

# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

February 2003 Vol. 5, No. 2

*Today*



MEDFORD'S HOLLY THEATRE

DIAMOND LAKE GOES HOLLYWOOD • SNIDER'S DAIRY





# "Lasting Impressions: The Art and Life of Dorland Robinson

NEW EXHIBIT FROM THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A historic Jacksonville prodigy,  
Dorland Robinson (1891-1917),  
produced an exceptional body of work.  
She died tragically at the age of 25.

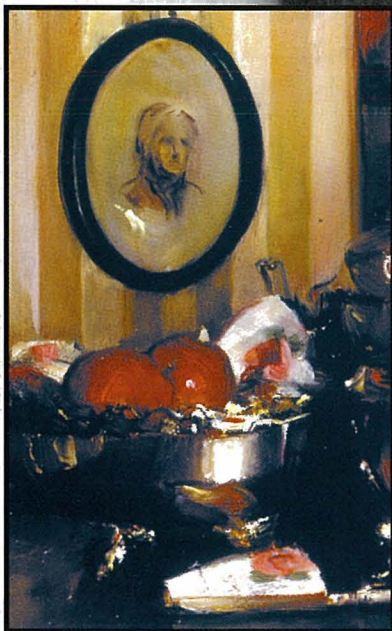
The Southern Oregon Historical  
Society is proud to own many of  
her works. More than  
five dozen will be  
on display.

## EXHIBIT OPENING FEB. 14

5 - 7 PM

History Center • 106 N. Central Ave., Medford

*Regular viewing hours:* Mon. - Fri. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.





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

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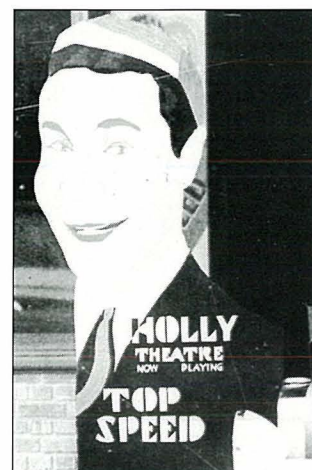
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Today

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SOHS #14135 DETAIL

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MS #67.119.8-1

This Modoc Indian bow, made from the wood of a yew tree, was donated to the Society in 1967.

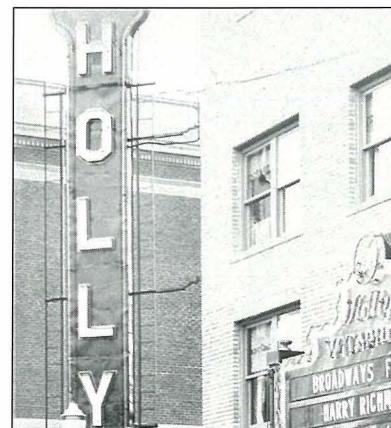
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Crowds line up to see *Puttin' On the Ritz*, which opened October 23, 1930, at Medford's new Holly Theatre, designed from the ground up for talking pictures.



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# A Passage from Hollywood

## *Rogue River Valley*

Words and Music by Hoagy Carmichael

Take me to the Rogue River Valley,  
Where the silv'ry moonlight shines.  
Someone waits for me in the valley,  
There among the blue-tipped pines.

She'll be by the river where all heaven beams,  
And there by the river we'll find the trail of dreams.

Donkey don't you dally.  
Can't you hear the killdeer's song?  
High up in the Rogue River Valley,  
That's where I belong.

*Burke and Van Heusen, Inc., 1946.*



The Society's collections include this 78-rpm recording of Hoagy Carmichael's "Rogue River Valley" by the gospel group the Charioteers. The song was one of a handful Carmichael wrote for the Western melodrama *Canyon Passage*, filmed in 1945 at locations around Diamond Lake and Crater Lake.

By Bill Miller

## EIGHT HOLLYWOOD HORSES

and five Hollywood mules staggered out of their trailers. A 1,100-mile journey from Universal Studios to the shores of Diamond Lake had finally come to an end. The animals would rest in a stable prepared by "movie magicians," who had hammered, sawed and painted for over a month just to recreate the western town of Jacksonville, Oregon, circa 1856.

The production was on schedule and the "stars" would soon arrive. It was the fall of 1945, and movie producer Walter Wanger had decided that "the grandeur of Southern Oregon could never be duplicated on a studio back lot." More than 150 skilled technicians were on location in Oregon, preparing to film the popular western novel, *Canyon Passage*. Along for the ride were eighty horses with riders, loaned as extras by the Jackson County Sheriff's Posse. They would play bad guys, good guys and Indians. Six of the riders' wives were given silent parts in the movie, and each of the women giggled as the makeup department transformed them into men.

Author Ernest Haycox's original melodramatic plot easily transferred to film. Dana Andrews agrees to escort Susan Hayward on a horseback journey from Portland to Jacksonville. Hayward is the fiancé of Andrews's best friend, Brian Donlevy. Soon Andrews and Hayward realize they have fallen in love and Donlevy is understandably upset. Andrews' arch-enemy, Ward Bond, touches off an Indian war that nearly destroys Jacksonville. Add gambling, robbery, murder, vigilantes, dancing, and a barroom kangaroo court. Conclude everything with a passionate kiss and a happy ending.<sup>1</sup>

It is an enjoyable if not challenging bit of cinematic fluff. The scenery of Crater Lake, Natural Bridge, Dutchman Flats and other Upper Rogue locations is striking. The music is an added plus, with four songs written and performed by Hoagy Carmichael. The most famous was "Ole Buttermilk Sky," which was nominated as Best Original Song for the Oscars of 1947, but lost to "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," from the 1946 film, *The Harvey Girls*.

Another song from the film caught the agreeable ears of many Rogue Valley old-timers. It was called "Rogue River Valley," and Carmichael was just the first of many singers to record it. The Society even has a 78-rpm version recorded by a gospel group, "The Charioteers." In 1956, an American singer, Chuck Miller, released the song in England. While



touring through the valley sometime in the late 1950s, Miller left a copy of his recording with KBOY disc jockey Tom Carnes. Carnes began to play the record each evening at station signoff and, until the station was sold in the early 1970s, "Rogue River Valley" was KBOY's traditional signoff tune.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1946, the Southern Oregon Historical Society was officially organized, and among its first announced projects for Jackson County was a "proper premiere performance of *Canyon Passage*." Its efforts failed.<sup>3</sup>

On July 13, Wanger and his wife, Joan Bennett, joined with Susan Hayward and Hoagy Carmichael in a parade to Portland's Broadway Theater, where world premiere festivities were held. The studio's most important guest, critic and gossip columnist Elsa Maxwell, barely arrived in time. Because Maxwell always refused to fly, she was instead traveling aboard the northbound Southern Pacific "Cascade." The derailment of a different train, just south of Klamath Falls in Dorris, California, blocked the SP liner and threatened Maxwell's appearance at the premiere. Oregon Governor Earl Snell called his friend, Medford baker "Heinie" Fluhrer, and asked him to pick up Maxwell and drive her to Portland by car. Fluhrer agreed, and with only a dinner layover in Medford, got Maxwell to the theater on time. Ironically, Snell and Fluhrer would both die in separate plane crashes within two years, Snell in a crash near Lakeview, and Fluhrer in a crash at Lake of the Woods.<sup>4</sup>

The Medford premiere of *Canyon Passage* took place one week later at the Craterian Theater, without movie stars or celebration, but with plenty of excitement and curiosity. The one-week showing drew an "incredible" 18,000 people and the film was extended four additional days. With advertisements that screamed "THE GLORIOUS SAGA ... FILMED AT CRATER LAKE ... IN LIVING TECHNICOLOR ... WITH MANY OF OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS," - just about everybody HAD to see it.<sup>5</sup> 🏠

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

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Portland Sunday Oregonian*, 7 July 1946.
2. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 18 June 1999.
3. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 28 February 1946.
4. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 14 July 1946; 31 December 1947; 23 August 1948.
5. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 21 July 1946.  
*Medford News*, 2 August 1946.

