

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today




SHRINE OF THE SILENT ARTS
MEDFORD'S PAGE THEATER

NEW USE FOR AN OLD LOG STRUCTURE
PERNOLL GENERAL STORE MUSEUM

HE SURE DOES LOOK FAMILIAR
BUT HE'S NOT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

August 2000
Vol. 2, No. 8

The Magazine of the Southern Oregon Historical Society 

Pernoll Grange Store

by Connie Fowler

With pioneer tenacity, members of the Applegate Valley Historical Society worked determinedly for several years and finally opened the doors of their museum on May 10, 1997—well over a century after the store was originally built!

The old Pernoll Grange Store, built circa the 1860s with hand-hewn logs, now nestles comfortably in its newly landscaped location at the junction of Highway 238 and North Applegate Road, between Jacksonville and Grants Pass. One might think that it has always been there, with its shrubs, rose garden, carriage gates, and pathway welcoming visitors to enter and take a step or two back in time. The little store/museum is settled at last, but like the travels of the early settlers, the journey wasn't easy.¹

Said to have been the first general store in the Applegate area, the eighteen-foot square building originally stood on the William Pernoll place just over a mile down river on North Applegate Road. Local folks made their purchases there until a new store opened on the main highway.

The structure remained on the property until the late 1970s when owner Fred West gave it to George McCune who relocated it to his Pioneer Village in Jacksonville. In 1985, Pioneer Village closed and buyer Don Rowlett donated the log building to the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The Society moved it to the corner of Sixth and C streets, opposite the former Jackson County Courthouse.

Hearing of the need to find a new home for the historic former store, pioneer family member Myrtle Krause founded the Applegate Valley Historical Society in 1989 with the single purpose of bringing the Pernoll store back to the Applegate Valley.²

The community rallied around the seemingly impossible project. The donated site for the building, totally overgrown with blackberries and brush, lacked enough land to satisfy access needs. Moving the building would be expensive and difficult, especially for the fledgling society. But the members were determined to overcome the obstacles that arose at every turn.

"For a while we rattled around like marbles in the bottom of a bucket," Krause said of their early struggles with the project.³ But in true pioneer form, the

society members forged ahead and before long, things started falling into place.

With help from the county, the state, the timber industry, local organizations, and many dedicated individuals and businesses, the building made its final trip on September 25, 1993, aboard a flatbed truck in a convoy from Jacksonville to Applegate, the last leg of its transformation from store to museum.⁴

Four years later, the doors opened. Displays in the museum feature a theme with artifacts from the area's past. The current theme is textiles from the nineteenth century. The museum hours are Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, about the museum or the Applegate Valley Historical Society, call (541) 846-9211. ■



PHOTO BY DANA L. HEDRICK

The Applegate Valley Historical Society found a home for the Pernoll Store not far from its original location.

Writer Connie Fowler and her husband, Ben, ranch in the Applegate Valley.

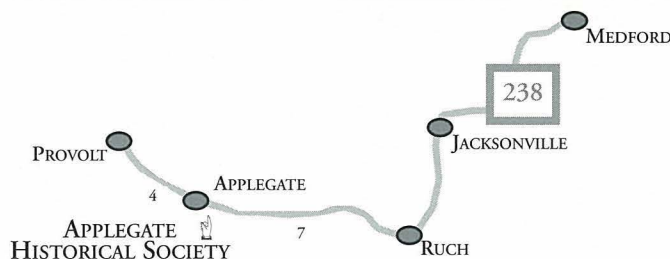
ENDNOTES:

1. Myrtle Krause, *Applegator* (Jacksonville, Ore.: Applegate Partnership, bimonthly) January 1995.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.



SOHS #10122

The Pernolls pose in front of the store circa 1890. Standing from left, are Martin, John, and Lidia. Seated are Maude, William, an unidentified girl, Henry, and Nancy, with Alice in arms.



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.

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HERITAGE
Today

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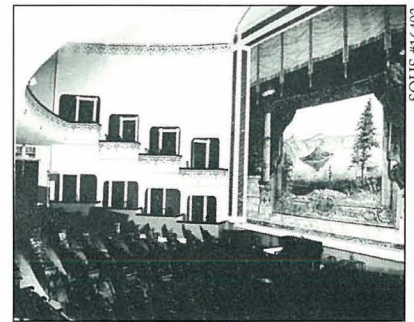
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SOHS #16-403

ON THE COVER

While Page Theater patrons waited for the show to go on, they could enjoy the view of a panorama of Crater Lake painted on the asbestos stage curtain.

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Southern Oregon Heritage Today is published monthly by the Southern Oregon Historical Society.
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Southern Oregon Heritage Today is produced using Quark XPress on Macintosh computers and is printed by Ram Offset Lithographers.

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SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SINCE 1946

Tolly's:

HISTORIC TREAT OFF INTERSTATE 5

by Molly Walker Kerr

Tolly's, located in the heart of historic Oakland, has been a traditional stop for Interstate 5 travelers for more than thirty years. A mixture of soda fountain, candy store, fine restaurant, antique shop and art gallery, it is Oakland's showpiece.



Oakland is just a few miles off the freeway at Exit 137 north of Sutherlin. After entering the town, Oregon's first National Historic Landmark, turn up Locust Street, where you'll spot Tolly's striped awning among a row of red brick buildings. Constructed around the turn of the century after fire destroyed most of the downtown's wooden structures, these buildings were made of bricks hauled from nearby Union Gap Brick Mill.

Once inside the double green doors, you'll be whisked back to a gentler time filled with smells of yeasty cinnamon rolls, sugar candy, polished wood floors and musty antiques. The ornate mirror over the soda fountain reflects china teapots, jars of gingersnaps, lollipops, and licorice candies, and an impressive display of costumed nutcrackers.

Tolly's actually consists of three adjoining buildings with one entrance. The restaurant is in the old Beckley Bros. General Merchandise Store, built in 1903 by Dr. E. C. Page and Pitzer and Charles Beckley. The store was later owned and operated by J.T. and Mrs. Bridges, William Bridges, and Ralstyn and Ruth Bridges and the name changed to Bridges Bros.—Dealers in Dry Goods and Groceries “On Receipt.” The adjoining building, constructed by the same people in 1903, was the Phil Beckley Drug Store, now Tollefson's Antiques. Adjacent to that is the old bank built by E. G. Young and Co. in 1892. Its ornate vault is still used by the Tollefsons. This building now houses Tollefson's Gallery of Fine Arts.

In 1968, present owners Terry and Carol Tollefson were looking for a place to store the overflow from their tiny antique store on their ranch when Terry came across two

old empty buildings on Locust Street. They had been boarded up for some time. “They had caved in roofs, rain-drenched interiors, no floors or ceilings and mildew-covered walls,” Carol remembers.

The Tollefsons and their friends, Don and Erma Mode who lived in Elkton, purchased the two old relics and, along with families and friends, took on the formidable project. They scrubbed, pounded, painted and polished until December 1968, when the two stores opened for business: Tollefson's Antiques in the old drug store and Mode's Emporium in the old mercantile store. The Modes furnished theirs with fixtures from Carrolls Drug Store in Eugene—including an old-fashioned soda fountain.

