

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

August 2002 Vol. 4, No. 8

Today



BUTTONS AND BALLOON BOMBS





HISTORIC HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

BETWEEN CENTRAL POINT & JACKSONVILLE

Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays

through September 22

ADMISSION CHARGED • MEMBERS, CHILDREN 5 & UNDER
FREE • SENIOR DISCOUNT

Hanley Farm Summer Season 2002

Each weekend enjoy hands-on activities and engaging programs highlighting one of five different themes: Native American Lifeways, Pioneer Lifeways, Late 19th-Century Farm Life, Early 20th-Century Farm Life, and Old-Fashioned Holidays. House and garden tours are offered each day. Wagon tours of the farm are available on Saturdays and Sundays on Pioneer, Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century weekends. Bring a picnic and spend the day—there's plenty to see and do for families of all ages! And, you'll be able to buy fresh farm produce on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Hanley Farm Farmers' Market.

AUGUST 2, 3, & 4

Early 20th Century Farm Life

Members of the Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association, branch 141, will display tractors and provide tractor-pulled wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. The Rogue Valley A's (Model A Ford Car Club) will visit Saturday. A botany workshop for kids will be presented from 1 - 2 p.m. on Saturday. At the Hanley Farmers' Market, purchase fresh produce on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.!

AUGUST 9, 10, & 11

Pioneer Lifeways—Soap & Candles

The Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will provide horse-drawn wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. There will be woodworking demonstrations on Saturday from 1 - 4 p.m. Soapmaking, candlemaking, weaving, and spinning demonstrations will be featured on Saturday and Sunday. Fresh farm produce can be purchased between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Sunday at the Farmers' Market.



AUGUST 16, 17, & 18

Native American Lifeways—Tools

Tom Smith, cultural interpreter and member of the Southern Oregon Indian Center, will demonstrate traditional tool making and flintknapping. Explore the traditions and culture of the first peoples who lived here through hands-on activities and displays. Purchase fresh produce between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Farmers' Market.

AUGUST 23, 24, & 25

Late 19th Century Farm Life—Haying

You will have an opportunity to try your hand at embroidery with the Southern Oregon Stitchers, and discover how to quilt with the Mountain Star Quilters on Friday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will demonstrate the use of a turn-of-the-century hay-baling press and provide horse-drawn wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. There will be woodworking and blacksmith demonstrations on Saturday; weaving and spinning demonstrations on Sunday. "Make a New Buddy"—miniature horse Buddy and his owner will talk some horse sense to youngsters. Don't forget to purchase your fresh produce from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Farmers' Market!



AUGUST 30, 31, & SEPTEMBER 1 *Old-fashioned Labor Day Holiday*

Bring your family and friends and take advantage of reduced admission at Hanley Farm—only \$1 per person, ages 6 and up! Pack a picnic and take part in the festivities. The Old Time Fiddlers will provide foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes on both Saturday and Sunday from noon to 3 p.m. Have you ever tasted roasted corn? Everyone who sampled it last year can't wait to have another piece. The Hanley Farmers' Market will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for purchase of fresh produce.

HANLEY FARM BARN

& GARDEN LECTURE SERIES

AUGUST 2: *Tools & Techniques of Archaeology*

Amy Sobiek, BLM archaeologist, walks us through current practices and concerns of the profession.

AUGUST 9: *Wagon Trail Gardens—Pioneer Women & Victorian Ladies*

Mary Anne Bryne, Jacksonville resident, uses diary excerpts to explore the medicinal and decorative use of plants by trail travelers and early settlers.

AUGUST 16: *Native Traditions—Yesterday and Today*

Cultural interpreter Tom Smith believes, "you don't really know where you're going today unless you know where you came from." Utilizing tools he has re-created, he'll discuss the place of past traditions in the world of today.

AUGUST 23: *Closets, Cupboards & Correspondence*

Dark corners, hidden hallways, crammed cupboards and faded pages. If this piques your interest, join us for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the historic Hanley house.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY
Editorial Guidelines

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

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

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Today

FEATURE

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by Laura J. Gifford

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ON THE COVER

A nicely executed balloon motif makes this fine example of a nineteenth century button very collectable. The two examples above date from the early 1900s.



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Lawrence L. Powell

A PIONEER FOR ALL SEASONS

by Patricia Parish Kuhn

Lawrence L. Powell.

mid-1920s that, while trying to design a new banner head for the paper, his eyes rested on lovely Grizzly Peak beyond the football field; a grizzly bear theme would do just fine. It became the now-famous Ashland High School team name and mascot.⁵

Powell graduated from Ashland High in 1928, a one-year delay due to an accident. While riding his bicycle down Scenic Drive from the family home at 196 Nutley Street, a car backed out of a driveway, colliding with Powell's bicycle and breaking his leg. Extensive hospitalization and complications in the leg's healing nearly caused his death. His slow recovery set him back a year at school. However, while in the hospital, he met a visitor, Altadena Charlotte Spencer, granddaughter of a local homesteader. They married on August 10, 1929.⁶

After graduating in 1930 with his sister, Ruby, from Southern Oregon Normal School (now Southern Oregon University) and following the birth of a second daughter, he and his wife accepted teaching positions at Coos Bay, then called Marshfield, where Powell taught history for two years at Bunker Hill School. They later returned to Ashland to raise three daughters, Constance, Carol and Julia, who all attended Lincoln School.

Among the jobs he held at this time, he said he only lasted a few days with the Works Progress Administration, which was building the road to Mount Ashland.⁷

He began work for the postal service as a mail carrier in 1934. As World War II expanded to the Pacific Theater, Powell and his wife became local air raid wardens, as a part of the civil defense effort the government organized along the West Coast. Like so many other Americans during the war years, they planted a "victory garden" to supplement what they were able to purchase with their food and gasoline ration books.⁸

When Powell left his carrier route to become a postal clerk, he enjoyed

answering questions about Ashland while selling stamps. It was during this time his daughter, Julia, recalls, that he stepped into his role as historian. The friendships forged there remained with him all his life.⁹

An avid photographer, Powell developed an early love for silent films and often filmed his family with his 16mm camera. Practicing hymns from the Methodist hymnal, Powell learned to play the pump organ at home. He would play the organ for church services and it would not be long, his daughter recalls, before he turned to the theater organ for entertainment and modest profit.

