

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

Summer 2005 Vol. 7, No. 3

Today

SOME OF THE BEST CITIZENS:
Intolerance in Southern Oregon

COMUNIDAD EN TRANSICION:
Mexican Migrants In Southern Oregon

MOUNTAIN OF MYSTERY

SIKH IMMIGRANTS:
Taking Their Place In Southern Oregon History

A QUESTION OF LOYALTY





From the Director

Dear SOHS members and friends:

This issue of *Southern Oregon Heritage Today* is unique, in that it deals exclusively with the issue of race in Southern Oregon, a sometimes controversial and heated topic, and one that has frequently been downplayed as we examine the history of our region. And that's exactly why we wanted to take it on.

From the mistreatment of Native Americans by immigrant white settlers to the relocation of Japanese residents to camps just across the California border, from the use (and abuse) of illegal Mexican laborers in the Rogue Valley's orchards to the racism displayed toward Chinese miners and laborers in Jacksonville, from the intolerance shown African Americans in 21st century Medford, Ashland or Eagle Point to the slavery and warfare between Indian tribes during the pre-contact era, the fabric of Southern Oregon society has often been torn, tattered, and tested by intolerance, racism, ignorance, and hate.

It is the Southern Oregon Historical Society's obligation to tell these stories, even if some people may not wish to hear or read about them. We do so here not with any intention to divide or demonize, rather to help our readers understand that we are all part of a greater whole, a common heritage, and that one does not heal and grow by denying an often conflict-ridden, complicated past.

Most are stories from the past; some are more present-day. I especially want to thank D.L. Richardson for telling his story of what it's like for an African-American man to arrive to a new posting in Southern Oregon. It's an important story, told with sensitivity, compassion, and great patience.

On another topic, our 2005 Membership Campaign continues during the first part of July. I urge all members and friends of the Society to help us meet our goal of 500 new members. Ask a friend, a coworker, a colleague if they, too, will support our worthy goal of collecting, promoting, and sharing the stories and artifacts of our common heritage.

John Enders
Executive Director



ON THE COVER

PHOTO BY ANTHONY DIMAGGIO

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SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

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A WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY.

JACKSON COUNTY can be justly termed a white man's county. Of the 25,756 persons enumerated by the census last May, all but 173 were white. There were all told 25,583 whites, 56 negroes, 5 Indians, 84 Chinese and 28 Japanese.

Racially speaking, Oregon is a white state. Of the 672,765 persons counted, 655,610 were whites. Negroes numbered 1526, Indians 5001, Chinese 7317, Japs 3286, Hawaiians 18, Filipinos 4 and Koreans 3.

An overwhelming majority of Oregon whites are American born. The percentage of illiteracy is very small. Oregon ranks high in the list of real American states, and its political independence and political progressiveness are probably due to this fact.

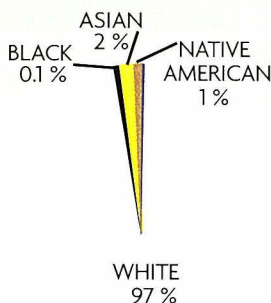
The bold, enterprising and adventurous have ever led the human race in its westward march. The daring spirit of the pathfinder has created in Oregon a state untrammelled by traditions and unfettered by caste or custom, a community self dependent and self reliant, unafraid to attempt experiments or to work out its destiny along original lines, to the end that democracy be freed from its taints, the ills of the body politic be cared for, and a government of, by and for the people be established.

Hence Oregon leads the states and is politically, as well as racially, a white man's country.

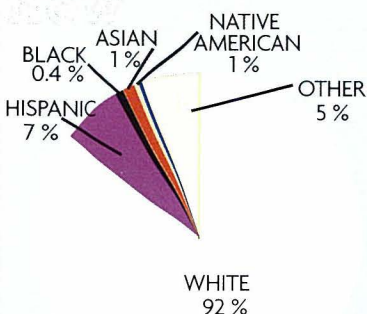
Census Figures 1900 & 2000

CENSUS 1900 — OREGON —

TOTAL	672,765
White	655,610
■ Black	1,526
□ Hispanic	n/a
■ Asian	10,603
■ Native American	5,001
■ Pacific Islander	25



We chose a county to state comparison because in 1900, in Jackson County, all minorities together added up to less than 0%.



CENSUS 2000 JACKSON COUNTY

TOTAL	181,269
White	166,125
■ Black	724
■ Hispanic	12,126
■ Asian	1,631
■ Native American	1,960
■ Pacific Islander	322

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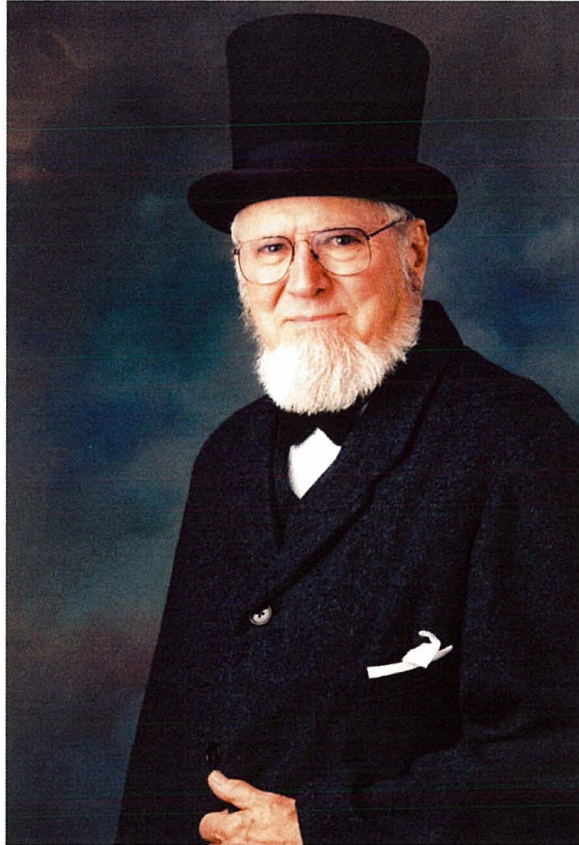
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In Memory of David Rishell



David Rishell as Mr. Beekman.

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DAVID RISHELL OF JACKSONVILLE, WHO PORTRAYED MR. BEEKMAN for SOHS, died on May 22, 2005. David was a part of the Southern Oregon Historical Society family. For thirteen years, he portrayed the character of Cornelius Beekman at Historical Society events and sites – mostly in Jacksonville, but also at Hanley Farm and at the History Center in Medford.

When David first applied for the job, he was told to come back once he'd grown a beard. After he did so, he immersed himself in the life and work of Mr. Beekman. He became Mr. Beekman. And in a larger sense, he became Mr. Jacksonville.

David was a profoundly dignified gentleman whose poise, quick wit, and manners illuminated the life of Cornelius Beekman and took us back in time to life in Jacksonville in 1911. Sincerity of character, motive, and action were some of the fine qualities he shared with the real C.C. Beekman.

He was always ready with a hug, words of praise and encouragement, and often, a joke. He affected many of us in a deeply personal way and became a cherished friend and confidante to some.

