

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

April 2001 Vol. 3, No. 4

Today



HOW LITHIA PARK WAS LANDSCAPED
THE BLOOMER GIRLS WON THE BALLGAME
SOUTHERN OREGON'S FIRST TEACHER



From the Director



It was 1948, just three years after the great sacrifices of World War II, and Americans looked with renewed appreciation at the values instilled by the people who settled our country. In Jackson County, the voters realized that to preserve and share these values and the important history of the region, they would have to set up a way to provide funds for the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the objects and stories of the past, a legacy for future generations. So, the voters in 1948 enacted a levy which provides for a continuing Historical Fund dedicated solely to the operation of Jackson County's historical societies. Today, this Historical Fund supports the fourteen members of the Jackson County History Museums Association (JCHMA). On behalf of these fourteen historical societies, their members, and the communities they serve, the Southern Oregon Historical Society (SOHS) recently filed a lawsuit against Jackson County. The members of the JCHMA strongly believe the full equivalent value of this voter-approved levy should be dedicated to its intended purpose: the operation of historical societies, as clearly outlined in Oregon Revised Statutes 358.160-358.230. SOHS has secured legal opinions stating that the County must levy and distribute the funds for the purposes set forth in the law.

For over fifty years SOHS has had a good working relationship with Jackson County government. It has always been the hope of SOHS that this issue could be settled out of court. The trustees of SOHS and JCHMA are requesting in this litigation, that Jackson County government continue to fund the Historical Fund levy at the amount approved by the voters (25 cents/thousand) subject to adjustment by Measure 50, just as Jackson County has done for other levies including those for the library and sheriff's department. Regardless of the outcome of the pending litigation, SOHS trustees believe that the vote of the citizens of Jackson County should be honored with full support for historic preservation in the county.

The JCHMA provided public service to over a quarter million people last year. **SOHS alone manages and maintains 70,000 sq. ft. of County-owned property** and another 30,000 sq. ft. of SOHS-owned property. SOHS has over 81,000 artifacts; 3,900 linear feet of manuscripts; 750,000 historic images; and 27,000 books, maps, and oral history transcripts—a valuable heritage that we can all use and share with others.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society and the other thirteen members of the Jackson County Museums Association continue to make positive, meaningful differences in people's lives and the communities they live in. The voters of 1948 who had the vision to establish a continuing Historical Fund for the preservation and interpretation of the history they valued make this possible. If you appreciate this heritage and wish to see it shared with local citizens and visitors in the future, please contact the Jackson County Commissioners (10 S. Oakdale, Medford, OR 97501), and let your support be known. A public hearing on the upcoming budget is **tentatively** scheduled for **April 26, 10:30 a.m.**, at the Jackson County Courthouse auditorium (10 S. Oakdale). Please call me at (541) 773-6536, closer to the hearing date, so I can confirm exact times. I would appreciate a good turnout for this hearing—it will be very important to have a large show of support.

Brad Linder
Executive Director

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.

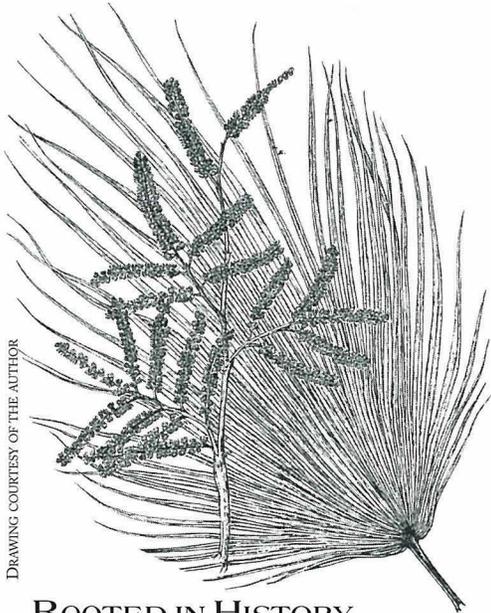
SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE Today



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

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DRAWING COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

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SOHS #13721 (DETAIL)

ON THE COVER

From left, Lurline, Vera and Lillian Wilkins and Maxine Pracht play on the swings at the original children's playground near the Upper Duck Pond at Lithia Park, ca. 1917.



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Palm Sunday Palms

by Nan Hannon

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, shown here in 1974, dominates the intersection of Eleventh and Oakdale in Medford. At right is a cross made from dried palm fronds.



SOHS- 1974 NEWSLETTER



COURTESY OF SOHS STAFF

EACH YEAR IN THE 1950s, A WEEK BEFORE EASTER, MY family arrived for Mass at Medford's Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church to find tables in the vestibule heaped with palm fronds. They whispered dryly against each other as parishioners reached among them for a frond to carry into the sanctuary. It was Palm Sunday, marking the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

My father's leather-bound Roman Missal depicted the scene. I leaned against him as I examined the intricate illustration on the gilt-edged page. Jesus, riding on a donkey, dominated, holding a long palm frond like a scepter. Behind him the Virgin Mary carried an olive branch. Before him, crowds saluted with palm branches. In the background, men at the tops of palm trees hacked off branches with hatchets.

Bored by the sermon, my sister and I played with the ridged, exotic leaves. We used our fingernails to scrape off the tough strings curling from the edges. We resisted the temptation to engage in mock swordplay. After Mass, we carried our palms home.

In an odd way, the frond was like sin. There was no easy way to get rid of it. Once it had been blessed, the frond became a sacramental and you couldn't just toss it, no more than you could throw out that potent secular symbol, the flag. Our home, and the homes of our Catholic friends and family, contained relics of many Palm Sundays. The thin fronds served as markers in prayer books. They were tucked into the frames of religious pictures. Sometimes they flared out at jarring angles behind the perpendicular lines of a crucifix, underscoring the irony that the crowd that hailed Christ on Palm Sunday demanded his execution within the week. As a child, I understood the palm to reinforce the Irish-American imperative: never be sure of yourself or anyone else.

