

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

November 2002 Vol. 4 No. 11

Today

WHEN TELEPHONES
REACHED THE
ROGUE VALLEY

LOCAL CATSUP WAS THE
CAT'S MEOW

HOW THE FUTURE
LOOKED IN THE PAST





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♦Indicates two year membership.

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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 outlines 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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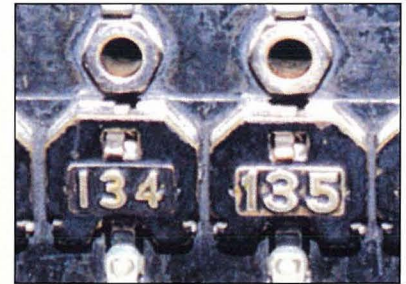
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SOHS POSTCARD COLLECTION

ON THE COVER

A young woman poses circa 1900 with one of the wonders of the age: the telephone. The first demonstration of the device in the Rogue Valley was in 1878.



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Lombardy Poplars: Clone on the Range

By Donn L. Todt and Nan Hannon

DONN L. TODT

BY MID-NOVEMBER, several wet Pacific fronts have spilled across the valleys and basins of Southern Oregon and Northern California, soaking surface soils and downshifting temperatures. After clear, frosty nights between storms, the slightest morning breeze sends spade-shaped golden leaves cascading down from tall poplar trees throughout the valley. While native poplars follow the sinuous courses of rivers and creeks, introduced Lombardy poplars often trace the straight lines and right angles of the surveyor's transit. Locally, the most obvious planting of these trees grows in a nearly mile-long row parallel to Interstate 5 between Talent and Ashland. Even the most road-weary traveler can't help but notice this imposing wall of trees. Those who have lived in the Rogue Valley for a while know the trees aren't old; they were planted about 1975.

Though this particular planting is recent, identical trees, with identical genetic material, have been planted widely throughout the West. Like leafy towers, they punctuate the horizons of the Far West.

The Lombardy poplar's place of origin isn't certain. It was probably selected about 1700 as an unusually upright tree growing near the river Po in the Lombardy region of Italy. The parent species, black poplar (*Populus nigra*), ranges from Western Europe into Central Asia. Since poplars may be easily grown from cuttings, the eye-catching upright form was eventually disseminated widely, colonizing, with the aid of its human vectors, much of the temperate world. All Lombardy poplars are planted since it is a male clone unable to reproduce from seed.¹

Initially, Lombardy poplars were planted

extensively along Europe's boulevards; the tree's upright form accentuated the architectural formality of newly designed landscapes. Lombardy poplars were introduced to America by 1784 and were frequently planted, as in Europe, along Eastern city streets.² Their use in urban areas was short-lived, however, as it became obvious that mature poplars are not well suited to heavily trafficked areas. During storms, limbs tended to come crashing down on the thoroughfares. By the late 1800s, Lombardy poplars, once common, had become rare in the urban plantings of the eastern United States.

While plantings of Lombardy poplar declined in the urban East, the tree flourished in the more open landscapes of the rural West. Western settlers desiring fast-growing trees to provide shelter and recall the greener landscapes left behind and held in memory planted the upright poplars near homesteads, farmhouses, and early ranches. They were especially planted by the well-organized and agriculturally oriented Mormon pioneers. In just a few years, Mormon villages could be readily identified from a distance by the narrow poplars that soon towered higher than the church spires. Historian and novelist Wallace Stegner suggested that the limits of the Mormon Zion could be effectively defined by mapping concentrations of Lombardy poplars.³

Rows of poplars not only divide the landscape into regular sections, they also break the force and drying capacity of the wind. They increase the effectiveness of irrigation in the oasis ranching economies of the windswept Great Basin. Likewise, in the Rhone valley of Southern France,

Lombardy poplars are planted closely in regular east-west rows to protect crops from the parching effects of the Mistral.

There has been a recent renaissance in the planting of Lombardy poplars in Southern Oregon, perhaps partly inspired by the imposing and impressive planting alongside the freeway. The tall columns of this historic clone will accent the seasons and landscapes of the Rogue Valley for years to come. 🌳

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

ENDNOTES

1. A few alternate genetic lines exist, as evidenced by a few female trees. Hui-lin, *The Origins and Cultivation of Shade and Ornamental Trees* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), pp. 51-53.
2. Christina D. Wood, "A Most Dangerous Tree: The Lombardy Poplar in Landscape Gardening," *Arnoldia*, 54:1, 1994, pp. 24-30.
3. Wallace Stegner, *Mormon Country* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1942), pp. 21-24.



DONN L. TODT

Rogue River Catsup

By William Alley



WHEN FRANK L. KNIGHT decided to expand his Portland-based pickle and vinegar packinghouse to include the manufacture of catsup, he spent two years studying the processes involved and seeking a suitable location. Ultimately Knight accepted the recommendations of the experts at Oregon Agricultural College in Corvallis and selected Medford as the location of his new catsup plant. "The Rogue River Valley," Knight was told, "produces a tomato that is particularly adapted to catsup manufacture." By locating his plant in Medford, Knight could turn the tomatoes into catsup within a few hours of their being picked; "That is a mighty important factor in making high grade catsup."¹

The Knight Packing Company opened its Medford plant on the south end of Front Street in the summer of 1916. Initial production capacity was estimated at fifteen tons of tomatoes per day, with room to expand to thirty tons in the future. By 1925, the plant was processing thirty-five tons of produce per day, the equivalent of 2,750 gallons of catsup.

After harvesting, Rogue Valley tomatoes were delivered to the plant, where they were washed in large tanks. They were then scooped onto a conveyor belt, passing by employees who trimmed



the tomatoes and removed any defective ones. The fruit was then washed again and steamed before being dropped into the chopper, which

separated the seeds and skin; the remaining pulp was then sent to large kettles where it was cooked with onions, garlic and spices. After cooking, vinegar, salt, and sugar were added to make the finished product. The catsup was then packed into five-gallon cans and shipped to Knight's Portland facility, where it was bottled in sixteen-ounce bottles.

Knight's Rogue River Catsup, the only catsup manufactured in Oregon, was an immediate success. At the end of the first eight years, the company could boast a 75 percent share of the Portland catsup market, and distribution had expanded to include parts of Washington, Idaho, and California. The company even went so far as to copyright the name "Rogue River" in connection with any tomato-based product.

The presence of the Knight catsup plant had an immediate impact locally. In addition to providing a significant payroll, the acreage devoted to commercial tomato cultivation soon increased. In 1924, the plant's production capacity was doubled to take advantage of the increased availability. The plant was again expanded in 1936 with the arrival of new, modernized equipment. No longer did the catsup need to be shipped in bulk to Portland for bottling. With the new equipment, the Knight Medford plant was now producing catsup at a rate of fifteen bottles per minute.