David will be deeply missed by the many staff and volunteers who worked with him as "Beek" through the years. 🏠



*A Creek Runs Through It:
Jackson Creek Past and Present*

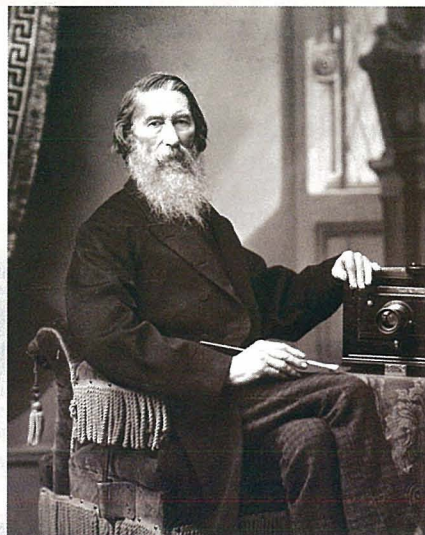
The **SOHS Annual Members Meeting** was held Sunday, June 5, at Hanley Farm. It was a rousing success with over 150 members and guests in attendance. Bluegrass music filled the air, courtesy of the Gold River Band, and the Outback Steakhouse of Medford provided a delicious steak and chicken barbecue with all the fixings. The guest speaker for the evening was Charlie Boyer, president of the Southern Oregon Draft and Harness Association, who discussed plans for the restoration of Jackson Creek. Though the weather threatened to put a damper on the evening, the clouds passed, the winds died down, and all had a grand time. If you couldn't make it this year, we hope you'll make plans to join us in 2006.

e x h i b i t s

NOW AT THE JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM

5TH & C STREETS, JACKSONVILLE

PETER BRITT
THE MAN BEYOND THE CAMERA



MUSEUM HOURS:

The Jacksonville and Children's Museum hours are
Wednesday through Sunday, 10am to 5pm.
Admission is free Wednesdays from 2pm to 5pm.

Some of the Best Citizens:

Intolerance in Southern Oregon

By James J. Phillips, Ph.D.

A COMMON ASSUMPTION ABOUT Southern Oregon is that the area's racial homogeneity and intolerance dissuaded "minorities" from coming here—"a tough spot with a nice climate," as a local newspaper article said in 1945. But the real history of Southern Oregon is one of diversity. Long before others arrived, Native Americans were already a population of different peoples and tribes.

By the nineteenth century, other groups were converging on Southern Oregon from all directions. From the north came British, French Canadian, and Russian explorers, fur trappers, and traders. From the south came Mexican explorers, mule-packers, and cowboys (vaqueros).³ Farmers, peasants, ranchers, traders, shepherds, gold miners, and missionaries came from the eastern United States, as well as from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Italy, Greece, the Basque country, and elsewhere in Europe. From across the Pacific came Chinese peasants, Japanese farmers, and Hawaiian seamen and carpenters.⁴

Gold, land, and railroad building brought many of them. Some came as the slaves or indentured servants of others. Still others wanted to leave behind slavery or the "slave question" in the eastern United States. The interactions of all of these diverse peoples were not always peaceful or harmonious. Although they shared some common traits, they also had many differences.

Intolerance was one reaction to the tensions of a society where very different groups struggled with fundamental questions of land, community, survival, and future. Early interactions between white settlers and Native Americans illustrate this. White greed aroused Indian anger. Indian anger, resentment, and acts of desperation fueled white fears. Fear served to justify the taking of Indian lands. Charles Pickett, the federal government's first Indian affairs agent in the Oregon Territory, wrote in 1847: "Self-preserva-

tion here dictates these savages be killed off as soon as possible."⁵

Local whites formed volunteer militias for "self-preservation," but also because making war on Indians was rewarding. "A good crop pays well, but a lively [military] campaign is vastly more lucrative," wrote a militia volunteer.⁶ Intolerance was the product of insecurity, envy, greed, opportunism, ignorance, and fear.

Most people do not like to see themselves as greedy, fearful, or intolerant. They need beliefs and assumptions that justify their actions. Settlers assumed that Native Americans were backward and unable to use the land properly. Instead of productive farming, the Indians only gathered roots and hunted animals. In various forms, this misperception has been used to justify attempts to expel Native Americans from ancestral lands, confine them to reservations, then turn their reservation lands into federally

"This is a white, Protestant, and Gentile man's country, and they are going to run it."¹

—Ku Klux Klan speaker Charles Mathis, Myrtle Creek, 1924



Klu Klux Klan parade marching through Ashland, circa 1925. SOHS#6973

managed forests, and dig into archaeological sites that happen to be in the way of urban development. Reacting to this assumption of white cultural and technological superiority over the Modocs, settler Samuel Clark wrote in the late 1800s:

Such as it was, it does seem as if the Anglo-Saxon greed could have spared [traditional Modoc territory] and passed it by. We may take our cattle there and pasture them, but we cannot make the wilderness to bud and blossom with our own fields and gardens. All the thousand things that were so useful to the Modocs will be useless to us. The birds and fishes, the roots, fruits and berries that gave them subsistence will be lost to all the human family for there will be no more Modocs left to gather and use them.⁷

In fact, traditional Modoc culture used at least ninety-five different varieties of local plants.⁸ Suppositions of white

cultural superiority in Southern Oregon continued well into the twentieth century, as in this assertion by a student of local history in 1927:

The Indians have been benefited... They have been trained... They have learned... When we consider the actual history of these people, their contact with the white race has been a blessing.⁹

Despite such justifications, greed promoted fear. A particularly powerful fear among local whites was that racial minorities would unite and wage bloody war against European settlers. In 1849, Samuel Thurston, who later became Oregon's first congressman, warned, "If allowed to come to Oregon, [blacks] will commingle with our Indians, a mixed race will ensue, and the result will be wars and bloodshed in Oregon."¹⁰ He supported a bill to exclude blacks from the Territory, and later sponsored legislation to ban blacks, Chinese, and native Hawaiians from owning land in Oregon. When Oregon became a state in 1859, these sentiments found legal expression again in the new state's constitution. In this case, white people let themselves believe that blacks were troublemakers responsible for all the fuss over slavery in the eastern United States; and that Native American hostility was a product of black agitation rather than white misdeeds—altogether, a breathtaking denial of responsibility.

Local conditions provided contexts for intolerance. Early mining towns like Jacksonville usually had a more diverse population than farming towns like Ashland, and provided more opportunity for different peoples to interact daily. Women's suffrage leader Abigail Scott Duniway's 1879 lecture tour of the Rogue Valley illustrated the difference between the communities. In Jacksonville, Duniway was pelted with garbage and burned in effigy. Men feared that the extension of women's influence through voting would bring restrictions on male freedoms, including drinking, gambling, and prostitution. People were also angry that Duniway, an outsider, had intervened in a local divorce case against a husband who was a prominent Jacksonville resident.¹¹

In contrast, Ashland and Phoenix gave Duniway a polite hearing, and even offered some support for the idea of women voting—thus showing how much more "civi-



Suffragettes in Ashland, 1917

SOHS#12975

PHOTO BY CHESTER STEVENSON

lized" they were than the rowdy Jacksonville residents. Ashland and Phoenix residents tended to think of Jacksonville as disorderly and full of vice, while they themselves were orderly, Christian, reasonable, and respectful of women as the bearers of civilization. Ironically, they may also have seen Jacksonville's vice as partly a result of its diverse population. That Jacksonville was still the county seat despite the growth of Ashland and Phoenix only added to this local rivalry in which women's voting rights became a pawn.

Real or imagined injuries of social class fed intolerance of minorities. By the 1880s in Southern Oregon, tensions were apparent between poor, hard working people—family farmers and ranchers, loggers, miners, railroad workers, farm hands, and small business owners—and the interests that seemed to control their lives, especially railroad owners, bankers, lawyers, and some owners of large businesses. Whites who felt economic insecurity sometimes translated their concerns into racial terms, and saw people of color as the root of their problems. When farm income declined and railroad shipping costs increased, when banks tightened credit or foreclosed on farm or ranch mortgages, those who suffered were often ready to direct their anger and resentment against those who were closer at hand and more vulnerable. They were seen as agents or pawns of the controlling interests. Most often, they were racial or ethnic minorities.¹²

This pattern, too, has continued into recent years. With the decline of Southern Oregon's logging economy in the area in

the 1970s and 1980s, the number of white supremacist organizations and hate crimes increased. Organizations that monitor racial intolerance reported that white supremacist groups sought recruits especially among laid-off loggers, lumber workers and their families, and others displaced by the economic decline.¹³

Conflict between those with primarily local interests and those with larger national and international interests has provided another context for intolerance. In the late 1800s, business people with interests in trade with China felt those interests jeopardized by the anti-Chinese sentiments and actions of whites who feared the Chinese would take jobs and overrun local culture.¹⁴ The Chinese themselves were scapegoats in an argument that involved local fears, larger ambitions, and different ideas about local and regional economic development. These divergent interests fueled the conflict that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In the early years of the twentieth century, Japanese immigrants in Oregon found themselves in a similar situation.