It was a quick trick to twist and tuck the long leaf around itself to make a simple cross. I remember these humble crosses in humble rooms: tacked over the narrow bed of Mrs. Walsh, an Irish widow who lived in a tiny rental one house down from us on West Tenth Street, or bleaching on the bare walls of piano practice rooms in convent schools.

As an adult spending Holy Week in Paris, I was surprised to see vendors outside Notre Dame selling sprigs of boxwood to worshippers as they entered the cathedral on Palm Sunday. Was this a sacrilegious scam by Parisian gardeners to get rid of prunings from the boxwood hedges ubiquitous in French gardens?

Research showed me I was simply parochial.

The Christian celebration of Easter coincided and merged with more ancient Eurasian festivals celebrating the spring equinox and

the "rebirth" of plants from winter dormancy. The customs of Palm Sunday vary from country to country, influenced by what plants are available. Thus, in some European countries, the folk name for Palm Sunday is Willow, Yew or Blossom Day.¹

Lacking easy access to Mediterranean palms, many English parishes use yew branches or sprigs of pussy willow on Palm Sunday. Some Slavic countries use willow branches. An Arabic tradition is to hold candles decorated with flowers in addition to palm branches. In Lithuania, elaborate floral decorations, sometimes comprised of forty-five different plants, are carried on Palm Sunday and kept to bless the home. Yaqui Indians in Mexico and Arizona walk with palms through a pathway outlined with cottonwood twigs representing flowers.

And, in fact, the palms of my childhood Palm Sundays were not from the Holy Land, but fan palms from Texas, used widely throughout the United States for Palm Sunday services, as are sago palms and date palms. Medford's Sacred Heart Church still uses fan palms to celebrate Palm Sunday, just as Christian churches throughout the world use available plants to commemorate an event that took place two millennia ago. ☪

Anthropologist Nan Hannon gardens in Asbland.

ENDNOTE

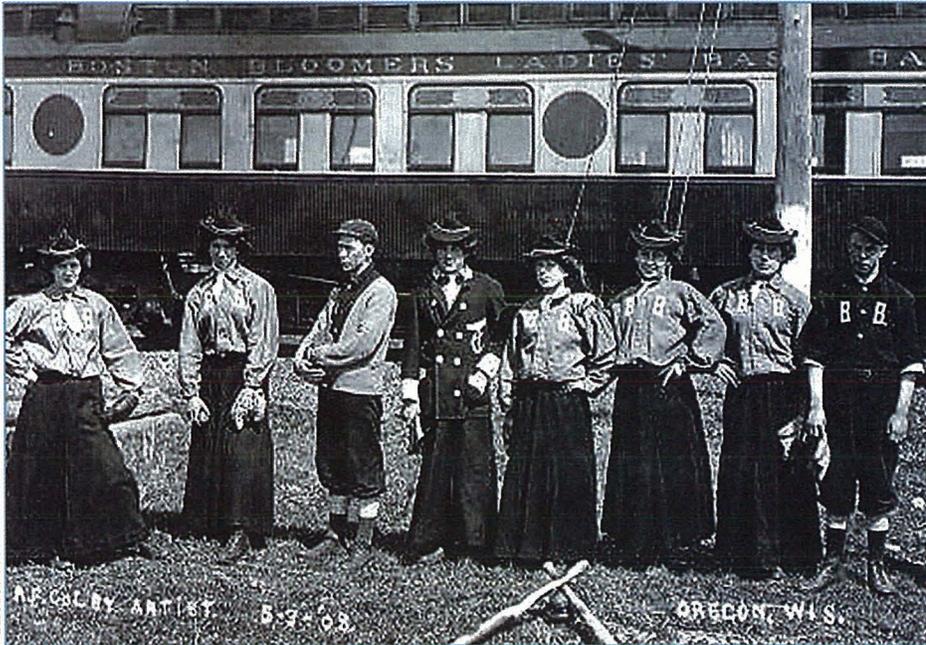
1. Richard Mabey, *Flora Britannica* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), pp. 142, 174.



PHOTO BY DONN L. TODT

No Joy In Medford

by Bill Miller



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Members of the Boston Bloomer Girls baseball team pose in front of their private rail car in Oregon, Wisconsin, in this 1903 photo. On their trip through the Rogue Valley in 1901, the Bloomer Girls trounced a Medford men's team but lost to Ashland's semi-pro men's ball club. Below, Maud Nelson was one of Boston's best pitchers, but it is unknown if she pitched against Medford or Ashland.

disguised themselves as women. One of the better-known lady baseball teams of the era, the Boston Girls traveled the entire United States by rail in their own "private palace car." They brought with them a canvas fence to enclose the ball field and a covered grandstand to seat 2,000 ticket buyers. Because women in the Victorian era seldom played baseball in public, watching women with talent play the game against men was exotic enough to require a subtle defense of the ladies' morals. "They have ... received good notices from the press, not only for their good base ball playing, but also for their ladylike behavior," the *Medford Mail* reported.²

Much of that Saturday game remains a mystery. The identities and sex of the Boston Girls were never revealed and the gate receipts and attendance were never reported. Ultimately the exhausted Medford men had given way to a younger team, anonymously known as the "Juveniles." Once the game began, the enthusiasm of the local crowd was quickly lost as fans watched their team's indifferent play. When it was over, the *Ashland Tidings* joyfully proclaimed that Medford had struck out and the Bloomer Girls had "buried the players ... by a score of 16 to 2."³

These Girls obviously had talent, and their opponent the next day would be Ashland. To lose was unacceptable and Ashland had no intention of losing. The grandstand was set up and the Boston Bloomer Girls began their warm-ups on the ball field near the Helman Baths. Ashland was fielding its semi-pro baseball team, which was the reigning champion of Southern Oregon and, just ten days earlier, had defeated Medford 24-2. Except for their best pitcher Ellis, who was sick, the "Granite City" boys were prepared to defend Ashland's honor. For nine action innings the Boston Girls "put up a good exhibition," but this time they weren't playing Medford. Those who bet that the Bloomers didn't have a chance were right, and the ladies lost 25-6. Ashland still had its pride and the Boston Bloomer Girls had the profit. Winning was the last thing the ladies cared about. They hopped on their palace car and headed to California, world championship intact and ninety-six dollars richer.⁴ ♣