# As sung by Hoagy Carmichael In the Walter Wanger Production "Canyon Passage" ROGUE RIVER VALLEY

By HOAGY C.

moderato

MECHFORD'S LUXURY THEATRE  
**ESQUIRE**

**TODAY** Doors Open 6:15 P. M.  
The Glorious Saga of Our Own Pioneer OREGON!  
FILMED AT CRATER LAKE!  
**DANA ANDREWS**  
**BRIAN DONLEVY**

**CANYON PASSAGE**

with SUSAN HAYWARD PATRICIA ROC  
HOAGY CARMICHAEL  
WARD BOND  
ANDY DEVINE  
STANLEY RIDGES  
LLOYD BRIDGES  
FAY HOLDEN  
VICTOR CUTLER  
THOSE DEVINE KIDS

IN Technicolor

**TOM BRENNEMAN**  
in  
"Breakfast in Hollywood"

me to the ROGUE

sil - v'ry moon - light

MMT JUNE 5, 1947





SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Things To Do in February



PROGRAM	DATE • TIME	LOCATION	DETAILS • FEES
Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Valentines • free with admission
Chinese New Year	1 Sat • 1 - 4 PM	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Family event • free with admission
"Lasting Impressions: The Art and Life of Dorland Robinson"	14 Fri • 5 - 7 PM	HISTORY CENTER	Exhibit opening reception • free
Chautauqua Program	March 8 Sat • 2 PM	HISTORY CENTER	"Westward I Go Free: Women and Freedom in the Frontier West" • free

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

For times and locations, see schedule above.

### CRAFT OF THE MONTH

#### Valentines

Celebrate Valentine's Day by making a valentine for someone special.

### CHINESE NEW YEAR FAMILY EVENT

Join us as Jacksonville celebrates Chinese New Year. We'll have lots of hands-on activities for the whole family to enjoy at the museums; including traditional Chinese games and a chance to do your own dragon dance! Be sure to visit Jacksonville's new library to see a display on the history of Chinese in Southern Oregon. And check with the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce for other events scheduled for this day.

### "LASTING IMPRESSIONS: THE ART AND LIFE OF DORLAND ROBINSON" EXHIBIT OPENING RECEPTION

Friday,  
February 14,  
5-7 p.m.  
History Center,  
106 N. Central  
Ave., Medford.



### "WESTWARD I GO FREE: WOMEN AND FREEDOM IN THE FRONTIER WEST"

Through journals, songs, readings, and discussion, historian and author Susan Butruille examines and interprets cultural concepts and legal definitions of freedom in the Trans-Mississippi west, with a focus on the meaning of freedom for women and ways in which historical interpretations shape our notions of freedom today. Freedom exerted a compelling pull for the bold, often reckless, and sometimes reluctant souls who made their way to the

Trans-Mississippi west in the nineteenth century. What did freedom mean to them? How was it defined differently for men and women, for the people who were already there, and for non-Anglo people who made their way west? (This presentation is made possible by funding from the Oregon Council for the Humanities.)



### LAKE CREEK HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENT:

*Saturday, February 15, 2 p.m.*

#### "MY GRANDFATHER'S EMIGRANT EYES: SONGS AND HISTORY OF THE IRISH EMIGRATION TO AMERICA"

The Irish were not welcomed in America, and their story in our country is one of struggle, perseverance, and triumph. Jeni Foster of Grants Pass combines historical narrative with her extensive knowledge of traditional Irish music to create a complex portrait of an enduring people, from those who made new lives for themselves in America to those who stayed behind and struggled with the loss of their sons and daughters. (This presentation is made possible by funding from the Oregon Council for the Humanities.) Presented by the Lake Creek Historical Society, 1739 S. Fork Little Butte Creek Road, Lake Creek. Call 541/826-1513 for further information.



EXHIBIT	LOCATION	DATE • TIME
Lasting Impressions: The Art and Life of Dorland Robinson	HISTORY CENTER	Mon - Fri • 9 AM - 5 PM
Century of Photography: 1856-1956		
The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z		
History in the Making: Jackson County Milestones	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed - Sat • 10 AM - 5 PM Sun • noon - 5 PM
Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker		
Politics of Culture: Collecting the Southwest		
Crater Lake: Picture Perfect		
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed - Sat • 10 AM - 5 PM Sun • noon - 5 PM

## EXHIBIT DESCRIPTION

For times and locations, see schedule above.

### LASTING IMPRESSIONS: THE ART AND LIFE OF DORLAND ROBINSON

Dorland Robinson (1891-1917), a historic Jacksonville prodigy, produced an exceptional body of work. The diversity of mediums, from charcoal, pastel, water color, is presented in this largest ever exhibit of her work.

### 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"

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; 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

This exhibit presents 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:

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

*Southern Oregon Historical Society*

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www.sohs.org

Fax (541) 776-7994

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## MUSEUMS AND SITES

### HISTORY CENTER

106 N. Central, Medford  
MON - FRI • 9 AM to 5 PM

### RESEARCH LIBRARY

106 N. Central, Medford  
TUES - FRI • 1 to 5 PM

### JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

5th and C, Jacksonville  
WED - SAT • 10 AM to 5 PM  
SUN • NOON to 5 PM

### HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road, Central Point  
(CLOSED FOR THE SEASON)

### C.C. BEEKMAN HOUSE

California & Laurelwood, Jacksonville  
(CLOSED FOR THE SEASON)

### C.C. BEEKMAN BANK

3rd & California, Jacksonville

### THE HISTORY STORE

3rd & California, Jacksonville  
WED - SAT • 10 AM to 5 PM  
SUN • NOON to 5 PM

### THIRD STREET ARTISAN'S STUDIO

3rd & California, Jacksonville  
(CLOSED FOR THE SEASON)

### U.S. HOTEL

3rd & California, Jacksonville  
UPSTAIRS ROOM AVAILABLE FOR RENT

### CATHOLIC RECTORY

4th & C, Jacksonville



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Patron ...	Two years \$110	One year \$60	
Family ...	Two years \$55	One year \$30	
Friend ...	Two years \$35	One year \$20	



# HOODOO MOVIE HOUSE: THE ORDEAL OF THE HOLLY THEATRE

By William Alley

**F**ROM 1908 TO 1928, during the era of the silent screen, Medford saw more than a dozen theaters come and go. From the modest beginnings of the hand-cranked projector behind the Bates brothers' barbershop to George Hunt's luxurious Craterian, residents had a choice of "Shrines of the Silent Arts" where they could watch their favorite stars. It was not until 1930, however, that the first movie palace designed specifically for sound motion pictures opened for business in the Rogue Valley.

