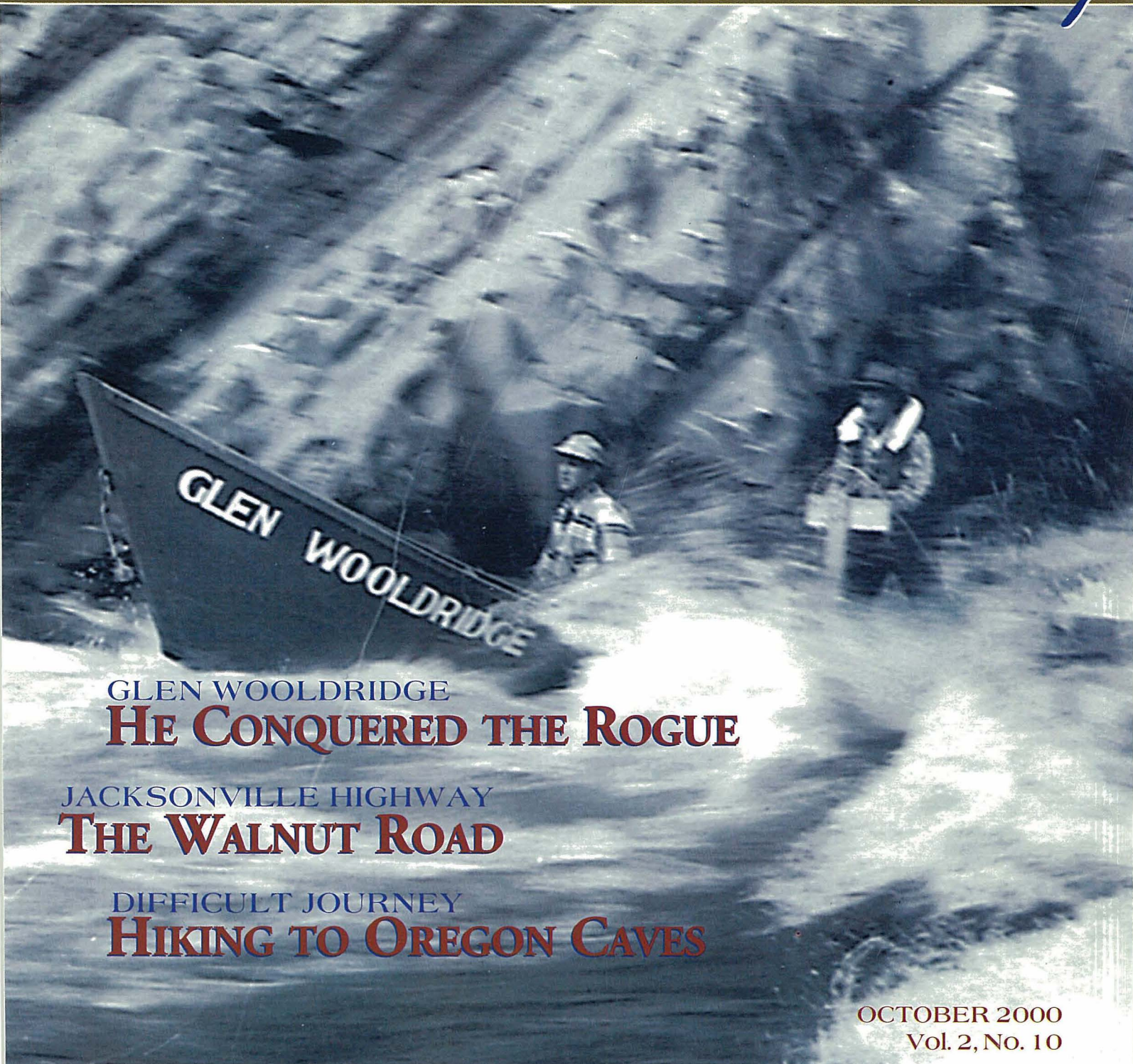


SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*



GLEN WOOLDRIDGE

HE CONQUERED THE ROGUE

JACKSONVILLE HIGHWAY

THE WALNUT ROAD

DIFFICULT JOURNEY

HIKING TO OREGON CAVES

OCTOBER 2000
Vol. 2, No. 10

The Magazine of the Southern Oregon Historical Society 

Thirty Year Retrospective Exhibition

HIGHLIGHTS THE WORK OF BRUCE W. BUTTE

A collection of oils and watercolors will be on display in the U.S. Hotel ballroom from October 27 to November 19, from 10am-5pm Wednesday-Saturday and noon-5pm, Sunday. Each item displayed will also be for sale. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Much of Bruce Butte's sought-after work captures the beauty of our region, while a large body of his work includes Jacksonville and other historic and architecturally significant subjects reflecting his love for history.

A Jacksonville resident since 1970, Butte lives in a National Register home with his studio next door where classes are held. Butte's painting of a band of elves jamming on musical instruments was chosen as the 1999 Britt Festivals poster.



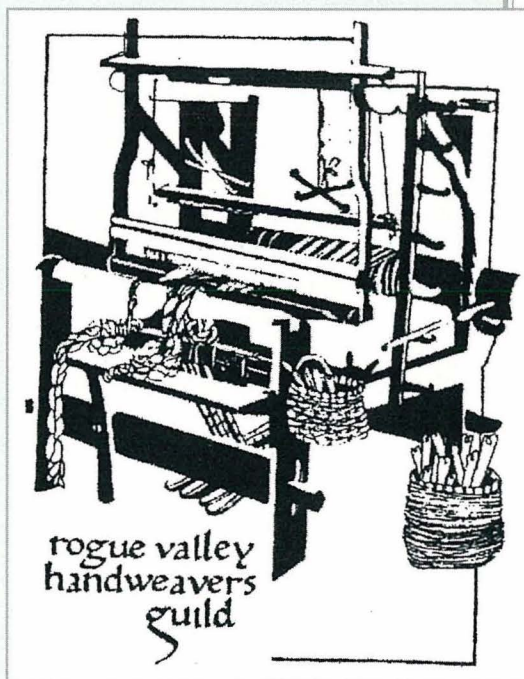
Fiber Arts Tour Comes to Jacksonville



Come view this delightful collection demonstrating the range and diversity of Oregon's Fiber Artists.

To kick off Spinning and Weaving Week the Rogue Valley Handweavers' Guild is hosting The Best of Oregon, A Touring Fiber Arts Collection. The Weaving Guilds of Oregon (WeGo), assembled the collection to demonstrate the range and diversity of Oregon's fiber artists. The show opens Saturday, October 7 at the U.S. Hotel upstairs ballroom on 3rd and California streets in Jacksonville. The show continues Sunday, October 8 through Sunday, October 15. Hours are from 1:00p.m.-5:00p.m. each open day. Weaving and spinning will be demonstrated.

The juried exhibit has traveled the state for a year. Forty-two artists are represented with six from the Rogue Valley. Junia Graff, a long-time weaver and teacher of weaving, was inspired by the Medford city skylight to make a silk and metallic garment. Applegate artist, Thalia Truesdell, reflects her life and experiences that revolve around nature in her weaving. Others were inspired by excellent teachers, yarn color and textures of weaves.



For further information, contact Janette Merriman at 772-3057.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE
TODAY

Editorial Guidelines

Feature articles average 3,000 to 4,000 (pre-edited) words. Other materials range from 500 to 1,000 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on 3-1/4-inch disks and should be accompanied by a hard-copy printout. Cite all sources and construct endnotes and cutlines using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The author is responsible for verification of cited facts. A selection of professional, unscreened photographs and/or line art should accompany submission—black-and-white or color. The Southern Oregon Historical Society reserves the right to use Society images in place of submitted material. All material should be labeled with author's name, mailing address, and telephone number. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped with sufficient postage. Authors should provide a brief autobiographical note at the end of manuscripts.