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

ENDNOTES

1. *Medford Mail*, 21 June 1901, p. 7:4.
2. *Medford Mail*, 28 June 1901, p. 2:5; Benjamin G. Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 157.
3. *Ashland Tidings*, 1 July 1901, p. 3:2. The *Medford Mail* said the score was 17-2.
4. *Ashland Tidings*, 1 July 1901, p. 3:3.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in April

PROGRAMS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

| | <u>DATE & TIME</u> | <u>LOCATION</u> | <u>DESCRIPTION</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--|
| April Craft of the Month | Museum hours | CHILDREN'S MUSEUM | May Day Basket or Wand; 25¢ |
| Hearts and Hands | Thur., April 19, 7 - 9pm | HISTORY CENTER | Award-winning Film; \$2 members \$3 non-members |

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

APRIL CRAFT OF THE MONTH

May Basket or Wand

Celebrate spring with a handmade May Day basket or wand.

HEARTS AND HANDS



As a preview to the "Piecing the Century Together Quilt Show," the Society will show this award-winning film. Subtitled the "Influence of Women & Quilts on American Society," the film chronicles the 19th Century's great movements and events such as the early textile industry, abolition, the Civil War, temperance and women's suffrage.

A selection of Society quilts will be on display. A discussion of quilt care will follow the film. Preregister by April 17.

YOUTH AND ADULT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

• BEEKMAN LIVING HISTORY

The Beekman Living History Program is a turn-of-the-century living history program in Jacksonville. The program is presented every afternoon from May 26 through September 3. Men, women, and teen volunteers entertain visitors while acting the part of various Beekman family members and friends. Volunteers also greet visitors and prepare them for time travel to the year 1911. Beekman Living History is a fun—and challenging—program. A seven-week training course which begins in April is required of all volunteers. When the summer season begins, volunteers are asked to participate in the program one afternoon per week. Application deadline is April 8.



• JACKSONVILLE-HANLEY TROLLEY TOUR

The trolley tour is the Society's newest program. Volunteers are needed to act as tour guides for 2-1/2 hour shifts on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, beginning May 26 and ending September 30. The trolley will tour hourly between Jacksonville and Hanley Farm. This is a great way to learn about local history and meet people. A three-week training course which begins in May is required of all volunteers. Application deadline is April 30.



• HANLEY FARM

The historic Hanley Farm will open again on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, beginning May 26 and ending September 30. Volunteers are needed to demonstrate heritage crafts and lifeways, sell admission tickets, and serve as tour guides. A three-to-four-week training course which begins in May is required of all volunteers. Interested volunteers should call (541) 773-6536. Volunteer applications are available at both the History Center, 106 N. Central, Medford, and the Jacksonville Museum, corner of "C" and 5th streets in Jacksonville. Application deadline is April 30.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK:

• April 22 - 28

The Society salutes its wonderful corps of volunteers!

HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:

- **State Historic Preservation Office**
prd.state.or.us -click on "publication"
PHONE: 503-378-4168
- **Southern Oregon Historical Society**
PHONE: 541-773-6536

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

| | LOCATION | MUSEUM HOURS |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Century of Photography: 1856-1956 The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z Sweethearts at Work and Play | HISTORY CENTER | Mon. - Fri., 9am - 5pm |
| Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience History of Camp White Hannah Hall of Justice | JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM | Wed. - Sat., 10am - 5pm Sunday, noon - 5pm |
| Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits | CHILDREN'S MUSEUM | Wed. - Sat., 10am - 5pm Sunday, noon - 5pm |

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.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN OREGON FROM A TO Z

Do you know your ABC's of Southern Oregon history? Even local oldtimers might learn a thing or two from the History Center windows along Sixth and Central as each letter of the alphabet tells a different story about the people, places, and events that have shaped the region we live in. Before Bigfoot there was "Reelfoot," the huge grizzly bear that wreaked havoc in the Rogue Valley in the late 1800s. After that, Bozo was clowning around in Jacksonville, and how about that guy named Fosbury whose big success at the 1968 Olympics was a real flop?

SWEETHEARTS AT WORK AND PLAY

The Southern Oregon Antiques and Collectibles Association's mission is to promote growth of knowledge in the antiques and collectibles fields. To this end, it donates reference books to Jackson County Library Services and displays collections at branch libraries. Because of common goals, SOACC and the Society continue to partner in displays and programs. On display through April, the exhibit features an international thimble collection and a rhinestone jewelry collection of rings, butterfly and other pins and necklaces, including a 53-inch rope of pearls.

MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER

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

POLITICS OF CULTURE: *Collecting the Native American Experience*

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

HISTORY OF CAMP WHITE

Perhaps the military post that has had the largest impact on Medford and Jackson County in recent history, was Camp White. Built in 1942, it served as the training depot for the 91st and 96th Divisions as well as other smaller combat units. At its peak, it housed more than 30,000 officers, men, women, and nurses, and would be the largest military facility in Oregon. The exhibit highlights an 03-A3 rifle, 81mm mortar, Japanese rifles and machine gun and Camp White hospital bunkbeds and bed, blanket, and nurse in uniform.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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

OREGON'S NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

All the winners listed below are from the Southern District competition held in Ashland. They all are eligible to compete in the state contest to be held April 14 at Willamette University in Salem.

HISTORY DAY WINNERS!

