sat, 12:00 to 4:00pm
(541) 488-4938

They Found a Slice of Paradise:

PIONEERS OF THE COLESTIN VALLEY

by Nancy Bringhurst

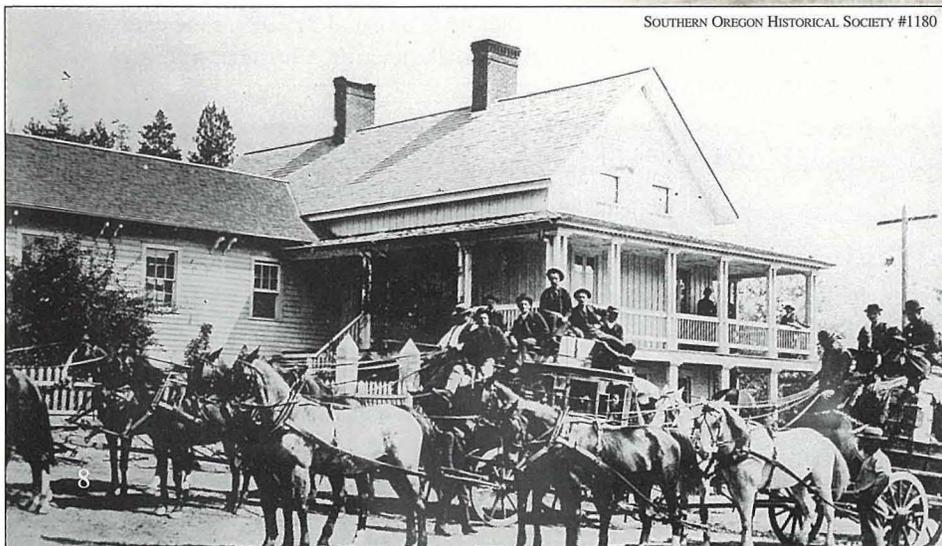


Tucked deep in the Siskiyou Mountains is a quiet, humble little valley, rich in nature's gifts and brimming with tales of those who have passed through, or stayed, as they wound their way over the mountains. The Colestin Valley, also called the Cottonwood Valley, was for years at the heart of the major route over the Siskiyou. Thus it has borne in turn the prints of Indian moccasins, and the boots of trappers, miners, loggers, and settlers.

At the northern end of the valley is Mount Ashland, snow-blanketed in winter and lavish with wildflowers—some of which are found nowhere else on earth—from late spring through early fall. The ever-snowcapped, imperial Mount Shasta looms high in the south. To the east juts Pilot Rock, stark and bare. The valley itself is a potpourri of meadows, hills and ponds, walls of ancient sea-bed rocks, remnant rocks of volcanic flows, and the tributaries of Cottonwood Creek, which wiggles its way down the valley before emptying into the Klamath River.

Stretching south across the Oregon-California border, the valley provided the Indian inhabitants with an abundance of fish and game, as well as a pristine panorama. But this was before the landscape was touched by European Americans.

Built in the late 1850s by Rufus Cole, Cole's Station bustles with activity as the last regular stagecoaches stop at the hotel in 1887, the year rail service was completed over the Siskiyou.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1180

Peter Skene Ogden, a Hudson's Bay Company explorer and trapper, was the first white man known to have crossed over the Siskiyou. In his diary entry for February 9, 1827, Ogden expressed his pleasure at finding less than a foot of snow at the summit, but bemoaned the fact that parts were so steep "it was with difficulty the horses were prevented from falling."

By the 1830s, what began as an Indian trail had become the Hudson's Bay Pack Trail, bearing increasing amounts of traffic by trappers, emigrants, and even livestock. In 1837, Ewing Young drove 680 cattle over the Siskiyou, a small number compared to the 1,200 cattle, 600 sheep and 200 horses Joel Walker drove over the mountains in 1843.

Though a few seasonal wagons crossed the mountains in 1851, most travel was by pack train.² But it was the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and in Jacksonville in 1851 that promoted the importance and use of the trail and the pioneer settlements in this remote and hidden valley. It was this trail that was used to supply the hordes of miners who scrambled to Northern California and Southern Oregon, and it was these miners ravaging the landscape to extract the gold who shared much of the responsibility for destroying the lifeways of the local Indians.

One writer, who wisely remained anonymous, described the prospectors as "A mixed and motley crowd—a restless, roving, rummaging, ragged multitude never before reared in the rookeries of man."³ Certainly there were exceptions. When, in 1894, prospector Byron Cole died at the age of sixty-nine, he was remembered fondly as "an honest upright citizen, scrupulously exact in making good his promises and keeping his honor unsullied."⁴

Lured by the cry of "gold," Byron and his brother, Rufus, left Putnam County, New York, in 1851 and traveled to Oregon via the Isthmus of Panama. They soon changed professions, forsaking mining to run pack trains for ten years, supplying those miners who persevered. In 1852, they homesteaded ranches in the Colestin Valley under the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850.

Rufus Cole built his first house adjacent to the Hudson's Bay Pack Trail, which in 1855 became a territorial road. His place served as a hotel for

PHOTO COURTESY OF PENNY MEADS



Wilmer Hilt, left, (nephew of John Hilt) and Colestin pioneer Rufus Cole survey the valley from horseback in Hilt, 1912.