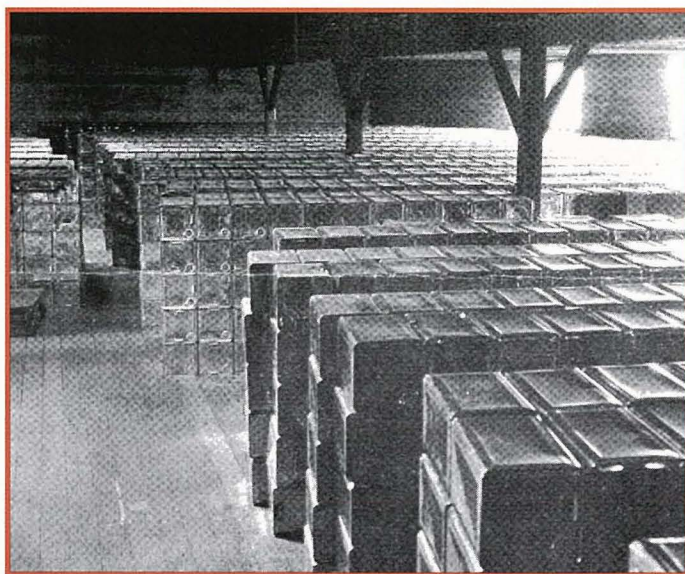
Knight's Rogue River Catsup flourished in Medford for twenty-five years, but the end came suddenly in the early 1940s. By 1942, the Knight Packing Company had disappeared from the local directories. The October 1925 issue of *The Volt*, the newsletter of the California-Oregon Power Company, now preserved in the collections of the Southern Oregon Historical Society, gives us a brief snapshot of a now-forgotten local industry. ■

William Alley is a historian and certified archivist.

ENDNOTE

1. *Medford Daily News*, 8 September 1929.

Below left, the circa-1916 Knight Packing Company Catsup plant, located on South Front Street in Medford's warehouse district, initially shipped catsup by rail to Portland in five-gallon cans for repackaging in bottles. Neatly stacked cans await shipment in the Knight warehouse, right. A story in the October 1925 issue of the California-Oregon Power Company magazine *Volt*, above, describes Medford's long-forgotten catsup industry.



MS #855



SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in November

PROGRAMS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	DATE & TIME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Corn Cob Critters; fee, 50¢
Fantastic Films of the Future	Sat., Nov. 23, 30, Dec. 7, 14, 21 and 28; see times below	HISTORY CENTER	Film Series for <i>Yesterday's Tomorrows</i> Exhibit

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

CRAFT OF THE MONTH

Corn Cob Critters

Create a corncob critter magnet to take home and decorate your refrigerator or use as a holiday placesetting. Or weave a basket using paper materials and local Native American twining techniques.

FILM SERIES FOR YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS EXHIBIT

The FREE films will begin at 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays, November 23 through December 28. During the week, the video *Yesterday's Tomorrows* will be shown during regular open hours at the **History Center**.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Film visions of the future.

Metropolis [1926] • 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

H.G. Wells' Things to Come [1936]

• 2:30 - 4:15 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Middletons at the 1939 World's Fair

• 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

To the Fair [1964] • 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Yesterday's Tomorrows • 2:30 - 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

Comedy.

Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times [1936]

• 12:30 - 2 p.m.

Buster Keaton's Electric House [1922]

short • 2 - 2:15 p.m.

Desk Set [1957, Tracy & Hepburn]

• 2:15 - 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 - Robots.

Day the Earth Stood Still [1951]

• 12:30 - 2 p.m.

Westworld [1973] • 2:30 - 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

TV science fiction.

Tom Corbett Space Cadet [1952]

• 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe,

Vol. 1 [1940] • 1:30 - 2:35 p.m.

Clips from Looney Toons- Marvin the Martian

Space Tunes • 2:20p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28

Science fiction.

H.G. Wells Time Machine [1960]

• 12:30 - 2:15 p.m.

Destination Moon [1950] • 2:30 - 4 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

• 7P.M. CRATERIAN THEATER

Free lecture presented by the Jackson County Human Rights Coalition. (A very short annual meeting will occur prior to the lecture).

THE KU KLUX KLAN IN OREGON: HISTORY AND PUBLIC MEMORY

A revived Ku Klux Klan played a significant role in Oregon history. Founded like its predecessor in the South, this second Klan spread rapidly throughout the country. Organizers enrolled members in Medford in early 1921. Thousands of Oregonians joined the Klan and its affiliated organizations, contributing to divisive social conflict as they burned crosses, marched in parades, and often dominated local politics.

Nearly every decade, people rediscover that Oregon had a Ku Klux Klan. What were its goals here? Who joined the Klan in Oregon? Why did it rise and decline so rapidly? Historian Eckard Toy uses slides, lecture, and discussion to examine the Klan's role in Oregon politics, illustrating how scholarly research, social myths, and stereotypes influence the public's memory of those events.

(Program made possible in part by the Oregon Council for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.)



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EXHIBITS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

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RESEARCH LIBRARY
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Tues. - Fri., 1 to 5 p.m.

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LOCATION HISTORY CENTER

Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions
of the American Future

Century of Photography: 1856-1956

The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z

History in the Making:
Jackson County Milestones

Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker

Politics of Culture: Collecting the Southwest

Crater Lake: Picture Perfect

Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM

MUSEUM HOURS
Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
and special Saturday hours

Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday, noon - 5 p.m.

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.

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS

The history of the future is explored in this Smithsonian traveling exhibit. Ray guns and plans for a nuclear powered car are part of *Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future* that opens November 23.

Popular culture objects such as toys, movie stills, and world's fair memorabilia are used to present past visions of what the future would be. Toy robots and early computers from local collectors and the Society collection supplement the exhibit.

On November 23, refreshments will help celebrate the opening, which also marks the debut of *Fantastic Films of the Future*, a weekly Saturday showing of early science fiction and futuristic films.

CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 1856-1956

Highlights the work of two area photographers, Peter Britt and James Verne Shangle. Britt's cameras and studio equipment are featured.

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*

In this recently added exhibit, view extraordinary examples of pottery and textiles from the American Southwest.

CRATER LAKE: PICTURE PERFECT

Can the majesty of Crater Lake be captured on film? In celebration of this national park's centennial, the Jacksonville Museum presents an exhibit of attempts to capture its essence. Peter Britt's first 1874 photo of Crater Lake marks the beginning of this exhibit. Other sections include early colorized photos, picture postcards, and park improvements. Of special interest is the most controversial Crater Lake image, believed by many as documentation of a visit by Theodore Roosevelt. Examples of how the Crater Lake name and image have been used to sell products ranging from butter to a hospital round out this exhibit.

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:

Nov. 5, noon to 2 p.m.

