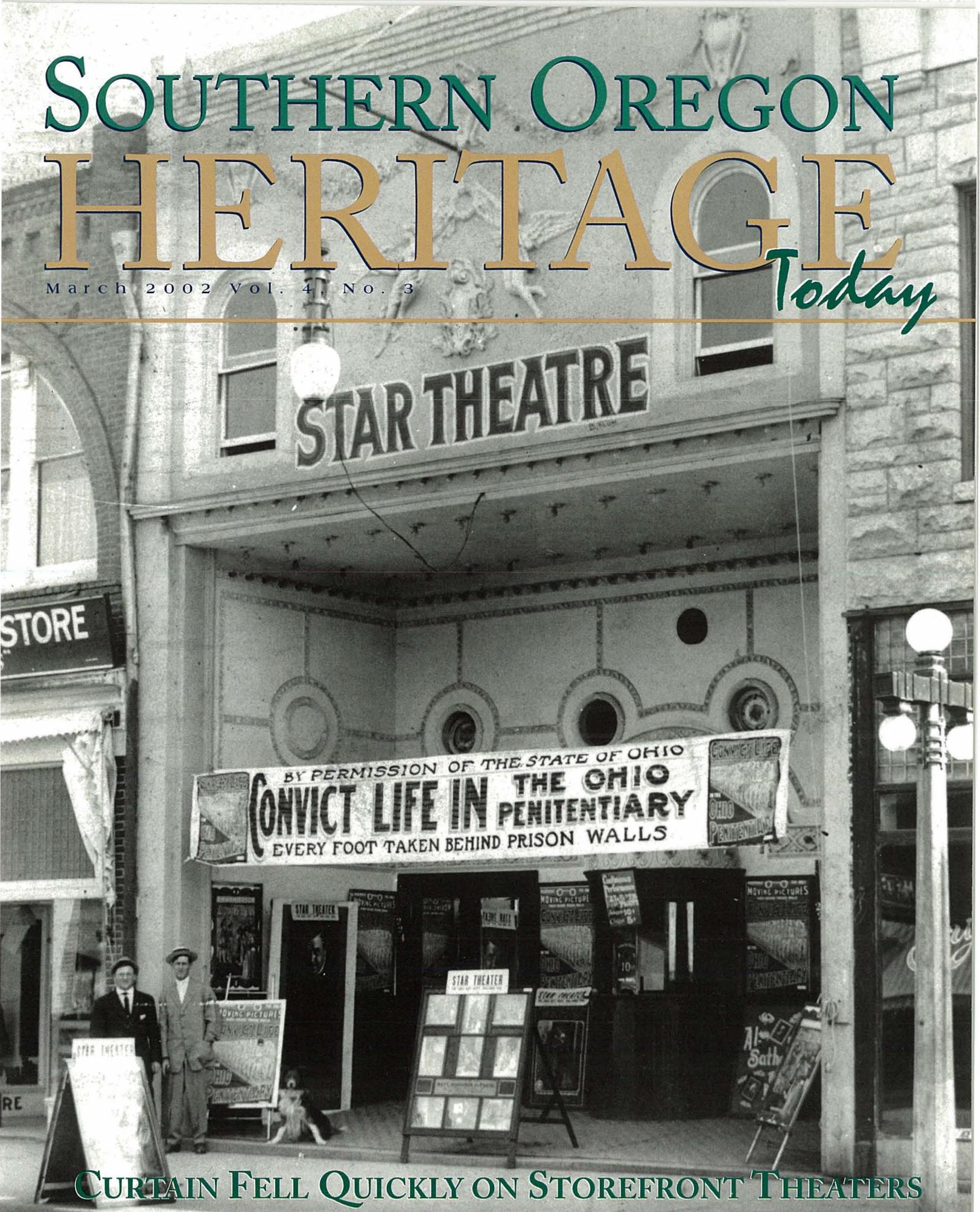


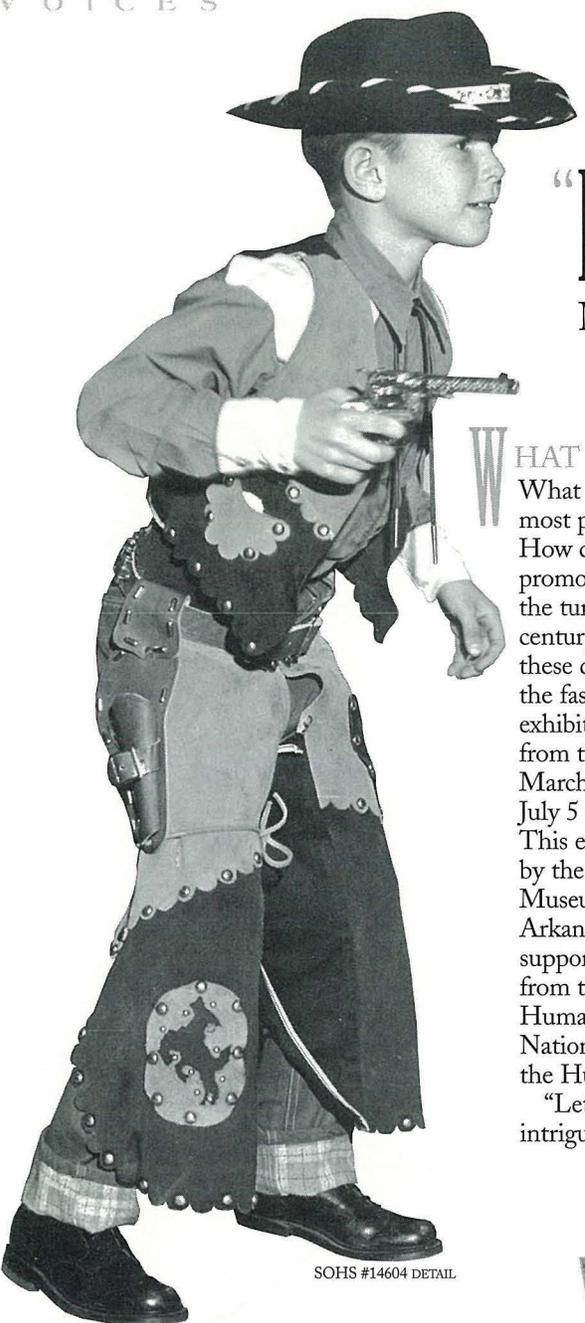
# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

March 2002 Vol. 4, No. 3

*Today*



## CURTAIN FELL QUICKLY ON STOREFRONT THEATERS



SOHS #14604 DETAIL

# “Let’s Play: Pastimes From the Past”

NEW EXHIBIT AT THE HISTORY CENTER

## WHAT WERE THE FAVORITE CHILDREN’S TOYS IN THE 1800s?

What college sport was the most popular in the 1890s? How did “broom drills” promote women’s fitness at the turn of the twentieth century? Find the answers to these questions and more in the fascinating traveling exhibit, “Let’s Play: Pastimes from the Past,” which opens March 23 and runs through July 5 at the History Center. This exhibit was developed by the Rogers Historical Museum in Rogers, Arkansas, and was supported in part by grants from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

“Let’s Play” offers an intriguing look at the ways

Americans enjoyed their leisure time in the late nineteenth century. More leisure time was available then than ever before, due in part to technological developments. Adults increasingly accepted the importance of play as the proper pastime for children, but play was not limited to children. Many adults participated in imaginative play such as amateur theatricals and costume balls, in parlor games such as dominoes and charades, and in hobbies such as needlework and coin collecting. Croquet, golf and other outdoor amusements were also important.

“Let’s Play” explores such

topics as the fitness craze, the role of organized sports, the rise of the sportswoman, America on wheels, and costumes for play and other toys. Illustrating these topics are photographs, documents, and artifacts such as an 1897 collapsible cyclist’s cup, turn-of-the-century card games, and early toys such as marbles, a “Frozen Charlotte” doll, checkers, and model soldiers.

The interactive portion of the exhibit displays a matching memory game featuring illustrations of early sports and amusements. The exhibit is free, and may be viewed during normal History Center hours.