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

SOUTHERN OREGON
HERITAGE
Today

FEATURE:

Glen Wooldridge (1896-1986),
The River Conqueror

by Zane E. McCourtney . . . p. 8

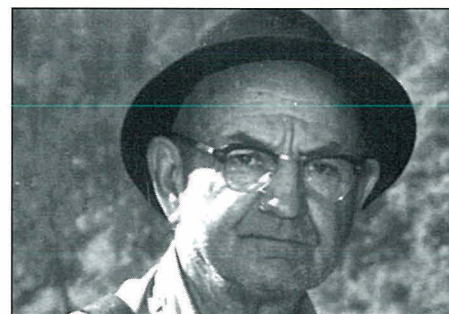


PHOTO COURTESY WOOLDRIDGE BOATS, INC.

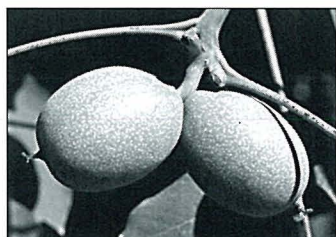
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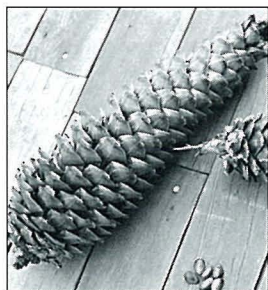


PHOTO BY BILL POWELL



SOHS #6721

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PHOTO COURTESY WOOLDRIDGE BOATS

ON THE COVER

Glen Wooldridge stands at the tiller as he pilots his boat up the Rogue River from Gold Beach to Grants Pass in 1947.

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SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SINCE 1948

The Walnut Road

by Bill Alley

Americans took to the roads in ever increasing numbers in the years immediately following the Great War. Across the country, Good Roads movements lobbied for the improvement of country roads; in Oregon, the Pacific Highway was paved from Washington to California by 1923. The following year work was begun paving the highway from Medford to Jacksonville and beyond to Ruch.¹

It was not just the grading and paving, however, that concerned local road enthusiasts. As work progressed on the Medford-to-Jacksonville highway, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce began to discuss ways of beautifying the road leading into the county seat. Under the leadership of Jackson County Judge George Gardner, the chamber hit upon the idea of enlisting the support of property owners along the right of way in the planting of trees, which would eventually grow into a canopy of leaves leading into town. After several meetings, the cooperating property owners decided to plant English walnut trees. They would not only provide adequate shade when mature, but would also supplement each property owner's income with profits from the sale of the walnuts, with each tree's yield estimated at sixty dollars.²

After canvassing the local owners and taking subscriptions for each property owner's share of trees, an order was placed with the Oregon Nursery Co. in Hillsboro for 400 English walnut trees of the Vroman Franquette variety.³

The bare-root trees arrived at the Medford freight depot on January 19, 1925, with the healthy young trees, ten to twelve feet in height, snugly packed in wooden crates. Almost immediately the trees were distributed to the subscribers and planting got under way. While some were earmarked for providing shade for the farms along the highway, most of the trees were destined for planting along the right of way. Soon fence lines along both sides of the highway boasted the new plantings.

Time has taken its toll on the planned canopy of walnut trees between Medford and Jacksonville, and many of the decorative trees are now gone. As one drives along the highway today, however, there are still scattered stands of the trees to be seen. One such stand still graces the north side of the right of way west of Winema Way, a remnant of an early effort to beautify one of the county's major roadways. 🌳

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

ENDNOTES

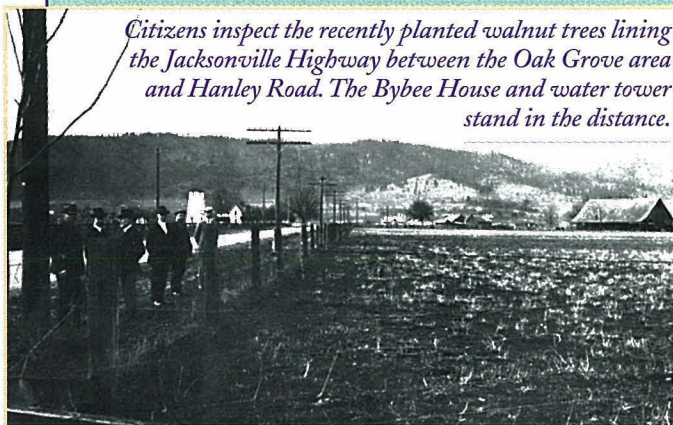
1. Jacksonville Post, 11 July 1924.
2. Jackson County News, 23 January 1925.
3. Medford Mail Tribune, 21 January 1925.

Four hundred bare-root English walnut trees from the Oregon Nursery Co. in Hillsboro lie on the loading dock at the Medford rail depot on January 19, 1925.



SOHS #60

Citizens inspect the recently planted walnut trees lining the Jacksonville Highway between the Oak Grove area and Hanley Road. The Bybee House and water tower stand in the distance.



SOHS #58

More freshly planted trees line the south side of the road; a few of the original trees remain today.



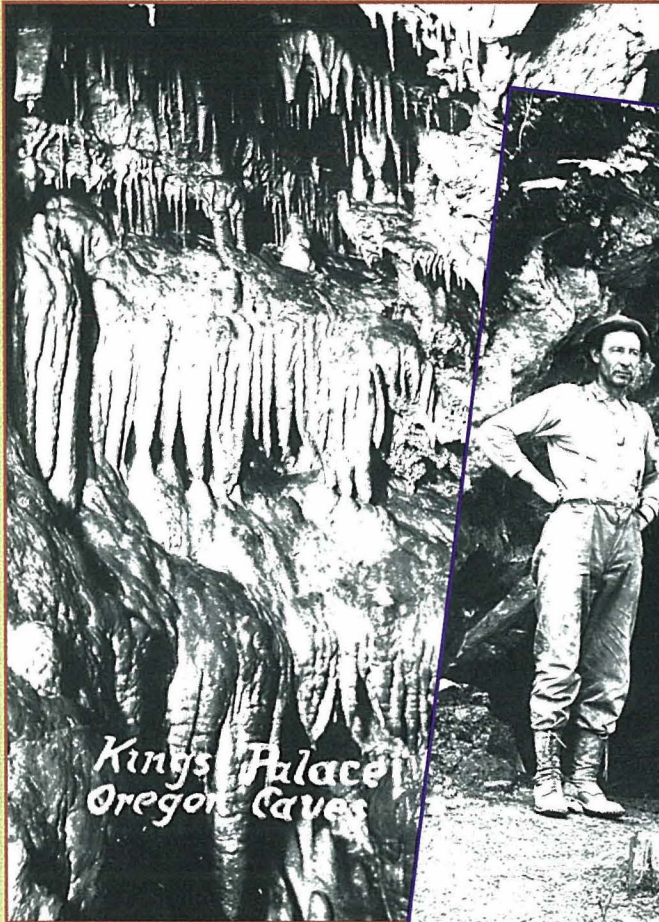
SOHS #59

Getting There (& Back) Is Half the Fun

HIKING TO THE OREGON CAVES IN 1920

by Jacque Sundstrand

Manuscript No. 608: Wilson Family Mementos



Among the items found in the Walter L. Wilson Family Mementos is a set of thirteen souvenir photographs from the Oregon Caves. On the back of six of the photos is a summary of a trip to the caves in July 1920. We do not know the writer's name, as the narrative is unsigned, but it is a fascinating story of a group's hike from Williams over the mountain to see the famous landmark, the only way to visit before the present road from Cave Junction to the entrance was completed in 1922.

