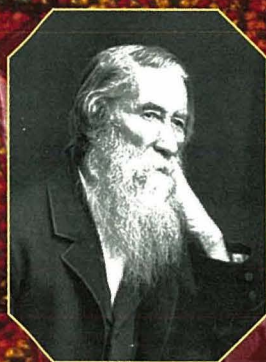


SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*

**MORE THAN A
PHOTOGRAPHER**

**The Many Faces
of Peter Britt**



**WHERE PADDLE WHEELS
ONCE CHURNED**

**Birders'
Paradise—Upper
Klamath Lake**

**DONORS HELP
COLLECTIONS GROW**

**Do You Have
an Artifact in
the Closet?**



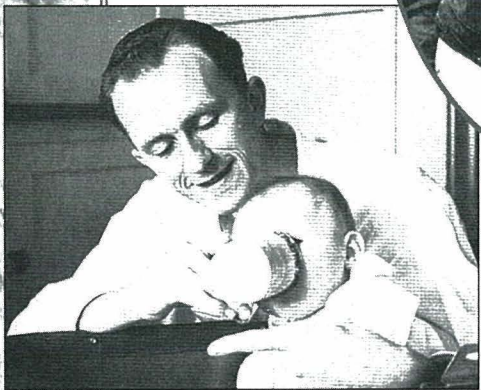
**MARCH 2000
Vol. 2, No. 3**



*Otto Frohnmayer in
his law office, 1977.*



*Otto and Marabel in 1936
shortly after their wedding.*



*Otto Frohnmayer feeding
nine-month-old daughter
Mira, the first of four
children, 1939.*



*Five-year-old twin
brothers, Herman, left,
and Otto, about 1910.*

*Otto, right, and Bill
Bowerman (co-founder of
Nike, Inc.), enjoy a winter
picnic, about 1937.*



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE FROHNMAYER FAMILY

Otto J. Frohnmayer

1906-2000

With the death of Otto Frohnmayer on January 31, the Society lost one of its strongest supporters and the Society Foundation lost one of its founding directors.

Frohnmayer came to Medford in 1933 after graduating from law school. He married Marabel Braden in 1936 and they raised four children. For sixty-seven years, Frohnmayer practiced law in Medford as a senior partner in Frohnmayer, Deatherage, Pratt, Jamieson, Clarke & Moore. He was a founding member of Mercy Flights; served as committee chair for the group that raised more than \$2 million to build Rogue Valley Memorial Hospital (now Rogue Valley Medical Center); raised funds for the renovation of the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater; was a leader in the development of downtown Medford; and served on a host of community non-profit boards.

Otto Frohnmayer, devoted husband and father, respected attorney, philanthropist, and community builder, will be greatly missed.

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.

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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HERITAGE
*Today***FEATURE:****The Other Side of Peter Britt**

by John Darlingp. 8



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY #17005

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RECLAMATION, KLAMATH AREA OFFICE**SUNDAY DRIVING**

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by Doug Foster

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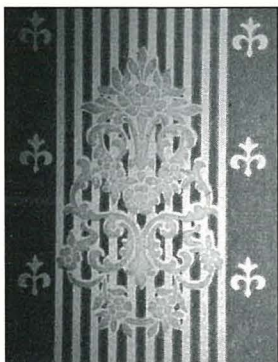
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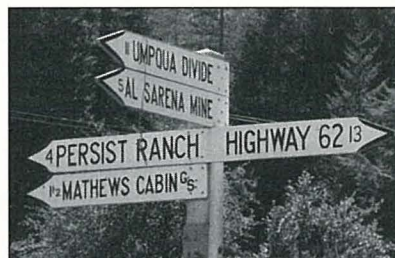


PHOTO COURTESY OF MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE

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#B625, B439, 86.7.74, B9.3 & B574

SOHS #17004

ON THE COVER

Glasses with a grape
motif, a bottle of Britt port, an
antique clock, and an artist's
brushes and paints reflect the
life of Peter Britt, photographed
in his later years.

Upper Klamath Lake

by Doug Foster

PHOTO BY AUTHOR

When the Cascade Mountain passes are clear of snow, drive east sixty miles to enjoy stunning views of Upper Klamath Lake, the centerpiece of the Klamath Basin, a land of "big sky" scenery quite different from the Rogue Valley. Upper Klamath Lake is such a vast lake—at more than twenty-five miles long, the biggest in Oregon—that steamships once plied its waters.

The first steamers appeared on the lake in the 1880s. On the sixty-foot steamer Oregon, launched in 1899, a full-day excursion from Klamath Falls to Pelican Bay Resort cost seventy-five cents, provided you brought your own lunch.¹

The steamer Winema, launched in 1905, was considered "the queen of the lake" because it was twice the size of any other steamer on the upper lake and because it looked much like the paddle-wheelers Mark Twain once piloted on the Mississippi. Powered by a 14,000 pound boiler, the 125-foot Winema had three decks and could hold well over 200 people. Besides hauling lumber, the ship ferried excursionists on regular runs across the lake until 1914.²

Pelican Bay, at the north end of the lake, was the most popular destination at the turn of the century. Railroad magnate E. H.

Harriman even had a private lodge there from 1907 to 1909. Pelican Bay still remains the premier destination on the lake because its spring-fed waters remain cool and clear in the summer and because it is nestled between the tall evergreens of the Winema National Forest and the marshes of Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

Rocky Point Resort has hosted visitors to Pelican Bay since 1912; the resort restaurant, perched on a rocky outcrop over the

water, still serves hungry guests and offers stunning vistas of the lake and the Cascade Mountains. (The restaurant is open on weekends only in the spring, and daily from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. Call 541-356-2242 for hours.)

Other areas of Upper Klamath Lake are less conventionally scenic. Much of the lake is shallow and soft-bottomed: stand up and you'll sink into the oozy muck. And it is highly eutrophic. Summer algae blooms can turn the water into a slimy, green broth: fall into algae-choked portions of the lake in August and you'll emerge looking gooey and green. The local chamber of commerce used to worry that all that algae would impede



PHOTO BY DON HUMMEL

The view across Pelican Bay from Rocky Point has soothed the souls of visitors since 1912. At left, a white pelican—one of North America's largest birds—rises from the surface of Upper Klamath Lake.

PHOTO BY AUTHOR



Just across Recreation Creek from Rocky Point Resort, above, lie the vast marshes of Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

economic development along the lake. Ironically, harvesting blue-green algae for use as a health food supplement has become a big business, generating many millions of dollars annually. In the summer, algae harvesters can be seen anchored near the outlet of the lake, busy churning away like metallic whales, gobbling up the algae for processing, packaging, and sale.

While Upper Klamath Lake has its limitations for swimmers and water-skiers, it is terrific for wildlife enthusiasts. The lake environs are home to the largest concentration of nesting bald eagles in Oregon. And more than 80 percent of the waterfowl migrating down the Pacific Flyway each fall—well over a million ducks and geese—congregate in the Klamath Basin, and many of these can be seen on Upper Klamath Lake. The northern shoveler, a filter-feeding duck, flocks to the lake in prodigious numbers; in the fall of 1991, biologists counted more than 200,000 on the lake at one time.