SOHS #1243



SOHS #5502

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SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY

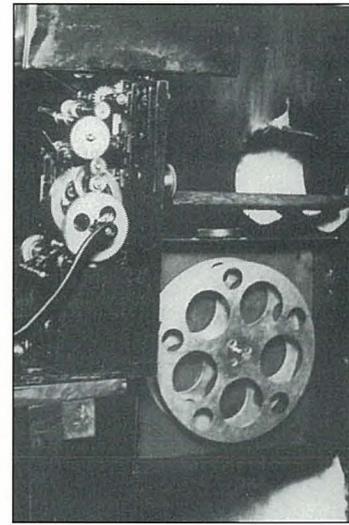
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Feature articles average 3,000 to 4,000 (pre-edited) words. Other materials range from 500 to 1,000 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on 3-1/4-inch disks and should be accompanied by a hard-copy printout. Cite all sources and construct endnotes 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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SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today



SOHS #16821 DETAIL

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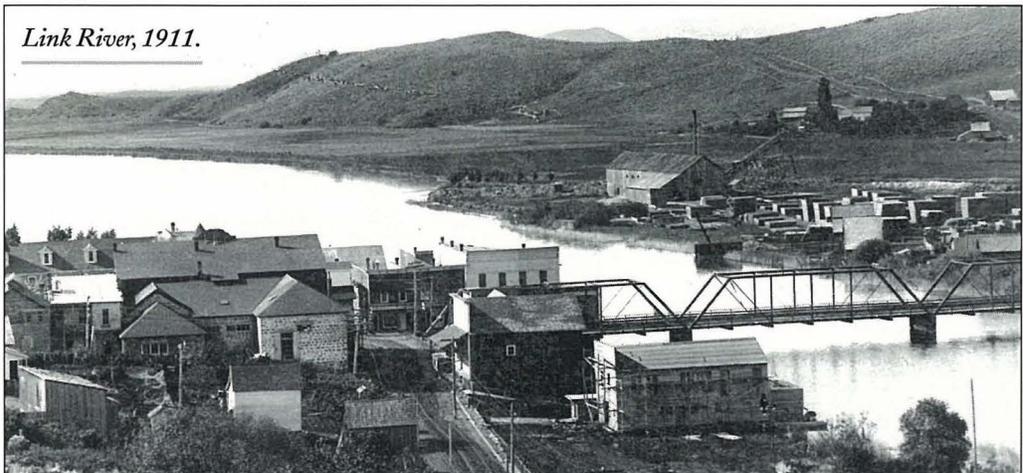
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Link River, 1911.



SOHS #15002



SOHS #9717

ON THE COVER

Medford's Star Theatre, which opened in 1911, included a recessed entry, plaster cherubs, and bright lights to lure moviegoers to such films as *Convict Life in the Ohio Penitentiary* which played Sept. 9-10, 1912.



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PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

# Link River : a Link to the Past

by Doug Foster

**F**OR A SUNDAY DRIVE THAT combines wildlife viewing and local history, visit Link River. This mile-long river—which lies entirely within the city limits of Klamath Falls—connects Upper Klamath Lake, the largest lake in Oregon, with Lake Ewauna, the headwaters of the Klamath River. In winter, Link River still flows when the lakes have frozen over, so ducks crowd onto the river and masses of night herons roost in bare trees along the banks. In summer, cormorants and white pelicans fly low over the river, repositioning from one lake to the other.

The first building in Klamath Falls was a trading post at a ferry crossing on the east bank of Link River above Lake Ewauna. When founded in 1867, the town was called Linkville; its present name is based on the waterfall that once cascaded in Link River before a dam was built in 1921. Main Street in Klamath Falls still begins on the east bank of Link River.<sup>1</sup>

Those interested in wildlife or small hydroelectric projects, or both, should walk the Link River Nature Trail. Start on the west side of Link River Bridge at the

Pacific Power substation, where transformers and wires loom above and the whirl of revolving turbines fills the air. Follow the trail into the river canyon and within ten minutes you won't hear the power plant or passing cars: the only sounds will be

the roar of the river and the sharp calls of wild birds. Willows and deciduous trees line the riverbanks; basalt outcroppings and scattered juniper trees stud the gorge's bare, brown hillsides.

The gravel trail, which follows the right-of-way of a former county road, roughly parallels a diversion ditch carrying water from Link River Dam to the West Side Power Plant. An earlier, smaller ditch was built along this route in 1877 to power a local sawmill. On the far side of Link River you can see a half-mile long wood-stave pipeline twelve feet in diameter, which still carries water from the dam to power turbines at the East Side Power Plant; an earlier plant there provided the first electric power to the city in 1895.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, spawning fish used to swarm in Link River. The March 21, 1901, *Klamath Republican* reported that "enormous droves" of spawning "sucker fish" filled Link River, and advised that "ordinary fishing with hooks, spears or even nets is too slow to think of. With a pitchfork or with naked hands a backload

may be thrown out in five minutes." An old photo shows a man spearing salmon at Link River falls with a pitchfork—before a dam on the Klamath River blocked the great runs of salmon.<sup>3</sup>

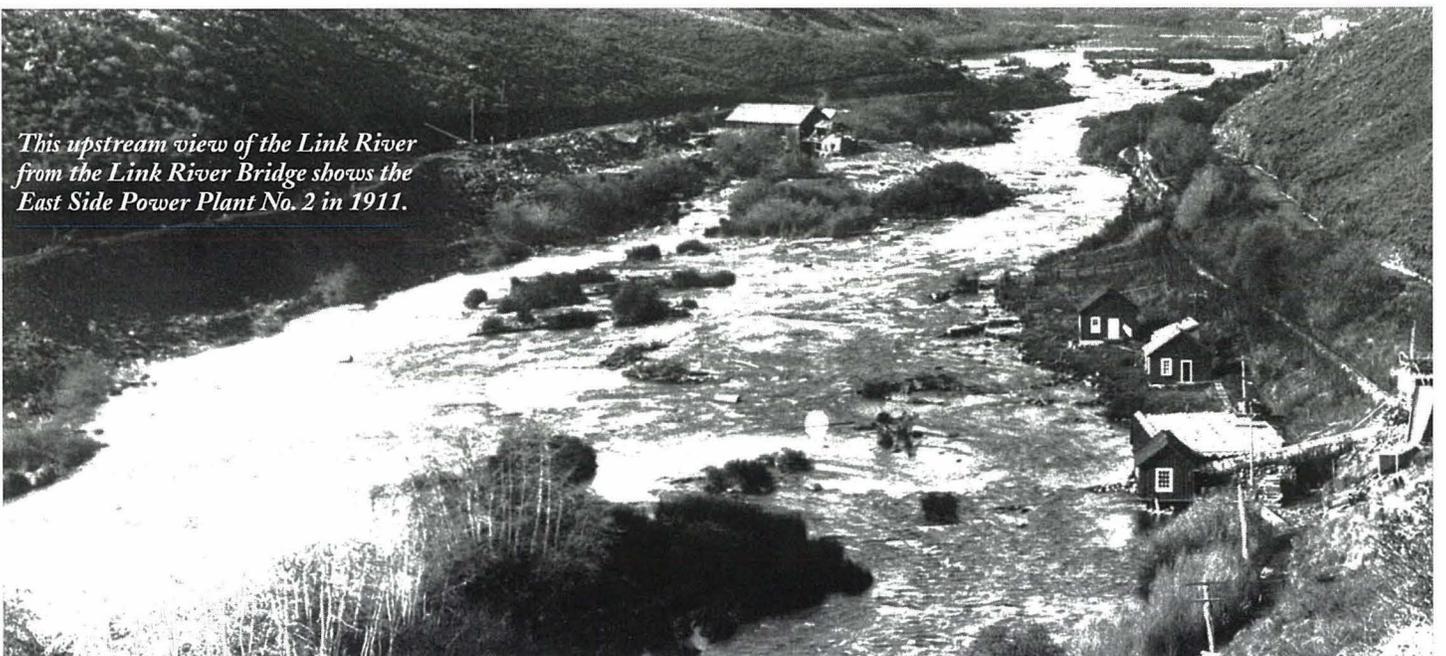
Link River is an enclave within Klamath Falls where you can see abundant bird life. As a bonus, while visiting Link River, you'll see the city's oldest buildings. ■

*Doug Foster is a writer and historian living in Ashland.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. "Linkville," *Klamath Echoes* (Klamath County Historical Society), No. 4, 1967, pp. 1-2.
2. John C. Boyle, *Fifty Years on the Klamath* (Medford: Klocker Printery, 1976), pp. 25, 27, 29.
3. "Linkville," p.11.