Medford, Ore.

July 1920.

"At 3:00 ... two cars of young folks -- Maude Schleichert, Bertha Schleichert, Minnie Schleichert, Alena Huson, Bernice Milnes, Harriet Milnes, George Watson, Victor Huson, [and] Clair Pickel -- started on our trip to the Oregon Caves, we made camp about 17 miles from the caves by William's Creek. Taking pictures, catching crayfish and gathering wood for a bon fire we busied ourselves until about 8:00 ... from 5:00 when we had arrived. At this time a private car and a big Eads truck carrying eleven people and the farmer ... making in all 23 arrived."

After a crayfish supper, playing games and singing, the group retired for the night, except for the thirteen younger members in one bed. The writer records that "it is hard to stop talking and

much less sleep when one boy is singing which Clair did until about 1:00 or 1:30 when he at least run out of songs and when we finally settled to sleep."

Arising at 4:00 the next morning, the men woke the others and after breakfast they reached the

place to leave the cars, beginning their ten-mile hike at 7:00 a.m.

"At 9:00 ... some were nearly tired out and hungry and being only half way there we ate what we had for lunch. We only rested about half or one hour and journeyed again. At 12:00 the first group reached the guides tent and sat to rest until 1:00 when the last ones were there."

Much of the party rested while a group of the boys were guided through at 1:30. Others finally decided to make the effort to get to the cave entrance. "The upper cave was 80 feet above the other and it only taking 30 minutes to go thru the lower one we strained what seemed like all of our energy to ascend to the upper mouth of which the Lower one entered into thru a mere crack in the rock. The cave was to our surprise quite warm even to the end which was 1600 feet below the surface of the earth and 3300

feet in the mountain. At this place 'The ghost room' we experienced being in total darkness when the lights were blown out. ... Before reaching Paradise Lost we had to climb [sic] 75 ft. of ladder over a deep black cavern. This being the end of the cave we started back having taken us 3 hours to make the trip.

"After eating what wennies [sic] and cookies left from dinner at 9:00 we started back over the long 10 miles. No one can ever tell how tired, hungry and home sick we all were on that mountain trail. The first one in began supper under difficulties of stiffness also preparing beds for those who were the last to drag in. ... We had planned to start home that night which was Sunday night as most of us were working but we never once tho [sic] of home but of some supper and a bed. We awoke about 4:30 a.m. and finished eating all the provisions and packed the cars. We reach home at 10 minutes till eight, in time for work. ... The trip will always be remembered more than the caves altho they were wonderful." ■

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

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in October

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

	<u>DATE & TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
October Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Pumpkin Patch
"The Fire Last Time..."	Tues., Oct. 3, 7pm	HISTORY CENTER	Oregon Archaeology 2000 Lecture
150 Years of Ashland History	Tues., Oct. 3, 7:30pm	ASHLAND HIGH (English lecture hall) 201 S. Mountain, Ashland	*Community Pillars: the Making of a City
History of Ashland City Government	Tues., Oct. 10, 7:30pm		
History of Oregon Shakespeare Festival	Tues., Oct. 17, 7:30pm		
History of Southern Oregon University	Tues., Oct. 24, 7:30pm		
The Great Pumpkin Patch	Wed., Oct. 25, 10 - 11am & 3:30 - 4:30pm	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Pumpkin decorating/carving workshop
Harvest Made Dolls	Sat., Oct. 28, 1 - 4pm	VALLEY VIEW ORCHARD 1800 N. Valley View, Ashland	Doll making workshop
History of Ashland Community Hospital	Tues., Oct. 31, 7:30pm	ASHLAND HIGH	Community Pillars: the Making of a City

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

OCTOBER CRAFT OF THE MONTH

Pumpkin Patch

Families are invited to decorate one of the many paper pumpkins on display in the Children's Museum pumpkin patch. Families. Free.

"THE FIRE LAST TIME: HOW AND WHY NATIVE PEOPLES BURNED THE LANDSCAPE"

Hour long slide and lecture program for adults presented by U.S. Forest Service district archaeologist Jeff LaLande explaining how and why the landscape of southwestern Oregon was burned by Native peoples. Fee: \$3.

GREAT PUMPKIN PATCH

For children ages 3-6. Join us as we discuss Halloween traditions in our area. Children will decorate and/or carve a small pumpkin to take home. Preregistration and prepayment required. Fee: \$3 members; \$4 non-members.

HARVEST MADE DOLLS

Around the world dolls have been created out of seemingly nothing. Bring the entire family and turn the fruits of the harvest: apples, walnuts and corn into simple dolls

and unique works of art. Project will take place at the Valley View Orchard, 1800 Valley View Road from 1:00-4:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 28. Families. Fee: \$1.

COMMUNITY PILLARS: THE MAKING OF A CITY

This five-part lecture series will focus on five long-standing Ashland establishments and their contributions to--or place in--Ashland's development. The series will be held in the English Lecture Hall at Ashland High School, 201 S. Mountain Avenue from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Fee: \$10 for SOHS members & \$12 for non-members per lecture.

Dates:

OCTOBER 3.....JOE PETERSON

• 150 Years of Ashland History

OCTOBER 10.....KAY ATWOOD

• History of Ashland City Government

OCTOBER 17.....ED BRUBAKER

• History of Oregon Shakespeare Festival

OCTOBER 24.....ART KREISMAN

• History of Southern Oregon University

OCTOBER 31.....JIM WATSON

• History of Ashland Community Hospital



HISTORY STORE!

HOURS

WED - SAT 10AM - 5PM

SUN NOON - 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

HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE TOURS

October 7, NOON - 4PM

• Thomas Chayner House,
12162 Blackwell Road, GOLDHILL.

October 28, 9AM - 1PM

• H. Chandler & Alice B. Egan House,
2620 Foothill Road, MEDFORD.

COMING IN NOVEMBER

DOCUMENTING QUILTS: *Caring for your family heirlooms*

Saturday, November 18 from 9am-noon at the History Center. FEE: \$10 members; \$15 non-members.

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

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
Century of Photography: 1856-1956 Talent Historical Society High Water: Local Flooding Archaeology of the Upper Rogue	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 Hannah Hall of Justice The Shape of Fashion: 1900-1925	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am - 5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10:00am - 5:00pm Sunday, noon - 5:00pm
"Fiber Fashions"	3RD ST. ARTISAN STUDIO	Sat., 11:00am - 4:00pm

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: LOCAL FLOODING

Dramatic photographs of local Jackson County floods of the last 150 years will be on display through fall 2000.

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 through October 10.

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."

FIBER FASHIONS

Members of the Rogue Valley Handweavers, Far Out Fibers and the Saturday Handweaving Guild present an exhibit of wearable art. Members will also demonstrate traditional artforms of spinning and weaving. Exhibit runs through November 25.

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

Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, Noon to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

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

HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road
(open by special appointment)
(541) 773-2675.