By 1973, the Modes grew weary of commuting from Elkton. They sold to the Tollefsons, who combined the two stores. Carol says, “We knew nothing about running their store!” Undaunted, she dug out her mother's cinnamon roll recipe, honed her baking skills and launched Tolly's restaurant.

“I baked 10,000 pies before I hired Carolyn Irons, a local housewife, to take over,” Carol recalls. Irons is still there after twenty-six years.

In 1975, Carol put a dress shop upstairs. Customers enjoyed twirling before mirrors in lace-covered dresses while waiting to dine. When she sensed a downtrend in that market, she closed the dress shop and put a

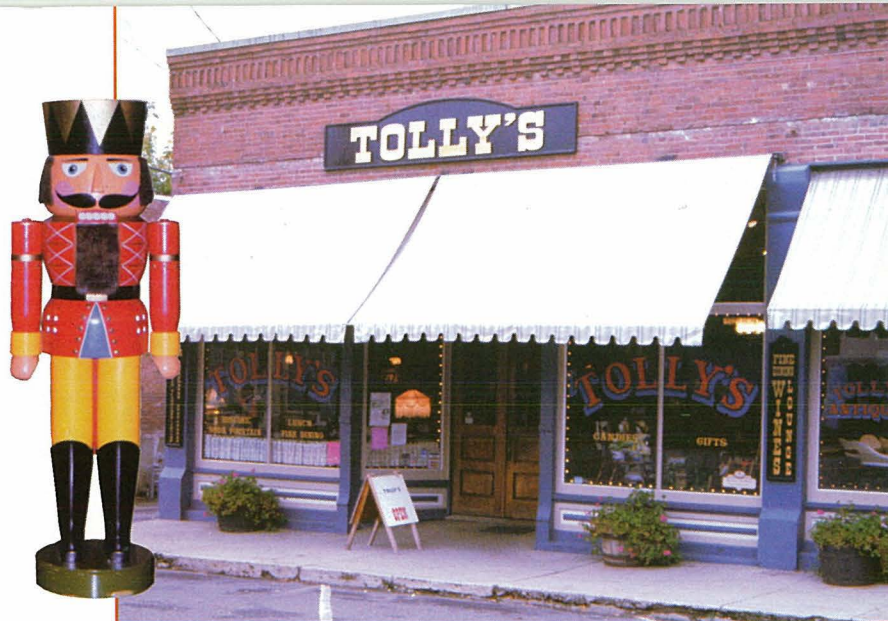
romantic dining room in its place—one of several dining spaces at Tolly's, including an outdoor terrace.

Besides desserts, Tolly's offers Scandinavian dishes, deli sandwiches, espresso, ice cream, salads, gourmet entrees and a fine wine list. Carol says, “There's no fast food here. Everything is started from scratch.”

While waiting to eat, be sure to peruse the antiques shop and the art gallery.

Tolly's is open daily except Christmas and New Year's from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday-Sunday for dinner from 5-9:30. ☞

Molly Walker Kerr is a Medford freelance writer/photographer.



Tolly's, tucked among the red brick buildings that line tiny Oakland's Locust Street, has lured visitors from Interstate 5 for more than thirty years.



Tollefson's Gallery of Fine Arts now fills the space once occupied by an 1892 bank.

PHOTOS BY MOLLY KERR

Two Out of Three Viewers Say It's T.R.

by Bill Miller



SOHS #9620

Arant family lore has it that the portly visitor seated second from left with Arant family ancestors in this 1902 photograph at Crater Lake is President Theodore Roosevelt.

A picture is worth a thousand words and never lies, right? Consider a recent media exercise and think again.

Years ago a photograph of the Arant family at Crater Lake was donated to the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The family's descendants had always been told that the large man, second from the left, was President Theodore Roosevelt. The identification seems conceivable as in 1902 Roosevelt had designated Crater Lake as a national park and William F. Arant was appointed park superintendent, serving until 1913. However, little effort was made to verify the photo identification until the National Park Service decided to include

the photograph in its centennial celebration of the park's opening. Park Service staff quickly realized, that if park records were to be believed, Roosevelt had never visited Crater Lake. The call went out to historical societies and the media, "Is the man in the picture Teddy Roosevelt?" Sensing a good story, television, radio, and newspapers scheduled interviews and reports.

One television station even asked their viewers to vote by telephone. "Press 1 if you think it's Roosevelt. Press 2 if it's not." But of course, history is proved not by popular opinion, but with facts.¹

The most important fact is that Theodore Roosevelt is known to have visited the Rogue Valley only three times, the first time in May 1903. The president left Washington, D.C., on April 1 with extensive activities scheduled in St. Louis, Yellowstone National Park, Sacramento and Portland. Roosevelt was up for election in 1904 and the brief stops and speeches he would make in between major events provided splendid campaign opportunities. Early in May, before leaving California for Oregon, the presidential party spent three days in Yosemite National Park. With conservationist John Muir acting as guide, the president camped amid the sequoias, spent a night in a snowstorm and had his photograph taken.²

Roosevelt's train entered Oregon at 4:45 p.m., May 20, 1903, and within a half-hour was at the Ashland depot, where a crowd awaited. He never saw the thirty-four-foot welcoming arch decorated with Oregon grape that townsfolk has erected in his honor; strong winds had blown it down just minutes before he arrived. Thousands of people strained to hear Roosevelt speak during the fifteen-minute stop. While W.F. Arant was in the crowd, he didn't speak to the president. The train resumed its northerly journey and as it approached Medford the engineer slowed it to a near stop. Hundreds of citizens cheered the chief executive, who smiled, bowed and waved from the back platform. As the train picked up speed, the president seemed amused at the flower-tossing children who ran after him. By the next morning, Roosevelt was in Salem. After visiting Portland and Washington state, he returned to the nation's capital.³

Both of Roosevelt's last visits to the Rogue Valley were in the middle of the night on a northbound train. As the Medford *Mail Tribune* reported, "he reached Medford, and it was one minute later that he left."⁴

No other Roosevelt visits to the area are known. This is not a case of too little information. Roosevelt's career and travels are well documented. We don't have to analyze an old photograph for head shapes, hairlines, and waistlines that don't fit; Roosevelt's timeline is enough. The man in the photograph is not Theodore Roosevelt. As Yogi Berra once said, "You could look it up," but most people won't. Results of the television call-in exercise showed nearly two out of three viewers pressed 1. They believed the man in the photograph was Teddy Roosevelt.

You can't force people to like history, but those of us who do sure wish we could share the fun of getting the story straight. After all, it really is what you find out after you know it all that's important. 🍷

Bill Miller is a library assistant with the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES:

1. SOHS Photograph #9620.
2. *Medford Success*, 20 March 1903, p. 3: 1.
3. *Ashland Tidings*, 21 May 1903, p. 3; *Medford Mail*, 22 May 1903, p. 6:5.
4. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 5 April 1911, p. 1:7.