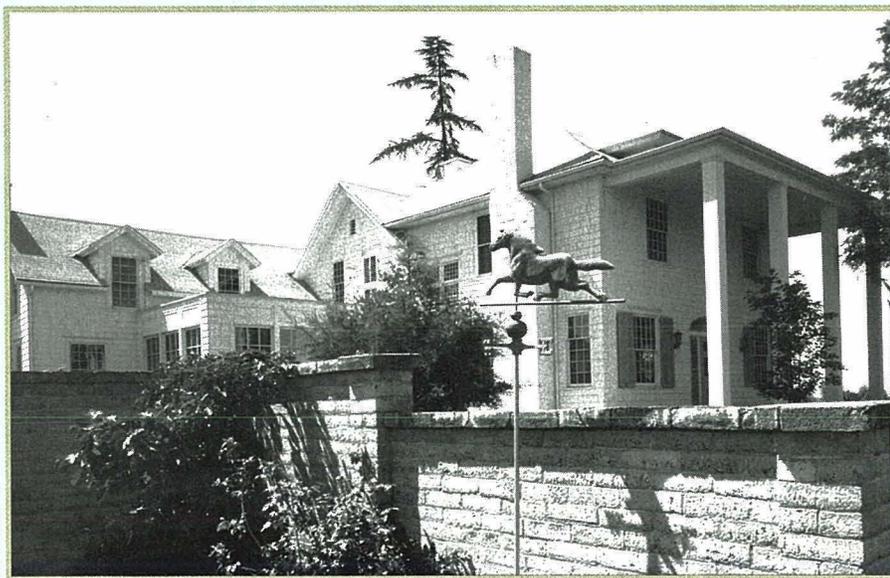
**DIRECTIONS:** *From Highway 140, take the Klamath Falls city center exit; in town, take two left turns to get onto Main Street headed west, cross the Link River bridge and look for parking. There is a sign for the Link River Nature Trail at the Favell Museum (125 West Main); the fenced entrance to the trail is by a Pacific Power electric substation upriver from the Favell Museum.*



*This upstream view of the Link River from the Link River Bridge shows the East Side Power Plant No. 2 in 1911.*

# The Cradle of the Commercial Fruit Industry in the Rogue Valley

by Stephen DeCoste



SOHS #12988

## THE STEWART/VOORHIES

House at 2310 Voorhies Road has witnessed the transformation of the Rogue Valley from a region little known outside Southern Oregon to one of the nation's top fruit-producing centers. Best of all, it has done so from its very own doorstep. In stages from 1890 to 1920, the Colonial Revival-style house was built to accommodate the owners of Eden Valley Orchard. Although the property had been in cultivation since 1853, changes came in 1885 when the land was purchased by a very enthusiastic fruit dealer from Chicago named Joseph H. Stewart.

Following the purchase of the 160-acre property for \$5,400, the *Asbland Tidings* reported that, "Mr. Stewart recently from Illinois, has bought the Ball place ... near Phoenix and intends to put the whole of it in pears."<sup>1</sup>

Stewart named his new enterprise Eden Valley Orchard and went on to plant large quantities of apples, pears, prunes, and almonds. His timing could not have been better, for in 1887 the Oregon-California Railroad was completed, making it possible to ship large amounts of fruit outside the Rogue Valley. In 1890, Stewart sold the area's first commercial carloads of pears to outside markets.<sup>2</sup> He probably began construction of his house the same year: after completion in 1898, the house would serve as the central structure for later additions.

The fruit trees that Stewart planted in 1885 (of which two dozen still survive

near the house) provided valuable budwood used for establishing large orchards across the Rogue Valley including Hollywood, Hillcrest, and Oakdale orchards.<sup>3</sup> By 1896, Eden Valley Orchard's output was ninety-five carloads of pears and apples, and Stewart was widely recognized as the "father of the fruit industry" in Southern Oregon.

In 1899, at the age of sixty-five, Stewart sold his property to Gordon Voorhies of Portland for \$18,500. Voorhies then moved his wife, Helen, and their three children into the house. Voorhies, a graduate of West Point Military Academy, had served in the Spanish-American War and would later serve with distinction as a lieutenant colonel in World War I. Helen Voorhies was the daughter of a prominent Portland merchant family.

The *Medford Mail* reported in 1906: "Of the many orchards which grace this little valley, the largest is the Eden Valley Orchard."<sup>4</sup> It was in 1906 that the Voorhieses decided to build a major extension to the original Stewart house. This resulted in an eastern addition that contains a large living room on the ground floor and front bedrooms on the second.

In 1920, Gordon and Helen's Harvard-educated son, Charles, oversaw the construction of several alterations and additions to the house. These changes included a front portico, multi-light windows, south wing, solarium, utility wing, garage, and shingled exterior wall sheathing. The grounds also saw

*The Stewart/Voorhies house, which dates to 1890, and is pictured here in 1990, still looks out on what was the heart of the Rogue Valley orchard industry.*

extensive remodeling. A concrete lined-swimming pool was created, flanked by cypress trees. A mortared masonry wall was put up to enclose the elegant gardens. Lawns were placed and segmented by formal privet hedges. Plantings included evergreens, maples, birch, pyracantha, and figs.<sup>5</sup>

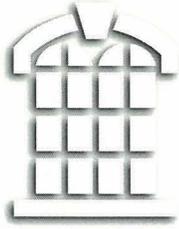
The property remained in the possession of the Voorhies family until 1986. The house, its surrounding buildings and grounds remain much as they were eighty years ago. The maple, oak, and fir floors are all original. The second floor contains seven bedrooms and five full baths. Period plumbing and electrical systems remain in place throughout the house with original fixtures in bathrooms. The downstairs library is exquisite with dark-stained fir panels and brick fireplace. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 14, 2000.

The local Root family now owns Eden Valley Orchard and has done much to preserve the house and its distinctive landscape. The Roots are in the process of opening the 8,000-square-foot house and twenty-seven-acre property to the public as part of an educational program on agricultural history. Not only will the original Stewart orchard be featured, but Oregon's reborn wine industry will be emphasized as well. For more information call (541) 512-2955 or email: [aroot@internetcds.com](mailto:aroot@internetcds.com) 📧

*Stephen DeCoste is a freelance writer and history lecturer at Southern Oregon University.*

### ENDNOTES

1. *Asbland Tidings*, 20 March 1885, p. 1.
2. Atwood, Katherine, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, 24 November 1999, Sec. 8.5.
3. Cordy, Clifford, *History of the Rogue Valley Fruit Industry* (Southern Oregon Historical Society, 16 November 1977), p. 2.
4. *Medford Mail*, 9 March 1906, p. 10.
5. Atwood, Sec. 7.7.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Things To Do in March



PROGRAMS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	<u>DATE &amp; TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Flip Books; 50¢
Bungalow Kitchens	Thurs., Mar. 14; 7-8:30 p.m.	HISTORY CENTER	Adult lecture; free
Bungalow Bathrooms	Fri., Mar. 15; noon - 1 p.m.	COMMUNITY CENTER, 59 Winburn Way, Ashland	Adult lecture; free
Children's Public Heritage Fair	Sat., Mar. 16; 1-4 p.m.	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUMS	Children's fair; free with museum admission
Games Galore!	Sat., Mar. 23; 1-4 p.m.	HISTORY CENTER	Family Day. Fee: \$1; \$5/ family; members free

## PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

### MARCH CRAFT OF THE MONTH

#### *Flip Books*

Children are invited to create a moving picture book like those children made in the early 1900s! Fee: 50¢. Children's Museum.

### BUNGALOW KITCHENS

The kitchen was and is the most complex room in the house. *Bungalow Kitchens* author Jane Powell explores the history of the "modern" kitchen (found in all early 20th Century houses, not just bungalows) and how it changed women's lives, the various elements contained in it, and the practical ways to integrate modern technology without compromising the period look.

Jane Powell is an Arts and Crafts restoration expert, consultant on 20th Century houses, and historic preservationist. She is renovating her ninth bungalow in Oakland, California.

### BUNGALOW BATHROOMS

Indoor plumbing is the very basis of modern civilization—from the white sanitary bathrooms of the late 19th and

early 20th Century, through the wildly colored tile and fixtures of the 1920s and 1930s. *Bungalow Bathrooms* author Jane Powell explores the history of plumbing and bathroom design, and suggests practical ways to restore a vintage bathroom or build a new bath in a period style. See biographical notes above. Sponsored by the Ashland Historic Commission.

### CHILDREN'S PUBLIC HERITAGE FAIR

Families are invited to discover what 4th grade students from Jackson and Josephine counties do when they visit the Society's museums and other historic sites in Jacksonville during the Society's annual Children's Heritage Fair. Explore Native American lifeways, go on a cemetery tour, learn about Oregon's state symbols, and make a pioneer toy.

### GAMES GALORE!

#### *A LET'S PLAY FAMILY DAY*

*Let's Play*, the Society's newest exhibit, provides ample opportunity for grandparents, parents and their children to share memories of childhood. The History Center will be open this Saturday only for the opening of this exhibit. We'll have a variety of games and toys and crafts on hand for all to enjoy. **Call 773-6536 by Wednesday, March 20, to preregister.**

### A WOMAN'S PLACE

*A Woman's Place* is an outreach program that pays tribute to Rogue Valley women and the roles they filled from the 1850s up to World War II. Cultural and social changes are

explored through the lives of two centuries of women. Contact Jay Leighton, 773-6536, to schedule this slide program for your group. Fee: \$30.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We're still recruiting volunteers for the Hanley Farm, Beekman Living History, and the Jacksonville-Hanley Farm Trolley Tour programs. If you are interested in meeting people and learning and sharing history, please call Dawna Curler at 773-6536 for more information or to sign up. Training for these programs begins in April.