American white pelicans return to the lake from their wintering grounds in March and are frequently seen on Pelican Bay as well as other parts of the lake. With eight-foot wingspans, they are the second-largest bird in North America. Unlike the brown pelicans on the coast, the white pelicans often feed collectively on top of the water, using their big net-like bills to scoop up fish. In the air, they are a majestic sight: skimming the water's surface in single-file flight, their wingbeats synchronized. ☞

Doug Foster is a writer and historian living in Ashland.

ENDNOTES

1. Harry J. Drew, "Early Transportation on Klamath Waterways," Klamath County Museum Research Paper No. 6, undated, p. 10.
2. Ibid, p. 35.

Directions: For a loop drive from the Rogue Valley take Highway 140 from Medford or Dead Indian Memorial Highway from Ashland over the Cascades to the Klamath Basin, then follow the signs to Rocky Point to admire the scenery and visit the resort. Continue south on Highway 140 toward Klamath Falls, still twenty-four miles distant; after descending Doak Mountain, the highway follows along the edge of Howard Bay for two miles, offering good opportunities for wildlife viewing. Return via Highway 66, the Greensprings route.

COURTESY OF U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, KLAMATH AREA OFFICE



The 125-foot stern-wheeler Winema is docked at the lower end of Upper Klamath Lake in this 1907 photograph. The lowland area directly across the lake is the present site of Moore Park.

Everyday Items are the Artifacts of History

by Mary Ames Sheret

Since 1946, the Southern Oregon Historical Society has collected, preserved, researched, and interpreted artifacts, documents, and photographs that connect us to our region's past. Each year through a careful screening process, the Society adds hundreds of donated items to its general history and library collections that record local events, businesses, people, culture, and changes in the region over time. These artifacts play a crucial role in preserving our cultural legacy.



#1999.15

In a small suitcase came the tools of George Laidley's life as a timber cruiser: a measuring stick, a tape, maps, notebooks, and a drinking cup.

what it was like to work for the old California Oregon Power Company, usually referred to as COPCO. From George Laidley came the tools he relied on when he worked in the woods as a timber cruiser, measuring the volume of lumber in the forests.

A large donation came from the descendants of Fred and Nancy Deuel, who moved to Medford in 1894 and lived on South Oakdale. They owned the Deuel & Kentner store and Del Rio Orchards. Among the artifacts were local school pennants, games, and sporting equipment as well as items from the store and business correspondence.

The Society also acquired a number of items associated with local schools, including a quilt given in 1940 as a farewell present to Eunice and Wallace Johnson, who taught at the Rogue Valley Elementary Christian School in the 1930s. The North Medford High School bass and snare drums that graced the window of Mountain Music store in Medford are now in the collection. And we were also delighted to receive three high school letterman's sweaters dating from a half-century ago: two worn by Bill Pruitt when he attended Prospect (1948-49) and Medford (graduated 1951) and one worn by Dean Sheldon in his senior year at Medford (1944-1945).

These items reflect a small portion of the objects donated to the Southern Oregon Historical Society in 1999. We thank everyone for their help in preserving Southern Oregon's cultural legacy for today and tomorrow.

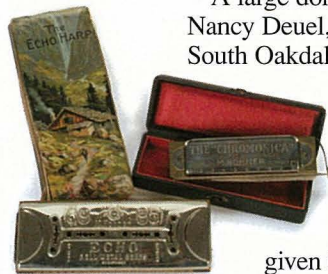
If you have an object, document, or photograph relating to the region's history that you would like to consider donating, please call the Society at 773-6536 to inquire about the donation and acceptance process. ■



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#1999.141.66 & .67

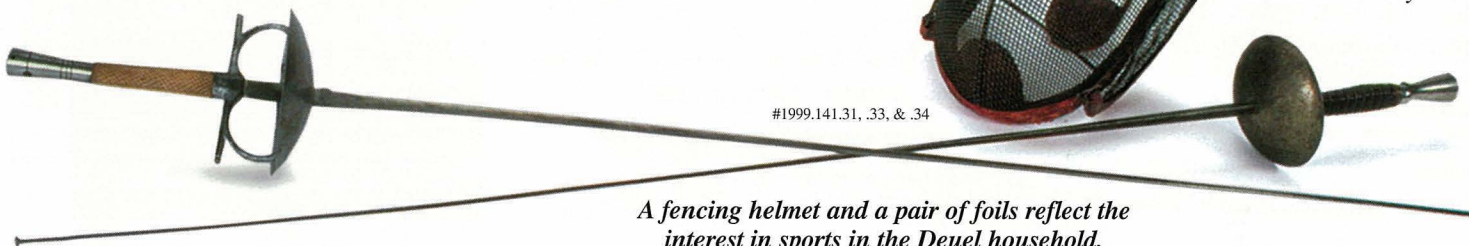


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The family of merchants and orchardists Fred and Nancy Deuel donated musical instruments, local high school sports pennants, and games. The late-1940s Prospect High School letterman's sweater is from Bill Pruitt.

In 1999, some of the artifacts added to the general history collection originated from local businesses, including Mann's, J.C. Penney, and Newberry department stores, Heath Drug Store, Micro-Trains and MEDCO.

Other donations tell more personal stories of the men and women who have lived and worked in Southern Oregon. For example, W.J. Gebhard's lineman's gear gives us a glimpse of



#1999.141.31, .33, & .34

A fencing helmet and a pair of foils reflect the interest in sports in the Deuel household.

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

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in March



PROGRAMS: *(see listings below for complete descriptions)*

	<u>DATE & TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
March Craft of the Month	Museum hours	Children's Museum	"Children's Museum Search"
Conversations with . . .	Sat., Mar. 4, 1:00 p.m.	Ashland Branch	John Enders: Ashland's Business History
Archaeology of the Upper Rogue	Sat., Mar. 4, 1:00 p.m.	Lake Creek Hist. Society	Lecture accompanies traveling exhibit
Photo Preservation Workshop	Sat., Mar. 11, 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	History Center	Preregister by March 3
The Women of Hanley Farm	Sat., Mar. 18, 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.	History Center	Heritage & legacy of the Hanley sisters
Public Heritage Fair Day	Sat., Mar. 18, 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	Jacksonville Museum	Hands-on activities for families
Honoring Talent Women	Sun., Mar. 19, 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	Talent Historical Society	3 part program

Program Details

For times and locations, see schedule above.

MARCH CRAFT OF THE MONTH

"Children's Museum Search"

Where in the museum can you find a bulldog holding an open sign? Visit the Children's Museum for a free museum search and find out why museums are so much fun! Families; 25¢.

CONVERSATIONS WITH...