Senior Historic Paper

- 1st • Jenica Pistone - Illinois Valley

Senior Group Performance

- 1st • Sam Ingle & Alex Wright
South Medford

Senior Individual Exhibit

- 1st • Amanda Henrichs - South Medford

Senior Group Exhibit

- 1st • Karl Ayers, Amanda Grannen,
Noah Lewis - South Medford
- 2nd • Amy Finney & Ashley Williams
South Medford
- 3rd • Joel Connors, Eric Rubey,
Brian Thibeault - South Medford

Junior Historical Paper

- 1st • Adam Cole - Hedrick
- 2nd • Elisabeth Shinn - Talent
- 3rd • Cassandra Williams - Talent

Junior Group Performance

- 1st • Rose Ballard, Shanti Birmingham
Julayna Pistone - Lorna Byrne
- 2nd • Andy Head, Kenny Krowel - Applegate

Junior Individual Exhibits

- 1st • Julie Robinson - Hedrick
- 2nd • Marybeth head - Applegate
- 3rd • Laura Sinner - Hedrick

Junior Group Exhibits

- 1st • Tim Kirkpatrick, Jeremy Treger
Hedrick
- 2nd • Andrew Henselman, Nathan
Kobinsky - Hedrick
- 3rd • Tanya Todorov, Amber Withol
Hedrick

Junior Group Documentary

- 1st • Andy Higgins, Casey Kostol
Hedrick
- 2nd • Kaleb Culver, Chris Gates, Caylee
Griffis, Jessica Mason - Lorna Byrne
- 3rd • Alex Mueller, Griffin Ramsdell
Hedrick

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITES

PHONE: (541) 773-6536

unless listed otherwise

FAX (541) 776-7994

E-MAIL 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

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

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

3rd and California, Jacksonville
Call for demonstration dates/times

C.C. BEEKMAN HOUSE

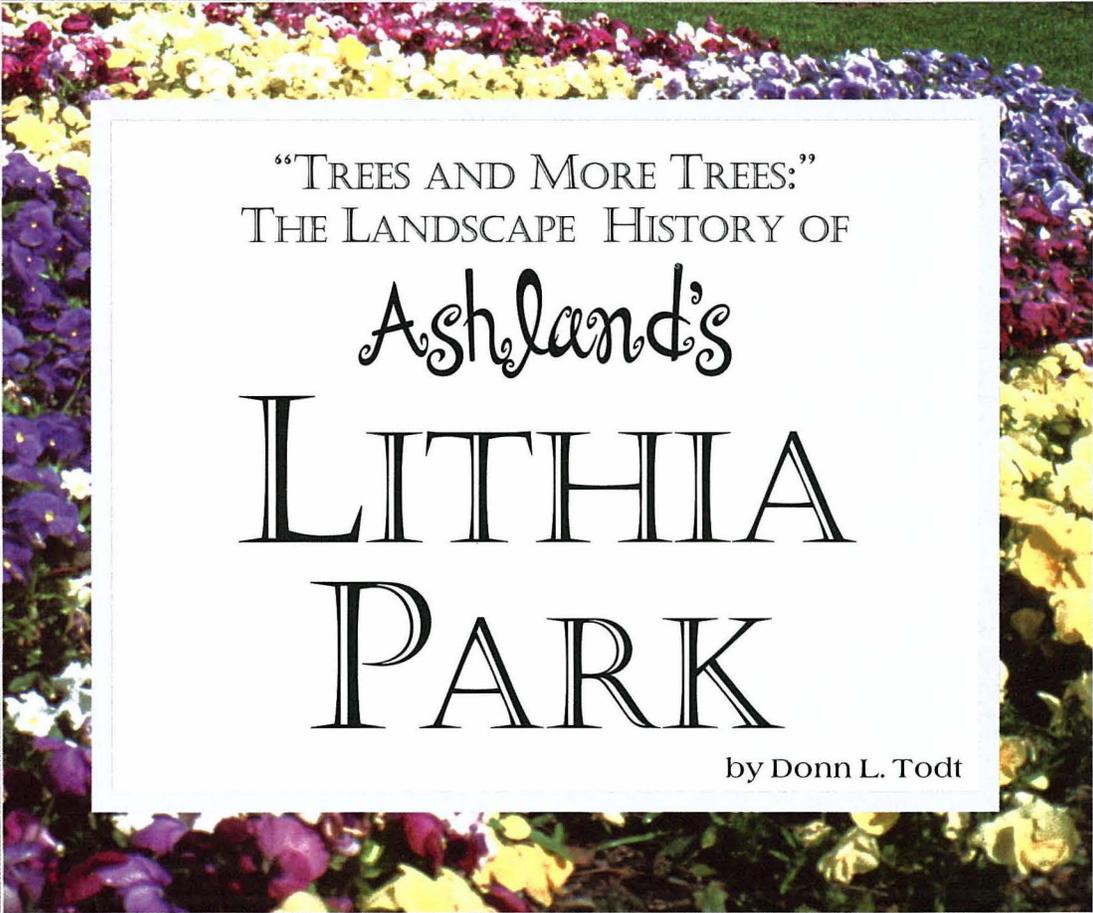
California & Laurelwood,
Jacksonville

CATHOLIC RECTORY

4th & C streets, Jacksonville

HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road
Fri., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
beginning Sat., May 26
(541) 773-2675.



“TREES AND MORE TREES:”
THE LANDSCAPE HISTORY OF

Ashland's
LITHIA
PARK

by Donn L. Todt



WHEN PEOPLE WALK INTO LITHIA PARK, THEY REALIZE THEY HAVE entered a little bit of paradise. Ashland Creek flows melodically over smooth granite boulders under a canopy of maple, ash, and alder trees. Curved, green lawns lend foregrounds to the spires of lofty conifers. Sun and shadows dance over people picnicking, feeding ducks, strolling, and napping on the grass.

From the soft pastels of spring to the pyrotechnics of autumn, the landscape highlights the seasons. The effect is naturalistic, as if a preexisting woodland had been touched up with grass, a few introduced trees, shrubs and flowerbeds. It might come as a surprise then to realize that Lithia Park, as we know it today, is a recent historic creation with a style as distinct as that of a Colonial Revival building. It is a cultural landscape modified from its potential natural state first by Native Americans, then Euroamerican settlers and finally by park designers. Although the Euroamerican influence is presently most prominent, the park is imprinted by a less obvious but much longer-term Native American relationship with the land.