SOHS #9954

Proud Ashlanders erected this ornate arch to welcome President Roosevelt's train in 1903; winds blew it down just minutes before he arrived.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in August



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

	<u>DATE & TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
August Craft of the Month Traditional Crafts	Museum hours Sat., Aug. 5, 11:00a.m.-2:00p.m.	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM Hanley Farm 1053 Hanley Road	"Toys to Remember" Blacksmithing, tin punching, candle making
Traditional Games	Sat., Aug. 12, 11:00a.m.-2:00p.m.	Hanley Farm	Vintage baseball, sack races
Chore Day	Sat., Aug. 19, 11:00a.m.-2:00p.m.	Hanley Farm	Wool dyeing, soap making, laundry
Quilting Bee, Dairy Day	Sat. Aug. 26, 11:00a.m.-2:00p.m.	Hanley Farm	Cow milking, butter churning, cheese making, quilting demonstrations
Archaeology of the Upper Rogue	Sat., Aug. 26, 11:00 a.m.	Trail Tavern Museum 144 Old Hwy. 62, Trail	Slide presentation

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

AUGUST CRAFT OF THE MONTH "Toys to Remember"

Children can add to their toy chests by creating an old-fashioned toy to take home. Choose from a handkerchief doll, optical toy or pinwheel to keep them occupied all summer long. Fee: 50¢.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF UPPER ROGUE

The BLM will present a slide show on the history of the Upper Rogue. Free. Refreshments.



HISTORY STORE!

HOURS

MON - SAT 10AM - 5 PM
SUN 11AM - 5PM

*The History Store specializes in original
handcrafted items created by local artists, as
well as books and other unique items*

CALIFORNIA & 3RD STREETS

JACKSONVILLE



HANLEY FARM

HOURS

FRI & SAT 10AM - 4 PM

SUN NOON - 4 PM

SATURDAY EVENTS!

AUGUST 5

*blacksmithing • tin punching • wall sconces
• candle making*

AUGUST 12

vintage baseball • sack races • traditional games

AUGUST 19

wool dyeing • soap making • laundry

AUGUST 26

quilting bee & dairy day

1053 HANLEY ROAD

BETWEEN CENTRAL POINT & JACKSONVILLE

Summer fun for families continues at the 37-acre historic Hanley Farm which is open to the public Fridays and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4:00 p.m. There is an admission fee of \$3.00 for adults (13 & above) and \$2.00 for seniors (65+) and children (6-12). Tours of the historic house and the gardens are included in this fee. Bring a picnic lunch, walk the interpretive trail, and enjoy the special Saturday only events listed above. Call 773-2675 or 773-6536 for more information.

INVITATION THE GOLD DIGGERS' GUILD "GREAT GATSBY" SOCIETY FUNDRAISER

Saturday, August 26

Event begins at 5:30 p.m.

Society members Robert and Patricia Heffernan open their home for an evening of games of chance, dancing 'til dawn, and a buffet. "Sassy" 1920 dress optional. Entry fee is \$75 per person. Only receipt of check guarantees reservations which must be made by August 12. Call Guild president Marty Moore at 779-5663 for further information.

WRITER'S AWARD WINNER

Nancy Bringhurst, Ashland author and poet, won the 1999 People's Choice Writer's Award for her article "Eugene Bennett: Artist Brings Color and Light to the Rogue Valley," from the December 1999 issue of *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, the Society's monthly magazine. Bringhurst was recognized at the Society's 54th Annual Membership Meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS/OFFICERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2000/2001

Yvonne Earnest and Hank Hart of Medford and Robert Stevens of Jacksonville, were elected to three year terms. Robert Cowling and Mrs. B.J. Reed were appointed to fill terms of resigning members. Officers for FY2000/2001 are Marjorie Overland, president; Nancy Hamlin, first vice-president; Cheryl Breeden, second vice-president; Nancy Mc Grew, secretary; Judi Drais, treasurer.

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

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
Century of Photography: 1856-1956 Ernest Smith, Butte Falls Photographer High Water: A traveling exhibit from the Oregon Historical Society	HISTORY CENTER	Mon.-Fri., 9:00am-5:00pm
Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Jacksonville: Boom Town to Home Town Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience Hall of Justice The Shape of Fashion: 1900-1925 Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am-5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm
Rethink/Reweave/Recycle Archaeology of the Upper Rogue	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM 3RD ST. ARTISAN STUDIO UPPER ROGUE HIS. Soc. 144 Old Hwy. 62, Trail	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am-5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm Fri. & Sat., 11:00am - 4:00pm Wed.-Sun., 10:00am-4:00pm

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITES

Phone: (541) 773-6536
unless listed otherwise

Fax (541) 776-7994

Email info@sohs.org

Website www.sohs.org

HISTORY CENTER

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

RESEARCH LIBRARY

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

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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

U.S. HOTEL

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

JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE

Mon - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, 11:00am to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

3rd and California, Jacksonville
Fri. & Sat, 11:00am to 4:00pm

HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road
(between Central Point & Jacksonville)
Fri & Sat 10:00am to 4:00pm
Sun, noon to 4:00pm
(541) 773-2675.

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.

HIGH WATER: A Traveling Exhibit from the Oregon Historical Society

Dramatic photographs of Oregon floods from 1862 to the present, on display through August 12. A special exhibit on local floods of the last 150 years will be on display through fall 2000.

MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER

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

THE SHAPE OF FASHION: 1900-1925

Women's fashion changed dramatically during the early years of the 20th century, reflecting the changing role of women in society. On display through December is a selection of daywear, evening gowns, and undergarments.

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.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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

RETHINK/REWEAVE/RECYCLE

Members of the Rogue Valley Handweavers, Far Out Fibers and the Saturday Handweaving Guild present an exhibit of recycled items creatively woven at the Third Street Artisan Studios through September 2.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF UPPER ROGUE

The Society and the BLM have put together a small traveling exhibit reporting on 30 years of archaeological studies of the history of the native peoples of the Upper Rogue. On display August 12 through September 10.

Mystery Object of the Month

May's Mystery Object was a Ballot Box. Votes were slid into the hole in the front and removed by opening the hinged door on top. Congratulations to Kay Maser of Ashland, for answering correctly!

May's
Mystery
Object:
Ballot Box



August Mystery Object:

This item is made of wood, has a handle and a lid with a small hole in the top to extrude something. Do you know what?