Mystery Object of the Month

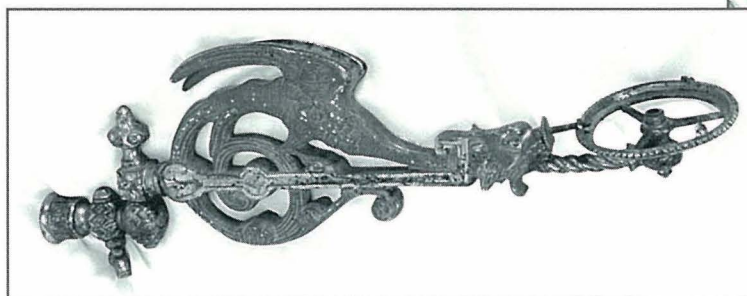
July's Mystery Object was a steam whistle. It is engraved "S Carter maker Ashland, Or.". Congratulations to Kay Maser of Ashland, for answering correctly!

October Mystery Object:

This item is a decorative cast iron bracket. Do you know what travelled through the dragon and why?

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

July's
Mystery
Object:
steam
whistle

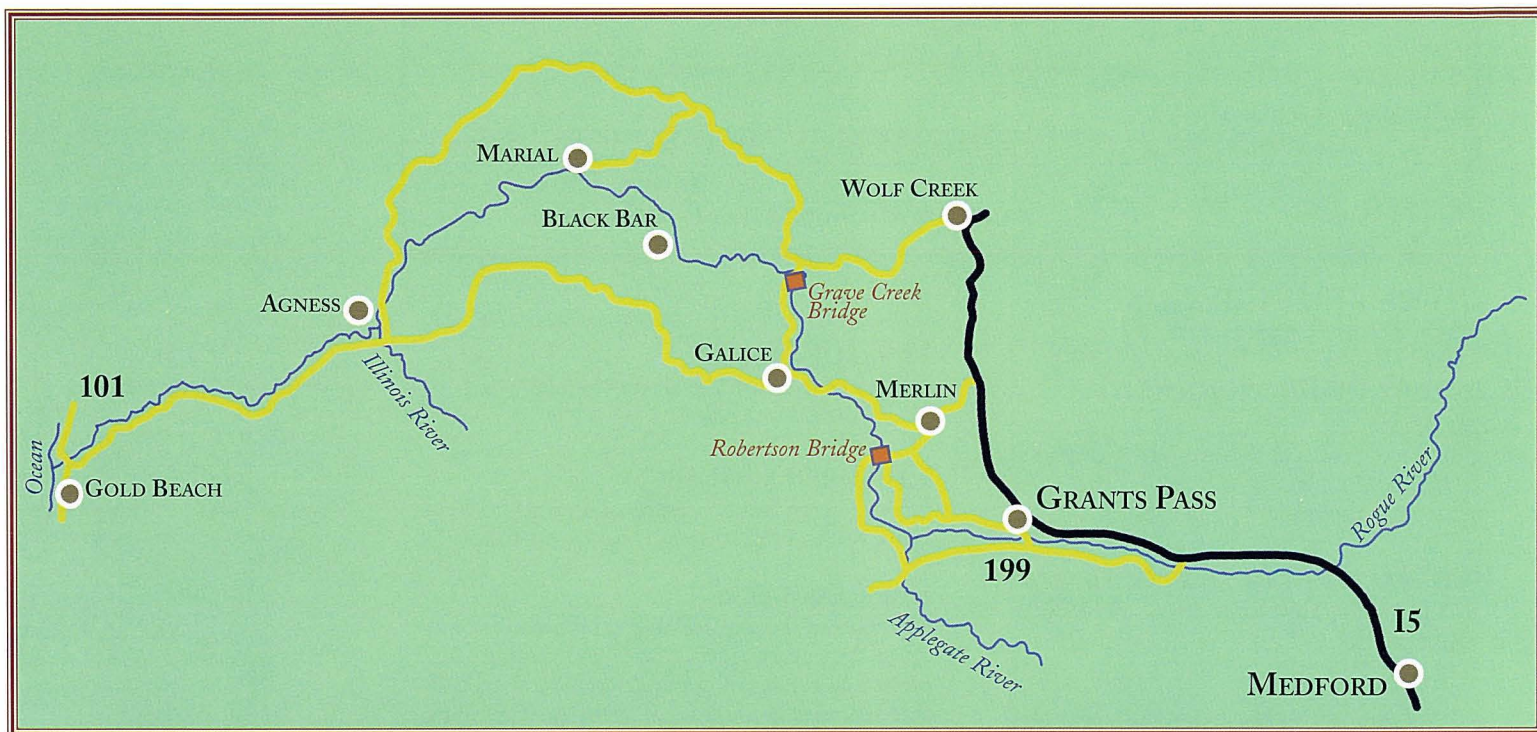


Glen Wooldridge (1896-1986):

by Zane E. McCourtney

PHOTO COURTESY WOOLDRIDGE BOATS, INC.
"ROGUE SPECIAL" FLY COURTESY OF DAVID ROBERTS

RIVER CONQUEROR



He was known as "ol' man river" to local folks, but writers give him other descriptive names: "dean of whitewater boatman," "whitewater cowboy," and "old man of the Rogue." The fellow who earned those titles was Glen Wooldridge, a remarkable man who lived a remarkable life. Ted Trueblood wrote a section for the 1952 *Fishing Yearbook* about his experience with Wooldridge:

He was standing spread legged, his muscular body perfectly balanced. His left hand held the steering arm; his right gripped the post behind the seat. His coat was flying open in the wind of our own making and his misshapen felt hat was pulled down tight.

The steady good humor still was in his face, but it was masked over now by a gleaming mixture of rapture and determination. This was one of the great times. This was what he loved, and as his sharp eyes scanned the rapids for hidden rocks they were as unaware of my scrutiny as those of a soaring eagle. It was the river and the man, alone, and the boat and motor were part of him, of course.¹

Wooldridge remains an Oregon legend who actually lived up to the mythical proportions of his reputation as Oregon's first whitewater excursionist and a pioneer of boating in the Northwest, if not the United States.² Heralded as an innovative