### REGISTER EARLY!

Back by popular demand is the LIFE STORY WRITING WORKSHOP taught by Debra Gwartney. The workshop will be held Saturday, April 13 and Saturday, April 20 from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the History Center. There is a \$10 fee for materials. Space is limited to 12. **You must preregister by April 1.** Writing samples must be submitted by April 8. Call 773-6536 to preregister and for further information.

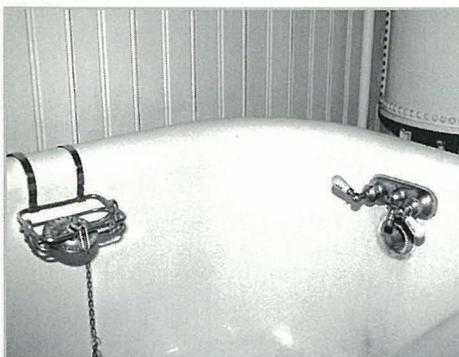
This program has been made possible by funding from the Oregon Council for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

### TALENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### *Spring Fling and Potluck!*

Sunday, March 17; 1 p.m.

- Woman's barbershop quartet; Civil War era fashion show; "Oregon Voices" by Twilo Scofield, folklorist (sponsored by the Oregon Humanities Commission); concert by Lorraine Rawls, Crystal Reeves, and Brian Freeman. For more information call 512-8838. Suggested donation: \$1.



# EXHIBITS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>MUSEUM HOURS</u>
Let's Play: Pastimes From the Past Century of Photography: 1856-1956 The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z	HISTORY CENTER	Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
History in the Making: Jackson County Milestones Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience—New Artifacts Hall of Justice	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed.- Sat., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday, noon - 5 p.m.
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed.- Sat., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday, noon - 5 p.m.

## EXHIBIT DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

### LET'S PLAY:

#### PASTIMES FROM THE PAST

Using photographs, documents and artifacts, this traveling exhibit offers an intriguing look at the ways Americans enjoyed their leisure time at the turn of the 20th Century. It explores such topics as toys, the fitness craze, the role of organized sports, the rise of the sportswoman, and America on wheels. What were the favorite children's toys in the 1800s? What was the most popular college sport in the 1890s? Find the answers in this exhibit! Developed by the Rogers Historical Museum, Rogers, Arkansas, and supported in part by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

#### 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.

#### "HISTORY IN THE MAKING: JACKSON COUNTY MILESTONES"

The spirit of America is captured in the history of Jackson County. Follow in the footsteps of early residents who experienced the five historic milestones explored in this colorful new exhibit. You'll be inspired by the pioneers who arrived by sea or land; see the gold rush from the perspective of Chinese sojourners; discover the local impact

of the railroad and automobile, and more. Artifacts include rare Chinese archaeological material and an early Coleman stove. A 1940s jukebox plays music and oral histories describing automobile travel experiences.

#### 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 information on contemporary collecting issues. **NEW!** Recently researched objects from the Society's Southwest Native American collections are now on display. Highlights include ancient Anasazi and historic Pueblo pottery including a classic piece by legendary San Ildefonso potters Marian and Julian Martinez. Featured textiles include a Hopi/Pueblo "maiden's shawl," two Navajo women's dresses, and a Navajo Germantown blanket.

#### HALL OF JUSTICE

History of this former Jackson County Courthouse.

#### CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Everyone enjoys exploring the home and work settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through "hands-on-history."

#### HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:

**March 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

- John M. Easterling Bldg.  
552 A Street, ASHLAND
- State Historic Preservation Office  
prd.state.or.us - click on "publication"  
PHONE: 503-378-4168
- Southern Oregon Historical Society  
PHONE: 541-773-6536

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106 N. Central, Medford  
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**JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM &  
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM**  
5th and C, Jacksonville  
Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

**HANLEY FARM**  
1053 Hanley Road  
(open by special appointment)

**C.C. BEEKMAN HOUSE**  
California & Laurelwood, Jacksonville  
(closed for the season)

**C.C. BEEKMAN BANK**  
3rd and California, Jacksonville

**JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE**  
3rd and California, Jacksonville  
Fri. & Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

**THIRD STREET ARTISANS'  
STUDIO**  
3rd and California, Jacksonville  
(closed for the season)

**U.S. HOTEL**  
3rd and California, Jacksonville  
Upstairs room available for rent.

**CATHOLIC RECTORY**  
4th and C streets, Jacksonville



*We invite YOU to  
become a member!*

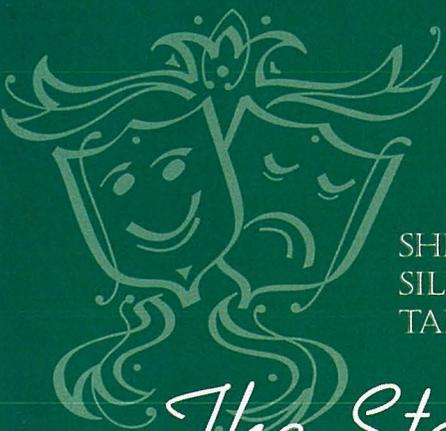
Your membership will support: preservation of Southern Oregon's rich heritage; Society exhibits and educational events; outreach to schools; workshops for adults and children; living history programs; and tours and demonstrations at historic Hanley Farm.

**Members receive** *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, the Society's monthly magazine with newsletter, providing a view into the past and keeping you up-to-date on services provided by the Society.

For membership information, call Susan Smith at 773-6536.

#### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Lifetime ...	\$1,000	
Business ...	Two years \$200	One year \$120
Director ...	Two years \$450	One year \$250
Curator ...	Two years \$200	One year \$120
Patron ...	Two years \$110	One year \$60
Family ...	Two years \$55	One year \$30
Friend ...	Two years \$35	One year \$20



SHRINE OF THE  
SILENT ARTS,  
TAKE 3:

*The Storefront*  
THEATERS

by William Alley

*To attract evening audiences, electric lights and signage, then still a novelty, were used by theaters. The brightly illuminated Star Theatre on the left leaves no doubt that patrons were welcome.*

ALMOST FROM THEIR INCEPTION, THE appeal of moving pictures was widespread. Seemingly overnight the early, primitive, flickering images first viewed in kinetoscope arcades spawned one of the nation's most rapidly growing industries, one that would eventually dominate the entire world.

The venues for the exhibition of the popular new medium evolved rapidly to keep pace with the unprecedented advances in movie content and technology. While the early films were mere clips viewed in hand-cranked viewers, they quickly evolved into photoplays, short films telling a complete story in four or five reels. Soon, the "nickelodeons" (the name derived from a 1905 Pittsburgh theater) appeared, small theaters where the flickering early silents could be viewed. The nickelodeon soon proved inadequate to accommodate the growing numbers enchanted with films. Across the country new, larger movie halls began opening up in empty storefronts.

As these new storefront theaters blossomed in the new century's first decade a pattern developed, many of the characteristics of which became a fixture in movie theaters that have survived to the present. Among these was the open entryway, liberally festooned with lithographic posters promoting current and coming attractions. As American towns and cities became electrified, theaters adopted bright and often gaudy light schemes to further attract audiences. Many storefront theaters also resorted to elaborate decorating schemes on their front elevations to simulate the large, "legitimate" theaters. In Medford's Isis, this decoration was painted on the facade. In the case of the Star, elaborate plaster decorations surrounded the theater's entryway.

To supplement the early photoplays, it was common for these theaters to round out their bills with vaudeville acts. But as the motion picture industry grew, the increasing number of films available to exhibitors resulted in a phase-out of the vaudeville. The second decade of the new century witnessed the construction of large and opulent movie palaces. Almost as quickly as they appeared, the storefront theaters had faded from the scene; theirs was merely a temporary niche in the evolution of motion picture exhibition.



## The Bijou and Savoy

The immense popularity of moving pictures is well documented, and their popularity in Medford was no exception. Movies were undoubtedly exhibited in Medford's Angle and Wilson opera houses, but it wasn't until about 1908 that the first actual movie theater would open.