Libertarianism, populism, and nativism—ideas and movements that have found expression in America's history—have also shaped intolerance in Southern Oregon. Libertarianism emphasized personal choice and freedom from governmental intrusions on personal liberty. Despite their sense of seeking freedom and self-reliance, Southern Oregon's early white settlers were aware of their dependency on the federal government. They relied on the army to protect them, and in later years much of the land came under the control of federal agencies.

Local forms of libertarianism included suspicion of government. Libertarian views defended the rights of minorities, unless government seemed to be imposing those rights on the local community. Then the minority recipients of rights were as likely to be blamed as the government itself. In 1870, the Oregon Legislature rejected the Fifteenth Amendment that guaranteed voting rights to blacks. Some said the amendment was a way for government to manipulate blacks to dilute the power of white voters.¹⁵ In recent years, some anti-government movements and “patriot militias” have taken libertarian thought to the extreme of denying the validity of many constitutional amendments and laws that guarantee and protect the rights of minorities.

Populism represented a larger national movement for social and political reform, and asserted the rights of “ordinary people” against a real or imagined power elite. Populism could be a voice against corruption and for justice for working class people. It could also (and simultaneously) lend its voice to intolerance. In the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan became active in Southern Oregon, portraying itself as a force against political and moral corruption and bootlegging, and a champion of moral reformists and poor rural whites. By 1922, Klansmen and Klan-supported candidates had gained control of the governor’s office, seats in the Legislature, and a variety of local offices in Southern Oregon, including the mayor of Medford. As part of its “reform” message, the Klan condemned Catholics, Jews, and immigrants as anti-democratic agents of corruption, bootlegging, and vice.¹⁶

“Racism is the defense of white privilege,” according to social scientist David Wellman.¹⁷ In the 1980s and 1990s, white supremacist groups in the region, such as White Aryan Resistance, peddled a distorted populism that cast poor white working-class men as victims whose rights suffered from affirmative action to provide equal opportunities for minorities. This message appealed to a sense of frustration over lost privilege or entitlement.

Nativism voiced the fears of social and cultural majorities that they might soon become minorities. It promoted suspicion and antagonism toward any group not deemed “one hundred percent American,” and it condemned some as unfit for

**“This area has never
had a minority problem
because there were
just not enough
of them to make
any difference.”²**

*—longtime Medford
resident, 1979*

American democracy. Nativism has resurfaced often in Southern Oregon, and the targets have been many.¹⁸ In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese were the object of jokes and attacks. Their mining claims could be stolen with impunity. They were often residentially segregated in towns like Jacksonville and Ashland. The state constitution barred them from owning land, voting, or testifying in court. Local whites debated whether the Chinese were fit to be Americans. “The Chinese are not looked upon as human beings, and have no rights that a white man is bound to respect,” according to a white miner in 1862. “Their incomprehensible language, strange customs, and heathen religion make them alien in every sense,” wrote another. In contrast, a northern Californian wrote that, “the China boys will yet vote at the same polls, study at the same schools, and worship at the same altar as our own countrymen.”¹⁹

In 1860, Jackson and Josephine counties began taxing Chinese businesses and mining claims, and stopped trying to enforce laws against Chinese owning property. The next year the two counties collected more than ten thousand dollars in taxes and fees from Chinese businesses and property—a case of economic interest blunting the sharper edges of intolerance. Despite this, Jacksonville’s *Oregon Sentinel* claimed in 1866 that the Chinese, “add nothing to the permanent wealth of the country.”

Catholics were another target of nativism. Many of the first Catholics in Oregon were French Canadians, regarded as sympathetic to British Canada’s claims over Oregon Territory. Later, Catholics were seen as servile agents of the Pope who wanted to control the government. In the 1880s, the American Protective Association condemned the area’s Catholics as drunkards and papal

agents of subversion—“rum, Romanism, and rebellion.”²⁰ In the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan made the area’s Catholics a special target. Rumors and sensationalist accusations fed the fear. An article in the *Klamath Falls Herald* on December 5, 1923, claimed:

The birth of every male child in a Catholic family is celebrated by burying a gun and ammunition beneath the church, in preparation for the day when the government is to be over thrown on behalf of the Pope.²¹

“The cardinal purpose of the Klan is to keep America free from domination by the pope of Rome. Mexico is a country under the domination of the Catholic Church—it is a country of illiterates,” claimed Reverend V. E. Allison in Marshfield (Coos Bay) in 1923. The Klan charged that Catholic schools spread anti-democratic ideas, ignorance, and illiteracy. “I warn the Catholic Church now, keep your dirty hands off the public schools,” declared Dr. J. R. Johnson of Portland in 1922.²² That was the year the Compulsory Public School initiative was passed into law by Oregon voters—effectively shutting down religious and private school systems, the largest of which was Catholic. Ironically, opposition to the initiative united various Christian and Jewish religious groups, lawyers, most of the black community, and others who urged voters to “do away with religious prejudice and make Oregon a decent place in which to live.”²³ (Oregon Defense League publication, 1922). In 1925, the United States Supreme Court decided that the new law violated religious freedom and parental rights.

During the Oregon governor’s race in 1922, Governor Ben Olcott declared that there was no Catholic or Jewish menace in Oregon, and that “some of the best citizens, and the most far-seeing and forward-looking citizens of the state are Catholics and Jews.”²⁴ Olcott lost his bid for re-election to a Klan-supported candidate. The Oregon Voter of December 30, 1922, concluded that, “bitter prejudice against the Catholics, based on their supposed domination in political affairs, was the motive for the tens of thousands who defeated Olcott.”

Japanese orchard, hotel, and restaurant owners and workers in Jackson County, were also targets of nativism and other forms of intolerance. In the decades before World War II, their very success as entrepreneurs

and farmers—models of American hard work and capitalism—made others envious of their success and fearful that they might take over the economic and cultural life of the region. In the 1920s and 1930s, state measures and local ordinances supported by white farmers and others tried to limit the rights of Japanese to own farms if they were not citizens, while Federal law forbade citizenship to first-generation Japanese. These were opposed by people with larger interests in maintaining good relations with Japan.²⁵

Bigotry often targeted several groups at once. A 1915 tourism flier published by the Ashland Commercial Club boasted that the town had “no blacks or Japanese.” Intolerance often provided stunning examples of irony and contradiction. Early in World War II, an American Legion commander’s speech was reported in the *Mail Tribune* under the headline, “Japs May Cause Problem Similar to Negro Growth.” At that moment a contingent of black soldiers was in training at Camp White, and both Japanese and African-Americans were fighting fascism in U.S. military units overseas. After Pearl Harbor, Japanese-American workers at the Holland Hotel in Medford had been among the first in the area to volunteer for military service.²⁶ Meanwhile some local farmers’ associations advocated taking over the farms of their Japanese neighbors so that white American farmers could “run them efficiently.”

Today, some of the same forces that shaped past intolerance are still at work. Our history shows that the more sensational and visible acts of intolerance occur especially when community attitudes and practices seem to condone them. Knowing this, many Southern Oregonians have dealt quickly and decisively with instances of intolerance, and worked to promote a more generally tolerant and accepting community. ☸

James J. Phillips, Ph.D., teaches cultural anthropology at Southern Oregon University and is the author of A Short History of Tolerance in the State of Jefferson.