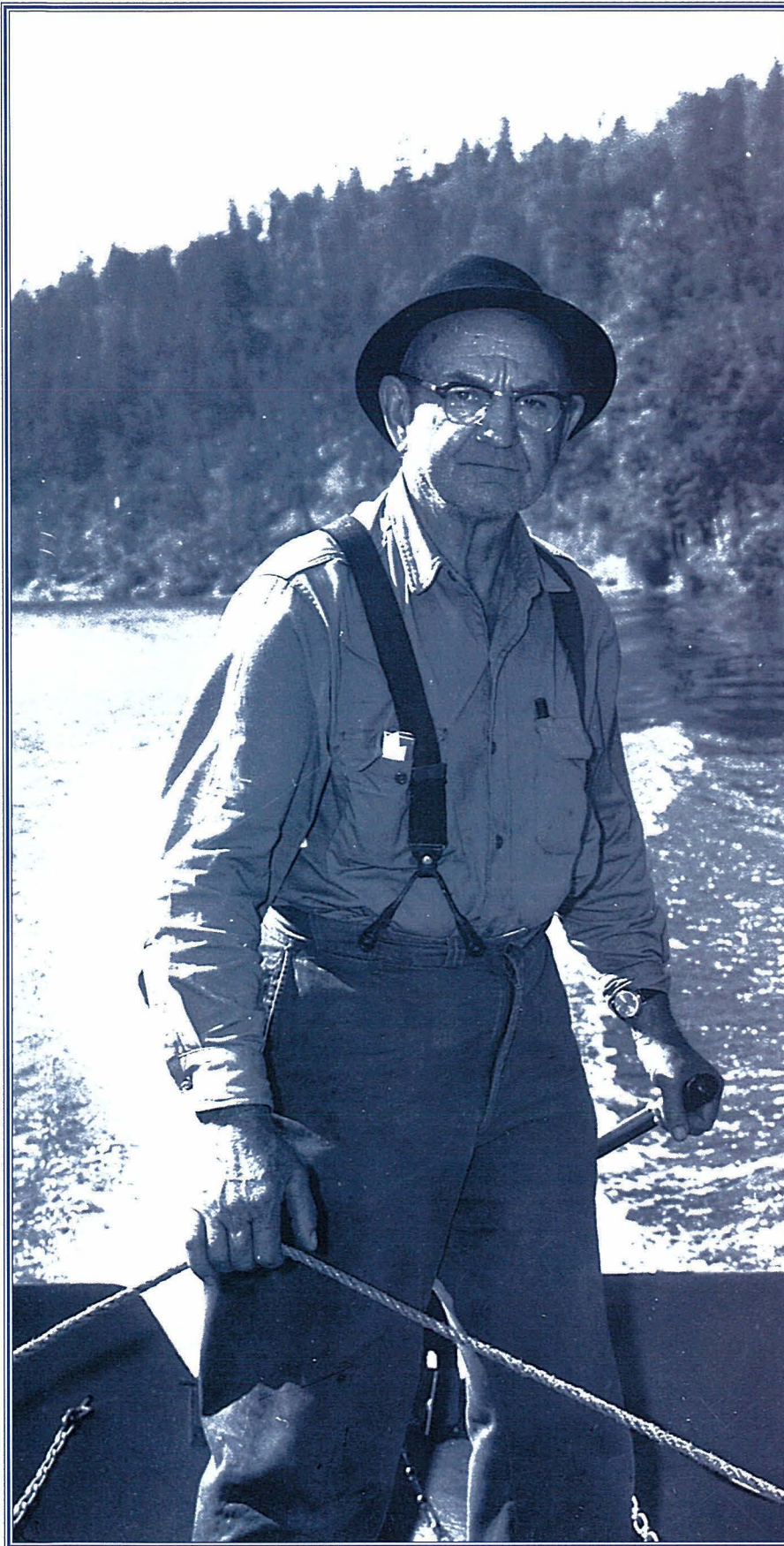
engineer, he developed boats and boat accessories that are still in use today. Wooldridge conquered rivers including Idaho's Salmon River, British Columbia's Fraser and Thompson, and Oregon's Klamath and Rogue.

"When it comes to whitewater rivers, the Rogue is still the best river to run," Wooldridge said.³

His legacy is kept alive by his son, who runs a thriving boat company, Wooldridge Boats, in Seattle.

The "river conqueror's" life began and ended on the Rogue. Wooldridge was born in 1896 on the banks of Footh Creek, on the mining claim his grandfather, Robert A. Cook, established in 1853. As a boy, Wooldridge had attributes similar to those of the adventurous fictional character Huckleberry Finn. Fascinated with the Rogue, Wooldridge studied its fluctuating currents and annual changes. "I was drawn to that river," he once explained. "It was alive."⁴

As a teenager, Wooldridge worked on the river as a gillnetter, spending his free time hunting and fishing for the Rogue's famous steelhead and salmon. Then when he was nineteen, Wooldridge and a Native American friend, Cal Allen, embarked on a courageous journey that would impact Wooldridge's life forever, fostering a life-long passion of boating.



*"I was just a brainless kid,
rambunctious for adventure
and wanting to explore the
unknown,"*

September 5, 1915, marked the date of Wooldridge and Allen's historic voyage on the Rogue River. In a crudely constructed six-dollar wooden boat, which Wooldridge said "looked like hell," the two became the first documented river runners to successfully navigate the Rogue from Grants Pass to the river's mouth at Gold Beach.⁵ Wooldridge quickly learned to read the river so as to avoid the dangerous obstacles they encountered along the way: logs, rocks, eddies, and rapids. They made the trek almost entirely without scouting, oblivious to what dangers might lurk around each bend and accomplishing a feat that others had died attempting.⁶

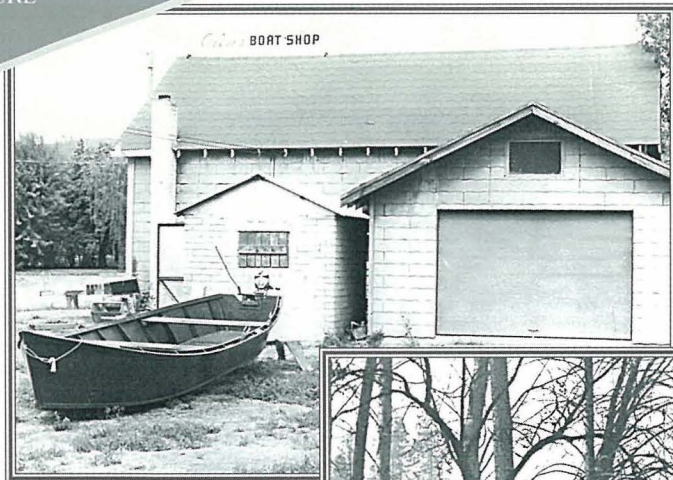
"I was just a brainless kid, rambunctious for adventure and wanting to explore the unknown," Wooldridge later recalled.⁷

Remarkably, and to the amazement of many, five days later, Wooldridge and Allen reached the ocean. Upon their arrival in Gold Beach, they found temporary work at a fish cannery, before returning to Grants Pass.

The 1915 voyage whetted Wooldridge's appetite for other whitewater adventures. Thirty-two years later, he would make another historic journey on the Rogue, but this time he wouldn't float down the river, he would motor his way up it.

In 1941, Wooldridge began testing equipment that would allow him to navigate the Rogue from Gold Beach upriver to Grants Pass. The challenge was to find an outboard motor with enough usable power for the task.⁸ It turned out that the Evinrude 22.5-horse outboard motor was just what Wooldridge needed to fulfill his dream of conquering the Rogue upriver.

Glen Wooldridge guides his river sled up Idaho's Salmon River—the "River of No Return"—circa 1948.



From the early 1950s through 1971, Wooldridge put his experience to use designing and building new river boats at his Grants Pass shop.

Wooldridge kept this rig ready for fishing or river running in the late 1940s and early 1950s: a wooden drift boat pulled by a classic 1947 Chevrolet "Woody."



With Wooldridge at the helm and Bob Pritchard and Charlie Foster as backup on the oars, Wooldridge and his crew became the first to ascend the Rogue from Gold Beach to Grants Pass. As the three prepared to depart on May 7, 1947, friends and supporters gathered, fearing the men might not return safely.⁹ The attendant publicity provided a welcome boost to Wooldridge's river-guiding business, augmented by a helicopter hired by the *Oregon Journal* to cover the event. As if the drama of the upriver trek were not enough, authorities were on the hunt at the time for one Jack Mahoney, for the murder of his neighbor, Bob Fox. State police officers stopped Wooldridge's party while he was running up the river, a delay that might have saved his life because Mahoney had plans to ambush him.¹⁰ Fortunately for Wooldridge, Mahoney heard the *Oregon Journal* helicopter overhead, and suspecting it was the state police, decided to flee, later taking his own life before he could be apprehended.¹¹

Wooldridge and his crew made the trip in his twenty-foot "Red-sled," a specially modified, flat-bottomed wooden river boat, in fifteen hours and fifteen minutes actual running time. Upon the party's triumphant entry into Grants Pass, an enthusiastic welcoming crowd heralded their safe return and the trip was widely reported in newspapers and magazines.¹²

The heroic trip excited Wooldridge about future river-running adventures, and the next year he did it again, this time on Idaho's Salmon River of No Return. Like the Rogue before it, the Salmon River—the "River of No Return", too, fell to Wooldridge as he navigated it upriver in 1948. The locals said the Salmon River was "impossible to go up"—just the sort of challenge Wooldridge liked. Although he had neither seen nor floated the river before his historic trip, Wooldridge made the 180-mile voyage in twenty-two hours running time from Riggins to Salmon City. For the expedition, Evinrude had sent Wooldridge a new thirty-three horse outboard, which he mounted on his newly designed semi-V keel, twenty-two foot sled. Wooldridge's friend, Ruell Hawkins, accompanied him on oars and photographer Tom Staley completed the crew.