Earl C. "Hub" Hubbard (no known relation to the hardware store) opened the Bijou Theater in the rear portion of a new building on West Main Street, adjacent to the Weeks and Orr building. The front portion of the building housed the Bates Brothers barbershop. The theater occupied the rear of the building, with a lobby/hall providing access to West Main Street, still known to many as West Seventh Street. Chairs were set up in what passed for an auditorium and a hand-cranked projector was used to exhibit the simple movies of the day. The projectionist, presumably Hubbard himself, would narrate the movies being shown.<sup>1</sup>

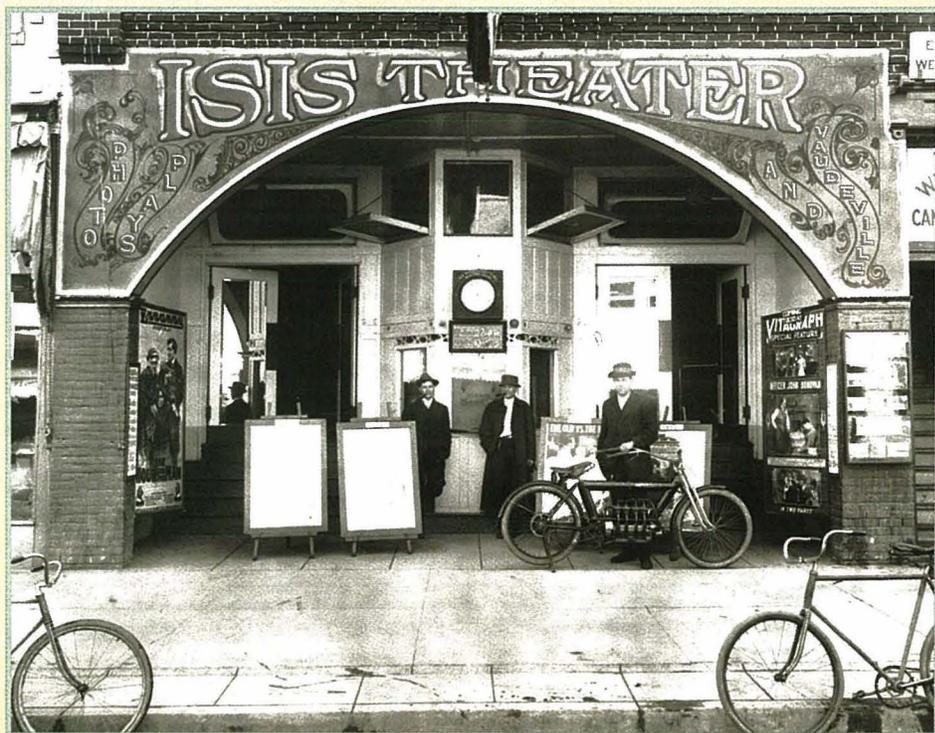
In these early years of motion pictures, the feature film was still a few years off. Movies consisted primarily of assorted short features and the occasional "illustrated ballads," where theatergoers were encouraged to sing along by "following the bouncing ball." The Bijou followed the pattern of similar storefront theaters by offering continuous performances. For the admission price of ten cents, patrons could enter whenever they wished and stay as long as they liked. At the Bijou, the entire program was changed regularly every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.<sup>2</sup>

Hubbard was not the only Medford resident attracted to the exhibition of moving pictures. In August 1908, an advertisement appeared in a local magazine for the Grand Theater. It is not likely that the Grand was in operation for very long, as this one ad is the only reference found to date. There is a strong possibility that the Grand was an early attempt by Medford photographer Frank Hull to enter the motion picture theater business, which he would successfully do in Central Point a few years later. Several facts point to the Hull connection. The first is the location of the theater, which was below Hull's Main Street studio. The magazine in which the Grand's ad appears, *Medford Lights*, is also a connection to Hull; *Medford Lights* was published by Hull to promote both the Rogue Valley and his photography business. The lack of documentation of the Grand anywhere else suggests its duration was short-lived.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the popularity of the new moving pictures, Hubbard's Bijou was not an immediate commercial success. In June 1910, W.H. Fluhart took charge of the Bijou. Shortly after that the theater was sold to W. C. Perkins, who changed the name to the Ugo. Perkins remodeled the theater with new scenery for the vaudeville performances and a new projector for the



SOHS #4000 DETAIL



SOHS #15395

*Top, when Medford's first movie theater, the Bijou, opened ca. 1908, West Main Street was still known as Seventh Street. The Bijou would undergo several name changes during its lifetime. Above, the Isis Theater, located on the current site of Vogel Park, utilized the recessed entryway characteristics of the early storefront theaters, ca. 1914.*

moving pictures. Perkins' efforts paid off, and by 1911 "his courteous treatment of the public and the splendid moving pictures, vaudeville and stock companies put on[,] Mr. Perkins built up a profitable business." When Perkins decided to retire in the spring of 1911, he found a ready buyer for the theater in L.C. Johnson of South Dakota.<sup>4</sup>

Still, Medford's pioneer movie theater continued to struggle and underwent a series of changes in ownership. In 1912, Johnson sold the theater to Perry Terwilliger, who in turn sold the theater in September to F.W. Porter. Porter, who had had experience running theaters in Oklahoma, had come to Medford the previous year and worked at the Akins, Benton & Co. dry goods shop and at the Golden Rule Store. Porter, in turn, sold the theater to local salesman Ross Kline and *Medford Mail Tribune* city editor Harry Hicks in February 1913. Kline would serve as the theater's manager.

The Ugo's newest owners' first order of business was to "put the theater back on its original basis—a picture house pure and simple. ... They will dispense with all cheap vaudeville and stock companies."<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the theater owners' best intentions, however, the Ugo continued to struggle. The "Ugo Jinx" had become part of the local scuttlebutt. This talk was reinforced a few days after the new management took over when the advertised films failed to arrive in time from Portland. A last-minute loan of four alternate films from the Isis Theater allowed the Ugo to remain open until the films finally arrived.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps in an effort to defuse the "jinx," the little west-side theater underwent another name change in the spring of 1913. Thereafter it would be known as the It Theater. For the next two years the It struggled along, but the pioneer movie house was never able to compete with the its larger neighbors. In the summer of 1915 the theater was taken over by a Mr.

Kay of Anacortes, Washington. When Kay renamed the show house the Empire, he embraced the old jinx in his advertising. He planned the reopening for Friday, August 13, declaring it "A hoodoo day, a hoodoo date. Come and help break the hoodoo on the old house." Apparently the old hoodoo held, for both the Empire and Kay were gone by the following year.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after he opened the Bijou, in 1908, "Hub" Hubbard and businessman Court Hall opened a second theater on Front Street, just north of Main. They named this theater the Savoy, not to be confused with a later theater of the same name opened in Central Point by Frank Hull. Hubbard, assisted by Hall's son,

Seely, continued to operate the Savoy until 1911. In June of that year the Savoy was sold to W.O. Wilson of Seward, Alaska, and Hubbard immigrated to South America, settling down in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Wilson was unable to make a go of the Savoy and it soon closed down. Like the Bijou, the Savoy was simply too small and primitive for the modern moviegoer. The Savoy's projector, seats, and other furnishings were sold to Frank Hull, who would use them in his new Savoy Theater in Central Point. Neither the Bijou nor the Savoy was able to compete financially against the larger seating capacity and ability to accommodate larger and more sophisticated vaudeville acts of the Medford Theater in the old Wilson Opera House, or larger storefront theaters opening up on Main Street.<sup>8</sup>

### "Follow the Crowds to the Isis"

The Isis Theater was located on the ground floor of the Angle building on Main Street, just east of Central. Work remodeling the space from its former use as a retail establishment began in May 1910. In order to accommodate the open, recessed entryway popular with the storefront theaters of the time, the "old-fashioned iron doors, such as were in universal use a quarter century ago," were removed.<sup>9</sup>

Robert E. Gordon was the owner of the Isis. The theater's name, inspired by the Egyptian goddess, was a popular one and graced silent movie theaters across the country. The Isis featured three or four five-reel photoplays and a "good, clean vaudeville performance." Admission followed the pattern of the other theaters—ten cents for adults and five cents for children. As the decade wore on the Isis followed the trend of many early theaters and instituted the continuous performance, where the day's bill would repeat itself throughout the day. Patrons were welcome to come at any time during the performance and remain as long as they desired.<sup>10</sup>

MS #835

WHEN IN MEDFORD DON'T FOR-  
get to spend an evening at



## The GRAND



**The Theatre with Elevated Seats**

Three Complete Performances Each Evening—

The First Performance Starts at	8:00
“ Second “	8:45
“ Third “	9:30

**10c ADMISSION 10c**

Complete change of program every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

**Matinee Every Saturday Afternoon  
at 2:30 O'clock**

Admission to Matinee is only 5 cents.

