

SPRING 2006



# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

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*Today*



*Celebrating Six Decades  
of Collecting, Preserving and  
Sharing the History of Southern Oregon*



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Dear SOHS members and friends:

We are very pleased to present our 60th Anniversary issue of *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*. It's been 60 years since the Society was founded by a small group of passionate supporters of history and our common heritage, and the Society has been going strong ever since. The staff, Board members and many volunteers of the



Society hope that you, as members and readers, are as proud of this organization and its work in the community as we are.

From the preservation and exhibition of the Society's large and stunning collection of artifacts, documents, and photographs to Children's Heritage Fair's promotion of history to the area's school children; from the Society's "First Weekends at Hanley Farm" programs during the summer to our local sponsorship of the National History Day competition; from SOHS's very visible collaboration on the recent Chinese exhibits at the Schneider Museum of Art at Southern Oregon University to our co-production with Jefferson Public Radio of the "As it Was" radio histories; from our depth and breadth of research support at the SOHS Research Library to our advocacy of historical preservation and education – SOHS performs an amazing array of services to the communities and people of the region.

Today, we are continuing our work with well below half the budget – and half the professional staff – that we had just a few short years ago. The reason we can continue this work is because of support from individual and family members like you, and financial and in-kind support from corporations, cities, partner nonprofits, and philanthropic foundations and individuals who believe that we must preserve our past or risk losing it forever.

Today, SOHS celebrates 60 years of historic preservation, education, and advocacy. We invite you to share our story, and the many stories of the community that only we can tell, with your friends, other family members, and your colleagues and associates. Consider giving a gift – small or large – to the Society to help support our programs and to maintain and preserve our collections. And please consider giving a gift membership to someone whom you believe could support us or might benefit from knowing more about our work. One thing is true: We cannot do it without you.

Congratulations SOHS! To those many, many people who have helped to build the Society over the years, thank you.

John Enders  
Executive Director



# HERITAGE

*Today*

## Museum Visited By 34,591 During Its Initial Year

A total of 34,591 people visited the Jacksonville Museum during the first year of its existence, Curator Myrtle P. Lee told the Southern Oregon Historical Society, Inc., at the organization's monthly meeting last evening. The museum, which is administered by the society, was opened July 10, 1950, and visitors have signed the register at an average rate of 98 daily, up to and including Tuesday, the first anniversary of the institution's existence. Mrs. Lee said visitation had increased greatly in recent months, the prospect being that even more people will view the pioneer displays during the current year.

Every state in the union is represented by registrants, except two, New Hampshire and South Carolina. Visitors from afar include Australia, South Transylvania, England, Germany, Scotland, Mexico, Canada, Cuba, Okinawa, India, Japan and the Philippine Islands, Hawaii, Alaska and the Virgin Islands.

The curator said a number of interesting items have recently been loaned or presented to the museum for display, among them a collection of early day maps covering the southern Oregon country. She added that several pioneer dresses and other pieces of wearing apparel have come in and that the museum especially needs the loan or gift of blouse forms for proper display of these articles.

A. O. "Bud" Hohensee, program director for KMED, attended last night's meeting to propose that the society cooperate in preparing material for a series of radio broadcasts concerning the museum and pioneer history of Jacksonville. President Claire Hanley named Dr. Arthur S. Taylor and Ralph Billings, Ashland; Mrs. G. Q. D'Albini, Medford, and Mrs. Paul Bulkin, Jacksonville, as a committee to go into the matter.

*From the Medford Mail Tribune, July 1951*

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*On the cover:*

*Photo of the Jacksonville Museum  
by Peter Britt. SOHS Photo #868*



## Come Celebrate SOHS's 60th Birthday

Saturday, June 17, 2006

11:00am – 2:00pm

Jacksonville Museum, 5th & C Street, Jacksonville

We're throwing ourselves a 60th birthday party...and you're invited! There will be live entertainment, activities for the kids, good food, free admission to the museums, and plenty of fun for the whole family. Come join the celebration.



## First Weekends at Hanley Farm

This summer we will once again open Hanley Farm to the public on the first weekend of the month, June through September. Our initial First Weekend will be held on June 3 and 4, 11:00am-4:00pm. The day will feature a return of the popular Jefferson Blacksmith's Hammer-In with up to 30 blacksmiths demonstrating their craft. In addition, there will be wagon and miniature horse cart rides, horse-shoes and pioneer games, Hanley house and garden tours, and a few yet-to-be-announced surprises. This year, Beekman House will be open for tours the same four weekends as Hanley Farm.

## Horizon Air– SOHS Raffle

You could win one of two pairs of Horizon Air travel vouchers, valued at up to \$1,300! Raffle tickets are available for \$5 each or 5 for \$20 and can be purchased at the Jacksonville Museum and the Historical Research Library in Medford. Or contact Richard Seidman at 773-6536 ext. 226. Proceeds support *Toward the Setting Sun: Traveling the Oregon Trail*, sponsored in part by Horizon Air, Judi Drais, State Farm Insurance, and Southern Oregon Public Television.



The drawing to select the winners will be held at 2:00pm, July 5, 2006, at the Jacksonville Museum, 5th and C streets, Jacksonville, Oregon. Winners need not be present to win. A maximum of 1,000 raffle tickets will be sold. The same person is ineligible to win both pairs of vouchers. SOHS employees, Trustees, Foundation board members or their families are ineligible. SOHS is a non-profit, member-supported organization. Some travel restrictions may apply.

## Save the Date! SOHS Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 4 5:30pm – 7:30pm at Hanley Farm

Join us for a delightful "Evening on the Farm," featuring dinner by the Outback Steakhouse and bluegrass music by "Gold River." Hanley house and garden tours will also be available. Look for your invitation in the mail soon.

## In Memoriam: Stephen W. Ryder

SOHS Trustee Stephen W. Ryder died in January 2006 after an illness. He was 82. Steve was a key member of the Board, and became friends with fellow Board members and many of the staff and volunteers at the Society. He was a lifelong newspaperman, and his passion for history, his vision and tact, and his extensive political and social connections in the community benefited the Society in many ways. He is greatly missed.





# Exhibits

## NOW AT THE JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM



PAINTING BY HAL BISHOP

### Toward the Setting Sun: Traveling the Oregon Trail

Our newest exhibit is now open. It's filled with artifacts such as pioneer diaries, clothing, tools, and furniture, as well as photos, interactive components, and a documentary entitled "A South Road to Oregon: The History of the Applegate Trail," produced by Southern Oregon Public Television. Don't miss it!



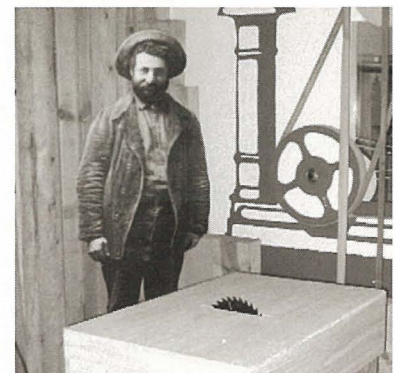
### Peter Britt: The Man Beyond the Camera

Come experience our most innovative exhibit to date, featuring nearly 400 artifacts and images from the Society's extensive Peter Britt collection, many of which are on public display for the first time. See the many interesting facets of Peter Britt's life in a contemporary, entertaining format with items ranging from Britt's personal diaries, which date from 1859 through 1905, to some of his earliest oil paintings, photographic gear, and the 1872 Steinway square grand piano he bought for his daughter Mollie.