John Enders, editor of the *Ashland Daily Tidings*, joins us this month. His great-grandfather, Henry G. Enders, built the Enders block in 1912 moving the business out of the "hole" as he called the Plaza. John, a fourth generation Ashlander, continues the family tradition of prominence in our community. Come and share in Ashland's business history. Free.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE UPPER ROGUE

For almost 30 years, archaeologists have studied the history of the native peoples of the Upper Rogue. The BLM and Southern Oregon Historical Society have designed a small traveling exhibit reporting this archaeology work. The exhibit is traveling to local historical societies over the course of the year. The BLM will present an archaeology slide show at each site. Call the Lake Creek Historical Society, 826-1513, for the location of this March 4 program.

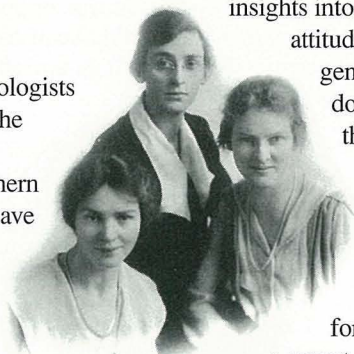


PHOTO PRESERVATION WORKSHOP

Society Library/Archives Coordinator Jacque Sundstrand presents a workshop on proper techniques for photograph storage, handling and display. Bring your problem photos for discussion. Space is limited, so sign up early. Preregistration and prepayment are required by 5:00 p.m. March 3. \$10 for Society members; \$15 for nonmembers. Call 773-6536 for more information.

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH with "The Women of Hanley Farm"

Join Society Programs Associate Dawna Curler for a trip into the past as she explores the family heritage and legacy of the Hanley sisters. Climb the Hanley family tree and trace the contributions that this pioneering family made to its community. Letters, photographs, and family papers reveal insights into the actions, thoughts, and attitudes of those from earlier generations. See what such documents have taught us about the women whose heritage links them to the farm and the rich pioneering heritage of Southern Oregon. Preregister by calling 773-6536. Fee is \$3 for Society members; \$5 for nonmembers. This program is a repeat of the presentation given during Womens History Month in 1998.

PUBLIC HERITAGE FAIR DAY

Families are invited to find out why over 2,500 fourth graders are so excited about

history. A free family day at the Children's and Jacksonville museums will provide hands-on activities including basket weaving, butter churning, and using a printing press. Come join the fun!

HONORING TALENT WOMEN

A 3-part program at the Talent Historical Society honors women this month. The program begins with a presentation by Diane Allen, titled "Abigail Scott Duniway and the Politics of Oregon Feminism," made possible by the Oregon Council for the Humanities, affiliate of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Next is a reading by Antoinette Claypole, author of "And Who Shall Unbraid Her Hair." The program concludes with a recognition ceremony honoring Talent women. For more information, call the Talent Historical Society at 512-8838.

We're looking for a few characters

Teenagers to senior citizens who love history and enjoy talking with people are needed to become costumed greeters and living history interpreters for the Society's 1911 Beekman Living History program.

The six-week training begins in April. Participants are asked to commit to one day a week, four hours per day throughout the summer. Both volunteer and a few part-time seasonal paid positions are available. Pick up applications at the Jacksonville Museum or History Center. Call 773-6536 for more information.

Deadline for applications is April 1.

EXHIBITS: *(see listings below for complete descriptions)*

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
Century of Photography: 1856-1956 Ernest Smith, Butte Falls Photographer	HISTORY CENTER	Mon. - Fri., 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Sat. 1:00 - 5:00 pm
Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Jacksonville: Boom Town to Home Town Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience Hall of Justice Yesteryear's Children's Playroom: One Hundred Years of Toys (1890-1990)	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00 am.-5:00 pm Sunday, noon - 5:00 pm
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibit	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00 am.-5:00 pm Sunday, noon - 5:00 pm
The Private Life of a Non-Public Place Streetscapes and City Views Public Places and Private Lives	ASHLAND BRANCH	Wed. - Sat., 12:00 -4:00 pm
Archaeology of the Upper Rogue	LAKE CREEK HIST. SOC.	call 826-1513 for hours

Exhibit Details

For times and locations, see schedule above.

CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 1856-1956

Highlights the work of two area photographers Peter Britt and James Verne Shangle, with cameras from the Society's collection.

ERNEST W. SMITH, BUTTE FALLS PHOTOGRAPHER

The Butte Falls Historical Society exhibit features Ernest W. Smith, Butte Falls photographer and surveyor (north window, History Center).

MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER

Explores the development of the Rogue Valley and the impact the industrial revolution had on the settlement of Southern Oregon.

JACKSONVILLE: Boom Town to Home Town

Traces the development of Jacksonville.

POLITICS OF CULTURE: Collecting the Native American Experience

Cultural history of local tribes and discussion of contemporary collecting issues.

HALL OF JUSTICE

History of the former Jackson County Courthouse.

YESTERYEAR'S CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM: One Hundred Years of Toys (1890-1990)

This Southern Oregon Antiques and Collectibles Club exhibit will run through May. One hundred years of childhood memories as antiques and collectibles fill the playroom. Delightful toys on display



include a 1920s doll swing, a child's rocker, pull toys, and a hobby horse on springs.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Explore home and occupational settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through "hands on history."

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF A NON-PUBLIC PLACE

Features Dunn House: a safe haven to abused women and children in Jackson County.

STREETSCAPES AND CITY VIEWS

Explores the visual history of Ashland through the eyes of yesterday's photographers.

PUBLIC PLACES AND PRIVATE LIVES

Focuses on people and landmarks of Ashland.

Share your memories & treasures!

Do you have a collection—buttons, stamps, war memorabilia—you would like to share? The Ashland Branch has space available for community members to display personal collections.

In preparation for an exhibit titled "Ashland Under Water," we would like to gather your memories and photos (for duplication) of Ashland's floods during the 20th century.

Please contact Ashland Program Associate Jay Leighton at 488-4938.

MYSTERY OBJECT OF THE MONTH

March Mystery Object:

Do you know what duty this mechanism performs? When the trigger is released the plunger pushes forward. Here's a clue: It has something to do with cheese! It measures 3.75"L and 1"W. Send your answer on a 3-1/2 x 5 card with your name, address and phone number to: News & Notes Mystery Object, SOHS, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501.



February's mystery object is a percussion instrument.

Congratulations to December's Mystery Object Winner, Kay J. Maser of Ashland, whose name was "picked from the hat", one of several entries identifying this still mysterious object as a printing press.

February's Mystery Object: a percussion instrument



He never caused a tear, but when he died.

Peter Britt poses with the daguerreotype camera he brought with him to Southern Oregon in 1852.

SOHS #10550
(DETAIL)



The Other Side of Peter Britt

by John Darling

A glimpse at lesser-known facets of this famous pioneer photographer: his head for business, his love of horticulture and his personal philosophy (usually) of peacefulness, equality, and good works.