**313 Main St. - MEDFORD, OREGON**

*Above, this advertisement for the Grand Theater appeared in the August 1908 issue of Medford Lights, published by Medford photographer Frank Hull. Below, this view looking west on Main Street from Fir Street shows Medford's first movie house when it was operating under the name Ugo.*



SOHS #8719B DETAIL

The Isis underwent a management change in June 1912, when Ira L. Whipple took charge. The surviving records are unclear, however, on whether or not Gordon retained ownership of the theater. His 1963 obituary indicates that he retained ownership. Since Gordon and his partner Thomas Fuson had recently been contracted to operate the newly opened Page Theater in 1913, it makes sense that a new manager would be hired to operate the smaller theater.<sup>11</sup>

In January 1914, R.G. Patch, the Isis' projectionist, announced that he had received a patent on a device that, when finally perfected, would take the annoying "flicker" out of the movies. The device, known as the Multiple Compound, was, according to the *Medford Mail Tribune*, being perfected by engineers at the Edison laboratories.<sup>12</sup>

While Patch was busying himself with improving the technical aspects of the Isis' exhibitions, Whipple was keeping the theater's playbills up to date. As in the other smaller theaters, vaudeville was being phased out, with the recently opened Page Theater proving a more attractive venue for the live traveling shows. In their place the Isis and the neighboring Star concentrated on exhibiting the feature photoplays that the studios were producing in ever greater numbers. It is during this period that the movie houses developed the playbill format that would remain little changed until the age of television. This new format featured a short film followed by a newsreel before presenting the feature films.<sup>13</sup>

The Isis was doomed, however, to fall victim to progress. The luxurious Page Theater, with seats for 1,100 patrons, spelled the eventual doom of the storefront theaters. Unable to expand any further, the Isis had essentially become obsolete in a rapidly modernizing industry. It simply could not afford to install the very latest in projection technology available at the Page, or install the new theatrical organs that audiences across the country were beginning to take for granted. When Gordon, the Isis' owner and operating manager of the Page, relocated to Klamath County in 1915, the little Isis Theater in the Angle building was closed. The building was later extensively remodeled and renamed the Fluhrer Building. It was destroyed by fire in 1969. Its location is now the site of Vogel Park.

### *The Star Theatre- "Where the Crowds Go"*

Located at 224 East Main Street, two doors down from the Isis, the Star Theatre opened to the public on September 23,

1911. It was owned and operated by the People's Amusement Company and managed by Al Sather. Sather had come to Medford from Portland, where he had managed other People's properties. Gifted with "a tenor voice of exceptional sweetness," Sather, in addition to his management duties, contributed to the Star's entertainment by regaling audiences with popular songs. There was some delay in the Star's opening as management had to await the arrival of the new "opera seats." In keeping with the style of the time, the Star featured a recessed entryway and elaborate plaster cherubs and garlands. The Star also introduced Medford to the lavish use of electrical lighting to attract customers in the evening.<sup>14</sup>

*"Movies consisted primarily of assorted short features and the occasional 'illustrated ballads,' where the theatergoers were encouraged to sing along by 'following the bouncing ball.'"*



In the fall of 1912, word was going around Medford that a new, larger theater was going to be built. In order to remain competitive with such a theater, The People's Amusement Company, under the supervision of Sather, decided to expand and improve the Star. A lease was secured on the building on the east side of the Star, made vacant when the Medford Mercantile Store, better known as the M & M Department Store, relocated to the building to the east. Ten thousand dollars was allocated to expand into the adjacent building, substantially enlarging the auditorium to seat 900, and a new stage the width of both buildings was installed. For the comfort of the patrons, and to ensure their safety, the management ensured that "provisions [were] made for emptying the building in less than five minutes." Being able to quickly clear the theater had the added

advantage of making room for new patrons when running a schedule of continuing performances.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the expansion, improvements were made to the Star's ventilating system, including a new electric exhaust fan, and steam heat was added. The Star's daily performances would continue during the remodeling.

Sather, who had managed the Star since its opening, left Medford in June 1913 to manage the Tivoli Theater in Portland; O.L. Burkhardt of Portland was sent down by People's Amusement to take his place. Sather would return briefly to manage the Star for People's in early 1915. In July, Arthur C. Burgess acquired the lease on the Star. In September, Burgess transferred the lease to D.L. Shartis.<sup>16</sup>

Shartis brought a new perspective to the Star. In addition to his experience managing theaters in his native Alabama, Shartis was also an experienced cameraman, having worked for the Nestor Film Co. Shortly after assuming the management of the Star, Shartis began exhibiting locally produced movies. On September 23, 300 feet shot at the county fair was exhibited at the Star to the delight of local audiences.<sup>17</sup>

The following spring Shartis, known among the film exchanges as a "live-wire showman," embarked on a more substantial local production. Scenes were shot at the local schools and among several area businesses, including the major hotels and Mann's Department store. One of the action-packed highlights included Herb Alford, Lowe Zundel ("the Chaplin of this movie"), and Carl Tengwald in an exciting scene involving the Perl Funeral Home's ambulance. Shartis' production, modestly billed as "The Biggest, Best and Most Expensive Entertainment In the History of Moving Pictures In Medford," opened on May 9. The film was shown every day of the week. To keep interest in the film high, a different school was featured every day of the week. "Manager Shartis," the *Mail Tribune* reported, "certainly hit a responsive [h]ord in the public mind for merriment." The film was an immense success, and attendance at the Star shattered all records.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the success of the Star's local films, Shartis chose not to remain in Medford. On July 5, 1916, a deal was made transferring management of the theater to George A. Hunt, manager of Medford's grand theater, the Page. Shartis and his wife returned to Birmingham, Alabama. Sadly his early film portrayal of Medford has been lost.<sup>19</sup>

As he would continue to do throughout his career as a theater owner, Hunt made improving the quality of his theaters a high priority. Shortly after taking over the Star, Hunt announced that he "will not only maintain the high standing of the theater, but will endeavor to improve it. New picture machines will soon be installed and other improvements made." Hunt managed the Star and Page theaters until after the United States entered the war in Europe. He then transferred the leases for the Star and the Page to Mr. and Mrs. O.T. Bergner, managers of Ashland's Vining Theater. Hunt and his wife moved north to Tacoma, Washington.<sup>20</sup>

As the war in Europe was coming to a close in the fall of 1918, the world was savaged by the Spanish flu pandemic. Medford was not immune from the effects of this plague, and harsh measures were instituted to protect the populace, including, for several months, a ban on public gatherings. This ban necessitated the closure of all of Medford's theaters. When the ban was finally lifted in November 1918, the Star reopened under a new name, the Liberty, inspired no doubt by the victorious conclusion of the war. Henry Harcke, who had worked at the Star and Page theaters and had been in the employ of People's Amusement in Portland, was the manager and lessee of the theater. Ownership by this time had passed from People's Amusement to the Jensen & Von Herberg Syndicate, which operated theaters up and down the Pacific Coast. Harcke immediately secured new equipment to improve the quality of the Liberty's performances.<sup>21</sup>

George Hunt returned to Medford in the fall of 1919 and formed the George

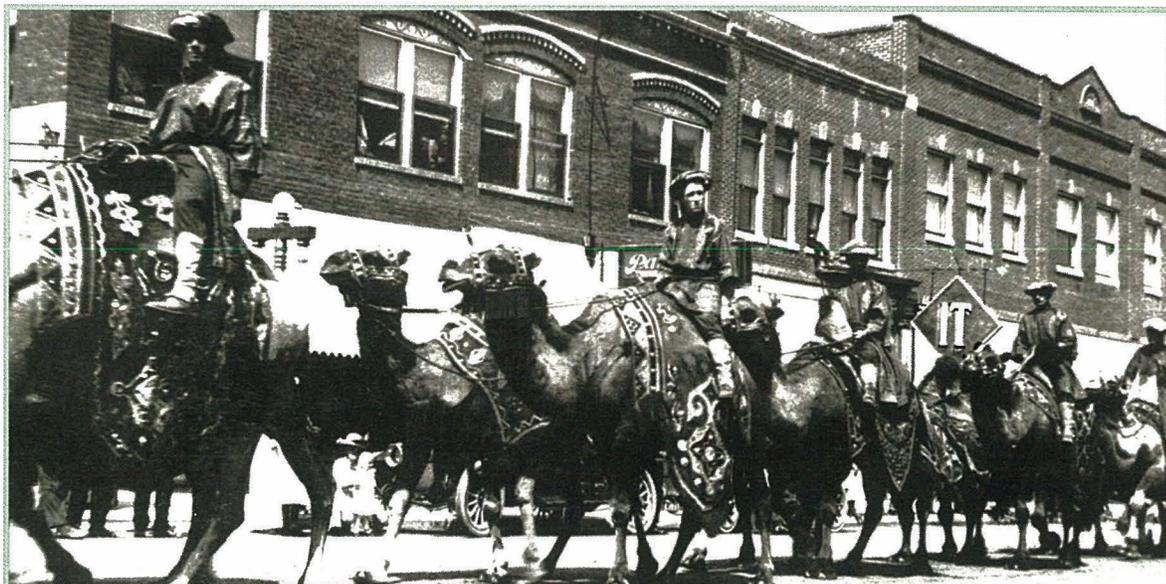
A. Hunt Theater Company. In October it was announced that Hunt had purchased several theaters from the Jensen & Von Herberg syndicate, including the Liberty. Harcke remained in the employ of the Hunts, having been promoted to manage the Grants Pass theaters. The following month Hunt acquired Medford's two largest theaters, the Page and the Rialto, which had opened in 1917.<sup>22</sup>

In either 1922 or 1923 Hunt decided to close down the Liberty. The small storefront theater, in spite of several renovations and expansions, was simply no longer competitive with the larger, more opulent theaters that were opening up. Hunt found that the Page and Rialto alone were adequate for his needs. When the Page was destroyed by fire on the last day of 1923 there was speculation that Hunt might re-open the Liberty, but he chose instead to build what would become the Craterian. In 1924 the Fluhrer family converted the old Star Theater into the new home for their Colonial Bakery.