"Local movie palaces were lucky to have a local lad eager to play exciting background music for otherwise silent films," she said.¹⁰

Powell's interest in projectors would lead him to take on a second job as projectionist for Ashland's local movie theaters, where he could continue into the 1960s. "I started (at the Varsity) during the war when there was a labor shortage and liked it so well, I stayed on," Powell recalled.¹¹

Powell also had a strong interest in natural history, and in the health of the local forest. In 1959, a wildfire swept over the eastern hills and down into the Ashland watershed. Powell, his wife, "Dena," and daughter, Julia, raced to Nutley Street to evacuate his parents and their possessions. Their house was spared with a shift of the wind. Julia recalls that before the ashes had cooled, her father was hiking up Strawberry Lane to survey the damage. It was then he began a voluntary thirty-year conservatorship of the mountain, she recalls.¹²

As soon as the blackened timbers had cooled, he was rolling them into position to support the road to prevent the decomposed granite from eventually flowing on down the hill into Ashland Creek. He collected cones from remaining trees and nurtured the seeds. Many of the evergreen trees now growing on either side of Strawberry Lane trail were planted, protected, and tended by Powell, the family remembers.¹³

In the early sixties Powell bought a 1950 Willys Jeep, with which he spent weekends exploring the nooks and crannies of Southern Oregon. Twice on his journeys, he found remains of incendiary balloons sent over the West

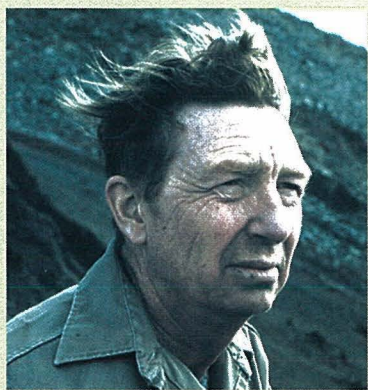


PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS KERR

WITH THE RECENT PASSING of Lawrence Leroy Powell, the community of Ashland lost a historian, a teacher, a hiker, and a friend. A modest man of eclectic interests, Powell's love of the outdoors and hiking was legend. "I've climbed all the peaks in this region. Even climbed Mount Shasta twice," he said.¹

There probably isn't a creek, hill, or valley in the area that Powell didn't explore.

Community-minded and dedicated to his family, Powell continued to contribute right up to his death on March 31, at age ninety-four. He credited his good health to a lifetime of walking, clean air, good food, and good genes. He was able to continue walking almost a mile a day until he was over ninety.²

Born to Benjamin L. and Julia Horning Powell on January 31, 1908, in Marlow, Oklahoma, Powell was four years old when the family journeyed west by train to Reno, Nevada; by narrow-gauge railroad as far as Alturas, California; and by horse-drawn stagecoach to Lakeview. His father, unable to find suitable land in Lakeview through the Homestead Act, bought a covered wagon and team and headed for the Rogue Valley by way of the Applegate Trail and the Greensprings Road to Ashland.³

Powell recalled that shortly after the family's arrival in the Rogue Valley, construction began on Lithia Park in 1914 on the former site of a flour mill, sawmill, planing mill, and electric light plant. Lithia water was bottled and promoted for its alleged healthful qualities, and many Ashland families in those days sold eggs, berries, and fruit to the Ashland Fruit & Produce Association, which then shipped the produce to Oakland, California.⁴

It was when Powell became editor of Ashland High School's newspaper in the



Lawrence Powell pauses by a rock outcrop on one of his many exploring trips into the remote corners of Southern Oregon, circa 1966. Powell often wore two hats when exploring so he had a spare if anyone with him needed one.

Coast by Japan during World War II. He located several campsites used by Chinese laborers during the building of the railroad tunnels through the Siskiyou. He tracked the wagon route up from the Coolest Valley over Mount Ashland's shoulder and down toward Emigrant Creek. The route has been subsequently posted to designate the trail.¹⁴

A practiced photographer, having learned his camera skills from his father, Powell took hundreds of images during his explorations to record when he was and found.⁴ Because of his focus on history, the camera, and his family, his descendants possess a ninety-year chronicle of his life in Ashland.

Retirement from the Postal Service in October 1969 allowed Powell to allot more time to his interests: Southern Oregon Normal School Alumni Association, Ashland High Alumni Association, Stamp Club, and the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

On December 31, 1982, his wife of fifty-three years died. He had helped her achieve one of her ambitions in 1973 to launch a quilt show, in part to benefit the

Swedenburg House by proving it was useful to the community and thus halting the college's plan to remodel or tear it down.¹⁵ In 1986, Powell married Ruth Zediker whom he met at the Post Card Club over her peanut butter cookies, which he said were the best he ever ate.

Shortly before his death on March 31, the First Methodist Church of Ashland was to celebrate Heritage Sunday. As the church's oldest member, Powell had planned to share a story about another of his early responsibilities: building the fire in the wood stove which was then the only source of heat in the church.¹⁶ But it would be his beloved family who would tell his story this time.

Powell's nephew, Thomas Kerr, says of his late uncle: "In all likelihood, he was the last pioneer to walk along the very last wagon train to come west. He was a remarkable man: a photographer, historian, genealogist, scholar, lifelong teacher, artist, and archaeologist to recount just a few of his pursuits and accomplishments. He was known as 'Mr. Ashland.'"

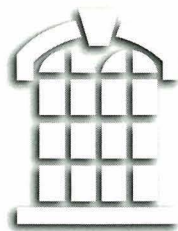
Powell never lost his sense of curiosity and kept his lifelong love of learning alive

to the very end. "Six months ago he called to ask me if he would benefit from purchasing a computer!" Kerr recalls.¹⁷ 🏠

Patricia Parish Kuhn is a freelance writer living in Medford.