Following his triumph over the Salmon River, Wooldridge took on other rivers. In July of 1964, he challenged the Klamath River

of Northern California, known for its swift currents and dangerous rapids. Without making portage, Wooldridge threaded his way up the Klamath from Happy Camp to the Highway 99 bridge.¹³ On the Klamath, he used a newly fashioned sixteen-foot aluminum sled, propelled by a fifty-horse Mercury with jet drive, a shallow-water propulsion device invented by California engineer Dick Stallman and first tested by Wooldridge and Stallman on the Rogue the year before.¹⁴

Five years later, Wooldridge headed to the last frontier for a

journey on Alaska's Yukon River and its branches: the Porcupine, Tanana, and Chena rivers. Then in 1975, at the age of seventy-nine, Wooldridge took on another "impossible" stretch of river: the Hell Gate Gorge on British Columbia's Fraser River. For the run, Wooldridge's sons, Bruce, Mike, and Mark, built their father a twenty-one foot aluminum sled

powered by two eighty-five horse motors and outfitted with outboard jets.¹⁵ Although the Fraser's fierce waters came rushing down at nearly twenty miles per hour, Wooldridge managed to navigate Hell Gate Gorge, his boat at times four feet out of the water as he powered his way up over rapids and salmon ladders.¹⁶ But his trip did not end there. Instead, he veered up the merging Thompson and muscled his boat through a number of dangerous rapids until he reached Spencer Bridge.

Although he had seen a lot of wild water in his career, the British Columbia streams made a lasting impression on Wooldridge. "I really believe the Thompson was the hardest to run," he later recalled. "I think that trip was the most fun."¹⁷

Fun to Wooldridge meant conquering a challenging stretch of water, but prior to his numerous upriver historical adventures, he gained valuable experience and made a living guiding on the Rogue.

Soon after his historic 1915 voyage, Wooldridge married Eva Owens, and decided to try his hand at earning a living based on his knowledge of the river. The risk paid off, and his small guiding business blossomed. In fact, he was the first to establish a guide business on the Rogue, which he held a monopoly on for more than twenty-five years.¹⁸ As the guide host, Wooldridge provided the cooking, company, fishing advice, and the stories which he was famous for. In 1917, he made his first guiding trip from Grants Pass to Gold Beach; his passengers were Bruce Cornwall, a real-estate agent from San Francisco, and his son. Wooldridge also guided a scenic trip from Robertson Bridge to Black Bar. Among his first passengers were some nurses from Josephine Memorial Hospital. Wooldridge's second wife, Sadie Black, was an incredible contributor to his operation, running the 150-mile shuttle route every other day, transporting boats and guests from Gold Beach.¹⁹

Word of Wooldridge and his business spread like wildfire in newspapers and magazines. An early guest was Zane Grey, the Western writer and avid sportsman, who drew attention to the Rogue River and the man who knew it best—Wooldridge. In 1925, Grey made the first in a series of float trips down the Rogue with Wooldridge. Later he spread the news of the Rogue in his book, *Tales of Fresh Water Fishing*. During his early guiding years,

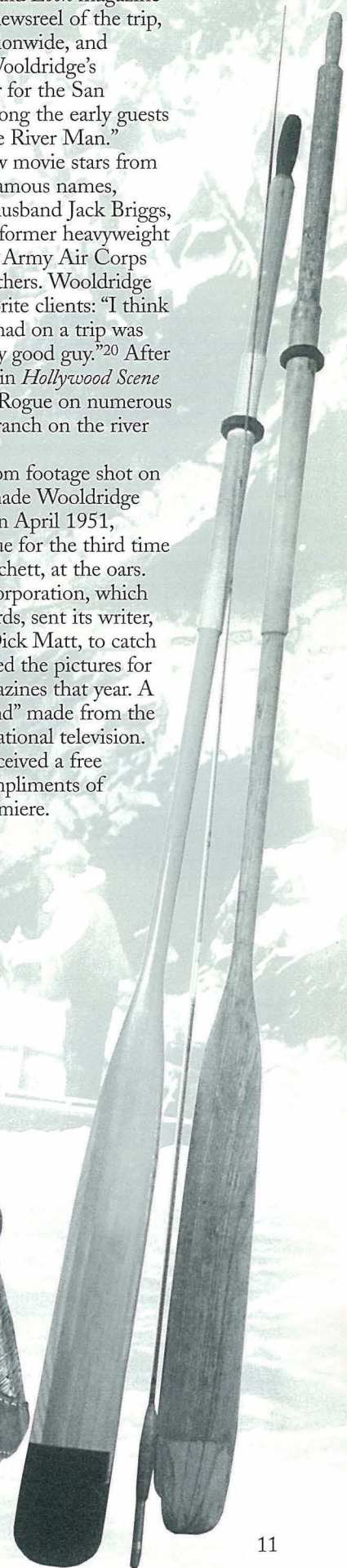


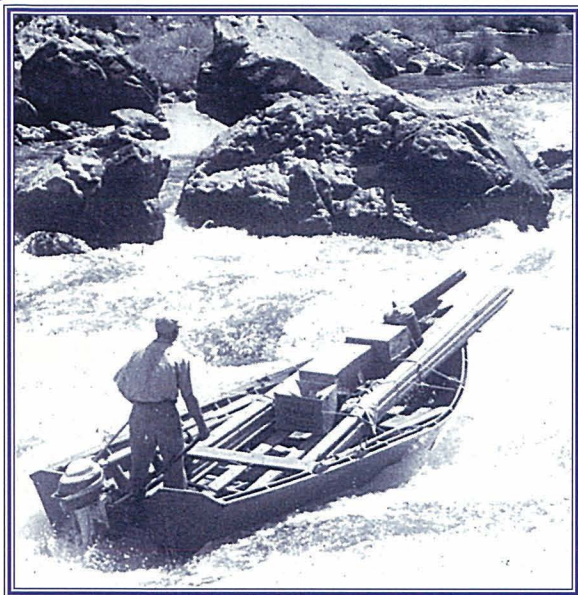
Game for any sort of river-retated adventure, including fishing and hunting, Wooldridge and his party took this bear on a Rogue boat trip in 1953. That's Wooldridge's "Jackass Motor Lift" at the stern.

Wooldridge took two boatloads of writers and cameramen from Pathe News and *Look* magazine down the river. Pathe made a newsreel of the trip, which appeared in theaters nationwide, and brought more recognition to Wooldridge's business. Fred Wagner, a writer for the San Francisco *Bulletin*, was also among the early guests who spread news of the "Rogue River Man."

Wooldridge's reputation drew movie stars from Hollywood, along with other famous names, including Ginger Rogers and husband Jack Briggs, Herbert Hoover, Clark Gable, former heavyweight boxing champion Jim Jefferies, Army Air Corps commander Carl Spaatz and others. Wooldridge said Rogers was one of his favorite clients: "I think one of the best guests we ever had on a trip was Ginger Rogers. She was a really good guy."²⁰ After her trip, Rogers wrote about it in *Hollywood Scene* magazine, and returned to the Rogue on numerous occasions, eventually buying a ranch on the river near Shady Cove.