At left, Rufus Cole's ranch and stage stop still straddle the heart of the pastoral Colestin Valley.

investigations and findings that the original trail was farther east.⁶ By the time the toll road over the Siskiyou was completed in 1859, Rufus had a well-developed residence where weary travelers on the daily stagecoach could eat and rest before the arduous trip over the mountains. Cole's Station served as a regular stage stop for almost thirty years. In the mid-1880s, the Southern Pacific Railroad heading north from Sacramento terminated at Cole's Station. Travelers continued their journey by stage over the mountains until 1887, when the railroad and Tunnel 13 were completed. Cole's Station housed the first telegraph office in the area as well as a post office.

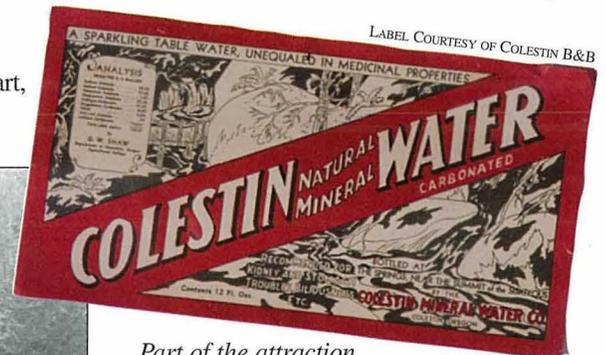
Byron, responding this time to the lure of his childhood sweetheart, sold his ranch to Rufus and returned to New York to win the

hand of Chloe Ann Knox. They returned to Oregon, bought land north of his brother's that included a mineral spring, and there raised ten children.

Anticipating the completion of the railroad, Byron was confident that if he built a handsome hotel, advertised the medicinal qualities of the mineral water from his spring, and provided healthy recreation in the fresh air of the beautiful valley, he could attract a grateful clientele. The hotel was completed in 1881, a bit early for the train, but this clever and successful entrepreneur was ready, and indeed it was a grand success for many years. The resort also provided a certain romantic ambience: Dorothy Sanborn Kelley recalled that her English father, Ivor Paley, while making a map in Medford in 1912, spent a weekend at the Colestin Resort. There he met and swept Dorothy's mother off her feet.

After Byron's death in 1894, his wife managed the resort until 1900, when she rented out the property and retired to Ashland. When the Pacific Highway opened in 1915, both the railroad excursion trips and the hotel lost their popularity. By 1919, the Cole family, financially strapped, was eager to sell the resort; George Avgeris was eager to buy, and William Lampert, a friend and businessman from Medford, was willing

the summer wagon stages from 1855 until 1859, when he moved his house to its present site just south of the Oregon-California border. Here, according to Wilmer Hilt, the house became the two top stories of his new home.⁵ Until recently, it was believed the Siskiyou Wagon Road authorized by an act of the Territorial Legislature in 1858 followed the Hudson's Bay Pack Trail, and that Rufus Cole's second home was his first. There appears to be firm evidence now to prove otherwise. Richard Silva, a mapper of emigrant trails, has shown through old surveys, numerous diaries, and on-foot



LABEL COURTESY OF COLESTIN B&B

Part of the attraction of Cole's Resort was the mineral water, billed as having a salutary effect on health and available fresh or bottled.

to lend George \$10,000 for 240 acres with only a handshake and Avgeris's word for collateral. In 1923 the loan was repaid in full.

Avgeris had come a long way for a twelve-year-old boy who'd left Greece in 1902, a stowaway with cheese, bread and five cents in his pocket. When George's brothers, Gus and Theo, joined him, the enterprising and creative trio developed a lumber business, a sawmill, and a stamp mill for crushing ore. They also bottled and sold the Colestin mineral water. At one time they owned close to 3,000 acres



Byron Cole built the Colestin Mineral Springs Resort in 1881, and it enjoyed a brisk business after the railroad came through in 1887, as the crowded porch attests. It remained a popular getaway until just before World War I.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #1117