ENDNOTES:

1. Author interview with Lawrence Powell, Ashland, 15 September 1999.
2. Memorial tribute given at Lawrence Powell's memorial service at the First Methodist Church, Ashland, 11 April 2002, compiled by Lawrence Powell's daughter, Julia Powell Woosnam, with contributions from his family. A copy of the memorial tribute provided by the Reverend Michael Powell, First Methodist Church of Ashland.
3. Author interview with Powell.
4. Ibid.
5. Memorial tribute.
6. Ibid.
7. *Ashland Daily Tidings*, 20 July 1999.
8. Memorial tribute.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Author interview with Powell.
12. Memorial tribute.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Author interview with Powell's nephew, Thomas Michael Kerr, Medford, 8 April 2002.



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in August



PROGRAMS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	<u>DATE & TIME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Toys to Remember; families; 25¢
Beekman Living History Program	Wed. - Sun., 1 - 5 p.m.	BEEKMAN HOUSE	Enter 1911: adults, \$3; ages 6-12 & seniors 65+, \$2; ages 5 & under and members, free
Hanley Farm	Fri., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.	1053 HANLEY ROAD, Central Point	Activities, programs; adults, \$5; ages 6-12 & seniors 65+, \$3; ages 5 & under and members, free

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

AUGUST CRAFT OF THE MONTH *Toys to Remember*

Create a Victorian Buzz Saw and learn how to make it buzz-z-z! Put together a Tumbling Acrobat and watch him tumble! Make a Thaumatrope and spin it to find out what an optical illusion is! Make one or all three of these traditional Victorian toys and enjoy hours of simple fun. Children's Museum.

BEEKMAN LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM

Step back in time to the year 1911 and enjoy a visit with costumed interpreters portraying Cornelius C. Beekman (Jacksonville's first banker), and other members of his family.

HISTORIC HANLEY FARM EVENTS

Enjoy hands-on activities and engaging programs highlighting one of five different themes. Tour the house and gardens. Take a wagon ride. Bring a picnic lunch! Purchase fresh farm produce on Sundays (11 a.m. - 3 p.m.) at the Hanley Farmers' Market.

AUGUST 2, 3, & 4:

Early 20th Century Farm Life

Members of the Early Days Gas Engine and Tractor Association will display tractors and provide tractor-pulled wagon tours of Hanley Farm on Saturday and Sunday. The

Rogue Valley A's (Model A Ford Car Club) will visit Saturday. A botany workshop for kids will be presented Saturday from 1 - 2 p.m.

AUGUST 9, 10, & 11: *Pioneer Lifeways—Soap and Candles*

On Saturday: woodworking demonstrations, 1 - 4 p.m. On Saturday and Sunday: soapmaking and candle making demonstrations; weaving and spinning; and the Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will provide horse-drawn wagon tours.

AUGUST 16, 17, & 18: *Native American Lifeways—Tools*

Tom Smith, cultural interpreter and member of Southern Oregon Indian Center, will demonstrate traditional toolmaking and flintknapping. Explore the traditions and culture of the first peoples who lived here through hands-on activities and displays.

AUGUST 23, 24, & 25: *Late 19th Century Farm Life—Haying*

Try your hand at embroidery with the Southern Oregon Stitchers and discover how to quilt with the Mountain Star Quilters on Friday from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will demonstrate use of a turn-of-the-century hay-baling press and provide horse-drawn wagon tours, Saturday and Sunday. Woodworking and blacksmith demonstrations on Saturday; weaving and spinning on Sunday.

AUGUST 30, 31, & SEPTEMBER 1:

Old-Fashioned Labor Day Holiday

Bring your family and friends and take advantage of reduced admission—only \$1 per person, age 6 and up! Pack a picnic and take part in the festivities. The Old Time Fiddlers will provide foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes on both Saturday and Sunday from noon - 3 p.m. Ever tasted roasted corn? Everyone who sampled it last year can't wait to have another piece!

HANLEY BARN & GARDEN LECTURE SERIES

Free with admission. Fridays, 2 - 3 p.m. Preregister by calling (541) 773-6536.

AUGUST 2 • *Tools & Techniques of Archaeology*

AUGUST 9 • *Wagon Trail Gardens—Pioneer Women & Victorian Ladies*

AUGUST 16 • *Native Traditions—Yesterday and Today*

AUGUST 23 • *Closets, Cupboards & Correspondence*

Hanley Farm Youth Programming for ages 3-6 provides storytelling for one-half hour at 1 p.m. each Friday.

Children in the Garden: August 3 Workshop, ages 7-11, 1 - 2 p.m. Free with admission; participants must **preregister by calling (541) 773-6536**.

Master Gardener Claire White presents botany for children. Explore the Hanley gardens and learn a lot about plants!

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

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
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 Southwest—Art & History Crater Lake: Picture Perfect	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.
Black/White and Sometimes Gray	3RD STREET ARTISANS' STUDIO	Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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.

"HISTORY IN THE MAKING: JACKSON COUNTY MILESTONES"

Be sure to take in this exhibit of ten major milestones in Jackson County's history. An abundance of artifacts and photographs, from Chinese archaeological material to an early cellular telephone, tell the county's story. Not everything is behind glass—a working 1940s jukebox plays vintage automobile songs, and a DVD player reproduces historic film clips.

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 Southwest—Art & History*

Cultural history of local tribes and information on contemporary collecting issues. Objects from the Society's Southwest Native American collection highlight ancient Anasazi and historic Pueblo pottery. Textiles include two Navajo women's dresses, a Navajo Germantown blanket, and a Hopi/Pueblo "maiden's shawl."

CRATER LAKE: PICTURE PERFECT

A photographic essay celebrating the centennial year of the founding of Crater Lake National Park.



CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

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

BLACK/WHITE & SOMETIMES GRAY

Members of Rogue Valley Handweavers, Far Out Fibers and the Saturday Handweavers Guild will be demonstrating the traditional art forms of spinning and weaving. Black, white, and gray textiles will be on display.

HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:

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

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITES

PHONE: (541) 773-6536
unless listed otherwise

FAX: (541) 776-7994
E-MAIL: info@sohs.org
WEBSITE: sohs.org

HISTORY CENTER
106 N. Central, Medford
Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

RESEARCH LIBRARY
106 N. Central, Medford
Tues. - Fri., 1 to 5 p.m.

**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
Fri., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

C.C. BEEKMAN HOUSE
California & Laurelwood, Jacksonville
Wed. - Sun., 1 to 5 p.m.