Send your answer on a postcard with your name, address, and phone number to: News & Notes Mystery Object, SOHS, 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501, or by email to info@sohs.org

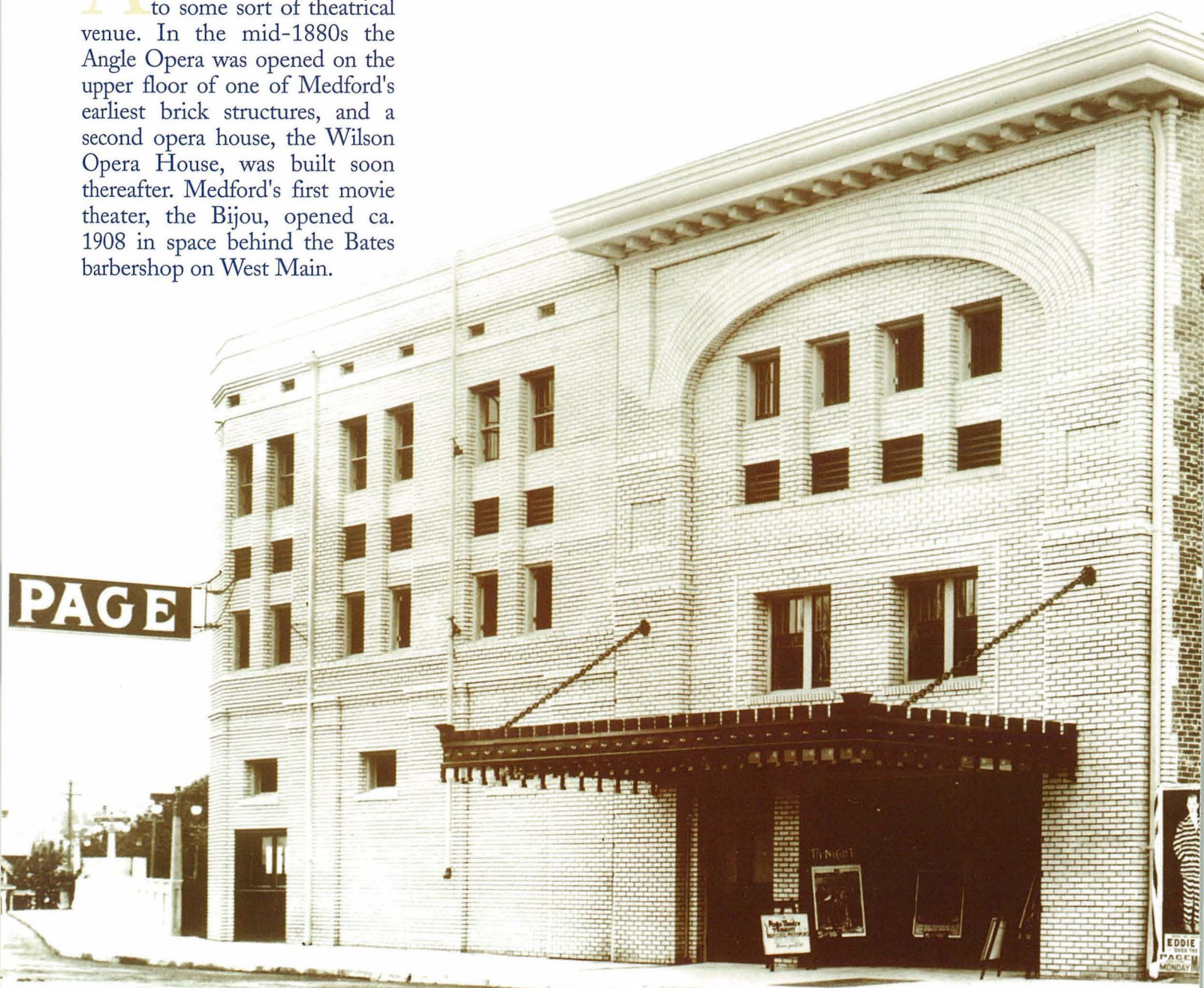


For more than a decade, Medford's Page Theater was the city's premier

SHRINE OF THE SILENT ARTS

by William Alley

Almost from its inception Medford has been home to some sort of theatrical venue. In the mid-1880s the Angle Opera was opened on the upper floor of one of Medford's earliest brick structures, and a second opera house, the Wilson Opera House, was built soon thereafter. Medford's first movie theater, the Bijou, opened ca. 1908 in space behind the Bates barbershop on West Main.



SOHS #16401

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Medford boasted a number of small theaters, which showed both motion picture and vaudeville performances. What was lacking, however, was a modern theater that could accommodate larger audiences and play host to legitimate theater acts that continually traveled around the country. Medford's location midway between San Francisco and Portland made it an ideal location, one where touring companies could stop en route and give a performance. Unfortunately, Medford's theaters—including the old opera houses—though adequate for the exhibition of movies, vaudeville and smaller traveling performances, were too small to accommodate the larger legitimate road shows of the day.



Dr. Frederick Page, a prominent Medford developer, recognized this potential, and as early as 1910 envisioned a large theater and hotel complex located on property he owned at the corner of Main and Riverside. In the spring of 1910 excavation for such a structure was begun, and in July it was announced that Page would be inviting bids for the laying of a concrete foundation for the Page Hotel and Theater Building. The plans and specifications for this new structure were on display in the offices of the architectural firm of Powers & Reeves in the Farmers & Fruitgrowers Bank building.¹

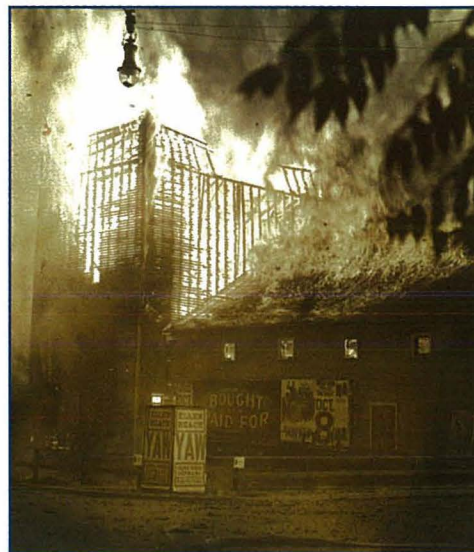
Ultimately, however, this planned theater and hotel complex was never built. Factionalism between the east and west sides of town, both of which wanted the theater, made it impossible for the developer to raise the capital required to begin construction. Although this structure was never built, Page continued to contemplate the construction of a modern theater.²

Two years later, in the afternoon of October 11, 1912, a fire of unknown origin broke out in the old Wilson Opera House on Eighth Street, which was then operating under the name Medford Theater. The wooden frame structure, built in 1902, was completely consumed in a spectacular blaze. As the largest of Medford's theaters, the Medford Theater had served as the city's primary venue for traveling performances. Its destruction left Medford without a large theater.³

At left, Page Theater, with its massive, north-facing brick front and inset box office, towers over East Main Street.

The Medford Theater, also known as the Wilson Opera House, burns in a spectacular fire in October 1912. The loss of the city's largest theater spurred Dr. Frederick Page to pursue his plans to build a new and larger theater, which opened the following May.