### Jackson County Milestones

They came to Jackson County looking for treasure, and carrying some with them. In this fascinating exhibit, you'll discover how immigrants to this area changed it forever and see many of the artifacts that they brought with them. You'll also get to know the farmers, miners, loggers, merchants, and railroad workers who fueled the growth of towns such as Ashland, Phoenix, Jacksonville, and Medford. It truly is "history in the making."



### Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker

Upstairs in the former courtroom of the Jackson County Courthouse, underneath the soaring 20-foot ceilings, you'll discover an adventure of yesteryear. MBF, as we often call it, is more than just an exhibit—it's a portal waiting to transport you to an earlier time when life was a bit rough around the edges and work called for strong backs and calloused hands. Discover the tools, architecture, agriculture, and fraternal organizations that shaped Southern Oregon.



## From the Collection





# THE CHINESE EMPEROR'S ROBE

By Tina Reuwsaat

*Curators are a wistful lot. In particular, they chronically lament the fact that objects can't talk. The question in this case is how did a richly embroidered Chinese emperor's robe from the mid-19th century end up in a collections storage building in White City, Oregon?*

DESPITE MANY HOURS spent sorting through sixty years' worth of records the question remains unanswered. All we know is that this exotic and prestigious robe was "Found in the Collection" in 1979, and had been on display in the Jacksonville Museum prior to that.

The Imperial Nine Dragon robe (SOHS #1979.3.75) probably dates from between 1820 and 1850. Entirely hand-stitched on yellow silk, it is covered with intricate embroidery rich in layers of symbolism, a code to be translated by those who know the key. Represented are five-toed Imperial dragons (the twelve symbols of sovereignty worn only by an emperor) and the entire universe from the mountains and oceans, to the sun, moon, and constellations. Among the ocean waves float the symbols of the Eight Lucky Treasures of the Buddhist faith. These all signify that the Emperor, whose head would be positioned above it upon donning the robe, is the center of the universe. There are also scores of reverse swastikas carried by red bats of good fortune, each to multiply the blessings ten thousand times.

In keeping with the strict class-differentiating dress codes of the Ch'ing Dynasty, the yellow color, cut, and symbolic decoration of this robe indicates that its wearer was either an Emperor, Empress, or Empress Dowager. It took an average of eight years to complete one dragon robe, incorporating over six million hand stitches. This robe was worn only once, and only as an undergarment.

Once it had touched the Emperor it was considered sacred, and was given away as a gift. Not even the Emperor's son was allowed to wear the robe again, upon penalty of death.

Somewhere along its mysterious journey this robe suffered the indignity of having the lower portion of its sleeves removed. Even so, it still causes us to marvel at its craftsmanship and beauty, its complex iconography, and its impressive representation of status, wealth, and conspicuous consumption attainable only by those of great power. Not to mention its ability to survive one hundred and fifty years.

If only it could talk.

---

TINA REUWSAAT is the Associate Curator of collections at the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

#### INSETS, TOP TO BOTTOM

*The two bronze cups are one of the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty. One holds a tiger (for strength), the other a monkey (for cleverness). Together they represent respect for one's parents.*

*Only an Emperor can wear the Pheasant and the five-toed Imperial Dragons. They represent the animal and bird kingdoms, thus the entire natural world.*

*The ocean encircles the hem of the robe. Floating among the waves are the Eight Lucky Treasures, symbolizing the sea as the source of all things of worth. The red coral represents longevity.*

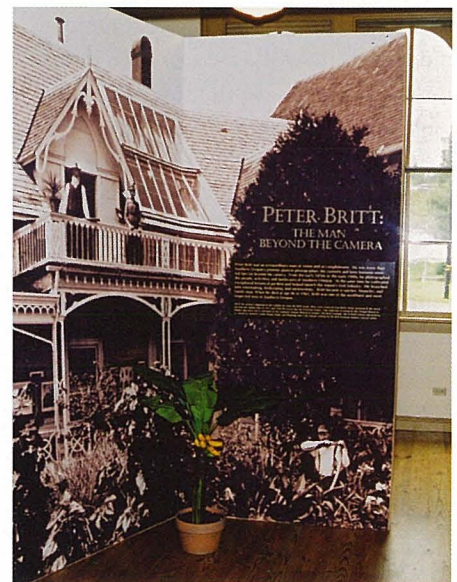




# Then and Now

## Exhibit Design

IT IS ESTIMATED that SOHS has nearly one million artifacts, photos, and documents in its collection. In order to better protect our collection from exposure to factors such as humidity, sunlight and temperature fluctuations, today we keep only a portion of our items on display in the museum at any given time. While popular with museum visitors, some of the over-crowded exhibits of yesterday endangered the very items we sought to preserve.



Top: The west end of the Britt Gallery, Jacksonville Museum, 1965.  
SOHS Photo #72.49.8 (original photo by Murray S. Gardiner)

Bottom: 1982 exhibit, upstairs in the Jacksonville Museum. SOHS Photo #5457

Above: Two views of "Peter Britt: The Man Beyond the Camera"—currently on exhibit at the Jacksonville Museum.



# REMEMBERING THE MAGNA CARTA

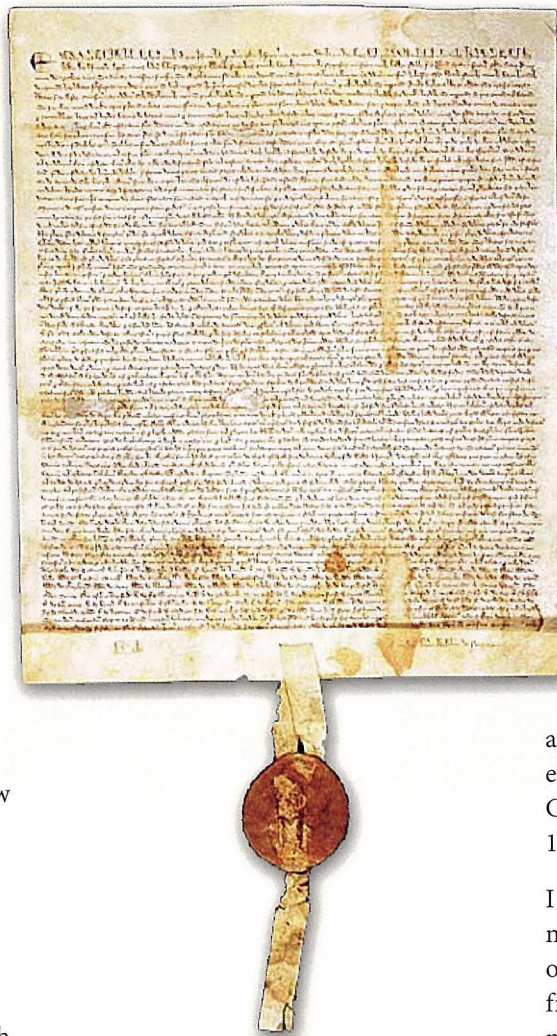
By Dawna Curler

IN THE FALL OF 1986, the Southern Oregon Historical Society presented a “blockbuster” exhibit in Jacksonville’s U.S. Hotel featuring one of the four remaining original issues of the Magna Carta, and I had the good fortune to be a part of it.

Dating back to 1215, the Magna Carta helped lay the foundation for our American democratic society. This ancient sheet of parchment to which King John of England affixed his royal seal held basic principals of liberty that became embedded in English law and were later cited in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Among the ideas put forth nearly 800 years ago was the concept that legitimate government is bound by law and that the governed are guaranteed certain rights though those laws. No one is above the law, not even a sovereign king. Because of its role as a foundation document for American liberties, the Magna Carta toured the East Coast in 1987 as part of the 200th Anniversary Celebration of the U.S. Constitution. Prior to the Bicentennial tour, the Magna Carta was displayed at three Oregon venues: Portland, Eugene, and Jacksonville.