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

JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

**THIRD STREET ARTISANS'
STUDIO**
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Sat., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

Terror on the Wind:

Southern Oregon's Tragic Connection to the Fu-Go project of World War II

by Laura J. Gifford

W o r l d WAR II

stimulated vast technological developments in the arsenals of both the Allied forces and the Axis powers. The Germans introduced military rocket technology with the V-1 and V-2 bombs they showered upon Britain. The United States demonstrated the awesome destructive power of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan, too, experimented with a variety of new technologies. One of these developments would prove deadly to six people from the small Southern Oregon town of Bly.

This development, called the Fu-Go Project, was one of the more innovative programs the Japanese military developed during World War II. Japanese meteorologists knew more about the jet stream, a river of air currents high in the atmosphere, than scientists elsewhere in the world.¹ Late in the war, as the tide of battle shifted against Japan, the Japanese government decided to use this knowledge to its advantage. Japanese military engineers developed unmanned, non-motorized, hydrogen air balloons, designed to carry up to five high-explosive and incendiary bombs.²

The Fu-Go balloons (one translation of Fu-Go is “windship weapon”) were constructed out of washi, a traditional Japanese paper glued together with potato paste and mass-produced by Japanese schoolgirls working in abysmal conditions.³ Six thousand of these balloons were set aloft in the upper atmosphere from launching sites east of the island of Honshu,⁴ floating across the Pacific in approximately sixty hours.⁵ The balloons were intended to serve several purposes, including diverting soldiers and resources, destroying U.S. and Canadian timber stands, and damaging American morale.⁶ The Japanese government reasoned that these silent, invisible tools of destruction would unnerve and demoralize the American populace—while burning down the precious timberlands of the American West. The first balloons were launched November 3, 1944, and within two days a U.S. Navy patrol boat spotted one floating on the water sixty-six miles southwest of San Pedro, California.⁷

In the end this program proved ineffective. Although balloons were sighted as far inland as Michigan, only 285 total sightings were recorded—and, in fact, these sightings themselves signaled a failure.⁸ The intent of the Japanese engineers who built the bombs was that they would never be detected or seen; they were designed to self-destruct upon dropping their payloads, instilling an additional sense of fear and uncertainty in American mainland citizens faced with an invisible assailant.⁹ Of the bombs that did reach the mainland, all failed to generate major fires. Japan erred in beginning the attacks during the winter months. While the jet stream was most active during the winter, most western forestlands were covered in snow or soggy with rain.¹⁰

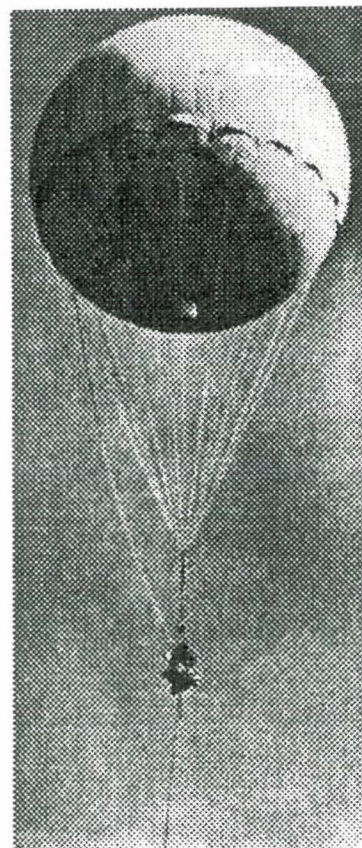
In addition, Japan relied exclusively on Western news reports and intelligence interceptions to verify that the balloons had accomplished their goal. After the first balloons were sighted, however, the U.S. government, with the cooperation of the news media, adopted a policy of strict silence.¹¹ From January 4, 1945, until May 22 of the same year, no mention of the bombs’ existence made it into American media sources,¹² although officials did deliver scattered word-of-mouth warnings to schools and churches throughout the West, telling people to leave strange objects found anywhere alone.¹³ Largely because of this news blackout, the Japanese government halted the program in April 1945,

The Japanese military set 6,000 of these air balloons aloft in the jet stream above the Pacific Ocean beginning in November 1944. Loaded with up to five high-explosive and incendiary bombs, the balloons were intended to spark forest fires throughout the North American West.

convinced that few, if any, balloons made it to the mainland. American bombing runs had destroyed the majority of Japan’s hydrogen supply by this time, and there was no point in continuing a failing project that relied so heavily on this scarce resource.¹⁴

The balloon bomb attacks did divert some American troops. The military took an active role in combating the threat of these balloons. Army Air Force and Navy fighters flew intercept missions to shoot down balloons when sighted, and Army Air Force and Army personnel were stationed at critical points along the West Coast to fight fires, should any have occurred. Also, the government transferred supplies of decontamination chemicals and sprays to counter the possibility of germ warfare via balloons,¹⁵ and state health officers, veterinarians, agricultural agents, and 4-H clubs were mobilized in the event of a biological attack.¹⁶ But the attacks failed to draw forces away from battles in the Pacific, and the very fact that U.S. military planes sighted and shot down balloons further indicates just how thoroughly the idea of an invisible attack failed.

Despite the ultimate failure of the Fu-Go Project, however, this program did kill six civilians—the only war-related deaths reported on the mainland during World War II that were enemy-inflicted. On May 5, 1945, Pastor Archie Mitchell took his pregnant wife and five Sunday school children to nearby Gearhart Mountain to go fishing. Mitchell, and his wife, Elyse, had moved to Bly recently to accept a call as pastor of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church. While Mitchell parked the car and retrieved the group’s picnic lunch, the children and Elyse explored the area. Finding something interesting in the bushes, the group shouted over to Mitchell. Mitchell sensed danger and ran toward them, telling them to get away from whatever it was that they had found. At that moment, however, their object of interest exploded, killing his wife and the five children: Jay Gifford, 13; Edward Engen, 13; siblings Dick and Joan Patzke, 14 and 13; and Sherman Shoemaker, 11. They had happened upon a balloon bomb that failed to drop



COURTESY OF THE WELSH FAMILY

“At that moment, however, their object of interest exploded, killing his wife and the five children.”

its payload before landing.¹⁷ While only one of the bombs attached to the balloon exploded, leaving incendiary bombs and the demolition block damaged but intact,¹⁸ the force of the blast left a crater six feet in diameter and two feet deep.¹⁹