ENDNOTES

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2. Unpublished transcript of interview with A. C. Allen, Jr., Nov. 26, 1979 (Medford: Southern Oregon Historical Society, 1979).
3. For accounts of early Mexicans in Oregon Country, see Erasmo Gamboa, *Nosotros, the Hispanic People of Oregon: Essays and Recollections* (Portland, Oregon Council for the Humanities, 1995).
4. For the basic history of early Hawaiians in Oregon Country, see Janice K. Duncan, *Minority without a Champion: Kanakas on the Pacific Coast, 1788-1850* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1972).
5. Quoted in Keith A. Murray, *The Modoc and Their War* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959). A number of Modoc in Southern Oregon today say that this is the best history of the Modoc War, from their perspective.
6. Quoted in Murray, *op. cit.*
7. Samuel A. Clark, *The Samuel A. Clark Papers* (Klamath Falls: Klamath County Museum and Guide Printing, 1960). A copy of this limited printing is in the Southern Oregon University library in Ashland, OR.
8. Documented by anthropologists Leslie Spier and Verne Ray. See Verne Ray, *Primitive Pragmatists: The Modoc Indians of Northern California*, American Ethnological Society Monograph 38 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963).
9. Mark V. Weatherford, "Rogue River Indian War," unpublished manuscript in Southern Oregon University library, n.d.
10. Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1778-1940, Oregon Oral Black History Project* (Portland: Georgian Press, 1981). The same fear is expressed in the preamble to the 1849 "Bill to Prevent Negroes and Mulattoes from Coming to, or Residing in Oregon" (Oregon Territorial Government Records #6075, Oregon State Archives, Salem), and is mentioned in Quintard Taylor, "Slaves and Free Men: Blacks in the Oregon Country, 1840-1860" *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 83 (2): 153-170).
11. Abigail Scott Duniway, *Path Breaking: An Autobiographical History of the Equal Suffrage Movement in the Pacific Coast States* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).
12. Differences between mining and farm towns and social class tensions are themes in various works, including Jeff LaLande, "Insurgent Decade: The People's Party of Jackson County, Oregon, 1890-1900" (Eugene: University of Oregon, Department of History, 1992); and, "It Can't Happen Here in Oregon: The Jackson County Rebellion, 1932-1933, and Its 1890s-1920s Background" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Oregon, 1993). See also David Johnson, *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840-1890* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).
13. Jonathan Mozzochi, *Coalition for Human Dignity: Report* (Portland: Coalition for Human Dignity, 1990); Robert Crawford et al., *The Northwest Imperative: Documenting a Decade of Hate* (Portland, OR: Coalition for Human Dignity, 1994).
14. Roger R. Olmsted, "The Chinese Must Go!" (*California Historical Quarterly* 50 (3):285-294). In 1868, Congress ratified the Burlingame Treaty, extending to China the same favorable trade status enjoyed by Britain and France. As a result, legal challenges were mounted against state laws (including provisions in the state Constitution) that barred Chinese land ownership and restricted Chinese enterprise in Oregon. In 1876, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that the anti-Chinese provision in the Oregon Constitution, "has always been a dead letter...intended to quiet the fears of placate the prejudices of a certain class of voters who were supposed to stand in dread of being [overwhelmed] by an influx of...these yellow people" (Olmsted, *op. cit.*). The same year, a committee of the California legislature issued a report detailing the negative effects of the Chinese presence in California. See L. T. Townsend, *The Chinese Problem* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1876). The issue between business leaders who favored international trade expansion and local laborers and farmers who feared it invites comparison to our own current debates over U.S. participation in international free trade agreements.
15. K. Keith Richard, "Unwelcome Settlers: Black and Mulatto Oregon Pioneers, Part 1" (*Oregon Historical Quarterly* 84 (2): 173-192) McLagan, *op. cit.*
16. Saalfeld, *op. cit.*; David A. Horowitz, "Order, Solidarity, and Vigilance: The Ku Klux Klan in La Grande, Oregon," *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, edited by Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Together with other Articles of Interest to Klansmen (New York: Arno Press, 1977 reprint of 1923 original).
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sheet music

Examples of circa 1890s sheet music. Although shocking, they serve as painful and poignant reminders of just how mainstream racist attitudes were at one time in our society.

While much has been done to change those attitudes and move society toward acceptance and equality for all, the question remains: Have we done enough?





*This is the only
correct pronunciation
of the name
as sung by the
original artist
May Irwin.*

May Irwin's Bully Song

AS SUNG WITH
GREAT SUCCESS
IN THE
"WIDOW JONES"

WORDS AND MUSIC
BY
Charles E. Trevathan

Copyright, 1896, By Charles E. Trevathan, for all countries.
Supplement To
THE EXAMINER.
PUBLISHED BY W. H. HEARST.
FRONTISPIECE COPYRIGHT 1896 BY W. H. HEARST.
PUBLISHED BY W. H. HEARST.

HARRY VON TILZER'S MASTERPIECE.

Mammy's Kinky-Headed Coon.

A SWEET SOUTHERN LULLABY.

WRITTEN & COMPOSED BY
HARRY VON TILZER
AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR SONG-WRITER.

PUBLISHED BY
W. C. DUNN & Co
49-51 WEST 28th ST.
NEW YORK.

“ My father (Martin Luther King, Jr.) talked about a dream of one day living in a nation where his children would not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. That was a vision shared back in 1963. We still have a long ways to go before we fully accomplish this dream. ”

—Martin Luther King III

COMUNIDAD EN TRANSICION:

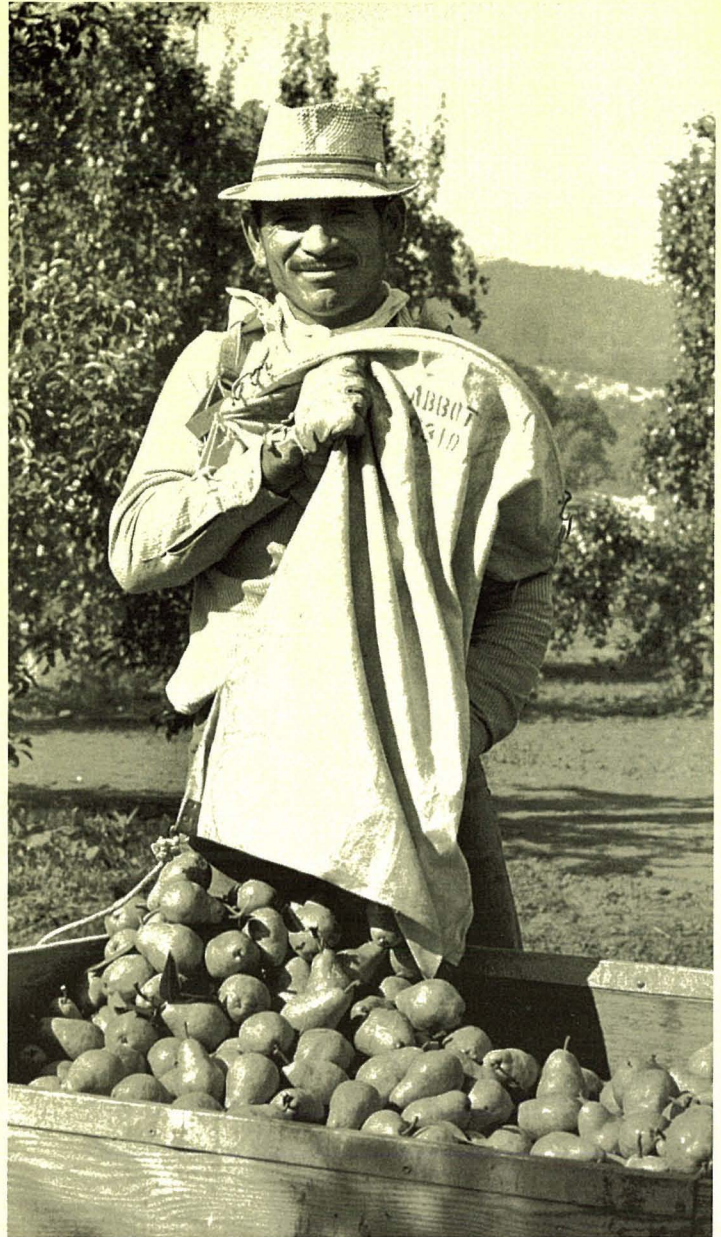
Mexican Migrants in Southern Oregon

By John Enders

The following article is excerpted from the 1994 issue of "Oregon Heritage" magazine, and it remains relevant. According to the 1990 Census, Oregon's Hispanic and Latino population was then estimated at just over 112,000. In the 2000 Census, that number more than doubled to over 275,000, accounting for 8 percent of the total statewide population. In 2000, Josephine County's Hispanic and Latino population was 4.3 percent of the total, Jackson County's was 6.7 percent, and Klamath County was 7.8 percent. The Census estimates that 12 percent of the U.S. resident population in 2000 was Hispanic, equivalent to 31 million. That number is projected to nearly triple by 2050 to 92 million, or 24 percent of the total population. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Demographic Profile Highlights, <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