Speculation ran rampant when, in November 1929, workers began making preparations for laying a foundation on the corner of Sixth Street and Holly. Sixth Street had only recently become one of Medford's

main thoroughfares. It was not paved from the Pacific Highway to Oakdale until 1927, and since then had attracted much of the local expansion of the business district. Most believed that a new office building was going to go up; a few guessed that it would be a new theater. All that was known at the time was that the vacant lot belonged to John Niedermeyer and that Earl Fehl's construction crews were performing the work. "Efforts to learn today just what kind of structure is going to arise on the site proved unavailing," according to the *Medford Mail Tribune*. The taciturn Fehl, carrying the rolled building plans under his arm, refused to answer any and all questions put to him, stating merely that a public announcement on

the project would be made in "due course."<sup>1</sup>

The following day a few more small details leaked out, including the information that Niedermeyer's new building would be sheathed in the same brick used in constructing Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and that its cost was estimated at \$55,000. Fehl, the man in charge at the site, maintained his silence. Meanwhile, a large steam shovel arrived on site to begin excavating the foundation.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until November 26 that Niedermeyer made his much-anticipated announcement. The site, he announced, would be occupied by a new, three-story brick theater building, costing an estimated \$100,000: \$60,000 for the building and the



remainder to be spent on the theater furnishings. The new structure was designed by local architect Frank C. Clark. In addition to the theater, the first floor would also have space for four retail shops along Sixth Street. The second floor would contain office space, and the third floor would be used by the theater operator. At the time of this announcement, no lease had yet been signed with a theater operator.<sup>3</sup>

Almost from its inception, however, this new theater began to encounter problems, a condition that would seem to plague the structure for many of its early years. At some point in 1928, Niedermeyer and Fehl had first begun excavating the site for a theater but were soon forced to abandon their plans. In December 1929, shortly after the current work was commenced, the City Council ordered a halt to construction, claiming that no permit had been approved for the now nearly completed foundation. Fehl had apparently begun work under the old permit issued for the previous project. Although Fehl immediately acquired the necessary permits to continue, a large crowd had by that time gathered at the site, believing the contractor to be "in contempt of the city edict." The quick resolution of the controversy undoubtedly disappointed some spectators, who had apparently expected the volatile Fehl to challenge the city's order.<sup>4</sup>

After Niedermeyer's announcement that the new building would indeed house a theater, those interested began to wonder just who the operator might be. One report began circulating that the new theater had been leased to Warner Bros., for the exhibition of their movies. Medford's other two major theaters had recently been sold to the Fox Theater Company by George Hunt, who for many years dominated local theatrical circles. This rumor was soon put to rest with the announcement that the lease for the new theater had been signed with Walter H. Leverette, with the stipulation that the building must be completed by April 1, 1930.<sup>5</sup>

Leverette was an active and influential member of Medford's business community. Born in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1889, Leverette arrived in Medford around 1921 and entered into the real estate business. During his career he served as president of the Medford Realty Board and chairman of the Medford Planning

Commission, and was a charter member of Medford's Rotary Club. An avid booster of the region, Leverette was credited with coining several widely used promotional slogans, including "Sun Sugared Pears" and "It's a Great Country."<sup>6</sup>

Leverette became interested in the theater business in the late 1920s, at the dawn of the talking picture era, when he partnered with George A. Roy and opened up theaters in Grants Pass and Eugene. When construction was completed on the Leverette Block at Central and Eighth, one of the new tenants was the State Theater, owned and operated by Roy and Leverette.<sup>7</sup>

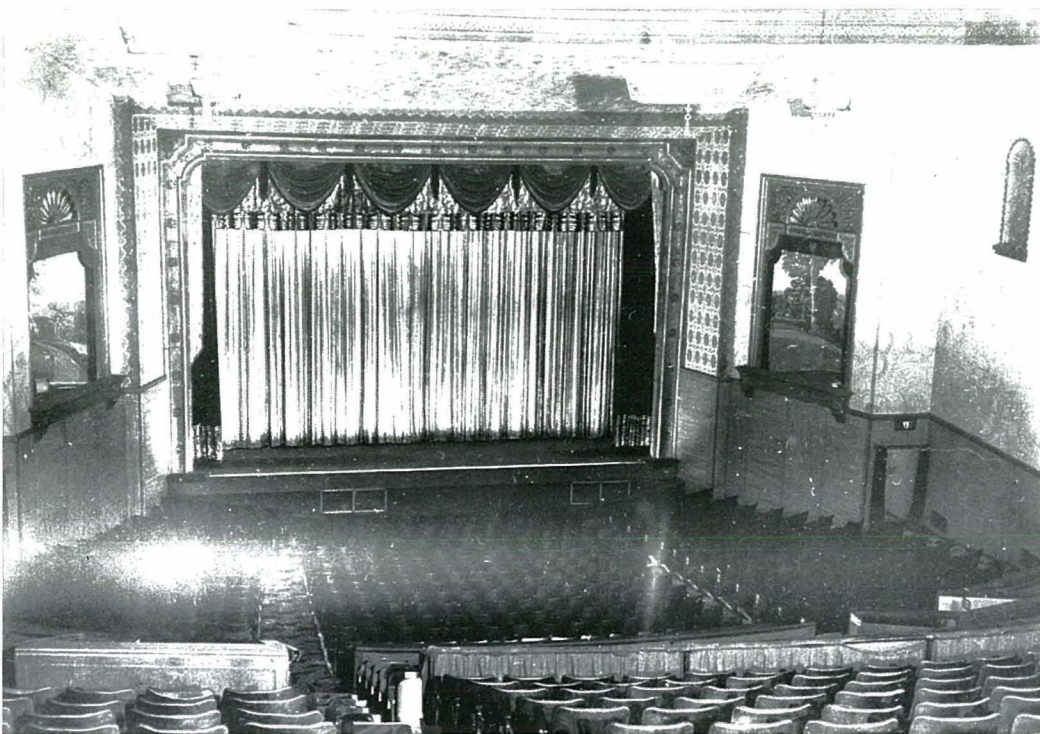
As the walls of Niedermeyer's new theater building went up, it was announced that the new theater would be named the Holly, for the street that ran alongside it. Earl Davis was hired by Leverette to serve as the new theater's acting manager. As late as the last week of February 1930, it was felt that construction was well on track and that there would be no problem meeting the April 1 deadline for completion.<sup>8</sup>