• Pinkston-Bartges House
426 B Street, ASHLAND

Nov. 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

• H.L. White House
321 E. Main Street, ASHLAND

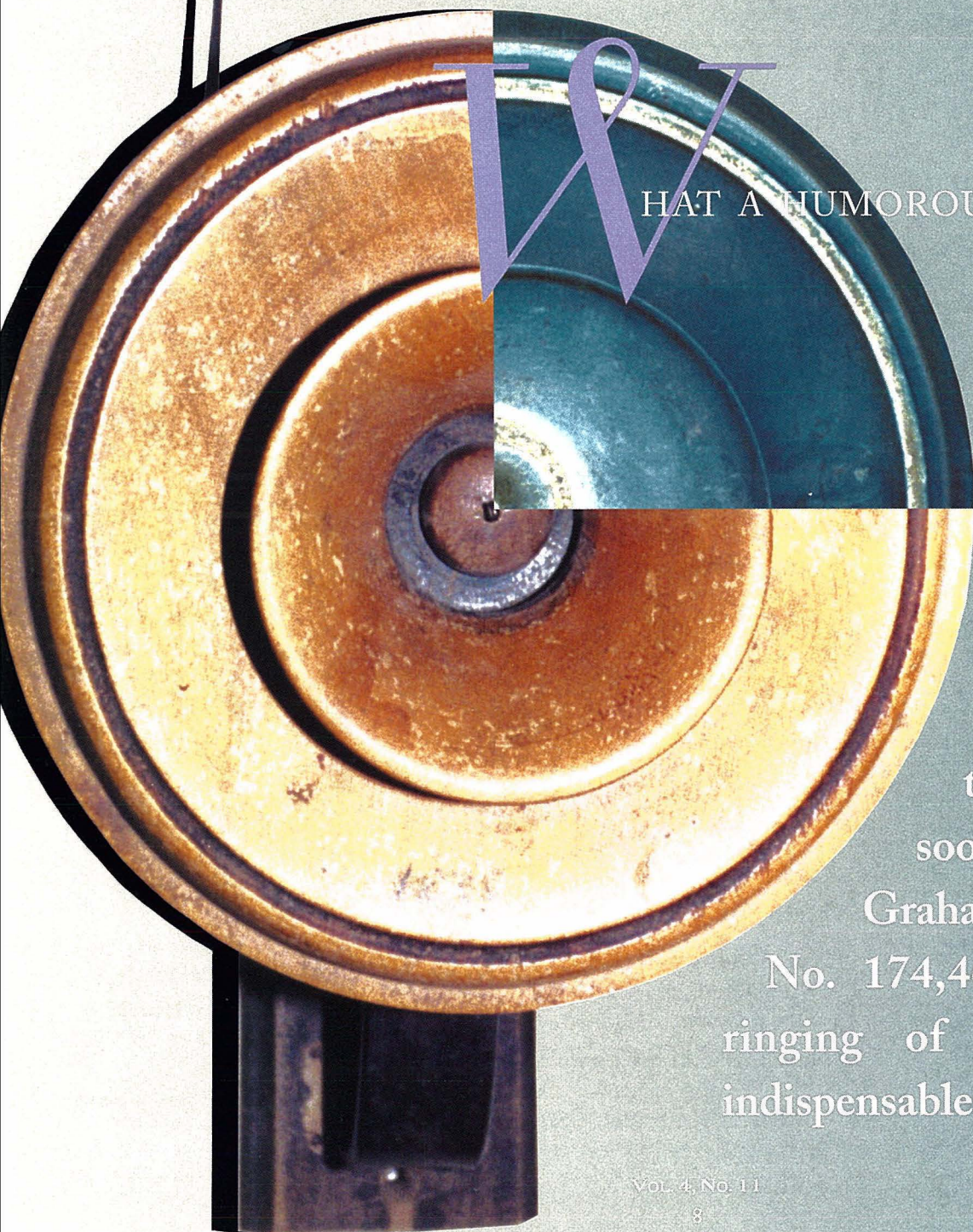
Nov. 26, 1 to 5 p.m.

- George Porter House
826 Minnesota, MEDFORD
- State Historic Preservation Office
prd.state.or.us - click on "publication"
PHONE: 503-378-4168
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Southern Oregon *"Hello's"* the World

By Bill Miller



WHAT A HUMOROUS COINCIDENCE

that a man named Bell is credited with inventing the telephone. It's almost as if someone named Click had invented the telegraph. But soon after Alexander Graham Bell filed patent No. 174,465 in 1876, the ringing of a bell became indispensable to the telephone

customer. Whether its tone was a tinkle or a jarring clang, the bell signaled a new era of communication. Starting in the eastern cities, neighbor to neighbor, a labyrinth of wires progressively engulfed the country. Those who had gone west, never again expecting to hear the voices of family left behind, must have been elated when those strands of metal and insulation finally arrived in their towns.

In the western metropolitan areas, where the profit potential was high, telephone service was established relatively soon, but in the many low-population areas of the Pacific Northwest, service was delayed for decades. Before the bell would ring for them, there were obstacles to surmount, and each community found different ways to meet the challenge. As unique as the experience of bringing a telephone system to the Rogue River Valley of Southern Oregon may be, in many ways it mirrors the experience of every small community in the country.

Eighteen years would pass before Jackson County residents finally took advantage of Bell's experiments and built a viable telephone system. The delay was not entirely of their own making.¹

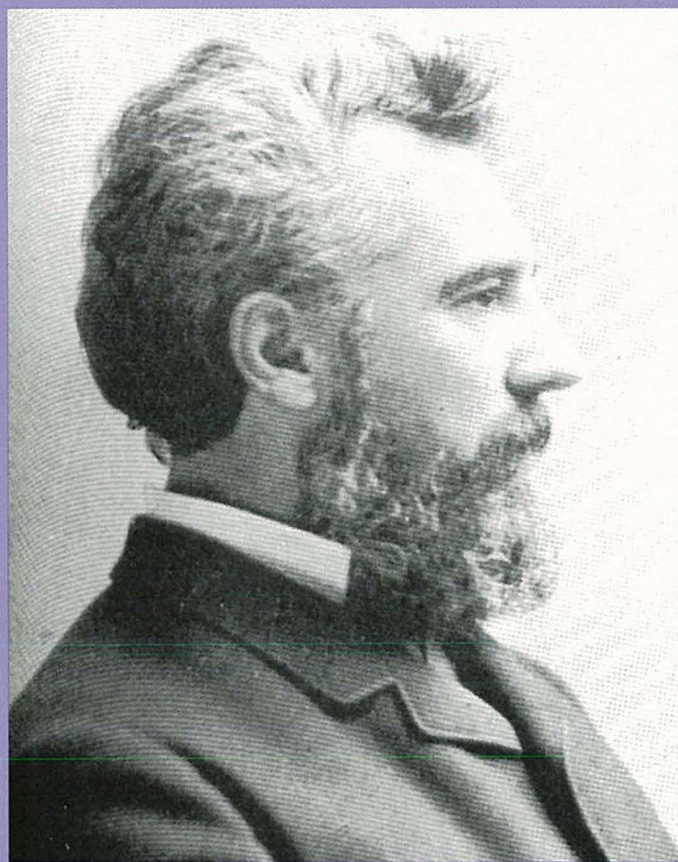
When Bell began his experiments in 1872, his goal was not to create the telecommunications behemoth that would soon bear his name. He was born to a family that made its living teaching the techniques of speech. Bell's grandfather gained renown as an instructor of elocution, using his skills to improve the speech of those who stuttered and stammered. Bell's father had developed a system of foreign language study known as "Visible Speech," which graphically illustrated the relative positions of lips, throat and tongue when a given sound or word was spoken. At the Boston School for Deaf Mutes, Bell adapted his father's system and successfully taught hearing-impaired students to speak.

Friends and family urged him to take his system on the road and make his fortune lecturing to academia, but Bell resisted. For years he had been fascinated with the possibility of sending music and speech vibrations electrically, over a wire. He began to study electricity and conceived the idea of transmitting sound vibrations to a tuning fork, which was placed against a person's skin. A trained recipient, he reasoned, could translate the vibrations into letters and perhaps even words.

What began as a communication device for the deaf quickly evolved into the pursuit of a more commercial product: transmission of multiple telegraphic messages over a single wire. The appeal of commercial success became more urgent for Bell after he fell in love with one of his students, Mabel Hubbard. Mabel had lost her hearing after developing scarlet fever when she was five. Her father, Gardiner Hubbard, was a well-to-do patent attorney and not particularly happy with the couple's growing relationship.²

Using daughter Mabel as the carrot and Bell's frustrated emotions as the stick, Hubbard forced Bell's experiments to fruition. In 1876, even before an intelligible telephone had been perfected, Hubbard

realized the significance of Bell's progress and knew that time was running out. Perhaps because he was a patent attorney, he knew experiments by others were nearing completion, and that whoever first filed a patent would reap tremendous financial rewards. Hubbard took Bell's drawings and specifications to the Patent Office in Washington, D.C., and filed for a patent in Bell's name on February 14. He had beaten a rival application by just a few hours. With the patent secured, Hubbard left to attend the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, reserving exhibition space for one of Bell's unreliable telephones. Although there were some who called it a hoax and impossible, the telephone worked perfectly. Hubbard hired a general manager and competent businessmen to run a new company, headquartered in New York City. He had secured his daughter's



Telephone developer Alexander Graham Bell beat the competition to the U.S. Patent Office by a matter of hours, primarily because his prospective father-in-law was a patent attorney. The royalty rights became enormously profitable, and showed the spread of phone networks to smaller communities that couldn't pay them. Opposite, this early style phone was known variously as a string, acoustic, mechanical, or harmonic phone. It required no electricity and worked on the same principal as two tin cans connected with a string or wire. This particular phone was installed in the late 1880s by Earnest V. Mills in Ashland.

DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN PORTRAITS

future and his opposition to Bell softened. Mabel and Alexander were married in July 1877.³

Christened "the greatest achievement of modern science," the telephone seemed deceptively simple: two mahogany boxes with tubes sticking out connected together by telegraph wire. Inside the boxes were horseshoe magnets, coiled wires and vibrating metal disks. Exterior batteries supplied electric power. To many people the instrument was almost alive, superior to a human being in its ability to think and speak. Its "iron tongue," was able to repeat any word or phrase faster and more accurately than any individual, and repeat it hundreds of miles away. While the human machine could only produce one sound at a time, Bell's machine could transmit the sounds of an entire orchestra in perfect harmony. This personification of the telephone led many first-time users to feel foolish and awkward. After all it was just a machine. "The dignity of talking consists in having a listener, and there seems a kind of absurdity in addressing a piece of iron,"⁴ a reporter for a Jacksonville newspaper observed.

To dispel the public's discomfort and to educate them on the telephone's value, the Bell Company, Western Union, and other smaller companies dispatched salesmen throughout the country to conduct demonstrations. In May of 1878, the Western Union Telegraph Company conducted one of the earliest recorded demonstrations in Oregon, between Roseburg and Portland. On a Sunday in December of that year, an exhibition was set up in Jacksonville at the combination telegraph and *Oregon Sentinel* newspaper office. A throng of curious residents crowded into the business at Third and C streets. A similar group of men and women packed the telegraph office in Yreka, California, and for most of the afternoon, individuals lined up to speak to each other. One at a time they yelled into the tube, and then turned their head, placed an ear where their mouth had been, and listened to the long-distance reply. Young ladies at both ends sang songs accompanied by pianos, which had been pulled into the offices for the occasion. Though the demonstration of "this wonderful invention" was intriguing and may have created a desire for a local telephone system, there were too many barriers, and the biggest were money and litigation.⁵

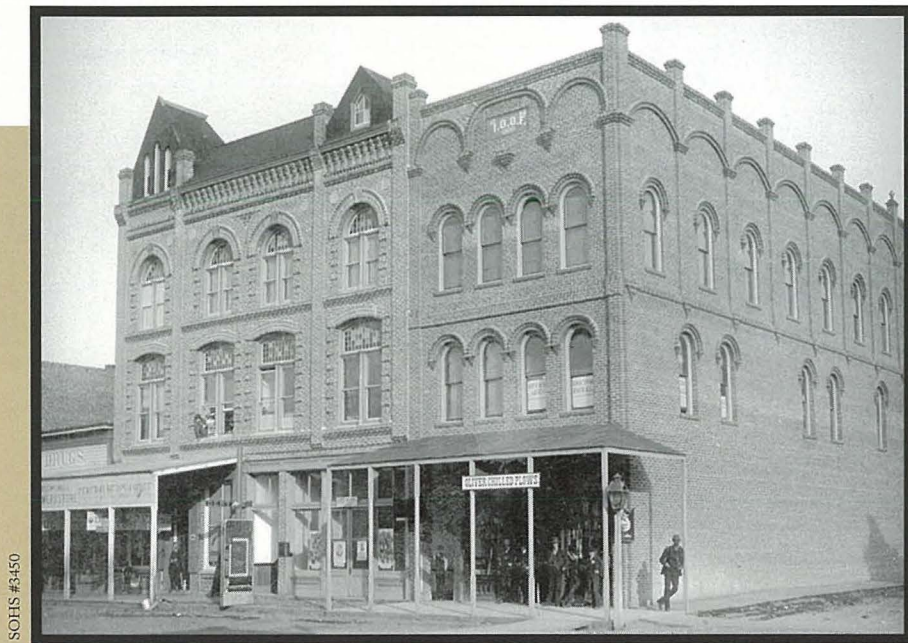
While the Bell Telephone Company grew rapidly during its first three years, it was embroiled in lawsuits and countersuits

with rivals, who disputed Bell's ownership of his patents. An agreement between the major combatants in November 1879 conceded the patents to Bell and gave his company absolute control of the telephone business for the next fourteen years. Royalties for the use of the Bell patents were costly and the company strictly enforced their payment. Localities with small populations simply couldn't afford the luxury of their own system, and so Bell's domination gave rise to an alternative telephone that didn't use electricity and was safe from Bell's patents. Called the "acoustic telephone," it was a more sophisticated version of a child's tin can telephone. A taut wire between two or more houses was connected to vibrating diaphragms that were usually made of wood, metal, or tightly woven cloth. While some people made acoustic telephones from scratch, a number of companies manufactured and sold their own versions well into the 1890s. Jacksonville dentist Will Jackson connected Jackson County's earliest known acoustic system in April 1879. The taut lines ran from his residence to those of Judge Legrand Duncan and William Turner. Turner, an early Jacksonville telegrapher and editor of the *Oregon Sentinel* newspaper, reported that conversation and music could be heard perfectly for a considerable distance over the acoustic

system. He noted that the instrument was "quite as practical as the Bell telephone, for the use of which a handsome royalty is charged." It was the only telephone the valley could afford, but it really wasn't practical. Handicapped by limited range, even the phone's connecting wires were easily brought down by ice, snow, or the wind. More of a novelty, it certainly never threatened the Bell Company.⁶

The ensuing years brought little talk of telephone service in the county. Most people just didn't see the need. While a few businessmen were undoubtedly intrigued by the idea, they kept their cash in their pockets and remained silent. Newspapers were more vocal. "Some of the 'boys' say that a telephone line would pay well in Jacksonville. All who seen [sic] it work in Portland are willing to subscribe to the capital stock," reported Turner's *Sentinel* in 1884. But the "boys" held onto their money; apparently most of them hadn't been to Portland. Two years later another rumor made the rounds. The Postal Telegraph Company was going to build a telephone line to Jacksonville from its Medford offices in the Riddle Hotel. The editor had no doubt that the line would be a "paying enterprise"—paying, of course, to someone who had enough capital to install and maintain a system, and also pay royalties to Bell. Even local governments couldn't provide financing. At a time when fire could destroy a town overnight, city councilmen were struggling to find money for water distribution systems. There were no electric power plants or sewer lines. As desirable as the telephone was, it was a luxury and would have to wait for private financing.⁷

Dr. Jackson's fascination with the telephone was apparently endless. In 1885, he and nine other men and women formed a company and ran telegraph wires connecting their homes. Their announced purpose was to learn "the art of telegraphy." Nearly two years later, on Christmas Day 1886, the *Sentinel* reported that Dr. Jackson was again connecting a telegraph line between his house and three others. This last wiring arrangement was most likely an experiment, an attempt to learn how to install and maintain a telephone system. Just four months later Jackson announced that he and partner Alexander L. Reuter were organizing a stock company that would construct a Medford-to-Jacksonville electric telephone line. The Medford telephone would be connected at the Riddle Hotel, owned by J. B. Riddle, one of the announced investors in the company. The Jacksonville terminus was not revealed, but may have been located in Jackson's variety store, later known as the Telegraph Variety Store. With an initial investment