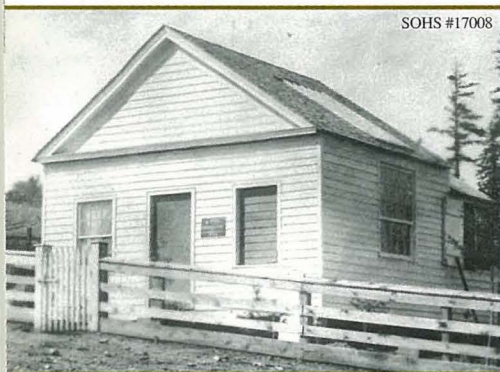
When we think of famed Rogue Valley pioneer Peter Britt, we generally think of either his accomplishments in photography or his namesake Britt Music Festival, whose grounds now occupy his former homesite on a hill just above downtown Jacksonville.

However, this Swiss immigrant was also a ceaselessly industrious businessman and horticulturist who planted the first grapes in Southern Oregon, marketed wines, planted an immense botanical garden, ran a pack train and—after arriving here poor—grew so wealthy that he became a major lender in the area.

Britt was also a pioneer at something that would challenge the nation a century later—racial tolerance. “He was a gentleman of

perfect honor and perfect kindness of heart,” wrote Silas J. Day, secretary of the Pioneer Society of Southern Oregon, after Britt’s death. “There was no uncharitableness or bigotry in his nature. He never made a man look dark nor caused a tear but when he died.”¹

SOHS #17008



Britt’s Jacksonville home started as this simple square structure with a skylight, built in 1854. The sign by the door says “Britt’s Photographic Daguerreotype Room.”

Mollie, Emil, and Jacob Britt picnic on the lawn of their father’s house near his banana tree in this 1880s photo. The wine is likely from Britt’s Valley View Vineyard.

ILLINOIS AND THE OREGON TRAIL

In 1845, when he was twenty-six, Britt and his family left Switzerland and settled in Highland, Illinois. With his brother Kaspar, Peter bought a 120-acre farm. While most settlers grew only enough for themselves, the Brittss joined many Swiss settlers in practicing commercial agriculture, selling their produce in St. Louis.

Britt’s wit, skill and aesthetic eye soon found a more creative outlet in portrait painting (photography was then only six years old). Britt wove his own canvases from flax he grew, and since there were no art supply stores on the frontier, he made colors by grinding minerals and mixing them with oil.²

Peter soon left farming to his brother and set off wandering the Mississippi River basin in search of portrait commissions. He earned “just enough money to pay for his food and lodging,” wrote Alan Clark Miller in the definitive 1976 biography, *Photographer of a Frontier: The Photographs of Peter Britt*.

In 1852 Britt set out for Oregon in a small party of three other Swiss men, with one wagon and a few horses between them. Britt’s pacific nature is revealed in an anecdote about the band’s encounter with a Sioux Indian party just west of Fort Laramie, in present-day Wyoming. The Sioux swept down from a ridge and raced in a circle around Britt and his companions. The other three men wanted to kill as many Indians as they could, but Britt, though armed with a Colt revolver and a combination rifle-shotgun, argued for waiting to see what developed. Sensing little danger from the settlers, the Indians soon drew up and spread their blanket. Britt threw in some hardtack and the Indians rode away.

EARLY MINING AND PACKING IN JACKSONVILLE

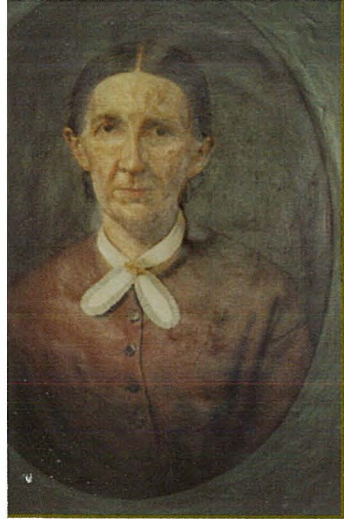
Britt reached then-tiny Portland in early October, but soon heard about Table Rock City (later Jacksonville). “Where so

much gold was being found,” Britt wrote, “I could undoubtedly do well in my business.” He arrived in early November 1852 with a two-wheeled cart (his party had sawn their prairie schooner in half), a yoke of oxen, a mule, 300 pounds of photographic equipment and five dollars.

Where Britt camped on his first night, just southwest of town, he would later come to own land stretching from Jackson Creek to

SOHS #12843





#B324 (DETAIL)

Britt's wife, Amalia, in the portrait at left, was the love of his life, even though they were only married ten years before her death in 1871. Britt used the oils and brushes above to tint photographs, and to paint.



COLOR PHOTOS BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP

Rich Gulch. In the 1860s, the town council would grant Britt clear title to this land, which likely was acquired through a combination of squatter's rights, barter and mining claims.

Britt built a dugout log cabin to serve as living quarters and studio. Within weeks, he opened the first "Daguerreian Gallery" in Southern Oregon.

Britt and several partners tried mining on Ashland Creek, which was said to be paying off richly. However, Britt's operation came up with only about seventy-five cents a man. After a week they gave up. It turned out the party had built their sluice box with the riffles pointing the wrong way, so that any gold was simply washed back into the creek.

Undaunted, Britt kept up claims throughout the 1850s. His 1853 claim on the south fork of Jackson Creek paid as much as \$500 a day. The following year, he and two partners found a rich deposit at the head of Sterling Creek, six miles southeast of Jacksonville.

In its brief life up to that point, Jacksonville had known only warm, rainy winters. With characteristic prudence, Britt had laid away a fifty-pound bag of flour. In December 1852, powerful storms choked the passes with snow, and the now-isolated Jacksonville found itself so low on meat that settlers stalked deer with hammers. The Table Rock Bakery was about out of flour.

Word spread that Britt was sitting on a flour stash. When approached, he refused to sell, so bakery owner John Wintgen soon whipped up public sentiment against Britt. Friends approached Britt to counsel that things might not go well for him in Jacksonville unless he shared his flour. Britt saw their wisdom and sold the bag for fifty dollars.

The first hard winter showed settlers the folly of relying for essential supplies on a 325-mile pack route to Portland, whose merchants were selling goods that mostly came from San Francisco, far to the south. A new supply trail was needed that would open Jacksonville to the new

Britt's Valley View Vineyards produced varietal wines as well as port, and was the first commercial vineyard in Oregon Territory. Britt may have sampled his product in these very glasses.



#B439, 86.7.74

and much closer port of Crescent City, where it could tap into goods shipped from the Bay Area.

Britt saw an opportunity and outfitted a string of twenty-six mules, each carrying 200 pounds, on the ten-day journey over the Cold Spring Mountain Trail. Britt exported mainly hides and gold dust, returning with flour, whiskey, clothes, mining tools, boots, salt, and copies of the *Crescent City Herald*, the only paper read in the Rogue Valley until the *Table Rock Sentinel* began publication in Jacksonville in November 1855. Britt's venture did well. To the tax collector, he reported his total valuation as \$280 in 1854, \$2,065 in 1855 and \$5,000 in 1857.

Britt had made the grubstake upon which he would found a fortune. By 1854, Britt had begun work on a new home—a square, one-story building with a classic revival cornice and a skylight. Britt would make many additions to this home, including conversion to the gingerbread "cottage Gothic" style, but the basic one-story square remained its heart until it all burned a century later.