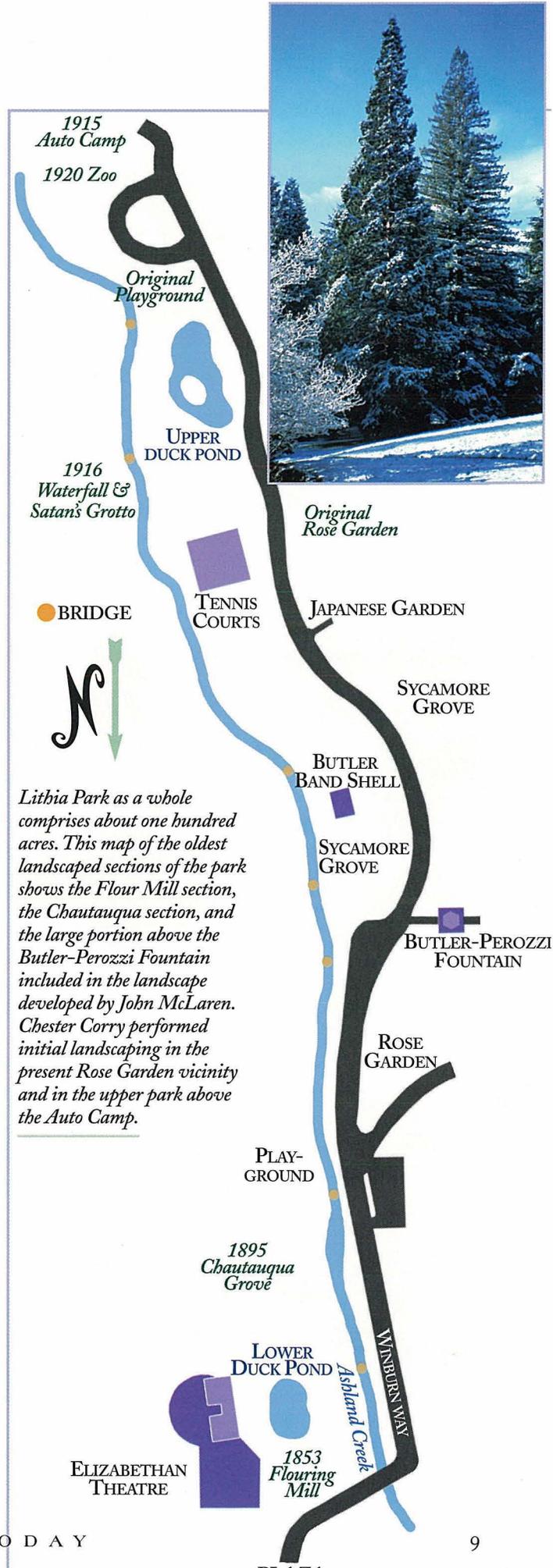
Fire, a sophisticated Native American land management tool, opened the landscape.

The location of a Native American village in the vicinity of the present Ashland Plaza suggests that prior to Euroamerican settlement, frequent fires were set in and adjacent to what is now Lithia Park to encourage useful plant species and improve forage favored by game animals as well as to better adapt the habitat for other Native American uses. Fire, a sophisticated Native American land management tool, opened the landscape, favoring grasslands and large trees such as oak and ponderosa pine over shrubs and smaller trees.¹ The result, upon the arrival of explorers and pioneers, was a land that seemed uncannily amenable to settlement in the European pattern. Orchards, wheat fields, and pastures could be developed without the labor of clearing the land. Likewise, the land that comprises Lithia Park, branded with Native American fire, provided a partially clean slate upon which a Euroamerican-style landscape could be designed. As surprising as it may seem today, when the park was established, it was mostly sun-soaked, open land. This is clear from the existing vegetation, the original landscape plan, and from early photographs.²



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

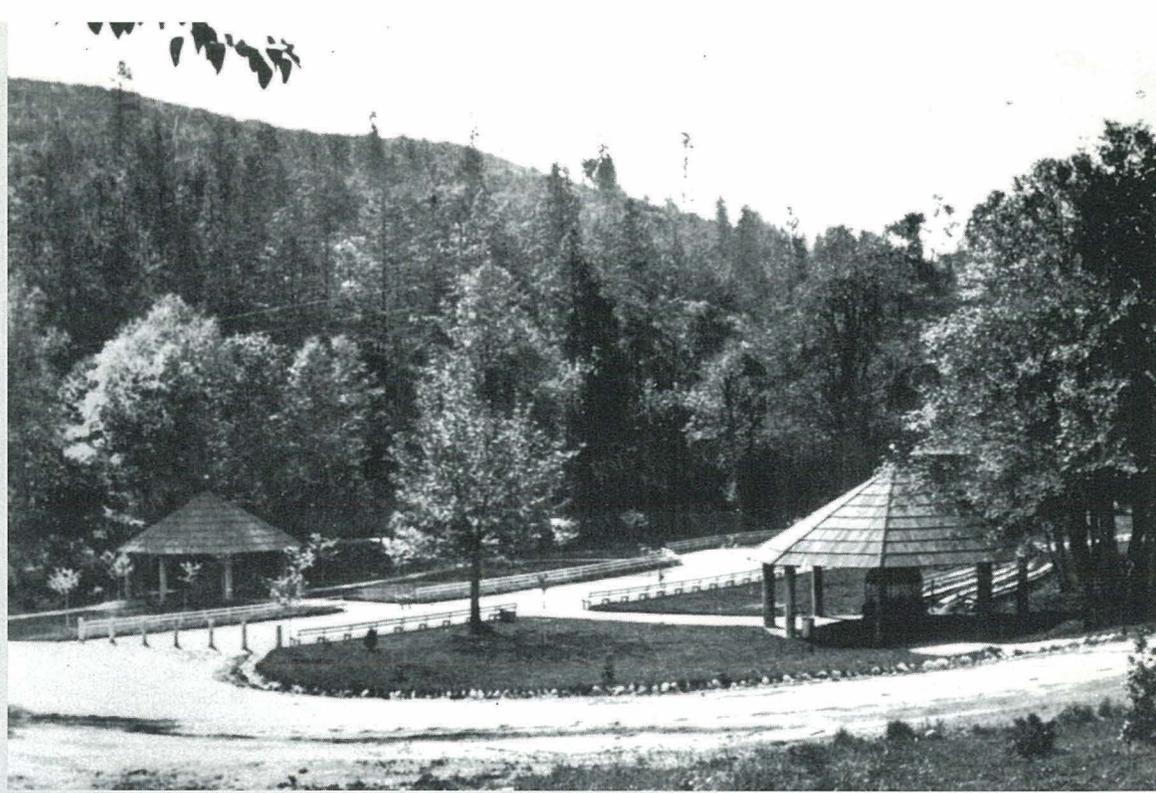
Around 1925 Boy Scouts planted a small sequoia (barely visible in front of the shovel). Above right, seventy years later, the same tree on left, shades the site of the original rose garden. Adjacent page: The large, formal sycamore grove between Granite Street and Winburn Way was included in the McLaren landscape plan for Lithia Park.