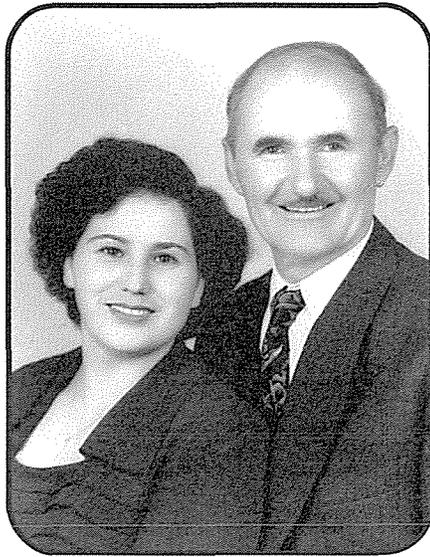
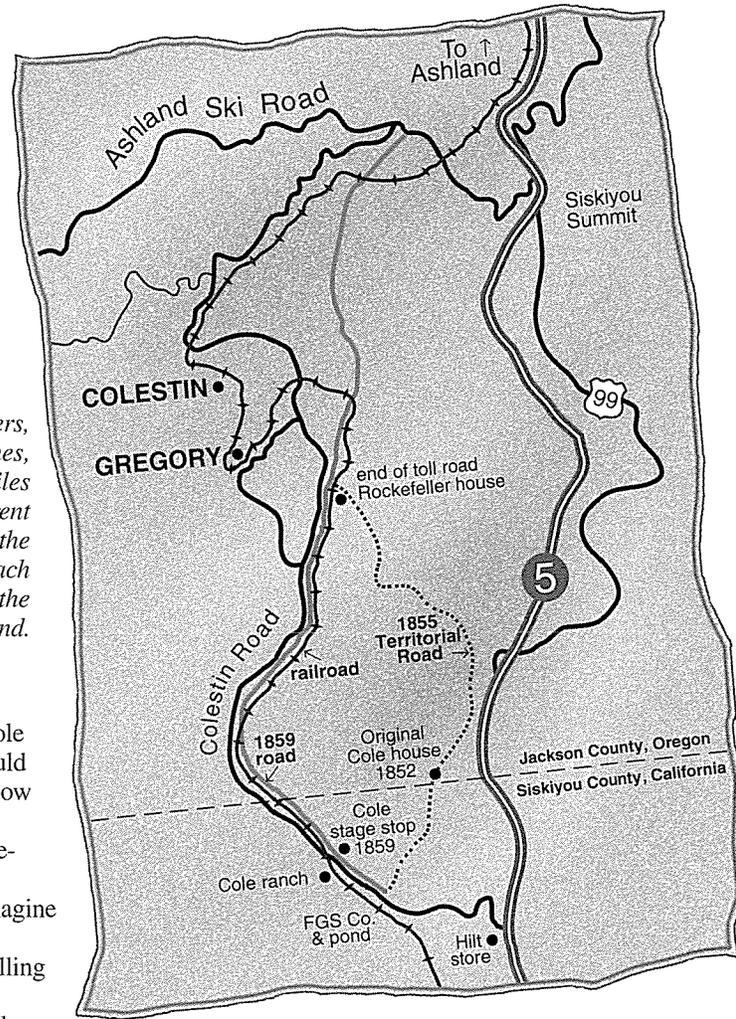


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

George Avgeris, who bought Byron Cole's resort in 1919, went home to Greece in 1949 and married Katina. The two raised three children in the Colestin Valley.

Over the years, trappers, miners, stagecoaches, trains, and automobiles have followed different routes through the Colestin Valley to reach Siskiyou Summit and the Rogue Valley beyond.



in the valley. Gus ran the little store and post office; Theo ran cattle and goats, and made cheese that went to markets across the country.

In 1949, George, then fifty-eight, returned to Greece for a wife. Katina was twenty-eight. In an outfit befitting a new bride, she was wearing heels and a good dress when she stepped off the train into three feet of snow in the Colestin.

"I'd never seen snow," she said. "I cried for a long time, but I'd rather have died than go back to Greece. How could I face our 200 wedding guests?"

1983, the hotel was torn down; the roof Byron Cole had built so long ago could no longer weather the snow loads. However, pictures remain of the grand three-story hotel with its wide verandas, and we can imagine guests gathering around campfires singing and telling stories under the stars.

About the time the Cole brothers left New York, John Hilt left Illinois heading for California's gold fields. In his travels he met and became partners with William Smith, a prospector from Michigan. They were successful miners and ranchers in Northern California. In 1877, Hilt bought a sawmill built by Smith on the west fork of Cottonwood Creek. He moved the mill upstream and operated it there until selling to the Northern California Lumber Company. The company moved the mill closer to the Southern Pacific railroad. Buildings were needed to house and supply the workers, and as a result, a town they named Hilt grew.

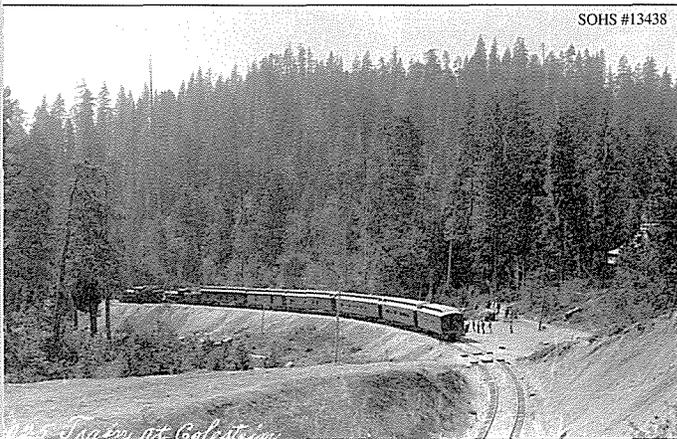
In 1910, Fruit Growers Supply Company of California (FGS), a subsidiary of Sunkist, acquired the timberlands, sawmill and small box factory from Northern California Lumber. Today only a handful of buildings remain, but in the early 1940s Hilt was a thriving town where a population of some 700 FGS employees and their families lived in company houses. The Americans lived in the main part of town;

the Italian community was across the tracks in West Side.

Because the name Colestin originated with the Cole resort, there are many who believe the Colestin Valley ends at the Oregon border and therefore does not include Hilt. However, according to historian Jeff LaLande, the Colestin Valley is considered to extend to where Cottonwood Creek flows into the Klamath River.