SOHS #8112



The sudden loss of the Medford Theater spurred Dr. Page into action to realize his dream for a new theater. On November 2, 1912, ground was cleared on a lot on Main Street adjacent to the Bear Creek bridge for the Page Theater. At the city council meeting of November 22, 1912, Dr. Page made formal application for the building permit, submitting the plans prepared by his architect, Charles O. Powers. The estimated cost of construction was given as \$30,000. Page and his architect agreed to comply with the new building codes the city attorney was in the process of compiling in the wake of the recent opera house fire.⁴

Actual construction of the brick edifice was begun on January 6, 1913. Considering that Southern Oregon had recently entered a period of economic decline following the orchard boom, Page's decision to go ahead with construction was seen as a vote of confidence in the city's future in uncertain times. As work was begun, the old steel and wood bridge across Bear Creek at Main, immediately

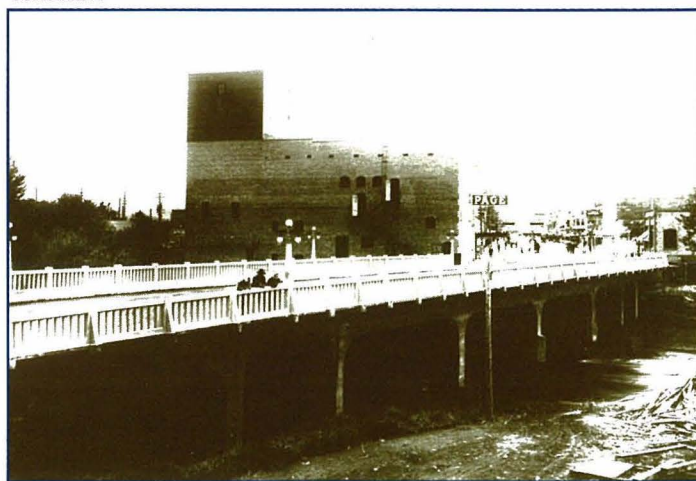
adjacent to the site of the new theater, was torn down by Jackson County and a new, wider, steel-reinforced, concrete crossing installed.⁵

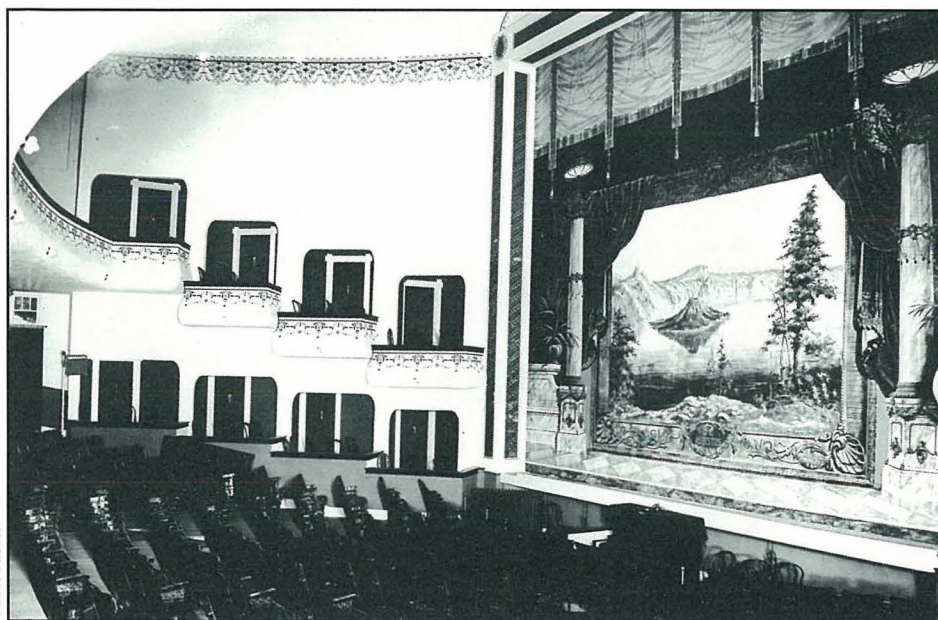
Construction of the Page Theater was completed on May 17, 1913, and that evening Robert E. Gordon and Tom Fuson, the theater's managers, held an open house. As the visitors wandered about, they were entertained by the Page Orchestra, under the direction of Professor Beach, the Page's musical director.⁶

All who visited agreed that the Page Theater set a new standard for theater excellence in Southern Oregon and Northern California. A recessed entryway and box office window was set into the theater's north facade along Main Street. Tile flooring with the name Page in the center welcomed the visitors. To the left of this entryway were the doors leading into the foyer. Access to the balcony seats was by way of a gentle ramp rather than stairs. The west wall of the theater was built to support a five-story building on the adjacent lot.⁷

SOHS #16398

In 1913, the view from present Hawthorne Park was dominated by the East Main Street bridge over Bear Creek and the Page Theater, both new that year.





SOHS #16403

The Page auditorium featured upper and lower private boxes, a balcony, a sloping floor, and a stage curtain graced by a painted panorama of Crater Lake.

Upon entering the auditorium the visitors were greeted with the sight of Crater Lake, painted on the fireproof asbestos stage curtain. On the walls flanking the stage were private boxes, four upstairs and four downstairs on either side. To enhance the audience's view of the stage, the Page was built with a gradually sloping floor. A large loft above the stage could accommodate the props and scenery for most traveling productions. The stage itself was described as "large enough for the production of any show which can play either Portland or San Francisco." Dressing rooms for the actors were located in the basement. An estimated 5,000 people toured the new building on the evening of the seventeenth. (In 1910 Medford's total population numbered just under 9,000.)⁸

Although Dr. Page owned the new theater, he had a lease agreement with the firm of Fuson & Gordon to manage the property. Gordon, who also managed the Isis Theater on East Main Street, was the local managing partner. For the opening act Fuson & Gordon booked Maude Adams, one of the most popular actresses of the day, in a role for which she was famous, as the title character in James Barrie's classic, *Peter Pan*. Opening day was scheduled for May 19, 1913.

Advance ticket sales at the Page's temporary box office were brisk, and it was soon apparent that the opening night performance would be a sellout. For the convenience of out-of-towners, special

trains from nearby cities were scheduled to accommodate the show times. By opening night more than 1,100 tickets had been purchased, 300 of them from outside of Medford.⁹

On the evening of the nineteenth, before the doors to the new theater had even opened, more than 1,000 patrons stood in line outside in "threatening weather." Traffic on Main Street was at a standstill as autos discharged their passengers at the front door. "Never had the society of the Rogue River Valley so universally turned out for an occasion as on Monday night, for the opening of the Page Theater," the *Medford Sun* reported the following day.¹⁰

After the throngs had found their seats, Benjamin F. Mulkey, prosecuting attorney for Jackson County, addressed the audience from his private box near the stage. He not only thanked Dr. Page and Fuson & Gordon, he congratulated all of Medford on the opening of the opulent new playhouse. He then went on to speak "optimistically" of the city's future. After Mulkey's remarks the audience sat back to enjoy *Peter Pan*. At the conclusion of the performance all seemed completely satisfied. "Needless to say Miss Maude Adams was Miss Maude Adams," the review in the *Sun* read the following day. "Charming, spirited, exquisite, finished in every detail of her act, with the entire audience at her feet all the time." The review in the *Medford Mail Tribune* also sang the praises of the opening

performance. "But the play!" the reporter gushed. "With what completeness did Maude Adams and her splendid company round out the most important event in the history of our city's amusements."¹¹

"Needless to say Miss Maude Adams was Miss Maude Adams," the review in the Sun read the following day. "Charming, spirited, exquisite, finished in every detail of her act, with the entire audience at her feet all the time."