WHEN DAVID SOLORIO CAME TO THE ROGUE VALLEY in 1970 from Laguna de Chapala in Mexico's Jalisco state, he came to pick pears, illegally, without papers. He was an outlaw in the eyes of the United States and a "wet-back" to many Americans. Today, Solorio owns a business, pays his taxes, and with his wife, raises two children to be good, law-abiding Americans. "When I arrived," Solorio explains, "there wasn't hardly anybody. You'd go to Safeway and see someone [Hispanic] and then you'd look up and they'd be gone."

Today, they are never gone. In Southern Oregon's Rogue Valley, there is still a lot of work for Mexican migrant workers, legal and illegal, and the hardest work is still picking pears--and learning English. However, "success stories" like Solorio's are repeated again and again, in Oregon and throughout the United States. The world of the migrant worker is changing in remarkable ways, and as the Hispanic population continues to grow, the Rogue Valley's culture and economy are changing just as dramatically. Mexican migrants are settling in, becoming members of the community, no longer invisible, docile or uncomplaining. And without realizing it, they are helping to change the society they have joined.



Migrant pear picker near Talent, circa 1965.

SOHS #19258

THE HISTORY OF THE ROGUE VALLEY—like that of the United States—is a history of migrants, of migration, of immigration. Migrant workers have labored in the Southern Oregon orchards since the 1930s. Only in recent decades, since World War II, have migrant laborers predominantly been Mexican. Since then, “migrant” has become almost synonymous with “Mexican,” and in the Rogue Valley, and neighboring Klamath and Josephine counties, that has typically meant someone working the pear or peach orchards or the hop fields.

In America, fruit orchard cultivation during the first decades of this century was mainly done by the families who owned and operated the fields or by local men hired to prune, pick, or do odd jobs. During the summer’s picking and packing rush, local boys and women would fill in. In the West, however—especially during the late 1930s—a huge, mobile labor force made up of “fruit tramps” moved with the crops, up and down the coast and across the land. These “migrant workers” lived along creek beds and in squatter shacks and labored each year to end their annual migration in California’s lush olive and orange groves or in Florida’s citrus fields.

Hob Deuel, Jr., owner of Del Rio Orchards in Gold Hill, Oregon, remembers those times for the migrants: “Front Street [in Medford] at that time was nothing but a series of pool halls and beer joints. At four in the morning, the orchard foreman would drive his truck up...He’d look for people who weren’t awake yet and grab them for a day’s work.” Many migrant fruit workers moved as families, with wives and teenage children working in the fields alongside their husbands and parents.

Then came World War II, and with it massive labor shortages. Men went to war and women went to work. During those years, Rogue Valley orchardists often used prison camp labor, mostly Italian and German prisoners of war who were held at Camp White. However, the labor force during the war still remained scanty, and American growers promoted Public Law 78. The law created the *bracero* (guest worker) program, established by the United States with the cooperation of the Mexican government. From the mid-1940s until its termination in 1961, the program brought tens of thousands of workers from Mexican villages to work in American agriculture and other labor-intensive sectors. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the program was a boon for area growers, who were guaranteed all the laborers they needed. Initially, Southern Oregon *braceros* were housed at a federally sponsored camp near Roxy Ann Peak and bused to local orchards. Conditions for the workers—confined to the camp—were often deplorable. “They were like prisoners,” says Claudino Padilla, a Medford Hispanic leader.

Mexican migrants in Medford, Talent, Gold Hill, and other parts of the Rogue Valley were once an invisible group, forced underground for jobs badly in need of filling by area employers. During the 1970s and 1980s—at the height of illegal immigration—this seldom recognized segment of the local population worked the fields by day, and for the most part disappeared at night. Few ventured out to social gatherings or restaurants of parks. Fewer still took part in public discourse or local governance.

Today, *Mejicanos* do more than just pick pears: they work in the vineyards and mills; they tend and plant seedlings for the U.S. Forest Service and wash dishes in downtown restaurants; they work in auto shops and beauty salons and on horse ranches; and they sell real estate. Many are opening their own businesses or sending their children off to college. Viewed a half-century ago as a temporary work force during the war, Mexican immigrants are now a permanent feature of the Rogue Valley work force, as well as the Southern Oregon economy. 🏠

John Enders is the Executive Director of the Southern Oregon Historical Society



David Solorio's video store, still in business today in Medford.

Commentary

by D.L. Richardson

WHEN PEOPLE FROM SOUTHERN OREGON find out that I am from Alabama, they always tend to come to the same conclusion. "You're from Alabama? Wow, coming here must really be a culture shock." Invariably there are two follow-up questions as well. One, "How do you handle being one of only a few African Americans in the Valley?" Two, "How are you as a minority treated in Southern Oregon?"

Four years ago I came to interview for the position of Journalism professor at Southern Oregon University (SOU). It was my first visit to the West Coast and I was extremely excited to come and experience a different culture. The only thing I knew about the Rogue Valley to that point was what I researched on the Internet. The sites I found were not exactly forthcoming in what I deemed at first as a lack of diversity. I remember asking one SOU professor how many African American professors there were at SOU and he said, "If you join us we will have one." Well, I laughed at what I thought was a joke. Five months later when I walked into my first faculty meeting, I realized he wasn't joking.

Deciding to come to SOU was difficult for me for several reasons. I did notice that I didn't see many African Americans during the four days I was in Southern Oregon for the interview. I was actually here during Easter Sunday and so I asked the Chair of the Communication Department to find a church I could visit for Sunday service. I naively asked her to find one close to my National Baptist roots. She called one church, mentioned my race, and they told her they thought I would be comfortable there. In the South, if a church has to think about whether or not a person would be welcome, they usually are not. I was taking these things into account as I was making my decision and had to fight some of my own preconceived notions.

I grew up in Selma, Alabama, the home of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. My grandmother would make me go watch the Ku Klux Klan rallies and marches through the streets of downtown so that I could "see just how stupid hate looks." She would say to me, "Make sure you show your face proudly to the cowards that hide theirs." I experienced racism, hatred, and bigotry all my life and I had to decide if I wanted to travel 2,700 miles just to experience the same things I had gone through early in my life. When you experience such negativity in your life and you see glimpses of it in other places, sometimes you are quick to overlook the positives that are right in front of you as well.

In thinking about the position, I remembered how kind the people at SOU were to me. I thought to myself that this would be a great group of people to be around not just in an academic environment but socially as well. Usually, people who are interviewing you are nice anyway so I thought I would take off by



PHOTO BY TRACY MURPHY

myself at night to see how people who were not trying to get me here reacted. I walked through downtown Ashland, I cruised over to the Rogue Valley Mall, I visited a couple of golf courses, and I talked to people. I remember that I met some wonderful, caring people. People who obviously knew I was different from them but who tried to search for how I was similar to them as well. I'm in agreement with many who say that instead of just "Celebrating our Diversity," and focusing on our differences, we need to find ways to celebrate how alike we are. It is those "likes" that bring us closer.