The Coles, Avgerises and Hilt were the most prominent families in the Colestin Valley, but there were other pioneers who found their way there. William Rockefeller, a cousin to John D. Rockefeller, according to his daughter, was "naturally a rover" who found it difficult to settle in one spot for long. Alice Rockefeller was five years old in 1854 when her family spent the winter working at Rufus Cole's first ranch. The following spring, the Rockefellers bought a homestead, originally a donation land grant to Samuel Hughes, four miles north of Cole's. By 1858, their place had become a regular stage stop, which they operated until Rockefeller took his reluctant family off to the Salmon River mines of Idaho.⁷

In 1908, Rufus sold Cole's Station to William J. Bray, who ranched there until



A Southern Pacific passenger train stops to let guests disembark at the Colestin Mineral Springs Resort.

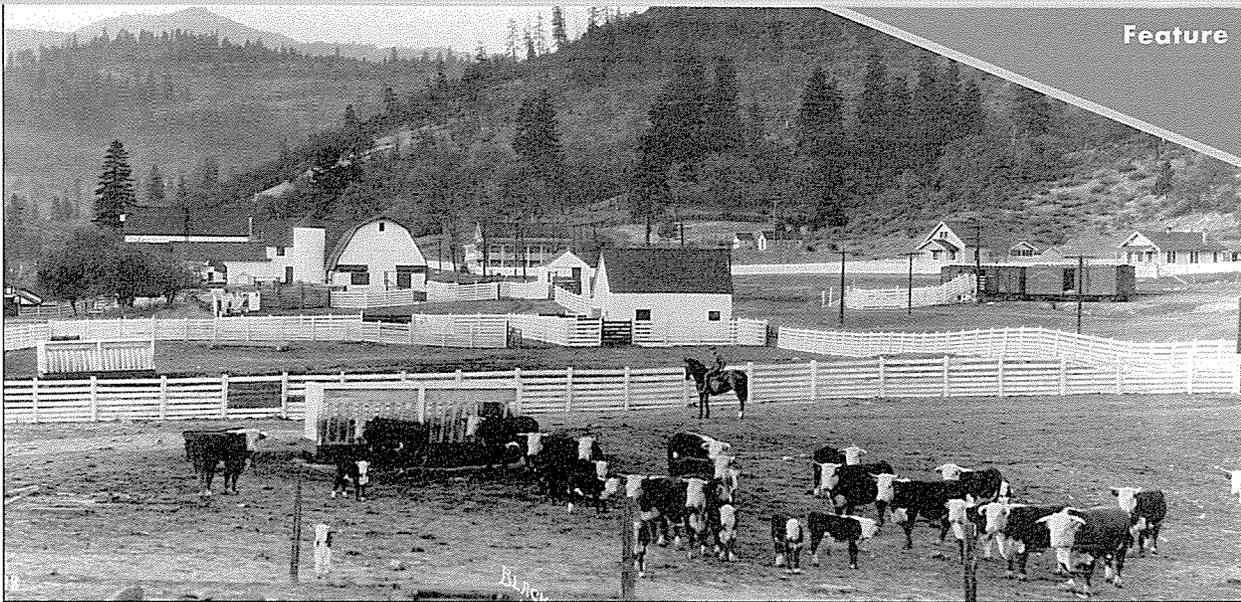
Her husband had no intention of leaving the valley. Their son Steve says, "My dad loved this land like no other human being I know. He was part of this land." George died in 1972. Though she lived for a time in Medford, Katina later returned to live on the land she had grown to love.

Katina and George raised their three children on the first floor of the hotel. In

PHOTO COURTESY OF PENNY MEADS

Cole's Station, at center back between the two barns, looks out over the corrals and pastures of what new owner Reginald Parsons called the Mount Crest Ranch in this 1915 photo. The fence line in the background marks the railroad tracks.

SOHS # 12973



1914 when he sold it to Reginald Parsons. Under the name Mount Crest Ranch, Parsons raised purebred show cattle and Morgan horses. In 1927, Parsons sold the ranch to William A. Bray, son of the man he'd bought the ranch from. Until 1941, Braecrest Ranch was a large cattle and dairy operation. The Depression years were difficult, but there were enough warm memories that Marjorie Bray Spear returned in May 1999 to sleep in her childhood bedroom. One of her fondest memories is of the engineers handing her mountain lilies they'd picked when they stopped for water to cool the train's engine.⁸

Four miles from the Brays' was the Deter Ranch, where Marjorie's Uncle Milton, Aunt Grace and their three children lived. The Deter Post Office and store was in their home from 1920 to

1931. Marjorie's brother Bill remembers going to summer school in the little white Deter schoolhouse. "When mother saw how my teacher at Hilt beat me black and blue, she yanked me out of school, so I finished eighth grade during the summer," he recalls.

Most of the fifteen children in the Deter school came from the Rametes family, a Portuguese family living on one of the five homesteads nearby. One of those cabins was used by the DeAutremont brothers in the famous Tunnel 13 train robbery in 1923. The school and the cabins have since crumbled.