Accolades for Adams' performance were not universal, however. An editorial in the *Mail Tribune*, presumably penned by that paper's editor, George Putnam, seemed immune to the spell of *Peter Pan*. "Maude Adams in *Peter Pan* can scarcely be called a suitable production for the occasion," he wrote about the dedication of the new theater. "Maude Adams herself is the most striking example of the trust manufactured star now before the footlights—an instance of what money can do with mediocrity." The editor of the *Mail Tribune* seemed to be objecting to much of the hype that had, in part, been generated in the pages of his own paper.¹²

In stark counterpoint, perhaps even as a jab at his counterpart, *Medford Sun* editor Robert Ruhl countered that, "Those who see in the play merely a fairy story have not grown up so much as grown back. They have lost connection with the immortal spring of youth."¹³

The quality of the performance aside, all were in agreement that the new Page Theater was a wonderful civic addition. City leaders and the local press praised the efforts of Dr. Page to bring quality entertainment to Medford, especially in such splendid surroundings. "Yes, Medford at last has an up-to-date playhouse of which we are all sincerely thankful to Dr. Page," the *Mail Tribune* stated. "His undertaking to build a theater in the very midst of our lean years proves beyond a doubt the doctor's abiding faith in the future of our beautiful valley."

With the successful opening performance of legitimate theater over, it was time for the Page to show off the latest projection equipment installed for movie exhibition. For the opening movie, Fuson & Gordon booked *Northern Spy*, which was

accompanied by a trio of shorts. Although not quite a sellout performance, more than 1,000 attended the Page's movie premiere. Management announced that they would change movies four times per week, and would exhibit movies every night there was no live performance booked.¹⁴

Vaudeville performances had not originally been considered for the Page. There were several theaters in town, primarily the Isis and the Star, that showcased vaudeville, but Fuson & Gordon soon gave in to public demand for the variety acts and made arrangements with the Pantages circuit for the popular road shows. A contract for three shows daily on Wednesdays and Thursdays was signed on May 26. In later years, with vaudeville on the wane, scheduling was reduced to one day per week.¹⁵

In 1916, George A. Hunt became the manager of the Page. Hunt had come to Medford from Portland in 1910 to manage the new Natatorium, a multipurpose amusement center on North Riverside. He later acquired control of the Star Theater on East Main Street in 1915. Hunt's selection as the Page's new manager enabled him to work with his wife, Enid, who had been the Page's cashier since its opening.

When the United States was drawn into the world war then raging across Europe, the Hunts made the decision to relocate to the Seattle-Tacoma region of Washington state. In October 1917, it was announced that Hunt had sold his leases on both the Star and Page theaters to Mr. and Mrs. Oscar T. Bergner of Ashland, managers of that town's Vining Theater. Mr. Bergner would assume the management of the Page and Star theaters, and Mrs. Bergner would manage the Vining.¹⁶

It is unclear from the surviving records just how long Bergner remained as manager of the Page. Newspaper accounts

imply that at some point Dr. Page himself had assumed direct management of his theater. In June 1919, Page had tired of running the theater and signed a ten-year lease with the Moran-Percy Company to assume the management responsibilities, effective July 1.

Arthur J. Moran and Harry L. Percy had come to Medford from Sacramento in 1917 and opened the Rialto, a new theater on West Main Street. In the spring of 1919 the Percy-Moran Company underwent a major expansion with the acquisition of two theaters in Albany and the Antlers Theater in Roseburg. Percy moved to Roseburg to take direct control of the Antlers, while Moran remained in

Medford to manage the Page and Rialto.¹⁷

Moran's first action as manager was to close the Page for two weeks for some upgrading, including a new curtain, sets, and an improved projection system. He announced that the Page would reopen on July 17 with a showing of *The Red Lantern*, featuring the exotic Russian star Alla Nazimova in a dual role.¹⁸

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SOUVENIR PROGRAM
Opening of **THE PAGE THEATRE**
Medford, Oregon, Monday Evening, May 19, 1913
MAUDE ADAMS in "PETER PAN"

"Yes, Medford at last has an up-to-date playhouse of which we are all sincerely thankful to Dr. Page," the Mail Tribune stated. "His undertaking to build a theater in the very midst of our lean years proves beyond a doubt the doctor's abiding faith in the future of our beautiful valley."

The first road show under the new management would be the popular musical comedy *Chin Chin*, currently on its first West Coast tour. *Chin Chin* was booked for August 1. To promote this program and the new management of the Page, Moran engaged the services of two local men, Floyd Hart and Seely Hall and their airplane "Old Sturdy."¹⁹ Hart and Hall had recently purchased the surplus Jenny aircraft, and, as the first locally owned airplane, it was an extremely popular novelty. A few days before the opening of *Chin Chin*, Hart flew over the valley towns dropping promotional flyers.²⁰

George Hunt returned to Medford in 1919 and formed the George A. Hunt Amusement Co., with Julius Wolfe, Richard Antle and Hunt's wife, Enid, as partners. This entity then purchased the old Star Theater, which had been renamed the Liberty following the allied victory in the recent war. In December negotiations to buy out the Percy-Moran theater holdings were completed, and as of December 1, 1919, George Hunt returned to the Page.²¹

On election night in 1920 Hunt advertised that the Page would be showing movies throughout the night, accompanied with continued updates on the election returns. Afterward, work was begun on the installation of two new Simplex projectors. These new machines were equipped to create the "fade-away" and close-up techniques popular in movies of the day.²²

While the Page's projection equipment was being upgraded, B.C. DaSheill of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company installed a new \$15,000 pipe organ. To accommodate the new instrument an arbor, designed by Medford architect Frank Clark and decorated by Tom Swem, was installed, adding a "conservatory effect to the stage." The capabilities of this new instrument far

exceeded anything before experienced in Medford. In addition to its musical qualities, the new organ could produce a variety of special effects for accompanying motion pictures. Among those effects, as described by the *Mail Tribune*, were "rain, the pounding of the surf on the beach, galloping of horses, castinets [sic] and tambourines for Spanish dances, telephone bell, auto horn, orchestra bells, xylophone, cathedral chimes, snare drum and bass drum and cimbals [sic], and imitation not only of human voices but those of domestic and wild fowls and animals."²³

The newly modernized and redecorated Page opened on November 23, 1920, with a showing of *Nomads of the North*. Sitting at the new organ was Henry Harcke, recently returned from San Francisco where he had trained on a similar instrument.

As manager of the Page, Hunt, assisted by his wife, Enid, began to show some of the flair for promotion for which he was to become so well known. Having booked the Douglas Fairbanks feature *Robin Hood* in April 1923, Hunt dressed his ushers in medieval costumes. In front of the screen a castle drawbridge was erected and costumed actors heralded the beginning of the movie with trumpets as the drawbridge was lowered, revealing the silver screen. Musical accompaniment for *Robin Hood* was supplied by Medford's popular "wonder organist," Grace "Betty" Brown, who played her own original adaptation of the score.²⁴

Early in the morning of Sunday, December 30, 1923, John Palmer and George Corum, heading out of town to hunt ducks, saw smoke and flames pouring out the windows of the Page. They sent in the alarm, but by the time the fire brigade arrived the building was too far gone to save. By 10:00 in the morning the fire had burned itself out; the building had been almost completely gutted.