This version of the Magna Carta came from the Lincoln Cathedral in England and was the best preserved of the four remaining documents. The traveling exhibit, *Magna Carta: Liberty Under the Law*, contained other medieval artifacts including a 200-pound throne that belonged to King Edward I, a 13th century Bible and stained glass window, and a replica of King John’s sword.<sup>1</sup> The exhibit also contained the original Oregon Constitution and, for a local connection, the Historical Society



added costumes and props from a production of “King John” borrowed from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Recalling this exhilarating time, I remember most vividly the camaraderie and teamwork shared by staff and the incredible community response. Security and logistics were complex. When not on display, the document rested in the vault of the U.S. Bank located on the ground floor of the U.S. Hotel in Jacksonville. A Jackson County deputy sheriff and a Society staff member sat on each side of the Magna Carta’s glass-fronted case during public viewing. Lights were kept dim and humidity and temperature were strictly monitored.

Nearly 15,000 people came to see the 13th century manuscript during the eleven days it was shown.<sup>2</sup> Only 100 people at a time could enter the exhibit gallery on the hotel’s second floor. The rest waited their turn in serpentine lines in the rooms downstairs and on a block-long stretch of sidewalk outdoors. A video explained the importance of the document to waiting visitors while volunteers checked and stored their backpacks and umbrellas.

We set up a gift shop in the adjoining upstairs room and designated special times for the 3,000-plus school students to visit. I coordinated the preparation and distribution of pre-visit teacher materials, gave talks to some of the school groups, and arranged for members of the medieval reenactment group, the Society for Creative Anachronism, to demonstrate 13th century activities.

I also worked security shifts sitting next to the document. That gave me an opportunity to look long and close at the fragile parchment and to hear the comments of viewers as they filed by, each one, for a short moment, privately connecting their personal liberties and present-day life with the ancient past.

DAWNA CURLER is a former employee of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. She now operates *Backward Glance*, an historical research and writing service.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> “Magna Carta: Freedom’s foundation comes to Jacksonville,” *Mail Tribune*, November 23, 1986.
- <sup>2</sup> “From the Executive Director,” *Table Rock Sentinel*, December 1986, p.29



# SOHS: Celebrating Sixty Years of Caring for History

By Louise A. Watson

IN 1946, THE world was just starting to emerge from the devastation of four years of war. The United Nations' General Assembly held its first meeting in London. The St. Louis Cardinals defeated the Boston Red Sox, four games to three, in the World Series. And "It's A Wonderful Life" starring Jimmy Stewart was first shown in movie theatres.

A little closer to home, 1946 was the year that Camp

White was deactivated. On one hot July afternoon, the temperature soared to 115 in Medford—a record high to this day. And in February, a small group of farsighted Jackson County citizens came together to form the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Sixty years later, the Boston Red Sox are baseball's national champions and the Historical Society is still going strong, making a difference in the lives of people who call Southern Oregon home. People like Walter Tilley of Jacksonville, for instance.

As an elementary student attending the old Jacksonville school in the mid-1940s, Walter and his friends stirred up the dust of the deserted Jackson County Courthouse. They weren't there to do damage but were just boys seeking a fun place to play.



*According to the Mail Tribune, a crowd estimated at more than 2,000 gathered on the lawn of the former Jackson County courthouse for the dedication of the new "southern Oregon historical museum." Saturday, August 5, 1950.*

According to Walter, "Downstairs where the main hall was, there were six rooms and debris where rats might have been. We didn't always play in the (current) museum, we couldn't get in there unless the doors were open . . . where the old courtroom is, the original court judge's desk was still up there. We just wandered in there and there was nobody to stop us really."<sup>1</sup>

Walter—who would later become a custodian at the Jacksonville Museum and work there for more than 20 years—had his playing days at the courthouse cut short when that small group of citizens realized that Jackson County would benefit from preservation of the 1880s Italianate-style courthouse and artifacts of Southern Oregon history. Thus the Southern Oregon Historical Society was born, an offshoot at first of the Oregon

Historical Society. Medford Mayor C.A. Meeker was elected president, assisted by Mrs. G.Q. D'Albini, vice president; Ralph Billings, treasurer; and Lester Harris, secretary and historian. Other board members were Frank Hull, Sr., Claire Hanley and Amos Voorhies. Annual dues were set at \$2, half of which was to go to the state society.<sup>2</sup> In 1948, the society incorporated as a non-profit organization.

In 1946, the county, like the nation, was readjusting to life after the turmoil of World War II. But that didn't deter those first board members. They kept working toward their dream and goal of making the courthouse a museum. Jackson County, which owned the building, endorsed the historical society's idea but money was lacking to accomplish the restoration: The first estimates for roof and window repair and bat eviction were \$75,000 to \$90,000.<sup>3</sup>

The dream came closer to reality in 1948 when county voters passed a permanent tax levy to establish a county historical fund, agreeing to pay 25 cents per thousand dollars of assessed property valuation.<sup>4</sup> That first SOHS board had crossed a major hurdle in



*“Following two years’ restoration, the museum was officially dedicated on August 5, 1950 with much fanfare. Longtime residents and descendants of pioneer families spoke; one official ‘emphasized that the museum would serve as a link with the past for present and coming generations.’”*

preserving and protecting the heritage of those who had come before, but a lot of work lay ahead.

Even before the levy passed, county residents scoured their attics and basements and discovered things they wanted to donate to the fledgling society. History had taken hold in Southern Oregon in a big way.

Following two years’ restoration, the museum was officially dedicated on August 5, 1950 with much fanfare. Longtime residents and descendants of pioneer families spoke; one official emphasized that “the museum would serve as a link with the past for present and coming generations.”<sup>5</sup>

The footsteps of those “coming generations” trod the old wooden floors even before the museum officially opened, many of them on school tours. Records show that 2,774 visitors signed the register before the dedication.<sup>6</sup> Many were perhaps eager to hear the stories connected with the 1927 trial in the old courthouse of the D’Autremont brothers, who killed four Southern Pacific trainmen in a railroad holdup. In 1951, Madge Heman, a Portlander, became the 50,000th person to visit.<sup>7</sup> The Jacksonville Museum was quickly becoming a “must-see” stop on visitor tours of Southern Oregon.

Sheriff’s deputies even dropped by in 1957, in response to a call from Mary

Hanley, museum curator. According to a newspaper account of the day, Hanley wanted assistance in unloading

on to educating the community on a broader scope, with exhibits mounted with a particular theme.



*May Pole dance performed by students from Orchard Hill Elementary School during the 1986 Children’s Heritage Fair.*

an 1849 single action, cap and ball Colt revolver. The firearm, part of the Emil Britt collection, was to be displayed in the museum. Two deputies came by and tried to unload the gun without success. The answer, according to the newspaper, proved quite simple: “Later, Dr. Edwin Sickles of Medford, who collects antique weapons, stopped at the museum and, since the gun was in very good condition, suggested firing it.” The problem was solved.<sup>8</sup>

Exhibits detailing Southern Oregon’s history were always a part of SOHS, whether at the museum, the History Center in Medford (acquired in the late 1980s from J.C. Penny Co.), or, for a time, at two locations in Ashland. The Society started by displaying “articles of historic value,”<sup>9</sup> such as collections of rocks, silver, Native American artifacts, and toys. Gradually, the Society moved

For example, visitors could “see” history in such early exhibits as “Masters of Ceremony,” celebrating life’s passages; “Going Places: Travel To and Through the Rogue River Valley, 1826-1996,” presenting a history of transportation in Southern Oregon; and a major exhibit about the impact of railroad-

ing in this area. In 1985, the Society hosted a popular traveling exhibit about England’s “Magna Carta” in association with the United States’ 200th anniversary celebration of the Constitution. (See related article on page 9).