The pack train business was a risky one, with packers' lives threatened by freezing storms and constant attacks by Indians. By the time of the Indians' defeat in June 1856, Britt got out of the packing business and devoted himself full time to photography.



Mollie Britt sits beneath her father's Abyssinian banana tree, which had to be brought inside during the cold Rogue Valley winters.

WINE, ORCHARDS, AND WEATHER

It was about this time that Britt made the first plantings in what was to become a magnificent five-acre horticultural garden and vineyard surrounding his home. Britt terraced the garden with shovel and wheelbarrow and amazed townsfolk by irrigating with permanent underground pipes fed by a ditch he dug to the headwaters of Jackson Creek.

Noticing wild grapes growing abundantly in the hills around Jacksonville, Britt in 1854 bought cuttings from old Mission vines in California and four years later was bottling the first wine in the Oregon Territory—claret, muscatel, schiller, zinfandel, and port.

His wine also attracted the Internal Revenue Service, which demanded that Britt get a retail and wholesale license. Britt claimed he was just selling wine to friends, but the IRS won the case and Britt soon went public under the name Valley View Vineyards, with fifteen acres producing up to 3,000 gallons a year.

Britt's wine, fermented in two 1,000-gallon redwood tanks, went for fifty cents a gallon and was shipped in large wicker-clad demijohns throughout the Northwest. He supplied Jacksonville's City Saloon and Lunch House and sold to locals who came to his cellar to fill bottle or bucket.

Britt supplied eucharist wine for local Catholic churches. He sent boxes of grapes to editors of the *Portland Oregonian* and to his friend Binger Hermann,

SOHS #14821



An inveterate horticulturist, Britt grew yuccas in "Britt Park," upper left, cactus in his greenhouse, upper right, and iris and water lilies in the lily pond, right.

whom Southern Oregonians sent to Congress for twenty-two years. Britt's vineyard was a regular stop for traveling correspondents, including one from *West Shore* magazine who wrote of his claret, "We very much doubt if it can be surpassed in the much-boasted-of California vineyards."

Britt brought in thirty-five beehives to foster pollination, and soon found himself selling honey in stores throughout the region. His wines, walnuts and honey were staples at area county fairs.

Many of the flowers, ornamental shrubs and non-indigenous trees that graced frontier homes came from starts in the "Britt Park," of which the *Oregon Sentinel* reported in 1879: "It causes one to fancy he is in an enchanted world." Many descendants of these plants thrive in Jacksonville to this day. Britt is considered

not only the father of Northwest viticulture but also the father of the multimillion-dollar Southern Oregon fruit industry.

Britt's horticultural pursuits expanded when an Italian peddler wandered over the Siskiyou from California in 1857, bearing a load of fruit and grape cuttings, including a snow apple, pound pear and peach tree. Britt bought everything the man had.

In this 1882 photograph, above, Britt's home is surrounded by his botanical handiwork including everything from ornamentals to garden vegetables.

Never one to miss an agricultural bet, Britt also raised bees to pollinate his crops and to produce honey, which he packaged and sold.



SOHS #17011

At far right, this early 1880s view from the back of Britt's expanding home and gardens also shows the new Jackson County Courthouse under construction in the distance.

Ever the observer, Britt also kept meticulous diaries recording business dealings, horticultural details and daily climatic data documenting Rogue Valley weather for thirty-five years.

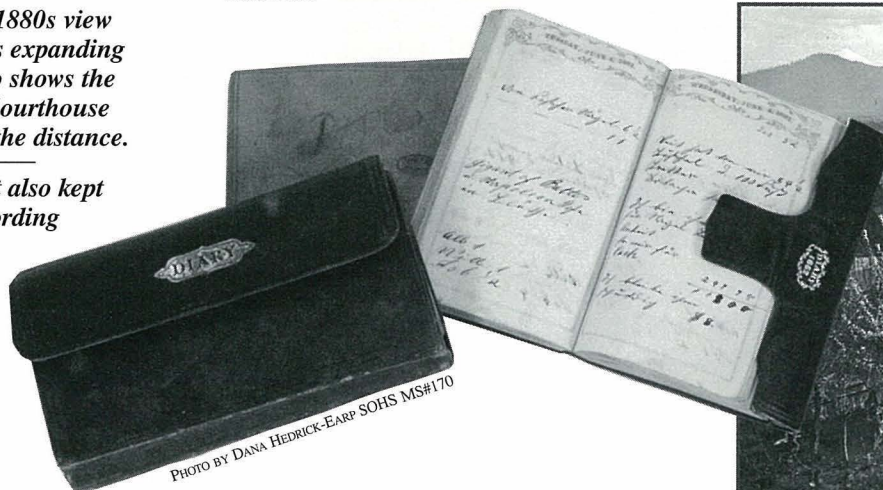
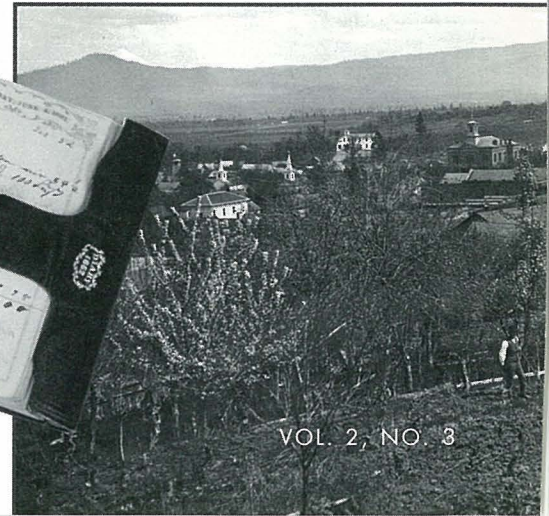


PHOTO BY DANA HEDRICK-EARP SOHS MS#170



VOL. 2, NO. 3

Soon Britt planted Bartlett pears on his ranch and initiated a practice that was to become a widespread ritual (and a source of much air pollution) in the Rogue Valley: smudging in orchards to protect against frost.

Britt grew large rhododendrons, Chinese wisteria, "German edging" for local sidewalks, British ivy that still climbs on local buildings and in the Jacksonville Cemetery, and sweet bay, which flavored many a local soup and stew.

Once, Britt found a stray English walnut in the packing of an order from a regular supplier, Louis Rothermel of San Jose. From this nut, the frugal Britt grew a widespread tree with nuts he considered superior to any of the hybrid varieties. Many descendants of this one tree dot Jacksonville today.

Britt grew the first palm tree in Oregon, although he had to build a house around it for the winter. Equally improbable was Britt's Abyssinian banana tree, which grew well in his yard, but had to be dug up and removed to the warmth of his house for the winter.

Britt photographed his sleeping children, Mollie and Emil, circa 1870.



SOHS #768



#B952

At right, Britt's first vineyard spread below his home, and was the first in Southern Oregon. Wine from Valley View Vineyards was aged in large barrels such as these, below, and shipped in wicker-covered demijohns like the one at left, from the Britt collection.