There have been a number of owners between the Brays and Fred and Ilona Marken, the present owners, but once again guests can spend the night at Rufus Cole's old stage stop, now Colestin Organic Farm and Bed & Breakfast.

Many others have left their trace on the Colestin Valley.

With lumber bought from George Avgeris, Max Temple built his homestead near Cole's Station. He later sold it to Max Ryce; it remains in the same family today. Ryce, born in 1901 in Idaho, was a difficult and an unpredictable man who quit college three months before graduating to go fruit tramping. In 1926, he married Grace Evelyn Corthell. While Ryce was a forest fire ranger for the Klamath National Forest, he and his family lived in an FGS house in Hilt. From there they moved to the old Civil Conservation Corps camp nearby before finally settling in the valley.

"My father wasn't always easy, but he could recite poetry for three days without stopping," his daughter,

Maurine Lockwood, says. "He played the guitar, had a vast medical knowledge, and could tie flies more beautifully than anyone I know.

"My brother and sister and I would walk all the way to the hotel store to buy candy that was so old the chocolate turned white. But oh, was it delicious! I remember going with my grandfather,



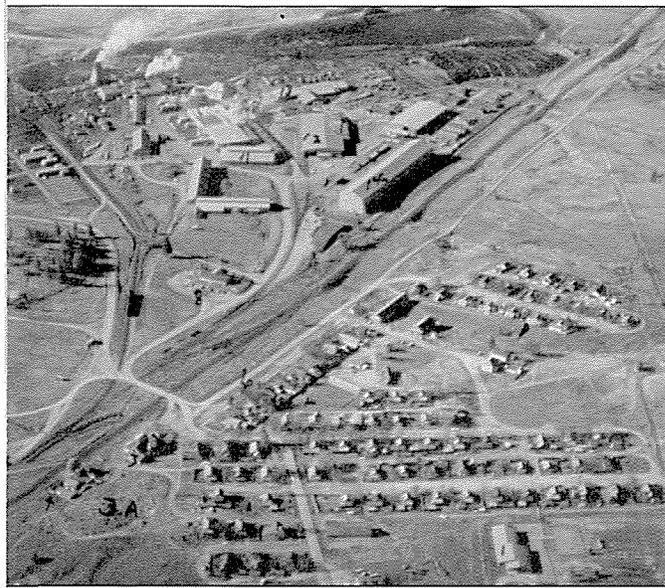
PHOTO COURTESY OF COLESTIN B & B

Ranch hands fill the hay mow of this barn on the Cole ranch. William A. Bray owned the ranch at the time this photo was taken.

Edgar Corthell, on his rounds as night watchman at FGS. When he found hoboes sleeping in the lumber piles, he'd put them in jail for the night so they'd have a warm place to sleep."

Not far from the Ryce place is Finas Orey King's homestead, now much enlarged. Another homestead still in existence was bought from a dying man about 1939 by Rocky Flint, a San Pedro, California, stevedore, though for years everyone thought it belonged to a Mr. Becker who'd squatted there, and who could blame him? The owner hadn't been there for years.

Now the real owner wanted to sell his place. "How much do you have in your pocket?" he asked Flint from his hospital bed, and for \$300 Flint had 160 acres, a



In this aerial view, homes, a store, school, hotel and other businesses spread out around the Fruit Growers Supply mill and box factory that for decades was the heart of the town of Hilt. The mill and box factory were phased out in 1973.

house, corrals, fruit trees and a disgruntled squatter who supposed Flint would want him to pack up his goats and be gone. Flint allowed him to stay, but no one knows for sure what eventually happened to Becker, his goats or his 1923 Dodge truck. Flint is gone now, but his wife, Dorothy Flint, still spends time there. "I absolutely fell in love with the place the first time I saw it in 1960 when we came for a vacation. I still love it here," she says.

Northwest of the King homestead was Poker Tom's shack. How he got his name remains a mystery, but likely he was involved in the weeklong poker games at the Colestin Hotel. He sold his 160 acres for \$1,000 in cash to Wes and Tess Morris, who had come from Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in the early 1940s. They first lived at the Edwards' place north of Poker Tom's. Having no desire to live in Tom's hovel, they built a new house, which still stands. Morris earned thirty dollars a month running Harry Furch's ranch nearby, but that ranch is long gone.

According to Maurine Lockwood, "I.O. (Ike) Edwards and his wife had 200-250 goats they milked by hand; Mrs. Edwards knew them all by name. Up the road, Theo and Grace Avgeris had the prettiest place going. They had seven male goats, yet their place was spick and span and never smelled."

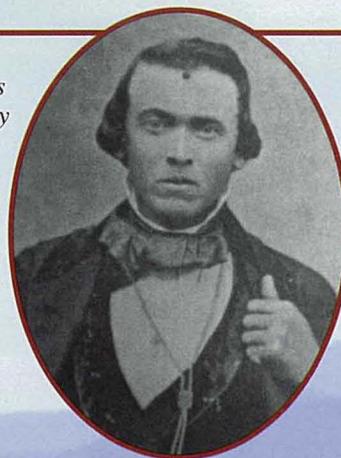
North of the Edwards' place was John Calabokus's homestead, built about 1918. No one remembers the correct spelling of his name, but they remember he raised goats and sold milk to Theo Avgeris for cheese making. William Rooker bought the homestead from Ray Neddefer in 1960 and lived there for twenty years. The house was destroyed by fire.