Lithia Park as a whole comprises about one hundred acres. This map of the oldest landscaped sections of the park shows the Flour Mill section, the Chautauqua section, and the large portion above the Butler-Perozzi Fountain included in the landscape developed by John McLaren. Chester Corry performed initial landscaping in the present Rose Garden vicinity and in the upper park above the Auto Camp.

incorrect

This is an early view of the band shell and Butler-Perozzi Fountain vicinity looking south up the canyon. Today this view is entirely obscured by trees planted when the park was established.



SOHS #8860



SOHS #2194

Workmen pause during pathway construction at the north end of what is now Lithia Park, ca. 1910. Water, incorporated into an ornamental waterfall, once powered the flour mill formerly situated on what is now the front lawn of the park.



SOHS #2205

An early view of the Upper Duck Pond with the original children's playground beyond. Most of the trees to the left of the pond are alders growing along the creek. Note the scarcity of trees between the road and the creekside woodland.

While the effects of Native American fire recede into the past, each generation witnesses the impacts of flooding upon Lithia Park. Recent floods show us the dynamic. At irregular intervals, torrents of debris-strewn floodwater cut new channels, rearrange the creek banks, wash away portions of the existing vegetation and create an open environment for a new generation of plants. Alders, common along Ashland Creek, find post-flood conditions ideal and sprout abundantly along the scoured creek banks.

In a sense, one can trace the beginnings of Lithia Park back to a flood event. A flood of considerable magnitude, probably the flood of 1861, resulted in a large population of alder trees growing along the creek in the late 1800s. A particularly large group of these trees, once known as Roper's Grove, shaded campers attending the Chautauqua events in the theater just up the hill. This flood-generated grove of alders, used as a park by Chautauqua visitors and townspeople alike, inspired and preceded Lithia Park. Though none of these particular trees survive today, alders remain common along Ashland Creek, and nearly all of them may be dated to a particular historical flood. The floods of 1948, 1964, 1974, and 1997 are all documented by stands of alder trees that sprouted in their aftermath.

The Ashland flood of 1861 affected only a handful of pioneers concentrated around the flood-prone Plaza area. But these early settlers implemented a landscape transformation that makes the largest flood a minor and localized vehicle of change. Creekside trees became firewood and milled lumber. Livestock and the general disturbance associated with building and agriculture encouraged the sweeping replacement of native grasses by introduced weedy species. A subtle but significant and far-reaching change in the landscape resulted from the cessation of fires that had regularly swept up into Ashland Canyon from the grass-covered valley below. The creekside woods thickened with young trees and the brushy hillsides hid thousands of newly seeded pines and firs destined to grow toward maturity in the absence of fire. The pioneers also introduced a limited but culturally significant suite of trees onto the land, mostly traditional European orchard trees such as plum, pear, apple, and walnut. This was just the beginning of an influx of introduced trees, shrubs, vines, and grasses into the landscape, a trend that accelerated during the years of park development.



Early in the twentieth century, the nationwide City Beautiful Movement and the developing American tradition of urban landscape architecture shared the then-novel perspective that trees and green space should be incorporated into cities and towns.³ Inspired by the City Beautiful Movement, in 1908 the Ashland Women's Civic Improvement Club convinced Ashland's citizens to begin setting aside most of what is now Lithia Park. Initial landscaping efforts concentrated on the lower portions of the city park land.

Plantings consisted of native trees such as big-leaf maples and introduced trees of proven adaptability such as catalpas and black locusts. A departure from the use of plants of tough constitution was the early planting of rhododendrons near the constructed pond at the front of the park.

In the nineteenth century, rhododendrons and a host of other species had become available in the horticultural trade as the result of European and American exploration. The portion of the world having the greatest abundance of ornamental plants amenable to temperate climates was East Asia. New and exotic species and varieties were initially incorporated into European landscapes and then into American parks and gardens where their presence became synonymous with an evolving ornamental landscaping tradition. This tradition, first in its vernacular form, and then via a more formal architectural design, organized the landscape into the basic configuration that contributes to Lithia Park's beauty and continuity today.

For a small-town park, Lithia Park has a surprisingly sophisticated lineage, extending to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and back to Central Park in New York City. Central Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. While traveling in England, Olmsted, sometimes known as America's first landscape architect, had been particularly impressed by a relaxed style of gardening then in fashion. This style imitated the sinuous, curvilinear forms of nature rather than imposing geometric patterning upon the land. This "English Style" of landscape design was used as an organizing principle for Central Park. Central Park became the template for many parks and arboreta

throughout America, including Golden Gate Park.