While I was weighing all these things in my mind, one day I received an email from SOU's Black Student Union (BSU). They asked that I seriously consider taking the position. The email listed every member of the BSU and it reminded me why I got into teaching in the first place--the students. I accepted the position that day.

**"How do you
handle
being one of
only a few
African
Americans
in the Valley?"**

The editors of this magazine asked me to share my thoughts and experiences as an African American in Southern Oregon. I needed to tell you that brief history in order to tell you the following. Understand that I have run into my share of racists in the Valley. Southern Oregon is like everywhere else in the nation in the sense that there are plenty of bigots within our community. There are those here who do not like me for no other reason than the fact I'm African American. There are people who feel races should not live or even work together. Narrow-minded people have always been here and they always will be around. The important thing to remember is that they are the minority and we must keep it that way. We must continue to grow as a Valley. Yes, race is easy to see when you look at a person. However, we must look past just seeing color or sexual orientation and see our Southern Oregon neighbor.

I'm proud to be an African American in Southern Oregon. I'm proud to have friends here who are Hispanic, Native American, Asian, Gay and Lesbian, Caucasian, and so forth. But the thing that makes me most proud is the fact that I have friends who are just ordinary people with the same day-to-day concerns, hopes, and dreams I have. Groups like the Ashland Cultural Diversity Council and the Medford Multicultural Council show that Southern Oregon is concerned about making life great for all the residents of the Valley.

Living in the Southern Oregon can be rough at times. At times it can be magnificent. When I look at the colleagues I work with, the friends I have made, the experiences I have had, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, I can say proudly there's nowhere I would rather be than Southern Oregon. 🏡

D.L. Richardson, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Journalism at Southern Oregon University and is Faculty-in-Residence for the SOU Multicultural Executive Council.

Mountain of Mystery

by Jan Wright

MODERN MAPS OF THE APPLGATE area near Cantrall-Buckley Park identify an intriguing mountain named "Negro Ben." The Applegate settlers started calling the mountain "Nigger Ben" to designate the area where Ben, a blacksmith in Uniontown in the late 1860s, made his home.¹ In the 1960s the U.S. Board on Geographic Names changed the word "nigger" to "negro" in an effort to make the name "less demeaning."² If they had referred to the mountain as simply Ben's Peak, or left it nameless, that would have erased the evidence that people of color had a historical impact on the Applegate area. As it is, we at least know that Ben made an impression, although we don't know if he even knew that the mountain had been named for him.

It seems obvious what his neighbors called him, but the real mystery has always been what Ben's last name was. The other blacks known to have been in the area have their first and last names recorded on the census and other records but Ben's identification has been elusive.³ More often than not, many minorities can be found listed in court records. The fact that Ben isn't found in these records may indicate either that he stayed out of trouble or that he just didn't live here long enough to leave a paper trail. Finding Ben's last name became a goal of mine.

I only knew his name was Ben, that he was black and that he lived for a while in Uniontown on the Applegate, worked as a blacksmith and did some prospecting. I went to the Jackson County Courthouse looking at land and mining records and even went to the mountain itself in a futile attempt to get some clues there. Nothing showed up on the Jackson County records or in the memories of the old timers.

I was actually searching for something else when I made a breakthrough at the University of Oregon Knight Library's Special Collections in Eugene. A "colored" Benjamin Johnson appears on the 1868 and 1869 assessment rolls for Jackson County, Oregon, in Uniontown.⁴ A subsequent search through the 1867 assessment rolls yielded nothing. Ben seemed to have disappeared by the time the 1870 enumerator came to Uniontown to take the census. With his last name to guide me, however, I was able to expand the search to other areas in Oregon and finally found a "mulatto" named Benjamin Johnson, a blacksmith from Alabama in Albany, Linn County, in both the 1870⁵ and 1880⁶ censuses listed with Amanda Johnson, his wife.

According to the Linn County marriage record they were married December 31, 1870. Amanda was listed as a black woman but both 1870 and 1880 list Benjamin as a mulatto. If Negro Ben and Benjamin Johnson of Albany, Oregon, are the same person, then that explains why he doesn't show up on other Jackson County records. It appears that he moved to Albany to marry and pursue his blacksmithing in a more populated place. Ben moved from Jackson County, but he left his mark in Southern Oregon where we still remember him through the mountain that bears his name. ■

Jan Wright is a historian for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

ENDNOTES

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3. Isaac Jones, Samuel Cozzens, Charles Blockwell, and Samuel Vose, to name a few.
4. U of O, Knight Library, Special Collections. Box 87 V. 41 p. 8, 1868 Assessment Rolls, Jackson Co. OR and p. 14 18 Assessment Rolls, Jackson Co. OR
5. 1870 U. S. Census M593 Roll 1286 p. 552 Linn County, Oregon, Albany Precinct.
6. 1880 U.S. Census T-9 -1082 p. 313B Albany, Linn County, Oregon. Benjamin & Amanda Johnson on Vine St. in Albany with an 11-year-old female, Maud Henderson.

**WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION**

**Presidio of San Francisco, California
April 28, 1942**

**INSTRUCTIONS
TO ALL PERSONS OF
JAPANESE
ANCESTRY**

Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the County of Multnomah, State of Oregon, bounded on the north by the Oregon-Washington State line, bounded on the east by 122nd Avenue, and 122nd Avenue extended southerly to the Multnomah-Clackamas County line, bounded on the south by the Multnomah-Clackamas County line, and bounded on the west by the Willamette River.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 26, this Headquarters, dated April 28, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Tuesday, May 5, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Tuesday, April 28, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Northwestern Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

The Navy Post,
American Legion Hall,
128 Northeast Russell Street,
Portland, Oregon.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Wednesday, April 29, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Thursday, April 30, 1942.

2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:

- (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
- (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
- (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
- (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
- (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.

4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.

5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage at the sole risk of the owner of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.

6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

**Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M.,
Wednesday, April 29, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M.,
Thursday, April 30, 1942, to receive further instructions.**

J. I. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

SEE CIVILIAN EXCLUSION ORDER NO. 26.

Posters like this one from Portland, Oregon, also appeared in Medford and in communities large and small throughout the country. SOHS #2005.1.6

A QUESTION OF LOYALTY

By Jennifer Brennock Buckner

NOT MUCH REMAINS TODAY ON THE WINDSWEEPED landscape that once housed the Tule Lake Segregation Center. Most of the buildings have since been removed and turned into outbuildings by area residents. A wooden sign with carved yellow letters simply states the painfully obvious: "Government Property."

The Center once covered more than 26,000 acres of a dry lakebed near what is now California's Lava Beds National Monument, located just south of the Oregon border. Between 1942 and 1946 it housed nearly 19,000 detainees, most of whom were American citizens of Japanese descent.¹

In Southern Oregon, conflicting attitudes towards the region's Japanese residents well preceded World War II.