In keeping with the national trend, the existence of storefront theaters was short-lived in Medford. They served to meet the demand for theatrical exhibition during the interim period before the birth of the motion picture palace made them obsolete at the dawn of the Roaring Twenties. In Medford it was the Page, Rialto, and later the Craterian, that would attract those seeking to escape into the world of motion pictures in unparalleled comfort. 🏠

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*Between 1913 and 1915 the small West Main movie theater was called the It. The theater's new sign is visible behind this parade of circus camels ca. 1914.*



SOHS #2476

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 1 June 1911.
2. *Semi-Weekly Southern Oregonian*, 4 November 1908.
3. *Medford Lights*, August 1908, p.5.
4. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 30 June 1910; *Medford Sun*, 5 April 1911.
5. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 5 February 1913.
6. *Medford Sun*, 13 February 1913.
7. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 12 August 1915; *Medford City Directory*, 1916.
8. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 1 June 1911.
9. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 19 May 1910.
10. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 20 October 1910, 6 April 1912.
11. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 13 June 1912; 6 June 1963; William Alley, "Shrine of the Silent Arts," *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, August 2000, p. 9.
12. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 20 January 1914.
13. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 7 July 1914.
14. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 28 September 1911.
15. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 23 April 1912; *Medford Sun*, 12 November 1912.
16. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 14 June 1913; 17 June 1915; 24 July 1915; 2 September 1915.
17. *Medford Sun*, 23 September 1915.
18. *Medford Sun*, 4 May 1916; *Medford Mail Tribune*, 9 May 1916; 11 May 1916.
19. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 6 July 1916.
20. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 6 September 1915; 26 October 1917.
21. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 15 November 1918; William Alley, "When the Spanish Lady Came: Medford and the Influenza Outbreak of 1918," *Southern Oregon Heritage*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 18-23.
22. Alley, "Shrine of the Silent Arts," p. 12.



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(Continued on page 2)

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# A Picture-perfect Flood

by Bill Miller



SOHS #16025

*Southbound rail passengers whose travel was blocked by heavy snows in the Siskiyou spent thirty-three days stuck in Ashland waiting for the tracks to be cleared, perhaps accounting for the glum faces in this 1890 photo outside the Oregon Hotel.*

GETTING TO KLAMATH  
 or even California was impossible. Roads and mountain passes out of Jackson County were blocked by walls of snow, which had fallen relentlessly since October 1889. Just four months earlier, county farmers were in a panic, praying for rain to end a ruthless drought. Ashland had even banned fireworks during Independence Day celebrations, fearing uncontrolled fire. Now, as 1890 approached, improvised sleds carried boisterous children down valley hillsides. In the mountains, telegraph linemen snowshoed up snowbanks to repair their wires. No need to climb when pole tops were easily reached from the surface of the snow.

In mid-January, flakes fell persistently on the valley floor. Heavy snow on fragile roofs collapsed sheds and other buildings, including John Orth's barn, which fell only hours before the awning on his Jacksonville commercial building crashed to the ground. Railroad snowplows were unable to clear the Siskiyou grade, and trains carrying mail and commerce from the south were halted in California. Train passengers from the north soon found that Ashland was the end of the line. More than 200 passengers were stranded at the Oregon Hotel (later the Ashland Hotel) and would remain in the "Granite City" for thirty-three days, grouching about town and fuming at the delay. 'O, for the days of the stage-coach. We always got mail at least semi-occasionally

then," said a *Jacksonville Democratic Times* reporter.<sup>1</sup>

Just as everyone was sure that the snow was here to stay, the February rains began and daytime temperatures warmed to a very mild forty-five to fifty-five degrees. Snow began to melt everywhere as raindrops replaced snowflakes. During the first five days of February, storms dropped seven inches of water, more rain than had fallen between January 1 and October 1, 1889. Rivers and creeks churned with mud and boulders. At the foot of Lower Table Rock, the Rogue River was one mile wide. The newspaper joked that one farmer had the nicest and smoothest forty-acre field of water ever seen in the valley.<sup>2</sup>

In Medford, Bear Creek was over its banks and quickly becoming a river. The view of the raging water was superb from the planks of the wooden bridge at the foot of Main Street. Barely a year old, the bridge was "the" place to be. Without fear, hundreds of people admired the ever-rising torrent, and honored the human tradition of placing themselves in harm's way, just to satisfy their curiosity. The Clutter brothers had recently launched a short-lived photography business in Medford and immediately saw the flood's money-making potential. Hoping to take a few souvenir photographs to sell, they set up a camera on Spencer Childers' rooftop, overlooking the crowded bridge to the east. Their

timing could not have been better. On the morning of February 3, 1890, a group of more than fifty men, most holding umbrellas, posed on the northwest edge of the bridge. As they smiled and looked up at the photographers, the bridge began to shudder and pull apart. The Clutters' glass plate captured the blurred images of escapees as they rushed to safety. Only three men were thrown into the water and they managed to swim to shore. Simply by chance, the Clutter brothers may have become the first photojournalists in the Rogue Valley. They released a four-photograph "flood series," three of which survive and are reproduced here.<sup>3</sup>

Each photograph was given a title. "No. 1 - Bear Creek Bridge, showing high water and barn on the east side." The crowd poses just before the collapse. E.W. Hammon's barn is near the east bank of the creek. Hammon and his brother operated a tree nursery on this farm.

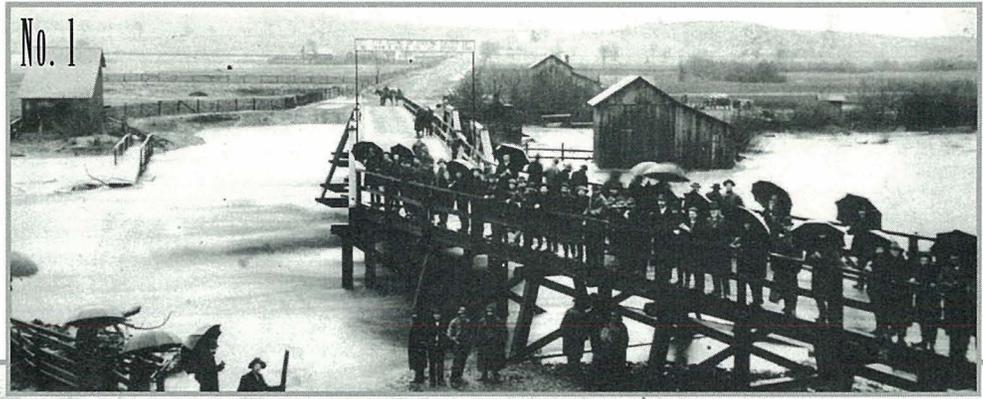
"No. 2 - Second bent of bridge loosened and barn gone." A "bent" is a section of the bridge. This is the only photograph of the series not found in the Society's collection.

"No. 3 - Second bent gone and third going." Hammon's barn is gone, along with hay, pig pens, pigs, chickens, and outbuildings. Had the barn not collapsed before being washed away, it would have taken the bridge out even sooner.

"No. 4 - The rope ferry with passenger en route." This photograph shows a boy being transported across Bear Creek. The first lady to dare make the trip was E.W. Hammon's wife. According to the newspaper, "The suspension cradle ... is dizzy-looking, but safe enough." Image No. 4 is the only original Clutter image owned by the Society.

Nearly every bridge on every creek and river within Jackson County was lost that

During the floods of 1890, the torrent that was Bear Creek drew the curious and foolhardy to Medford's Main Street bridge for a closer look. On Feb. 3, the Clutter brothers were photographing the crowd on the bridge when it gave way. No lives were lost, but by the time they had taken image No. 3 (below) just moments later, part of the bridge had been swept away, along with E.W. Hammon's barn, just upstream of the bridge in photo No. 1.