Three Forest Service employees, Richard Barnhouse, George Donathan, and John Peterson, were working nearby. They heard the explosion and responded to the scene. "There was a loud explosion. Twigs flew through the air. Pine needles began to fall. Dead branches and dust and dead logs went up," Barnhouse recalled to *Oregonian* reporters in 1995.²⁰ The men immediately sent word to Lake County Sheriff H. A. Casiday.²¹ Casiday notified Fort Lewis, the regional Army command center, and six officials were sent by air to nearby Lakeview.²² "When we phoned the Army they barked, 'Don't touch anything! We'll be right there,'" Forest Service ranger Herb Hadley remembered in a 1971 *Oregon Journal* article.²³ Meanwhile, two naval officials from the Naval Air Station at Lakeview were sent to the scene, including a bomb disposal officer.²⁴ The disposal officer deactivated the remaining live bombs, and military personnel collected the debris.²⁵ The officer, Lieutenant H. P. Scott, later recalled that the bomb had been grounded for quite some time; several of the mechanism's parts were rusted, the paper of the bag was mildewed, and between six and eight inches of snow remained below the bag in an otherwise snow-free area.²⁶

Meanwhile, however, the victims' hometown neighbors had no idea what had prompted this sudden influx of servicemen to tiny Bly, and why the picnickers had failed to return. About forty-five minutes after the group departed for the mountain, a Forest Service ranger arrived at Bly's telephone system office, where sixteen-year-old Cora Conner was working the switchboard. The ranger locked himself and Conner inside the room, and proceeded to notify authorities of the explosion. While Conner knew what had happened, she was prevented from telling others because of the blackout on balloon bomb-related news.²⁷

On the fiftieth anniversary of the explosion, Ed Patzke, brother to two of the victims, told the *Klamath Falls Herald and News* that the family knew there was something wrong when the group did not return, and the streets of Bly filled with military and law enforcement officials and vehicles. The families were not told what had happened, however, until nine o'clock that evening.²⁸ At that time, Forest Service ranger F. H. Armstrong,

*"There was a
loud explosion.
Twigs flew
through the
air. Pine
needles began
to fall. Dead
branches and
dust and dead
logs went up"*



Opposite, the Gearhart Mountain deaths were Page 1 news in the Klamath Falls Herald and News of May 7, 1945. The accident happened on a Saturday, and was first reported in Monday's Herald and News, but the cause of the tragedy was listed as "unannounced" in keeping with the government's policy of secrecy surrounding the Japanese balloon-bomb program.

Army Lieutenant Colonel C. F. Bisenius, Sheriff Casiday, Lake County District Attorney Tom Ferrell, and Forest Service employee Herb Hadley made the rounds of victims' homes, informing their families of the tragedy.²⁹

While the families received full disclosure, public statements about the deaths remained subject to news blackouts imposed by the U.S. censorship office. This silence extended even to official records; in his May 7 coroner's report, Lake County Coroner James Ousley wrote, "The cause of death, in my opinion, was from an explosion from an undetermined source."³⁰ Participants in a May 6 conference held at the forest supervisor's office in Lakeview determined that Forest Service officials would say the cause of the deaths was an explosion of undetermined nature, and would maintain that they were not at liberty to disclose any further information.³¹

At the time of the incident, nothing was mentioned in either of Portland's major newspapers. Publications closer to the actual site of the explosion, however, were not able to ignore it; when seven people go on a fishing trip and only one returns, the residents of a sparsely-populated area will certainly notice. As the only daily newspaper in the region, the *Herald and News* was the first to mention the incident. While the dominant feature of the paper's front page on May 7 was, understandably, "Germans Surrender: Nazis Give Up Unconditionally," the second-largest headline on the page read "Blast Kills Six." "Five children and a minister's wife, all residents of Bly, were killed instantly by an explosion of unannounced cause while on a fishing trip in the Gearhart Mountain area," the paper reported.³² The article goes so far as to state that "One of the members of the party found an object, others went to investigate, and the blast followed," but in keeping with the news blackout, the identity of the object was not revealed.³³ On May 10, the *Lake County Examiner* also went no farther than to cite "an explosion of unannounced cause."³⁴

However, the balloon bomb explosion in Bly caused the federal government to seriously question its nondisclosure policy. Finally, it determined that more information was necessary to ensure the public safety in the future. The Navy and War departments issued a joint statement May 22, acknowledging the bombs' presence and providing the public with information on how to identify and avoid them.³⁵ Newspaper coverage of the Bly

tragedy, however, remained elusive. In the May 22 edition of the *Oregon Journal*, the civilian casualties were not mentioned, and in fact, the paper's coverage was dismissive of the balloons' threat. *Journal* editors gave the military substantial credit for acting proactively when, in reality, the statement was a reactive one:

The armed services said they took the position that the possibility of saving even one American life through precautionary measures would more than offset any military gain which the enemy might make

from the mere knowledge that some of the balloons had arrived on this side of the Pacific.³⁶

The *Journal* did report that editors and broadcasters had been urged to continue working with the censorship office when covering stories related to balloon bombs.³⁷ It seems safe to speculate that the Bly deaths were a detail the papers had been instructed to continue to omit. The article concluded, "in case the balloons cause a casualty, the statement said it will serve the national interest if the press and radio and all civilians

refrain 'from connecting such casualty with enemy action.'"³⁸

The *Oregonian's* coverage of the joint statement, in its May 23 edition, was similar. The paper included an excerpt from the statement reading, "it is desirable that people, and especially children, living west of the Mississippi River, be warned of this possible hazard and cautioned under no circumstances to touch or approach any unfamiliar object."³⁹ No doubt the memory of the Bly incident was prominent in officials' thinking when this particular portion of the statement was drafted. The *Oregonian*

Herald and News

In The Shasta - Cascade Wonderland

CENTS

KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON, MONDAY, MAY 7, 1945

Number 10459

BLAST KILLS 6

Page 1, November 11, 1918

's News

ANK JENKINS

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the news on the fly, waiting for the first word Kennedy, an ex- and responsible AP not his office in Lon- phone, told what had and added: "That's

FIVE CHILDREN, PASTOR'S WIFE IN EXPLOSION

Fishing Jaunt Proves Fatal To Bly Residents

Five children and a minister's wife, all residents of Bly, were killed instantly by an explosion of unannounced cause while on a fishing trip in the Gearhart mountain area just inside Lake county and about 65 miles from Klamath Falls.