This corner of downtown Medford, at Seventh (now Main) and Central, was a hotbed of early phone activity. Dr. Elijah Pickel had an acoustic telephone hooked up between his office in the I.O.O.F./Adkins & Webb Building and his nearby home in 1893. The next year, the Cusman Telephone Company installed an electric phone system in Charles Strang's drugstore, the storefront second from the right. Then a group of local investors operating as the Rogue River Valley Telephone Co. bought the new phone system and moved the switchboard to rival druggist George Haskins' store at the far left of the photo. The investors included Benjamin Adkins and Benjamin Webb, owners of the Adkins & Webb Hardware store on the corner (now Vogel Plaza). But in 1898, the lines of the competing Sunset Telephone Company reached the valley, and the company opened its offices in Strang's drugstore.

of \$1,000, telephone poles were purchased and batteries and telephone instruments ordered from Portland. In early July 1887, the phone line was in operation and reported to be in first-class running order. Initially calls were to be charged at twenty-five cents, with the caller expected to talk for a "reasonable length of time." Within weeks the rate schedule was changed in a most unusual way. Rather than charge by the call, the company would charge by the number of words spoken. The first ten words cost fifteen cents and each additional word, a penny. With this monitoring of each word in private conversations, the new telephone company was doomed to failure. After just two months of operation, the Jacksonville-Medford telephone line reverted to telegraphy.⁸

In May of the following year, Riddle decided to lease the telegraph line between Medford and Jacksonville and reconnect the phone in his hotel to an instrument in the U.S. Hotel at Jacksonville. With Bell's patents still in force, earnings were vital. The Riddle Company had agreed to pay the American Telephone and Telegraph Company a royalty of seventy-two dollars per telephone and 15 percent of all money earned. After eight months even Riddle admitted defeat and discontinued telephone service in March of 1889. The wire was taken over by the Postal Telegraph Company that opened its Jacksonville office in Dr. Jackson's variety store.⁹

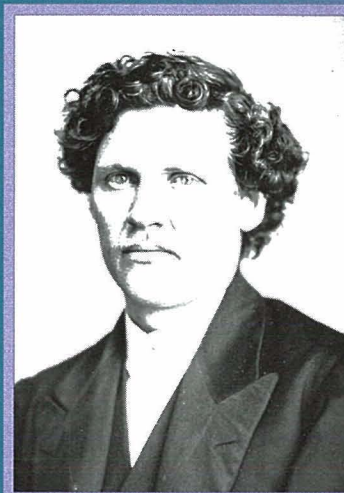
In 1893, one year before Bell's major patents would be opened to everyone, the acoustic telephone received its final trial in the valley. Medford physician Dr. Elijah Pickel installed an Elliott Non-Electric telephone between his office, in the I.O.O.F building on Seventh and Central, and his home on B Street. The doctor had arrived in Medford in 1888 and quickly became one of the best-known people in the community. He was first president of the Southern Oregon Medical Society and later would serve as Medford mayor. Perhaps his popularity stemmed from his gregarious nature. In announcing Pickel's telephone, what it called "Telephone No. 1," the newspaper couldn't resist poking fun at him, claiming that Pickle had reserved "the right to do *all* the talking." But Pickle was talking on an obsolete telephone to his home a block away. In the East, long-distance telephone calls already spanned 500 miles. Acoustic telephones were dying and the electric

phone would be king.¹⁰

As the expiration of Bell's patents approached, competitors eagerly awaited the "easy" telephone money that would come from constructing their own systems. Once the patents were eliminated, not only would the royalties disappear, the high price of telephone equipment was also expected to plummet. For nearly twenty years, outsiders had seen the Bell Company's profits steadily increase, and understandably, many were poised to exploit this new opportunity. Telegraph companies, with wire already connecting towns, were confident that they had the upper hand in the emerging competition. Even burglar and fire alarm companies were ready to convert their systems to the telephone. Entrepreneurs with little or no technical knowledge were forming telephone companies and hiring electrical hobbyists, who overnight became telephone engineers. With the anticipated swift and heavy competition, local communities felt themselves in the driver's seat. The valley's long wait for a sustained telephone system was near its end and the only question was "which company can hello the loudest and for the least money."¹¹

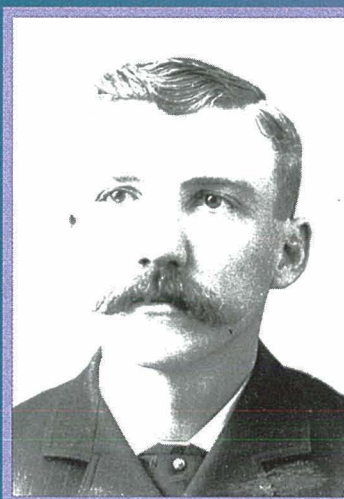
M. Kerr arrived in Medford during the first week of June 1894. Representing the Cusman Telephone Company, he met with local businessmen and proposed construction of a telephone line between Jacksonville and Medford. The old line had vanished along with the Postal Telegraph's Jacksonville office in 1890. For the community's most affluent citizens, Kerr offered to connect private lines, which could remain private, or be linked with the main system. Most people were skeptical and apprehensive. Too many times they had seen a stranger come to town promising to build whatever the town desired, and ultimately the stranger disappeared, taking their money with him. But Kerr was a man of his word and quick to prove it. Within two weeks of his arrival, his first telephone lines were in operation. The homes of druggist Charles Strang and Dr. Walton Jones were connected to the system's central office, located in Strang's drugstore, near the corner of Main and Central. To stir up interest, Kerr arranged a promotional demonstration, hoping to entice prospective customers.

A small group of people listened at the drugstore as Dr. Jones' wife played piano from the family's home. The



Jacksonville dentist Dr. Will Jackson was fascinated by the telephone, and first experimented with a non-electric acoustic phone system in 1879. The electric phone line he and a partner installed in 1887 between Medford and Jacksonville worked fine, but their scheme to charge users by the word doomed the endeavor to failure.

SOHS #18338



Dr. Elijah Pickel, an early and prominent Medford physician, had an Elliott Non Electric acoustic phone line installed in 1893 between his office in the I.O.O.F building and his home on what is now Bartlett Street.

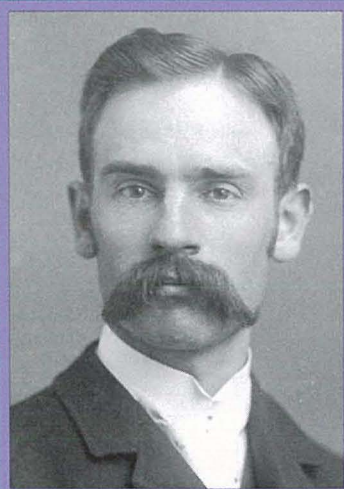
SOHS #18339

*"The dignity
of talking consists
in having a listener,
and there seems a
kind of absurdity
in addressing a piece
of iron."*



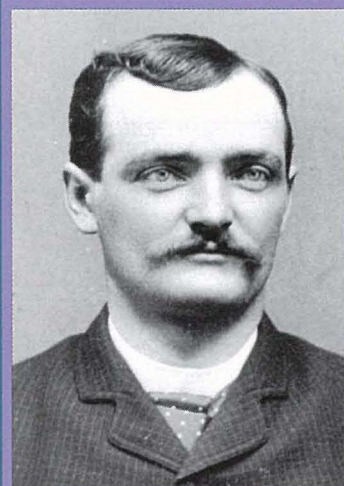
SOHS #16591

Druggist Charles Strang's store on Seventh Street, now Main, in Medford was the site of the first electric phone switchboard operated by the Cusman Telephone Company, connecting his drugstore to his home and to the home of Dr. Walton Jones. Local investors bought out the phone lines and moved the switchboard two doors down. But when the Sunset Telephone Company came to the valley in 1898, the Bell-backed firm chose Strang's drugstore to house its central office.