An early sign of cultural appreciation came in 1888 as the Ashland Tidings announced a marriage ceremony to be performed and welcomed all to "the opportunity to witness a Japanese wedding."² An 1893 Tidings article, however, reported how after six Japanese men were hired to replace a group of white railroad workers, the section house in which the Japanese were living burnt to the ground.³

By the mid 1920s a few Japanese businesses flourished in Medford including several restaurants, a couple of dry cleaners, a boarding house, and an art supply store. There was also a school with twelve Japanese students who learned etiquette, the Japanese alphabet, and the "Star Spangled Banner" both in English and Japanese.⁴

George Takahira opened Medford's Jewell Café on Front Street in 1926. In a handwritten letter to the Southern Oregon Historical Society, his daughter Judy recalled, "My sister and I were born and the depression hit—money was in short supply. But to my father's credit, he never turned a hungry person away. He would wave the person off and say, 'When you have it' or 'When you come again you can pay.'" ⁵

George also brought food to the county jail in neighboring Jacksonville, which at that time was located where the Jacksonville Children's Museum is today. "Sometimes I would go with him and the policemen would play games with me while I was waiting for my father," Judy recalled.⁶

Just three months before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the obituary for another Southern Oregon Japanese resident, Masuzo "Maru" Maruyama, manager of the Rogue Valley University Club, expressed sadness at his passing. It referred to him as a man of "fine character" and it declared that there was "no more loyal citizen or devoted Medford booster than Maru, who was always ready to do his part when any civic service was called for."⁷

As the war in Europe intensified, President Franklin Roosevelt established the WRA, War Relocation Authority, to identify people of Italian, German, and Japanese ancestry. Both the Supreme Court and Congress backed his executive order. When Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941, the WRA began to detain and relocate people of Japanese heritage, but not of Italian or German. Over 120,000 people were under the control of the WRA, yet none was charged with a crime or granted due process before relocation. Despite how civic-minded and seemingly well respect-



Members of the Japanese Association of Southern Oregon marched through downtown Medford in 1918 in support of the Red Cross. SOHS#9107

ed the Japanese community was in Medford, its members were forced to register and relocate as well. Many families only had a few days to liquidate their possessions and say good-bye to their lives as they knew them before reporting to an assembly center.

Despite the efforts to preserve the daily routines of farming and household chores, the Tule Lake detainees found life difficult. A teenager at the time of her internment, Judy Takahira, whose father George had died several years earlier, was initially sent with her mother and stepfather to Tule Lake. They lived in rustic barracks with shared toilets, laundry, and kitchen facilities. They made their own furniture from supplies left over from the construction of the barracks.

In acts of rebellion against conditions at the camp, detainees held massive demonstrations. As tensions grew, these often exploded into riots. In turn, reactionary guards combined violent interrogations, beatings, and solitary confinement to harass and control the detainees. A constant show of force with tanks, machine guns, and tear gas was also employed to further intimidate and maintain order.

On March 20, 1946, ten months after the last Nazi concentration camp in Europe was liberated, Tule Lake Segregation Center closed. Afterward, most of the evacuees from Southern Oregon went to larger cities to find work. One of the few to return to Medford was Judy Takahira; she graduated from Medford High School in 1946.

In April 2005, forty-six acres of the Tule Lake Segregation Camp were recommended for designation as a National Historic Landmark. Such a designation would automatically place it on the National Register of Historic Places. If the designation is finalized it will be preserved and interpreted using a widely accessible lesson plan, research website, and oral history collection. 🏠

Jennifer Brennock Buckner is a freelance writer living in Jacksonville.

ENDNOTES

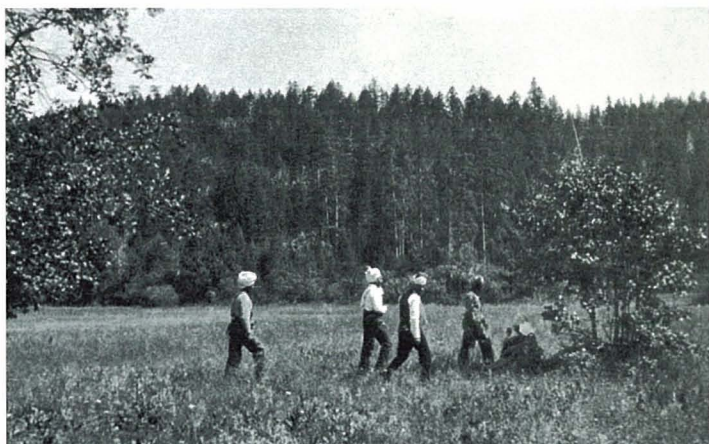
1. Frank and Joanne Iritani; Ten Visits, Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc., San Mateo, CA, 1995
2. *Ashland Tidings*, 20 January 1888
3. *Ashland Tidings*, 31 March 1893
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SIKH IMMIGRANTS: TAKING THEIR PLACE IN SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORY

By Dawna Curler

ONE EARLY 20TH CENTURY EVENING, YOUNG JOYCE Bailey and her brother stood in their Eagle Point home staring out the doorway. "We had never seen anything like them before," she explained years later, recalling the group of turban-clad Asian Indians sitting under a tree in their yard. They had business with her father and were waiting for his return home.¹

The men were contract laborers laying railroad track between Medford and Butte Falls for the Pacific and Eastern Railroad. Lacking an understanding of East Indian culture, people in Southern Oregon, as well as elsewhere, called these people Hindus, but they were actually a distinct religious-ethnic group from the Indian state of Punjab.



A group of Sikh immigrants seek shade under a small tree in the Upper Rogue Valley, circa 1910.
SOHS # 1706

These Sikhs were part of an immigration wave that brought six or seven thousand Asian Indians to Canada, Washington, Oregon, and California between the late 1890s and 1917. Many left their homeland because of economic instability caused by British Imperial rule but planned to return and buy farmland with money they had made in this regime. A number of Sikhs found jobs in the Northwest working for railroad or lumber companies, but the majority ended up in California's agricultural valleys where the climate and work were more familiar to their home experience.²

The Sikhs came into existence as an ethnic-religious group about 500 years ago. They recognize one God "who governs the world with commands based on the twin principles of justice and grace." They believe "human beings have the unique opportunity to achieve liberation" (become one with God) and work towards that goal. They value "hard work, sharing the fruits of one's labor, and service to humanity." Family and community are key elements in their search for liberation. They see themselves as a group "distinct from others in the surrounding world." Their long hair, which men wear tied in a knot and covered with a turban, symbolizes "the sanctity of the body, a divine temple not to be made unclean."³

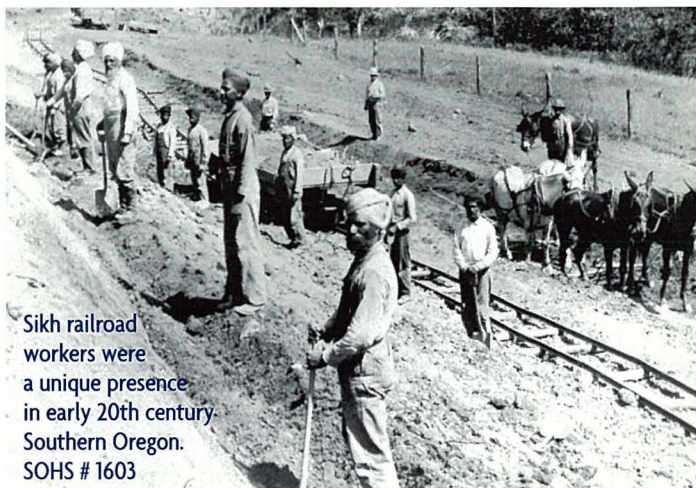
The Sikhs arrived in the United States at a time when anti-Asian sentiment was high. Their dress, culture, and religious beliefs marked them as separate and threatening to the established way of life. They were tagged with degrading labels, such as "ragheads" and the "turban tide," and they fell victim to a number of discriminatory laws.

The Sikhs were not in Jackson County very long. Construction on the Pacific and Eastern Railroad, incorporated first as the Medford and Crater Lake Railroad, began in 1905 and ended in 1911 when the tracks reached Butte Falls.⁵ In the mid 19th century, Chinese immigrants worked on many railroad projects, but the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 eliminated them from the railroad labor pool. During the early 1900s Sikhs, along with a mix of other new immigrants, provided the necessary work crews. Once the work was done, they moved on.

As Asians, they could not become U.S. citizens, a 1913 California law kept them from owning property, and in 1917 the Barred Zone Act prohibited further immigration of people from certain parts of the world, including the Sikhs' homeland in South Asia. Immigrants already in the country could not bring in their spouses.⁴

Although their numbers dwindled, several thousand Sikhs remained on the west coast. In spite of the difficulties, they found ways of settling in and establishing homes, families and communities. As immigration laws loosened after World War II, new waves of Asian immigrants, including Sikhs, entered the country but the descendants of the first Sikh immigrants now share a unique American history of their own.