One of the members of the party found an object, others went to investigate, and the blast followed.

Killed

The dead: Mrs. Elsie Mitchell, wife of Rev. Archie Mitchell of Bly, who was the lone survivor of the in-

The Evening Herald

WAR IS OVER

COMPLETE VICTORY FOR THE ALLIED ARMIES

TERMINAL CONFLICT THE UNBROKEN AMERICAN DRAFT THE HONOR OF THE ALLIED ARMS WAS STAYED TODAY THE HONOR OF THE ALLIED ARMS CALLS SUSPENDED THE HONOR OF THE ALLIED ARMS VANISHED

Lake County Examiner

Official Paper for Lake County

COMBINED WITH LAKE COUNTY TRIBUNE

Lakeview's Leading Newspaper Since

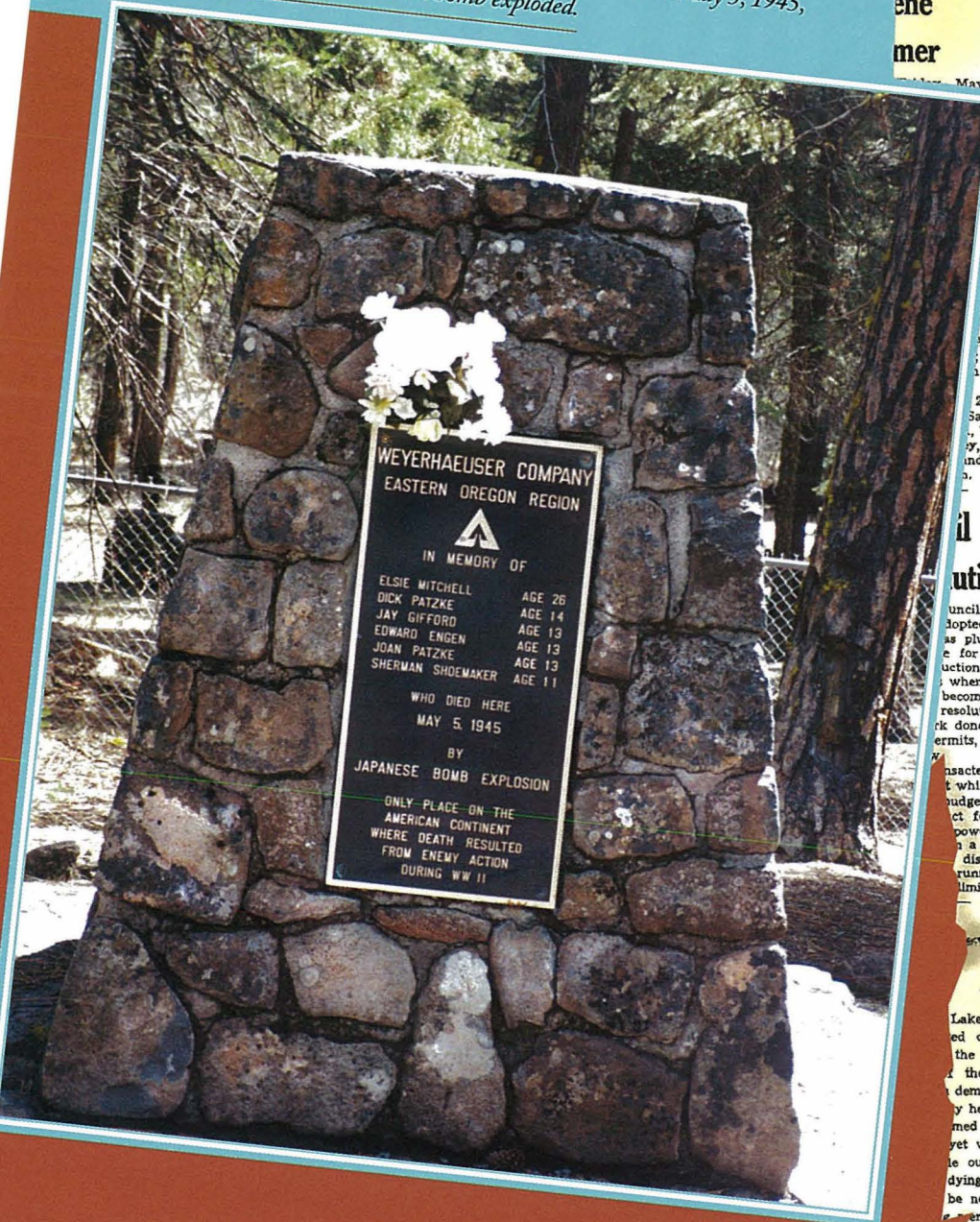
V — NO. 22

LAKE COUNTY EXAMINER AND LAKE COUNTY TRIBUNE

Thursday, May 11, 1945

County 7th War Loan to

This rock monument at the Mitchell Recreation Area on Bureau of Land Management land on the south edge of Gearhart Mountain memorializes the young minister's wife and the five children who died here on May 5, 1945, when a Japanese wartime balloon bomb exploded.



schools
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mer

Five Families Bereft When Explosion Occurs

County Court To Attend Meet May 16

County Judge J. R. Heckman and county commissioners, P. W. Hofchiss and B. C. Robinson, will attend the Associated Counties meeting to be held in Prineville on May 16.

Other county court members in attendance will come from Deschutes, Klamath, Crook, Harney and Jefferson counties.

Special June 22 Election

The measure to be voted on June 22 to earmark \$10 million excess income tax money for the state building fund will be systematically presented to voters by a state wide citizens committee, as indicated by the appointment of six men in various parts of the state to carry on the work started by the fathers organizations of the state university and colleges.

The urgency of this measure can be scaled by the importance of providing educational opportunities for boys as they return from the army," Will Henry said. "If only 10 per cent of Oregon's enlisted boys and girls desire to go to college after being mustered out, the present classroom facilities will be utterly incapable of handling the enrollment. If there is one thing we owe our boys and girls it is opportunity to obtain a higher education in preparation for the years to come."