SOHS #8270 (DETAIL)

A greenhouse Britt built housed such exotic plants as cactus, kumquats, pomegranates, lemons, oranges, coffee bushes and Smyrna figs. Also found on the grounds were such subtropical fauna as Monterey cypress, magnolia, olive, and Japanese persimmon.

From his earliest years in Jacksonville, Britt began keeping weather diaries, using only a pocket sundial and homemade rain gauge. Later he joined the government's weather reporting system, keeping a faithful record for some thirty-five years, except perhaps for one October day in 1889, when his journal notes, "some boy hit the rain gauge with a sling shot and broke it all to pieces."

LOVE AND FAMILY

History tells us of only one love in the life of Peter Britt—Amalia Grob. He had loved her in the old country, as his brother Kaspar had loved her sister, Ana Grob. Kaspar's suit was successful and they married, but the father, Jakob Grob, believing portrait painters "no better than actors or Gypsies," sent Peter packing.

Amalia married another man, but in early 1861, Peter got a letter from Kaspar informing him that Amalia, now living in Wisconsin, had become widowed. Her husband, a carpenter, had suffered a stroke and died, leaving her with Jacob, her six-year old son, and few means.

Peter immediately wrote Amalia, offering money for passage back to Switzerland as well as another alternative: Would she come to Jacksonville, where he would marry her and be a father to her boy? She accepted the proposal, steamed down the Mississippi and around the

Horn to San Francisco, boarded a ship to Crescent City and took the new stage line to Jacksonville.

On August 11, 1861, Peter met his beloved at the Applegate stage stop, where they were married by a justice of the peace in the home of longtime friend Kaspar Kubli. The couple returned to Peter's lovely hillside home and a year later, their son Emil was born.

To mark the birth, Britt planted a sequoia that is still growing. Another son died young in 1864 and young Amalia, known as Mollie, was born in 1865.

Free-thinking Britt was a member of the agnostic Secular Union and eventually became vice president of the Oregon chapter. Although he avoided church, he and Amalia had their children baptized as Presbyterians. This did not go off without a hitch: Emil became panic-stricken during the ceremony and dove under a table to elude the minister, who then grabbed Emil by his waistband. His pants came off and a chagrined Peter had to capture his semi-clad son before the ceremony was completed.

Amalia died in September of 1871. As did many a pioneer, Peter bucked himself up and went on to raise his three children, now ages sixteen,

Britt planted this sequoia the day that his son, Emil, was born in 1862.



SOHS #6487 (DETAIL)

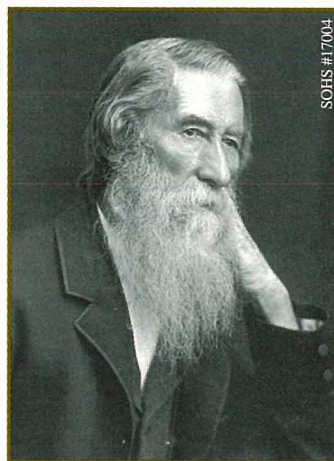


SOHS #13981

SOHS #1460 (DETAIL)



The Britt children paid for the rich Brussels carpet (close up at left) with proceeds from the sale of ice cream they made out of snow from Siskiyou Summit. Above, Mollie Britt poses at her piano about 1885.



Toward the end of his life, the white-bearded Britt was instantly recognizable on the streets of Jacksonville.

HUMANITARIAN, LODGE MEMBER, MUSICIAN

In pioneer days, the community of German and Swiss immigrants formed societies for mutual assistance, keeping old customs alive and furthering social ties through leisure activities. One of these was the Eintracht, or "Union," and Britt was very active in it, handling correspondence and serving as a contact for those who wanted to settle here, were seeking friends and family they'd lost touch with, or needed someone to troubleshoot a government problem. When Applegate pioneers Fritz and Anna Ruch committed suicide in 1875, orphaning five children, Britt took custody of their three boys, helping them to become successful local businessmen.

As it is today, music was an important part of Jacksonville's community life, with the "Jacksonville Harmonie" sponsoring a string band, brass band and German Singing Club, in which Britt participated. He fostered the love of music in his children; his boys attended "singing schools" and Mollie played piano.

In 1870, a lodge affiliated with the Improved Order of Red Men sprung up in Jacksonville. The fraternal order's

purpose, according to the *Democratic News*, was to "aid the afflicted, council the distressed, succor the feeble, watch with the sick and bury the dead." Britt was among the first members.

Politically, Britt, like most German-Swiss, sided with the Union during the Civil War. He was elected to the town council in 1865 and 1877 and served on many appointive and volunteer committees. Originally a Democrat, Britt switched to the Republican Party when he was about sixty-five.

Britt's lifelong dedication to photographing frontier life has been widely reported. Some tales from his photography days speak eloquently of Britt's character. Miller, his biographer, writes:

"His most harrowing experience occurred when the meanest cutthroat in camp swaggered into his studio and demanded a daguerreotype. The character posed with his pistol in prominent view and Britt secured a

marvelous image capturing all the menace of the situation. The cutthroat seemed quite pleased to discover he was so handsome and the matter appeared to be settled. But the next morning, the hooligan was back, plainly the worse for liquor, brandishing his pistol and demanding his money back. It must have surprised him when Britt made the refund without argument, for he hesitated a moment at the doorway, laughed and then walked down California Street and killed the first citizen who got in his way. (The man was hanged and) subsequently it was learned the murderer had vowed to 'get me a man for breakfast.'"

While Britt was respected for his charitableness toward all members of the community, he was no Pollyanna. The homely daughter of a local saloon keeper came to Britt seeking a portrait photo she could trade with friends. Dissatisfied, she returned again and again. She implored

Britt helped organize the "Jacksonville Harmonie," which sponsored the Silver Cornet Band gathered below.



Britt took this portrait of Emil, Mollie, and Jacob in the 1880s.

nine, and six, alone. The children received good educations in local private schools and apparently picked up their father's plucky entrepreneurial ways.

For example, as young adults, they decided to raise money for new carpets and drapes by selling ice cream at Jacksonville's Fourth of July celebration in 1884. There were no refrigerators then, so the boys drove a buckboard to the Dollarhide Toll House at the crest of the Siskiyou, where there were still snowbanks. They packed snow in burlap and sawdust for the return to town, then made ice cream and served it in small butter dishes for twenty-five cents each. The Britt siblings made a small fortune—enough to purchase a red Brussels carpet and heavy white lace curtains shipped via rail from Portland by December.

Britt to make just one shot of her with a pretty face, to which Britt replied, "Miss, if you want a beautiful face, you must bring one with you."

Britt often took his children on his long summer outings to photograph the region. His crowning achievement was taking the first photograph of Crater Lake, an image that later helped inform Congress as it voted to create the national park. Britt kept a diary for decades and his entry for that landmark day in 1874 was typical in its brevity: "Photographed the lake. Very cold and windy. Emil had a cough."

MONEY, LAND AND THE CHINESE



Britt photographed all manner of folks, from the rough-hewn gentlemen in the shapeless hats at left to this Chinese couple in native dress.