The Page Theater could handle almost any form of stage and screen entertainment, from the silent movies to vaudeville acts to full-size stage productions complete with an orchestra in the pit.



SOHS #6687

Medford Fire Chief Roy Elliott and volunteer fireman Amos Willits entered the theater to inspect the extent of the damage when, suddenly, the stage fire wall collapsed. Willits was killed instantly; Elliott was severely injured. For the remainder of the day and the following night, the ruins of the Page smoldered. Firemen were stationed with hoses throughout the night in case the conflagration flared up again. Dr. Page was fully insured for his loss of the building. The seats, organ, scenery and projection equipment, however, were the property of Hunt's company, and were woefully underinsured. The total estimated losses amounted to \$100,000.²⁵

For ten years the Page had been the valley's premier entertainment palace, showing some of the best in both legitimate and motion picture entertainment, and had played host to many of the top performers of the day. The recently closed Star, Hunt announced, would not be reopened, leaving the Rialto as the only theater operating in town. Since it was a movie theater, Medford was left without a venue for live productions.

The loss of the Page, therefore, dealt a serious blow to the community. Almost immediately there was talk of either rebuilding the Page or building a new theater to take its place. Later inspection had determined that the Page's exterior walls were still sound. *Mail Tribune* editor Robert Ruhl, in a January 11 editorial, echoed the community's sentiments that "Medford must have a good theater. If it can't be built in one way, it can be built in some other. The idea of abandoning the idea entirely is unthinkable."²⁶

In the end, however, Hunt made the decision to abandon the Page in favor of an entirely new structure. On the corner of Central Avenue and Eighth Street, local attorney Porter J. Neff and businessman J.C. Cooley financed the construction of a new building. Designed by Frank Clark, the Cooley Theater Building would house a new theater along with storefronts along Central Avenue and offices on the second floor. The theater space was leased to the George A. Hunt Theater Company. A public contest was held to name this new theater, with "Hunt's Craterian" selected from hundreds of entries.²⁷

In spite of the decision by Hunt to occupy a new theater building, Dr. Page was not yet ready to abandon the Page. In September 1924, shortly before the grand opening of the new Hunt's Craterian, the

Mail Tribune reported that \$50,000 would be spent to rebuild the Page. The plans for the three-story structure, also drawn up by Clark, called for a 700-seat auditorium, a second-floor hall for the local Knights of Pythias, and rooms for the Andrews Bros. Conservatory of Music on the third floor. This building, however, never materialized.²⁸

The following year Dr. Page again explored the option of rebuilding the Page, which he would call "The New Page." As with the earlier announcement, this attempt came to naught. Eventually Dr. Page gave up on his theater site and control of the property, and the remaining walls of the old theater were acquired by the George A. Hunt Co. These ruins were the cause of several discussions between the Hunt Co. and the city of Medford, which began to see the old walls as a public safety hazard.

"Medford must have a good theater. If it can't be built in one way, it can be built in some other. The idea of abandoning the idea entirely is unthinkable."

In the spring of 1928, Hunt and the city were involved in a dispute over the amount of liability insurance the former should maintain for the property. Two years later Hunt and the city of Medford were again at odds over the fate of the old Page. In early 1930, City Council member Joseph O. Grey voiced his concern over the "dilatoriness" of the Page's owners, in spite of the council's repeated requests that the site be either rebuilt or cleared. The council then instructed City Superintendent Fred Scheffel to condemn the structure and order its immediate removal. Hunt was able to arrange an extension on the council's order, hoping to arrange some sort of suitable use for the site. Several ideas, including an apartment building were considered, but none panned out. Finally, in 1930 the last vestiges of the grand old theater were pulled down.²⁹

This was not the end of a theatrical presence on Dr. Page's old property. In 1932 Gene Childers built a new theater, the Roxy, on the site, to replace the Isis he operated across the street. After a run of several years under different names, this theater, too, was eventually torn down.

As for Dr. Frederick Page, he had left Medford in 1922 for Los Angeles, where he was active in the real estate business. In the summer of 1934, while visiting his sister in Medford, Dr. Page suffered a heart "ailment" and was confined to bed, where he died on September 21, 1934 and was interred in the recently opened Siskiyou Memorial Park.³⁰ 🏠

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

This is the second in a series of articles on Medford's theatrical history. The first, "George A. Hunt, Medford Impresario, and the Craterian Theater," appeared in the Winter 1997 issue of Southern Oregon Heritage. Additional articles will appear in future issues of Southern Oregon Heritage Today.

ENDNOTES

1. *Medford Mail*, 14 July 1910.
2. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 6 July 1911, 17 October 1912.
3. *Mail Tribune*, 28 August 1902; *Medford Sun*, 12 October 1912.
4. *Sun*, 12 October 1912, 23 November 1912.
5. *Ibid.*, 7 January 1913.
6. *Mail Tribune*, 17 May 1913, 19 May 1913.
7. Photographs of the Page Theater, taken at the time of its completion, are annotated with descriptions of some of the building's details. Manuscript no. 582, Southern Oregon Historical Society, Medford.
8. *Mail Tribune*, 19 May 1913; *Sun*, 24 April 1913.
9. *Sun*, 20 May 1913; *Mail Tribune*, 20 May 1913.
10. *Sun*, 20 May 1913.
11. *Sun*, 20 May 1913; *Mail Tribune*, 20 May 1913.
12. *Mail Tribune*, 20 May 1913.
13. *Sun*, 20 May 1913.
14. *Ibid.*, 20 May 1913.
15. *Ibid.*, 25, 27 May 1913.
16. *Mail Tribune*, 26 October 1917, 3 November 1917.
17. *Ibid.*, 11 April 1919, 19 June 1919.
18. *Mail Tribune*, 2 July 1919, 17 July 1919.
19. "Old Sturdy" was a common early nickname for Hart and Hall's plane. It would later be officially named the "Mayfly."
20. *Mail Tribune*, 28 July 1919.
21. William Alley, "George A. Hunt, Medford Impresario, and the Craterian Theater," *Southern Oregon Heritage*, Vol. 2, no. 3, 1997, p. 22; *Mail Tribune*, 2 December 1919.
22. *Mail Tribune*, 2 November 1920.
23. *Ibid.*, 20 November 1920; 23 November 1920.
24. *Ibid.*, 20 April 1923; 26 December 1923.
25. *Ibid.*, 31 December 1923.
26. *Ibid.*, 11 January 1924.
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Indian Tobacco

by Donn L. Todt & Nan Hannon

While the Native Americans of the Southern Oregon-Northern California region got their food by gathering and hunting wild foods, they also practiced horticulture to provide themselves with one domesticated non-food item: tobacco.