Another of the series of mishaps that would plague the Holly, however, led to a temporary halt in construction. The Holly's contractor, Fehl, had earned a reputation as a controversial individual, and was "well known as a continual litigant of nuisance lawsuits and a perennially unsuccessful candidate for mayor." In addition to his contracting business, Fehl was publisher and editor of *The Pacific Record Herald*, a local weekly newspaper, where he "earned a nasty reputation for character assassination." On a number of occasions, critical remarks, often aimed at city and county government, led to libel suits being filed. Such was the case in February 1930, when plaintiffs brought four counts of libel against him, forcing a suspension of construction on the Holly Theatre building. During the trial in March, two of the counts were dropped and the other two brought acquittals from the jury. Work soon resumed on the Holly.<sup>9</sup>

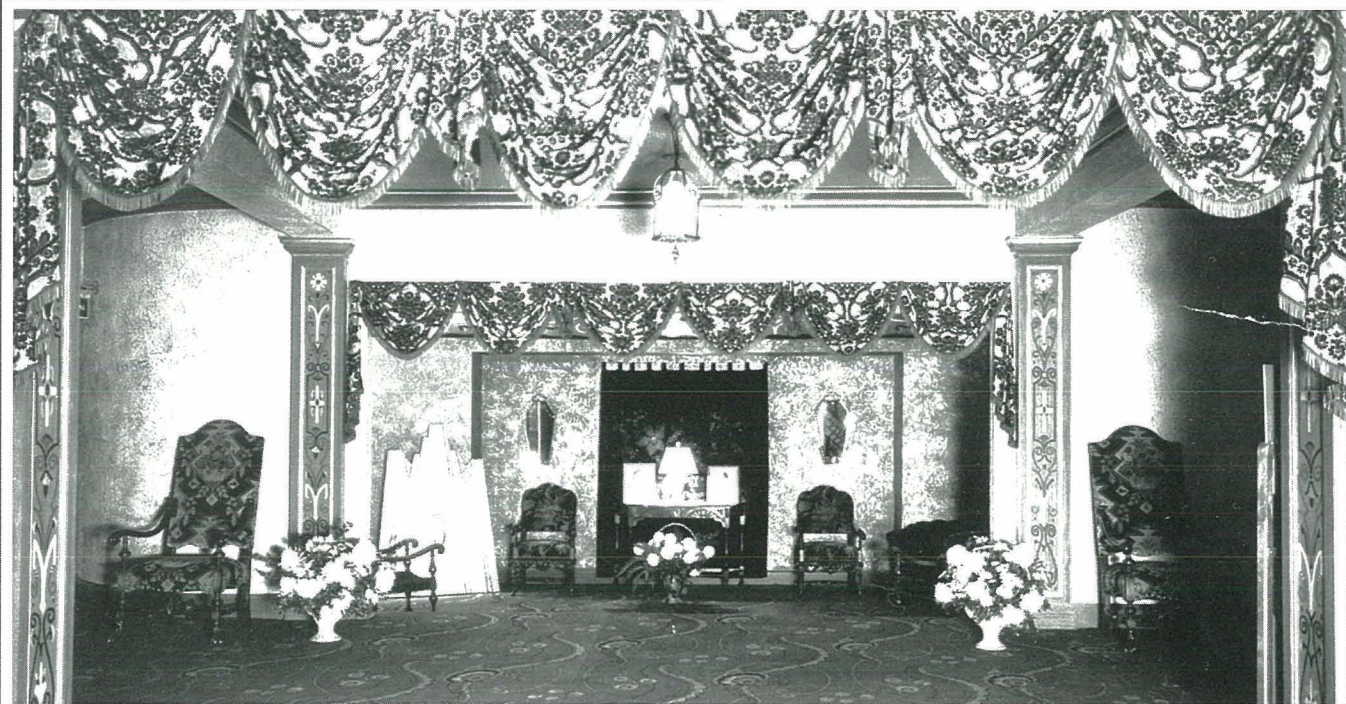
With his legal troubles behind him for the time being, Fehl was able to turn his full attention to the completion of the Holly Theatre building. As the building neared completion, it was announced that the Holly's grand opening would be held on August 29. Louis Ebert, representing the Seattle-based National Theater Association, was placed in charge of the Holly's interior design. Ebert had recently completed a similar job on Leverette's new Broadway Theater in Yreka.<sup>10</sup>

As work on the Holly's interior progressed, leases were let on the office spaces available in the building. Dr. David A. Chambers moved his optometry practice into the corner suite on the first floor, and Dr. Emmett Carpenter opened up a chiropractic clinic on the second floor. On the third floor Dr. Charles E. Kunz equipped three treatment rooms for his dental practice.<sup>11</sup>

Frank Clark was the architect for the Holly Theatre Building, which opened at Sixth and Holly in Medford in 1930, opposite. It is shown here featuring the 1934 film, *Lady from Shanghai*. At left, because it was Medford's first theater built specifically for talking pictures, the Holly's owner consulted acoustics experts to make the most of the theater's sound qualities. The Holly was also the first in the region to feature stage curtains and lighting controlled from the projection room.







SOHS #14143

The elegant décor of the Holly Theatre lobby enhanced patrons' sense of the "fairy tale" experience of going to the movies in 1930.

Excitement grew as the long-anticipated opening of the new Holly Theatre drew near. Bliss Hein, local artist and decorating specialist, was retained as the "official decorator" for the Holly's grand opening, and the city's Committee on Streets approved Leverette's application to decorate Sixth Street with flags and banners. On the corner of the building a thirty-three foot pylon sign, reputed to be the largest in the state outside of Portland, hinted at the luxury inside.<sup>12</sup>

Many had watched as the Holly building went up, but it wasn't until the *Medford Mail Tribune* printed a special opening-day "Holly Theatre section" that many of the details of the Holly's special appointments became widely known. After purchasing tickets at the booth in front, patrons entered at the middle of the building on Sixth Street, passing under a large metal marquee into the foyer. There the floor was covered with a plush, brilliantly colored carpet in a water weave design. This foyer opened up into a larger room the width of the building, which provided access to the 1,200-seat auditorium and the balcony. All the rooms featured walnut-tone woodwork with highlights of gold and red. Doors and pilasters feature painted scroll patterns.<sup>13</sup>

The very latest in motion-picture projection and sound systems had been installed in the new Holly, including a pair of Super Simplex projectors and Western Electric's latest equipment to exhibit any type of sound picture. The Holly's sound system was also capable of broadcasting live performances over the radio. The Holly was also the first theater in the Pacific Northwest where the curtains and all lights were operated directly from the projection room. Acoustics were of paramount concern to the Holly's owners, and two of the country's leading acoustics firms had been consulted during the building's construction.<sup>14</sup>

The safety of the Holly's patrons was also made an integral part of the building's design, and many of the latest fire safety innovations were incorporated into the building's plans. The projection room was completely fireproof, and rested on its own

concrete and steel supports. In case of fire, all doors and windows would close automatically, and an asbestos fire curtain would drop into place. To prevent the Holly from filling up with smoke, the skylights would open to allow the smoke to billow out with the assistance of ceiling fans.<sup>15</sup>