Today, little evidence of the Sikh presence in Southern Oregon remains beyond a few photographs and a common knowledge that they were here. But a deeper look reveals that these men laboring on a short stretch of railroad track were part of a much greater slice of history. ■



Sikh railroad workers were a unique presence in early 20th century Southern Oregon.
SOHS # 1603

Dawna Curler has been a writer and historian for the Southern Oregon Historical Society for 22 years.

ENDNOTES

1. Bailey, Joyce. "Eagle Point Memories," Siskiyou Sites & Sagas (Jacksonville, OR: Siskiyou Pioneer Sites Foundation, Vol. 2, 1967), p. 7.
2. Sikh background information for this article has been synthesized from the following two sources: Gurinder Singh Mann, Paul David Numrich, and Raymond B. Williams. "Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America," Oxford University Press, New York, 2001; "Pioneer Asian Indian Immigration to the Pacific Coast," website compiled by T.S. Sibia, Bio/Ag Reference Dept., Shields Library, University of California Davis, Davis, CA. Revised 2001.
3. Mann, Numrich, and Williams pp.117-118.
4. Mann, Numrich, and Williams pp. 126-27 and Alicia J. Campi, Ph.D. "Closed Borders and Mass Deportations: The Lessons of the Barred Zone Act," January 2005, from the American Immigration Law Foundation website: http://www.aifl.org/ipc/policy_reports_2005_barredzone.asp
5. Under the ownership of the Medford Logging Railroad, track was extended into the woods for hauling logs in the 1920s. Bert and Margie Webber. *Railroading in Southern Oregon* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1985), pp.77-85.

The Desire for Citizenship

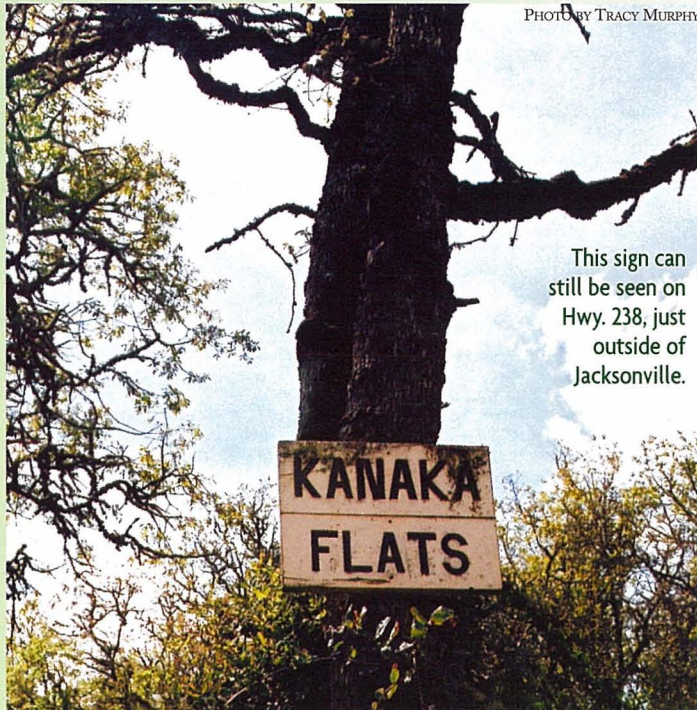


PHOTO BY TRACY MURPHY

This sign can still be seen on Hwy. 238, just outside of Jacksonville.

Kanaka Flat

IN 1853, A YEAR AFTER GOLD WAS DISCOVERED in Jacksonville, Oregon, a small community sprang up just west of town, on a large flat in the middle of Jackson Creek. The flat was a rich and popular source of gold, and soon miners, who were discouraged from settling in Jacksonville proper, began to settle on the flat. At first, it had a few log cabins, a blacksmith shop, and a trading post, and was casually referred to as "One Horse Town."¹

In the 1820s, Hawaiians first came to the Pacific Northwest with the express purpose of settling and learning western culture.² They lived in the Willamette Valley and worked in various professions including as servants for the Hudson Bay Company. Some thirty years later, a number of Hawaiians, also called "Kanakas," came in search of gold and settled in One Horse Town. Their presence eventually led to the area being renamed "Kanaka Flat."

The following excerpt from the radio series "As It Was," co-produced by the Southern Oregon Historical Society and Jefferson Public Radio, tells the story of one Hawaiian immigrant whose experience serves as an example of the double standard in existence at the time: While Kanakas were allowed to contribute to the local community and economy, they still were denied American citizenship based on the color of their skin.

IN THE 1860S, JACKSONVILLE, OREGON, WAS A BOOMING MINING TOWN, attracting hopeful miners of many races, creeds and religions from the world over. Bill Bottle was one of the hopeful who not only dreamed of striking it rich, but also of becoming a U.S. citizen. One problem: Bill was Hawaiian. In 1868 Oregon rescinded its ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed basic civil rights for all Americans regardless of race. So, when in 1869 Bill went with his black friend Mike to the county clerk's office to apply for citizenship, you can imagine Bill's surprise when he was told that Hawaiians, or "Kanakas" as they were also known, were not eligible.

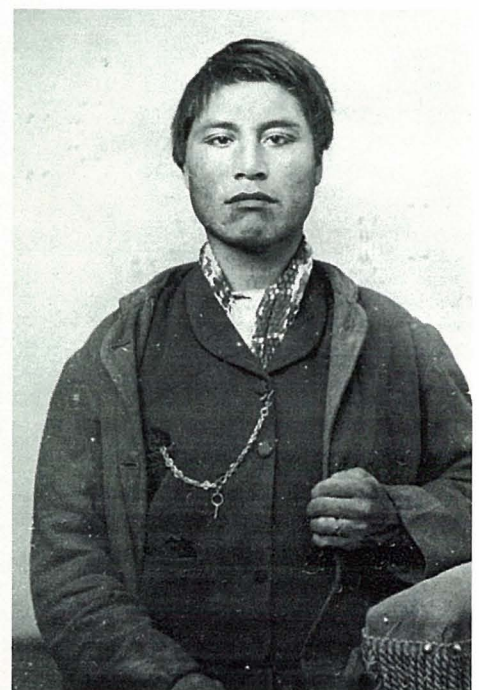
Bill was a quiet man, but not his friend Mike. Of the incident that followed, the local paper reported: "At this the African Lion raised in old Mike, he snorted and puffed as would a steam engine under double pressure on a heavy grade. He repeated the 'Civil Rights Bill' entire, swore like thunder and finally concluded by thrusting a copy of the amendment right under the Clerk's nose."

History does not show whether Mike's tirade helped Bill's cause. But we do know that it would be nearly a hundred years before civil rights became the law of the land. 🏠

As It Was, segment #6, written by Stephanie Butler, edited by Dawna Curler, April 2005.
Source: *The Democratic Times*, 1869.

ENDNOTES:

1. Barbara Hegne, "One Horse Town, the Wildest Town in Southern Oregon," in *Wild True Tales: The Early Settlers of Southern Oregon* (USA, Freestyle Graphics, 2002), p. 76
2. "History of Jackson County," *The Morning News*, April 28, 1979, Central Point, OR.



Peter Britt photographed this unidentified Kanaka man in Jacksonville, circa 1865. SOHS #18856



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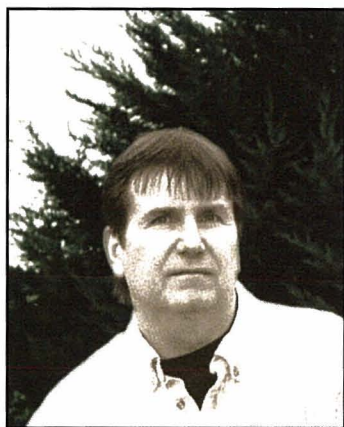
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