A promotional film made from footage shot on an upriver trip on the Rogue made Wooldridge sort of a "movie star" himself. In April 1951, Wooldridge ascended the Rogue for the third time with his trusty friend, Bob Pritchett, at the oars. For this trip, the Kiekhaefer Corporation, which manufactured Mercury outboards, sent its writer, Jack Camp, and cameraman, Dick Matt, to catch the action on film. Mercury used the pictures for advertisements in boating magazines that year. A movie titled "The River Beyond" made from the Technicolor footage aired on national television. Glen and Sadie Wooldridge received a free vacation to New York City compliments of Kiekhaefer for the movie's premiere.





Wooldridge runs up the Rogue with a boatload of building materials destined for his cabin at Long Gulch, circa 1960.

"He is easily one of the most interesting personalities Oregon ever produced."

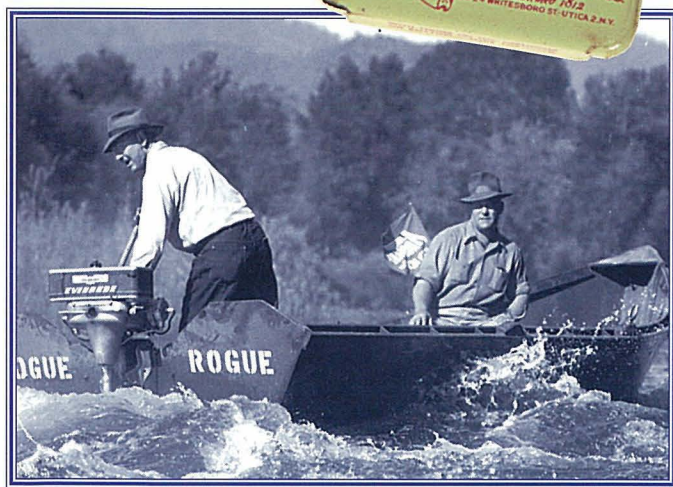
Throughout the guide years, Wooldridge and his friends sporadically blasted boulders and bedrock along the Rogue, making unnavigable sections of the river more navigable.²¹ The Forest Service provided much of the dynamite for these blasting projects, which helped make the river floatable by boat both upriver and downriver. By demolishing sections of rock from the river, the dynamite projects made unnecessary the tiresome task of portaging and lining the boats around boulders and over falls, thereby saving time and allowing for unrestricted travel, and making the river less hazardous for future river runners. "The blasting along the river was done over a wide number of years," Wooldridge recalled. "We didn't just go down the line blasting. ...We might blast some upriver, then next time ... downriver."²²

Wooldridge and his comrades blasted as far up as Dunn Riffle near Hellgate Canyon and as far down as Shasta Costa Riffle, a short distance above Agness. Some of the more important sections blasted out of the Rogue included Two-Mile Riffle; Tacoma, between it and Blossom Bar; Blossom Bar; China Bar; John's Riffle; Kelsey Falls; Jenny Creek; Upper Black Bar; Wildcat; Tyee (north side); Grave Creek Falls; and Wooldridge Riffle.

Wooldridge was not only a pioneer river runner, but also a pioneer in the field of boat instrumentation and design who developed boat accessories and specialized river sleds.

Wooldridge's invention of greatest impact was the "Jackass motor lift," which enabled the helmsman of the boat to raise and lower the prop in order to avoid rocks, shallows, or gravel bars. Purchased by the Army, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state fish and wildlife agencies, law enforcement agencies, and fishermen, the "Jackass Lift" was a huge success because of its practical capabilities.²³ Orders came from as far away as the marshes of Venezuela to the Everglades of Florida.

In the off-season, Wooldridge and friend Glenn Ballou spent the winter months designing and building specialized sleds for the running season.²⁴ Two hull designs emerged from Wooldridge's garage that remain classic models today: the Rogue River dory and the Wooldridge sled. Another small but important development was adapting aluminum oars for drift boats; these oars were considerably more durable than wooden oars, yet were lighter in weight.



Wooldridge puts an outboard motor through its paces on the Rogue near Grants Pass circa 1949. Outboard manufacturers sought his opinion and suggestions for improving their products.



Wooldridge, with brochure, describes a Rogue River adventure to a rapt audience at the Los Angeles Boat Show.

Wooldridge put one of his sleds, and his boating expertise, to the test when he participated in a dramatic winter rescue in 1955. On a stormy Christmas Eve, Fred Cale, owner of the Grants Pass Airport, failed to return from a routine flight to drop off supplies for Black Bar Lodge in the Rogue Canyon. And to make matters worse, Southern Oregon and Northern California were suffering from some of the worst flooding in recorded history. That night, a Forest Service plane surveyed the river gorge and spotted a fire, but because of the time and elements, the plane was unable to land. The next day, Red Keller and Bill Brockman reached the wreckage of Cale's plane and transported the severely burned pilot to the lodge.

Cale's evacuation had to be done by boat, and no other man was more equipped for the dangerous task on the flooded Rogue than Wooldridge. "We knew we had to get him out of there quick and with no communications, we had no choice but to take him by boat right on down to Marial," Wooldridge recalled.²⁵

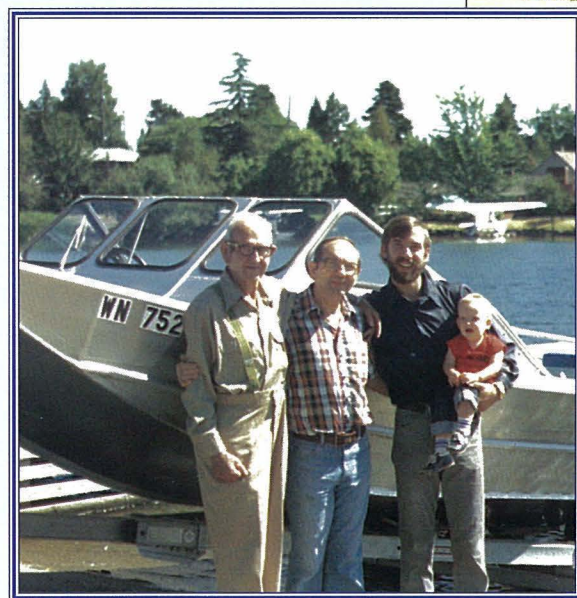
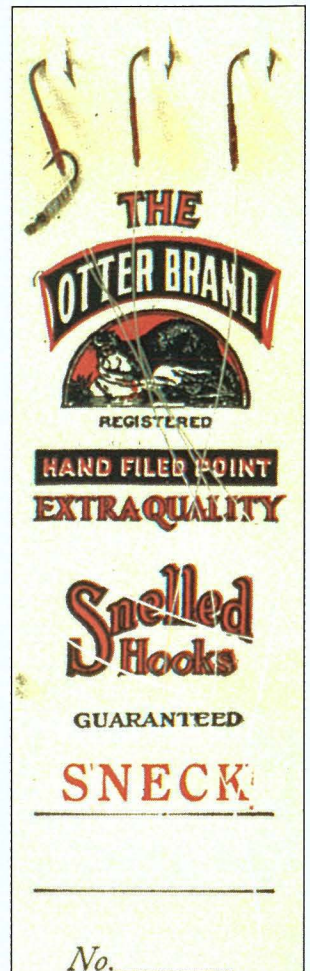
Wooldridge proved his mastery at the helm by outmaneuvering dangerous debris, chunks of houses, and trees to reach Black Bar Lodge. From there he transported the three men down the river to Marial, where Cale could be airlifted to a hospital. The "Christmas Day Rescue" was one of Wooldridge's most remarkable achievements; he defeated the odds on a flood-engorged Rogue and helped save a friend's life.