Lake Makes Good Showing On 7th War Loan Quota

During the first three weeks, April 9 thru April 30, of the payroll savings plans of the Seventh War Loan drive, Lake county placed seventh in the state in the percentage of its E bond quota sold and 18th in the percentage of all bonds sold.

In the above period \$25,074 in E bonds had been purchased representing 92 per cent of its E bond quota, while the state stood at 11.4 percent of its quota. Individual purchases including E bonds totaled \$30,074 or 8.4 per cent of its quota while the state stood at 9 per cent. Corporation purchases were \$519 or 0.5 per cent against the state's 2.5 per cent.

Total sales of all types of bonds were \$30,593 or 6.6 per cent of the county quota while

Jay, Son of Mr. and Mrs. N. L. Gifford Is Victim

An explosion of an unannounced cause brought tragedy Saturday to five families of Bly when six people were killed. One of the families, Mr. and Mrs. Nick Gifford, who lost their only son and child, Jay, had lived in Lakeview for about five years previous to moving to Bly last June. Another family, the Einar Engen's, who also lost their only child, lived in Lakeview when their son, Eddie, was born. Others killed on the fishing trip in the Gearhart mountain area just inside Lake county were Mrs. Elsie Mitchell, 26; Sherman Menno Shoemaker, 11; Ethel Joan Patzke 13, and Dick Joe Patzke, 14, all of Bly. The only one in the party who was not killed was Rev. Archie Mitchell, who was about 40 feet away from the others when the explosion occurred.

Funeral services for Jay Verle Gifford were held here at the Presbyterian church Wednesday afternoon with Rev. Eugene Nel-officiating. Burial and graveside services will take place in Medford today.

He was born at Ashland March 29, 1932 and was 13 years old. Jay participated in school and youth activities during his five years here, and after moving to Bly he was Scribe in the Bly Boy Scout troop and president of his class.

Funeral services for the other four youths were held Wednesday at Wards Funeral Home in Klamath Falls with Rev. Daniel B. Anderson officiating. Burial for all took place in Linkville cemetery with the exception of one body.

Edward Engen was born in Lakeview 13 years ago and besides his parents he is survived by a grandmother, Mrs. Amelia Morken of Klamath Falls.

Sherman Shoemaker was born at Lemon Cove, Calif. He leaves two brothers, Cpl. Fredis Lee of USA air corps in Germany, and Merlin of Bly; three sisters, Mrs. Warren Morrison, Rosburg, Mr. Wayne Britton and Francis Shoemaker of Bly; his grandparents Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Frasier Dorris.

Dick Joe Patzke and Ed Joan, were both born at Lakeview, Minn., and survivors include the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Patzke; four brothers, ward of Bly; Lt. Albert F. USA air corps; T-Sgt. Jack O. army, a prisoner in Germany, PFC Pat J. of the US arm Germany; four sisters, Mrs. F. McGinnis, Mrs. James Boyd, and Joyce, all of Bly.

The only known survivor

article went on to report, "the departmental announcement made no mention of casualties caused by the bombs."⁴⁰ On May 24, the *Oregonian* editorialized on the balloon bombings, using the issue as an excuse to ridicule the Japanese and labeling the Fu-Go Project as even more ridiculous and futile than the Germans' liberal use of V-1 and V-2 rockets in the closing days of the European war:

The more they [the Japanese] attempt to embarrass America by such means, the less they will have with which to resist the fate which is being prepared for them only a few miles distant. They are shooting away their resources over the heads of our forces in a manner that makes the German stupidity almost smart.⁴¹

Evidently, disclosure of the balloon bombs' presence failed to assuage the guilt of some government officials over the fate of the Bly six. On May 31, the Western Defense Command issued a statement containing the following information:

You are being informed about these balloons because they are dangerous. Six persons have been killed. You are now in on the secret. ... Do not be unduly alarmed. Let us all shoulder this very minor load in a way such that our fighting soldiers at the front will be proud of us.⁴²

June 1, the *Lake County Examiner* was finally free to report on the details of the tragedy. The War Department, it reported, "told what has been known to Lake county [sic] for some

The weekly Lake County Examiner also played the story of the Gearhart Mountain deaths on the front page of the May 10, 1945, issue. Again, the cause of the explosion was reported as "unannounced." It was not until June 1 that the paper was free to report the real cause of the tragedy, following a change in the government's secrecy policy.

time"—namely, that the blast was caused by a balloon bomb.⁴³ The *Examiner* also reported that Mitchell was the only one of the party who had heard about balloon bombs at the time of the explosion.⁴⁴ Ostensibly, he had come into contact with someone willing to share information with him as a community leader, but had not had the opportunity or felt at liberty to discuss the bombs' presence with others.

By 1948, the U.S. government realized that while its policy of silence contributed to the end of the balloon bomb campaign, it had also played at least a partial role in the six deaths.

The House Judiciary Committee ruled that military authorities were negligent in failing to warn the public about the attacks, and Congress awarded a total of \$20,000 to survivors of the victims. However, later statements by Japanese military officials confirm the U.S. government's initial suspicion that silence was the best policy for ending the Fu-Go Project, despite the Bly tragedy. In 1976, Sakyo Adachi, who designed radio equipment proving the viability of the balloon bombs, stated that if the Japanese government had known that even one life had been lost, another 10,000 balloons would have been launched.

In recent years, the victims of the balloon bomb have been memorialized in a number of ways. A monument to the six people killed stands at the site where the bomb exploded, and in 1996, a group of Japanese women who helped make the paper for the balloon bombs visited the site to offer their condolences. Remarkably, the women did not learn what the paper they had produced was used for until forty years after the war had ended. The surrounding wilderness is now a Forest Service park called the Mitchell Recreation Area. As mentioned previously, memorial observances were held on the fiftieth anniversary of the event and received extensive coverage in local newspapers. Now that the residents of Bly have the freedom to discuss this tragedy, they are determined to preserve the memory of the first—and last—mainland civilian casualties of World War II. 🏠

Laura J. Gifford is a student in the Ph.D. program at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her grandparents, Ed and Joye Ritchie of Klamath Falls, are longtime Southern Oregon residents.