A place known as "the hanging house" belonged to a woman who, the story goes, hanged herself from her pear tree after her son went to war and never returned and her husband went to town and never returned. The house is gone, but the tree and the cross nailed to it remain.

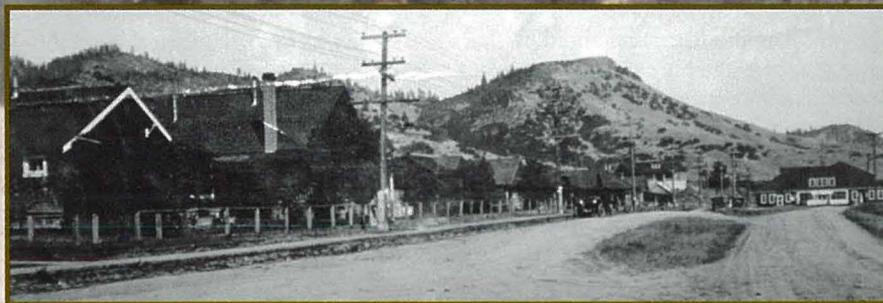
Another surviving homestead belonged to William and Margaret Ferguson, their five sons and three daughters. Ferguson was a carpenter; he also drove the school bus taking the valley children to Hilt, where they boarded another bus to school in Yreka. Since there was no high school in Hilt and the roads to Ashland were too poor, Oregon paid to have students bused to the closest school in California.

Still relatively remote, the Colestin Valley is no longer as isolated as it once was.

Pioneer John Hilt, at right in this 1857 portrait, and his wife Nancy Buckner Hilt, below, left their stamp on the Colestin Valley.



HISTORIC PHOTOS COURTESY OF PENNY MEADS



The Hilt store, upper right, and at far right in this 1920s street scene, has vanished along with the row houses that once were home to workers at the mill and box factory.

Telephone service didn't arrive in the Colestin until 1981, and residents still go a distance for groceries and mail. But with the advent of better roads, four-wheel-drive vehicles, and snow plows, the Siskiyou Mountains and the valley below are more easily accessed. The train passes through twice a day carrying only freight.

Escapees from city life are slowly pioneering their way into the Colestin,

building homes amidst an amalgam of yurts, cabins, mobile and modular homes, and even a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center.

For the Indians who summered in the valley those long years ago, the changed landscape would be lamentable, but for those of us living in a time of overpopulation and diminishing wilderness, the Colestin Valley still resembles a little slice of paradise. 🏡

SECOND WAVE OF PIONEERS CAME FROM EUROPE

There was another sort of pioneer in Hilt in the early 1900s. Along with the Americans who filtered into the Colestin Valley over the years, there were many Italian immigrants who found their way to the Hilt area to carve a better life.

Surely, men like Benvenuto (Ben) Cappello, who left Italy in 1909, were pioneers. Cappello came to Hilt in 1910 and, like most of the immigrants, saved to send for his family. Most of the houses were built by FGS, but not Cappello's: "My father packed lumber in snow up to his waist to build our house himself," says his son Frank, who was born and raised in Hilt. "The company provided the lumber for the house and supplied water. They deducted a monthly rent of \$3 from his pay."

The women often worked in the box factory office or, as Frank's mother did, took in boarders and did laundry for the bachelors—no easy job when she had to carry the household water herself.

Like Frank Cappello, many of the immigrants' children born and raised in Hilt spent their entire working lives at FGS. Even today, some of their grandchildren work in the FGS office in Hilt, even though the mill and box factory are gone, FGS still owns the land and maintains an office.

Despite the hard work, there were joyful times for the immigrant families, with picnics, singing, dancing, and bocci ball. Their children tell stories of baseball championship games played as far away as San Francisco, and of winemaking. During the Depression, the Italians made their own wine from grapes brought by railroad cars from the Napa Valley. Their children loved crushing the fruit with their bare feet.

For amusement, Frank Cappello says, "We'd hop the train in Hilt, ride to Tunnel 13, jump off, walk through the tunnel,

and hitch a ride home. And when the loggers returned from the woods, they'd get drunk, sing about being mountain panthers, and toss coins in the air. We'd dive into the snow for the money. When the snow melted we'd go back to the spot and look for more."

When Giovanni (John) Marin was eighteen, he followed his sister, Ben Cappello's wife, to Hilt. He worked for FGS until he was permanently disabled by a stroke at age forty-one. "My mother raised four children alone, and cared for my father until he died at seventy-eight," Tony Marin said. "We killed rabbits, birds, deer, anything we could to provide food."

Tony was nine when he began working summers for the Lower Mount Crest Ranch, where the thoughtful foreman, Fred Baylis, would send chickens and eggs home with him. Tony worked for FGS until the company phased out the mill and box factory in 1973. At that time, he and his wife Inez were paying \$32.50 a month for a three-bedroom house in Hilt.