John McLaren, superintendent of Golden Gate Park, was invited to design a portion of Lithia Park upstream from the Chautauqua Park.⁴ In 1915, McLaren presented a master plan for the development of Lithia Park to the parks commissioners. The plan used the design criteria that molded Golden Gate Park and incorporated many of its features, including a curving roadway with parallel pedestrian pathways. Specific matches between the early Golden Gate Park and the Lithia Park landscape plan include a children's playground, a Japanese garden, a music concourse, a donkey trail, a constructed lake, an artificial waterfall, picnic grounds, a gardener's cottage, a park nursery, an aviary, a rose garden, a rustic log structure, a hitching yard, and a restaurant.⁵

An early view down-canyon along upper Granite Street, ca. 1916. The Duck Pond is right of center. Notice the open landscape of recently planted Lithia Park extending toward the Plaza.



SOHS #4735



Here's how the Lower Duck Pond looked in 1910 with the newly planted trees and shrubs. This area was relandscaped by Chet Corry in the 1960s.

SOHS #6978



The Atkinson Bridge has withstood many floods. Flood-adapted alder trees are shown growing in the vicinity of what is now the Children's Playground and wading area.

SOHS #6992



The creekside rock walls demonstrate an early attempt to separate the flood-prone creek from the landscaped portion of the park.

SOHS #5428



The same section of Ashland Creek scours the park during the 1974 flood.

Golden Gate Park was developed on a largely treeless tract of land, and McLaren's plan for Lithia Park emphasized the development of portions of the landscape that were largely treeless as well. Land not used for structures was designed to be heavily planted with trees in order to achieve a woodland effect. Records indicate that a wide variety of trees, including Port Orford cedars, catalpas, Japanese maples, sycamores, and birches were to be planted in the new park.⁶ These were to be sited informally, to give the effect of natural woodland that would coordinate with the riparian woodland along the creek.

While most of Lithia Park emulates the informal, naturalistic landscapes prominent within the Olmsted tradition and based upon the English woodland garden, a portion of the park recalls another style rooted in a more formal approach to landscaping. The two groves of sycamore trees in Lithia Park, arranged in a grid pattern, sometimes puzzle park visitors, since their regular placement is a radical departure from the naturalistic ambience of the rest of the park. The use of sycamores in formal urban park design can be traced to Paris, where the French landscape designer Andre Le Notre used regular rows of trees in a royal garden called the Tuileries. Consciously or unconsciously, Le Notre duplicated the effects of aisles flanked by pillars in medieval cathedrals, but with a focus upon a secular building instead of an altar. This formal arrangement was subsequently used in many large, formal French gardens and parks, including Versailles, designed by Le Notre.

A regular arrangement of trees was practiced within the Olmsted tradition when the focus was to be upon an architectural element, and both sycamore groves were originally focused upon structures. The larger grove on the slope between Granite Street and Winburn Way was to be a music concourse focused upon a band shell. Perhaps the Model Ts motoring noisily along Winburn Way persuaded park officials to move the band shell to its present location, which was to have been a restaurant with a formal sycamore-lined approach. Today, these rows of trees, offset from their intended focus on a structure, cast dappled shade on those walking toward the open, sloped lawn to attend City Band concerts and other events. When the band shell was moved to its present location, the larger sycamore grove, above Winburn Way, lost its focus and the trees were left standing as an incongruous formal element in a largely naturalistic landscape. Nevertheless, this grove comprises one of the most significant and beautiful features of the park, providing an airy, green canopy for weddings, picnics, Easter egg hunts, study, naps, and games.

McLaren's plan specified features intended to encourage Ashland's development as a mineral springs resort. These included mineral spring water fountains, a sanitarium, and a pool. For a variety of reasons, the resort concept never materialized. Consequently, a number of the springs-oriented facilities were never built.

One aspect of the McLaren plan for Lithia Park that differs from many Olmsted-style designs is that relatively little space is allocated for lawn areas. Space not set aside for structures or functions was to be intensively planted with trees. One of McLaren's mottoes, "Trees and more trees," certainly applies to his treatment of Lithia Park. Some of the present lawn areas result from openings in the tree canopy where springs-oriented structures such as the sanitarium or the pool were not developed.

Many of the plants introduced into the park during the early years were noted for their toughness. Once established, they survived and even flourished with minimal attention. Trees in this category include black locust, catalpa, black walnut, ailanthus, Norway maple, and European buckeye. In addition to trees specified in the McLaren plan, park officials took advantage of native species growing close to the park. These could be transplanted with some effort but no expenditure of scarce funds. Native big-leaf maples were combined with introduced catalpas to line the entrance to Lithia Park, while native Douglas firs and incense cedars were mixed with introduced Norway spruces, Port Orford cedars and Colorado blue spruces through the park's middle section.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR



Left, a magnolia blooms in front of a mature incense cedar in the Japanese-style garden. Below, mature sycamore trees frame the last vestiges of Lithia Park architecture inspired by the mineral springs resort concept.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Above, at the Upper Duck Pond, brilliant foliage accentuates Southern Oregon's autumn. Right, a Japanese flowering crabapple planted by Chet Corry graces one of the shrinking lawn spaces in the lower portion of the park.



Nearly all of the tree species planted during the early years were fast growing and of potentially large stature. As the woodland canopy expanded, the character of the park began to change: shadows grew longer and the park became an oasis of coolness on a hot summer day. The changing microclimate favored certain groups of plants while selecting against others. The rose garden, shaded by conifers, had to be moved from its original location. Shade-adapted invasive species such as ivy and periwinkle infiltrated both landscaped and undeveloped sections of the park. Ponderosa pine seedlings failed to germinate or grow in filtered light, while plants that thrived in little light became increasingly easy to grow.

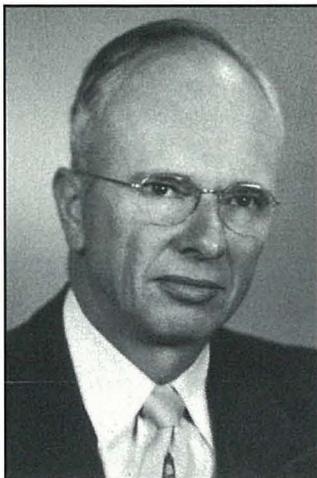
Many areas that had, in the early days of the park, been exposed to relentless summer heat were now shaded...