SOHS #18337

John White was made the general manager of the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company, which served the valley from 1894 until 1901, when its owners sold out to the larger and better-capitalized Sunset Telephone Company.



SOHS #16894 DETAIL

Benjamin Webb, co-owner of the Adkins & Webb Hardware Store, served on the board of directors of the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company.

eager voice of her two-year-old daughter, Maude, was clearly and repeatedly heard in the background, demanding to "Talk to phone ... talk to phone." Everyone declared the demonstration an astonishing success and Kerr promised to have Jacksonville and Medford talking by telephone within a month.¹²

As Kerr's crew set poles and strung wire along the Medford-Jacksonville road, four local businessmen announced that Kerr had sold his telephone system to them and that the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company was now in business. Two of the three telephones to be installed would be placed in Jacksonville, one in the Courthouse and the other in the Reames & White General Store. John White was designated general manager of the new company and Medford merchant Benjamin Franklin Adkins was selected president. Benjamin Webb, co-owner of the Adkins & Webb Hardware store, and druggist friend George Haskins rounded out the board of directors. Charles Strang's custody of the first telephone switchboard in the valley would only last a month. Ironically, his drugstore was hemmed in between the Adkins & Webb building and Haskins' new two-story drugstore. With three of the four telephone partners surrounding Strang, switching equipment and company offices moved into a twenty-foot storeroom at the back of Haskins' store in August 1894. The Medford telephone was installed up front, near Haskins' cash register, where twenty-fivecent tickets were sold, for "five-minute telephone talks." Even before the system was completed, three hundred conversations were snapped up. After years of anticipation, a viable and growing telephone system was now a thrilling reality.¹³

Jacksonville and Medford were "helloing" to each other by the second week of July 1894, just as Kerr had promised. From the southern end of the valley came a note of jealousy from the editor of the *Ashland Tidings*. "Ashland ought to be connected with the other towns in the valley this way," he insisted. Within two weeks Rogue River Valley Telephone workmen were setting poles and establishing offices in Phoenix and Talent, well on their way to Ashland. In early September, without boarding a train, horse, or wagon, a customer of Barrett's drugstore in Ashland could speak with a friend in Jacksonville. A *Medford Mail* reporter

was almost sure that this was a "great convenience," but thought it might be a long time before anyone got the notion of what to talk about. His newspaper got the notion for the perfect attention grabber when it introduced a "Telephoned from the Court House" column, less than a month after the first telephone was installed. Even though the paper was a weekly, and time was *not* of the essence, this column kept readers up-to-date on the previous week's criminal and civil court news.¹⁴

Expectations were high and already there was talk of long-distance service. When someone could use the "talking machine" to call relatives in Eugene, Portland, or San Francisco was the question, not *if*. There was a telephone company with a line under construction between Grants Pass and Crescent City and, to the north, a Bell phone company had connected Washington state with Eugene. When that company announced plans to extend its line to Roseburg, the *Ashland Valley Record* got excited. "This will leave but a small connecting link between Medford and Grants Pass and Grants Pass and Roseburg, which will undoubtedly be built before another year rolls around," it optimistically reported. A year later, at the end of 1895, telephone lines from Medford finally reached Grants Pass, but for the next three years, the span of long-distance "helloing" was measured by the distance between Ashland and Grants Pass.¹⁵

The valley's major cities were now connected to each other and to many, the next logical step was local telephone networks within the towns. Although the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company upgraded telephone instruments frequently, new locations for telephones apparently were a rarity. The business was successful enough to force Western Union Telegraph to discontinue service between Medford and Jacksonville, but it still lacked enough profit to wire up the towns. As the company's lines reached Grants Pass, promises were made that local service would be considered if and only if "the steady use of forty phones will be guaranteed." The company's lines stretched sixty miles, a distance too short for most people to guarantee steady calling. Until the arrival of a well-funded competitor, the company wouldn't worry about its inability to expand local service or provide true long-distance calling. The well-funded competitor arrived in 1898.¹⁶

SOHS Acc. #22222



The Sunset Telephone Company, with Bell Company backing, was erecting a long-distance line that ran northward from San Diego to Yreka, California, and by September 1898, the line crossed the Siskiyou Mountains into Oregon. The speed, ability, and drive of this telephone invader must have amazed the local company. Within a week of Sunset's arrival, a local network was set up in Medford, and Charlie Strang got revenge on his telephone neighbors when the new central office was placed in his drugstore. The company connected fifteen telephones to the switchboard and exhausted its supply. With eager subscribers waiting, additional instruments were ordered. The company was innovative, boosting its number of customers by offering free switching between Medford and Jacksonville businesses. By mid-October, calls could be made as far south as San Francisco and as far north as Seattle and Spokane. Over the next two years the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company responded with updated equipment, additional phones at the County Courthouse, and a few other new locations. But Sunset's dominance was becoming apparent. In 1899 many of the valley's more prominent landowners connected their homes to the Sunset line and local businessmen followed. By the end of the year, business had increased so much that Lillian Barr was hired as the county's first telephone operator. No longer would Strang have to interrupt his business, run to the back of his store and connect a call on the switchboard.¹⁷

Throughout 1900, reports of Sunset Telephone's growing success overshadowed the deterioration and occasional repair of the Rogue River Valley Telephone Company's lines. In December, the four local partners gave up and sold all equipment and rights to Sunset. Warren Williams, Sunset's sole lineman, was ordered to take an ax to the old company's telephones, as he removed the sixty miles of wire and poles that connected them. The wire would be used to build a new telephone line between Sams Valley and Gold Hill.¹⁸

Twenty-five years after Bell received his patent, the Rogue Valley was "helloing" up and down the West Coast. Soon there would be calls to Chicago, New York, and maybe even London. New companies were forming back East, promising to compete with Bell across the entire country. In the