More recently, the Jacksonville Museum has been home to “Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker,” exploring the life of pioneers, particularly their professions; “Milestones,” a progressive history of Jackson County; and “Peter Britt: The Man Beyond The Camera,” a multi-media exhibit on the life and times of artist and photographer Peter Britt, who took the first photograph of Crater Lake. In March of this year, “Toward the Setting Sun: Traveling the Oregon Trail” debuted, telling the stories of several pioneer families who braved



*"Many artifacts have been donated to the Society but, by far, its biggest acquisition came in 1982 when Mary Hanley, descendant of a pioneer family, bequeathed her family's 37-acre farm to SOHS for 'establishing and maintaining a continuing historical farm.'"*

the Oregon Trail on their way to settling in Southern Oregon.

In the 1970s, Society officials wanted to create a museum for the smallest of visitors: children. So it began work on converting the old jail, next to the museum, into what would become the Children's Museum. It opened in 1979 and, since then, thousands of delighted children have gotten their "hands on" history. Programs at the Children's Museum, with its dolls, toys, and books of long ago, evolved into the annual Children's Heritage Fair, which attracts fourth-graders from all over the county. They have a great time operating a printing press, panning for "gold," and churning butter.<sup>10</sup> Smiles wreath their faces

even as they get more than a little dirty and sometimes wet. Scores of volunteers assist at the Heritage Fair, which over its 21-year history has allowed some 50,000 fourth-graders<sup>11</sup> to experience bits of life as their 19th century counterparts might have lived it.

Jeanena White was a fourth-grader who visited the Jacksonville Museum in 1957 with her class from Kerby Elementary School. Jeanena had never been to Jacksonville before and didn't know she was from a pioneer family. On a return trip in 2003, Jeanena White Wilson discovered the value of the SOHS Research Library at the History Center in Medford when she went to learn more about her Jacksonville

ancestors. Census records, land grant maps, and old journal notes written by the traveling minister who married her great grandparents brought the past alive for



Mary Hanley in the "Children's Room" at the Jacksonville Museum, 1962.  
SOHS Photo #19979

her. She remains grateful for the staff's assistance in linking her to three more generations of ancestors.<sup>12</sup>

SOHS Research Library Manager Carol Harbison-Samuelson knows how Wilson felt upon discovering her past. Samuelson often sees the delighted "ahhh" expression when a researcher makes an important discovery. Samuelson oversees an extensive collection of letters, videos, books, official early records, maps, telephone books, and much more to assist someone who is looking for a connection to a relative.

For example, in the 1990s, New Jersey resident Bill McDonnell contacted Samuelson looking for his connection to Louisa Stewart, who moved to

Medford in the 1920s. McDonnell was sure there were descendants here. A clue was found in a 1941 postcard sent just before World War II. Then Samuelson started looking at all the resources in the library and found a 1949 Medford city directory with one relative who was the assistant golf pro at the Rogue Valley Country Club. Through that relative, McDonnell eventually found a long-lost cousin in Milwaukie, Oregon. Samuelson says she was delighted to assist McDonnell in his search. "There is so much that we do in here that people do not realize . . . if (people) are patient with us, so often we can help them develop the bigger picture," says Samuelson.<sup>13</sup>

Many artifacts have been donated to the Society but, by far, its biggest acquisition came in 1982 when Mary Hanley, descendant of a pioneer family, bequeathed her family's 37-acre farm to SOHS for "establishing and maintaining a continuing historical farm."<sup>14</sup> The Hanley sisters had long been associated with the Society; Claire served as Society president in 1949 and Mary was curator of the museum from 1955 to 1967. All were dedicated to the concept that history should live on for those who would come after them. In 1986, after some restoration and legislative work, the farm opened to the public during the summer. Volunteers have played a key role in ensuring that visitors could enjoy activities such as vintage baseball, wool dyeing, soap making, blacksmithing, cow milking, and butter churning.<sup>15</sup> Volunteers also tend the farm during off hours, keeping



*“Volunteers have played a key role in ensuring that visitors could enjoy activities such as vintage baseball, wool dyeing, soap making, blacksmithing, cow milking, and butter churning. Volunteers also tend the farm during off hours, keeping it ready for public visits.”*

it ready for public visits.

In 1977, 15-20 women established the Gold Diggers Guild of SOHS, a fund-raising arm for the Society. Duane Clay, former president, says today's 50 members enjoy what their group was formed to do. “It seems to be an unspoken rule: you have to have a good time raising money,” Clay says, adding, “I just think it would be so sad if SOHS wasn't here. It just gives you a feeling of place.”<sup>16</sup>

The Gold Diggers go for “something big” every other year, she says, such as the 2004 antique show at the Voorhies Mansion. Of course, sometimes things go awry despite the best plans. She remembers the year a coloratura soprano from Klamath Falls gave a performance as Jenny Lind at the U.S. Hotel. It was a “hot, hot weekend” but organizers felt all was well the night before. They got a big shock on performance day upon discovering all the flowers had wilted from the heat and they had to start all over. In addition, the intense heat forced them to open all the windows in the hotel's main room, bringing in noise from outside that disturbed the performance, causing Clay to worry until her son allayed her fears, saying it was more “authentic” that way.

Clay isn't the only one who had some heart-stopping moments on the job. Walter Tilley, museum custodian, recalls the time right after he began work when he had the scare of his life.

Walter had turned off the alarm in the main museum but heard it elsewhere in the building. Going around the back to check it out, he started to step through



*Miss Carrie Beekman (Lois Tokar) gives a piano lesson to a student (Maureen Holen) during a Living History program at the Beekman House, August 1986.*

the back door when he encountered a state policeman who was in the neighborhood along with the museum's night watchman, Jack. Assuming Walter was a burglar, the policeman aimed his shotgun at Walter's head as he stood at the back door. “If I had stepped through that door they would have shot me!”<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1980s, the Society's administrative and research focus shifted to Medford with negotiations to purchase another historic building, the vacant J.C. Penney department store. The 30,000-square-foot Art Deco style structure was built in 1948 and remained empty after Penney's moved to the Rogue Valley Mall in

1986. After the purchase in 1989 and public opening in 1990, the remodeled building—now known as the “History Center”—allowed the administrative

offices and research library to be consolidated in one place.<sup>18</sup> Where once dresses and men's shirts were sold, the large open space allowed room for such exhibits as “A Century of Photography: 1856-1956” and “What's Cookin',” about how food has influenced our lives.<sup>19</sup>

Volunteers have always played a large part in Society activities, from the Gold Diggers and Quilters' Guild to the Living History presentations at the Beekman House in Jacksonville. Local newscaster Ron Brown's two daughters, Tiffany and Celecia, now grown, volunteered when they were in high school. One portrayed a piano student and the

other worked on the wood stove in the Beekman House's 1911 kitchen. They welcomed visitors—in character, of course—and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, Brown says. “That was always a lot of fun, they liked the people and they liked the experience.”<sup>20</sup>

The Brown girls were part of what has grown to a coterie of over 250 active Society volunteers who today assist the organization in numerous ways. In addition to its volunteers, SOHS depends on more than 1,500 active members to keep the Society alive and growing into the future. And in the years to come, those members and the support they provide will become more important than ever.