When Remo Trinca's father, Giovanni, came, he first worked summers in sawmills and headed south for the winter. The summers of 1913 and 1914 he piled lumber in Hilt. In 1919, he took a year-around job that paid four dollars for a ten-hour day, and a house with no indoor plumbing for seven dollars a month rent. It was hard but steady work even during the Depression. "But my father didn't want us to end up working there," Remo says. "He told me he'd

rather I became a hobo on the tracks than spend my life in the box factory."

Remo and his brother Gino followed their father's wishes, but they didn't leave Hilt. They owned and ran the company store from 1957 to 1961, and at the same time ran the service station in Hilt. Gino eventually sold his share of the station, but Remo spent forty-five years there before selling to Penny Meads in 1998. One can still get a famous "Hilt-burger" at the station, and browse through Trinca's large photograph collection of faces and places from the past.

Those first-generation FGS workers have passed on, but ever since the mill



This steam engine and other antique logging and mining equipment can still be seen at the Hilt service station and store.

closed, many of their children have been meeting the first Sunday of every August to picnic and celebrate the colorful memories they cherish from their Hilt days.

Like the sightless describing an elephant, names, dates, places and events may take on different raiments according to each one's memory. But these are their memories. ■

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOS BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Nancy Bringhurst writes children's books, music and articles from her Ashland mountaintop.

ENDNOTES:

1. Jeff LaLande, *First Over the Siskiyous*, (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987) p. 53.
2. Richard Silva, emigrant trail mapper

3. Siskiyou County Museum, Yreka, California, exhibit text.
4. Southern Oregon Pioneer Association Records, Vol.11, p.13.
5. Wilmer Hilt, "Origin and History of Hilt," *Siskiyou Pioneer*, Vol.1, No.5, (1951).
6. Daniel G. Major, U.S. Astronomer and Surveyor, "Field Notes, California and Oregon Boundary, Contract of 1 October 1867."

7. Southern Oregon Historical Society, account by Alice Rockefeller.
8. Author's oral interviews with: Steve and Cheri Avgeris, Charles Brown, George Burrell, Marjorie Bray Spear, William Bray, Frank and Ida Cappello, Dorothy Flint, Warren Fox, Maurine Lockwood, Ilona and Fred Marken, Tony and Inez Marin, William Rooker, Richard Silva, and Remo Trinca

Jackson County Courthouse:

PRESERVATION IN PROGRESS

by Louise A. Watson

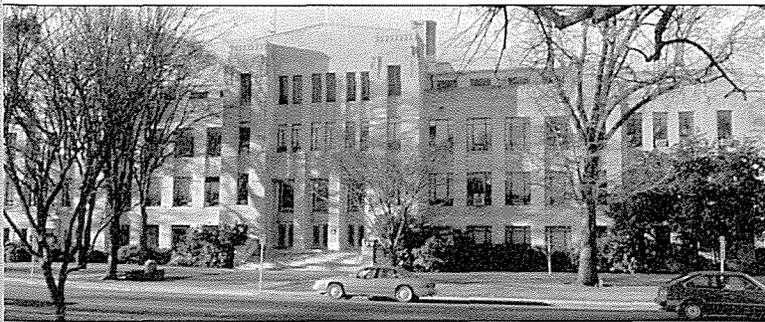


PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

A Historic Structures Report now in preparation will guide the county in renovating the County Courthouse while preserving its significant architectural features.

Cross, a courtroom, and other judicial spaces. At that time, of course, Link didn't have to plan for earthquake safety, computer wiring, air-conditioning ducts, or a modern communications system. Accommodating these needs while preserving the beautiful materials of yesteryear are the challenges that present and future architects face as they keep the courthouse up to date.

"The materials of the past can sometimes be rare and hard to find," said Fitzgibbon. "This makes them valuable, like rare coins become valuable."⁹



PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Preserving decorative architectural details will keep the building and its history alive.

Louise A. Watson is a Medford free-lance writer and editor.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert Russell, Jr., "Citadels of Justice: The Courthouses of Jackson County," *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1999, pp. 11-12.
2. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, prepared by Kay Atwood for SOHS, 2 Dec. 1985, Item No. 7, p. 2.
3. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 31 Aug. 1932, 1:1.
4. Center for Population Research and Census, Portland State University, 1 July 1998.
5. Henry Fitzgibbon, e-mail to author, 1 Dec. 1998.
6. Margaret Watson, interview by author, 1 June 1999.
7. Nomination, Item No. 8, p. 1.
8. *1931-32 Oregon Blue Book*, (State Printing Department, Salem, Ore., 1931), p. 119
9. Fitzgibbon, 1 Dec. 1998.

The year was 1932. The Great Depression had struck, but Jackson County citizens were celebrating. Civic pride outstripped economic gloom on September 1 as the new County Courthouse was dedicated.