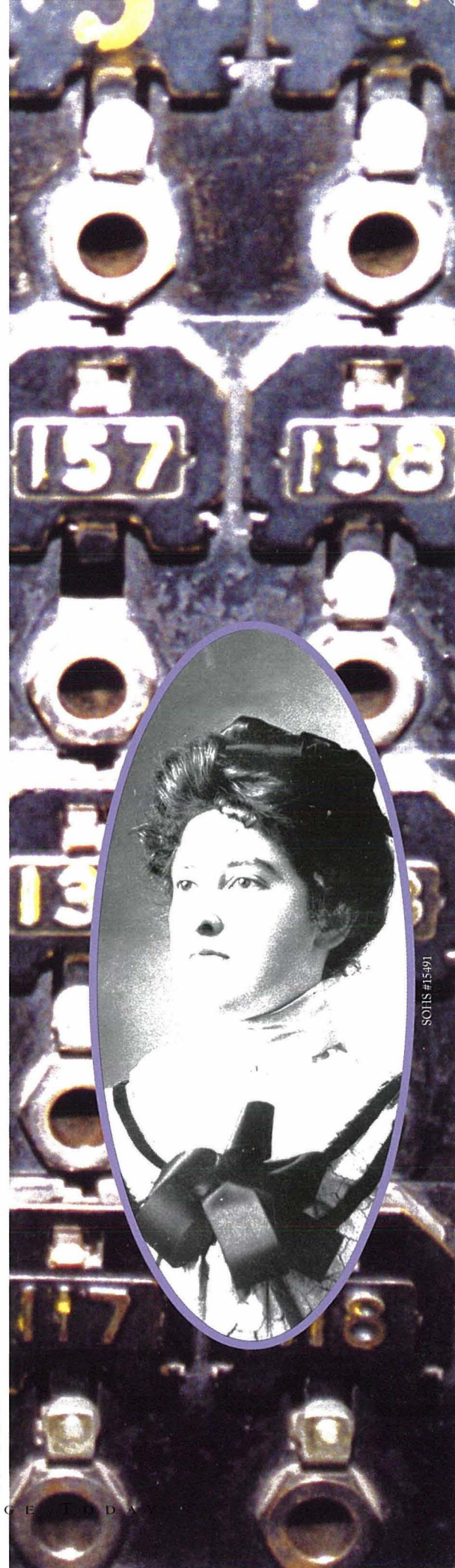
future, the Rogue Valley would see more than a half dozen competing phone companies in the towns, and a number of independent cooperative telephone lines constructed in rural areas by farmers and ranchers. New switchboards, new buildings, and new equipment were coming—dial phones in 1940, touch-tone in the 1960s, the Internet and cell phones in the 1990s. Growing from three phones in 1894 to tens of thousands in 2002, the valley was just as obsessed with "talking to the phone," as anyone else in the world. ☐

Bill Miller is a historian with the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

1. Patent allowed March 7, 1876, three days before the famous, "Mr. Watson, come here..."
2. Robert V. Bruce, *Bell: Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 58-69, 90-102.
3. John Brooks, *Telephone: The First Hundred Years* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 37-58.
4. *Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel*, 2 May 1877; 5 June 1878.
5. *Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel*, 15 May 1878; 11 December 1878.
6. *Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel*, 11 April 1879. Turner's home was across Fifth Street from Jackson's. Duncan's house is now known as the Hanna House.
7. *Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel*, 4 October 1884. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 17 December 1886; 22 April 1887.
8. *Jacksonville Oregon Sentinel*, 14 March 1885; 25 December 1886. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 6 May 1887; 13 May 1887; 8 July 1887; 23 September 1887.
9. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 18 May 1888; 6 July 1888; 14 March 1889. *Medford Mail*, 29 June 1894.
10. *Medford Mail*, 28 April 1893. *Talent News*, 1 December 1893. Seventh Street is now Main and B Street is Bartlett.
11. *Medford Mail*, 24 February 1893.
12. *Medford Mail*, 1 May 1890; 8 June 1894; 15 June 1894. Strang's drugstore was in the Angel-Plymale building. Today the location is Vogel Plaza.
13. *Medford Mail*, 29 June 1894; 17 August 1894. *Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 4 July 1894. The Haskins building still stands at 214 E. Main in Medford. The Adkins-Webb building stood on the corner of what is now Vogel Plaza.
14. *Medford Mail*, 20 July 1894; 3 August 1894; 7 September 1894.
15. *Ashland Valley Record*, 30 August 1894.
16. *Medford Mail*, 13 September 1895; 29 May 1896.
17. *Medford Mail*, 2 September 1898; 23 December 1898; 22 September 1899.
18. *Medford Mail*, 28 December 1900. Warren Williams Diary, 7 January - 23 March 1901, SOHS, MS50.

Business grew so fast for the Sunset Telephone Company that before 1899 was out, Sunset had hired Lillian Barr, as the Rogue Valley's first telephone operator.



SOHS #15491

Yesterday's Cities of the Future

By Steve M. Wyatt



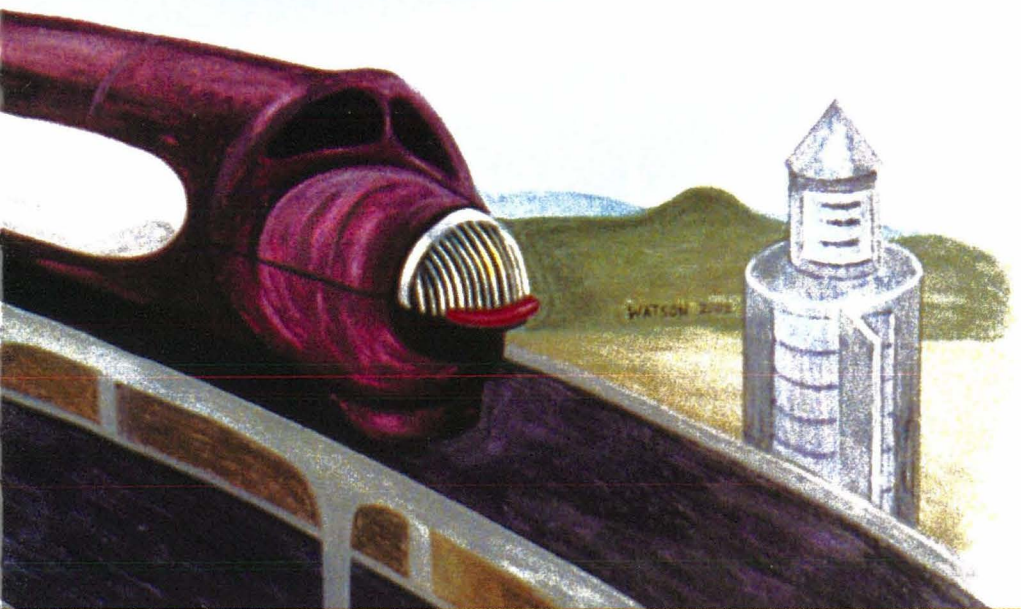
Above right, this fanciful illustration from an article titled "Housekeeping in 2000" in a 1950 issue of *Popular Mechanics*, suggests that, "Because everything in her house is waterproof, the housewife of 2000 can do her daily cleaning with a hose". Below, this 1946 photo of a Continental Airphibian echoed the post-World War II belief that air travel would become the new common denominator of transportation.



IMAGINE AN AUTOMATED city in which machines and robots do the work and cars can fly. Perhaps since the very first machine was built, sedentary people began dreaming of just such a place. For most of us the future is not so fanciful, but with some luck and planning it will be brighter than today. Ensuring a livable future is a fulltime job for city planners. Their counterparts in the private sector, developers of subdivisions and shopping malls, may or may not share the same vision of a livable future. The components of a livable city of the future have continually changed with the social norms and technology of the times.

Early Rogue Valley towns simply grew to accommodate pedestrians and horse-drawn wagons without much thought toward the future.

Beginning in the 1880s, the arrival of the railroad and streetcars radically changed the way urban dwellers visualized the city of the future. Commuting, made possible by the advent of streetcars, marked the beginning of the suburbs. In 1893, Medford resident W.P. Dodge wrote down his vision of the future for the *Medford Mail* newspaper. Under the front page headline of "One Great City" Dodge predicted the ongoing Medford/Central Point rivalry would end. The fruit and mining industries would generate enough prosperity for the entire region. Medford and Central Point would become one continuous city



MATTHEW WATSON

"with her electric lights and street railway for the benefit and happiness of her citizens."¹

By the early 1900s, automobiles and buses had largely replaced the streetcar, making suburban living even more convenient. Locally, a mysterious "syndicate of wealthy eastern people," came to town in 1909 intent on developing Jacksonville as a suburb of Medford. They announced to the press their intention to sell homes in the Jacksonville foothills to Medford business people. Commuting to work each day was to be on a double-decker "monster automobile" patterned after an English coach. Walnut trees were to be planted along the road between the two cities. Profits from the harvest would underwrite the road's upkeep.² As planned, the scheme seems to have come to naught, although today, many Rogue Valley residents make this commute.