*“Our big challenge in coming years,’ says Enders, ‘will be to build a stable funding mechanism that relies more on individuals, corporations, and philanthropic donors rather than tax dollars.’”*



*Hanley Farm in winter. Photo by Jason Strock.*

As the 20th century gave way to the 21st, the Society was met with new funding challenges arising from the effects of Measure 50. Passed by voters in 1990, the measure effectively turned history levy funds over to the county general fund. Years of discussion, litigation, and negotiation led to an agreement signed in 2003 between the Society and Jackson County.<sup>21</sup> It restored partial funding to SOHS until 2007. Deep cuts were required in SOHS personnel and programs.

Society Executive Director John Enders believes the Society is up to the challenges that lay ahead. “Our big challenge in coming years,” says Enders, “will be to build a stable funding mechanism that relies more on individuals, corporations, and philanthropic donors rather than tax dollars. To do that, we need to make SOHS a household word.”<sup>22</sup>

To accommodate the leaner times, the administration offices moved back to Jacksonville

in 2005, although the Research Library remains at the History Center. The future will be different, however, and officials acknowledge that.

From its humble beginnings in 1946, the Southern Oregon Historical Society has grown in ways hardly imaginable to the original founders, both in what it does and what it means to all the residents of Southern Oregon. SOHS today oversees the management and preservation of eight historic properties: Jacksonville Museum, Jacksonville Children’s Museum, Beekman House, Beekman Bank, Catholic Rectory, Hanley Farm, U.S. Hotel, and the History Center/ Research Library. It maintains a vast collection of two and three-dimensional artifacts—ranging from a 1926 Stutz fire engine, vintage clothing, and textiles to hundreds of thousands of photographs, newspaper articles, and other written materials. Items from the collection are on display in the museums, at the historic Beekman and Hanley homes, archived in the Research Library, or housed in the climate-controlled, 11,000 sq. ft. White City storage facility, built in 1980. And more than 30,000 individuals each year take advantage of its educational programs and attend its special events.

“SOHS has a lot to be proud of in its sixty-year history,” Enders says. “We look forward to sixty more years of collecting and preserving the region’s heritage.”

LOUISE WATSON is a freelance writer living in Medford, Oregon.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Author’s interview with Walter Tilley, 17 January 2006.
- <sup>2</sup> “Southern Oregon Historians Name Mayor President,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 28 February 1946.
- <sup>3</sup> Richardson, Paul, “Fifty Years of Caring, The Southern Oregon Historical Society Then & Now,” *Southern Oregon Heritage*, Spring 1996, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 24-26.
- <sup>4</sup> Alsing, Al, “The Gift of History,” *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, May 2000, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup> “Old Courthouse History Reviewed by Speakers in Ceremony of Dedication,” *Medford Mail Tribune*, 6 August, 1950, p. 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> *Medford Mail Tribune*, 3 September 1951.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 29 April 1957.
- <sup>9</sup> Richardson, p. 25.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 27.
- <sup>11</sup> Wright, Jan, “The 20th Annual Children’s Heritage Fair,” *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, Spring 2005, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 8-11.
- <sup>12</sup> Member profile of Jeanena White Wilson, *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, Spring 2005, Vol 8, No. 2, p. 21.
- <sup>13</sup> Author’s phone interview with Carol Harbison-Samuelson, 23 January 2006.
- <sup>14</sup> Watson, Margaret, “The Making of a Museum, The Hanley Sisters’ Contribution,” *Southern Oregon Heritage*, Spring 1996, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>15</sup> *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, August 2000, Vol. 2, No. 8, p. 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Author’s interview with Duane Clay, 21 January 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> Tilley interview, 17 January 2006.
- <sup>18</sup> Merrill, Karen, “Historical group eyes Penney’s,” *Mail Tribune*, 1 April 1987, p. 1A.
- <sup>19</sup> Exhibits page, *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, May 2001, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Author’s interview with Ron Brown, 20 January 2006.
- <sup>21</sup> “County and historical society sign accord,” *Mail Tribune*, 11 September 2003.
- <sup>22</sup> Author’s phone interview with Executive Director John Enders, January 24, 2006.



# CHILDREN'S HERITAGE FAIR 2006

By Stephanie Butler

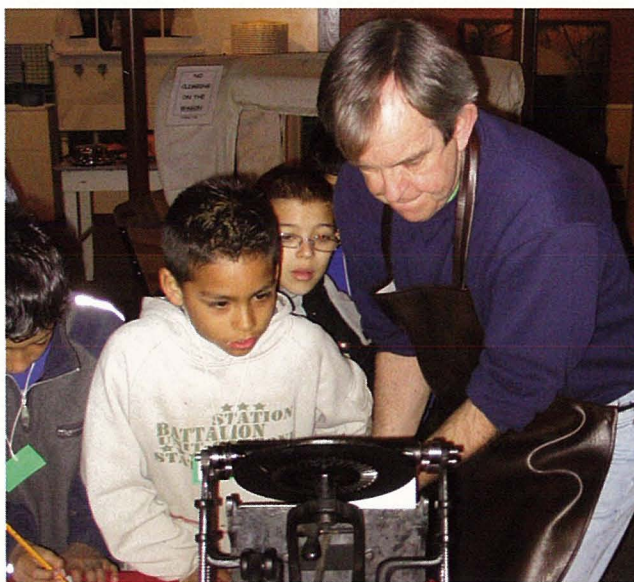
MOMENTUM FOR THE 21ST Children's Heritage Fair, which took place in historic Jacksonville in March of this year, has been building for a quarter century since the Southern Oregon Historical Society first began including school programs as a part of its mission to educate future generations about local history.

For four action-packed weeks, nearly 3,000 fourth graders, their teachers, and chaperones participated in this unique interactive, hands-on-history program. Students moved through six "stations" each day gaining perspective on issues related to Native American lifeways prior to European settlement and Oregon Trail history. They toured the historic Jacksonville Cemetery. They even met some of Jacksonville's earliest residents, including Mrs. C. C. Beekman and Peter Britt.

While it is difficult to illustrate in words the value of a program like Heritage Fair, testimonies are sometimes offered up in surprising and spontaneous ways.

On Friday, March 24, the final day of the Fair, after classes had returned to school, stations had been cleaned for the last time, and our weary, extremely dedicated volunteers had gone home to nap or rest, a small group gathered at the Beekman House Program Space to mark the official retirement of Jean Ayers from her Living History portrayal of Mrs. C. C. Beekman.

For more than a decade, Jean has inspired people of all ages with her ability to "become" Julia Beekman and to share insights about her trip across the Oregon Trail, family, life



*Heritage Fair volunteer Dick Meyers assists students at the vintage printing press station.*

in early Jacksonville, and the world at large in 1911. The Beekman House and a visit with Mrs. Beekman have been highlights at Heritage Fair each year. For many students, it is the only time in their lives that they visit an historic home and view it intact as it appeared in the early 1900s, filled with artifacts that belonged to the Beekman family.

SOHS staff and many Living History colleagues raised a glass of sparkling cider, shared stories and cake in honor of Jean's elegance and grace through the years as Julia Beekman. When it was time to say our final thank you and goodbye, I walked to my car outside the gate and noted a small knot of people walking down California Street, led by a small boy.

As I observed their progress, it became clear that they were headed for the front door of the Beekman House. I approached them and asked, "Can I help you?" The boy said, "I was here last week with my class and I want to show my family the house." A woman and a slightly older boy stood waiting nearby. "Yes," the woman added, "he's told us all

about the house and he wanted to show it to us."

I explained that the house was closed for the day and for the end of Heritage Fair, and the little boy's face fell. He was clearly disappointed and his mission to share his excitement about the historic home was dashed.

I asked him his name and he told me it was Aaron, adding, "I came with Mrs. Sedy's class from Jewett Elementary."

"Well, Aaron," I said, "I'm afraid that we can't go into the house today but Mrs. Beekman is still here. Would you like to introduce your family to her?"