Microclimate diversity offered the skillful gardener many opportunities to situate plants in optimum locations. And in 1935, the Parks Commission hired talented gardener Chester “Chet” Corry, who became parks superintendent in 1937.⁷ It’s hard to imagine a better choice. With a degree in landscape architecture, Corry had been trained in the philosophy and methods of that newly emerging discipline. In assuming responsibility for Lithia Park, he conserved the Olmsted tradition while expanding the landscaped acreage.

Corry, recognizing the English roots of Lithia Park, incorporated many of the foundation plants of that tradition, especially rhododendrons. The changing environment aided him. Many areas that had, in the early days of the park, been exposed to relentless summer heat were now shaded and cool during the hot season. Sometimes rhododendron plantings failed, not from lack of care or an inadequate environment, but because they were at the time rare and attractive landscape plants. Corry noticed that some carefully placed and planted specimens would be removed at night by rhododendron bandits.

Corry especially liked an old-fashioned, fragrant-flowered group of rhododendrons known as Loderi hybrids. In establishing these plants he provided another parallel between Lithia Park and Golden Gate Park. Loderi rhododendrons of tree-sized proportions are featured at the McLaren Rhododendron Dell in San Francisco.

Corry planted many of the mature trees that now grace the landscaped sections of Lithia Park. He particularly favored blue spruce, European birch, red oak, pin oak, and Japanese maple. The combination of



Chet Corry served as Ashland parks superintendent from 1937 to 1969; he’s responsible for planting many of the park’s rhododendrons.



native species with some of the most distinctive trees from around the world provides Lithia Park with a richly textured landscape that accentuates Southern Oregon’s seasonal changes. By the time Corry retired in 1968, most of the overstory planting in Lithia Park had been accomplished. Ironically, many of the trees favored by John McLaren or Chet Corry would now find Lithia Park too shaded for their requirements. The park, which had originated as a largely open landscape, had become the park we recognize and respond to today, a landscape characterized by a nearly continuous canopy of trees.

As we walk through Lithia Park, we see more than trees. We see a carefully crafted paradise where nature and culture met and melded into a living landscape that continues to evolve. 🌳

Donn L. Todt has served as the horticulturist for the Ashland Parks Department since 1980.

ENDNOTES

1. Jeff LaLande and Reg Pullen, “Burning for ‘Fine and Beautiful Open Country,’” *Indians, Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Robert Boyd, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999) pp. 255-276.
2. John McLaren Lithia Park landscape plan, Southern Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
3. Jon A. Peterson, “The City Beautiful Movement,” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 2 (4), pp. 415-434.
4. Marjorie O’Harra, *Lithia Park* (Ashland: Ashland Parks and Recreation Department, 1986), p. 11.
5. Raymond H. Clary, *The Making of Golden Gate Park* (San Francisco: Don’t Call It Frisco Press, 1984).
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John McLaren, superintendent of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, drew up a master plan for Lithia Park in 1915.



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Mary Vining Pioneer Woman

by Louise A. Watson

A CENTURY BEFORE THE PHRASE “SINGLE PARENT” CREPT into our cultural vocabulary, Mary Vining literally filled this role for her eight fatherless children. To support them, she became an early female entrepreneur in Ashland. But she never would have thought of it that way. To her, it was simply “survival.”



Early Jackson County pioneer Mary Hoffman Vining survived tragedy and economic hardship to raise a large family and live a long, productive life.

Mary Henrietta Hoffman was born in Attica, Indiana, on June 26, 1837. The eldest of six daughters, she was fifteen when her parents, William and Caroline, decided to relocate to Oregon in 1853—partly to cure Caroline’s asthma, and



the first through fifth grades. She was the first teacher in the first school in Southern Oregon. On December 31, 1855, Mary gave up teaching to marry George Vining. They soon moved to Kerbyville, a raw mining camp in Josephine County, where George built a store and a hotel. Mary was in charge of the hotel and kitchen. Children Kate,

She was the first teacher in the first school in Southern Oregon.

Millie, and Frank were born two years apart, from 1858 to 1862 respectively. In 1864, they moved to Albany, where son William was born and George dabbled briefly in Oregon politics. Then the family moved to Franklin, Washington Territory. Sons Ralph, Robert, and Irving were born in 1868, 1873, and 1874, respectively. Mary gave birth to another daughter, Emma, date and place unknown.

In 1875, Mary became a single parent when George’s fog-bound ship collided with another one off Cape Flattery on the Washington coast, drowning everyone aboard. Mary, only thirty-eight and penniless, had to support herself and eight children, ages one through seventeen. She chose to return to Southern Oregon, purchasing a small Ashland hotel in 1877, and operating it as a boardinghouse.¹

By 1914, Mary’s youngest son, Irving, a professor, had opened the Vining Theater at the corner of Pioneer and East Main in Ashland.² Much admired, Mary was Southern Oregon’s oldest living pioneer woman when she died at the age of ninety-four on January 12, 1933.³ She is buried in the Ashland Cemetery. 🏠

Louise Watson is a Medford writer and editor.

ENDNOTES

1. Otis and Marjorie Perry, *Our Vining Family*, (privately published, San Jose, Calif, 1993) pp. 73-79.
2. Southern Oregon Pioneer Resolutions, Vol. 4, Southern Oregon Historical Society Library.
3. Perry, “Our Vining Family,” p. 79.

also so that William, a pious lay preacher, could establish a new church on the frontier.

The family settled near Phoenix, but was forced to take cover at a neighbor’s fortified home when open warfare broke out between the Rogue Indians and local settlers. Family history includes speculation that Mary may have met Jacksonville farmer George Vining during one of these Indian alarms. In 1854, near Talent, Mary put her private school education to use by opening a one-room school in a rough cabin. Soon the school had forty pupils in



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