For the opening performance, Leverette booked a musical comedy titled *Hold Everything*, starring Joe E. Brown. This all-talking early Technicolor production, utilizing the new Vitaphone sound process, was ideally suited for the Holly's premiere as the region's first movie house designed specifically for talking pictures. Accompanying this movie was a local entertainment revue dubbed the "Holly's Follies." Demand for the opening performance was so high that all available tickets had been sold by noon. A second, midnight, showing was quickly scheduled to accommodate the overflow. Tickets for this second performance would go on sale at 9:00.<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly the biggest hit of the theater's grand opening was the Holly's Follies, which preceded the featured film. The Follies featured fifty local performers in "snappy revue" directed by George Olsen, the Holly's advertising manager. The musical arrangements for the Follies were under the direction of Wilson Waite, the high school band instructor, and the set was the work of local artist Tom Swem. The Follies proved to be so popular that new versions would be prepared for the Holly's first and second anniversaries.<sup>17</sup>

After a highly successful grand opening, things appeared to run smoothly for the Holly, and the difficulties faced during construction appeared to be a thing of the past. Unfortunately, however, the economy continued to decline and attendance figures at the Holly, as with theaters nationwide, proved worrisome. In the spring of 1931, Leverette took steps to improve the Holly's profits. First, he pulled the plug on a brief attempt to stage vaudeville performances. In May, the Holly followed the lead of competing theaters and lowered admission prices to entice attendance. That summer, however, misfortune again struck the Holly, when the owners were sued for \$50,000 by a projectionist injured on the job.<sup>18</sup>

Leverette and Niedermeyer (who now served as manager of the Holly), were again confronted with a crisis late the following year. Back in 1929, George Hunt had sold all of his Medford

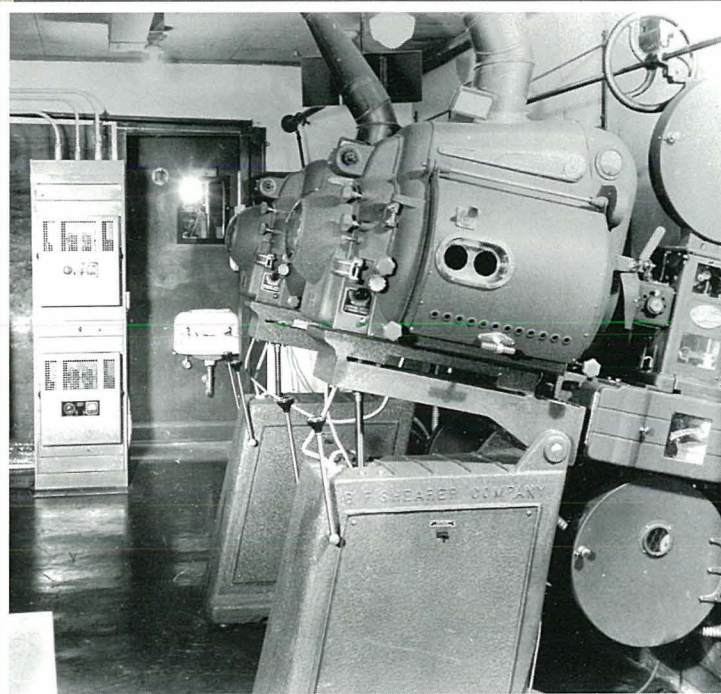


theaters to the Fox West Coast Theater Company. By 1932 Fox, which also controlled a piece of the film distribution business, had begun to make it difficult for Leverette, as well as other independent movie houses, to obtain quality first-run movies, giving preference to the local theaters they owned. Unable to secure the movies they needed, Niedermeyer announced that he would temporarily close the Holly after the last performance on December 10, 1932. An ad was placed in the *Mail Tribune* explaining the closure. "Inability to secure sufficient and suitable pictures to continue operation has forced us to close the Holly Theatre," the ad read. "This condition has been brought about by the recent actions of Fox West Coast Theaters, whereby we have been stopped from securing film services upon which we were dependent."<sup>19</sup>

For much of 1933 the Holly remained dark. Ironically, the bleak economic conditions that prevailed would soon come to the theater's aid. In February 1933, Fox West Coast Theaters was forced to declare bankruptcy, and the courts issued an order returning Fox's Medford holdings to their former owner, George Hunt. Freed from having to compete with Fox-owned theaters, the Holly was soon able to secure movies from the distributors once again.<sup>20</sup>

During the period that the Holly was closed down, the owners embarked on a major remodeling project, with new paint, seats, and other improvements. Re-opening would be on Saturday, September 30. In addition to remodeling the theater itself, the Holly also underwent a business reorganization. Niedermeyer hired Ernest E. Marsh as the new manager and reorganized under the name Medford Amusement Company. Apparently Leverette's Pacific States Theater Company had severed its connection with the Holly during the period that the theater was closed. The new Medford Amusement Company was affiliated with the Fox Evergreen Theater circuit.<sup>21</sup>

It was not too long after the Holly's re-opening that the bad fortune that seemed to dog the Holly re-appeared. At a meeting of the Kiwanis in February 1934, Marsh announced that the lease to operate the Holly had been acquired by George Hunt. With attendance at all local theaters down because of the Great Depression, Medford had an excess of theater seating capacity.



SOHS #4178

From the start, the Holly projection room featured the latest in projection technology, and was designed to prevent fire from spreading to the theater beyond, if catastrophe should strike.

Now in control of the Holly, Hunt's first decision was to close the theater after the last performance on March 2. It would be eight years before the Holly would again operate on a daily schedule.<sup>22</sup>

During this period the Holly was, from time to time, aired out and opened up for special occasions to accommodate overflow crowds. Having the Holly available enabled Hunt to hold over a particularly popular movie without disrupting the schedule at either the Rialto or his flagship theater, the Craterian. One such case was in the fall of 1936, when *The Great Ziegfeld*, starring William

Powell and Myrna Loy, was booked at the Craterian. "To accommodate the crowds that are expected to see the attraction at popular prices," Hunt announced, "it has been decided to also have one evening show Sunday at the Holly Theatre."<sup>23</sup>

Hunt temporarily re-opened the Holly in November 1936, while the Craterian underwent a major renovation. For the duration of the remodeling, the Craterian's scheduled attractions were exhibited at the Holly. When the "New Craterian" re-opened to the public on December 27, 1936, the Holly was quickly closed down.<sup>24</sup>

The Holly's friendly and professional staff included faces familiar to many Medford moviegoers in 1932.