His face lit up, again filled with expectancy and purpose. "Oh yeah! Mrs. Beekman's cool!"

I led the way to the program space where Jean was saying her final good-byes, still dressed in her Living History attire. I opened the door and said, "Mrs. Beekman, could I ask you for the favor of one last appearance before you go?"

Immediately Jean slipped back into her role and said, "I'd be delighted!" Then, as I began to make formal introductions, Aaron interrupted me blurting out, "My name is Aaron and I met you last week and I'm from Jewett Elementary School! This is my family..."

As I walked back to the parking lot, I smiled at the force of a passion for history rising in this child just as Jean Ayers' tenure as a passionate advocate for the Beekman legacy was coming to a gentle close.

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STEPHANIE BUTLER is Education and Programs Coordinator for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



# SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE TODAY

## *The Magazine Through the Years*

by Harley Patrick

THE PUBLICATION YOU ARE holding in your hands has undergone many changes during its lengthy history: from newspaper to newsletter to respected historical magazine. And throughout its evolution, it has chronicled our region's history as well as those human events that define our present and shape our future.

It began in 1855 when William G. T'Vault and his partners purchased the printing equipment of the *Scottsburg Umpqua Gazette* and moved it to Jacksonville, where they named their new weekly newspaper *The Table Rock*

In the spring of 1994, the *Sentinel's* final issue ran almost simultaneously with the publishing of the first issue of the Society's new magazine, *Oregon Heritage*. Writing in that last issue of the *Sentinel*, Sam Wegner, SOHS executive director from 1986 to 1995, said, "Oregon Heritage will be a different kind of history magazine ... It will recognize that ours is a world of inter-connected relationships, that our lives are constantly affected by events, decisions, and people beyond the bounds of our personal experiences."<sup>4</sup>

In 1995, the words "Southern Oregon"

*Oregon Heritage will be a different kind of history magazine ... It will recognize that ours is a world of inter-connected relationships, that our lives are constantly affected by events, decisions, and people beyond the bounds of our personal experiences.*

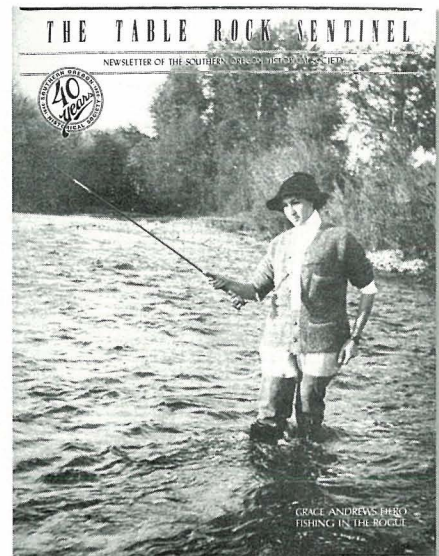
*Sentinel*.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, T'Vault and a set of new partners changed the name to *The Oregon Sentinel*. Over the next nineteen years, the *Sentinel* went through a succession of owners and editors until its purchase and dissolution in March 1888. Except for *The Oregon Sentinel's* brief re-appearance from 1902-1906, the newspaper never again went to press.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly seventy-five years later, in the fall of 1980, the *Table Rock Sentinel* reemerged as the newsletter of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. By the next year, the *Sentinel* – as it was now being referred to – went from bimonthly to monthly. Over the next 14 years, the magazine grew in size and quality, culminating with a *Certificate of Commendation* from the American Association for State and Local History in 1990.<sup>3</sup>

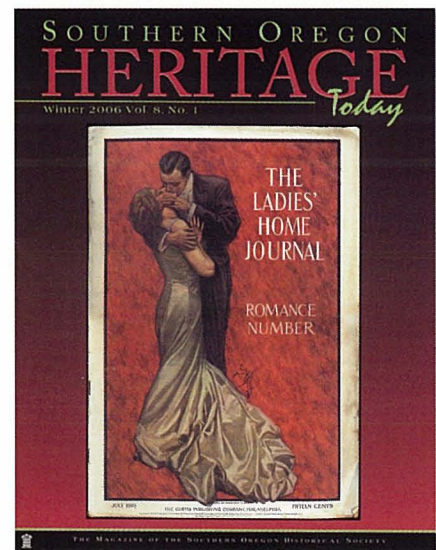
were added to the title and in 1999, the word "Today" was added. In the summer of 2003, the magazine went from a monthly to a quarterly publication.

With this 60th Anniversary issue, and hopefully well into the future, the *Southern Oregon Heritage Today* will continue to – as Sam Wegner envisioned the magazine's role more than a decade ago – "examine the people, places, and issues both in Oregon and the region, that have and will define Oregon's past, present, and future."<sup>5</sup>

HARLEY PATRICK is Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.



March 1886



Winter 2006

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Wegner, Samuel J, "Looking Back, Looking Forward: From Table Rock Sentinel to Oregon Heritage," *Table Rock Sentinel* (Spring 1994): 22.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., pg. 23
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.





Sept/Oct 1980



December 1987



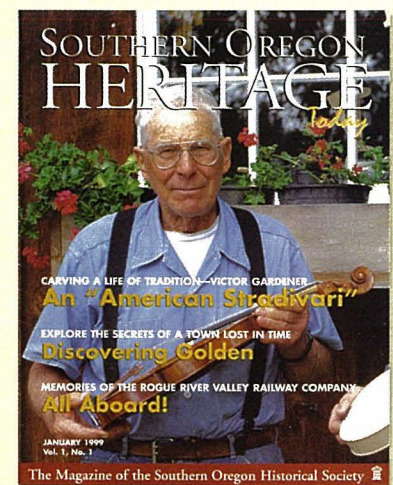
Spring 1994



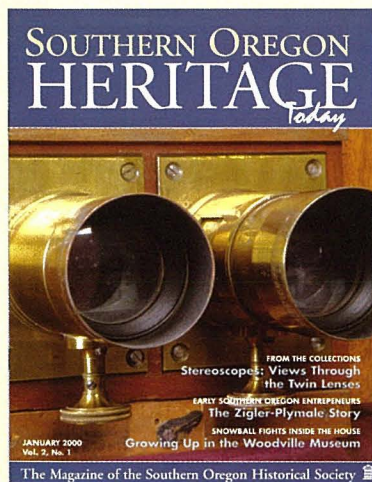
Spring 1994



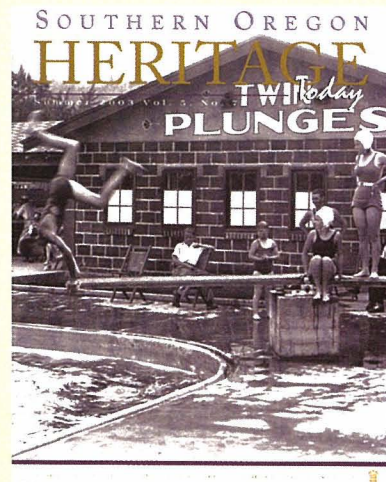
Spring 1996



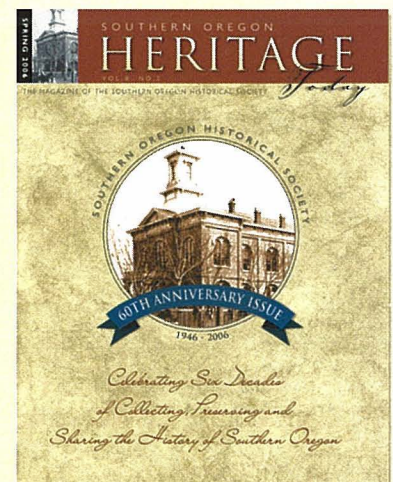
January 1999



January 2000



Summer 2003



Spring 2006

Cover Stories (left to right): Premiere issue of The Table Rock Sentinel newsletter; the first Table Rock Sentinel magazine with a cover printed in color; final issue of the Table Rock Sentinel; first issue of Oregon Heritage; 50th Anniversary issue of Southern Oregon Heritage; first issue of Southern Oregon Heritage Today; first issue of the new millennium; first quarterly issue; 60th Anniversary issue.