After nearly sixty-five years of whitewater experience, Wooldridge began to slip stubbornly into retirement, due to his declining health. In 1977, Wooldridge suffered the loss of his wife, friend, and business companion. Characteristic of his nature, Wooldridge made the most of the final years of his life by floating the Salmon—this time as a passenger—remarrying (a neighbor, Mary Miller) and continuing his hobbies of boat building and fishing.²⁶ Wooldridge died in Grants Pass on February 19, 1986, at the age of 90; he etched his unshakable imprint on the hearts and minds of the people who knew him.

The word "can't" never crossed Wooldridge's determined mind, and what he set out to accomplish he finished: from his historic float down the Rogue in 1915, to ascending it in 1947, to reclaiming a friend from its grasp. Wooldridge conquered nearly every major whitewater river in the Pacific Northwest. Veteran outdoor writer Don Holm summed up an illustrious life: "He is easily one of the most interesting personalities Oregon ever produced."²⁷

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2. Don Holm, "The Man who Grew Up with the Rogue," *Northwest Magazine*, 22 May 1982, p.10.
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Four generations of Wooldridges gathered for this photograph in 1980. From left are: Glen Sr., son Bob, grandson and namesake Glen and great-grandson Grant. The latter three play key roles in the current Wooldridge Boat operation in Seattle.

Zane McCourtney, of Culver, is a history major at Southern Oregon University.

Sugar Pines

GIANT PRINCES OF THE FOREST

by Donn L. Todt & Nan Hannon

In early autumn of 1826, the intrepid Scottish plant explorer David Douglas entered Southern Oregon's Umpqua Valley in search of a large pine. His quest began along the Columbia River, where he had seen the enormous cone and the large seeds that Native Americans carried for food. On September 26, after leaving his camp near present-day Roseburg, Douglas met an Indian who stood his ground with bow and arrow at the ready. Douglas put down his rifle and motioned for the man to put down his weapon as well. Douglas, following custom, lit tobacco for him and sketched out the cone of the tree he sought. The Indian pointed south.

By mid-day, Douglas had found his pines. They were as large and graceful as he had hoped. However, the cones grew far out of reach, so Douglas, an expert marksman, shot a few samples down. The shots attracted the attention of eight Indians with weapons.

After a tense confrontation, the Indians agreed to accept tobacco for sugar pine cones. The Indians set off for the cones, and Douglas, fearing for his life, grabbed the cones he had shot down and a few foliage samples and fled in the opposite direction.

That night, Douglas, resting on his elbows in tall grass, wrote his notes by the light of a pitchwood torch. He kept his rifle close by. Though enthused by the majestic sugar pines, which he later described as the "prince of pines," he had that day in 1826 seen something even rarer: the hunter-gatherers of Southern Oregon in full command of their traditional culture and embedded in a living landscape that had supported them for thousands of years.¹

The Native Americans of southwestern Oregon and Northern California found sugar pines (*Pinus lambertiana*) useful in a variety of ways. The Takelma used sugar pine planks in house construction. All local tribes relished the big pine seeds, rich in fats and carbohydrates. Often they mounted special expeditions to gather them. Men climbed the tall trees and used hooked sticks to knock the cones to the ground where the women gathered them. Peeling back the outer bark of a sugar pine revealed sweet, edible inner bark. A granular "sugar" could be scraped from the burned surface of a pine, giving the tree its common name. Naturalist John Muir declared this sugar "the best of sweets--better than maple sugar."

The large, clear-wooded sugar pines furnished boards and roof shakes for early pioneer houses in Southern Oregon, including the Hanley home owned by the Southern Oregon Historical Society. Early loggers often made these pines their first choice for cutting. One large expanse of old pines stood on the Pokegama Plateau, southeast of the present-day community of Pinehurst. In 1901, the Pokegama Sugar Pine Lumber Company boasted of cutting eight million feet of sugar pine.² Many of these trees were railroad-logged, hauled to the south escarpment of the plateau, dropped down the steep log chute into the Klamath River and rafted downstream. By the 1950s, most of the large stands of sugar pine in Southern Oregon and Northern California had been cut. Today, it's hard to find a mature sugar pine on the Pokegama Plateau. Even young trees are rare.

Today, sugar pines are threatened less by the saw than by changed environmental conditions. When Douglas entered Southern Oregon, lightning-caused fires and fires intentionally set by Native Americans combined to favor old-growth sugar pines, while eliminating their competitors. In present-day forests, sugar pines stressed by competition from other trees succumb to bark beetles, especially in dry years.

To admire large sugar pines, travel Highway 62 between Prospect and Union Creek, and you will see David Douglas's "prince of pines." ■

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

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Elizabeth Myer

A LITTLE BIT OF HOME

by Janette Merriman

Elizabeth Nessly Myer

Elizabeth
Nessly
married

William Cortez Myer
on April 3, 1849, in Ohio,
where the couple remained
until the spring of 1853, when they heard
the call of Oregon.

Elizabeth Myer readied herself for the
trip. Included in the precious cargo most
certainly were several unfinished quilt tops
carefully stowed for the new frontier, along
with a cutting from her mother's cherished
apple tree.¹ On the trail, Elizabeth
watched over Frances, her six-month-old
daughter, helped drive the seventy to
eighty head of cattle, and performed the
many chores necessary to maintain the

family during the long and difficult trip.
The family arrived in the Rogue Valley in
September 1853. Elizabeth and William
settled on a homestead just outside the
new community of Ashland Mills, where
they farmed, raised livestock and bred
horses.²

Seven years later, Elizabeth wrote to her
sister: "I have been taking times easy this
winter." The extra time gave Elizabeth a
chance to pull out one of those quilt tops
that survived the westward journey and
complete the work. Elizabeth continued:
"I quilted my Flowering Almond quilt this
winter, you will say I have had it on hand a
long time, so I have but I never had time
to quilt since I have got room. I quilted it
all myself, no one else put a stitch in it. It
goes very slow for one to quilt alone but I
am glad it's done. ... I have three to quilt
and then I am going to quit the quilt
business, as I have enough to do me a
while, that is as long as I live and Frances
may piece as many as she pleases, when she
is old enough."³

The many hours of quilting gave
Elizabeth a chance to reminisce about her
family and friends far from Oregon and
dream for a moment of the apples in her
mother's yard. In a letter written two
weeks before her sudden death in 1887,
Elizabeth told her sister of the prosperity
of their own orchard, from which they
packed and sold 150 or more boxes of

apples and pears.⁴ Those carefully packed
quilts and the apple tree cutting offered a
little bit of home to warm the soul of this
pioneer woman in her new surroundings
on the frontier. ■

*Janette C. Merriman is the owner of JCM
Museum Services, dedicated to the preservation of
historical heirlooms.*

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3. Copy of letter to Judith Nessly McCoy from
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family papers, Laura Jones.
4. Original letter to Judith Nessly McCoy from
Elizabeth Nessly Myers, 28 October 1887,
family papers, Laura Jones.



PHOTO & QUILT COURTESY OF LAURA JONES

Elizabeth with her sister Judith McCoy.



*Elizabeth quilted this flowering
almond design in 1853; the quilt now
belongs to her great-granddaughter,
Laura Jones of Ashland.*



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