SOHS #14147



It would take America's entry into World War II to revive the Holly. Out on the Agate Desert an army base—Camp White—was under construction, and the promise of thousands of soldiers, eager for entertainment while off duty, convinced Hunt that it was time to re-open the Holly on a regular basis. On April 4, 1942, the Holly began operating on a weekend-only schedule, featuring, appropriately, the "socko entertainment" of *Call Out the Marines*, starring Victor McLaglen. Admission was thirty cents for matinees and forty cents for evening performances; soldiers, "in accordance to established custom," were admitted for a quarter. The following month the Holly resumed a full, daily schedule of operations. The long period of darkness was over.<sup>25</sup>

Misfortune, however, never seemed too far away from the Holly Theatre. On August 31, 1943, George Hunt was killed in an automobile accident. His family decided against continuing the operation of his business, which included theaters in Medford, Grants Pass, and Roseburg. Hunt's widow ultimately sold her holdings in the Hunt Theater Company to another theater chain, Leverette Interstate Theaters, in early 1945. The Hunt

Service, and Leverette was eventually convicted of income tax evasion and sentenced to a term in prison.<sup>28</sup>

Leverette's trials and tribulations seemed to signal an end to the string of misfortunes that had long plagued the Holly Theatre. Under the management of Oregon-California Theaters, the Holly provided uninterrupted entertainment for the residents of Southern Oregon. When Lippert died in 1976, his partner Charles Maestri took charge of the theaters, including the Holly. A decade later, citing sagging attendance, the Maestri organization announced that it was going to close the Holly on October 27, 1986. In August 1996, the Holly building, which had been stripped of many of its furnishings, was purchased by Val-Art, a California corporation. The future of the Holly remains uncertain, especially after Medford building safety officials learned in late December 2002 that one of the building's main roof trusses was failing. The city ordered the building evacuated, and told the owner the truss had to be repaired, or the building was to be demolished.

*William Alley is a certified archivist and historian.*



Playing at the Holly in this photograph was the 1930 Joe E. Brown comedy musical *Top Speed*, about a clerk who pretends to be a millionaire.

Company was later dissolved. Control had come full circle back to the Holly's original operator.<sup>26</sup>

Leverette did not hold onto the Holly for very long, however. In December 1946, Leverette Interstate Theaters was purchased by Oregon-California Theaters, Inc., an independent chain of theaters owned by Robert L. Lippert, for a reported \$500,000. This sale would not, however, mark the end of Leverette's Holly connection and the seemingly endless string of crises associated with the movie house. Within a few months of the sale of his theaters, Walter Leverette found himself in court.<sup>27</sup>

Leverette's legal problems began with a civil suit, filed in federal court in Portland, by eight major Hollywood production companies. The suit alleged that Leverette Interstate Theaters falsified admissions accounts, thereby underpaying the studios, which based their royalties on a theater's gross receipts. Plaintiffs included 20th Century Fox, United Artists, Warner Bros., Paramount, Columbia, Universal RKO, and Loews, Inc. This civil action led to an investigation by the Internal Revenue

#### ENDNOTES

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2. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 23 November 1929.
3. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 26 November, 1929.
4. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 22 November 1929; 18 December 1929.
5. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 24 December 1929.
6. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 17 April 1929; 25 July 1929.
7. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 25 June 1963; *Who's Who in Oregon, 1936-1937* (Portland: Capitol Publishing) p. 335.
8. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 24 February 1930.
9. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 17 March 1930; 21 March 1930. *Land in Common, An Illustrated History of Jackson County* (Medford: Southern Oregon Historical Society, 1993) p.89. This would not be the end of Fehl's controversial career. In 1932 he would be elected county judge, with close ties to Llewellyn Banks and the Good Government Congress. He was sent to prison for his role in the theft of ballots associated with the murder by Banks of Medford Constable George Prescott in 1933.
10. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 30 June 1930.
11. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 29 August 1930.
12. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 21 August 1930; 29 August 1930.
13. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 29 August 1930.
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17. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 26 August 1930; 29 August 1930; 31 August 1932.
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21. *Medford Mail Tribune*, 26 September 1933; 29 September 1933.
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# Snider's Dairy

By David Scafani

**T**HE ROOTS OF MEDFORD'S first successful commercial dairy were planted with the arrival of John and Maude Snider in Medford in December of 1904. John had proposed marriage to Maude in Xenia, Ohio, with the idea they would move to Medford and manage the Warner Ranch west of town on the road to Jacksonville. She accepted, and one week later they were married and on a train headed west to Oregon.

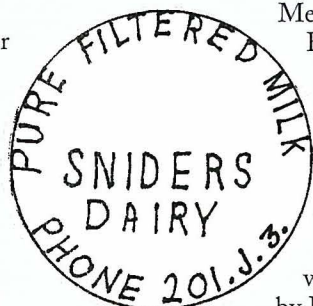
Upon arriving in Medford, they found their house had not yet been completed. So they stayed at the Nash Hotel. John completed the house in 1905. It still stands at what is now 2241 West Main Street between Rosario's and the 7-Eleven Store.

The business was known as Warner and Snyder [sic] until late in 1910. The Snider's sold milk, dairy products, and chickens both locally and to the Southern Pacific Railroad. The first phone number was Farmers 2148 but that changed in 1910 to 7118. This phone number shows on the first known photograph taken of John and his delivery wagon circa 1910 or 1911.

In 1911, the name Medford Dairy first appears in the phone directory with John Snider as the proprietor. The spelling of John's last name seems to be changing, although as late as 1913 an advertisement in the county fair brochure spells the name Snyder.

In 1912, John and Maude moved the Medford Dairy farther west to the former Ish Ranch, then owned by William H.

Gore, the president of Medford National Bank. The new Jacksonville Road address came with a new telephone number of 201 J3.



Embossed milk bottle from 1916 - 1918.

At first, the Sniders' 250 cows were hand-milked by John and a crew of Swiss milkmen who yodeled to the cows, in the belief that it

encouraged them to yield more milk. However, there is no record of any change in production when machine milking was introduced. The milk was filtered through cheesecloth to clean it before delivery to the customer.

Before 1910 all milk deliveries in the Medford area were made door to door using a wagon loaded with five-gallon cans and a ladle to dip out the milk for the customer. The first known embossed milk bottle in Medford was used by Southern Dairy in 1910-1911. Medford Dairy bottles probably were first used in 1912. The Sniders' first order was for 1,500 bottles.

Maude got up every morning at 2:30 to cook breakfast and make preparations for lunch and dinner. She often rode the

wagon with John on his morning milk deliveries, sometimes returning half frozen.

The two Snider children were born during the years at the Gore Ranch on what is now Pioneer Road; Mary was born in 1913, and John in 1918. Their playmates were the children of the ranch hands. Some of the hands, such as one fellow everyone knew as Little George, would bring back Hershey bars for the children when they went to town.

In 1916, the dairy's name was changed to Snider's Dairy. In the middle of 1918, the Sniders bought the Independence Creamery at 601 North Grape Street for expanded processing. The phone number at the creamery was 755R. D. O.