By 1930 cars, roads, and railroads were of little concern to local planners. In a magazine article on Medford's planning by consultant Jacob L. Crane, he scarcely mentions traffic. He wrote that Medford had, "comparatively few serious and difficult planning problems confronting it." His article showcased the proposed civic center, several blocks of downtown that included a new city hall, courthouse park-plaza, museum, and library. Today this is the area near Alba Park. Crane gave Medford high praise for its progressive airport. He expressed a widely

held belief from this era that "airplanes are going to revolutionize the transportation field."³

Today it seems the future is no longer up in the air. The goal of many planners and developers alike is to create pedestrian-friendly towns and neighborhoods. A recent ad for a new housing development near Central Point asks potential buyers, "Have you ever dreamed of living in a place where you can take a stroll through parks, linger at a sidewalk cafe, walk to a nearby store or local library?"

The current vision of the ideal city of the future has more in common with the early cities predating trains, streetcars, automobiles, and airplanes than the automated city with flying cars.

For now, it looks as if the future just might be more like yesterday. 🏠

Steve M. Wyatt is exhibits manager at the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

1. "One Great City" *Medford Mail*, 31 March 1893.
2. "Suburb of Medford," *Jacksonville Post*, 2 August 1909.
3. Jacob L. Crane, "An Alert Northwest City Plans for Its Development," *Western City*, August 1930.

This Buck Rogers-like city of the future appeared in an artist's imagination in 1939.

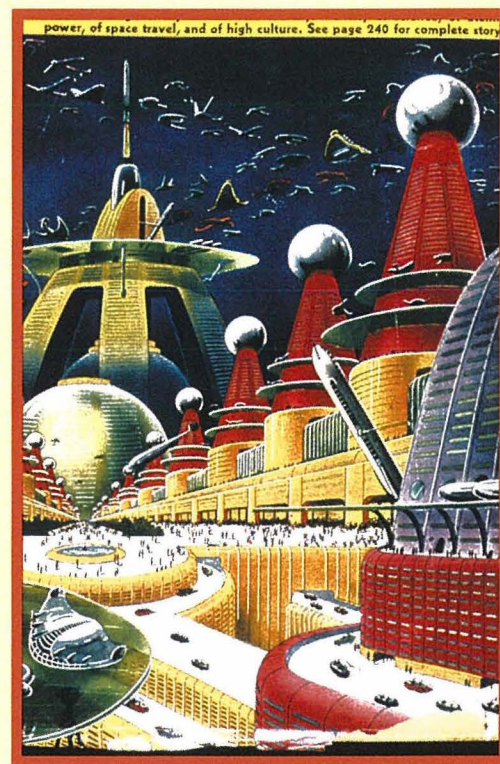
HISTORY OF THE FUTURE EXPLORED IN SMITHSONIAN TRAVELING EXHIBITION

RAY GUNS, ROBOTS,

and plans for a nuclear-powered car are part of *Yesterday's Tomorrows: Past Visions of the American Future*. This exhibit will open November 23 at the Southern Oregon Historical Society's History Center in Medford and remain on display through January 4.

Yesterday's Tomorrows uses popular culture objects such as toys, movie stills, world's fair memorabilia, car designs, and advertisements and architectural models to examine past visions of what the future should be. The Southern Oregon Historical Society is supplementing this Smithsonian exhibit with a weekly film festival of early science fiction movies, guest lecturers, and artifacts from its collection once considered futuristic. Early computers, a Teletype (predecessor to modern fax machine) and a 1930s "modern" kitchen can be seen at this exhibit. For more information, contact the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

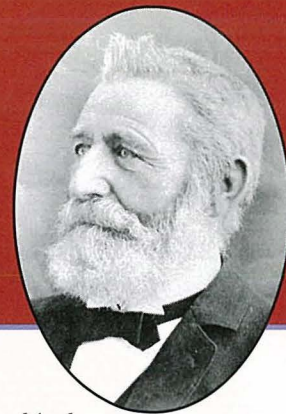
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE



J.S. Howard:

FOUNDING TOWNS WAS A FAMILY TRADITION

By Rodney Coleman



JAMES SULLIVAN HOWARD, dubbed "the Father of Medford" when he died on November 13, 1919, was born April 21, 1832, to Sullivan and Elizabeth Howard in Mason, New Hampshire. Educated in Illinois, Howard married Margaret E. Snuggs in 1855. In 1860, the couple and their three children moved to Jacksonville, where Howard became a successful surveyor and civil engineer.

In addition to advancing regional development by conducting a preliminary survey for the Southern Pacific Railroad and engineering the COPCO Condor Dam,¹ Howard examined surveys for the U.S. Land Office in Oregon and Arizona until 1898,² and opened a bakery and butcher shop in Jacksonville's historic Kubli Building in 1875.³ After fire destroyed Howard's business in 1884, he built a general store near modern-day Front Street between Eighth and Main streets in Medford. Howard later recalled that contemporaries criticized his choice of location at first, calling the townsite "Mudville," "Rabbitville," and "Chaparral,"⁴ but suggested he "laughed last" after he "got in right" with railroad officials⁵ and witnessed Medford's growth and incorporation two years later.

A familiar presence at the Nash Hotel in Medford's early days, Howard became president of the Town Board of Trustees and Medford's first mayor in 1885, postmaster, and Wells Fargo agent.⁶ As one of Medford's

founders, Howard had followed in the footsteps of his father, who co-founded Wethersfield and Kewanee, Illinois, in 1837 and 1854.⁷ However, the "rags to riches" lore associated with his arrival in Jacksonville "with only fifty cents in his pocket"⁸ also distinguishes J.S. Howard from other proud and resourceful pioneers of his day. ■

Rodney Coleman is a regular contributor to Southern Oregon Heritage Today.

ENDNOTES

1. Linda Morehouse Genaw, *Gold Hill and Its Neighbors Along the River* (Central Point: privately printed, 1988), p. 66; Don Corsetti, "J.S. Howard, Medford's Founder and First Postmaster," *Postal Historian* 2 (March 1968): p. 33; and *Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon: Containing Original Sketches of Many Well Known Citizens of the Past and Present* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1904), pp. 609-610.
2. *Portrait and Biographical Record*, 610; and *Medford Mail Tribune*, 13 November 1919.
3. Ruth Goldschmidt, *Jacksonville: A Living Legend* (Jacksonville: privately printed, 1991), p. 83.
4. Corsetti, pp. 33-34.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
6. Kay Atwood and Marjorie Lutz O'Harra, comps., *Medford 1885-1985* (Medford: Medford Centennial Committee, 1985), pp. 7-8; Corsetti, p. 34; *Portrait and Biographical Record*, p. 610; and *Medford Mail Tribune*, 13 November 1919.
7. "Origins," in *Kewanee, IL, USA—History* (Kewanee, Illinois: Kewanee Historical Society, n.d.), <<http://kewanee-il.com/history.htm>> (15 July 2001).
8. Corsetti, p. 33; *Portrait and Biographical Record*, p. 609; and *Medford Mail Tribune*, 13 November 1919.

At left, future Medford Mayor J.S. Howard wears a Masonic uniform in this studio portrait by Peter Britt circa 1875; above, Howard in 1898. He watched Medford spring up along the Southern Pacific line.



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