# DEMOCRACY, PEARS AND POWS

## *Camp White and the German Prisoner of War Re-education Program*

by Joe Peterson

*Sixty-one years after the end of WWII, we once again find ourselves dealing with issues of post-war nation building and the treatment of prisoners of war. In his article, Joe Peterson looks at a little-known government program that brought those very issues to the Rogue Valley in 1946.*

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, 18-YEAR-OLD Heinz Bertram had good cause to be terrified. Suddenly he found himself a prisoner of war sure to be shot by his British captors. Much to his astonishment and relief, young Bertram ended up instead near Medford, Oregon, with approximately two thousand fellow German prisoners-of-war (POWs) learning English and picking pears while part of the U.S. military's attempt to re-educate German POWs and hopefully transform a dictatorship into a future democracy.

In light of current issues of prisoner abuse and attempts to bring democratic rule to Iraq, it is interesting and possibly instructive to look back to an earlier experiment in nation building.

Begun as a secret mission, an elaborate plan was launched to reeducate German prisoners of war held here in the United States. The hope was that exposure to American ideals might prepare them to take a positive participatory role in a "de-Nazified" post-war Germany. As Lieutenant John Fahey recalled in a 1992 article,<sup>1</sup> he and seventy other U.S. military officers were sent to New York for twelve intense days of clandestine training in the fall of 1944. Fate would soon find Lt. Fahey and POW Bertram together at Camp White separated by a double row of barbed wire.

With British POW camps overflowing, 350,000 German prisoners were transported to 150 camps scattered across the United States. But an important question arose: Would the Geneva Convention allow POWs to be put to work and simultaneously indoctrinated? By 1943 War Department policy had evolved to allow prisoners held in the United States to do work that needed to be done but did not aid the American war effort.<sup>2</sup> Work would still be optional and prisoners would be paid 80 cents a day for their labor.

Lt. Fahey's mission was fraught with serious logistical problems from the outset. For starters, Fahey didn't speak German. The U.S. military command had decided not to relinquish any German-speaking American officers to the re-education program, as they were reserved for more important intelligence work. As a consequence, Fahey seldom had more than two American soldiers fluent in German to help him.

Secondly, while daily work in the orchards of Southern Oregon and fields of Northern California were a popular diversion for the Camp White POWs, it interfered with re-education night classes offered on the base. After a day in the field little time and inclination was left for English language, American history, and civics classes. It seems the re-education program took a backseat to

the War Department's desire to provide a substitute workforce for needy farmers.

Most importantly, strict adherence to the intent of the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of war meant walking a fine line between indoctrination and the allowed "intellectual diversions" that had to be "organized by the prisoners."<sup>3</sup> An interesting result was classes taught by the POWs themselves. Further accountability came from outside observers as both American and Swiss representatives visited Camp White and filed written reports on prisoner treatment, specifically addressing the "Intellectual Diversion Program."<sup>4</sup>

With victory in Europe, the veil of secrecy was lifted from this experiment and American newspaper reporters flocked to POW camps to assess its success and inform an unknowing public about its existence. Among them was *Portland Oregonian* staff writer Herman Edwards, who wrote a series of three features in the fall of 1945. It would not be the lectures Fahey had been trained to give that resulted in changed minds. Edwards would find, rather, a number of seemingly unrelated decisions and events that had the most impact.

Unlike the newsreel footage of German extermination camps shown previously but widely seen as American propagand-



da, Frank Capra's Hollywood-produced series *Why We Fight* was intensely watched (sound tracks had been translated into German at Camp White) and became the subject of animated discussions and much arguing after each showing. Herman Edwards concluded that Capra's films captured the POW's interest and became a turning point in the re-education program.<sup>5</sup>

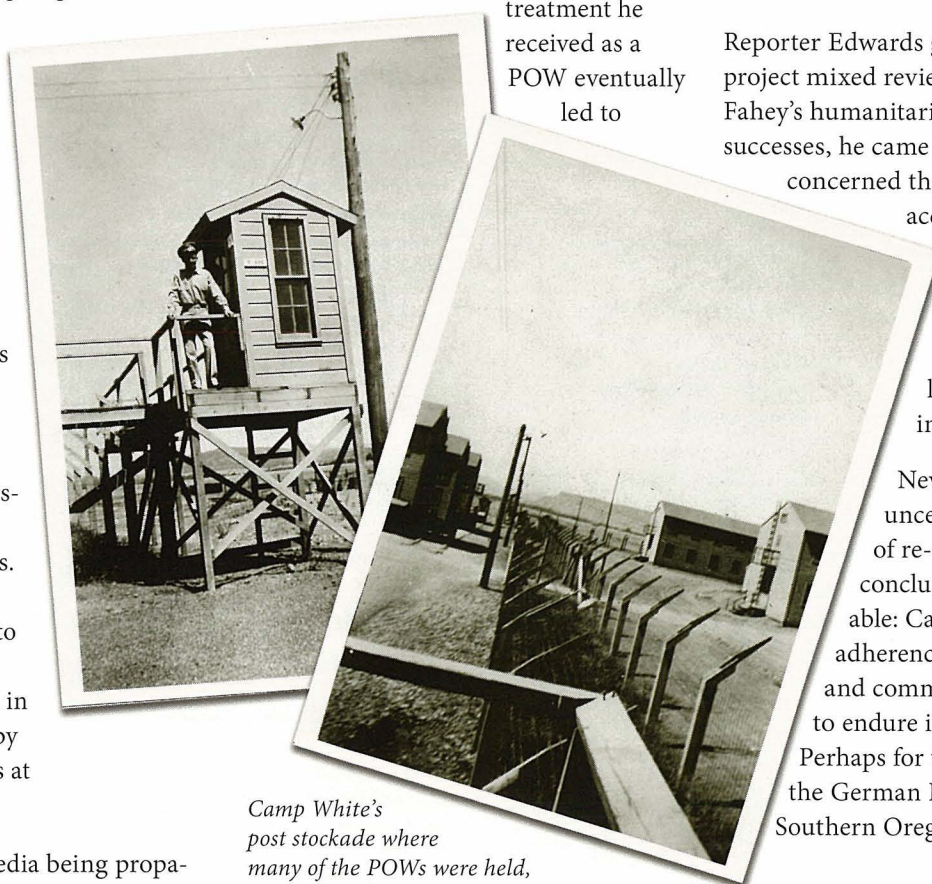
Longer-range strategies enabled prisoners to print their own uncensored news magazine and freely elect their own spokesman to deal with their American jailers. POW-owned radios were unrestricted as to programs listened to and were maintained in good working order by Medford repair shops at Lt. Fahey's direction.

Accustomed to all media being propaganda, prisoners slowly came to understand the notion of a free press as *Life* magazine and the *Oregonian* came to be accepted as factual. If *Life* printed pictures of Nazi atrocities many prisoners now deemed the stories true. By far the most read newspaper was the *Oregonian* with a surprising 100 personal subscribers behind the barbed wire. Another 80 copies were made available for general distribution from canteen profits.<sup>6</sup>

With half of the prisoners in night classes and another twenty taking correspondence courses through the University of Oregon, many POWs learned of American life through more than thirty course offerings. Even camp library usage was arranged for uncensored reading. At one point, testing Lt. Fahey's true commitment to free thought, a prisoner asked to check out *Mein Kampf*. Fahey didn't object and

soon POWs realized that whatever books they wanted to read were available to them.