Money stuck well to Peter Britt's fingers. After being in Oregon only four years, Britt had ready cash to loan. His first loan of \$1,500 to his friend Kubli and another man was secured by promissory notes and a mule train. Hundreds more loans followed, usually at 10 percent interest and often secured with large acreages. Some were unsecured and a good share of these went unpaid.

Some, of course, had to be foreclosed on, but, wrote Miller: "He always maintained the goodwill of his fellow townsmen and there was never any charge of sharp practice leveled against him." On one foreclosure, Britt allowed the debtor to continue living on the property for three years with the opportunity to redeem the loan at any time.

Britt was one of very few white settlers who treated the Chinese as fellow citizens. Beginning in the late 1850s, Britt granted a Chinese company mining rights on his property in return for a percentage of profits. He loaned start-up capital to other Chinese companies that were taking over abandoned claims.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY

Some Chinese lived in shanties behind the Britt house and he maintained a "bank" in a shed there.

Britt found other lucrative places for his money, including an 1868 investment of \$4,000 in Spring Valley, California, water stock, another in Sachs Brothers Dry Goods, and in 1870 in a proposed railway from Winnemucca, Nevada, to Jacksonville, which would have joined the Rogue Valley to the transcontinental Central Pacific Railroad. The project went bust in 1872.

With the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887, it became apparent that the Rogue Valley was to be a prime urban and agricultural area, drawing many new settlers. Britt bought larger tracts of land, eventually totaling more than 2,000 acres. These he operated with tenant farmers.

Among his holdings were his eighty-acre home, the 354-acre ranch north of Jacksonville, a 150-acre farm in Eagle Point, a 301-acre ranch on Griffin Creek and 812 acres on Little Butte Creek. By the turn of the century, he was the largest landholder in Southern Oregon.

In old age, Britt returned to his first love, painting. In his upstairs studio, the now white-bearded pioneer painted from memory his beloved Swiss landscape. Miller writes: "Those who knew Peter Britt in these later years recall a dignified gentleman, strong, courteous and self-contained: a man of great reserve but little vanity who was often seen standing at his balcony surveying the valley through a telescope or taking solitary hikes in the cool of the evening."

When the railroad bypassed Jacksonville, the town went into steep decline and many friends moved away to Medford, now the region's main rail stop. Britt considered returning to Switzerland.

In September 1905, Britt visited the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exhibition in Portland, which included a Jackson



Britt used his cameras as well as his easel to document the scenic wonders of the region, as in this oil painting of Lake of the Woods.

County exhibit organized in part by Emil. It displayed many riches—fruits, wines, photographs—that Peter Britt had helped create. Emil offered to travel with his eighty-six-year-old father, but the old man wanted to make the trip alone. On the way back, he caught pneumonia and, a week later, died at home in Jacksonville, the brief Eden he helped create. 🏠

John Darling is an Ashland writer.

ENDNOTES

1. Silas J. Day, "Biographical Sketch of Peter Britt," (Read at the thirtieth reunion of the Southern Oregon Pioneer Association, Jacksonville, Ore., August 30, 1906). Papers of the Southern Oregon Pioneer Association, Southern Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
2. In preparing this story, the author drew heavily on Alan Clark Miller's biography, "Peter Britt, Pioneer Photographer of the Siskiyou," (M.A. thesis, Dartmouth College, 1964). This thesis was later published as *Photographer of a Frontier: The Photographs of Peter Britt* (Eureka, Calif.: Interface Publishers, 1976).



When he died in 1905, Britt left behind a lush greenhouse crowded with plants and a photographic gallery reflecting a half-century of images of the Rogue Valley and its citizens.



Wallpaper for the Masses

by Margaret Watson

Few of us have escaped the desire to exercise some kind of discriminating taste in creating our home environments. And although few of us rarely go all-out “country” or all-Martha Stewart, publications aimed at home decorating crowd supermarket aisles and bookstores. This is not a new trend; home decorating resource books have been popular in America for more than 150 years.

Andrew Jackson Downing was one of America's first decorating gurus, publishing *The Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850. Later in the nineteenth century, designers such as Charles Eastlake (*Hints on Household Taste*, 1868) had multiple editions of his books published in New York and London, and

printer used to print textiles. For the first time, wallpaper became readily available and was an “easy, economical, and agreeable means of decorating or finishing the walls.”²

As a result, wallpaper color and pattern choice became essential ingredients in the design of American rooms. By the 1870s, good taste called for a “tripartite” wall treatment: a three-foot-high wainscoting, a field of wallpaper, and a border or ornate cornice treatment at the ceiling.

The first ready-mixed paints and new theories on color created an interesting color palette during the 1870s and 1880s. Each room was to have a different color scheme depending upon its use and the light it received. Entry halls were to be subdued and exhibit a color that was easy to keep clean, such as red, salmon, green or gray. Contrasting woodwork in olive green or dark blue was recommended. For the parlor, designer Harriet Prescott Spofford suggested highly personal environments: “a family of pale and fallow people not being able to have a great amount of green about them, for example, and a very rose lady being quite unwise to surround herself with ruddier colors.”³

In a sunny parlor, however, house owners were encouraged to try color schemes such as a peacock-blue carpet, olive-green window shades, bronze woodwork and lemon-yellow walls. Bedrooms should be quiet and subdued with hues of “cream, amber, fawn, rose or blue in patterns of passionflowers, honeysuckle, wild roses, blackberries, crow's-foot, oak leaves and acorns.”⁴ Some wallpaper designs tended to be “exotic,” imitating Turkish or Japanese elements; Eastlake promoted “commonsense” designs, tending to be flat and repetitive. A popular magazine, *House and Painting Decorating*, recommended that homeowners avoid wallpapers with a pattern that gave a “look of motion,” because “nothing is more distressing to the eyesight than to be in a room where the pattern of the paper seems always crawling like a mass of worms.”⁵

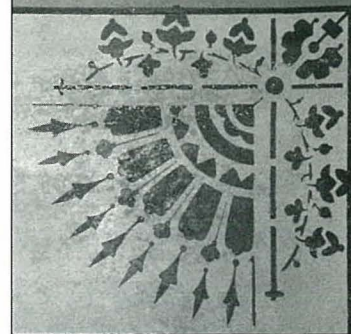
As the nineteenth century closed, wallpapers and ready-made paints had revolutionized middle-class homeowners' abilities to transform their living spaces; the decorating gurus were there in droves to tell them how to do it, and they still are. So somebody explain it—why, with all these color and decorating resources, do most Americans today prefer to live with white walls? ■

Margaret Watson is curator of Hanley Farm for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

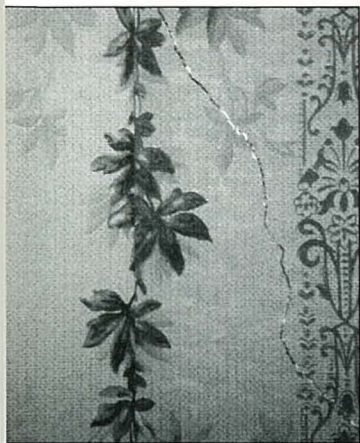
ENDNOTES

1. Roger Moss and Gail Winkler, *Victorian Interior Decoration* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986), p. 241.
2. Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, (1850; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, 1969), p. 398.
3. Harriet P. Spofford, *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (New York: 1878), p. 215.
4. Moss and Winkler, *Victorian Interior Decoration*, p. 139.
5. Ibid, p. 143.