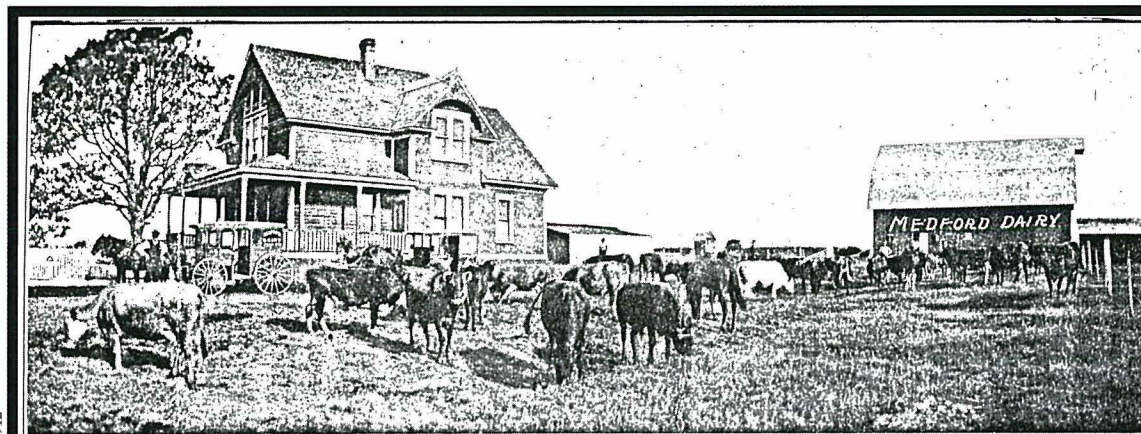
Frederick was hired to run the creamery. John and Maude continued to live at the Gore Ranch until 1921, when they left the ranch to move into town on Pennsylvania Avenue. In October 1921, they bought a larger creamery from Eldridge Dairy at 28-32 North Bartlett, with a new phone number of 203. They also opened a short-lived branch at 319 South King Street in Ashland. Another branch was opened in Grants Pass in 1926, but it didn't last long either.

After John died in 1930, the North Bartlett Street address remained the heart of the business for Maude and her children, who added produce and soda to their dairy product line. Originally they bottled Whistle Soda, Green River, Sunkist, root beer, and seltzer water. They even had a soda bottle and two different bottles designed for their business.

Eventually they became Medford's first Pepsi Cola distributor. In 1963, the creamery was sold to Arden Farms Co., but John Jr. and Mary continued in the Pepsi bottling and distributing business. Maude Snider passed away in 1970.

*David Scafani is a retired teacher, and the author of "The Bottles of Jackson County."*

This advertisement pictures the Medford Dairy in 1921 on West Main Street. The home, built for John and Maude Snider in 1905, still stands next to Rosario's.