SOHS #915



SOHS #914

week in 1890. By the end of February the flooding stopped, and enough snow had melted in the mountains to once again open the valley to the rest of the world. Frustrated southbound train passengers eagerly boarded trains. The Reverend Moses Williams walked to the Medford Post Office to pick up his share of more than a month's worth of recently delivered mail. By July 4, the bridge was repaired

and would remain in service until replaced by a steel bridge in 1902.<sup>4</sup>

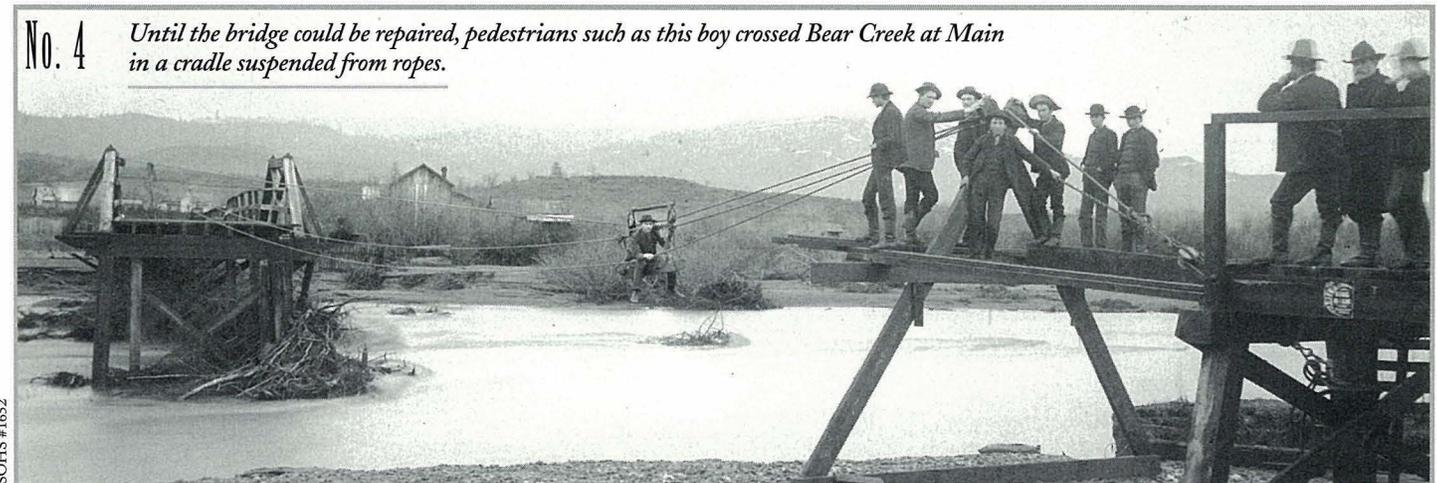
Old-timers grumbled that the flood of 1862 had been worse, and maybe that was true, but they had no evidence to support their claim. Survivors of the 1890 flood had photographs, and for them, this flood would always be "The Big One." 🏠

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

ENDNOTES

1. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 16 January 1890; 30 January 1890.
2. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 30 January 1890; 6 February 1890; 13 February 1890.
3. *Medford Daily Mail*, 8 February 1890; *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 13 February 1890.
4. MS 119, Diary of Moses Williams, Southern Oregon Historical Society Library; *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 4 July 1890.

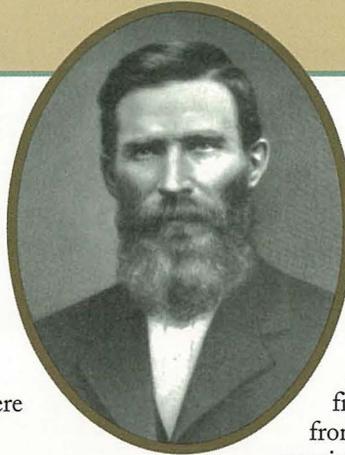
No. 4 *Until the bridge could be repaired, pedestrians such as this boy crossed Bear Creek at Main in a cradle suspended from ropes.*



SOHS #1652

# James D. Buckley

by Molly Kerr



**WHEN YOUNG JAMES D. BUCKLEY** emigrated from Ireland in 1852, he didn't realize his name would someday be a household word in Southern Oregon, or that the property he would eventually own near Ruch—adjacent to the Cantrall property—would one day become the popular Cantrall-Buckley Park, where picnickers flock to spread their blankets on the cool grass along the Applegate River.

Buckley was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1836. In 1852, the potato famine drove the family to America. Upon landing in New York, sixteen-year-old James and his older brother John got separated from the family. They followed a wagon train west to California in search of gold, then made their way on foot to Jacksonville, where they mined along Poorman's Creek and Jackass Creek.<sup>1</sup>

In 1863, John Buckley purchased a 160-acre Donation Land Claim taken up and then abandoned by Jacob Toffelmier. He bought the choice, river-bottom land from David L. Hopkins for \$3,000—probably with gold worth \$12 an ounce. James Buckley bought the 160-acre parcel adjoining his brother's land to the east. Patents were issued in 1872 and 1875, respectively.<sup>2</sup> They farmed together on the prime parcels extending from the river to the hills above Upper Applegate Road until John married Mary Billups in 1873 and turned over his homestead to James. He purchased a 320-acre claim nearby.

In 1871, James Buckley married Margaret (Maggie) Riley, daughter of Irish immigrants. James and Maggie had seven children, six of whom lived to adulthood: Rose, John, James Thomas, Mary Catherine, David and George.<sup>3</sup>

According to James Buckley's grandson Lewis Buckley (son of James Thomas), "The first Buckley homestead burned down. In 1880, they built a new house called a box house with a wooden water tower behind. To my recollection, it was the first house in the area with water pumped inside and electric lights run by a generator with a one-cylinder engine that ran on kerosene. The house,

though in bad shape, was still standing last time I was out there."<sup>4</sup>

In 1907, James Buckley deeded the ranch to his wife Maggie. He died on October 30, 1908. Maggie's children helped her operate the ranch until her death on February 15, 1933. The land was divided among them.

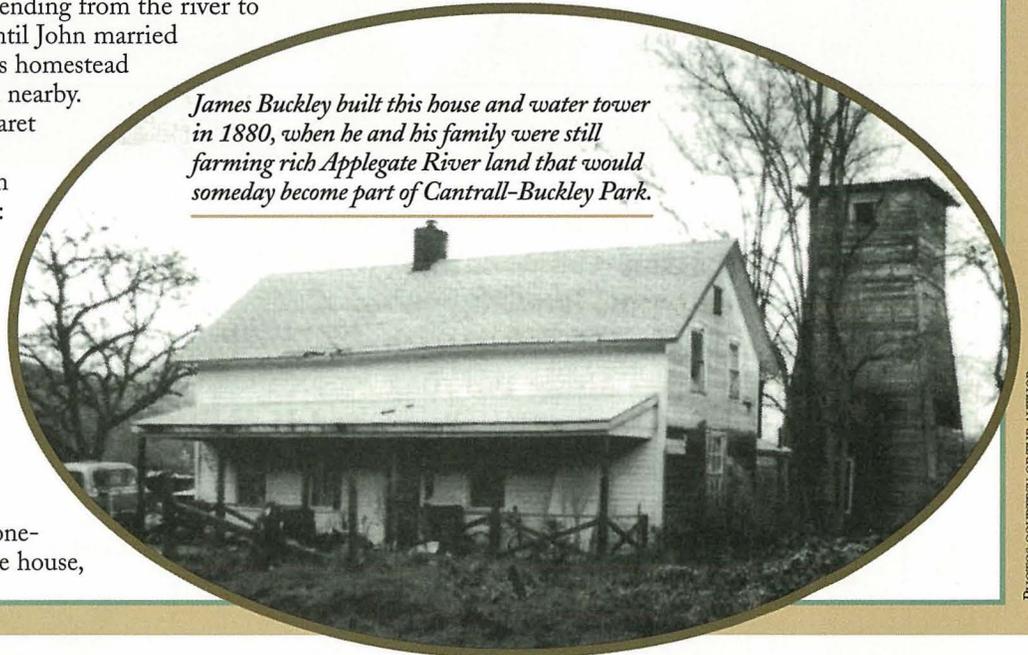
James Buckley's only surviving grandchild, Lewis Buckley, eventually inherited the entire ranch. In 1962 Jackson County purchased forty-five acres of riverfront from Harlan Cantrall and from Lewis Buckley for the park. Lewis farmed the remainder until 1973 then sold to Ray Offerd.

The Buckley pioneer spirit lives on in Lewis' children, Mary, Anna, and Jim, who is chairman of the Medford Parks Commission. 🏡

*Molly Kerr is a freelance writer and a Medford parks commissioner.*

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with Lewis Buckley of Creswell, grandson of James D. Buckley, 2 January 2002.
2. Ibid.
3. John and Marguerite Black, *Ruch and the Upper Applegate Valley* (Medford: Webb Research Group, 1989), p. 82.
4. Interview with Lewis Buckley.



*James Buckley built this house and water tower in 1880, when he and his family were still farming rich Applegate River land that would someday become part of Cantrall-Buckley Park.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



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