WALLPAPER PHOTOS FROM
SOHS PHOTO DEPARTMENT



This fan-shaped detail is an example of stenciled wallpaper in the parlor at Hanley Farm.



This leaf pattern, very popular in the late nineteenth century, decorates a wall in a Hanley Farm bedroom. Wallpaper lends pattern to this room in the home of Reverend and Mrs. William Clyde, circa 1901.

publications such as Gody's *Lady's Book* had followers and subscribers numbering more than 150,000 in the 1860s.¹ These books describe how every room of the house should be furnished and decorated.

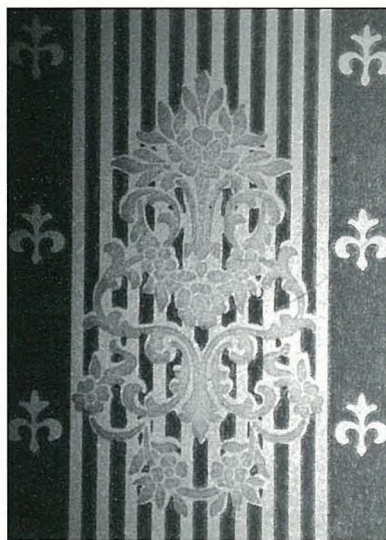
Downing, John Claudius Loudon and other designers preferred wallpaper to paint in decorating a room, but up until the 1840s, only the wealthiest families could afford wallpaper. That was because each individual piece of wallpaper was made by hand from cloth rags reduced to pulp in water. The papermaker scooped the pulp onto a wire screen having a wooden frame measuring about twenty by thirty inches, drained it, then removed it from the frame. The paper was then dried between sheets of felt. These small sheets were glued together to form long strips, then painted with a background color and hand-printed with wooden blocks.

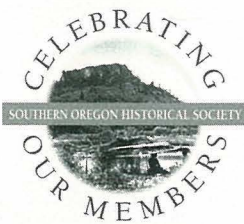
In 1841, wallpaper-making was revolutionized by two technological innovations which made mass production possible: the “Fourdrinier” machine, which made continuous rolls of paper, was coupled with a steam-powered cylindrical

This fleur-de-lis motif was extremely popular in the nineteenth century, and decorates another Hanley Farm bedroom.



SOHS #7009





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Amos Willits and the Legacy of Persist

by Brian Kinsey

Almost everyone has heard the old stereotype about how men are more reluctant than women to stop and ask for directions. But reluctant or not, even the savviest Southern Oregon backroads explorer would likely need directions to pinpoint Persist. This pioneer community—now mostly a private ranch and a memory—lay ten miles by trail from Prospect and twenty-two miles from Trail on upper Elk Creek.

First homesteaded by William Willits and his wife, Irene, in 1884, Persist didn't become official until 1902, when after years of requests, the Willitses received a

trek the ten miles of bad trail to attend school in Prospect. The school quickly became the social hub of the Persist district.³

In the early years, the school had a succession of teachers, among them Alice French and Ann Wells. The school teachers boarded at the Willits home, and in one case, this is where young love began. The Willitses had four children, Roy, Merle, Inez, and Amos.⁴

Amos and Alice fell in love.

At noon on August 14, 1910, Amos Willits, then in his mid-twenties, and Alice French, twenty-two, were wed. The ceremony was held at Alice's parents' place in Ashland. Afterward, Amos and Alice took the No. 13 train to Coolest Springs for their honeymoon, then returned to Persist where they equipped themselves for a ten-day horseback trip to Crater Lake. Upon returning, they set up house in Persist.⁵

Amos and Alice later moved to Medford where they became active in the community. A mechanic for the C.E. Gates Auto Company,⁶ Amos also was active in the Knights of Pythias and the affiliated Dramatic Order Knights of Khorassan, and served as a volunteer firefighter.⁷

In early January 1924, a fire broke out at the Page Theater in Medford. Amos responded to the fire with his fire

company. He and Fire Chief Roy Elliott were examining the scene when the stage wall collapsed, trapping both men for more than an hour. Elliott suffered serious injuries to his head and chest, but Amos was killed instantly. He left behind his wife and his son, William, who was a year old.⁸

The Persist School District merged with larger districts long ago; the name of Persist has disappeared off most maps; and Amos has rested in peace in Ashland's Mountain View Cemetery for more than three-quarters of a century. But the persistent, pioneering spirit of those who created the small community and those who came from it still lives on in the history of Southern Oregon. ■

Brian Kinsey is a history major at Southern Oregon University.

ENDNOTES

1. Barbara Hegne, *Yonder Hills: Shady Cove, Elk Creek, Persist, Trail, Etna*. (Eagle Point, Ore., 1989) p. 1.
2. Lewis A. McArthur, ed., *Oregon Geographic Names*, 6th ed. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1992) p. 664.
3. Hegne, *Yonder Hills*, pp. 1-2.
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5. *Ashland Daily Tidings*, 15 August 1910.
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Persist school teacher Ann Wells boarded at the Willits ranch, and called her home above the woodshed "Squirrel Inn."

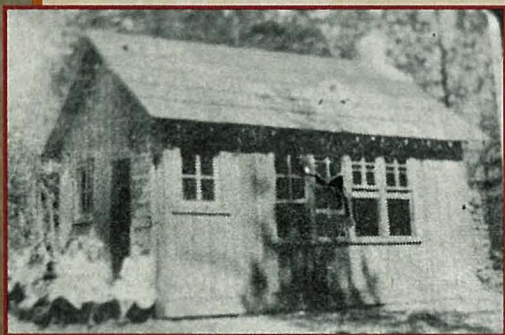


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The one-room Persist School saved children from local ranches a ten-mile walk to the school in Prospect.

Postal Service charter to distribute mail from their home. William was postmaster for thirty-three years.¹ The name Persist came from the persistent spirit the homesteaders had shown in settling the remote area—and in obtaining mail service.²

Local postal service wasn't the only new development in Persist. Around 1900, a one-room school was built a mile from the Willits house. This was so the children from ranches in the area wouldn't have to

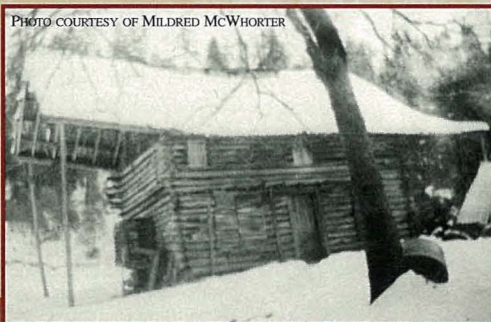


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