After the flowery speeches, about 6,000 citizens toured the building.¹ They marveled over the Indiana limestone exterior, the Ashland granite front steps, the Alaskan marble hallways, solid mahogany doors and paneling inside, and the wrought iron light fixtures in the lobby. Among other things, they saw the jail keeper's quarters on the fourth floor, the stage behind the auditorium,² and the Alex Sparrow Memorial Clinic, honoring the county judge who died after being injured while working on plans for the new courthouse.³

The jail keeper's quarters, the stage, and the clinic are gone now, but the marble, mahogany, and wrought iron remain amid the computers and other furniture of the modern office. Meeting the needs of a growing county population (172,000-plus by 1997) has resulted in four renovations of the courthouse since 1932.⁴ A planned fifth renovation will be the first one done with the guidance of a Historic Structures Report, being prepared by the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Portland architect Henry Fitzgibbon is doing the architectural assessment for the Society. "The [report's] purpose is to identify the historic fabric of the existing building" and provide a document that will guide future use and maintenance of the building in ways that protect its historic elements.⁵

Margaret Watson, curator of Hanley Farm and liaison to the county for the assessment, described the Historic Structures Report as a "blueprint."

"It reviews the history of the building, the materials used, and the materials [currently] existing. It describes what

history is significant... it is a blueprint on how to successfully live within that structure and preserve those things that make it significant."

The Society got involved in 1998, she said, as a result of the county's application to the Society's historic preservation grant program. "We think [the courthouse] is one of the more important structures in the valley," Watson said.⁶

By 1925, a growing county's needs had outstripped the capacity of the existing courthouse in Jacksonville. By 1927, when the county seat moved to Medford, city officials agreed to furnish a permanent home for the new structure, eventually choosing the site of Washington School, the city's first public school. Montana architect John G. Link

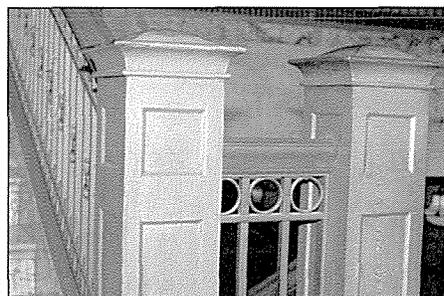


PHOTO BY MACGEE JAMES

The courthouse's wrought-iron railings and Alaskan marble stairs wowed Jackson County citizens when the courthouse was built in 1932.

won the contract to design the building, with construction costs estimated at \$265,000. He immediately set to work drawing up plans reflecting county wishes for a courthouse without any "gingerbread" effects, a structure with "straight line simplicity."⁷

The county's population in 1930 was only 32,918,⁸ and Link's original plans called for all county offices to be housed in the four-story building, including the Medford Irrigation District, the Red



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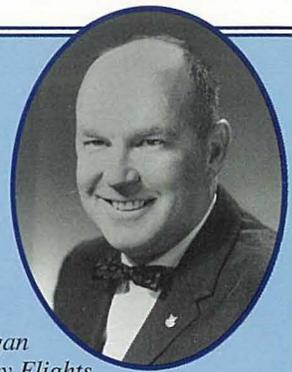
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George Milligan: A VISION OF MERCY

by William Alley



SOHS #16477

*George Milligan
founded Mercy Flights*

In 1949 Medford auto dealer Art Winetroun was stricken with polio and rushed to medical facilities in Portland. The trip by ambulance took more than twelve hours, and the patient died four days later. For George Milligan, a young Civil Aviation Administration towerman at the Medford airport, this tragedy provided another example of the Rogue Valley's dire need

enough money had been raised—almost a third of it from schoolchildren—to purchase and equip a surplus twin-engine Cessna. Milligan and several other qualified pilots signed on to fly the plane for free, and local mechanics offered to donate their time for the plane's maintenance.

The new plane, christened "Rogue's Wings of Mercy," carried its first patient to Portland on February 28, 1950. At the end of its first year of service, however, the pioneering air ambulance service found itself in a financial tailspin. Mercy Flight's woes were solved with the creation of subscription service. For one dollar for an individual, or two dollars for a family, Mercy Flights would provide emergency medical transportation for a distance of 400 miles. Soon 4,000 subscriptions had been sold.

For the next forty-nine years Mercy Flights and its Good

Samaritan flight and ground crews transported a steady stream of patients. On many occasions services were required in the midst of dramatically inclement conditions. The log books of Mercy Flights abound with tales of dramatic rescues in remote locales under weather conditions that would have deterred many other courageous pilots.

The inherent danger in Mercy Flights' selfless undertakings was brought home tragically on February 9, 1985, when a flight piloted by Milligan crashed just short of the Medford airport. All on board were killed, including Milligan, his co-pilot Dr. Henry Boehnke, a paramedic, and a patient being brought to Medford from the coast. At the time of Milligan's death, Mercy Flights had safely transported 7,320 patients.

Today, Mercy Flights, after half a century of service, continues to transport those in need. Services have been expanded to include a fleet of ground ambulances, but founder George Milligan's dream of providing swift emergency transport at the lowest possible cost still guides the organization he founded. It is a lasting testament to a visionary who lost his own life in the pursuit of his dream. 🏠

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

Milligan, center, discusses engine maintenance with two volunteer airplane mechanics, circa 1960.



SOHS #16411

Milligan points out a flight destination to Mercy Flights pilots and crewmen in this 1950s photo.

for an air ambulance service. Milligan set out to make this dream a reality.

Mercy Flights, Inc., the country's first nonprofit air ambulance service, was organized that August, and Milligan began pitching his idea to anyone who would listen. Milligan's vision was to provide at-cost medical transport for anyone who could afford it, and at no cost to those who couldn't. By the end of the year



SOHS #16471



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