In the fall, a man established his tobacco plot by burning logs to create a nutrient-rich bed for seeds. As the plants grew up, he thinned, weeded and sometimes watered them. In late summer, he harvested and dried the leaves. He also saved seeds from the plants that produced the most potent tobacco, as careful of plant breeding as any farmer. He smoked the crushed tobacco in a stone or wooden pipe.

The main tobacco species used by the Indians of the region was *Nicotiana quadrolvalvus*, which probably originated in Southern California, but was traded up the West Coast and planted as far north as coastal Alaska. Plant explorer David Douglas found it growing in a Native American garden near the Columbia River in 1825. "I met with one of the little plantations and supplied myself with seeds and specimens...On my way home, I met the owner, who, seeing it under my arm, appeared to be much displeased; but by presenting him with two finger-lengths of tobacco from Europe, his wrath was appeased, and we became good friends."¹

The "European" tobacco that Douglas traded was actually native to the West Indies, where Native Americans cultivated it. Columbus took *Nicotiana tabacum* back to Europe from his first voyage to the New World. It contains the same chemical as the tobacco of the Far West: nicotine. It is now smoked around the world, with disastrous health effects. Unfortunately, the customs and social controls regulating tobacco use weren't exported along with the plant. As ethnographer J. P. Harrington noted: "It is a curious fact that while whites took over the material tobacco from the Indians they took no fragment of the world that accompanied it."²

For the Indians of the Far West, tobacco smoke curled up mist-like into the cool

canyon air when friends met on the trail and shared a pipe as a goodwill gesture. Sometimes the viscous leaves of tobacco poulticed sores. Late at night, the sweathouse might be bathed in the leathery scent of fresh tobacco smoke as a sleepless man lit a pipe for its sedative effect. These were mundane uses. But, wrote Harrington, tobacco was also "a heritage from the gods, a strange path which juts into this world and leads to the very ends of magic." Tobacco served not only as a medicinal herb but also as a spiritual catalyst, which enabled more complicated combinations of medicines and cures to work effectively in the hands of a trained shaman.

Among Native Americans living in this region, custom restricted tobacco use to adult men and female shamans. Men mostly smoked their pipes outdoors and in the men's lodge or sweathouse, where they slept apart from women and children. Since tobacco use decreases female fertility and endangers unborn children, and since secondhand smoke is especially dangerous to children, practical reasons probably underlay the traditions regulating tobacco use.

Indian tobacco plants may sometimes be found growing near old Indian village sites. They have



Acc. #72

A stone pipe of steatite, excavated from an Upland Takelma site in Jackson County, would have been used for smoking the leaves of a tobacco plant native to the West Coast.

sticky, strong-smelling leaves and small white flowers of the same shape as garden Nicotiana. Their tiny seeds may lie dormant for many years, waiting for the disturbed conditions that permit them to grow. And for ceremonial purposes, Native Americans of this region have again begun to plant the tobacco species that their ancestors cultivated for thousands of years.³

Ethnobotanist Donn L. Todt and anthropologist Nan Hannon garden in Ashland.

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Nicotiana quadrolvalvus

PHOTO BY DONN L. TODT



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Abel Helman:

FROM PIONEER TO POSTMASTER

by Louise A. Watson

An Ashland street and school carry his name. For twenty-seven years, residents trusted him to deliver their mail—on horseback. But in January 1850, Abel D. Helman just wanted to find the adventure and riches promised by golden California.¹

Born in Wayne County, Ohio (now Ashland County), on April 10, 1824, Helman left behind his pregnant young wife, Martha Jane, whom he'd married in 1849, his farm, and his cabinet-making business.² Cold, rain, homesickness, high prices, starvation, disappointment, and a fellow Ohioan named Eber Emery accompanied him on the grueling journey west. By 1851, Helman's hopes of striking it rich had been dashed. Instead, land captivated him: the beautiful, fertile valley at the base of the Siskiyou Mountains in Oregon Territory, on a main route north from California. His search for his future was over. To get started, Jacob Emery, Eber's uncle, and a man named James Cardwell

helped Helman build a sawmill. They christened the little settlement Ashland Mills, honoring Helman's and Emery's Ohio roots.³

Helman brought his wife and daughter, Almeda, born in 1850, and Eber Emery's family, back to Ashland

Mills in 1852. Then he officially claimed the first property in town, a site of 320 acres somewhat north of the present downtown area.

Community business and civic leadership followed: Helman and the Emerys built a flour mill that lasted for fifty-five years, boosting the town's economy. He became Ashland's first postmaster in 1855. The post office was located in the Ashland House, the community's first hotel, and home to the Helman family. Helman soon

laid out twelve lots in the present-day Plaza area to encourage the town's development. Military experience came when Helman served as a lieutenant, then as a captain, in Company A of the Oregon Militia, in frontier Indian wars and the Civil War period. He also organized the community's school district in 1857.⁴

Abel and Martha Jane Helman, with one of their eight children.



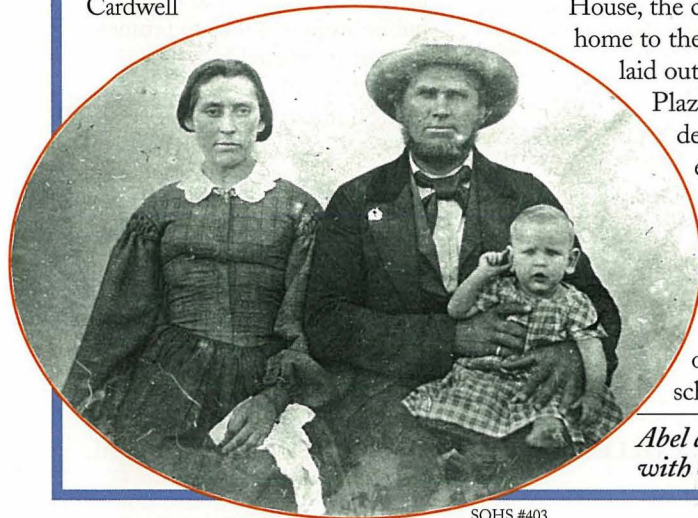
Ashland founder Abel Helman poses outside his home at Orange and Helman streets with his son, Grant, and his granddaughters Susan, standing, and Isabella, in her father's arms.

Abel and Martha had seven more children: John, in 1854, the first white child born in Ashland Mills; Mary Elizabeth, 1856; Martha Jane, 1857; Abel Lincoln, 1860; Benjamin Butler, 1863; Ulysses Grant, 1865; and Oates Orange, 1869. Martha Helman died on May 12, 1881. Thirteen years later, in 1894, Helman married Susan Culp Rockfellow. Helman died in 1910, still residing, appropriately enough, on his original land claim.⁵ 🏠

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ENDNOTES

1. Mary Lou Skinner, *Medford Mail Tribune*, 17 November 1967.
2. Almeda Helman Coder biographical record, 14 October 1953, Research Library archives, Southern Oregon Historical Society, Medford, Ore.
3. Kay Atwood, *Mill Creek Journal, Ashland, Oregon 1850-1860* (Ashland, Ore.: Kay Atwood, 1987), p. 13, 22.
4. *Medford Mail Tribune*; Coder biographical records.
5. Ibid, Coder records.



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