POW Heinz Bertram's friendships with American farmers and the humane treatment he received as a POW eventually led to



*Camp White's post stockade where many of the POWs were held, 1944. SOHS Photos #13619 and #13620 (original photos loaned by Tom Hafey)*

American citizenship and a permanent return to the Rogue Valley. For more than twenty years, beginning in the 1950s, Bertram ran an upholstery shop in Medford, which was housed in a former Camp White building sold off as surplus after the war.<sup>7</sup> Interviewed in 1980, Bertram explained, "I liked the general way of living here. I liked the country. I liked the democratic way of things done over here. I wanted to get away from Communism."<sup>8</sup> Before returning to live in Oregon, Bertram had returned to a divided Germany with his hometown now located in East Germany and occupied by decidedly undemocratic Russians.

Camp White German prisoners of war, finally repatriated in the spring of 1946, repeated their original jour-

ney by rail and then by ship back to an occupied homeland. Had Lt. Fahey succeeded? Did they return with a favorable impression of American democracy while being treated in a manner consistent with Geneva Convention provisions?

Reporter Edwards gave the re-education project mixed reviews. While he praised Fahey's humanitarian efforts and several successes, he came away from his visit concerned that most POWs did not accept personal responsibility for the war. Several articulated their doubts that the democracy they had learned of could work in Germany.

Nevertheless, despite the uncertain lasting impact of re-education efforts, one conclusion seems inescapable: Camp White authorities' adherence to international law and common decency was able to endure in the worst of times. Perhaps for this reason alone the German POW experience in Southern Oregon is worth revisiting.

JOE PETERSON is an adjunct lecturer in the History and Education Departments at Southern Oregon University.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 John Fahey, "Reminiscence," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Winter 1992-93.
- 2 Fahey, "Reminiscence," p. 368.
- 3 John Brown Mason, "German Prisoners Of War in the United States," *American Journal of International Law*, April 1945.
- 4 "Report on Field Service Visit to POW Camp, Camp White, Oregon," 9 May 1945 and "POW Camp, Camp White, Oregon," 1 May 1945, (Declassified Documents), Camp White Historical Society.
- 5 *Oregonian*, 1 October 1945.
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- 7 George Kramer, *Camp White: City in the Agate Desert*, (White City, Oregon), Camp White 50th Anniversary Committee, 1992, p.86.
- 8 *Mail Tribune*, 29 February 1980





## MEMBERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Judy Hanshew Lozano &  
Robert Lozano, *Butte Falls*

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Judson Parsons & Diana Gardener, *Salem*

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Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield, *Medford*  
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Rogue Aggregates, Inc., *Medford*

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Hakatai Enterprises, Inc., *Ashland*

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Neal & Jo Smith, *Jacksonville*  
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Jennifer Williams, *San Rafael, CA*  
Monty Zukowski & Jane Anderson, *Jacksonville*

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Sharon Duggan, *Berkeley, CA*  
Chuck & Colleen Eccleston, *Medford*  
Alex & Bette Hamilton Jr., *Eagle Point*

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Douglas Legg, *Ashland*  
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Richard & Ann Offenbacher, *Jacksonville*  
Shiena & Culley Polehn, *Medford*  
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Thank you to the following people who contributed to the SOHS collection over the past three months:  
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Memberships last one year. All members receive the following benefits:

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## Member Profile



FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, **John and Kathy Loram** drove past a rundown farmhouse three miles below their home on Old Highway 99 south of Ashland, unaware of the historic significance of the dilapidated building. But when a for-sale sign appeared in the front yard, John, out of curiosity, decided to go inside.

Hidden beneath peeling aluminum siding, dropped ceilings and shag carpet was what proved to be the oldest surviving structure in Southern Oregon. Originally known as the "Mountain House," the two-story building had been completed in 1852, then served for decades as a way station, providing meals and lodging to travelers crossing the Siskiyou Summit by foot, horseback, wagon train, and stagecoach.

John's impulsive interest sparked what became an extensive restoration project. He and Kathy wound up purchasing the property with the intent of returning it to its original condition and use – as a travelers' accommodation.

Preservation consultant George Kramer and historian Kay Atwood carried out a research/detection effort that revealed the full history of the property and helped get it listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. And local craftsmen worked for two and a half years to meticulously restore the Mountain House to close to its original appearance.

SOHS librarians provided photographs by Peter Britt that documented the early look of the house and enabled the Lorams to recreate many of its details. "We couldn't have done it without the help of SOHS," John says. "It was wonderful to have the Society available as a resource. The information that SOHS provided was key to recovering the history of the Mountain House and the pioneering families who built it."

Kathy, a former graduate student in American History, says, "SOHS has really become the guardian of the collective memory for this area. I think that's especially important given the influx of new residents to the Rogue Valley. For example, we're not natives of Southern Oregon. But with the help of SOHS – its archives and exhibits and publications and programs – we've been able to make a powerful connection with the history of this area, which has truly enriched our sense of being at home here."

You can find out more about the Ashland Mountain House B&B at [www.ashlandmountainhouse.com](http://www.ashlandmountainhouse.com). For more about SOHS, go to [www.sohs.org](http://www.sohs.org).

What inspires you to support SOHS? Please let us know your story by calling Richard at 541-773-6536 ext. 226, or e-mailing [development@sohs.org](mailto:development@sohs.org).



(Top) John and Kathy Loram (and friend) on the front porch of the Mountain House in 2006. (Above) A Peter Britt photograph of the Mountain House, ca 1880. SOHS Photo #3646



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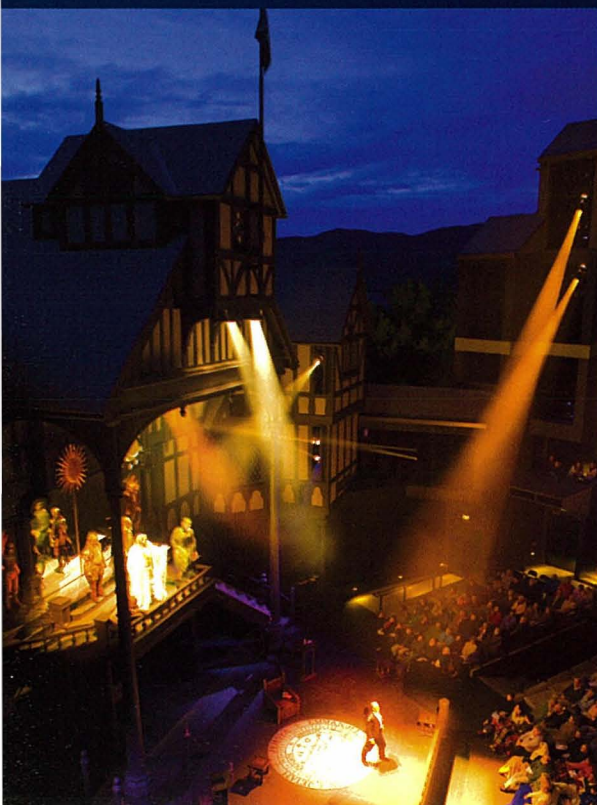
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*Clockwise from top right,  
The Importance of Being Earnest (2006): Kevin Kenerly.  
The Diary of Anne Frank (2006): Laura Morache.  
The Winter's Tale (2006): Greta Oglesby.  
The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (2005): ensemble.*

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