## Medford Dairy Pure Filtered Milk and Cream

Tel. Pacific 201 L J 3 Home 285 M

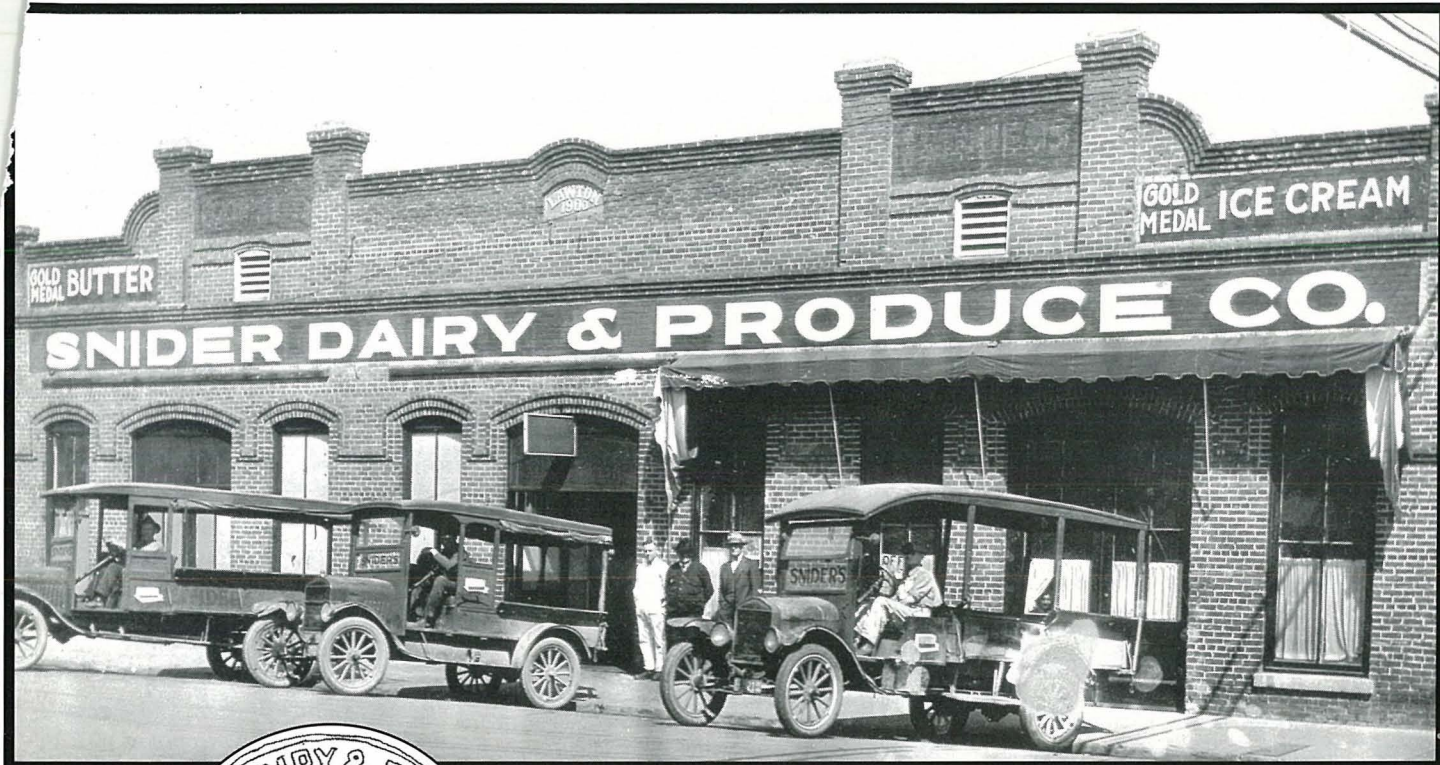
JACKSONVILLE ROAD

Wholesale and Retail

Fresh Buttermilk Churned Daily

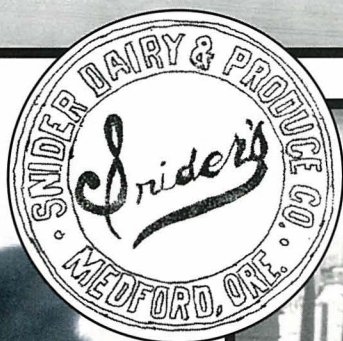
Free Delivery to all parts of city



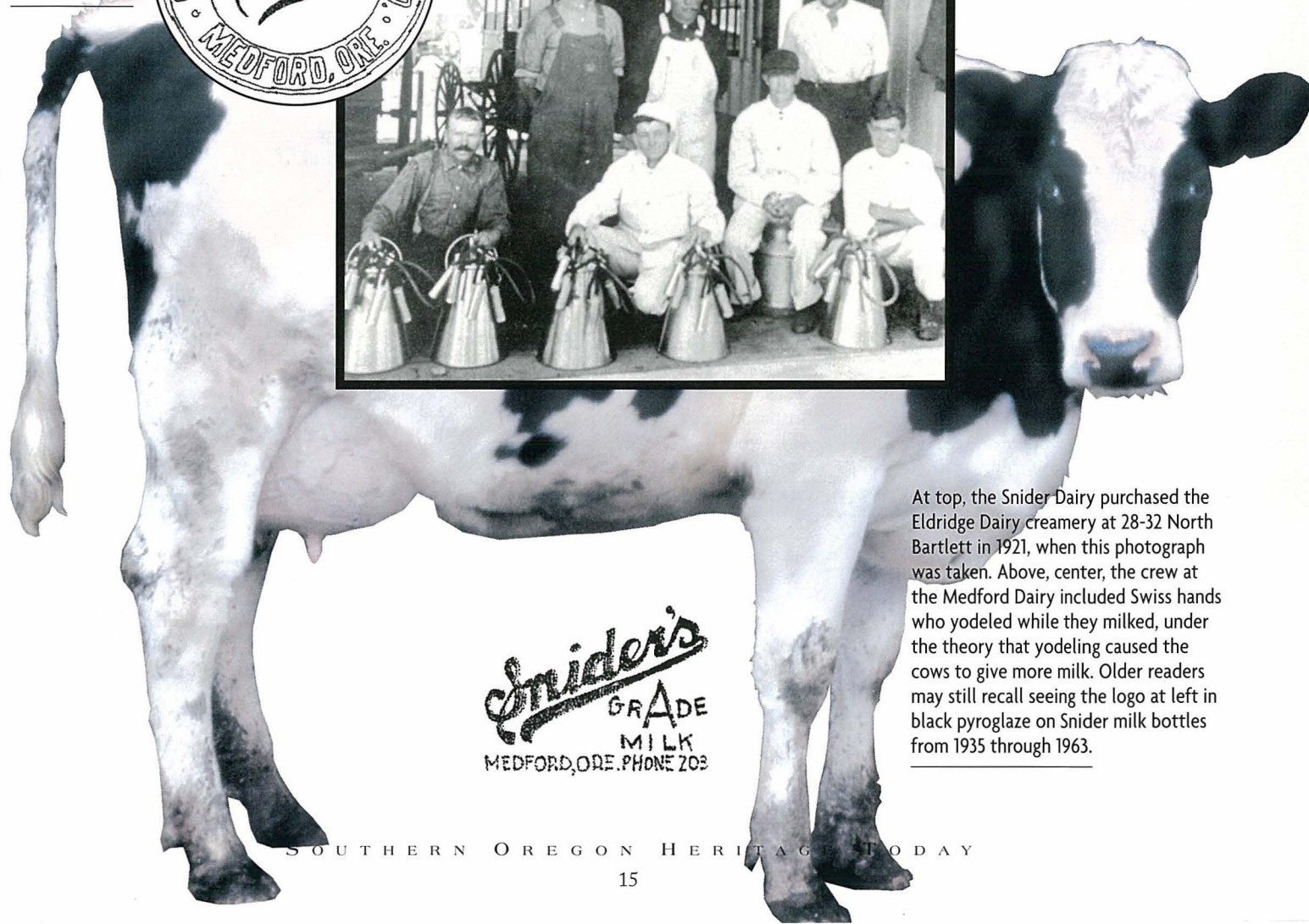


SOHS #9696

The Sniders sold  
seltzer siphons  
etched with this logo  
from 1921 - 1935.



SOHS #2597



*Snider's*  
GRADE  
MILK  
MEDFORD, ORE. PHONE 203

At top, the Snider Dairy purchased the Eldridge Dairy creamery at 28-32 North Bartlett in 1921, when this photograph was taken. Above, center, the crew at the Medford Dairy included Swiss hands who yodeled while they milked, under the theory that yodeling caused the cows to give more milk. Older readers may still recall seeing the logo at left in black pyroglaze on Snider milk bottles from 1935 through 1963.



# Yew: Tree of Death, Tree of Life

By Donn L. Todt and Nan Hannon



## ONE OF THE OLDEST

known wooden artifacts is made from yew. Found in the gravels of the River Thames in England, the sharp-pointed implement is an astounding 500,000 years old, made by an ancestor of modern humans before *Homo sapiens sapiens* evolved. Significantly, it is a weapon: a spear point, demonstrating the almost unfathomable antiquity of the association of the yew tree with the battle and the hunt.

The yew was recognized as the best bow wood by peoples throughout the Northern Hemisphere. At the same time that the Native Americans of Southern Oregon shot deer, elk, and fish with their yew weapons, peoples of Japan, China, the Himalayas, Turkey, and Europe also favored bows made of yew.

In the moist portions of the Pacific Northwest, hunters and warriors from maritime Canada through Northern California sought yew for bows. The Klamath Indians, who had easy access to juniper for bow wood, nevertheless made regular journeys west into the Rogue River drainage to obtain superior yew for bows. One of the earliest historic accounts of yew bows used by the Shasta Indians of Southern Oregon and Northern California was made by William Brackenridge in 1841. He wrote of an encounter in Southern Siskiyou County. "Had visit of Shaste Indians at Camp, who conducted themselves with great propriety. [They] sold us fish, Bows and Arrows for Knives, buttons, &c. These bows are made of Yew tree. ... These weapons are well made and [they] use them with great dexterity,

particularly in shooting fish, and for my own part I would as soon at one hundred yards distance, have a musket discharged at me as an arrow from one of these Indian Bows."<sup>1</sup>

In Europe, yew bows, long used for hunting, eventually became the war weapon of choice, particularly for the English, who developed the longbow as a long-range agent of death. The origin of the term "yeoman" for the armed citizens of England derives from yew. A yeoman is literally a man armed with yew. Robin Hood's longbow was of yew, and the superiority of the English longbow proved itself again and again on the killing fields of Europe.

Those familiar with the yew as an ideal bow wood were also familiar with its poisonous properties. Plant lore of classical times emphasizes the potentially deadly properties of the yew. All parts of the plant are poisonous, except for the sweetish red flesh surrounding the seed. Even the Latin name for the yew genus, *Taxus*, has the root meaning "toxic." With its poisonous properties and its effectiveness on European battlefields, yew held a strong association with death. The yew's dark presence in European cemeteries, including those dating to the pre-Christian era, only reinforced its deadly symbolism. European folklore speaks of yew trees in cemeteries whispering messages from the dead.

The yew tree also whispers of immortality. Its evergreen habit, its great

longevity, and its resistance to decay elevated the yew to a symbol of life beyond the grave. In Europe, yew was a preferred coffin wood.

The close relationship between the yew's toxicity and its medicinal properties was rediscovered by medical researchers in 1979, using samples of yew gathered from the Pacific Northwest. A chemical compound of the tree, now known by the trade name Taxol, prevents cancer cells from dividing. It is particularly effective against ovarian cancer, breast cancer, and malignant melanoma. The Food and Drug Administration approved Taxol as an anti-cancer drug in 1992.

From ancient weapon to modern medicine, from the graveyard to immortality, no tree has more associations with both death and life than the yew. ☙

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

### ENDNOTE

1. William Brackenridge, "The Brackenridge Journal," O.B. Sperlin (ed.), *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 1930, Vol. 21, p. 223.



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