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Collecting Antique Buttons

by Mary Ames Sheret

ANTIQUE BUTTONS APPEAL to collectors interested in art and history. Like fine jewelry, buttons are works of beauty fashioned on the smallest palette with paint, enamel, metal, glass, porcelain, fabric, shell or plastic. Button designs, uses, and manufacture provide insights into how people once dressed and worked. And some buttons commemorate historical events while others are collected to study military history.

Members of the Southern Oregon Button Club (SOBC) have been cataloging the Society's large button collection for months. In order to organize and display the collection, the buttons are mounted on card stock. The members help each other with identifications and refer to the "Big Book of Buttons," written by Elizabeth Hughes and Marion Lester for details.

Shown are metal picture buttons that became fashionable in the late 1800s. It is one of the most popular button collecting categories. Brass, tin, or steel buttons were stamped with a multitude of designs including people, animals, birds, flowers, buildings, sports and pastimes, and familiar scenes from plays, fables, and nursery rhymes. The hot air balloon button is especially fine. The steel cup has a pearl background and the balloon is embellished with cut steels.

The Southern Oregon Button Club members have some tips for new button collectors: leave the shanks attached; sort by date, material, category, or color; learn how to properly clean and store each type of button. For more information, log on to <http://www.buttonimages.com> or contact the Southern Oregon Button Club. It meets at noon on the first Thursday of each month at the Lions Sight and Hearing Center, 228 N. Holly Street, Medford. 🏠



Debby Gros and Irene Schleis of the Southern Oregon Button Club work on cataloging the specimens in the Southern Oregon Historical Society's large collection.



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



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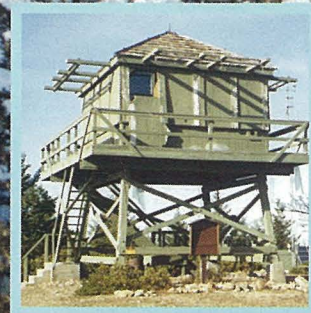
Please call Membership Coordinator Susan Smith at (541)773-6536 for a brochure on the museums participating in this program.



Leave a Legacy of Southern Oregon is a community-wide program established to create public awareness and to promote interest in charitable giving through a will or from an estate. The Southern Oregon Historical Society is participating in **Leave a Legacy**. Mary Hanley bequeathed Hanley Farm to the Society in 1982, thereby leaving a historic legacy for Southern Oregon residents and visitors who can now experience the farm's rich history.

Onion Mountain Lookout

by Loren Pryor



A VISIT TO ONION MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

A in the Siskiyou National Forest is an opportunity to get a panoramic view of much of Southern Oregon. The drive through the tall pine, fir, and madrone trees is spectacular in itself. It can be a day trip, or you can spend a few nights.

Around 1910, the first fire lookouts were constructed in the Pacific Northwest. These lookouts were tall trees with a few limbs removed and a four-foot by four-foot covered wooden platform scabbed together in the treetop.¹ Peavine Mountain Lookout was more than 100 feet above ground and access was by a ladder nailed to the tree.² The firewatcher was also expected to climb down and put out any fires in his area.

The first lookout on Onion Mountain, built in 1915, was a twelve-foot by twelve-foot cabin perched atop a twenty-foot platform tower. It was replaced in 1924 with another building the same size, on a six-foot-high log platform. It had a glassed-in second-story observation cupola in the center. The present structure was built in 1952 from a pre-fabricated kit.³

Former lookout Wayne Cox of Central Point described the kit as rudimentary. "It was really just a pile of lumber," he recalled.

But that pile of lumber turned into a "new" lookout on a ten-foot platform just west of the old one, which Cox had manned the year before. It took all summer to build. When Cox returned the next summer it was part of his job to paint the interior of the new building, as well as scan the surrounding forest day and night for any sign of fire.⁴

The lookout contained a platform bed, table, chair, cabinet, and pedestal on which an Osbourne Firefinder was mounted. The firefinder was accurate in pinning down a fire's direction and distance. A dispatcher then checked with other lookouts by radio and, using triangulation, pinpointed the exact location of the fire so that a crew could be sent in.⁵ The firewatcher did not have to respond, or climb down a 100-foot ladder!

Sandy Foster of Grants Pass was a firewatcher from 1985 to 1993, the last year the Onion Mountain Lookout was manned.⁶ Since 1993, remote weather stations in the area have been used to detect lightning strikes. A computer maps these strikes to help

pinpoint any fire. If a fire is close to the station, it will be manned.⁷

Foster and Cox both said that star-gazing from atop the 4,438-foot peak is awesome. Bring your telescope, or at least binoculars, to take in the sparkling beauty of the night sky far away from the city lights. You may even find yourself enjoying the quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of a busy life, and discovering the real meaning of the word ... "relax"! 🌲

Loren Pryor is a lifelong resident of the Rogue Valley and a Central Point freelance writer.

To reach Onion Mountain Lookout from Grants Pass, travel west on Redwood Highway 199, approximately 6.5 miles to River Banks Road and turn right. Proceed 5.5 miles to Shan Creek Road (a single-lane gravel road with turnouts); turn left. Drive eight miles to the top. At the intersection of Forest Road 2509, turn right and proceed to a three-fork intersection. Take the middle fork to a locked yellow gate. Day-trippers will have an easy hike the last 0.8 mile from the gate.

Overnight guests will be given a key when renting the lookout, so don't worry about carrying all your gear, food, and water up the hill. You will be able to drive right up to the lookout. Additional information is available by calling the Siskiyou National Forest at (541) 471-6500, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

ENDNOTES

1. "Nature of the Northwest," <<http://www.firelookout.com>> (2 April 2002).
2. Siskiyou National Forest photo No. 24716A.
3. <[http://www.naturenw.org/cabin info.htm](http://www.naturenw.org/cabin%20info.htm)> (2 April 2002).
4. Author interview with William Wayne Cox, Central Point, 6 April 2002; *Country Weekly*, Grants Pass, 13 June 2001.
5. Interview with Larry Cosby, Forest Service recreation planner, Siskiyou National Forest, 2 April 2002.
6. Author interview with Sandy Foster, Grants Pass, 6 April 2002.
7. Crosby interview.



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